watermark 2011

Volume 5

Editor
MELANIE HARRISON BUCKOWSKI

Managing Editor
MICHAEL KOGER

Rhetoric / Composition Editors
STEPHANIE BURNHAM & SARAH ROUSSIN

Gender Literature Editors
ERICA HAGAMAN & DEBORAH REED

American Literature Editor
GERI LAWSON

Medieval and Classical Literature Editor
MARCEL LOSADA

Borderlands Literature Editor
JEFF O'BRIEN

British Literature
CRESCENT SEWARD

International Literature Editor
PATRICK VINCENT

Editorial Advisory Board

ANNABEL ADAMS
JESSICA DOBSON
ELAYNE RODRIGUEZ HAVEN
MEGHAN HOUSE
EMILY KEERY
JENNIFER LARES
MARK OLAGUE
MICHELLE PARSONS
MALLORY REEVES
GILBERTO RODRIGUEZ, JR.
VANESSA ST. OEGGER
KAYLEIGH SEVI
RYAN SMERNOFF
MINTRA TANTIKIJRUNGRUANG
KRISTEN VAN DER ROEST
NOEL VINCENT
ALIN YESSAIAN

Cover Design, Website, Layout and Design
DEAN TSUYUKI

Faculty Advisor
GEORGE HART

Table of Contents

001 | Transformational Grammars: Virtual Exile and Mystory
MARK OLAGUE
California State University, Long Beach

021 | "I never did hack anyone up": South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Circumfession, and J.M. Coetzee's *Dusklands*
CHRISTOPHER GARLAND
University of Florida

038 | Demystifying Moynihan's Myth: A Black Feminist Analysis of the Black Family Model and the Black Matriarch as Radical Counter-hegemonic Agents in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*
JODI THOMPSON
University of Washington

054 | "Like a Big, Public Garbage Can": Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* and the Abject
ERICA HAGAMAN
California State University, Long Beach

068 | Engendering the Fall of the Patriarch: Subversive Maternity in *Absalom, Absalom!*
CHRISTIE WAKEN
California State University, Long Beach

086 | Identifyin(g): Prosopopoeic Play in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*
CORY TEUBNER
Wichita State University

103 | Conversion and Inversion: Chaucer's Man of Law and Wife of Bath
MICHELLE PARSONS
California State University, Long Beach

117 | Controlling and Exploiting the Black Delta: An Ecofeminist Exploration into the Feminization and Racialization of Nature in William Faulkner's "Delta Autumn"
MINTRA TANTIKIJRUNGRUANG
California State University, Long Beach

135 | Gabriel's Queer Difference in Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen*
JESSICA MATHERS
California State University, Long Beach

145 | Visions of Death and Desire: Exploring Embodied Ethics in Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*
ZOË ROTH
King's College London

160 | Exchange and Restoration: Sacrifice as a Commemorative Act in *Iphigenia at Aulis*
MICHELLE JANSEN
SUNY Binghampton

178 | Salvation Through Laughter: Nanapush in Erdrich's Tracks
NICHOLE THIBODEAU
Fort Hays State University

195 | The Gift of the Telescope: Women, Natural Philosophy & Landscape in Haywood's *Eovaai and The Female Spectator*
ANNABEL ADAMS
California State University, Long Beach

215 | Milton's Colonial America: Ecology, Empire, and Stewardship in *Paradise Lost*
CHRISTOPHER BLACK
Oklahoma State University

239 | "Ceci n'est pas un conte": Glissant's *La Lézarde* and the Treachery of Words in Postcolonial Discourse
CHRISTOPHER FLOOD
University of California, Los Angeles

258 | Plagiarism in the Digital Age
SANDRA LEONARD
Indiana University

Editor's Note

As the stewards of *Watermark*, we consistently strive for excellence and to improve the journal with every issue. Thanks to the contributors, our stellar 2011 editorial staff, and our inspired advisor, Dr. Hart, we have once again achieved our goal. This issue represents the highest caliber of emerging voices. We thank those who submitted essays and everyone who continues to support our efforts.

This issue is bountiful and encompasses a unique mix of viewpoints and topics from plagiarism in the digital age, to ecofeminism, to apartheid. The literature that inspired these essays includes such diverse authors as: Euripides, Milton, Alice Walker, Henry Miller, and Eliza Haywood. Our contributors hail from universities all over the U.S. as well as international academic institutions, and we hope to continue to foster the larger academic community beyond the university.

On a personal note, I would like to thank Michael Koger whose talent and brilliance never ceases to astound me, and Geri Lawson, who is a consummate scholar, valued colleague, and my rock through all of life's unpredictable challenges. I would also like to thank Dean Tsuyuki; he is the creative genius behind the *Watermark* website and the artist who choreographs words and images for the journal. Lastly, I wish to thank my family, especially my husband Dan, who has encouraged and sustained me with love, practical support, and large cups of coffee.

Especially during this period of economic strife, constricting budgets, and time pressures, the *Watermark* Staff would like to thank Dr. Eileen Klink, Lisa Behrendt, Janice Young and the entire English Department for their continued support and enthusiasm. We are most grateful.

Melanie Harrison Buckowski
Editor

Transformational Grammars: Virtual Exile and Mystory

by Mark Olague

"Our own minds are not simply sites of storage; they perceive connections and patterns that may only become present to us in the later stages of their construction."
—Colin Gifford Brooke

Mark Olague is a first-year Master's candidate in Rhetoric and Composition at CSULB. He has a B.A. in Comparative Literature and an M.A. in Interdisciplinary Studies from CSULB. His article "Minor Variations on an Eastern European Theme: Becoming Balkan in Ismail Kadare's The File on H*" was published in* Watermark *in 2008. His chapbook of poems* Malos *was published in 2011 on Blurb Books. Along with author New York-based writer Sergio de la Pava, he is a co-founding member of the internationally-based, Situationist-inspired literary movement known as* Suadada*. Currently, he is editing the group's inaugural journal* Dim Hovering *to be published next spring.*

Summary

The Mystory project sprang from Roland Barthes' theory of the *punctum* expressed in his study of photography, *Camera Lucida* and Gregory Ulmer's subsequent discussion of *biographemes* in his article, "Barthes's Body of Knowledge." Like Barthes in *Camera Lucida*, the first impulse for this project sprang from my attempts to express my grief from the death of my mother and connect it with my critical interests to produce a "body of knowledge" for myself. In an earlier version of

this project, I produced a video essay entitled "Sunshine and Noir," in reference to the opening chapters of Mike Davis' Foucauldian study of the urban history of Los Angeles, *City of Quartz* (http://www.vimeo.com/15171126). Guided by *punctums*, the spontaneous personal resonances viewers feel toward certain visual images theorized by Barthes, I analyzed the films of Quentin Tarantino, drawing a link between the "hidden" neighborhoods of Los Angeles used as backdrops in the director's early films with the neighborhood I grew up in Bell, California during the late 1970s and 1980s. For the purpose of constructing my Mystory, I remediated components of the video essay in a digital collage format, organizing material under the four "Althusserian" institutional discourses delineated by Ulmer as central components to the Mystory. By categorizing elements under the discourses of "family," "entertainment," "school," and "discipline," I hoped to enact a discursive electronic writing event that reflects the "heuretics" approach toward digital composition, a central method to Ulmer's concept of "electracy," or digital writing ("Toward Electracy"). To explain heuretics in more detail I will start by giving a brief explanation of its critical methodology; then I will discuss the efficacies and drawbacks of the Mystory genre as an example of heuretics in action; and finally, I will proceed with an explanation of the components of my own Mystory (http://www.wix.com/markolague/transformationalgrammar).

Heuretics and Heretics

Heuretics is the name given by Ulmer and his Florida School of researchers to a mode of image-based, digital composition emphasizing invention over critique, a "generative" approach to writing more appropriate for the logic of digital age. Part avant-garde art practice and part-critical theory, heuretics reflects the non-linear, "rhizomatic" movement of hypertext away from the causal, deductive reasoning long

associated with print literacy. By contrast, according to Ulmer, harnessing "picto-ideo-phonographic" writing allows for a type of discursive subjectivity that more fully exploits the "sensorial, figurative, narrative, imaging capabilities of language" ("Toward Electracy"). One of the more salient aspects of heuretics is his emphasis on *chora* or space, a concept retrieved by Ulmer from classical rhetoric conceptually richer than its emendation in modern philosophy as *topos*, the particular setting of a place. For the ancient Greeks, *chora* represented a third type of logic, between the "sensible or intelligible," as a means to represent the "spirit" or emotional attachments to place that "imprints" itself upon memory. To be a *choragrapher*, according to Ulmer, therefore requires one to be more attuned to the "logic of touch (feeling) more than vision" ("Florida" 42). Chorography is thus central to mystoriography, as practitioners are urged to think of their connections and groupings in terms of musical "riffs" than stand-alone concepts. Thus, a Mystory selects a problem or issue to investigate "from the discursive levels of family, entertainment, school, and "discipline" and constructs a digital *bricolage* of video clips, images, text, and sound. Unlike the aims of the academic essay, the goal of the Mystory is to move towards "complexification rather than simplification" in its practice. Making resonant critical connections between the various discourses—searching for what Ulmer calls "Eureka!" moments in the Mystory process—are thus more easily generated and achievable through digital, or electrate, compositions.

Some scholars, however, have criticized the "ludic" and solipsistic tendencies of Ulmer's heuretic approach and see it emblematic of the depoliticizing obfuscations made against many post-structural theories and applications. For politically-minded academics and theorists, feminists, Marxist, post-colonial and cultural studies critics alike, the jettisoning of critique and debate for a "logic of invention" is a critical practice in name only, authorized by the same privilege and authority it tries to evade.

Other critics of digital media's role in rhetorical practices include political scientist Jodi Dean, who, while not specifically singling out Ulmer or electracy, accuses digital media of weakening the democratic public sphere, providing communicative networks for capitalist imperatives, and fostering apathy and disengagement from political participation rather than facilitating vigorous and meaningful exchange ("Florida" 40). None of Ulmer's critics, so far, have specifically engaged in his larger project to reformulate rhetorical methodologies and theorize its possibilities in the digital age as an alternate and potentially more effective means of political participation and resistance. Rather than serious theoretical challenges, such arguments represent, instead, the "trained incapacities" all too symptomatic of departmental and disciplinarian territorialism.

A more trenchant critique of heuretics and the Mystory, however, is the "apostasy" of former Ulmer protégé, Marcel O'Gorman, one of the editors of the Florida School anthology, *New Media/New Methods: The Academic Turn from Literacy to Electracy*. In a recent blog post, O'Gorman disavowed his former enthusiasm for the Mystory, fearing that, from his experience using it in the classroom, it too often indulges the narcissistic meanderings of "navel gazers" who "produce work no more innovative than the self-exploratory essays encouraged in freshman composition classes" ("From Mystorian"). O'Gorman admits somewhat lightheartedly that his recent "curmudgeonly" attitude toward the Mystory stems from his research interests in "finitude" or death and sees the promotion of hypertext writing's anti-hermeneutical, open-ended "drive to infinity" as naïvely resisting the inevitably of (mainly, corporeal) finitude. This has not prevented O'Gorman from still assigning the Mystory to his classes, but only to admit that he now assesses with more value the critical, written portion of the project—the "ecriture over the e-text"— to restrict the solipsistic and nostalgic pitfalls of the project ("From Mystorian"). Ironically, O'Gorman's critical disdain for "nostalgia" connects with the

"resting place" of my own Mystory project whose individual components I would now like to explain.

Mourning Diary

Like intuition, serendipity plays a key role in the analogical reasoning of the Mystory process. It was only by luck that while reading *Camera Lucida* this semester—part of the last, critically acclaimed books Barthes wrote after his mother's death in 1977—*The New Yorker* excerpted the critic's soon-to-be published *Mourning Diary*, a collection of handwritten entries Barthes intermittently scribbled on quarter strips of paper soon after her death. I have hyperlinked images of these entries on my page with the article in *The New Yorker*, including a photograph of the theorist as a child being held awkwardly by his mother Henriette. So much of Barthes' theory of the *punctum* in *Camera Lucida*—that prick of self-awareness and emotional connection from images evoking human mortality—can be contextualized by this intimate account of his own mourning expressed in these entries. As Barthes writes: "I don't want to write to talk about it, for fear of making literature out of it—or of not being sure of not doing so—although as a matter of fact literature originates within these truths" (*Mourning Diary* 23). In many ways, the newly published diary represents a *remediation* of Barthes' grief, a fact resonating deeply with me because of my own mother's death from cancer two years ago. Like Barthes, I too was grief-stricken, struggled with the desire to express my grief that honored its formless, *chora*-like nature. Print technology, in particular genres like the literary memoir, seemed cognitively "pre-mapped" by sentimentality, hermeneutics, and self-absorption—too seductive it was to describe and define grief, attempt to make it "meaningful" to its subject, than to trace or be directed by its elliptical and fragmentary nature.[1] The trick was to find a form that made it more productive to me, to watch patterns emerge rather than to impose

any upon it—to become, in effect, a *choragrapher*. I would have to, as Ulmer contends, "use multiple meanings at once" and allow "place to do more than hold meanings" (Rice and O'Gorman, "Introduction" 9).

For the purposes of my Mystory, I added pictures of my mother of about the time when I was a child, formatted to appear as if they were being flipped through and searched (perhaps to express my looking for her elusive "air" or essence which Barthes discusses in *Camera Lucida* with photos of his mother). Some of the pictures were of my mother before she was married, including one that I had never seen before while she was alive: an employee I.D. from the time when she was employed at Norris Industries in Maywood, California, a defense contractor and major employer during the post-WWII industrial boom in Southern California. This allowed me to think about the decline of defense manufacturing throughout Southern California, including major employers like Norris Industries in the 1990s, and its effect on communities like the one I grew up in, a fact which I connect later in more detail in the "Noir City" section of my Mystory. But while reading and discussing Barthes' theory of the emotional impact or "third meaning" in the images of photographic stills, I began to speculate how Barthes' might have applied his theory of the *punctum* to cinematic images had he lived. During the research of my first project, I found Barthes' brief essay on the cinema, "Leaving the Movie Theater," published in his collection of miscellaneous writings, *The Rustle of Language*. While, technically, it does not offer up a theory of the *punctum* in the cinematic context, it does offer many critical insights into the public "spectatorship" of the cinematic experience.

In similar analogical fashion as the Mystory process, Barthes gives a personal account of the "erotic" pleasure of entering and leaving a darkened movie theater, analyzing all the supplementary aspects of the film going experience—bodies slipping down in their seats, eyes "glued" to the screen silently consuming images ("Leaving the Movie Theater"

346). Entering a movie theater from daylight and emerging into darkness afterwards, according to Barthes, was akin to undergoing (psychoanalytic) "hypnosis," an intimate urban experience whose effect on the spectator was not only personal but "ideological"—public as well as private. Hence, what begins in *Camera Lucida* as the private meditation on the agonizing condition of grief from looking at static images comes full circle with the curative and socially integrating powers from experiencing the moving images in an anonymous public space. As Barthes explained, the cinema is not only an intimate social space with its own rituals, but it is where the "separation between the theater and its outside breaks down" (Stubblefield 84). It is also where cinema goers experience the "naturalness" or "truth" of ideological discourse when consuming images onscreen (ibid).

Cinematic State Apparatuses and Noir City

Barthes' discussion of cinematic spectatorship brings me to the next two webpages of my Mystory. In these sections I have attempted to link Barthes' concept of the *jouissance*, or the "erotic" bliss, of film watching with the more subtle "seductions" of ideology. I have designed the page to include an image of an empty movie theater from a spectator's point of view, where a *YouTube* clip plays a scene (which I explain in more detail below) from Quentin Tarantino's film, *Pulp Fiction*. I link the image of the local movie house of my childhood, the Liberty 3 (formally the Alcazar Theater) with Tarantino's preferred film aesthetics—"grindhouse" and its antecedent, "film noir." Motivated by the improvised logic of the *punctum*, I briefly historicize film genres like "noir" and "grindhouse" in their post-WWII contexts.

For some time now I have been trying to theorize the films of Quentin Tarantino beyond traditional film criticism. Few of the critical exegesis of Tarantino's films I have encountered locate *specifically*

what I find appealing about them. It is not only his noted pastiche technique that alone explains their power. As Barthes' similar analysis of Eisenstein's films, there appears a latent "third" or "obtuse meaning" present in them also. As Barthes explained, the obtuse meaning of an image has "something to do with disguise," a pasting over of the "Real," which Barthes believed, irrupted in fragmentary form in the still images of Eisentein's films. What is sensed by the viewer of such images is an "emotion which simply designates what one loves, what one wants to defend," according to Barthes ("The Third Meaning" 59). Developing Barthes' concept under electracy, Ulmer argues that the third meaning can only be mapped through *chora*, by subtle affective discernment, not as a categorical universal but as a subjective singularity (Rice and O'Gorman, "Introduction" 9).

Tarantino himself has implicated Barthean cinematic spectatorship as at least part of the motive behind his 2007 co-directed *Grindhouse* film project with fellow director Robert Rodriguez. *Grindhouse* was an homage to the low-budget, exploitation cinema of the 1970s. So-called "grindhouse" films were distinguished stylistically by their excessive depiction of sex and violence; yet the much less talked about content of these films often dealt with contemporary social issues, e.g. the war in Vietnam even before mainstream movies did. But more importantly, as its moniker connotes, it was the financially low-end movie houses and the working class audiences they appealed to that influenced the aesthetics of these films every bit as much as their reputed low budget *auteurism*. The term "grindhouse" could also refer to the "grinding" or "churning" mass-production release frequency (reflecting the nation's booming manufacturing economy of the period) of such films, whose stock content, usually exaggeratedly depicted in garish film posters, elicited the desires of filmgoers, the working class cinephillic.[2] Director Robert Rodriguez, accounting for his half of the *Grindhouse* project, the

quasi-sci-fi horror film *Planet Terror*, stated his intention was to "make good" on what many cinematic posters of the era promised audiences but usually failed to deliver: more sex, more gore, and more violence than mainstream films. This promise to deliver *jouissance* to today's film audience with an outmoded style of moviemaking seems anachronistic: how could today's film audience raised on blockbusters and home video appreciate a film aesthetic so specific to a particular era, a particular experience? One way to answer this question was to consider the film as evoking nostalgia for an increasingly obsolete film going experience. This insight provided an analogy for me between the closing down of the local movie theater in my neighborhood and certain tertiary elements in Tarantino's early breakthrough films, *Reservoir Dogs* and *Pulp Fiction*.

In *Pulp Fiction*, the *punctum* I experience occurs nearly half-way through the film when the scheming Boxer Butch (played by Bruce Willis) returns to his apartment to retrieve the watch his father, a P.O.W. killed in Vietnam, has given to him while the gangsters he has betrayed look for him throughout the city. Like a similar scene in *Reservoir Dogs*, the *punctum* occurs when background suddenly melds into foreground: Butch makes his way cautiously through the back entrances of his apartment, alongside secret passage ways, cutting through a chain-link fence, pushing aside towels draped over a fence drying, into the court of his shabby apartment building. Like the previous scene, it is devoid of dialogue, silent except for low sounds of a distant television drifting from nearby apartments, punctuated by the cry of a child and the musical horn of a passing lunch truck. But for me the scene is clear: I am situated in an urban landscape that I not only know but one I formally inhabited—a working class suburb in Los Angeles largely absent from the typical images of the city. Thus, the much-discussed "noir" or "pulp" aspects of Tarantino's films, where seedy and corrupt characters transact with each other in seedy and corrupt places, can be linked to

the latent class dimensions evoked by their background locations. While I am not claiming Tarantino's films are intentionally political, they do contain, in my reading of my affective responses to them, a political context, facilitating a "third meaning," what I would call a working-class self-recognition. Yet this presence of my past evoked onscreen simultaneously covers up a loss in the present, since my working class neighborhood of my youth, like both the Liberty 3 movie theater and the manufacturing industries surrounding it, no longer exists. If Barthes compared the darkness of the cinema to the maternal womb, then the image of my mother, too, is invoked. Certain images are "uncanny" in the Freudian sense, Barthes acknowledged, because they invoke a sense of home that is no longer home. Therefore "noir" seems a perfect metaphor to account for what is "hidden" and "repressed" in the city, the personal and ideological, discernable only to the heuretically-questioning "detective." Moreover, it is no coincidence that the introductory chapter of social historian Mike Davis' *City of Quartz* employs the "noir" trope to explain the latent class antagonisms in the city emerges at the same time as Tarantino's films, which is why I have included it in my Mystory. Davis' book demarcates the historical "power" and "class" lines in the city, connecting the city's "utopian" promise of self-creation and material abundance with its "sinister equivalent," racism and corruption; thus, *noir* invokes this "dark underbelly" of the city, pushed to the shadows and dark corners of official histories. To accentuate this point even further I have included in my Mystory a podcast of an *NPR* story on the two *Los Angeles Times* investigative reporters who broke the Bell City Manager pay scandal.[3] While *noir* expresses the idea of the "repressed" ideological history in the city it also connects with film noir's investigations into more personal subject matter: the "seedier" side of human nature, the repressed secrets of personal trauma.

Intimate Chora

On this webpage in my Mystory, I have laid out photos and images from my neighborhood when I lived there from 1976-1985 in an effort to map, as a *choragrapher*, the closeness of the community. In my video essay, I discussed the importance of social networking sites like Facebook in allowing me to reconnect with former residents of my old neighborhood. In fact, one of the goals of my first project was to endorse the community "reforming" capabilities of social networking sites as a way for "imagined" communities no longer bound in real time to reconstitute themselves virtually in order to enact cultural memories. What I found after talking to some of the people who lived in the neighborhood during that time is that many shared the same narrative threads about the rise and fall of the neighborhood. For instance, many of us agreed that the death of my older brother Roland and a childhood friend of mine, Jose Carlos Rubio, both in their early 20s, were turning points for the neighborhood.

I have included a picture of my brother on this page taken the same year he died, 1985, of a drug overdose. Because my own family reticence to talk about it, many rumors and innuendo surrounded his death, which I was able to dispel, including the rumor that he was "murdered" because he had started the street gang in the neighborhood, which, unfortunately, still exists today. I also included the pictures of two classmates who were killed (one by the other) in gang violence. In fact the death of Jose Carlos Rubio, a close friend of mine since kindergarten until the day I moved, who was shot while attending a birthday party of a friend in a house full of witnesses, compelled many families to leave the neighborhood because of the increasing violence. My mother herself often cited our move out of the neighborhood as a strategic move to save me from falling under the same influences that were consuming several of my friends and family members—a fact that further connects my project to her. In the YouTube clip I have put on this page visitors can watch a home video from 1985 that

shows kids from the neighborhood (including me when I was 14) playing football, and eerily fleeting images of Rubio about 3:07 minutes in. After some hesitation I decided to include these personal aspects because they are as important to mapping *chora* as relaying the larger social contexts, illustrating how the personal and private converge in one's memories of place. Since, besides these deaths, Chanslor's decline was emblematic of the urban problems besetting many similar neighborhoods in Los Angles at the time, reeling the divestment of public expenditures Davis writes about in *City of Quartz*. Moreover, the deindustrialization of the national economy and decline of manufacturing had a devastating effect on working-class industrial suburbs like Bell.[4] By the 1990s Bell was considered a "dangerous" neighborhood plagued by gang violence and drugs, one of the many urban "infernos" besieged by the national crack epidemic. For many of us who escaped this fate, including myself, there was a sense of loss and alienation that only later, while undergoing the Mystory process, was I able to recognize and connect with the "discipline" or "career" portion of my project: my research interests in the themes and tropes of exile and nostalgia in literary texts.

Virtual Exile

If there were any explicit "Eureka!" moments to the Mystory process I experienced, they were reserved for the final aspect of my project. In some respects, these insights inadvertently responded to the drawbacks or reservations critics like O'Gorman complained about with the Mystory. His disdain for "nostalgia" specifically echoed my own undergraduate and graduate research interests in literary exile as it pertained to writers from the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe living in the west. I found that Ulmer's conception of *chora* and *monumentality*, including his construction of electronic monuments, the "MEmorial," connected with the cultural critic Svetlana Boym's theory of "reflective nostalgia"

and "virtual exile" explained in her book, *The Future of Nostalgia*, a key text in my understanding of exilic writing in the twentieth century. As I made connections between the work of Ulmer and Boym, I was also able to see the role digital technology might play in fostering productive uses of nostalgia and cultural memory, particularly via Colin Brooke's "redescriptions" of the five traditional canons of rhetoric—invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery he outlines in his book *Lingua Fracta*. Most interesting was Brooke's reinstitution of the canon of "memory," long abandoned in traditional print rhetoric, as "persistence of cognition" best exemplified in new database-driven mnemonic technologies like tag clouds which track the popular search terms of users with analogous material.

In her book *The Future of Nostalgia*, Boym discusses the etymological origins of nostalgia, this "sickness" or "longing" for home, as first coined by a Swiss doctor to explain the physiological maladies that afflicted soldiers abroad. Boym distinguishes two types of nostalgia in her study: *restorative nostalgia* and *reflective nostalgia*. The former concerns a desire to return to an "idealized" past, to pristine origins, where all the blemishes of history have been removed (as in her critique of the project to restore the Sistine Chapel). She sees "restorative nostalgia" implicated in spurious "conspiracy theories" bound up in "us" and "them" narratives that often attribute the loss of home to insidious "others." According to Boym, this type of "imagined community" is predicted on exclusion and evident in such ethnic conflicts as those that consumed the former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s (*Nostalgia* 43). By contrast, she theorizes about a more nuanced "reflective nostalgia" that acknowledges the imperfect images of the past, the ambivalences and the ironies of historical memories against the drive for pure and impossible restoration. Reflective nostalgia is thus an "intermediary between collective and individual memory," writes Boym, and it is often expressed in cultural forms like art and literature

which meditate on the "common landmarks of everyday life" now lost to exiles and emigrants from certain vanished communities (*Nostalgia* 53-4). As the growing number of refugees and exiles at the end of the twentieth century continue to swell in the twenty first, Boym sees the potential for an "imagined community" of strangers bound by an "exilic self-fashioning," paradoxically unified by their unbelonging to any particular state. In turn, the notion reflects theorist Giorgio Agamben's concept of a "coming community," which theorizes the potential for political subjects to shed traditional social identities for a perpetually contingent community of "whatever being(s)"—"whatever" denoting the various and ever-shifting ground for connections between subjects than traditional identity politics (Agamben 2.1). It is my contention that this utopian gesture is perhaps appropriate for nomadic and stateless subjects whose experience of a cultural loss can be shared with others more easily because of the global reach of digital networks and its potential to create such affective communities.

To reflect this I have included a "gallery of exiles" on my page, mostly the pictures of well-known Eastern European literary exiles such as Vladimir Nabokov, Joseph Brodsky, the late Serbian writer Danilo Kis, Albanian writer Ismail Kadare, and Croatian writer Dubravka Ugresic among others. I have also included an image of the Russian artist Ilya Kabov's installation, *Toilets, 1992* including a link to Boym's discussion of Kabakov's art in *ArtForum* online. *Toilets* depicts a communal toilet during the Soviet era and thus expresses the "banal" grandeur of vanished social spaces that, *punctum*-like, bring to the surface the many mixed emotions of those Russians living during that era. In this way, Russian viewers of the installation both re-experience the public disillusionment toward the failed promise of a communist utopia and the private memories of these abject quotidian Soviet realities, which, when combined, produce an "ironic" solidarity. This is why I have included the equally banal image of

the "catwalk" or passageway I photographed when I recently visited my old neighborhood. As I posted the image online, I received many comments by those wanting to share their own memories and feelings that the image evoked for them which, as in Kabakov's *Toilets*, produced a similar "ironic" solidarity between us who remember it. From this connection, I meditated on the "virtual" aspects of exile, how feelings of estrangement and alienation so common to political exiles in Eastern Europe were similar if not equivalent to my own "reflective nostalgic" feelings for my old neighborhood. For the point of my nostalgic remembrances was not to restore, Proust-like, an idealized image of my neighborhood but to reflect on the ambivalences I still feel toward that time period, the place, and the people I grew up with. In a sense, this connection provided me an insight into why I identified with the work of certain writers and why certain themes, ***biographemes***, seem to unconsciously repeat in me.

Ulmer, too, writes about how the choragraphic process tries to "capture the more subjective dimensions of spatiality" in the heuretic process, a notion best illustrated in his discussion of the electric monument compositional genre he christens as the "MEmorial." Here Ulmer explains the intentions for communal electric monuments:

> The goal of cumulative MEmorials is collective self-knowledge. In the testimonial, the maker gives evidence, testifies to the ethical experience, the feeling of duty that abuses me (if it does). My identification with (recognition of) this disaster outside me as a fractal measure of the disaster within makes writable the category of justice, and is the point of departure for an electrate postnational identity. (qtd. in Brooks)

This idea of constructing "abject" electric monuments of cultural loss is very much in tune with Boym's appreciation of a project like Kabakov's. As she writes: "Ambiguous nostalgic longing is linked to the individual experience of history. Through the combination of empathy

and estrangement, ironic nostalgia invites us to reflect on the ethics of remembering" (Boym, "Ilya Kabakov"). In this sense, nostalgia, when combined with irony and critical reflection, can undergrid the heuretic process—so long as such nostalgia is directed outward and looks askance, rather than fetishizes, the objects of its remembrances. Finally, to add a further dimension, I turn to Colin Brooke's discussion of the lost rhetorical canon of "memory," which Brooke retrieves and discusses in context of the digital tag cloud.

One critically fecund aspect of Brooke's redescription of the five rhetorical canons is his chapter on memory, which Brooke retools in the digital "ecology of practice(s)" as "persistence." According to Brooke, humankind has established, as a feature of print literacy, a "vast externalization of memory," despite the fact that we have not quite shaken Plato's worry expressed in the *Phaedrus* that the faculty of memory will become greatly attenuated if not obsolete with the invention of writing. To combat the dialectical critiques of presence/absence synonymous with deconstructive practices of textual exegeses, Brooke sees digital technology's ability to facilitate randomness and pattern making more useful than attempts at achieving, through technology, total recall, especially since "information overload" has restricted our cognitive capacity for endless "storage." According to Brooke, database thinking does not digitally enhance human mnemonic capabilities, but instead allows us a "persistence of cognition," wherein the *kairos*, or atemporal eruption of catastrophic events can be cross referenced with the linear progression, or *chronos*, of historical time, thus expanding and connecting our personal and collective remembrances with others. Like Boym, Brooke's "persistence of cognition" does not seek to "restore" memories as a "whole [cognitive fabric] from which pieces are missing," but "works more inductively connecting smaller pieces, keywords, sources, and ideas, insisting on a *proairesis* [repurposing] of invention ..." (156). Brooke singles out digital aggregators like the tag cloud, which "[enable] us to

perceive ... connections among a set of texts to arrive at the conclusion that 'everyone' is talking about a particular topic" (164). The tag cloud, for Brooke, aggregates "collective memories" by tracing the popularity of certain aspects and ideas as searched by previous users and visitors online and draws connections between them. In my project, I illustrate an application of Brooke's notion by constructing my own "exilic cloud of memory" which lists all the sentiments and ideas associated with nostalgia and the condition of exile as expressed by my photographic "gallery" of aforementioned literary exiles, e.g. estrangement, reflective nostalgia, etc. It is in this digital rhetorical canon of "persistence of cognition," facilitated by digital technology, in which one finds political potential. In this way, reflective nostalgists and virtual exiles, for example, can aggregate themselves into a potential "coming community," a networked multitude connected through their shared experiences of cultural loss. For sure, this is a utopian concept, but one, according to Boym, which carries far less risk of being co-opted and exploited by previous ideologically-based collective movements.

Conclusion

At the very least, my experience composing my Mystory led me, if not to refute O'Gorman's criticisms completely, at least to amend his notion about nostalgia as a critical dead-end frequently bottoming out in arid solipsism. Instead, I attempted to show how nostalgia is not a monolithic concept and can be critically productive rather than sterile. I found the heuretic process personally revealing and rewarding—a way to draw together several threads of my own intellectual endeavors without forcing these connections or overreaching for them. My Mystory allowed me to reflect on electracy's ability to generate disparate ideas and concepts that would otherwise remain compartmentalized or segregated. Moreover, the cross discourse trajectory of the process reflected my own interdisciplinary approaches to research and writing. The digital portion

of my project allowed me to map the public and private aspects of *chora*, to explore and express a notion of "home" and "community" more expansive and conceptually richer than perhaps what traditional literacy would have allowed. On a personal level, the process allowed me to make explicit the personal connections and investments I had for certain critical concepts rather than to repress them in the name of academic objectivity.

Notes

[1] It is no accident that the popular therapeutic term "closure" implies the same desire for a "master reading" of grief akin to most hermeneutical textual criticism. The implication is that once we have interpreted what our "grief" means to us or "what we are actually grieving," then the closer we are to being free from its clutches.

[2] Some critics claim the term "grindhouse" also refers to the explicit "soft-core" sexual content of many of the films produced in the mid-1960s, while others claim that the term refers to the peep shows and strip clubs converted into movie theaters during this period. See *American Grindhouse*. Dir. Elijah Drenner. Warner Bros, 2009.

[3] I refer to the July 15, 2010 article "Is A City Manager Worth $800,000?" in the *Los Angeles Times* where Bell City Manager Robert Rizzo was accused of embezzling city funds and rewarding himself and other council members with an annual salary and pension totaling over $800,000 a year.

[4] Writer Luis J. Rodriguez documents the decline of manufacturing and its effects on neighborhoods in southeast Los Angeles in his fictional Steinbeckian epic novel, *The Music of the Mill*. In the novel, Rodriguez renames the Bethlehem Steel plant in Vernon, California (where my father worked for a couple of years) as "Nazareth Steel" and depicts the plant as rife with unsafe working conditions and seething racial and class tensions. In a side note, one of the characters, the Marxist union organizer who battles the closed-shop racist tactics of the older, Anglo members of the union, holds weekly "teach-ins" to Black and Latino workers and their families at his home in—you guessed it—Bell, California.

Works Cited

Agamben, Giorgio. *The Coming Community*. Trans. Michael Hardt. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2009. Print.

Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida*. Trans. Richard Howard. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1981. Print.

---. "Leaving the Movie Theater." Trans. Richard Howard. *The Rustle of Language*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1986. 345-349. Print.

---. *Mourning Diary*. Ed. Nathalie Léger. Trans. Richard Howard. New York: Hill and Wang, 2010. Print.

---. "The Third Meaning." Comp. and trans. Stephen Heath. *Image, Music, Text*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1977. 52-68. Print.

Boym, Svetlana. *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York: Basic Books, 2001. Print.

---. "Ilya Kabakov: The Soviet Toilet and the Palace of Utopias." *ARTMargins*. Studiosonic Interactive. 30 Dec. 1999. Web. 15 Oct. 2010.

Brooke, Collin Gifford. *Lingua Fracta: Toward a Rhetoric of New Media*. New Jersey: Hampton P, Inc., 2009. Print.

Brooks, Kevin. "History and Theory of MEmorials." *Exploring MEmorials: Not Just Another Website Assignment*. North Dakota State University. n.d. Web. 15 Oct. 2010.

Davis, Mike. *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles*. London: Verso Books, 2006. Print.

O'Gorman, Marcel. "From Mystorian to Curmudgeon: Skulking Toward Finitude." *Electronic Book Review* (2007): n. pag. Web. 15 Oct. 2010.

Pulp Fiction. Dir. Quentin Tarantino. Miramax, 1994. Film.

Reservoir Dogs. Dir. Quentin Tarantino. Miramax, 1992. Film.

Rice, Jeff, and Marcel O'Gorman. "Getting Schooled: Introduction to the Florida School." Introduction. *New Media/New Methods: The Academic Turn from Literacy to Electracy*. Ed. Rice and O'Gorman. Indiana: Parlor P, 2008. 3-18. Print.

Stubblefield, Thomas. "Dissembling the Cinema: The Poster, the Film, and In-Between." *thresholds* 34 (2009): 84-95. Web. 15 Oct. 2010.

Ulmer, Gregory. "Barthes's Body of Knowledge." *Studies in Twentieth Century Literature* 5.2 (1981): 219-235. Print.

---. "Florida out of Sorts." *New Media/New Methods: The Academic Turn from Literacy to Electracy*. Ed. Jeff Rice and Marcel O'Gorman. Indiana: Parlor P, 2008. 21-46. Print.

---. "Toward Electracy: A Conversation with Gregory Ulmer." *BeeHive* 3.4 (2000): n. pag. Web. 15. Oct. 2010.

"I NEVER DID HACK ANYONE UP": SOUTH AFRICA'S TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION, CIRCUMFESSION, AND J.M. COETZEE'S *DUSKLANDS*

by Christopher Garland

Christopher Garland is a second-year Ph.D. student in the Department of English at the University of Florida. Born in New Zealand, he has also studied at the University of Auckland and the University of Virginia. He has published articles on the slums of Port-au-Prince, hate groups in the United States, and sci-fi writer William Gibson. His essay "'I know who I am and where I'm from!' Imagining Paris through the Cinéma de banlieue" will appear in Cities of Imagination, Paris *(Intellect Press, UK). His c urrent research focuses on recent literature and film that depict life in the slums of the Global South.*

"One of the fates of confession since Rousseau--of secular confession at least--has been to spin itself out endlessly in an effort to reach beyond self-reflection to truth."

— J.M. Coetzee

In a March 2010 issue of *Time,* the Archbishop Desmond Tutu was featured in one of the magazine's regular sections: a page towards the front of the publication dedicated to questions from the magazine's readership for famous public figures. Asked by a reader if Tutu, as chairman of South Africa's post-apartheid Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), thought the TRC had done "enough to help South Africa move past that

dark chapter in its history," the Archbishop emphasized the importance of the commission as not only a cornerstone of the New South Africa, but as a means for the country to avoid a social apocalypse:

> Had we not had the commission, South Africa would have gone up in flames. It was not a perfect instrument, but it did a heck of a job. It lanced the boil. A festering soul was opened and cleansed, and balm was poured on it. (4)

Although in answer to another question Tutu had described himself as "not optimistic" by nature (4), his reply to a question about the utility of South Africa's TRC seemed unequivocal; a position that is understandable as Tutu's own legacy is tied to the commission he headed. While South Africa's Truth Commission has provided a massive archive of documents that detail the crimes of apartheid, it also raised a number of questions about the ability of truth commissions to allow societies to "cleanse themselves of the corrosive enduring effects of massive injuries to individuals and whole groups" (Rotberg 3). From Chile to Rwanda to Haiti, these are some of the questions that have been raised by truth commissions around the globe: what is the nature of complicity? How is the guilt of the individual measured in relation to a larger system of wrongdoing? Why and when does one acknowledge complicity? And if one acknowledges complicity, how does one confess? Through investigation, witness testimony, and mass confession by the guilty, the primary aim of truth commissions is to exorcise the demons of genocide, political murder, and terrorism before granting forgiveness towards those who committed crimes.[1]

For the first time since the end of the apartheid regime, South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which began its work in 1996, allowed the victims of crimes committed during apartheid to face the perpetrators—many times police officers or members of the South African army, but often 'ordinary' South African citizens—and hear

verbal confessions of guilt. Yet the TRC was not limited to accusation and confession; it provided a space where perpetrator and victim tried to understand one another, as they engaged in "testifying, complaining, apologizing, venting one's rage, expressing one's grief, disappointment or despair... (all) these discursive practices took a central position in the proceedings of the TRC" (Verdoolaege 2). Insidious and multi-layered in its effect on South African society, the reality of over forty years of apartheid meant that the TRC had to deal with "outrages committed by whites against Africans, Africans against Africans, Africans against whites, and the African National Conference (ANC) against its own members" (Rotberg 6). However, it was whites, as the primary architects, implementers, and beneficiaries of apartheid, who were deemed the main perpetrators, underscored by the fact that only 1.1% of the victims who gave written testimonies to the TRC were white (Verdoolaege 110). Moreover, the identification of whites as perpetrators was publicly demonstrated when Tutu asked the whites of South Africa to apologize for apartheid, as well as questioning whether there was a leader "of some stature and some integrity in the white community" who would admit that whites "had a bad policy that had evil consequences?" (Tutu qtd. in Rotberg 6). The desire to assign complicity beyond a single figure or figures became part of the discourse of the New South Africa. Elizabeth Kiss states that white South Africans "were encouraged to recognize the 'little perpetrator in each one of us' and to acknowledge their 'direct or indirect responsibility' for the 'mundane but nonetheless traumatizing' dimensions" of life in apartheid-era South Africa (78).

J.M. Coetzee, who lived and wrote in South Africa through the last decades of apartheid and for six years after the African National Congress's election win in 1994, published his first work of fiction, *Dusklands* (1974)[2], over twenty years before the inception of South Africa's TRC. *Dusklands* can be considered a novel that addresses the conception of

complicity and confession that was so important to the TRC and its role in shaping the New South Africa. The first part of *Dusklands*, "The Vietnam Project," is set in the United States in the 1970s and is framed by America's war in Vietnam; the second part, "The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee," consists of selections from the journal of an eighteenth-century Dutch explorer in the Cape region. The juxtaposition of two distant locations and temporal settings is one of the most jarring facets of *Dusklands*, serving to highlight the shared brutality of two distinct imperial projects, and reflecting Coetzee's experience as an Afrikaner living in the U.S. during the Vietnam War.[3] As Sue Kossew argues, the overarching links "between colonial fictions, history, and exploitation" in the two narratives of *Dusklands* play out through the ways that both narrators embrace the ubiquitous colonial myth of white superiority (33). "The Vietnam Project" is narrated by Eugene Dawn, a writer and researcher, working to produce a report for the propaganda department within the U.S. military complex. At the opening stages of the writing of his report, Eugene makes a revealing claim:

> [Had] I lived two-hundred years ago I would have had a continent to explore, to map, to open to colonization. In that vertiginous freedom I might have expanded my true potential. If I feel cramped nowadays it is because I have no space to beat my wings. (32)

In contrast to Eugene Dawn, who is reminiscent of one of Noam Chomsky's "backroom boys," the protagonist of the second part of *Dusklands*, "The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee," is one of J.M. Coetzee's own real-life ancestors. Jacobus Coetzee is a *voortrekker* (Afrikaans for "those who trek forth") taking part in one of the first journeys by Dutch explorers from the Cape Colony to lands north of the Orange River. If Eugene is restricted to a suburban office and library in the building of a new empire, the protagonist of the second novella of *Dusklands* is

given Eugene's absent "wings." Unlike Eugene, Jacobus is a brutal agent of empire on the ground; he expresses both repulsion and attraction in regards to Africa and its people, demonstrated in his harried internal monologue that purports a connection to the land while coolly recounting his own acts of sickening, rationalized violence against the natives. Derek Attridge argues that Coetzee's novels stage circumfession because "for Coetzee, as for Dostoevsky, confession is never simple or direct; it is always what Derrida calls a circumfession, an avoidance as well as an admission, a staging of confession as well as a confessing" (136-7). Although Attridge identifies Coetzee's fascination with confession--from *Dusklands* and *In the Heart of the Country* to *The Master of Petersburg* (1994), Coetzee's first novel "written since South Africa began to refashion itself as a democratic state" (115). With this essay I will take Attridge's identification of circumfession and argue that *Dusklands* is a novel that utilizes circumfession as narrative strategy.

In reading the two novellas that make up *Dusklands* as circumfessions staged by the two protagonists, I am making a number of claims. First, I read *Dusklands* as a text that anticipates the problems for "guilty" whites of confessing and narrating complicity with the apartheid regime that occurred during the TRC hearings over two decades later, and the circumfessional narrative strategies that are at the heart of the aftermath of South African settler colonialism. Second, *Dusklands* is not only a precursor to *In the Heart of the Country* (1977) and *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), both of which explicitly use circumfessional narrative strategies to probe the ways in which the white subject struggles with culpability born of complicity with a racist regime, but contains one of J.M. Coetzee's most ambitious narrative structures. I am suggesting that the ostensibly disconnected narratives of Jacobus and Eugene create a solipsistic worldview that causes any relationships the narrative subjects might have with the Other to suffer from a "failed dialectic" and a

compulsion to narrate one's inner life.[4] The title of this essay comes from one of Eugene Dawn's lines: "But the truth is like huffy Henry I never did hack anyone up: I often reckon, in the dawn, them up: nobody is ever missing" (Coetzee 10). From this line, which is representative of Eugene and Jacobus's inability to acknowledge complicity, I argue that circumfession goes beyond Attridge's definition of avoidance and performance and becomes a strategy of imperialism: colonization via imagination. Edward Said argues that imperialism is "an act of geographic violence through which virtually every space in the world is explored, charted and finally brought under control" and that the "land is recoverable at first only through the imagination" (271).

While the imagination might be a site for resistance, for Jacobus and Eugene it is also a site for creating and justifying particular imperial discourses by ruminating on the foreign Other. Derrida explores the notion of creating subjective truth throughout "Circumfession"[5]:

> The exercise with and in which G. and I are indulging in its rightful dimension as a whispering, the *aparte* of a confessional where we are in for nobody, changing skin every minute to *make* truth, each his own, to confess without anyone knowing... (233)

This short passage, particularly Derrida's description of his writing in "Circumfession" as "aside" (*aparte*) of a confessional, is fundamental to my reading of the function of circumfession in *Dusklands*. Circumfession here is not the telling of untruthful or misleading confessions, or, as Attridge argues, avoidance but as a means to write one's own (in the case of Eugene and Jacobus) solipsistic and Manichean world. Although J.M. Coetzee's most well-known novel, *Disgrace* (1999), which was published during the last stages of the TRC and presented a grim realist portrait of post-apartheid South Africa, is often read as Coetzee's most stark address to the violence of the post-apartheid era, and the role of the commission

in forming the identity of the New South Africa, his interrogation of the complicit white subject begins with *Dusklands*[6]. By reflecting on *Dusklands* rather than *Disgrace* in the context of the legacy of the TRC, I locate *Dusklands* as a prophetic work about the problem of reconciliation in contemporary South Africa.

As Michael Neill has suggested, during the period before the fall of apartheid the predilection towards repression became a compulsion to confess, turning "every white South African, regardless of political allegiance, into a kind of Ancient Mariner, frantic with the desire for unburdening" (80). This proclivity for confessional narratives is evident in autobiographical works including Breyten Breytenbach's *True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist* (1985), Christopher Hope's *White Boy Running* (1988), Rian Malan's *My Traitor's Heart* (1989), and novels such as Andre Brink's *Mapmakers* (1993) and Nadine Gordimer's *My Son's Story*[7] (1990).Unlike these confessional texts, prior to the fall of the apartheid regime (including those last years of waiting for the inevitable that Nadine Gordimer famously dubbed "the Interregnum")[8] Coetzee produced the novel *Foe* (1986), an inter-textual engagement with Daniel Defoe, which sets about subverting the myth of Robinson Crusoe and his island. The fact that Coetzee turned to a canonical novel for inspiration and created a plainly meta-fictional novel, instead of drawing from South Africa's tumultuous social landscape of the mid-1980s, shows that Coetzee's reliance on the influences of philosophy and allegory for the political aspects of his fictions differentiates him from his peers. As Dominic Head asserts, where "for example, Nadine Gordimer has immediate recourse to Frantz Fanon, a modern anti-colonial thinker, to delineate the process of decolonization, Coetzee sometimes looks back to Hegel" and specifically the Master/Slave dialectic, a critique of Manichean dualism that is at the core of *Dusklands* (75).

As in the literature produced by the fore-mentioned white South

African writers, the question of complicity and confession is a recurring concern throughout Coetzee's oeuvre. Addressing the issue of confession through fiction rather than in the autobiographical form, Coetzee complicates the idea of complicity and confession. For Coetzee's white narrative subjects, the "neurotic defence system" of repression is combined with an elaborate mining of their own psyches via circumfession, evident in two of Coetzee's most well-known protagonists: the relentless, crazed monologue of Magda, the farmer's daughter from *In the Heart of the Country*, and the Magistrate from *Waiting for the Barbarians*, whose relationship with a "barbarian" girl, and subsequent punishment by a brutal unnamed empire, provides the central action. In these novels, Dick Penner identifies a "failed dialectic" from which the characters cannot break free.[9] The protagonists of Coetzee's novels are often also deeply invested in the act of performance rather than "true" confession, defined by an inability to connect with any other human subject with whom they make contact.

This presentation of the "failed dialectic" between self and Other begins in *Dusklands*, the immediate impetus behind which, Coetzee explains, was "the spectacle of what was going on in Vietnam and my gathering sense, as I read back in South African history but more particularly in the annals of the exploration of Southern Africa, of what had been going on there" (27). When asked about his own Afrikaner heritage, Coetzee expressed his concern with severing his ties with Afrikanerdom:

> The whites of South Africa participated, in various degrees, actively or passively, in an audacious and well-planned crime against Africa. Afrikaners as a self-defining group distinguished themselves in the commission of that crime. Thereby they lent their name(s) to it. It will be a long time before they have the moral authority to withdraw that brandmark … Is it in my power to withdraw from the gang? I think not … More important, is it in my heart's desire to be counted apart? Not really. Furthermore—and this is an afterthought—I would regard it as morally questionable to write something like the second part of *Dusklands* —a fiction, note—from a position that is not historically complicit. (342-43)

In reading *Dusklands* as it relates to South Africa's TRC, I am accentuating the importance of acknowledgment as "a political choice for the priority of restoring the civic and human dignity of the victims of gross human rights violations" (Du Toit 134). Circumfession, as an avoidance of complicity that creates an alternate narrative to acknowledging guilt, is the basis of the Eugene and Jacobus's narrative strategies. In this way, *Dusklands* is more than an indictment of the U.S.'s decision to carpet-bomb the people of Vietnam and a critique of the inhumane treatment of indigenous Africans by the early Dutch settlers. *Dusklands* explores circumfession as a strategy to circumvent the "politics of blame" engendered by the legacy of settler colonialism (Blythe 198).

What underlines Jacobus Coetzee's circumfession is his inability to see "the black as the autonomous other," a limited worldview that Michael Wade identifies with whites in South Africa from the period of early settlement and throughout the country's twentieth-century history (20-21). J.M. Coetzee uses Jacobus Coetzee to interrogate the notion of "man as explorer":

> This projection is part of a system of defences in white South Africa's perceptual apparatus; its function is to empty the self-image of the real and fill it with the desirable. In other words it enables the perceiver (the explorer himself, continuous with his whole society) to see himself in attractive, even heroically disinterested terms, and to ignore sordid motives for his actions, such as extending the area of his own backyard, or engaging in

'beads-for-freedom' barter. (Wade 139)

The relentless division of Self/Other, combined with an avoidance of complicity by the individual subject, defines the two novellas of *Dusklands,* and is central to considering the text as a prophetic work about the challenges faced by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to "cleanse" South Africa's violent apartheid history. The following discussion of the TRC highlights how the fictional circumfessional narratives of Eugene Dawn and Jacobus Coetzee are echoed in the real-life examples of circumfession by "guilty" South African whites, many of whom, despite Archbishop Tutu's most "eloquent pleas," failed to actively participate with the commission and "testify in significant numbers" (Hunter-Gault xi). Moreover, the use of the circumfessional mode in *Dusklands* speaks to contemporary South Africa.

The South African TRC was a forum for both the perpetrator and the victim to tell their stories with the first six months of the hearings dedicated to the victims' testimonies. Much of the analysis that has been published after the end of the TRC has discussed "the healing potential of storytelling" that occurred during this period, alongside the satisfaction felt by victims when given the opportunity to narrate the details of their suffering under the struggle against apartheid (Krog 43). Victim testimony that fulfilled the commission's objective of providing a space for "healing" range from a man blinded by police bullets who said that "it feels like I got my sight back by coming here and telling you the story" (43) to a woman who offered pictures of her husband's mutilated dead body so that the audience "could see what happened to him" (Verdoolaege 106).

While a number of victims who participated in the TRC hearings expressed a similar satisfaction with the procedure, to say that the commission provided a sense of healing or closure for the majority of South Africans would be to ignore the many vocal critics of the commission. As Susan Graybill attests, "perhaps the cathartic value of

testifying and the benefit of having one's sacrifice were overemphasized by the media and by the commissioners" (83). First, a number of the "main" perpetrators, including high-ranking members of the majority-Afrikaner National Party, refused to cooperate with the TRC and received no other punishment, thus undermining the commission's authority. Second, the commissioners would equate crying with healing, leading some critics to dub the TRC the "Kleenex Commission." This overflow of grief may not have been cathartic, but rather could be read as an example of how the TRC caused the victims to become more embittered: Tom Winslow, assistant director of the Trauma Center for Survivors of Violence and Torture in Cape Town, claimed that the commission's process was like a doctor who opened "the patient up and then walked away" (Winslow qtd. in Graybill 83).

Aside from the issue of the psychological effect on the victim in this excavation of the past, the matter of the accurate and active participation of the perpetrator was deemed extremely important in the process, allowing the formation of a collective memory as much as the placement of guilt and complicity. In this way, the commission's focus was not just the pursuit of catharsis for the victim, but a question of establishing an agreed upon "truth." For example, the decision of the commission to deny amnesty to the police responsible for the killing of Steve Biko was due to the inability of those involved to make a "full disclosure" due to a failure to "narrate the precise moment of Biko's death" (Moon 85); this demonstrated that the "confessional does not always render complete the supplication of the perpetrator" (97). Moreover, there was the construction and public delivery of circumfessional narratives, most famously provided by torture practitioner Jeffry Benzien, who professed to be a patriot of the "old" South Africa and displayed "a certain professional pride in his work" (Moon 97). Dirk Coetzee, who testified about "roasting the corpses of murdered antiapartheid activists while guzzling beer with his police

buddies," shifted the tone of his confession from claiming that he would understand if the family of one of his victims never forgave him, to being "fed up" with the family's "nagging" and failure to forgive (Graybill 49). In *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (2001) Derrida argues that there is "only forgiveness, if there is any, where there is the unforgivable" and that there exists an "absolute victimization" where the victim is deprived of the agency enabled by speech and thus disenfranchised from the ability to authorize forgiveness:

> There, the unforgivable would consist of depriving the victim of this right to speech, of speech itself, of the possibility of all manifestation, of all testimony. The victim would then be a victim, in addition, of seeing himself stripped of the minimal, elementary possibility of virtually considering forgiving the unforgivable. This absolute crime does not only occur in the form of murder. (59)

Even though the denial of victim testimony was addressed in the extended TRC hearings, by establishing the TRC as a state-sponsored apparatus that offered amnesty to the perpetrators, the commission relied to some extent on the cooperation and active participation of those who committed crimes. Demonstrated in the testimony provided by some whites, the perpetrators did not see themselves in that role, but rather as rightful protectors of white minority rule and its apartheid state against the attacks of "terrorists." Indeed, many "did use the hearing as an opportunity to explain and even justify their actions" (Slye 180). This failed dialectic between victim and perpetrator in the New South Africa has origins reaching to the pre-apartheid interactions between white and African groups, with some arguing that TRC's historical scope should extend to "as far back as the first arrival of white settlers in 1652" (Boraine 141).

How does the circumfessional mode apply to contemporary South

Africa? If the problem of whites admitting complicity and guilt is a historical specter that haunted the historical transition from apartheid to the birth of the 'New' South Africa, it is also an issue for the country's future, particularly when many view South Africa "through the lenses of African decline" and the "carefully managed 'transition to democracy' as just one more step along the road to the civil war, ethnic division, and one-party rule that has characterized much of post-colonial Africa" (Butler 1). The metaphor that Archbishop Desmond Tutu used to describe the TRC's role in shaping the New South Africa (as a "balm" used to soothe a "festering soul") is a continuation of the Christian underpinning of the commission's discourse and a hopeful evaluation of its effects.

However, Tutu's description of the TRC could also be viewed as "circumfessional" in its avoidance of the TRC's effect on South African society today. As noted earlier, many South Africans, both white and black, are still unhappy with the TRC's objectives, processes, and outcome. Butler writes that even after seven years of work by the TRC, South Africans continue to "remain divided by their history as well as over it. Some still view South Africa as 'two nations'—White and Black—divided by culture, wealth, and history" (53), which is the fundamental fracture in the country that the TRC failed to fix. It is this division that J.M. Coetzee has explored in all of his novels set in South Africa, from *In the Heart of the Country* to *Age of Iron*, but starting, most importantly, with *Dusklands*. By addressing America's war in Vietnam and the bloody origins of Afrikanerdom in Southern Africa, *Dusklands* anticipated the challenges faced by the TRC in regards to the "guilty" subjects' sense of complicity and willingness/ability to narrativize their guilt, while also exploring the failed dialectic between human subjects that is both a omnipresent legacy of settler colonialism and a critical problem for both South Africa today and the country's future.

Notes

[1] While many of the first truth commissions (in Argentina, Bolivia, the Philippines, Zimbabwe, and over a dozen more countries) did not hold open hearings due to concerns that violent reprisals may occur, the South African TRC insisted upon both public and private testimony, as well as allowing media reportage of the events (Rotberg 5). Across class stratification and language boundaries—translators were on hand to assist this multilingual affair—guilt was admitted and forgiveness sought: sometimes from one individual to another, other times from the individual to the group. As for a classification of the confessions elicited by the TRC, one might crudely label them both non-criminal and semi-secular: non-criminal in the sense that they held no consequence of a jail sentence or any other direct punitive action (as in the case of the criminal confession) and semi-secular in the sense that although absolution was not directed primarily by a metaphysical presence or the representative of a higher power, but rather by the victim and the state.

[2] *Dusklands* was only published in the United Kingdom in 1982 and the United States in 1985 after the critical and popular success of *Waiting for the Barbarians.*

[3] See Mike Marais's "'Little enough, less than little: nothing': Ethics, Engagement, and Change in the Fiction of J.M. Coetzee" (2000) and Rita Barnard's "'Imagining The Unimaginable': J.M. Coetzee, History, and Autobiography" for useful critical engagements with *Dusklands.*

[4] Attwell notes that some "ideologically sensitive critics" (including Michael Vaughan and Peter Knox-Shaw) have expressed "misgivings" about the juxtaposition of Eugene Dawn and Jacobus Coetzee, and the contexts from which they emerge as an attempt to "mount a philosophically idealist diagnosis of Western imperialism" (36).

[5] Like *Dusklands, Jacques Derrida* contains two separate 'narratives.' Derrida's "half" of the text is both autobiographical and responds to Bennington's text, which is constructed in a way that provides an understanding and "explain as clearly as possible, "Derrida's thought," up to the point where the terms "understand," "explain," and "thought" (or even "Derrida") no longer suffice" (Bennington 9).

[6] As Jane Poyner points out in her introduction to *J.M. Coetzee and the Idea of the Public Intellectual* (2006), critics, including Sam Durrant, Elleke Boehmer, and Rosemary Jolly, argue that *Disgrace* "makes an implicit critique" of South Africa's TRC (12). Other critics, including Michael Neill and Derek Attridge, have made a similar observation about *Disgrace.* See Sue Kossew's "The Politics of Shame and Redemption in J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*" (2003) for an excellent reading of *Disgrace* in the context of the TRC. I have not found any critical pieces that deal with *Dusklands* in the context of the TRC.

[7] See Michael Neill, "'The Language of the Heart': Confession, Metaphor and Grace in J.M. Coetzee's *Age of Iron*" (2010) for more on confession in other white South African writers during this period.

[8] See Nadine Gordimer, "Living in the Interregnum," *New York Review of Books* (20 January 1983), 21-9

[9] Due to this wavering between avoidance and confession that characterizes the psychological interiority of Coetzee's protagonists, Derrida's notion of circumfession, a strategy of evading confession while constructing a personal narrative, provides a useful theoretical lever into Coetzee's fiction.

Works Cited

Attridge, Derek. *J.M. Coetzee & the Ethics of Reading: Literature in the Event*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2004. Print.

Attwell, David. *J.M. Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing Perspectives on Southern Africa, 48*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1993. Print.

Barnard, Rita. "'Imagining The Unimaginable': J.M. Coetzee, History, and Autobiography." *Postmodern Culture* 4.1 (1993): (Review). Print.

Bennington, Geoffrey, and Jacques Derrida. *Jacques Derrida (Religion and Postmodernism Series)*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1993. Print.

Blythe, Martin. *Naming the Other: Images of the Maori in New Zealand Film and Television*. Metuchen: Scarecrow P, 1994. Print.

Boraine, Alex. "Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa: The Third Way." *Truth V. Justice: The Morality of Truth* Commissions. Eds. Robert I. Rotberg and Dennis F. Thompson.

University Center for Human Values Series. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton U P, 2000. 141-158. Print.

Butler, Anthony. *Contemporary South Africa*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. Print.

Coetzee, J. M. *Disgrace*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1999. Print.

-----, and David Attwell. *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews*. Cambridge: Harvard U P, 1992. Print.

-----, *Dusklands*. Johannesburg: Ravan P, 1974. Print.

----, *In the Heart of the Country*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1977. Print.

-----, *Foe*. New York: Viking, 1987. Print.

-----, *Waiting for the Barbarians*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1982. Print.

Davies, Rebecca. *Afrikaners in the New South Africa: Identity Politics in a Globalised Economy*. London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2009. Print.

Derrida, Jacques. *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness (Thinking in Action)*. London: Routledge, 2001. Print.

Dovey, Teresa. *The Novels of J.M. Coetzee: Lacanian Allegories*. Craighall: A. Donker, 1988. Print.

Toit, Andre du. "The Moral Foundations of the South African TRC: Truth as Acknowledgementand Justice as Recognition." *Truth V. Justice: The Morality of Truth* Commissions. Ed. Robert I. Rotberg and Dennis F. Thompson. University Center for Human Values Series. Princeton: Princeton U P, 2000. Print

Graybill, Lyn S. *Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa: Miracle or Model?* Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002. Print.

Head, Dominic. *J.M. Coetzee*. Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1997. Print.

Hunter-Gault, Charlayne. Introduction. *Country of My Skull: Guilt, Sorrow, and the Limits of Forgiveness in the New South Africa*. By Antjie Krog. New York: Times Books, 1999. Print.

Kossew, Sue. "The Politics of Shame and Redemption in J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*." *Research in African Literatures* 34.2 (2003): 155-162. Print.

Kiss, Elizabeth. "Moral Ambition Within and Beyond Political Constraints." *Truth V. Justice: The Morality of Truth Commissions*. Ed. Robert I. Rotberg and Dennis F. Thompson. University Center for Human Values Series. Princeton: Princeton U P, 2000. Print.

Kossew, Sue. *Pen and Power: A Post-Colonial Reading of J.M. Coetzee and André Brink*. Cross/Cultures, 27. Amsterdam: Atlanta, 1996. Print.

Krog, Antjie. *Country of My Skull: Guilt, Sorrow, and the Limits of Forgiveness in the New South Africa*. New York: Times Books, 1999. Print.

Marais, Mike. "'Little Enough, less than little: nothing': Ethics, Engagement, and Change in the Fiction of J.M Coetzee." *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 53.4 (2000): 159-182. Print.

Moon, Claire. *Narrating Political Reconciliation: South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008. Print.

Neill, Michael. "'The Language of the Heart': Confession, Metaphor, and Grace in J.M Coetzee's *Age of Iron*." *J.M Coetzee's Austerities*. Ed. Graham Bradshaw and Michael Neill. Surrey: Ashgate, 2010. Print.

Penner, Dick. *Countries of the Mind: The Fiction of J.M Coetzee*. New York: Greenwood P, 1989. Print.

Poyner, Jane. *J.M. Coetzee and the Idea of the Public Intellectual*. Athens: Ohio U P, 2006. Print.

Rotberg, Robert I. "Truth Commissions and the Provision of Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation." *Truth V. Justice: The Morality of Truth Commissions*. Ed. Robert I. Rotberg and Dennis F. Thompson. University Center for Human Values Series. Princeton: Princeton U P, 2000. Print.

Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism*. London: Vintage, 1994. Print.

Tutu, Desmond. "10 Questions." *TIME*. 22 Mar. 2010: 4. Print.

Verdoolaege, Annelies. *Reconciliation Discourse: The Case of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 2008. Print.

Wade, Michael. *White on Black in South Africa: A Study of English-Language Inscriptions of Skin Colour*. New York: St. Martin's P, 1993. Print.

DEMYSTIFYING MOYNIHAN'S MYTH: A BLACK FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF THE BLACK FAMILY MODEL AND THE BLACK MATRIARCH AS RADICAL COUNTER-HEGEMONIC AGENTS IN ALICE WALKER'S *THE COLOR PURPLE*

by Jodi Thompson

Jodi Thompson is a first-year, English Master's student at the University of Washington. She hails from Brooklyn, New York where she studied English Adolescent Education as an undergrad at CUNY Brooklyn College.

In "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action," Daniel Patrick Moynihan claims that the black family "is the fundamental source of the weakness of the Negro community at the present time" (Chapter 2). The corrosion of the black family is accredited to the black matriarch, whom Moynihan describes as an emasculating threat to black manhood. In response to Moynihan, Roderich Ferguson states that "[t]he discourse on black matriarchy was founded on assumptions that presumed heteropatriarchal culture as the appropriate and regulatory norm" (123), undermining women's roles in the black family model as deviant from that norm. Moynihan's notions about the black community, family, and the mythical matriarch became a significant site for scholarly

debate in subsequent years, specifically amongst black academics who felt it imperative that black history not be misappropriated and misused in a manner that would be harmful to the community. As Audre Lorde states, "it is axiomatic that if [black people] do not define ourselves for ourselves, we will be defined by others – for their use and to our detriment" (45). Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* is integral to that redefining as a cultural form that encompasses "the material and discursive multiplicity of African American culture" (Ferguson 24). Walker's novel is utilized in my essay to directly engage Moynihan's allegations and also as a medium for a dialogue between Moynihan and black feminist scholars on the black family structure and black women's oppression under capitalism.

Socialist feminist theory utilizes Marxist theory of historical materialism as a foundation in working towards a critique of capitalism that encompasses women's exploitation as workers, as well as their oppression as mothers and wiv es within the patriarchal family structure. According to Zillah Eisenstein, capitalist patriarchy is "the mutually reinforcing dialectical relationship between capitalist class structure and hierarchal sexual structuring" (5). The critique of capitalist patriarchy is further complicated when race is brought into the discourse and employed to analyze the multiple oppressions that black women experience. Under an economic system that creates various hierarchies—sex, class, race—to ensure a continuous surplus labor pool, working class black women were one of the most exploited groups (Davis, "Reader" 176). I employ Angela Davis' black feminist Marxist critique, to analyze Walker's depiction of the black family under capitalism. My aim is to represent Walker's depiction of the black family as a revolutionary social unit and the black matriarch as a revolutionary gender-destabilizing agent that offer progressive alternatives to hierarchal gender constructs and the male-headed nuclear family instigated by Moynihan and perpetuated by American public policy as the norm.

In the chapter entitled "The Tangle of Pathology," Moynihan states that "[o]urs is a society which presumes male leadership in private and public affairs. The arrangements of society facilitate such leadership and reward it" (Chapter 4). This male leadership extends to the middle-class patriarchal family unit toward which Moynihan proposes the black community should strive. Under capitalist patriarchy, if men are rewarded for leading, then it follows that women are rewarded for acquiescing or deferring to male leadership. Very early in *The Color Purple*, Celie, the protagonist and narrator, is married off to Albert by her stepfather without her input or consent. Albert, a widower, is many years her senior with several children. As a woman, she has no agency in the decisions that will impact her life. She can only watch from the sidelines as Albert and her stepfather decide her future (Walker 9-12). As the wife of a financially stable landowner, Celie can be considered a middle-class housewife. As such, she is exploitatively overworked and unpaid as her husband's domestic worker; furthermore, she is subjugated to sexual and physical abuse, as well as to the abuse of his children. As a black woman in the South, Celie has no recourse to judicial intervention because the police, as an agency that enforces capitalist patriarchy's dominance, pose a violent threat to the black community and, in particular, a sexual threat to black women;[1] furthermore, the economic opportunities available to her as a black woman are limited—her options are to "marry somebody like Mr. __ or wind up in some white lady kitchen" (17) as an underpaid domestic servant. Through her representation of Celie via Albert—"You black, you pore, you ugly, you a woman… you nothing at all," (213)—Walker exposes the racist, sexist, and classist ideologies that intersect to disempower black women, while discrediting Moynihan's assertions of black matriarchal dominance. Celie's socially imposed roles of mother and housewife in her patriarchal family unit are based on capitalism's self-serving hierarchical gender roles. As a housewife, she fulfills all her

responsibilities dutifully and always does what she is told, yet instead of being rewarded, she is victimized by capitalist patriarchal norms[2] – standards which Moynihan advocates for in his report as being the key to the salvation of the black community from economic and domestic instability.

One aspect of Moynihan's argument for the patriarchal family unit is based on the belief that the family as "the basic social unit of American life" is where a child becomes socialized and hence profoundly shapes his adult conduct (Chapter 2); therefore, a family headed by a dominant female creates adults who are deviant from and unfit for the patriarchal norms of society. His argument becomes Walker's counterargument in her depiction of the relationship between Sofia and Harpo, Albert's oldest son. In one pivotal chapter, Albert tells his son that "Wives is like children. You have to let 'em know who got the upper hand. Nothing can do that better than a good sound beating" (37). Walker's point is very clear: women's oppression is perpetuated through the learned behavior of children, who take on the hierarchal gender roles inherent in the patriarchal family unit. This is evident later in the novel when Harpo confides to Celie his distress that his marriage to Sofia isn't the patriarchal ideal that it should be; he says "I want her to do what I say, like you do for Pa … you his wife, he say, just like Sofia mine. The wife is spose to mind" (66). Sofia is a strong-willed, independent black woman and Harpo loves and respects her for that reason; however, he becomes discontent with his marriage when his father indoctrinates him with male supremacist ideals, whereupon Sofia's independent spirit and disregard for gender roles present her as a threat. In an exchange between Celie and Sofia, it is made clear that "[Harpo] love[s] cooking and cleaning and doing little things around the house" in contrast to Sofia, who prefers to "be out in the fields or fooling with the animals. Even chopping wood" (62-63). Angela Davis asserts that the myth of the matriarch is an unofficial weapon

of ideological warfare utilized by capitalist patriarchy to undermine egalitarian tendencies amongst black men and women ("Reader" 126). There is much more conflict between Harpo and Sofia when he tries to force her into normalized gender roles, eventually leading to the failure of their marriage.

Although Moynihan states that "there is, presumably, no special reason why a society in which males are dominant in family relationships is to be preferred to a matriarchal arrangement" (Chapter 4), he is clearly advocating for the former in his demonization of black women who dare to take leadership roles within the black community. Ferguson believes this to be one of patriarchy's inherent contradictions—a byproduct of capitalism's need to create deviance. Within this contradiction, capitalism seeks to increase its surplus labor pool, then to denounce the deviance that rebukes heteropatriarchal ideals (127). These contradictions are clearly present in Moynihan's analysis of slavery and Reconstruction's emasculating impact on black men, and his assertions of black women somehow benefitting from this negation of black manhood (Chapter 3). In his analysis, Moynihan uses black women as scapegoats for the systematic racism that has disempowered not just black men, but black women, by blaming black women for coping with non-normative gender roles that the racial supremacist policies of slavery and Jim Crow laws created within the black community. Accordingly, Frances Beal asserts: "It is a gross distortion of fact to state that black women have oppressed black men. The capitalist system found it expedient to oppress them and proceeded to do so without consultation or signing of any agreements with black women" (343). What is left unsaid in Moynihan's report are the ways in which black women are punished, as Angela Davis states, "because their attitudes and their behavior are seen as blatant contradictions of prevailing expectations—especially in the judicial and law enforcement systems" ("Reader" 218). Sofia is arrested

for taking a stand against white racism and has to serve several years in prison, performing an inhumane amount of labor under the racist debt peonage system prevalent in the South in the decades preceding slavery. Debt peonage was a direct result of capitalism's need to minimize the cost of exploiting labor power, and the racist ideology of slavery that was its foundation ("Reader" 80). She is then eventually forced into working as a domestic servant—a hyper perversion of the roles of motherhood and housewife—as a means of eliminating her threat to capitalist patriarchy ("Reader" 218-219). Moynihan, by asking black women to adhere to the American patriarchal family model, is asking them to give up what little power they wield within the black family, in exchange for complete gender subjugation.

Frances Beal states that "[capitalism] has defined the roles to which each individual should subscribe. It has defined 'manhood' in terms of its own interest and 'femininity' likewise" (341). In contrast, the irony of slavery was that it blurred gender distinctions within the black community, which made it possible for black women to assert themselves as equals to black men (Davis, "Women" 23). Angela Davis asserts that black women under slavery left a legacy for their descendants of a new womanhood—"a legacy of hard work, perseverance and self-reliance, a legacy of tenacity, resistance and insistence on sexual equality" ("Women" 29). The black matriarch is the inheritor of that legacy. In capitalist patriarchy's rewriting of history, black matriarchs, embodied by Walker's characters Sofia and Shug, are destructive to the black community and emasculating to black men. On the contrary, I assert that black matriarchs, in deviating from hierarchal and heteronormative gender roles, act as revolutionary agents against capitalist patriarchy and are thus assets to the black community. Black matriarchs help empower black women to strive for egalitarian relationships with black men. The empowerment of black women serves black men as well through the creation of more progressive social relations.

It is through Sofia's influence that Celie begins undermining hierarchal gender relations within the community in her own subtle ways. When Harpo's new girlfriend Squeak complains of not being taken seriously, Celie advises her to "[m]ake Harpo call you by your real name [instead of by her nickname which is a reference to her squeaky high pitched voice] then maybe he see you" (89).[3] The climactic moment in Celie's life occurs amongst Sofia and Shug, at a family dinner, where she finally stands up to Albert and announces her plans to leave him. At this same gathering Mary Agnes (Squeak) also announces she will leave Harpo to pursue a singing career. Sofia and Shug help mediate this hostile conversation and give Celie and Mary Agnes the support needed to withstand their husbands' anger in this pivotal epoch of self-emancipation. Celie's empowerment is then put to use in aid of Sofia when she tells Harpo, "If you hadn't tried to rule over Sofia the white folks never would have caught her" (207). There is a cyclical learning process of knowledge and empowerment at play amongst these women, originating from Sofia and Shug, whose influence leads to self-actualization for other women.

Moynihan advocates for the implementation of a patriarchal family structure within the black community because "a subculture, such as that of the Negro American, in which this is not the pattern, is placed at a distinct disadvantage" (Chapter 4). In response, Ferguson asserts that "African American culture has historically been deemed contrary to the norms of heterosexuality and patriarchy" (20); furthermore, through its "particular contradiction of being racialized as nonheteronormative, [it] produces heteronormativity as a site of rupture" (27) from capitalist patriarchal ideals that are out of line with the interests of the black community. Black matriarchs help blur heteronormative gender distinctions—"Sofia and Shug not like men, [Albert] say, but they not like women either" (Walker, 276)—and in doing so create a gender diversity that characterizes black culture. When Sofia's mother dies, she

and her sisters—"They all big strong healthy girls, look like amazons" (71)—decide to carry her coffin along with their brothers. Harpo protests that Sofia should take it easy instead and mourn her mother like a proper woman should. Her response is that "I can cry and take it easy and lift the coffin too" (225). At the funeral, Celie notes that "[f]olks crying and fanning and trying to keep a stray eye on they children, but they don't stare at Sofia and her sisters. They act like this the way it always done" (228). By virtue of Sofia being her unabashed self, and in doing so, critically questioning heteronormative gender roles, she infuses the consciousness of the black community with a fluid outlook on gender norms. Instead of conforming to the patriarchal family model as a means of assimilating into American society, the black community's family model is a source of strength and resistance. It is an ideal foundation in working towards deconstructing gender roles, which would alleviate female oppression under the American family model, if not eliminating it entirely. As Audre Lorde attests, "it is through the coming together of self-actualized individuals, female and male, that any real advances can be made. The old sexual power relationships based on a dominant/subordinate model between unequals have not served us as a people, nor as individuals" (46). Walker's novel, combined with Angela Davis' and Hortense Spilllers' analysis of the slave family, are crucial to this line of thinking and to the reassessment of the viability of the black family model as a revolutionary socializing unit.

Hortense Spillers labels the black woman in slavery as an insurgent female subject. By empowering the female slave body as the sole legitimate parent of the child, slavery created a "law of the Mother" within the black community in contrast to "the Father's law" that dominated capitalist relations. "Because of this peculiar American denial, the black American male embodies the *only* American community of males which has had the specific occasion to learn who the female is within itself" (Spillers 80)

through the shared oppression of slavery and the racialized exploitation of capitalism that followed. Indeed, Davis implicitly concurs with Spillers' analysis of black male and female relations resulting from slavery when she asserts that "[t]he salient theme emerging from domestic life in the slave quarters is one of sexual equality" ("Women" 18). Under slavery's tyrannical regime, many families were torn apart—brothers, mothers, husbands, and grandparents—and sold for profit or relocated to prevent them from forging a consciousness of collectivity. It was common, in fact, for slaves to share communal living spaces with others unrelated to them; as a result, black men and women, young and old, formed familial bonds of kinship with slaves unrelated to them based on their shared oppression (Davis, "Reader" 112). When not at work for their masters, slaves fulfilled domestic tasks that would ensure the survival of their family and the extended community. Cooking, gardening, and hunting were all considered equally important necessities; consequently, black women's labor was not socially stigmatized within the slave community, as women's labor would become under capitalism, because it was crucial to the larger group's survival. Under the gender-neutralizing oppression of slavery, black people forged an "egalitarianism characterizing their social relations" (Davis, "Women" 18). Davis asserts that among black people, "the potential for a different, more human quality of relations [still] prevails" ("Reader" 181)— relations forged from slavery that go beyond the confines of the nuclear family and encompasses multiple generations of blood relatives as well as adopted kin, as part of the black extended family. Through shared history and experiences, adopted kin could be as close, if not closer, than biological kin ("Reader" 214). A family dynamic such as this allows for more individual freedom. Childcare is socialized, and chores, both domestic and non-domestic, are a gender-neutral, communal responsibility; as a result, women and men alike become free of the oppressive heteronormative gender determinism

of capitalist patriarchy.

The flexibility and freedom that individuals have within the extended family model is another notion explored in *The Color Purple*. Throughout the novel, Walker highlights characters all partaking in raising each other's children so that the responsibility does not fall to any one person, especially not to a female. The female-headed family that Moynihan speaks of is rejected, and an extended family composed of various members of the community takes its place. When Sofia is imprisoned, Mary Agnes, Harpo, Sofia's sister Odessa, and Odessa's husband Jack all take on the roles of parents to Sofia's children. As a result, Sofia's "[c]hildren call Odessa mama. Call Squeak little mama. Call Sofia Miss" (Walker 205). Conversely, Squeak's and Harpo's daughter, Jolentha, seems to have a natural affinity for Sofia—more so than Sofia's biological children have for her. Walker portrays the scene in which Sofia and Harpo accept the responsibility of taking care of Jolentha as being a natural process of social relations born from the distinctive extended family model at work amongst the characters:

> "Go on sing, say Sofia, I'll look after this one till you come back."
>
> "You will? say Squeak."
>
> "Yeah, say Sofia" (211).

Raising children, an aspect of social relations within the community, is not gender specific, and may or may not involve the heteronormative nuclear family model. Celie refers to her biological children as "our two children" (154)—referring to and acknowledging her sister Nettie's crucial involvement in their upbringing. It is a statement that deemphasizes biological motherhood as it validates "foster motherhood, adoptive motherhood, or play motherhood" (Davis, "Reader" 214) as being equally important, legitimate options for women. In portraying childcare as a collective responsibility, Walker questions the need for women to be

isolated as mothers and capitalist patriarchy's motives in propagating the nuclear family model in which women's alienation is most prevalent.

Besides diffusing the heteronormative gender roles that oppress women, the extended family model also creates a more egalitarian consciousness amongst the men in the novel. The black matriarchal figure is also integral to this configuration as a gender-destabilizing agent. Odessa's husband Jack, for instance, is described as being a patient and kind father figure to all the children within the extended family, though none of them are his biological children. He also "[r]espect[s] his wife, Odessa, and all Odessa['s] amazon sisters. Anything she want[s] to take on, he['s] right there" (220). Jack's and Odessa's marriage is given as an example of what a truly egalitarian marriage can look like, and Jack, as a supportive husband, and a nurturing father, is an example of what a man who does not conform to capitalist patriarchy has the potential to become. Jack is neither emasculated nor unhappy in his marriage. Harpo eventually comes to find the happiness he previously had with Sofia before he felt the need to adhere to hierarchal gender roles. By the end of the novel, when Celie asks him if he minds that Sofia has a job, he says, "[w]hat I'm gon mind for? It seem to make her happy. And I can take care of anything come up at home" (288). Matriarchy in this marriage is not emasculating because both Harpo and Sofia enjoy the work they have chosen for themselves. The transformation that Albert makes under the influence of the extended family is probably the most profound example of the validity of such a family model. He not only becomes a self-reliant man, performing tasks in and outside the house without the help of a woman, but he also seeks out and eventually gains Celie's forgiveness, trust and friendship. In an intimate moment of sharing, amongst two individuals who were once dominant husband and subordinate wife under the patriarchal family model, Albert confides, "[w]hen I was growing up, I used to try to sew along with mama cause that's what she was always

doing. But everybody laughed at me. But you know I liked it" (279). And in response, Celie teaches him how to sew, an activity that they share as friends and equals. In another instance, Shug tells Celie that as young lovers, Albert loved it when she wore his pants and he once even donned her dress (153). We come to realize that Albert was once like Harpo until his own father prevented him from marrying Shug – the very thing he tried to do to Harpo when Sofia became pregnant with their first child. Albert is not an embodiment of capitalist patriarchy but a circumstantial bystander of its need to rigorously compartmentalize gender roles. The new Albert is more involved in his son's and grandchildren's lives. The well being of others within the community matters more to him than it previously did, and he actively pursues ways in which to better their lives rather than just his own. Within the extended family model, as within the community of slaves, people work towards the betterment of the collective. No individual is burdened with too much work and work is not stigmatized by gender. Under these egalitarian collectivist principles, men and women alike in the novel are less restricted by gender roles and lead happier, more fulfilled lives.

Moynihan uses the white nuclear family as his example of a viable family model in so far as it adheres to patriarchal standards set forth by society and has achieved more stability than the black family. The three main reasons for instability within the black family, according to Moynihan, are high illegitimacy rates, female-headed households, and high rates of welfare dependency (Chapter 2). His first two reasons are both examples of a line of thinking that adheres to and perpetuates capitalist patriarchal ideals. The fact that a child is considered illegitimate because he does not bear the name of his biological father or because the woman is unmarried completely devalues women in the eyes of patriarchal law; in addition, the idea that female-headed households should be problematic highlights the ambiguity of the uncontested normalization of male-

headed households. The same capitalist patriarchal ideals that he praises are responsible for his third reason—the economic instability of the black family that would necessitate welfare dependency. The triple oppressions of racism, classism, and sexism have kept black Americans in the surplus labor pool to be exploited for lower wages with less educational and economic opportunities. Economic stability within the white community does not mean that people are happier or that women are on equal terms with men. Eleanor Jane, the little girl that Sofia raises during her years of domestic servitude, is unhappy in her marriage though she is the wife of an economically stable man. As an upper middle-class housewife, she feels lonely, unloved, unappreciated, and insignificant to her own family and within her marriage. Her husband "don't love nothing but that cotton gin … When he not working, he playing poker with the boys" (273). She is further distressed at the notion that her son, Reynolds Stanley, could turn out to be just like her husband, father, and brother and that she, as a woman, will not be able to prevent it. She is much happier in Sofia's company and amongst Sofia's extended family where she gains fulfillment, acceptance and a sense of autonomy by helping Harpo take care of Henrietta. She creates a place for herself and her son within the black community that not only empowers her as a woman, but also gives her son the chance to experience gender egalitarianism as opposed to male dominance (288).

The black extended-family model, as a tradition carried over from slavery into capitalist patriarchy, demonstrates the incredible resilience of the black community in transforming oppressive circumstances into the constructive dynamics of collectivity. As a family model, it also questions and challenges the validity of the nuclear family as a social norm. Unlike Moynihan, I do not prescribe to the thinking that any singular family unit is a social norm towards which society ought to strive. The significant difference between the patriarchal nuclear family, for which

Moynihan advocates, and the extended family model is that the latter is flexible. A family model that is flexible has no single ideal configuration. It is left up to the collective to decide what works best for them. The extended family model is also more inclusive and is more conducive to incorporating adoptive kin. The characters in the novel do not question why Eleanor Jane would want to align herself with their extended family. They welcome her presence and her willingness to help them. The only question they ask is what the men in her patriarchal family have to say in protest. The extended family, in contrast to the patriarchal family, tends to have no clear authoritarian figure and thus lends itself to more egalitarian decision making amongst its members. Men and women all work towards common goals and children have the opportunity to experience multiple dimensions of family life as well as nonheteronormative gender roles such as black matriarchy. I contend that the extended family model is an excellent foundation for catalyzing radical change in social relations between men and women in contemporary American society.

Notes

[1] See *The Angela Davis Reader*, pages 145 – 146, for more clarification on this point.

[2] In Candice Jenkins's article, "Queering Black Patriarchy," she argues that Walker "*deconstructs* a black family romance and represents unequivocally the ways in which 'traditional'—and traditionally idealized—family structures can endanger black women both physically and psychically, largely because of the patriarchal power that such structures grant to black men" (970). I expound Jenkins assertion with a critique of the role capitalism plays in female oppression under a traditional patriarchal family structure. She also asserts that Walker's "authorly body functions as an apparent source of subversion" (971) to her Black male critics whereas I argue that Walker's novel is subversive to allegations put forth in the Moynihan Report about the black family as well as the matriarchal emasculating black woman.

[3] In Charles J. Heglar's essay, "Named and Nameless," he makes an argument that "Walker's erasure of or withholding of surnames [for the male characters] draws attention to her examination of male dominance; on the other hand, in the few cases when she supplies a surname for a character [such as with Shug], Walker indicates an alternative to such domination" (39). I do think Walker is directly protesting against patriarchy, like Heglar argues, but I argue that Walker's critique of male dominance is *embodied* in Shug and Sofia as gender destabilizing matriarchal figures.

Works Cited

Beal, Francis M. "Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female." *Sisterhood is Powerful*. Ed. Robin Morgan. New York: Random House, 1970. 340-353. Print.

Davis, Angela. *The Angela Davis Reader*. 'Ed'. Joy James. 1998. Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2004. Print.

---. *Women, Race, and Class*. 1981. New York: Vintage Books, 1983. Print.

Eisenstein, Zillah. "Developing a Theory of Capitalist Patriarchy and Socialist Feminism." *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism*. Ed. Zillah Eisenstein. New York: Monthly Review P, 1979. 5-40. Print.

Ferguson, Roderich. *Aberrations in Black: Towards a Queer of Color Critique*. Minnesota: U of Minnesota P, 2004. Print.

Heglar, Charles J. "Named and Nameless: Alice Walker's Pattern of Surnames in *The Color Purple*." *ANQ* 13.1 (2000): 38-41. Print.

Jenkins, Candice Marie. "Queering Black Patriarchy: The Salvific Wish and Masculine Possibility in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*." *Modern Fiction Studies* 48.4 (2002): 969-1000. Print.

Lorde, Audre. *Sister Outsider*. 1984. New York: Ten Speed P, 2007. Print.

Moynihan, Daniel. United States Department of Labor. *Negro Family: The Case for National Action*, 1965. Web. 7 Dec. 2010.

Spillers, Hortense J. "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book." *Diacritics – Culture and Countermemory: The "American" Connection* 17.2 (1987): 64-81. Print.

Walker, Alice. *The Color Purple*. 1982. New York: Pocket Books, 1985. Print.

"Like a Big, Public Garbage Can": Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* and the Abject

by Erica Hagaman

Erica Ashley Hagaman graduated from UCLA in 2008 with a B.A. in English Literature, and a concentration in Creative Writing, Short Fiction. She graduates in 2011 from CSULB with an M.A. in English Literature, and a concentration in American Literature 1900 to present. She currently teaches Appreciation of Literature at CSULB, and in the future, she hopes to pursue her Ph.D. in Literature.

In a 1931 letter to childhood friend Emil Schnellock, Henry Miller announced the start of a controversial and heatedly debated text that would soon be titled *Tropic of Cancer*: "I start tomorrow on the Paris book: first person, uncensored, formless–fuck everything ... [The novel will be] like a big, public garbage can ... only the mangy cats are missing. But I'll get them in yet" (*Letters To Emil* 80). To Schnellock, Miller described his new found aesthetic as gritty, seedy, and above all else, honest. By creating what he described, by embracing what was so often censured in literature, Miller was capable of crafting Henry, *Tropic of Cancer's* seemingly autobiographical protagonist. An exaggeratedly free man, a man without parameters, Henry lives by one repeated principle: "Do anything but let it produce joy. Do anything but let it yield ecstasy"

(*Tropic* 252).

Anais Nin, a friend of Miller's and one of the first to read over Miller's original text, immediately recognized the potency and importance of Miller's new-found power. Hearing in the pages of *Tropic of Cancer,* the significance of Miller's *"Fay ce que voudras!"* chant, identifying with Miller's freshly freed, inclusive writing style, the preface she provided for the first edition challenged Miller's readers to see how the novel asked them to wake up. For Nin, Miller's novel had the special ability she had been searching for; *Tropic of Cancer* could "startle the lifeless ones from their profound slumber," but more than being Miller's "kick in the pants to God" or Nin's cultural alarm clock, *Tropic of Cancer* is a celebration. It is a war whoop. It is an exercise in liberation, a simultaneous advertisement and cautionary tale concerned with living in the moment, living for joy, and living for ecstasy. *Tropic of Cancer* is a text about waking up, and quite possibly, it's a novel about at least a small sect of contemporary female thought—Kristevian abjection and its embrace.

Regardless of how bold it seems to claim that Miller may not be the menacing misogynist Kate Millett made him out to be in her 1970 critique, *Sexual Politics*, Mary Kellie Munsil, a more current feminist scholar, in "The Body in the Prison House: Henry Miller, Pornography, and Feminism," urges future critics to avoid following in Millett's steps. Munsil instead asks readers to take a new approach towards the text: "go beyond the superficial [...] meaning of its language [... and] ask of the text what it is 'doing'" (292). Despite Millett's attempt to categorize Miller as a violent sexist, she does question the novel's purpose and intent. Interestingly, amongst her many critiques and defamations, Millett credits Miller for initiating "a kind of culturally cathartic release"; for Millett, if there is anything to be celebrated in Miller, it is with him "first giving voice to the unutterable" (Millett 295). Even while launching a rather scathing feminist rebuke, Millett recognizes Miller's ability "[to]

articulate [...] the disgust, the contempt, the hostility, the violence, and the sense of filth," which she felt surrounded societal understandings of sexuality and that she knew needed and deserved exposure. With her articulate response aside, the question remains: What is the purpose of Miller's obscenity? And where does one find value in "filth?"

I argue that Millett's answer to these questions is at least partly myopic. It is not just that Millett finds value in "violence" and in "filth," it is that she finds value in a particular type of filth and, even more specifically, she finds value and significance in Miller's embrace of that particular filth. For Millett, there is value in obscenity and vulgarity, but only when they operate as tools of transgression and inspiration; what she eloquently describes as "cultural catharsis." For Millett, the novel is more than the necessary uttering of the unutterable; she finds Miller's text and Miller's defiance worthy because she finds it purposeful and political. I argue that what she values most is how Miller's use of the obscene operates in relation to Julia Kristeva's study of the abject.

In *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva characterizes "the abject" as "what disturbs identity, system, [and] order [... it] does not respect borders, positions, [or] rules" (4). Although the abject is willfully and repeatedly pushed aside due to its ability to disgust, the individual must eventually confront what she, or the symbolic order, has previously rejected. Kristeva describes how the individual, upon having to make this confrontation, is simultaneously propelled towards and away from what she has previously rejected. Regularly, the abject is represented by human waste and excretion, such as feces, urine, or menstrual blood. More specifically for Kristeva, the human corpse is an image she frequently evokes as a quintessential symbol of abjection. Throughout *Tropic of Cancer*, Miller purposefully conjures up such disturbing images while simultaneously introducing his own brand of the abject such as decomposing food, lice, semen, and sewage. These images are then, just as Kristeva suggests in

Powers of Horror, forced upon both the reader and Henry, the protagonist, again eliciting the question: What is the purpose aesthetically, politically, or socially of subjecting an audience, a protagonist, a text, or even the self to such abjection?

Hal Foster, in *The Return of the Real: The Avante Garde at the End of the Century*, discusses how Kristeva's recognition and identification of the abject can be applied to art and literature, and in a way, Foster offers an answer to our question. Although Foster leaves Miller and *Tropic of Cancer* unexamined, he does thoroughly explore the impact of an author embracing the abject, and throughout *The Return of the Real*, Foster attempts to understand the motivation behind an artist like Miller. Foster theorizes that a large sect of artists drawn towards the incorporation of the abject do so "to approach it somehow—to probe the wound of trauma, to touch the obscene object" (157); again, just as Kristeva explains in *Powers of Horror*, the individual and the abject are "both repellant and repelled" simultaneously (6).

This Kristevian concept of confused and muddled motivation is overtly evident and frequently repeated in *Tropic of Cancer*, as Henry, although disgusted by the abject, seemingly and inexplicably delights in it just the same. When describing Henry's living scenario with Eugene, Anatole, and Olga, Miller conjures a full confrontation between Henry and the abject, and he does so in nearly perfect Kristevian language: "Every meal ... mostly tastes as if a dish rag had been stewed in it – slightly sour, mildewed, scummy ... The butter, too, ... it tastes like the big toe of a *cadaver*" (61, emphasis added). Although it is obvious that this food repulses Henry, as is indicated by him actually physically "feel[ing] ill," he claims that the "smell of rancid butter" brings up "good associations too" (61). In parallel fashion, Kristeva describes the individual as inexplicably in battle over what she desires and what she detests: "One does not know it, one does not desire in it, one joys in it. Violently and

painfully" (9). That is to say, when one is faced with the abject, whether that confrontation is purposeful or not, one rejoices, and the embrace of such costly rejoicing operates as the previously unrecognized, and so often misunderstood, refrain of the novel: *"Fay ce que voudras!"* (252).

Reiterating nearly line by line Kristevian thought and theory into his own novel, Miller describes the internal nightmare in Henry's mind, and in doing so, he launches an examination of how the obscene and the abject haunt *Tropic of Cancer* and its pitiable inhabitants: "So much crowds into my head when I say … *Fay ce que voudras* … images, gay ones, terrible ones, maddening ones, … lust, crime, holiness … But above all, *the ecstasy!*" (252). It is this precise mixture of the horrifying and the joyous that Miller searches for throughout the novel; discovering how Henry can carry on after "the discord" and "the rancor" is what motivates the novel. It is what pervades every episode, and is the reasoning behind the obscenity and accused misogyny (252).

Shortly after being introduced to Henry, the reader hears him boast: "Put rat poison in the coffee, and a little ground glass. Make some boiling hot urine … That won't scare me away" (60). No, it most certainly will not; in fact, it's the urine and poison that Henry's there for in the first place. Besides his boastful affinity for pesticides and waste, Henry hosts a number of destructive habits and desires. His drive to experience *jouissance*, or what he describes in *Tropic of Cancer* as "ecstasy," is dependent on a confrontation with the abject; consequently, Henry spends the entire novel forced to search and pursue the ugly and the abject, regardless of the negative consequences that follow such desire. Usually, Henry attempts to find this muddled pleasure in his tumultuous relationships with women and his subsequent (and intimately linked) emotional and physical downward spirals. In particular, the context of Henry and Mona's relationship helps voice the confusing nature of Henry's contradictory emotions.

Examining Henry and Mona's relationship, while keeping Kristeva and Foster's understanding of the abject in mind, offers a nuanced approach towards their overlooked exchanges. In particular, when one considers Foster's theory on the modern "chronic pain-and-pleasure" (222) principle, the amount of pain and suffering Miller incorporates when describing Henry and Mona's torrid love affair takes on a different significance. As an example, Foster illustrates how for the contemporary American, "the CNN Effect of the Gulf War … repel[s] by the politics, [but] rivets by the images" (222); the specific, and quintessentially modern American subdivision of abjection closely parallels Henry's struggle with his and Mona's impossible love; a love Henry constantly either destroys or desperately laments and labors over.

Their relationship, like Kristeva's human corpse or Foster's war footage, both attracts and repels. Kristeva describes the experience of confronting the abject as following a complex pattern involving a rotation and repetition of "collaps[ing], and start[ing] again;" the two, the subject and the abjected object, Henry and Mona, or vice versa, are "inseparable, contaminated, condemned" (18). Their habits, their lives, and their treatment of one another sits "at the boundary of what is assimilatable, [or] thinkable" (ibid). Together, they become the "abject" (ibid).

To help explain this muddled human connection and its subsequent consequences, Miller offers a metaphor. Like the orange blossom wedding ring Henry bought Mona, Henry knows the importance of separating himself for his own benefit, but is incapable of doing so; he finds himself, as Kristeva suggests, "collaps[ing], and start[ing] again" (18). Whenever Henry tries to reject or suppress Mona by "try[ing] to pawn [the ring] off" or by " le[aving] it in a public bath," he is left powerless to execute the action, and it is important to note that the force pulling him towards her does so regardless of how much pain the action causes him. Just as keeping the ring and not thinking about selling it makes him hungry,

the more he stays linked to the abjected Mona, the more it destroys him. Henry's desire for the abjection is emphasized by his desire for Mona and his perpetual habit of approaching, yet ultimately, avoiding her; he finds it impossible to leave her and move on.

These torrid exchanges between Henry and Mona are further emphasized by Henry's half-hearted stay in France. Although Henry cannot describe precisely what keeps him from America, (when he asks himself, "Do you want to go? There was no answer."), he purposefully remains in Paris, a place where he knows cannot host Mona appropriately: "the first thing that strikes an American woman about Europe [is] that it's unsanitary. Impossible for them to conceive of a paradise without modern plumbing" (318, 152). And regardless of how Henry romanticizes living the Parisian life with Mona, she is propelled away as well, leaving Henry at the dock waiting for no one to arrive, or looking out towards the nation he's avoiding, "vague[ly] wondering what had ever happened to [his] wife" (318). Henry and Mona cannot be, and yet they are more drawn to one another because of this. Thus, in the midst of his eternal struggle with his loss of her, Henry demands, "Let us have more oceans, new oceans," which is to say: let Mona and I be farther apart, forever divided, and yet all the more drawn together in spite of it (318). Henry and Mona experience pleasure, but only when experiencing pain.

Just as Henry explains how it is necessary "that the women must suffer," he suffers as well: "more terror and violence, more disasters, more suffering, more woe and misery" (29). That's the only way he'll have it, and he demands it both loudly and often: "It may be that we are doomed, that there is no hope for us, *any of us,* but if that is so then let us set up a last agonizing, bloodcurdling howl, a screech of defiance, a war whoop!" (257). *Tropic of Cancer* is that; it is a war whoop, and its use of obscenity may be what makes it "agonizing" and "bloodcurdling," but it's also what drives away Henry's "lamentation;" he needs the "agonizing," the

"bloodcurdling."

In her exploration of the abject, Kristeva argues that as a result of pain, of "suffering" and of "woe," one unexpectedly derives pleasure; while Kristeva speaks generally and refrains linking her theories to the work of Miller, Henry and his obsessions complement Kristeva's argument. Like Oedipus, whom Kristeva references to frequently as a character in literature, who seeks pleasure in punishment, he "exile[s] himself," or the Jew, also examined in *Powers of Horror,* who must suffer repeated Diaspora, Henry seeks pleasure in that which destroys him. But simultaneously, he also derives the inspiration and motivation to create art. Kristeva theorizes that proactivity is dependent in some form or another on becoming the exile. While there are many ways to become the exile (e.g. become the abject object of another), what matters most is how Henry exiles himself (84). Linda Nochlin, in "Art and the Conditions of Exile: Men/Women, Emigration/Expatriation," reinforces this idea with her in-depth analysis of the expatriate movement. Nochlin explores how exile, "although … indeed devastating," can also "provide stimulation and inspiration … especially [to the artist] who finds herself freed from the conventional boundaries of … identity in her country of origin" (317).

This concept is again endorsed by Janet Wolff's study of writers living in exile. In *Resident Alien: Feminist Cultural Criticism,* Wolff writes, "Displacement … can be quite strikingly productive. First, the marginalization entailed in forms of migration … can … facilitate personal transformation." With this understanding of the expatriate movement and the modern process of self-inflicted exile, Henry's refusal to return home to the United States seems to closely coincide with his struggle over conflicting desires for Mona, and his confused embrace of the abject. Consequently, Henry becomes an exile on at least two counts; he is an exile from his own nation and from his own wife, and it seems that on at least one of these occasions, he is an exile of his own accord:

"And the funny thing is again that I could travel all around the globe but America would never enter my mind; it was even further lost than a lost continent" (*Tropic* 177).

Henry's desire to be classified as the ex-patriot, combined with his estrangement from Mona, marks Henry the forever foreigner: "It is no accident that propels people like us to Paris … Paris is simply the obstetrical instrument that tears the living embryo from the womb and puts it in the incubator" (29). That is to say, Paris is what orphans Henry; it's what Kristeva would accuse as turning Henry into the "deject … in short a stray" (8). Paris and its ability to draw him in to that which destroys him; Paris is precisely what stands in the way of his developing true human connections, and leaves Henry open to the perpetual experience of alienation, but again, Paris is what he has chosen; it is what he desires.

To put it simply, Paris and exile are responsible for both the good and the bad. They are extensions of the abject and its embrace. Henry is attracted to them, not only because he is drawn to the abject and because he delights in his own suffering, but also because interacting with it fuels his writing: "I want to make a detour of those lofty arid mountain ranges where one dies of thirst and cold … When there exists neither beast, nor vegetation, where one goes crazy with loneliness"; Henry wants to feel disconnected, forever out of tune, "unhooked, ungeared, out of joint with the times" (256).

Henry's dependency on the abject keeps him marooned on one side of the Atlantic, constantly torn between his draw and his pressing desire to retreat, ever unaware of what he desires, or what he actually needs. Each time Henry "strays instead of getting his bearings, desiring, [or] belonging," he leaves a woman, a prostitute, a home, or crosses a free meal off his rotating list, and finds himself inspired (256). For Kristeva, Henry's desire for a no-man's land, where he can again "situate" himself rather than define himself, where he can suffer, so that he can, in turn,

be pleased, can be interpreted as exactly where he garners the motivation and ability to create.

Keeping Kristeva's concept of the abject and her understanding of the exile in mind, while revisiting Millett and the questions originally posed to her, can serve to illuminate. The significance of Miller voicing the previously unutterable changes when it's is appropriately understood as directly leading to his exile. Also, when considering Miller's dependency on the abject for creative inspiration, the implications of the obscene take on a different level of significance. When can filth be good? When it leads to transgression, when it leads to change, when it leads to a heightened awareness and the development of a consciousness, that is when filth is productive and deserves feminist support rather than feminist spurning.

Repeatedly, Miller clarifies and highlights what halts Henry's progress as a writer and as a human being; we know being paid to write doesn't work for him, and we know being well fed and in a steady relationship fails him as well, but when "thinking of lots of things gone and buried," when being intimate with the tragic, "sniffling" Elsa, Henry swells, his novel "grow[ing] inside him" (4-26) Henry is pregnant with his inspiration, but only after an exchange with the abject. Only after he listens to "that damned German music, so melancholy, so sentimental" and is with a woman "so hot and *sorrowful,"* does Henry feel capable of finishing his novel (24, emphasis added). He needs to suffer. He needs to be the foreigner; he needs to feel like someone's abjected object in order to write. And that's precisely what he gets from Elsa. He not only embraces the abject when he is with her, he, in turn, becomes the abject. Elsa has a lover she prefers, as does Henry, and as he takes her, she thinks of the letter she will write to the lover she actually wants; they objectify one another and inexplicably, just as they repulse one another, they resolve each others' desires: "Ah the Germans! They take you all over like an omnibus. They give you indigestion" (25).

Again, Henry is drawn and simultaneously propelled away, cured and simultaneously stricken. In "Fighting Desires: Henry Miller's Queer *Tropic*," Michael Hardin discusses this precise push and pull. When examining that which does and does not inspire Henry, Harden draws a causal link between the abject, the non-normative, 'inappropriate' sex, and the act of writing. *Tropic of Cancer* is a novel motivated by the writing of itself; the role of motivation and inspiration is critical to the text's understanding. In turn, Hardin theorizes that since Henry doubts the power of writing and authorship, so he is forced to "seek potency elsewhere," potency easily working here as synonymous with the power to write, and the answer to this need, according to Hardin, is "the vagina" (133). Hardin continues: "Miller … states that he wishes to re-enter the womb," but although this desire is commonly identified in modern male writing, Miller's is especially important. Deriving inspiration from the maternal, siphoning it from the female sex organ, is critically important, but when that milking and extraction involves an object of the abject, Kristevian thought must be considered as well.

While Hardin's argument paints Henry as dependent on his quest for the vagina, he never examines how Henry's violent, obscene, vulgar, misogynistic approach to the vagina colors that dependency, leaving utterly alone Henry's conflicting relationship with sexual desire. Van Norden, more conscious of his tendency to derive joy from the abject than Henry, derives meaning from the female body and provides the insight the reader needs to better understand why Henry consistently engages in sexual behavior that appears to be directly detrimental.

Van Norden explains, "Every time I have an orgasm … It's like receiving communion … For a few seconds afterwards I have a fine spiritual glow … and maybe it would continue that way indefinitely—[…] if it weren't for the fact that there's a woman beside you" (130). Van Norden, like Henry, is drawn towards sex and the female body

because, as Foster discussed earlier, Henry needs "to probe the wound"; he needs to confront the abject, but afterwards, he is confused. He is left with both the positive and the negative, the conflicting result of mixing draw and repellant: "All those little details that make you desperately self-conscious, desperately lonely" (*Tropic* 130). Foster, reflecting on both Foucault and Kristeva, suggests that artists hungry to "test … the symbolic order … probe the maternal body repressed by the paternal law," and one can easily see how Henry fits in this category (159). Eager to launch a polemic attack on puritanical standards, eager to write "libel, slander, defamation of character," eager to write a novel that accentuates the obscene, a novel that reads "like a big public trash can," Henry probes away at the female body, repeatedly having sex, exploring, condemning, celebrating, and prodding. However, Foster goes on to argue that for a male to launch such an effort is rare; "the artists who assume an infantilist position to mock the paternal law tend to be men," but Henry does not fit in this category. As Hardin argues, it's not just that Henry wants to return to the womb, as a regressed child, but he wants to "appropriate" it, as demonstrated in his pregnancy fantasy with Elsa (133). Now return to our initial question. How can a feminist, who is sensitive to that which objectifies and exploits the female body, forgive Miller's obscenity? When the reason behind his objectification is to illuminate, which we as a modern society have rejected, hidden, and suppressed, that's when.

As argued by Wolff, self-exile and the incorporation of the abject can easily be read as attempts to challenge and ultimately revolutionize the symbolic order. When examining *Tropic of Cancer,* a text that only three decades ago was rejected by feminists as both violent and sexist, under Kristeva's lens it becomes possible to rationalize Miller's motivations, which are sensitive to the female cause and feminist agenda. Before contemporary feminist readings came out in defense of Miller, obscenity, and *Tropic of Cancer,* the reigning woman thinker on the side of Miller

was Anais Nin. Like Miller, Nin, and Karl Shapiro, the other voice included in the form of a preface for the 1961 Grove Press edition, saw the potential of such a gritty and inclusive aesthetic.

Nin identified the unique forcefulness in Miller's voice. She saw the importance of his inclusion of the abject, and along with Shapiro, she felt that *Tropic of Cancer* had the power to awaken a generation, to push each individual into howling as Miller: "Do anything, but let it produce joy. Do anything, but let it yield ecstasy." After first dismissing *Crazy Cock*, Michael Fraenkel urged Miller to "just sit down before the machine and let go ... Evacuate the trenches," and by doing so, by allowing everything that is usually considered abject and unworthy of description, Miller exposed his world to something completely outside of themselves, something they both desired and feared (Martin 343). Of course that means Millett was at least partly right after all; Miller and his uttering the unutterable started a type of cultural catharsis, but he could never have achieved this without the abject, and without the obscene.

Works Cited

Foster, Hal. *The Return of the Real: the Avant-garde at the End of the Century*. Cambridge: MIT, 1996. Print.

Hardin, Michael. "Fighting Desire: Henry Miller's Queer Tropic." *Journal of Homosexuality* 42.3 (2002): 129-50. *Informaworld*. Web. 8 Dec. 2010.

Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: an Essay on Abjection*. New York: Columbia U P, 1982. Print.

Martin, Jay. "The King of Smut: Henry Miller's Tragical History." *The Antioch Review* 35.4 (1977): 342-67. *JSTOR*. Web. 8 Dec. 2010. Print.

Miller, Henry, Emil Schnellock, and George Wickes. *Letters to Emil*. New York: New Directions, 1989. Print.

Miller, Henry. *Tropic of Cancer*. New York: Grove, 1961. Print.

Millett, Kate. *Sexual Politics*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970. Print.

Munsil, Mary Kellie. "The Body in the Prison House: Henry Miller, Pornography, and Feminism." *Gottesman* (1992): 285-96. Print.

Nochlin, Linda. "Art and the Conditions of Exile: Men/Women, Emigration/Expatriation." *Poetics Today* 17.3 (1996): 317-37. Print.

Wolff, Janet. *Resident Alien: Feminist Cultural Criticism*. New Haven, CT: Yale U P, 1995. Print.

ENGENDERING THE FALL OF THE PATRIARCH: SUBVERSIVE MATERNITY IN *ABSALOM, ABSALOM!*

by Christie Waken

Christina Waken is pursuing a Master of Arts in English Literature at California State University, Long Beach. Interested in twentieth-century American and British literature, she is most captivated by the works of Toni Morrison and Oscar Wilde. After completing her degree, she hopes to continue to write and teach literature at the college level.

To possess the land and a wife, to sow the seed, to cultivate the crop, and to propagate one's own line—these ambitions are the pride and glory of the Old South and serve as the masculine ideal of both agricultural and human virility in which a man could be the master and creator of his own wealth and lineage. This ideal is also the doomed design of Thomas Sutpen, the mythic, self-made Southerner of William Faulkner's 1936 novel *Absalom, Absalom!* Purely patriarchal to its core, Sutpen's dream necessitates complete male domination of female bodies, land, and slaves, and his pursuits reflect the ideologies and practices of the antebellum South. Faulkner's narrative, however, is remarkably devoid of the compliant instruments required to create the dynasty that Sutpen desires: fertile female bodies capable of producing a legitimate, male heir.

Mothers are instead rendered deviant or altogether absent, children born of these culturally transgressive mothers repudiate their own flesh and blood, subjugated slaves taint the Sutpen bloodline, and the plantation itself decays and terminates as ash. In a story overtly concerned with Sutpen's ventures to achieve and maintain male primacy, Faulkner's female characters covertly resist masculine oppression in an unconventional maternity that refuses to produce a sustained corporeal lineage for Thomas Sutpen. Where the reproduction of human heirs halts and falters in these subversive female bodies, dark tales of the deterioration and demise of both Sutpen's line and the once-glorified South are generated instead. In their rebellion against traditional procreation that attempts to mark them as mere pawns in an oppressive masculine design, women like Rosa, Judith, and Clytie, Sutpen's ever-virginal sister-in-law and daughters, reposition their maternal faculties from the bearing of biological bodies to the creation and perpetuation of the very story of patriarchy's collapse. Subtly indicting the oppressive system of unbridled patriarchy in the Old South, Faulkner enacts the destruction of Sutpen's design by means of a powerfully subversive and unnatural maternity that pervades *Absalom, Absalom!*; thus, Faulkner's defiant women revise conventional, biological maternity, displacing their creative potential onto the engendering of the narrative itself.

Situated in the heart of the South, Faulkner's own Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi, during the Civil War and the following decades, *Absalom, Absalom!* is steeped in the long-standing codes and principles of white patriarchy. This social system of male domination over human and terrestrial property, passed down from father to son, governs the lives of many of the novel's characters. Traveling as a poor, white child from the mountainous region now known as West Virginia, Thomas Sutpen enters a "land divided neatly up and actually owned by men who did nothing but ride over it on fine horses … while other people worked for

them," and he quickly realizes that power and financial success in the South stem from the accomplishment of this masculine ideal (Faulkner 179). As "the Old South was a masculinist culture," Minrose Gwin argues that "Sutpen [is] its natural outcome" (66). Indeed, Sutpen's dream—the reality of a multitude of patriarchs south of the Mason-Dixon Line—excludes all who fail to fit the mold of a white, slave-and-land-owning male. Any deviation from this narrowly defined role of supremacy would be a devastating blow to the rigid hierarchies of gender, race, and class. Joseph A. Boone notes that, "for the Southern aristocracy, then, the great fear is the threat of nondifferentiation, of the collapse of the boundaries and polarities that allow for the repression and subjugation of otherness constitutive of (in this case) white male identity." Therefore, as Sutpen devotes his life to the attainment and retention of the role of the perfect Southern patriarch, all others must be subdued to ensure his success (227).

Sutpen's patriarchal endeavors essentially require the overwhelming dominance and exploitation of all that is female, and as Faulkner aligns Sutpen's subjugation of female bodies with that of the land itself, he reveals the dark oppressive nature of Southern patriarchy that the novel's unnatural maternity must undermine. First, Sutpen acquires and subdues the metaphorically female "virgin bottom land" upon which he builds Sutpen's Hundred, the plantation that is to be the foundation of his dynasty (Faulkner 26). Rosa's description of the creation of Sutpen's Hundred as torn "violently out of the soundless Nothing" evokes an image of childbirth, just as Sutpen's "dragg[ing of] house and gardens out of virgin swamp, and plow[ing] and plant[ing] his land with seed cotton" is reminiscent of copulation and delivery (4, 30). These depictions of the dominant male "ripping from the prone rich female earth" suggest a violent and vile oppression of the female vessel necessary for the realization of Sutpen's design (162). Boone remarks that "Sutpen's creative enterprise ... is repeatedly imbued in phallic imagery," and as he pursues a wife, his masculine sway only seems to intensify (215). "Exactly as he would have gone to the Memphis market to buy livestock or slaves," Sutpen "come[s] to town to find a wife," according to Rosa (Faulkner 31). Like Sutpen's land, Ellen Coldfield, the first wife to appear in the novel's progression, is symbolically purchased like chattel for Sutpen's single purpose: reproduction. Laurel Bollinger argues that Sutpen "offers his wife Ellen only a position on her back ... either conceiving or delivering the children who exist to consolidate his accomplishment" (213). Sutpen's Hundred and his various wives become merely "breeding machines," to borrow Linda Wagner-Martin's term, under the tyranny of his patriarchal design, and as such, they are completely deprived of autonomy (3). In his suppression of the female body and the feminized soil, Sutpen attempts to manipulate maternity. Not only does he claim the role of master over his own creation, the plantation, but he also attempts to master the act of biological creation to achieve his own prosperity and posterity in the male-governed South, which is a venture that maternity will not allow.

Throughout the novel, Sutpen succeeds in obtaining female bodies to bear his offspring, but these mothers are far from obsequious. As the first wife and mother to inhabit Sutpen's Hundred, Ellen seems to submit to her husband's authority, fulfilling his purpose for her with the birth of their son Henry. The subsequent birth of Judith, however, sabotages the first, and in due time, the very products of Ellen's maternity undermine Sutpen's patriarchal ideal. These "doomed children" whom she begets ultimately "destroy one another and [Sutpen's] own line" (Faulkner 12). Henry, the beloved heir, "repudiate[s] his home and birthright" in his refusal to admit that Judith's fiancé, Charles Bon, is in fact his father's son (12). Bon's presence would be far less subversive in the absence of the sister, but Judith, the likeness of the maternal vessel, is very real. In effect, Henry's renunciation terminates his role as heir, for he becomes "a non-

Sutpen," thwarting "the rules of male procreativity (as far as we know he sires no heirs) *and* creativity (by becoming a creative absence in Faulkner's text)" (Boone 218). Along with instigating Henry's repudiation, Ellen's production of the two children threatens patriarchy further through the incestuous nature of the siblings' "curious relationship" (Faulkner 63). Henry longs to "metamorphose into, the lover, the husband" who "destroy[s]" Judith's virginity just as he would "metamorphose into the sister" to be "despoiled" by Bon himself (77). The siblings create a triad of incest that "forms an extremely powerful undertow in Sutpen's paternal plot" (Boone 220). Boone argues that "sibling incest stands in direct opposition to the plot of the father," especially in the case of Bon and Henry's cravings of a "non-reproductive" union (221). Ellen's children, unnatural in their desires and destructive in their very existence, stagnate the Sutpen bloodline.

Just as her spawning of children jeopardizes the constructs of patriarchy, Ellen effectively orchestrates the subversive relationships and launches the series of events that eventually destroy Sutpen and his dream. It is likely, as Mr. Compson posits, that Ellen is "actually proud of [her marriage]" as "wife to the wealthiest" and "mother of the most fortunate," but the glory she seeks through Judith and Bon's nuptials is subconsciously flouted by her insistence on this incestuous, miscegenous marriage (Faulkner 54). The tryst between Judith and Bon is fueled by Ellen as she inserts her will, like all "mothers who … can almost make themselves the brides of their daughters' weddings," into the plotting and planning of the union (59). She absolutely "engineer[s] that courtship" in order to colonize Bon as "a garment" to adorn Judith, "a piece of furniture" to complete the Sutpen house, and "a mentor" to influence Henry (82, 59). Bon's influence proves to be just as damaging as the proposed wedding, for Henry also champions the union by offering Judith as a "narrow delicate fenced virgin field already furrowed and bedded" into which Bon can effortlessly "drop the seeds" (261). By the time Bon arrives at Sutpen's Hundred, both mother and son have primed the stage for this disastrous engagement; furthermore, by expending her time and energy on her *daughter's* marriage, Ellen neglects the critical espousal of her *son* that would certify the "triumphant coronation of [Sutpen's] old hardships and ambition" (81). Ellen elects instead to play the "role of the matriarch arbitrating from the fireside corner of a crone the pride and destiny of her family." Faulkner's emphasis on the "matriarch" signifies Ellen's creation of her own posterity—separate from her husband's—through Judith, her "sex's successor" (54, 58). Although the desolation of her husband's design is not her conscious objective, as a maternal figure who pairs the wrong child with the wrong suitor, Ellen functions as one of Faulkner's deviant mothers.

Once Ellen has covertly contributed to the destabilization of patriarchy, she recedes into oblivion, removing her body, the site of conception, from Sutpen's impregnating reach. After Henry rejects the name of Sutpen and his place as a male heir, Ellen "seem[s] to have retired to the darkened room" where she dies (62). To Mr. Compson, Ellen is "the butterfly" who retreats back to her cocoon "filled with baffled incomprehension" at her son's repudiation (63). Various critics have argued that Ellen's recession and Mr. Compson's description of this act reveal patriarchy's overwhelming victory over this conceding mother. Deborah Clarke claims that Mr. Compson, by simply constructing Ellen as an insect in his narration of the Sutpen saga, "defuses maternal power by denying human identity to mothers" (136). The butterfly, specifically, is a degrading metaphor, according to Clarke, for "butterflies, apparently, give birth to themselves, evolving out of cocoons." Consequently, Ellen's "creative potential is dehumanized" as well (135). It is a compelling argument, but as Mr. Compson expands upon the metaphor, Ellen's disappearance becomes less an act of surrender and more an irrevocable

defiance of patriarchal authority. She is described as "the substanceless shell, the shade impervious to any alteration or dissolution because of its very weightlessness," and her removal of herself guarantees "no body to be buried" (Faulkner 100). As an absent body, Ellen is impregnable. She rejects any "alteration" into yet another state of maternity (100). Once she is certain of Henry's refusal to carry on Sutpen's line, she deliberately removes her body from the oppressor, resisting any further attempts by Sutpen to replace Henry. It is fitting, then, that she should return to a cocoon: an anti-womb that inhibits the creation of another. Though Mr. Compson may seem to paint her as a devastated victim, Ellen undermines Sutpen's oppressive aims even in her death.

To an even greater extent than Ellen, Eulalia Bon, Sutpen's first wife, is a stealthy but highly subversive maternal presence in the narrative. The daughter of a French plantation owner in Haiti, Eulalia is immediately given to Sutpen as his reward for "subdu[ing]" a slave uprising (204). Though it is seemingly constructive to Sutpen's plan, his union with Eulalia and the birth of their son instigate Sutpen's collapse due to Eulalia's undisclosed black heritage, for Southern patriarchy recognizes white blood alone. It is as if maternity itself, begetting a mullato son, imposes its vengeance on Sutpen for his participation in the suppression of the slave rebellion, an event reeking of patriarchal force. Upon learning of their mixed blood, his repudiation of Eulalia and their son ignites an even deeper desire for revenge in the discarded mother. Reaching far beyond the borders of Haiti, the island described nearly synonymously with the South as "a theatre for violence and injustice and bloodshed and all the satanic lusts of human greed and cruelty," Eulalia's retribution follows Sutpen to Mississippi in the form of Charles Bon, the couple's child whose "*blood* ... [is] *tainted and corrupt by ... Mother*" (202, 263). While raising Charles in New Orleans, Eulalia and her lawyer direct his path to Henry and eventually to Sutpen himself, just as Ellen has done.

Eulalia is repeatedly described as "plowing and planning and harvesting" Bon for the moment when he will reunite with his estranged father and bring about Sutpen's demise (241). This idea of planting and reaping revenge in the body of the son mirrors Sutpen's raping of the virgin land to build his legacy; furthermore, as he depicts Eulalia's actions in these terms, Faulkner inverts the discourse of oppression, bestowing patriarchal power upon this maternal figure. It is therefore because of Bon, who affirms his role as "[*his*] *mother's son*," that Sutpen is deprived of an heir and ultimately killed for his attempts to secure another (255). For patriarchy's "moral brigandage" in Haiti and the South, maternity impedes its expansion in the form of Eulalia Bon (209).

As disruptive as Eulalia is to Sutpen's design, she plays an ephemeral role in the narrative, paralleling Ellen as the dissolving butterfly. Introduced as "the shadow" and "just emerging for a second of [Sutpen's] ... telling, in a single word almost," Eulalia is noticeably absent from even her own sections of the novel (200, 201). Susan Donaldson considers her "one of the most conspicuous empty spaces in the narrative, a character whose very name occupies no place in the round of stories" (29). Perceiving Eulalia as an imagined ghost, Donaldson asserts that "so subversive is her presence (or nonpresence, as the case may be) that we cannot even be certain she actually exists," and Boone agrees that Eulalia only exists as "a projection of the narrators' fantasies of her" (Donaldson 29; Boone 221). While Eulalia's verbal and physical absence does render her vulnerable to the whims of her male narrators, the mulatto son she bears is nonetheless a potent body that permeates the story. Charles Bon succeeds where Henry will not and Sutpen cannot—he impregnates his wife with a son, who likewise ensures the production of another, and another. Boone notes that "the one realized dynasty in the novel, the legacy of all Sutpen's procreative efforts, is the genealogy that stretches from his repudiated son, Charles Bon," and this "genealogy" is one that

is "characterized by an exponential rise in degree of blackness" (226). Through the evanescent, Haitian-born mother, an alternate lineage is formed, one that resists the South's patriarchal standards of racial purity.

Similar to Eulalia in textual obscurity, Bon's octoroon mistress, his son Valery's black wife, and Sutpen's final victim Milly Jones, represent biological maternity at the height of its contamination of Southern patriarchy. As the first two women are marginalized by race and third by class, these three mothers occupy a predominantly silent and deceptively inconspicuous space in the novel. Philip Weinstein refers to the octoroon as one who "weeps rather than speaks" during her visit to Bon's grave at Sutpen's Hundred (92). Despite her silence, her "flesh" is potent enough to "impregnat[e]" the "airless and shuttered" room in Sutpen's house (Faulkner 158). The house, a symbol of Sutpen's patriarchal design, is metaphorically infused with this mother's Negro blood, signifying the continual racializing of his line. In due time, the octoroon's son Valery weds the "coal-black and ape-like woman" in order to "den[y] the white" blood he has inherited from Sutpen (166, 168). Echoing Henry's repudiation of his father, Valery's marriage to this "black gargoyle" reintroduces a highly concentrated level of black pigmentation to Sutpen's descendents (169). This mother, too, is silent, and her body is depicted as an utterly dark form, with "nothing alive about her but her eyes and hands" (170). Although the narrators withhold from her a visual and vocal role in the text, her body generates the most perverse character of the novel: Jim Bond. Boone deems this birth the woman's "primary function in the plot," for Bond is the "one nigger Sutpen left" by the end of the narrative, the half-wit "scion, the heir, the apparent" (Boone 226; Faulkner 302, 296); moreover, the final child born of Sutpen's seed is a girl who meets her death within hours of her birth, the daughter of the impoverished "fifteen-year-old country girl" Milly Jones (149). In contrast to the other mothers, Milly does speak, but she

is only "given a total of one and a half broken lines to say (just before she is decapitated)" (Weinstein 92). Despite her quasi-silence, her delivery of a female child following Sutpen's final attempt at patriarchal perfection speaks for her, and when Sutpen discards her in outrage at the baby's gender, Milly's grandfather murders the failed patriarch with Sutpen's own scythe; consequently, these nearly nameless, mute, and fragmented bodies become "the female flesh in which [Sutpen's] name and lineage should be sepulchred" (Faulkner 107).

Deviant biological mothers, although ostensibly peripheral in the text, prove to be a powerful force, but maternity is most subversive to Southern patriarchy in the virginal bodies that utterly undermine and dismantle Sutpen's enterprise. Rosa, Judith, and Clytie, the three paramount virgins of the text, employ unnatural maternity in their function as "not mothers," biologically barren but nonetheless creative figures (Clarke 125). These "*three nuns*" are curiously linked by their unconventionality, portrayed in maternal terms; Clytie's hand upon Rosa's shoulder, like "*a fierce rigid umbilical cord,*" appoints them "*twin sistered to the fell darkness which had produced her*" (Faulkner 124, 112). It is as if Clytie and Rosa are simultaneously born of the same incendiary womb that flouts white patriarchy in its creation of a mixed-raced daughter. Literally sharing Clytie and Rosa's blood, Judith, who is "widowed before she ha[s] been a bride," completes the "*triumvirate mother-woman*" born to generate Sutpen's demise (167, 131). Together, these three "resist the categories that fit so easily into the narrative of patriarchal history-making—dutiful daughter, eager betrothed, faithful servant, obedient retainer," according to Donaldson (27). Despite their racial differences, Rosa, Judith, and Clytie become an inextricable trio of patriarchal repudiation.

Each woman's deliberate resistance of insemination complements the South's downfall, and with it, the dismantling of Sutpen's line.

Judith acquiesces in the engagement with Bon, the unrecognized Sutpen heir, but her complete lack of grief over his death implies a more furtive reality. Rosa claims that Judith "*had chosen spinsterhood already before there was anyone named Charles Bon*," an allegation that explains the puzzling fact that Judith is "*not bereaved*" and "*d[oes] not need to mourn*" his death by her own brother's hand (Faulkner 148, 157). Although Judith may seem to surrender to the suppression of her female body with her engagement to Bon, by choosing to remain the virginal sister of both Bon and Henry, her body functions as the site of untouched desire that becomes the impetus for Henry's abdication of his inheritance and his murder of Bon. The disastrous destiny of Sutpen's line mimics that of the South in Rosa's reaction to the news of Judith's engagement. Rosa begins sewing "garments … for her niece's trousseau" on the eve of the Civil War, and as she weaves from scraps items for Judith's deflowering, Rosa keeps in time with "Lincoln's election" and the secession of Mississippi (61, 63). The two events—the war and Judith's wedding—are twinned in this moment of creation that foreshadows the destruction of the South, Judith's marriage, and ultimately, the patriarchal sway of both. In her act of "whipping lace," Rosa "lose[es] the knell and doom of her native land between two tedious and clumsy stitches," as if sewing the Confederacy's fate into Judith's own matrimonial clothing (61). Hand-in-hand, the marriage and the Confederacy unravel, and Judith, who has chosen to flout the oppressive forces that are symbolized by both, does not mourn.

Once the South has been defeated, Rosa's withholding of *her* fertile body precipitates Sutpen's fateful death. In pure patriarchal style, Sutpen "*decree[s]*" his engagement to Rosa shortly after his return from the war, and on "*the very day*" that he sees his vast property diminished to "*Sutpen's One*," he summons Rosa as if she were "*a bitch dog or a cow or mare*" to breed a son (132, 136). Appalled by his treatment of her, as an animal whose only desired function is the production of a male child, Rosa

rejects Sutpen and removes herself from the plantation. Rosa's response is evidence of the "rank smell of [her] female old flesh long embattled in virginity," as described by Quentin Compson, the young man with whom she shares her stories (4). Faulkner's image of a body "embattled," or fortified, against male copulation is a profound one that interprets Rosa's refusal as a very deliberate and subversive action of her body's own volition (4). Clarke affirms that in "refusing to accept the premise of wife as breeder or woman as body[,] she prefers her marginal, unconventional role as spinster, thereby hastening the collapse of the Sutpen dynasty" (130). Rosa's departure ultimately necessitates Sutpen's insemination of the only other female body he can find, Milly Jones's, and his patriarchal dream perishes in a bloody heap soon thereafter.

Although devoid of biological maternity, Clytie's body, like Judith's and Rosa's, visibly heralds the undoing of female oppression under Sutpen and acts as a surrogate matriarch for the lineage that he has spurned. "*In the very pigmentation of her flesh*," Clytie "*represent[s] that debacle*," the Civil War, as well as the miscegenation that corrupts Sutpen's white bloodline (126). As the product of a slave mother, Clytie's body reflects all that Sutpen fears: daughters, Negro blood, and defiant virginity. These "forces[,] which defeat white southern patriarchy" are noticeably "inscribed on her body;" Furthermore, Clytie usurps the role of the patriarch by inserting her already subversive body into the role of the defender of Sutpen's mixed-race bloodline (Clarke 127, 149). Once Valery Bon is orphaned, Clytie goes "herself to fetch him" from New Orleans, and she and Judith raise the boy in Sutpen's own home (Faulkner 159). Valery's death, too, orphans a distinctively black son, Jim Bond, whom Clytie adopts as well. Bond, like Clytie herself, "inherit[s] what he was, [his blackness,] from his mother"; consequently, as an adoptive mother, Clytie protects this matriarchal line, of which Bond is an heir, that disrupts primogeniture by bequeathing black blood to its offspring

(174). In the closing moments of the narrative, Clytie and Bond enact their final assault on the patriarchal ideal from which they are excluded by burning Sutpen's house, with Henry inside, to the ground. As if it "were flesh," Sutpen's "gaunt and barren household" collapses, and with "nothing out there now but that idiot boy to lurk around those ashes," the patriarch's plantation and his remaining white child are erased from Yoknapatawpha County by Clytie's maternal vengeance (293, 160, 301).

The three virgins, comprising the "*triumvirate mother-woman*" and engendering patriarchy's downfall, utilize their creative potential to generate the narrative that chronicles Sutpen's collapse, and with it, they proliferate their own literary posterity (131). According to Bollinger, "to tell a story is to control the past—historical events are actually created and transformed through the process of narration;" Therefore, in a novel saturated in stories and peopled by a plethora of voices, historical control is not limited to a single, masculine voice (207). Rather, the story's events, specifically those that are unknown to the town of Jefferson, are collected, preserved, and passed on by Clytie, Rosa, and Judith. This production and transference of the story is an active displacement of biological maternity onto the creation of the complete narrative. Throughout the text, Clytie is characterized as one who knows and reveals the secrets that would otherwise remain tenebrous to the male narrators: Mr. Compson, Quentin, and Shreve, Quentin's college roommate. Referring to Bon's undisclosed racial identity, Shreve tells Quentin, "You wouldn't have known what anybody was talking about if you hadn't been out there and seen Clytie" (Faulkner 220); similarly, with the exception of Quentin's grandfather, Clytie is the only one who is "ever to know that Sutpen had gone to New Orleans" to inquire about Bon (55). Rosa also knows the critical intricacies of the tale that she shares with Quentin in her old age, and it is as if maternity itself empowers her in the process of attaining this knowledge. As a child, Rosa "*lurk[s]*" through the Sutpen

home, listening to important, clandestine conversations and events "*unapprehended as though ... shod with the very damp and velvet silence of the womb*" (116). Self-described as "*gestate and complete, not aged, just overdue because of some caesarean lack,*" Rosa is figuratively unborn; she is protected by the maternal womb she inhabits and, consequently, she possesses a heightened sense of hearing that stems from the inhibition of sight and smell within the female body (116). Amassing little known facts and relating the full story of the Sutpen household by means of a latent maternal faculty, Rosa and her fellow virgins conceive and propagate the crucial details that constitute the novel.

Historical artifacts, such as the Sutpen family tombstones and Bon's letter to Judith, are also essential elements preserved by the virginal "not mothers" in order to create the complete narrative and ensure the interminable retelling of the story. All three women oversee the preparation of the graves that memorialize the death of the Sutpen dynasty. Judith "write[s] down for Clytie" instructions concerning several of the stones, including Bon's and Valery's, and "Miss Rosa order[s]" the elaborately phrased inscription on Judith's tombstone (170, 171). Alongside Sutpen's and Ellen's graves, these stones act as indelible proof of the destruction of the Sutpen line for generations of Southerners, like Quentin, to see. Clarke argues that the collection of these gravestones "celebrates the agent of [the family's] ... downfall," and it is clear that the women are committed to the memory of the line's elimination (144). Even the burial of the bodies, specifically Bon's, subverts patriarchal codes, for Bon's grave "vanish[es] slowly back into the earth" as if "*he had never been*" (Faulkner 127,123). In the process of the "*three women put[ting] something into the earth,*" they erase the masculine body as if returning him to the maternal womb (123). Rosa, moreover, maintains that the trio never mentions Bon again; thus, in their "refus[al] to spin stories about him," the women figuratively "*uncreate* Charles" (Bollinger

208). The story of what has been created and "*uncreat[ed]*" must still be passed on as evidence of maternity's subversive power, and like the marked graves, Bon's letter to Judith documenting the death of the Old South upon the Confederacy's defeat is protected (208). Judith, who "most actively concerns herself with preserving a written record … of the suppressed stories underlying the official history of the family's rise and fall," hands down the only letter she deems "worthy" to Quentin's grandmother (Boone 228; Faulkner 102). In this "act of female-to-female transmission," a matriarchal line of sorts, Judith ensures that the fall of the patriarchal South "would … be remembered" (Boone 228; Faulkner 101). Inscribing patriarchy's mortality upon stone and passed-on paper, the triumvirate establishes and shares the facts of Faulkner's narrative that are to be read and reread.

Judith and Clytie certainly participate in the generation and propagation of the story; however, it is Rosa who ultimately revises biological maternity into the literary form of the novel itself. The only published writer in the novel, Rosa possesses a profound capacity for the creation of stories even as she refuses to create physical bodies. She is "the county's poetess laureate" who "issu[es] … poems, ode, eulogy and epitaph," effectively "embalm[ing]" the South's "unregenerate vanquished" (6). In a similar manner, Rosa weaves the tale of *Absalom, Absalom!* because, as Quentin realizes, "*she wants it told*" (5). Erica Lazure dubs the novel "Rosa's gestational terrain," for it is "her version of events, that takes form and regenerates in the minds and memories of those in Yoknapatawpha County and beyond," beginning with Quentin Compson (481, 494). Rosa initiates the narrative by beckoning Quentin's listening ear and instilling the truth of Sutpen's demise in the young man's mind. Lazure finds that Rosa's "voice—with its fertile, horticultural imagery," symbolized by the ever-present wistaria, "seduces Quentin," and together they "birth … this tale" with Quentin as "its heir" (481,

491). Clarke agrees that "Rosa, in a sense, bears the novel … comprised of nine sections," a number that is suggestive of the duration of a biological pregnancy (130, 131). In this act of seduction and birth, Rosa inseminates a patriarchal figure with her own story, ostensibly avenging herself of Sutpen's insult and flipping masculine primacy on its head. Rosa originates this telling and acts as the impetus for Mr. Compson's, Quentin's, and Shreve's retellings of the story.

Although Rosa is the primary female voice of the novel, a number of critics contend that the "control of Rosa's story is actually usurped by Mr. Compson, Quentin, and Shreve" as she is silenced into the role of a "voiceless child." Yet, as the figurative mother of the narrative, Rosa is a commanding presence even among threatening male voices (Wagner-Martin 10). The novel opens with the "wistaria vine," a metaphor for Rosa, whose own name evokes visions of flora, "blooming for the second time" outside of the room in which she creates images of Sutpen and his patriarchal design for Quentin (Faulkner 3). Even as Mr. Compson's voice seems to suspend Rosa's, she lingers, for his own cigar gives off "wistaria colored smoke" (71). Repeatedly, in Quentin's dorm room at Harvard, "the wistaria, the cigar-smell, the fireflies—attenuat[e] up from Mississippi" as Quentin and Shreve continue to narrate and revise the tale of Sutpen's destruction (141). The young men's dialogues are constantly interrupted and overwhelmed by the terms and phrases that typify Rosa's speech. The story that Rosa generates "pervad[es] the chapters like the ever-looming wistaria," and at her death, the wistaria and her "engendering voice" remain with Quentin, her chosen heir (Lazure 480; Clark 140). Even in the final pages of the text, Quentin speaks of "*Miss Rosa*" and stares at the letter from his father detailing her death—the letter that brings with it "the wistaria Mississippi summer" (Faulkner 301). Faulkner not only grants Rosa the voice to initiate the tale of Sutpen's destruction, but he literally weaves her presence into every thread of the

novel as narrators adopt her voice and wistaria invades each chapter. She is no more repressed by the male narrators than her body is oppressed by Sutpen's design. After incubating the story for forty-three years and implanting it within Quentin, Rosa gives birth at last in the form of the text; her final act of subversive maternity is the literary generation of the Sutpen saga.

Originating in the mouth of an ancient, unnaturally maternal virgin, *Absalom, Absalom!* is the tale of the undoing of Thomas Sutpen and, by extension, of the Old South, not by means of blazing guns or Union flags, but by the ones whose bodies have an uncanny potential to create, and, in this novel, to destroy. Although seemingly powerless in the confines of an oppressive patriarchal society, Faulkner's literal and figurative mothers instigate and memorialize the ruination of the Sutpen line through a subversive maternity that produces incestuous, rebellious, and racially mixed children or refuses to produce offspring entirely. As biological mothers, Ellen, Eulalia, the octoroon, Valery's wife, and Milly Jones exist in the margins of the text but guarantee Sutpen's demise even as they surrender to his impregnating force, while the virgins of the text, Judith, Clytie, and Rosa, undermine patriarchy's foundation in their resistance of physical maternity. These barren bodies, thwarting the ideologies of the South with their very existence, effectively generate the narrative in which Sutpen's failure is forever preserved. Gwin maintains that the novel is "Faulkner's most sustained *re*vocation of the Father and his mastery," and as Sutpen's greatest fear proves true, that the "design to which he had dedicated himself would die still-born," Faulkner, indeed, interrogates the socially constructed ideologies that shape Sutpen's dark dream (Gwin 77; Faulkner 200). Bereft of wives, land, and his most desired white progeny, Sutpen is utterly doomed to inhabit the pages of Rosa's literary maternal production as the failed patriarch of *Absalom, Absalom!*

Works Cited

Bollinger, Laurel. "'That Triumvirate Mother-Woman': Narrative Authority and Interdividuality in *Absalom, Absalom!*" *LIT* 9.3 (1998): 197-223. Print.

Boone, Joseph A. "Creations by the Father's Fiat: Paternal Narrative, Sexual Anxiety, and the Deauthorizing Designs of *Absalom, Absalom!*" *Refiguring the Father: New Feminist Readings of Patriarchy*. Ed. Patricia Yeager and Beth Kowaleski-Wallace. Carbondale: Southern Illinois U P, 1989. 209-37. Print.

Clarke, Deborah. *Robbing the Mother: Women in Faulkner*. Jackson: U P of Mississippi, 1994. Print.

Donaldson, Susan V. "Subverting History: Women, Narrative and Patriarchy in *Absalom, Absalom!*" *Southern Quarterly* 26.4 (1988): 19-32. Print.

Faulkner, William. *Absalom, Absalom!* 1936. New York: Random House, 1990. Print.

Gwin, Minrose. *The Feminine and Faulkner: Reading (Beyond) Sexual Difference*. Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1990. Print.

Lazure, Erica Plouffe. "A Literary Motherhood: Rosa Coldfield's Design in *Absalom, Absalom!*" *Mississippi Quarterly* 62.3/4 (2009): 479-96. Print.

Wagner-Martin, Linda. "Rosa Coldfield as Daughter: Another of Faulkner's Lost Children." *Studies in American Fiction* 19.1 (1991): 1-13. Print.

Weinstein, Philip M. "Meditations on the Other: Faulkner's Rendering of Women." *Faulkner and Women*. Ed. Doreen Fowler and Ann J. Abadie. Jackson: U P of Mississippi, 1985. 81-99. Print.

Identifyin(g): Prosopopoeic Play in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*

by Cory Teubner

Cory Teubner is a graduate student and composition teacher at Wichita State University. Having earned a B.A. in philosophy from Kansas State University, he is presently finishing work on his M.A. in English. In coming semesters, Cory will continue teaching collegiate English while pursuing doctoral-level academic work in English literature and critical theory.

The narrator of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* provisionally floats and then retracts various identities, deliberately defying settled identification into the kind of stable personalities prescribed by political interests aiming to harness his symbolic political potential. Synthesizing African American folk traditions with Western forms such as the picaresque and *Bildungsroman*, the book suggests and then denies readers' conventional expectation that the central character, through the transformative processes of plot, will coalesce into a fixed identity, finally reconciled in enlightened self-awareness. In *Invisible Man*, the protagonist's representation remains constantly in flux, suspending collapse into any particular discursive constitution. In the end, the still nameless hero embraces invisibility and stands as a multi-faced personality, a tropic figuration I will show to be born of autobiographical endeavor represented in the tropic language

of "Signifyin(g)," the punning, riffing, playful double-talk that Henry Louis Gates argues defines African American poetics. Ellison uses these devices to give us our narrator's face, an attempt at *prosopopoeia*, "the trope of autobiography" as theorized by Paul de Man (Man 926). This innovation—what, in deference to Gates, I will call "Identifyin(g)"—offers a solution to de Man's skeptical claim that autobiographical efforts are ultimately futile, effacing what they propose to bring into being. By giving prosopopoeia a uniquely African American spin, by embracing effacement—invisibility—and play, Ellison's protagonist provides what Jacques Derrida calls for in *Structure, Sign, and Play*: "being ... conceived as presence or absence on the basis of the possibility of play and not the other way around" (292). Thus, Ellison and his protagonist propose empowering possibilities for asserting space in American national identity for speechless and otherwise invisible Others.

Gates has defined "Signifyin'(g)" as the central trope, "the rhetorical principle," (44) of African American literature and analyzed its structure and workings. Investigating the deep roots of African-American literary culture, Gates explicates the Signifying Monkey, a linguistically sophisticated stock character who recurs in African American folk poetry. The Signifying Monkey, like its pan-African counterpart, Esu-Elegbara, stands in for what Gates argues are indigenous African tropic structures that govern the production of meaning in the relevant literary traditions. Unlike Esu-Elegbara, however, the Signifying Monkey's particular poetics have been born of a "confrontation between two parallel discursive universes," a confrontation, that is, "between Afro-American culture and American culture" (45). In the Signifying Monkey poems once sung by American slaves, a monkey repeatedly undermines a lion's power by using "double speech" to trick him into taking the monkey's words literally. According to Gates, the monkey's rhetoric is essentially concerned with resisting dominant semantic structures. Because "signification" is

a "fundamental term in the standard English semantic order" (46), the Black slang term "Signifyin(g)," which Gates denotes with a dropped "g" to suggest a common pattern of pronunciation in Black Vernacular English, confronts its white homonym "signifying" in an important location of this conflict.

Signifyin(g), for Gates a "shadowy revision" of its white counterpart, operates by replacing the "semantic register by the rhetorical" (48)—by, in Saussurean terms, pairing a particular "signifier" with a complex of rhetorical figures instead of with a more rigid concept or "signified." To illustrate this relationship between Standard and Black Vernacular English, Gates offers a chart with two axes, a horizontal one representing the "semantic axis" and a vertical one representing the "rhetorical axis." According to Gates' scheme, the vertical "rhetorical axis" is the province of Signifyin(g) tropes, and therein resides a "chaos" of oblique, deferred meanings and contexts, "everything that must be excluded for meaning to remain coherent and linear" (50). Signifyin(g) performs a literary "re-doubling" that vertically inflates the range of meanings available in an utterance otherwise entrenched in a flat, literal semantic chain. This re-doubling compounds meanings into a "double-voice" that disrupts the "semantic orientation of signification," rendering the sign unstable, "demonstrat[ing] [it] to be mutable" (50).

Signifyin(g) is "repetition … with a signal difference" (51). The "difference" is a consequence of word play, a riffed and revised multiplicity of meanings "inscribed within a relation of identity" (45), which revives and repeats meanings that dominant semantic discourse would perpetually defer. This is Jacques Derrida's *differance*, the condition of totalizing systems such as history or science, which, via an infinite "play of substitutions" (Derrida 289), threatens to demonstrate "the lost or impossible presence of the absent origin" and engender the "structuralist thematic of broken immediacy" (292). Broken immediacy, for Derrida,

results in "anxiety" to which totalizing systems attempt a response, a "reassuring certitude" on the basis of which "anxiety can be mastered" (279). For him, play in the instability of difference demonstrates a condition of being "implicated in" and, thus, "at stake in the game from the outset," of having exposed a system's lack of a center and, thus, lack of presence. Gates finds this anxiety—a "sense of vertigo" (45)—to be the result of Signifyin(g) play that subverts the stable semantic chain.

Ellison, a world-class Signifier, works in *Invisible Man* to destabilize a semantic order that would render his narrator irrelevant to history or reify him into a subjugated named identity. It is this sensibility, perhaps, that he expresses in his literary aim, to "take advantage of the novel's capacity for telling the truth while actually telling a 'lie,' which is the Afro-American folk term for an improvised story" (Ellison, xxii). Improvisational punning and play figure centrally throughout *Invisible Man*, notably in IM's experience in the Liberty Paints factory hospital. When discombobulated vertigo puts him on the defensive, he falls—reflexively, it would seem—into Signifyin(g) irony. He internally mocks the interrogator's written question "WHO WAS YOUR MOTHER?" by playing the dozens—"And how's *your* old lady today?" (241). The doctor seems to lose when his eyes "blaze with annoyance" (241), and IM cannot answer the question. In IM's mind, the doctor is "playing around with … childish names" (242), and when he plays back "like an old man attempting to catch a small boy in some mischief" (242) he feels "like a clown" (243). This give and take goes on until the interrogator, "Old Friendly Face" to the narrator, gets the upper hand, invoking the African-American folk character Buckeye the Rabbit in an apparent attempt (however essentializing) to spur IM's memory. Though the doctor—who shifts to the impolite "Brer Rabbit"—has "hit upon an old identity" (242), IM simultaneously refuses and admits it; it is "too ridiculous – and somehow too dangerous" (242). Picking up the internal banter, he cracks

that Brer Rabbit was "your mother's back-door man" (242), a double entendre referring to the contradictory identifications of blacks as servants and reservoirs of projected sexual desire, and a dozens-style slam on the man's mom. This double-voiced response is quintessential Signifyin(g), a spontaneous revision of the doctor's dialogue in real time. Tellingly, at the factory hospital, stricken speechless, IM defaults into the Signifyin(g) mode of communication. To play the dozens is to try to stupefy or stun an opponent with insults; indeed, according to Gates, "dozens" comes from an eighteenth-century word that describes just that condition (Gates 71). At the factory hospital, this vertigo infuses the lived experience of unsettled identity, and produces IM's ornery (internal) exchange with the doctor. If the Liberty Paints explosion knocked him unconscious, and the electro-shock therapy knocked him silly, vertigo—like that of Gates and the anxiety of Derrida—characterizes the experience of identity grappling IM undergoes. He struggles to understand "progressions of sound" around him but loses their meanings in "the vast whiteness in which … [he] was lost" (238). He views his hospital attendants from a "disturbing" angle, disoriented by their "mysterious pantomime" (239). When he realizes that he does not know his own name, he "plunges into the blackness of [his] mind" (239). The question eventually strikes him "limp with fatigue," and he wonders whether he is anything but "this blackness and bewilderment and pain" (240). IM's punning interior voice, while he is "whirling about in [his] mind" and "fretting over [his] identity" (242), reaches for aspects of his personality that "blackness" doesn't exhaust. And yet, the grappling takes double-voiced rhetorical form: Signifyin(g).

Pressed to articulate his identity, then IM—responding with silence—can only invert the doctor's questions, undermining the factory hospital's attempt to corral IM's personality into words. IM's effort to find the words that will make him known, to name himself, is a patently

autobiographical move; it is "prosopopoeic." *Prosopopoeia*, a term in use at least as early as Quintilian's *Institutes of Oratory*, names uses of language that posit the presence of personalities where they would otherwise not be found. As the OED puts it, prosopopoeia is a relative of *personification* and a "rhetorical device by which an imaginary, absent, or dead person is represented as speaking or acting" ("Prosopopoeia," def. 1). Prosopopoeic devices such as the simple attribution of spoken dialogue to real or imagined characters may be at work in writing of all kinds, fiction and non-fiction alike; in autobiography they function centrally. De Man has elaborated prosopopoeia as "the trope of autobiography, by which one's name … is made as intelligible and memorable as a face" (926). Below, however, we will see what is already evident at the factory hospital; IM's autobiographical mode—his particular prosopopoeia—functions with a uniquely African American inflection, a Signifyin(g) antagonism, that registers possibilities de Man has not imagined. Ellison, to be sure, operates in a prosopopoeic idiom, riffing on a history of autobiography available in European, American and African-American literary traditions. Though *Invisible Man* is a work of fiction, its first person narrator and family resemblance to slave narratives—not to mention its occasional parallels with Ellison's life—suggest that the exigencies of autobiography may supply a useful category of analysis. As Valerie Smith notes, Ellison's project, "by linking the narrative act to the achievement of identity … [engages] a tradition of Afro-American letters that originated with the slave narratives of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries" (191). John Wright has shown *Invisible Man* to be reluctantly, antagonistically informed by some conventions of *Kunstlerroman*, demonstrating Ellison's awareness "that narratives of artistic evolution frequently have a ritual substructure" (245) in conversation with such Western narrative logics as myths of "heroic biography" analyzed by Lord Raglan in his 1936, *The Hero: A Study in Tradition, Myth, and Drama* (222). Consider as

well Ellison's unequivocal assertion that the search for identity is "*the* American theme" ("Art," emphasis in original). As autobiography, as *Kunstlerroman*, perhaps, the book's plot is explicitly concerned with identity formation and artistic awakening as IM cycles through various transitory identifications ranging from the protagonist's adolescent reverence for material prosperity, say, as a youthful merit-student, to pursuit of a particular variety of historical relevance as a political leader. The reader follows the unnamed subject across a terrain of life episodes, each positing a particular social identity, which IM tries to reconcile with his own self-estimation. As autobiography, then, the book precludes the expectation of a fixed identity from the start, a tendency well-enough suggested by the narrator-protagonist's lack of a name; even talking about the main character resists his easy designation as a coherent, stable subject. On the other hand, though, autobiographical forms promise an eventual settling, after a coming-of-age transformation, into a particular identity. A reader might, therefore, expect *Invisible Man's* fictional autobiographer to grow into a suitable name, a final climactic stroke of self-illumination rendering him prosopopoeically visible. At the moment of this achievement, however, the usual tropes of autobiography would prove unstable. Ultimate discursive effacement, in de Man's view, is the hopeless outcome of prosopopoeia which "deals with the giving *and* taking away of faces, with face *and* deface, figure, figuration *and* disfiguration" (926, my emphasis). As autobiography, then, if de Man is right, *Invisible Man* could not hope to accomplish a socially useful negotiation to create an empowered visibility.

But our narrator never takes a name. Each of his various identifications —as honor student, paint-making laborer set on bootstrap-style uplift, communist leader, or underground renegade—is not only discursively conceived, but also discursively denied. Every major turning point in the novel hinges on singularly linguistic limitations on the

narrator's trajectory of awakening. From the speeches of Barbee and Trueblood, to Bledsoe's pernicious letters, to the consequences of the protagonist's own speeches for the Brotherhood, every episode proposes to give the protagonist a discursive face but, ultimately, leaves him floundering in the vertigo of invisibility. This pattern is imminently manifest, for example, when IM destroys the contents of his briefcase—documents and artifacts of identification—burning each in turn: his high-school diploma, Clifton's doll, the anonymous letter, and Jack's slip bearing IM's "brotherhood name" (568). Ellison might have naturally added to this list IM's high-school graduation speech, Bledsoe's letters and the "official looking" (32) scholarship to college. Each of these documents, as he says of Brother Jack's note, had "named [him] and set [him] running with one and the same stroke of the pen" (568). The only self-illumination provided by these "feeble torches" (568) leaves him (in a reprise of his factory hospital vertigo) "whirling on in the blackness," eventually cast "headlong … into another dimensionless room" (ibid).

Back at the factory hospital, it was a demand for his name, an attempt to constitute him discursively, that IM deliriously evaded, "giddy with the delight of self-discovery and the desire to hide it" (241). In fact, the goal of the electric "lobotomy" machine that IM loses himself in, as stated drily by the doctors, is a "complete … change of personality" to make him an "amiable fellow" so that "society will suffer no traumata on his account" (236). And Old Friendly Face will be satisfied when IM speaks his own name, giving proof that the hospital's treatments have been successful. Now the doctor may write it down closing a clerical loop, perhaps, that depends on the reification of IM's discursive likeness. The demand that IM produce a name—the name's *felt absence*—gives presence to the lack and "organizes the vagueness that drifted through [IM's] head" (239). He can think of many names that don't "seem to fit" even though he feels "as though [he] was somehow a part of all of them …

submerged within them and lost" (241). He is sure his name is on the tip of his tongue, that he "would remember soon enough" and that he "would solve the mystery the next instant" (242). Confusion overwhelms him in contradictory identifications; he feels like he is "being both criminal and detective" (242). Oddly, the doctor leaves "pleased" and "smiling" (242), satisfied before IM ever produces his name. Evidently his questioning—the Brer Rabbit barb—provoked a reaction in IM's demeanor sufficient to settle for him the question of IM's mental presence and identity. IM's silence and namelessness figure lightly in the doctor's assessment; a flicker of recognition and hostility is enough to settle the doctor's query that this black man—a "primitive" subject for medical experiment (236)—knows himself and things are as they should be. Old Friendly Face, aiming to document IM in order to channel his identity into the institutional rationality of the hospital, deems IM consciously present; he is as visible for the institution as he can be, assuredly present in "the blackness of his mind" (239).

But for de Man, presence is what the doctor's prosopopoeic construct prevents; for whenever an artist posits "voice or face by means of language [...] we are deprived of ... the shape and sense of a world" (930). Yet, the shape and sense of IM's world—the Signifyin(g) grammar of his experience—may rightly be what we see distilled during IM's conscious silence at the hospital. By combining IM's Signifyin(g) flair with prosopopoeic face-making, and by inverting the autobiographical tropic system (in a scene rich with imagery of childbirth, a Lacan-inspired birth into language, perhaps, and deeply symbolic of what Gates sees as a uniquely African-American consciousness), Ellison may have brought our protagonist into being *by virtue of* his silent invisibility. Though the prosopopoeic face of this being—a Signifyin(g) photo-negative of the doctor's institutional discourse—stays quiet at the hospital, our protagonist has had his first, embryonic glimpse at a truly empowering

mode of expression: Identifyin(g).

Ellison's autobiographical project in *Invisible Man* employs a special prosopopoeia; he builds face-making, specular tropes with the double-voiced poetics that Signifyin(g) intones. That is, prosopopoeic effacement —which would, on de Man's account of autobiography, make the novel incapable of giving visibility or being to the long-suppressed aspect (indeed, the *face*) of African-American identity—does not tell the whole story of our protagonist's invisibility. De Man's tropes are anchored in a Western semantic order and it is in this respect that autobiography "is the manifestation, on the level of the referent, of a linguistic structure" (922), prime material, that is, for Signifyin(g) revision. Prosopopoeia is a master trope, perhaps, pegged to Gates' horizontal, semantic axis. His description of Signifyin(g) play—the "slave-trope" as he calls it in passing—as fusing vertical meanings "within a relation of *identity*" (45, my emphasis), takes on added significance in this context. Signifyin(g) on prosopopoeic figures, revising, playing with, or riffing them, Ellison is *Identifyin(g)*. Thus, he may prosopo-propose a multiplicity of identifications that, in the end, subverts de Man's ultimate censure, and that autobiography "demonstrates ... the impossibility of coming into being ... of all textual systems made up of tropological substitutions" (922).

If Signifyin(g), as Gates sums it up, is "a metaphor for textual revision" (88), Identifyin(g) is the same, but with Gates' signal difference: Identifyin(g) applies to figurative identities. Likewise, if Signifyin(g) turns on homonyms, Identifyin(g) turns on homologies, to steal a biological term from *Merriam-Webster's Medical Dictionary*: "likeness in structure between parts of different organisms" ("Homology," 1a). An almost desperate vertigo and a comical, fast-motion flexibility of homologous personalities crescendo when the narrator finds himself Identifyin(g) on Rinehart, a bafflingly incoherent, shape-shifting Harlem local. The narrator's experience when he is repeatedly mistaken for Rinehart shows

Rinehart to be an artful Identifier, a "player" in many senses of the word, playing with different identities to master different situations. And Rinehart, who appears in the book only in the language of the narrator and other characters (one discursive level removed, I suppose, from the literary presence of the other characters who, of course, are also given in the language of the narrator and other characters), is clearly rendered as a problematic prosopopoeic construct. From the start of this episode, it is IM's speech which most threatens to betray his visual disguise, anchoring the real Rinehart's everyday "passing" in the verbal domain. He is, perhaps, a prosopo-passer, or better, a prosopo-poser. The first person, who mistakes IM calls him out for not "talk[ing] like Rine" and demands his "story" (483). Later, the group of men, who rush to defend Rinehart from the "paddies," warn IM that to "act like Rinehart" he needs a "smooth tongue" (493). At Rev. Rinehart's church, IM must disguise his voice to trick a couple of fawning parishioners.

IM's experience as Rinehart allows him to see a broader view of reality, to see through the limitation of illusory fixed identities, "to see the world [...] without boundaries" (498). By Identifyin(g), by playing with discursive constitution, he may "make [himself] anew" (499). As in his factory hospital rebirth, this revelation comes with a hallmark vertigo; it is "too much for [him]" when the scene inside Rinehart's church "quiver[s] vague and mysterious in the green light" (498); his "body start[s] to itch, as though [he] had just been removed from a plaster cast" (499); and he finds it "frightening, for now the world seemed to flow before [his] eyes" (499). Because vertigo and anxiety characterize the existential experience of the play of substitutions in a broken semantic chain, they are the condition of the "double-faced" consciousness and identities in flux. Thus, we can look to instances of vertigo in the novel as signals of prosopopoeic contortion in progress. After Bledsoe kicks him out of school, for example, IM stumbles outside weak and nauseated and sees the

"whirling, double-imaged moon" (ibid), while his head also "whirls in a circle" (ibid). After the disorienting shock at Liberty Paints, Mary Rambo acts as an anchor for his identity, preventing him from "whirling off into some unknown, which [he] dared not *face*" (258 emphasis added). Before IM's eviction speech—a transformative moment when he begins to self-identify through political engagement—a dispossessed couple's array of belongings dizzy him in a "rising whirlpool of emotion" (272).

De Man warns against this vertigo, professing the bleak impossibility of avoiding being "caught in double motion, the necessity to escape from the tropology of the subject and the equally inevitable re-inscription of this necessity within a specular model of cognition" (923). But IM's inverted autobiographical transformation—one that transpires through self-denial rather than self-discovery—makes peace with the vertigo by embracing the "double motion." In the sewer, IM chooses invisibility, emancipating himself from his life's perpetual birth and rebirth in prosopopoeic constitution, and whirls again, now into "a state neither of dreaming nor of waking, but somewhere in between" (568). Vertigo, arguably a source of plot tension in standard autobiographical works, here results not in a "waking" from illusion, but from a dispersion of identity. IM has learned to prevent such a waking by using the tropes of Signifyin(g) and Identifyin(g) as Gates embraces them, to "luxuriate in the chaos of ambiguity that repetition and difference yield either in an aural or visual pun" (45).

The ultimate lesson of IM's sequence of floated identities, then, is to acknowledge chaos as more real—and more fruitfully empowering—than oppressive institutionalized reality. As IM puts it, "until some gang succeeds in putting the world in a strait jacket, its definition is possibility" (576). De Man has fatalistically succumbed to a model of interpretation that Derrida argues comes at the expense of one that "affirms play and tries to pass beyond man [who] ... throughout his entire history ... has

dreamed of full presence, the reassuring foundation, the origin and the end of play" (292). For de Man, autobiography "demonstrates ... the impossibility of closure and of totalization ... of all textual systems made up of tropological substitutions" (922). For him, this is tantamount to "the impossibility of coming into being" (ibid). And Derrida, it seems, would concur, arguing that in the face of standard semantic orders "play is the disruption of presence" (292). For Gates and Ellison, though, play—in *Invisible Man*, Identifyin(g)—disrupts the *suppression* of presence amidst a semantic order; it is the catalyst for new presence, one consisting, perhaps, in invisibility. As such, *Invisible Man* prescribes Identifyin(g) to escape the enslaving limitations of falsely totalizing social identities: "Step outside the narrow borders of what men call reality" he writes, "and you step into chaos—ask Rinehart, he's a master of it" (576).

Disturbance from "outside the narrow borders" (576) of an established structure is a central theme in *Invisible Man*; it serves not only as a strategy of resistance, but also as a catalyst for wielding invisibility as an empowered identity. The book's prologue—expressing, paradoxically, the new vision from the point of view of the fully-awakened narrator – anticipates this theme, road-mapping possibilities for resistance from amidst the invisible cracks of ubiquitous systems of power, or better, the un-named interstices of pervasive but demonstrably contingent rationalities. IM, "hibernating" in his basement, steals from Monopolated Light & Power by milking juice from beneath the company's "master meter," safe in an off-the-grid Harlem "border area" (Ellison 5). Like a "yokel" boxer he saw bring down a "scientific" prizefighter by exploiting "his opponent's sense of time" (8), IM operates from the power company's systematic gaps, "draining off" power by evading its metered counting of time (kilowatt hours). Similar possibilities, for IM, pulse in jazz music, which like "invisibility ... gives one a slightly different sense of time" (ibid). By synching with jazz' rhythms, and becoming aware of its "nodes,

those points where time stands still or from which it leaps ahead ... you slip into the breaks and look around" (ibid). Playfully injecting fresh modes of self-expression into otherwise rigid rhythmic systems, jazz musicians disrupt the formal codes of traditional Western music to create space for a uniquely African-American musical idiom.

In jazz music, as in the yokel's powerful punch, IM descries a model for subverting the social, political, and intellectual systems that render him invisible. Inside musical "breaks," the "silence of sound" (13) allows IM to "discover unrecognized compulsions of [his] being" (ibid). In fact, the Signifyin(g) capacities of jazz music figure prominently in Gates' discussion, as well. He notes that Count Basie and Oscar Peterson have composed pieces "structured around the idea of revision and implication" (123). Gates, like Ellison, finds expression amidst rhythmic interstices when a "Signified" beat "merg[es] two structures together to create an ellipsis of the downbeat" (123). *Invisible Man*, Identifyin(g) in a swinging jazz idiom, creates possibilities for overcoming invisible irrelevance, for giving life to a pulsing heartbeat, perhaps, which, like the syncopated jazz beat, "is rendered present by its absence" (123) and, thus, attains both present and absent.

Punning, rhythmic Signifyin(g), and the presence in absence of Identifyin(g) play, all synthesize in one of *Invisible Man's* virtuosic climaxes when IM poses as Rinehart in a "wild starburst of metamorphosis" (Ellison xxiii). Donning green glasses and a wide hat and plunging into the rhythms of Rinehart's situation, IM is off-time, in a sense, reveling in the "broken immediacy" (Derrida 292) that makes the charade possible. He is never exposed by directly encountering Rinehart, for he is "for once ... on time" (Ellison 483) to Rinehart's girlfriend, who expects the real Rinehart to be late; he tells the police he is not Rinehart "this time" (492); a group of men expect Rinehart to be sporting a Cadillac "at this time of night" (493); when a prostitute mistakes him, he quips that he is

sorry "for the first time tonight" (494); and even the ladies at the church say he's "here a little early" (497). Just off-beat, then, IM improvises his way through the sundry roles Rinehart plays. Instead of the word *play*, though, Ellison's punning gives us ellipses, the word's hinted, punned presence leaving him, "free to imply it," as Gates says of a jazz musician Signifyin(g) the beat (123). Harlem locals know Rinehart as one who "plays it cool" (Ellison 484). A consummate *player*, Rinehart collects money from a prostitute with whom he is evidently *playing* around, in spite of his girlfriend. Recognized in a bar as Rinehart (where IM has gone in to *play* a trick on his friend Maceo), *playful* language almost results in *gunplay*. In other offices, Rinehart *plays* the numbers game as a runner, and an implied pun has him keeping local police on *payola*, and *playing* for fools the *praying* congregation of his church. Prosopopoeic play figures in the presence-in-absence of Rinehart, as it circles but never lands on a discursive center that would render him totally intelligible and, if de Man is correct, negate his presence.

Embracing invisibility—gesturing to ellipsized reality—may upend the presence/absence distinction, so that we see "no longer from the standpoint of a concept of finitude as relegation to the empirical, but from the standpoint of the concept of play" (Derrida 289). But, as IM demonstrates, this constitutes more than a philosophical proposition, whether skeptical like de Man's or inspiring like Derrida's. The stakes are much higher; they concern the lived experience and existential condition—the double-consciousness, perhaps, the vertigo and angst—of so-called hyphenated-American Others, and the possibility of achieving empowered being through discursive, prosopopoeic play.

From his underground location "shut off and forgotten during the nineteenth century" (Ellison 6)—outside of totalizing history, perhaps, and like a jazzman filling rhythmic gaps—IM fills discursive ellipses with personality. Ever Identifyin(g), IM wedges himself deep into "the

margins of discourse" (Gates 45) and widens them, amplifying the "tension between play and history" (Derrida 292). He is a "thinker-tinker" (Ellison 7), an embodiment of praxis, and mediates the distinction between thought and action by bleeding white power into the gaps, where the incubating light can "confirm [his] reality" and "give birth to [his] form" (6). Signifyin(g), "ever punning, ever troping, ever embodying the ambiguities of language" (Gates 52), forces an expansion of meanings available in standard discourse, "proffer[ing] [a] critique of the sign as the difference that blackness makes within the larger political culture and its historical unconscious" (45). Identifyin(g) may give face to this difference or, generally speaking, to *differance*. If, as Gates argues, we can "think of American discourse as both the opposition between and the ironic identity of the movement, the very vertigo, that we encounter in a mental shift between the two terms" (50), then he is right, as well, that tracking "double-voiced" utterances, identifying one text's Signifyin(g) on another will "allow us to chart discrete formal relationships in Afro-American literary history" (88). Likewise, keeping a lookout for Identifyin(g) "double-faces" may help us identify points of contact between the invisible, unnamed, effaced aspects of American culture and the expanded potential for being and identity they engender.

Works Cited

Derrida, Jacques. "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences." Trans. Alan Bass. *Writing and Difference*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1978. 278-293. Print.

Ellison, Ralph. *Invisible Man*. New York: Vintage, 1980. Print.

---. "The Art of Fiction No. 8." *The Paris Review*. N.p. Spring (1955). Web. 9 Feb. 2011.

Gates, Henry Louis. *The Signifying Monkey*. New York: Oxford U P, 1988. Print.

"Homology." Def. 1a. *Merriam Webster's Medical Dictionary*. Merriam-Webster, 2011. Web. 9 Feb. 2011.

Man, Paul de. "Autobiography as De-facement." *MLN: Modern Language Notes*. Vol. 94 (1979). 919-930. Print.

"Prosopopoeia." Def. 1. *The Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford U P, 2010. Web. 9 Feb. 2011.

Smith, Valerie. "The Meaning of Narration in *Invisible Man*." *Ralph Ellison's* Invisible Man*: A Casebook*. Ed. John F. Callahan. New York: Oxford U P, 2004. 189-220. Print.

Wright, John S. "The Conscious Hero and the Rites of Man: Ellison's War." *Ralph Ellison's* Invisible Man*: A Casebook*. Ed. John F. Callahan. New York: Oxford U P, 2004. 221-252. Print.

Conversion and Inversion: Chaucer's Man of Law and Wife of Bath

by Michelle Parsons

Michelle Parsons is a second-year English Master's student at California State University, Long Beach. She has presented at the Medieval and Renaissance Student Association conference, and will be presenting at the 2011 PAMLA conference.

In the commonly accepted ordering of the *Canterbury Tales*, Fragment II, consisting of the "Man of Law's Tale" and the aborted "Shipman's Prologue," is placed in a disconnected space between Fragment I, including the Knight, the Miller, the Reeve, and the Cook, and Fragment III, which begins with the oft-quoted "Wife of Bath's Prologue." G. L. Kittredge argues in his "Chaucer's Discussion of Marriage," that the Wife of Bath begins the new "marriage group" of tales, which are unconnected to any of the tales that have gone before. He furthermore asserts that this group of tales concerns a debate about authority in marriage, and that the "Franklin's Tale" of an equitable marriage is "what Chaucer thought about marriage" (Kittredge 467). He furthermore claims that the tales are important only because they reveal the opinions of the characters, and work with the dramatic frame of the prologues and responses to enact

a roadside drama (Kittredge 435). Cai Zong-qi expands the argument in his article "Fragments I-II and III-V in *The Canterbury Tales*: A Re-examination of the Idea of the Marriage Group," asserting that the Marriage Group is in fact connected to the previous fragments, I and II, as a continuing discussion of different kinds of marriage. I agree with Zong-qi that the Wife of Bath is actually connected to earlier fragments. However, I argue specifically that the tales of the Man of Law and the Wife of Bath are intricately connected through their structure and their discussions of marriage, economics, and religion. I also explore the importance of the connection between the tales based on the apparent possibility that these were originally the first two tales of the competition. Ultimately, the Wife of Bath rejects the model of saintly wifehood presented by the Man of Law, which sets up a debate for the rest of the tales between worldly enjoyment and spiritual perfection.

The very structure of the two prologues and tales suggests that the "Wife of Bath's Tale" may be a deliberate inversion of the tale of the Man of Law. First, in lines 39 to 98, the Man of Law demurs his authority to tell a tale, claiming that Chaucer has already told all the proper tales of lovers in *The Seintes Legende of Cupide*, also known as *The Legend of Good Women* (Boenig & Taylor 116), and he does not wish to tell of incestuous relationships. Then, from lines 99 through 121, he condemns "poverte," then moves to a praise of merchants in lines 122 through 133, who he claims are both wise in their riches and are the carriers of news, which is how he learned his tale. The tale of the Man of Law extends from line 134 through 1162, a length of 1028 lines, and tells of the virtuous life of the young, rich, noble, and beautiful Custance. Her marriages are in the forms of exchanges; her self in exchange for conversion to Christianity. She is a holy wife, and after her marriage to Alla ends with his early death, Custance returns to her father and lives out her life in chaste, pious widowhood. "The Man of Law's Tale" ends with a prayer, "Now Jhesu

Crist, that of his myght may sende/ Joye after wo, governe us in his grace / And kepe us alle that been in this place. Amen."

"The Wife of Bath's Prologue" begins with her claim that she needs no authority except for experience to tell her tale (1-5). The Wife's prologue extends from line 1 through line 828, and tells of her experience as an enthusiastic wife seeking her sixth husband after being widowed five times. She quotes extensively from *The Book of Wikked Wyves* (685), which is the misogynistic text read to her by her fifth husband. She then proceeds to convey a short tale, lasting only from lines 857 through 1264, which tells of a knight who has raped a young woman and must determine what women want most in order to save his life. The hag who gives him the answer demands that he marry her, but he upbraids her for her low birth, her poverty, her age, and her ugliness; in short, for being exactly what Custance is not. The hag gives a speech on the spiritual quality, rather than the inherited quality, of being gentil (1109-1176), and then gives another lecture on the spiritual benefits of poverty from lines 1177 to 1206, which is within five lines of being equal length to the diatribe on poverty given by the Man of Law. Finally, by granting the hag authority over their marriage, the knight gains a blissful, lifelong marriage (1257-8). The Wife also ends with a prayer, but it is partially a curse as well:

> And Jhesu Crist us sende
> Housbondes meeke, younge, and fressh abedde
> And grace to t'overbyde hem that we wedde.
> And eek I pray Jhesu shorte hir lyves
> That nat wol be governed by hir wyves.
> And olde and angry nygardes of dispence,
> God sende hem soone verray pestilence! (1258-1264)

The overall structure, then, of the "Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale" is arranged in such a way as to invert the "Man of Law's Prologue and

Tale." Even the name of Custance, which is a virtue name suggesting constant virtue and constant dependence on "goddes sonde," is contrary to Alysoun's response to the idea that women like best "to been holden stable and eek secree,' / And in o purpos stedefastly to dwelle / And nat biwreye thyng that men us telle./ But that tale is nat worth a rake-stele! / Pardee, we wommen konne nothyng hele!" (946-50) Alys or Alysoun's name is not a virtue, but instead a real woman's name. Custance is described as a nearly objectified paragon:

> In hire is heigh beautee withoute pride,
> Yowthe withoute grenehede or folye.
> To alle hire werkes vertu is hir gyde.
> Humblesse hath slayn in hire al tirannye.
> She is mirour of alle curteisye.
> Hir herte is verray chambre of hoolynesse,
> Hir hand minstre of fredam for almesse (162-168)

However, the Wife says that "be we [women] never so vicious withinne, / We wol been holden wise and clene of synne" (943-4), suggesting that the reputation of a real woman is not always matched with her actual personality or actions.

The tale of the Wife of Bath responds to the tale of the Man of Law, which is specifically the story of a woman who is a holy, reluctant wife and a chaste and virtuous widow. The Wife of Bath tells her tale as an enthusiastic wife who declares that she will not "lyve parfitly" (111) in chaste widowhood, but instead find a sixth husband. The Wife of Bath's description of women is tied closely to the descriptions of the Sowdanesse and Donegild, both of whom we assume are widows, given the lack of men in their lives. They too, like the Wife of Bath, seem to desire "sovereynetee"(WoB 1038); Donegild is accused of "tirannye" (779), and the Sowdaness "hirself wolde al the contree lede" (434). The Man of Law describes the Sowdanesse as a "serpent under femynynytee" (360),

claiming that since Satan knows that women are more easily influenced, based on his experience with Eve, he makes his "instrument ...of wommen when [he] wolt bigile!" (370-1). The Wife proclaims that "half so boldely kan ther no man / Swere and lye as kan a womman" (227-8). According to the Wife of Bath, "[d]eceite, wepying, spynning God hath yeve / To wommen kyndely whil that they may lyve" (401-2).The worldly woman who is championed in the "Wife of Bath's Prologue" is linked with the worldly women in the "Man of Law's Tale," which suggests that she too may be serving the spiritual foe in pursuing her worldly advantage. Furthermore, the Sowdanesse is described as a "cursed krone" (433). One of the reproofs of the knight against his wife in the "Wife of Bath's Tale" is that she is old, which the wife describes as a virtue, since it preserves her fidelity (1213-6). Furthermore, the Wife claims that a "wydwe... been wise" (1027), suggesting that age beyond the marriage years is good for the development and use of worldly wisdom.

Custance takes leave of her earthly mother, and takes on a spiritual mother instead in the form of the Virgin Mary. Custance claims that she will never more see her "mooder," since she is going away to be married (276). This worldly mother never appears again in the text. Her mothers-in-law each hatch a plot to set her adrift on the ocean. Donegild, in fact, is slain by her own son, Alla, in revenge for the banishment of Custance (893-4), while the Sowdanesse is assumed slain in the revenge strike of the Roman Emperor's army (955-65). However, her spiritual mother Mary saves her, first in the trial (641), then when she is set adrift in the boat with her son (832, 841-54), later when she is attacked by the second attempted rapist (920), and finally when she is returned to the Romans (950). However, Alysoun speaks only of her worldly mother. She claims that "I folwed ay my dammes loore" (583) in order to trick men into marrying her, using various forms of "soutiltee," like claiming that a man has used an enchantment on her (574-5). This language is similar to

the language used for the deliberations of the Sowdan's counselors, when "Many a subtil resoun forth they leyden. / They speken of magyk and abusioun" (213-4).

The associations with magic also differ greatly between the two tales. In the "Man of Law's Tale," the Sowdan's advisors first consider using magic to gain Custance for the Sowdan, but instead decide to be christened so that the Sultan can marry Custance (214-7), suggesting that worldly magic might disrupt the spiritual nature of Custance herself, and thus fail to satisfy the Sowdan's desire for her. Donegild also attempts to alienate Custance and Alla by claiming that Custance "was an elf by aventure / Ycomen by charmes or by sorcerie" (754-5), and thus, was a monstrous creature who had deceived Alla. In the "Wife of Bath's Tale," however, it is magic, and not religion, that forms positive force of the tale. She claims that at the time of the story, "Al was this land fulfild of fairye. / The Elf Queene with hir joly compaignye / Daunced ful ofte in many a grene mede" (859-61). The religious figures that have driven out the "elves" are "lymytours and othere hooly freres" (864, 866) who "ne wol doon [women] but dishonour" (881). The patriarchal spiritual representatives are the people who prey on worldly women, in contrast to the woman who prays to spiritual figures to save her from worldly foes. The "wyf" is seen in the same place where the "compaignye" of the fairies has been dancing (990-8), suggesting that she is a fairy who transforms in order to perform the correction of the erring knight.

The tale of the Wife of Bath rewrites the story of the punishment of a rapacious knight; rather than being punished by God, he is reformed through the power of women. In the "Man of Law's Tale," Dame Custance is attacked twice by men who want to possess her physically. The first time, the knight is acting specifically under the influence of Satan. When she refuses to "do no synne by no weye" (590), the knight accuses her falsely of murder, but the knight is miraculously blinded for

swearing a false oath (668-72). The second time, when she is physically attacked, "blisful Marie heelp hire right anon, / For with hir struglying wel and myghtily, / The theef fil overbord al sodenly...O foule lust of luxurie, lo thyn ende! ... Th'ende of thy werk or of thy lustes blynde / Is compleynyng" (920-9). Both times, the earthly threat is solved by a spiritual force. While in the case of the first knight, "Custance hadde of his deeth greet routhe," Alla still slays him (687-9). However, when the knight in the "Wife of Bath's Tale" is sentenced to death, the intervention of the queen and her ladies is enough to gain him a temporary reprieve, while he goes to seek the answer of what women desire most (890-905). In the "Man of Law's Tale," it is the attackers who disappear; Allman and Hanks suggest in their article "Rough Love: Notes Towards an Erotics of the *Canterbury Tales*" that "taking rape seriously in the "Wife of Bath's Tale" requires the disappearance of the victim so that the criminal knight, whose story it is, can be reeducated for marriage with as few narrative distractions as possible" (50). His attack on her is worldly, and neither his punishment nor his salvation is spiritual in nature. In fact, his reformation seems orchestrated by a magical force ruled by a Fairy Queen rather than a spiritual force ruled by God the Father or Christ the Son.

The Wife of Bath uses spiritual language in her descriptions of worldly actions. She imitates the antifeminist tradition when she accuses her first husbands of likening "wommennes love to helle" (370). She claims that "in erthe [she] was [her fourth husband's] purgatorie, for which [she] hope[s] his soule be in glorie" (489-90). She claims that she has purged his soul by being so hard on him in life. In fact, when she speaks of causing him so much jealousy in return for his own trespasses, she likens her actions to making "hym of the same wode [i.e. jealousy] a croce" (484). She is linking her actions to crucifixion, and thereby, in a paradoxical fashion, saving her husband's soul through causing him to suffer. The spiritual language continues to be used in relation to worldly

actions and feelings in the "Wife of Bath's Tale." The Knight "hopeth for to fynde grace" (920) by seeking for the answer to the Queen's question. However, "grace" is usually granted in a spiritual sense to gain pardon in a spiritual court, rather than found in order to appease a worldly court. The language of hell again arises in relation to love when the hag declares that she wishes to be the love of the Knight. He responds in horror: "My love! ... Nay, my dampnacioun!" (1067). Her worldly shortcomings are likened to torture for the knight. While she shows him how her worldly shortcomings are spiritual blessings through her lecture, she claims that she knows the knight has a "worldly appetit" that she must fulfill in order to please him (1218). She transforms into a beautiful maiden who can compete with "any lady, emperice, or queene" (1246), who is entirely true to him (1243-4), and who gives him the power over her "lyf and deth" (1248). This transformation seems to bring him a moment that mimics baptism, where "his herte bathed in a bath of blisse" (1253). However, despite the spiritual language, the delights are all worldly, "joye" lasting "unto hyre lyves ende" (1257-8). The Man of Law, however, says that "sodeyne wo" is always the end "[t]o worldly blisse" (421-2). When Alla and Custance reconcile, their reunion is described in terms of the "blisse ... ther betwix hem two," but is quickly described as being less than the spiritual "joye that lasteth evermo" (1075-6). Their worldly happiness is still less than their spiritual happiness, and theirs is a marriage based on Christian, rather than worldly principles, as demonstrated by Christ's direct intervention in their marriage (690). Because of Custance's participation in conversions, particularly in relation to her betrothed Sowdan and her husband Alla, her love may be seen as a kind of spiritual salvation, contrasted to the earthly "purgatorie" and "dampnacioun" associated with the Wife of Bath.

The "Man of Law's Prologue" regarding the hatefulness of poverty has been read as paradoxical given the hagiographical content of his tale.

Blamires notes that if the Man of Law had simply condemned the poor for their condemnation of their neighbors and of God's will, the prologue would not be so problematic, but that the attitude of the Man of Law is consistent with a lawyer who values poverty much less than property (112-3). Furrow, however, argues that the seeming inconsistencies in the "Man of Law's Prologue and Tale" are symbolic of the difficulty represented in the tale: the hardship of maintaining a holy life in this world (223-4). In fact, while he uses the concepts of spiritual contempt for worldly things in other parts of his tale, at this moment where he praises the merchants "he is determinedly yoking virtue and success in this world," suggesting that the worldly knowledge and worldly wealth can be used to celebrate and promote spiritual goals (Furrow 232-3). But in a roughly equivalently-sized section of her tale, the Wife of Bath rewrites the story of ungrateful poverty and its hateful nature into a story of true humility which is part of gentilesse.

Custance's unwilling, rudderless journeys are placed in marked contrast to the extensive number of pilgrimages that the Wife claims to have performed. Hallissy argues that Custance's wandering is pitiable, as opposed to the deviant wandering of the Wife of Bath. Her argument further states that Custance's selfless-ness is a type for the soul on its journey to be reunited with the father. Delaney argues that Chaucer uses marriage to represent the relationship between mankind and a seemingly arbitrary God, and thus, Constance represents the ideal passive Christian reaction for "everyperson" who suffers. The Wife of Bath explains her own wandering through her question:

> ... What wiste I wher my grace
> Was shapen for to be or in what place?
> Therfore I made my visitaciouns
> To vigilies and to processiouns,
> to prechying eek to to thise pilgrimages,

To pleyes of myracles and to marriages (553-8)

However, the seemingly holy tones of her pilgrimages and other church-related outings are undermined by the lines surrounding her defense of travel. She claims that she had the ability to travel and "for to se and eek for to be seye / Of lusty folk" because of her husband's absence during Lent, which is meant to be a holy season of fasting (550-3). Furthermore, she describes herself as continuing to wear her scarlet clothing so much that the moths never have a chance to feast on it, suggesting that she does not put aside her bright, fine clothing for the holy season (559-62). In contrast to the spiritually-guided travels of Custance, Alysoun admits that she "folwed ay [her] inclinacioun" (615). Furthermore, while Custance's heart is described as a "verray chambre of hoolynesse" (167), and therefore she carries a holy place with her wherever she goes, the Wife specifically wants to know in which worldly place her "grace" can be found.

Both Custance and the Wife of Bath show marriage as an economic exchange. In the Wife of Bath's tale, marriage or sex is given to the hag in exchange for getting the right answer to save the knight's life. With Custance, her first and second marriages are seen as an exchange of her worldly body for the spiritual conversion of various nations. Mogan argues that Chaucer had in-depth knowledge of the theological "*bona matrimonii*," or goods of marriage, which allowed him to write tales with such varied interpretations of the basic information. In the Wife of Bath, he mainly uses the concept of the equality of the "marriage debt" to allow the Wife a chance to assert her sovereignty over her husbands in areas outside the bedroom, ignoring the other goods, such as the procreation of Christian children. In the "Man of Law's Tale," the *bona matrimonii* are used to explain Custance's abandonment of her virtuous chastity, since Alla is calling forth her debt to him, and they are working for the engender of children who will be raised as Christians. The sexuality of

Custance is indicative of the difficulty of negotiating a spiritual life with a worldly life. The application of the *bona matrimonii* means that Custance is putting aside her chastity in order to pay her debt to Alla, and for the procreation of Christian children. The Wife, however, trades her sexuality for two things. First, she notes that with her first husbands,

> Namely abedde hadden they meschaunce.
> Ther woulde I chide and do hem no plesaunce...
> With empty hand men may none haukes lure,
> For wynnyng wolde I al his lust endure
> And make me a feyned appetit. (407-8, 415-7)

Her reasons for sex with her fifth husband have to do with his abilities to flatter her and to please her in bed (508-12).

The titles of the texts that are mentioned in both the Man of Law and the Wife of Bath prologues are indicative of the kind of opinion that is tied to each of the main female characters. Tellingly, at the beginning of his tale about the holy, silent Custance, the Man of Law recollects Chaucer's *The Seintes Legende of Cupide* (61), also known as *The Legend of Good Women,* while the Wife of Bath's husband reads aloud to her from the *Book of Wikked Wyves* (685). This suggests that Custance may belong as one of the "good women," since she is a true wife and holy woman. By contrast, the worldly wife is grouped with the "wicked wives." While the Wife of Bath rips pages out of Jankyn's book and ultimately has it burned (788-91, 816), she pays for her gained authority with violence and a partial loss of her hearing (635-6), representative possibly of an inability to listen to the truth about her own nature. Custance admits that "sooth is that thurgh wommanes eggement / Mankynde was lorn and dampned ay to dye, / For which [Mary's] child was on a croys yrent" (842-4), admitting the original transgression of Eve as embodied in women in general except for the Virgin Mary. The Wife of Bath, in contrast, clumps Eve in with the other wicked wives, for "[u]pon a nyght Jankyn that was

oure sire / Redde on his book as he sat by the fire / Of Eva first, that for hir wikkednesse / Was al mankynde broght to wrecchednesse, / for which Crist hymself was slayn" (713-7), concluding that "heere, expres of womman may ye fynde,/That womman was the los of al mankynde" (719-20). She expresses that the sin of Eve has been applied more generally to women, but does not believe that it is true.

Custance prays that "Crist that starf for oure savacioun / so yeve me grace his heestes to fulfille! / I wrecche womman, no fors though I spille. / Wommen are born to thraldom and penance / And to been under mannes governance" (283-7). The Wife's prayer, by contrast asks that "Jhesu Crist us sende / housbondes meeke, yonge, and fressh abedde / And grace to t'overbyde hem that we wedde. / And eek I pray Jhesu shorte hir lyves / That nat wol be governed by hir wyves"(1258-62). Christ is asked to send "grace" in both cases; for Custance, grace is the capability to withstand the demands of a holy life; for Alysoun, "grace" is the ability to rule over her husbands. While Custance admits that it is "no fors though [she] spille," since she is a woman in the world, and therefore, automatically imperfect, the Wife instead asks for the early deaths of men who "nat wol be governed by hir wyves," a punishment for those who would not agree with her version of worldly "blisse" (1253).

It has been argued that the "Man of Law's Tale" may have originally been intended as the first tale of the *Canterbury Tales,* based on the introductory material which includes a summary of Chaucer's previous work and an exact description of the astrological timing (Boenig and Taylor 137).The tale of the Wife of Bath can be said to directly follow the tale of the Man of Law, since in fact, in the Ellesmere manuscript, it does. The two tales, which exist in separate fragments, are only separated by an interrupted prologue in the most common arrangement. Kittredge may insist that "What connection Chaucer meant to make between the Wife's Prologue and the portion of the *Canterbury Tales* that comes before it we need not conjecture. Probably he had not determined. For us the

question is of no immediate interest. It is enough for us that the prologue begins a group and opens a new subject of discussion" (439), the prologue in fact does not begin a new discussion. Instead, the prologue and tale explicitly respond to the "Man of Law Prologue and Tale." That prologue has been alternately assigned to the Squire, the Shipman, or possibly the Wife of Bath herself, based on the comment about the "joly body" that will tell the tale (Boenig and Taylor 137). If the astrological timing means the Man of Law was originally supposed to go first, then the Wife of Bath's response would begin the "conversation" of the tales according to the critics, like Kittredge, who support the concept of the "roadside drama." Even without the supposition that the "Man of Law's Tale" was intended as the first of the *Canterbury Tales,* the "Man of Law's Tale" seems to occupy an important position, with an extensive introduction that is omitted in the Fragment I texts. Scholars have suggested that due to some incongruencies between prologues and tales, the Man of Law and the Wife of Bath were originally meant to tell other tales. However, whether or not the Wife of Bath and the Man of Law were the original tellers of these tales, the tales themselves are still in close discussion with one another, with their prologues and tales working in opposition.

The holy Custance, who has so little voice in her tale, is responded to by a bevy of powerful, eloquent women in the "Wife of Bath's Tale," and her hagiography is rewritten as the exploits of the "Wife of Bath's Prologue." The ideal silent woman becomes an outspoken real woman of the world. However, the Man of Law, in linking the worldly and the spiritual, suggests that worldly good, while not as dependable as spiritual good, may be used to promote spiritual goals. The Wife of Bath, by contrast, uses spiritual goods, as revealed in her prologue, to bring about worldly goals. Thus, while they can both be read as relating to a broader discussion within the tales (such as marriage), the two tales really relate to a broader debate about the negotiation of the spiritual and the worldly.

Works Cited

Allman, W. W. and D. Thomas Hanks, Jr. "Rough Love: Notes Toward an Erotics of the *Canterbury Tales*." *The Chaucer Review*, 38.1(2003): 36-65. *Project MUSE*. Web. 29 March 2010.

Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Canterbury Tales*. Ed. Robert Boenig and Andrew Taylor. Buffalo: Broadview, 2008. Print.

Delaney, Sheila. "Womanliness in the *Man of Law Tale*." *Chaucer Review: A Journal of Medieval Studies and Literary Criticism* 9.1(1974): 63-72. *JSTOR*. Web. 18 April 2010.

Finke, Laurie. ""All is for to selle": Breeding Capital in the Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale." Geoffrey Chaucer. *The Wife of Bath*. Ed. Peter G Beidler. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 1996. 171-188. Print.

Furrow, Melissa M. "The Man of Law St. Custance: sex and the saeculum." *Chaucer Review: A Journal of Medieval Studies and Literary Criticism* 24.3(1990): 223-235. *JSTOR*. Web. 18 April 2010.

Hallissy, Margaret. *Clean Maids, True Wives, Steadfast Widows: Chaucer's Women and Medieval Codes of Conduct*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1993. 101-104. Print.

Hendrix, Laurel L. ""Pennannce profytable": the currency of Custance in Chaucer's *Man of Law Tale*." *Exemplaria: A Journal of Theory in Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 6.1(1994): 141-166. *EBSCO*. Web. 18 April 2010.

Justman, Stewart M. "Trade as pudendum: Chaucer Wife of Bath." *Chaucer Review: A Journal of Medieval Studies and Literary Criticism* 28.4(1994): 344-352. *JSTOR*. Web. 18 April 2010.

Kittredge, G. L. "Chaucer's Discussion of Marriage." *Modern Philology* 9. 4 (April 1912): 435-467. *JSTOR*. Web. 29 March 2010.

Levy, Bernard S. "The Wife of Bath's *Queynte Fantasye*." *The Chaucer Review* 4. 2 (Fall 1969): 106-122. *JSTOR*. Web. 18 April 2010.

McKinley, Kathryn L. "The silenced knight: questions of power and reciprocity in the *Wife of Bath Tale*." *Chaucer Review: A Journal of Medieval Studies and Literary Criticism* 30.4(1996): 359-378. *JSTOR*. Web. 18 April 2010.

Mogan, Joseph J. "Chaucer and the *Bona Matrimonii* ." *The Chaucer Review* 4.2 (Fall 1969): 123-141. *JSTOR*. Web. 29 March 2010.

Patterson, Lee. ""Experience woot well it is noght so": Marriage and the Pursuit of Happiness in the Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale." Geoffrey Chaucer. *The Wife of Bath*. Ed. Peter G Beidler. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 1996. 171-188. Print.

Zong-qi, Cai. "Fragments I-II and III-V in *The Canterbury Tales*: A Re-examination of the Idea of the Marriage Group." *Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 19.1 (1988): 80-98. *Escholarship*. Web. 29 March 2010.

Controlling and Exploiting the Black Delta: An Ecofeminist Exploration into the Feminization and Racialization of Nature in William Faulkner's "Delta Autumn"

by Mintra Tantikijrungruang

Mintra Tantikijrungruang is a Thai-American graduate student at California State University, Long Beach, and is currently pursuing her M.A. in English. She received her B.A. in British and American Studies from Thammasat University in Bangkok, Thailand. Although she finds herself caught between two continents and two cultures, she has her eyes set upon her ultimate goal in life, which is to become an English professor.

> ... Yazoo, the River of the Dead of the Choctaws—the thick, slow, black, unsunned streams almost without current, which once each year ceased to flow at all and then reversed, spreading, drowning the rich land and subsiding again, leaving it still richer.
> ... the rich black land, imponderable and vast, fecund up to the very doorsteps of the negroes who worked it and of the white men who owned it; which exhausted the hunting life of a dog in one year, the working life of a mule in five and of a man in twenty—(Faulkner 324)

> ... retreating southward through this inverted-apex, this ∇-shaped section of earth between hills and River ... seemed now to be gathered and for the time arrested in one tremendous density of brooding and inscrutable impenetrability at the ultimate funneling tip—the (Faulkner 326-7)

At the geographical core of William Faulkner's "Delta Autumn" is the Yazoo river delta. Described in terms of its unpredictable black fertile currents and overwhelming black fertile soil, the Yazoo river delta is finally "arrested" and cast into a simple black, or "brooding" inverted triangle ▽, an image that is highly reminiscent of the female reproductive system. The black ▽ thus becomes both a symbol and a metaphor for the black womb of the land, while also serving as a means by which black fertility is contained and controlled. The Yazoo river delta has thus been systematically racialized and feminized, and cast into the role of an extreme other that is completely opposite to that of the white male. At the same time, because the delta is perceived as a black female other, the very same racism and sexism that inspired and guided the historical subjugation, control, and exploitation of the black female and her fertility, could also be seen projected onto the delta, thereby inspiring the exploitation of the land and its wildlife by the novel's white male characters. This argument reiterates the fundamental ecofeminist theory that "the ideologies that authorize injustices based on gender, race, and class are related to the ideologies that sanction the exploitation and degradation of the environment" (Sturgeon 23).

In their introduction to *Rape of the Wild* (1989), ecofeminists Andrée Collard and Joyce Contrucci draw the important parallel between patriarchy, its treatment of women, and its treatment of nature:

> In patriarchy, nature, animals and women are objectified, hunted, invaded, colonized, owned, consumed and forced to yield and to produce (or not). This violation of the integrity of wild, spontaneous Being is rape ... it allows the oppressor the illusion of control, of power, of being alive. As with women as a class, nature and animals have been kept in a state of inferiority and powerlessness in order to enable men as a class to believe and act upon their 'natural' superiority/dominance. (1)

The argument that male oppressors seek power over "things" (that includes women, nature, and animals that have become "objectified") that are different or apart from them, is central to Collard and Contrucci's explanation of male dominance. At the same time, both ecofeminists view male oppressors as accomplishing their dominance first through objectification, and then through their control (or the "illusion of their control") over those objects.

In the case of "Delta Autumn," the control of the Yazoo river delta is accomplished through such an objectification, for the complex interweave of diverse geographic features such as rivers, streams, tributaries, and land belonging to this particular southern region, is simplistically captured and reduced into a triangle. The term *delta* is of course derived from the Greek word for triangles, which Herodotus first used to refer to the Nile's triangle shaped alluvial deposits (Coleman 1). However, the representation of this natural wonder in a triangle, is completely misleading and problematic because it arrests it in a false state of static inactivity, when in reality, deltas like the Mississippi are in a constant state of flux, even changing their shape and location every few centuries (Coleman 28-29). Therefore, the belief in the triangle illusion of a stable river delta is an example of what Collard and Contrucci were referring to as "an illusion of control," practiced by patriarchy.

Although the delta triangle serves both as a paradigm for a specific natural geographic feature and a paradigm of patriarchal control (*for* patriarchal control), the delta that is represented in "Delta Autumn" also has an additional dynamic to it. It is labeled and represented as black. Therefore, any critical ecofeminist analysis of this black delta ▽ has to address issues concerning race and race representation. This need for black ecofeminism however, goes beyond Collard and Contrucci's generalized ecofeminism (they were more concerned about treating "women as a class"). Nevertheless, Collard and Contrucci's exploration into the

oppression and exploitation of nature and women is still applicable and crucial in an analysis of how the black delta's womb is exploited and "raped" by white males in this novel.

When the narrator describes the currents of the Yazoo River in "Delta Autumn," he focuses on the concentrated appearance of its waters, and he sees the river's rate of flow as being directly related to its viscosity: "thick, slow, black, unsunned streams almost without current" (Faulkner 324). This is important for readers not only because we are given a very descriptive image of what the river looks like, but also because we are called to notice how the river's black appearance signals that it is "pregnant" with fertile alluvium. Blackness, in this sense, is equated with female fertility, and is connected to the land, which it blackens and enriches (ibid). The soil's black fertility, thus, becomes a thing of value in the eyes of farmers and plantation owners who wish to exploit its potential, and use it to produce valuable crops. Therefore, in an equation where black soil is made into a commodity, black fertility or plain blackness becomes a "fetish" that drives agricultural obsession for more production. This then also leads to an increase in land exploitation.

If we look at the geography and the economic history of the Mississippi River Delta region, the close connection between *where* agriculture was practiced and *how* it was practiced should come as no great surprise. Plantations were strategically located in areas where natural resources could best be manipulated and exploited, or, in other words, where the soil was fertile enough and the land wide enough to support its practice of large-scale cultivation and production of crops (Saikku 88). As a result of that practice, the biggest plantations, the largest land ownership, and the highest number of slaves were found in the fertile delta lands surrounding the Mississippi and Yazoo rivers (Woofter 5). In light of this information, the history of southern agriculture could be understood as a history of the systematized exploitation of black land and

black labor. In addition to this, our understanding of the exploitation of female blackness is further enhanced when we recognize the reproductive role that certain black female slaves were forced to play in the plantation system, as Julia Burkart explains, "Because the continuance of slavery depended on natural increase, female reproduction became a critical role in the plantation system and in the slave trade. In this way, the plantation owner controlled the sexual activities of slave women ..." (Burkart 131). Therefore, on the southern plantations, black female fertility was exploited like the black female land's fertility was exploited, and the wombs of black female slaves were regulated and controlled under the white male plantation owner, just as the black delta's womb was.

In "Delta Autumn," the process of the white man's establishment of control over the land's fertility is described in detail by Ike, who notes how the entire network of flora naturally endemic to the delta region is stripped away:

> At first there had been only the old towns along the River and the old towns along the hills, from each of which the planters with their gangs of slaves and then of hired laborers had wrested from the impenetrable jungle of water-standing cane and cypress, gum and holly and oak and ash, cotton patches which as the years passed became fields and then plantations. (324)

The use of "wrested" to describe the slave's and hired laborer's actions towards nature in this passage is an interesting choice of word, especially when considered in light of its definition as "drawn out, taken or acquired, by force" (OED) and "a pull, force, or move by violent wringing" (Merriam-Webster), because it exposes the violent nature of their act. Their simultaneous taking by force of the land and their forced penetration into the black "impenetrable jungle" thus becomes synonymous with what Collard and Contrucci would say is an act of rape done upon the wild (1). The fact that the slaves and hired laborers had

to "wrest" the native plants and trees from the land in order to subdue it, also shows nature's non-compliance, thereby accentuating the brutality of the rape act. But of course, we must also keep in mind that the ultimate responsibility and blame for the rape lies not with the slaves and their forced labor, or with the hired labor of workers, but with the mastermind behind the rape—the plantation's white master. The white male is thus the figure that oppresses and exploits all; nature, slaves, and laborers.

Having been subjugated, the black land is now forced to devote the fertility of its delta ▽ (or womb), to the production of a single cash crop —cotton. Ike then continues with a description of the change that has befallen the violated landscape that now lies "open" and exposed: "Now the land lay open from the cradling hills on the East to the rampart of levee on the West, standing horseman-tall with cotton for the world's looms" (ibid). The white cotton plant has clearly adapted well to the black land, and, like its white male 'father,' it is able to exploit the soil's fertility to its full advantage, growing monstrously to become "horseman-tall." Higher than any single man or animal, the cotton is shown to be a true freak of nature, no doubt a result of its perverse artificial conception or unnatural introduction into the black fertile earth. At the same time, the image of a "horseman" (man on top of a horse) is significant because it also serves as a metaphor for how the white male has established himself as dominator of both nature and slaves. And as the passage continues, the inferior position of the slaves becomes obvious because they are placed side by side in the same running category as other animals of servitude: "the rich black land, imponderable and vast, fecund up to the very doorsteps of the negroes who worked it and of the white men who owned it; which exhausted the hunting life of a dog in one year, the working life of a mule in five and of a man in twenty ..." (ibid). Also made apparent in this passage is how human interference with nature's fertility has given rise to a land and a system that has become an exhausting burden to all

non-white male others, which of course includes animals and slaves.

Having successfully raped the land and subdued it, the white farmers and plantation owners have erected what Ike describes as "tremendous gins" that are "the only permanent mark of man's occupation" (ibid). On the one hand, we might take solace in the fact that these are the "only" permanent marks that man has been able to impose on the landscape, which implies that man has not been able to conquer nature completely. Yet, what little monuments they have erected on the landscape are "permanent," therefore man's action on nature forever changes it, and that is disturbing. The fact that the gins are "constructed in sections of sheet iron and in a week's time" (ibid) is also significant, first of all because the iron adds to the gin's durability that in turn amplifies and prolongs man's adverse effect on nature and the land. Secondly, the use of manufactured sheet iron is symbolic of man's commoditization of nature through the technological manipulation of natural metal resources. Thirdly, similar to the foreign presence of man, the iron that is created and introduced onto the landscape is completely foreign to nature. Lastly, the rapidity and convenience with which these gins were installed (within "a week's time"), symbolically approximates the same amount of time it took for a white-patriarchal-male-God to create (as Ike believes) a vision of nature that both suited his desires as a man and encourages the white male exploitation of natural wildlife through hunting (331). It is the same exploitive situation with the gins. They too were created to satisfy the white male plantation owner's desire for a nature that would serve as 'genesis' for his wealth. Therefore, the white male relation to nature in this chapter is always about the control, manipulation, and exploitation of an inferior black female nature.

As Ike travels further into the delta's interior, he also pictures himself as strangely traveling back further into time to witness and experience a nature that resembles more what it used to look like to him:

presently it seemed to him that the retrograde of his remembering had gained an inverse velocity from their own slow progress, that the land had retreated not in minutes from the last spread of gravel but in years, decades, back toward what it had been when he first knew it: the road they now followed once more the ancient pathway of bear and deer, the diminishing fields they now passed once more scooped punily and terrifically by axe and saw and mule-drawn plow from the wilderness' flank, out of the brooding and immemorial tangle, in place of ruthless mile-wide parallelograms wrought by ditching and dyking machinery. (325)

Strangely enough, the land that Ike describes as being like the one he once knew is not that different from the previous landscape that he had just passed (the one that was dotted by giant cotton gins). Despite traveling deeper into the land and deeper into more 'primitive' times and conditions, man's touch on nature and his effects on it is still discernible. Therefore, it is clear that both man and his technology have penetrated deep into the delta's womb, forever altering its appearance. The history of human progress has repeated itself this far into the delta and now we can see that there is no real natural surrounding left. All that Ike sees are fields that, although small and puny, are still the results of violent acts done against the land. With the axe and saw, sharp metal tools are used as weapons in man's conquest of feminine nature, and they use it to cut, sever, and maim it in order to subdue it. At the same time, the land is violated and raped by both the cold steel thrust of the farmer's mule-drawn plow that cuts and slashes the land's flesh or "flank," and the "ditching and dyking machinery" that cuts open the land and divides it into grooves. The anatomy of the land has thus been reformed, and like the delta's reconfiguration by man into an abstract ∇, nature here has been transformed into "ruthless mile-wide parallelograms." Another geometric

shape now defines the land, which like the triangle, is a conceptualized product of man's desire for a nature that is easily controlled within the confines of imagined angles and lines, lines which are as imaginary and abstract as the ones that are drawn up by men to demarcate property and establish ownership over the land.

Travelling even deeper into the delta's dark interior, Ike still witnesses the presence of man and the extent of his progress and invasion:

he watched even the last puny marks of man—cabin, clearing, the small irregular fields which a year ago were jungle and in which the skeleton stalks of this year's cotton stood almost as tall and rank as the old cane had stood, as if man had had to marry his planting to the wilderness in order to conquer it. (326)

Again we see the history of exploitation repeating itself here in the same process of settlement of the land and the establishment of small-scale agricultural practices. The new nature here, the cotton, has also succeeded in supplanting the old cane, therefore both man and his practices have successfully taken over the land. As a result of this, the delta has been literally pushed back into a subservient position as "wife" in what Ike refers to as a marriage between agriculture and the wilderness. Ike's metaphor of agriculture as a marriage or compromise between man and nature is fascinating, simply because it does not appear to be a conventional view of a loving marriage at all. It is a marriage that is driven by sinister intentions and has as its chief concern, conquest and domination. One is ultimately left with the impression that this is a forced marriage between dominating white male farmer and subjugated black female nature. In this marriage of inequality, man's relationship with nature is one involving the constant rape and forced pregnancy of the enslaved land.

As intriguing as Ike's observations are, they are still the product of a southern culture that privileges the white male and condones his exploitation of the inferior black land and the inferior black female.

Although he sees himself as antagonistic or "juxtaposed" to the southern agricultural system of plantations and farms and its "tamed land, the old wrong and shame ..." (334), Ike's glorification and romanticization of hunting is still very much an exploitation of nature, he just does not realize it. Ike eventually reveals his bias against agriculturalists and his bias for hunters:

> The twin banks marched with wilderness as he remembered it—the tangle of brier and cane impenetrable even to sight twenty feet away, the tall tremendous soaring of oak and gum and ash and hickory which had rung to no axe save the hunter's, had echoed to no machinery save the beat of old-time steam boats traversing it or to the snarling of launches like their own of people going into it to dwell for a week or two weeks because it was still wilderness. There was some of it left ... (326)

It is no surprise that as a hunter himself, Ike sanctions the hunter's exploitation of nature. In fact, after having identified himself with hunters, Ike no longer sees or speaks of nature's destruction, he completely changes his tone: "He had watched it, not being conquered, destroyed, so much as retreating since its purpose was served now and its time an outmoded time" (326). In choosing to see and label the environmental degradation as a simple "retreating" and not a receding, Ike has essentially redefined the current state of deforestation and habitat destruction, there is simply none of that happening. If the wilderness is merely moving further away, then all that man has to do is pursue it. And by perpetuating the myth of a fertile delta, there is no need for white men like Ike to worry about conservation or the consequences of their action, because they could always believe that there would be a wilderness out there, somewhere, lurking in some dark corner, their only job would be to "hunt" it down.

Moreover, by using the idea of a "retreating" wilderness, Ike has shifted the responsibility to nature and holds it accountable for its own

action. The delta could thus be seen as retreating out of its own accord, after realizing how it is no longer of any use to any man (as if nature's value could only be derived from its servitude to man), having out-grown its usefulness and become "outmoded." At the same time, this invention of a self-conscious, retreating, knows-when-it's-beaten nature is also grounds for its continued abuse, because if nature's reduction is thought of as stemming from its own acknowledgement of defeat, then man, not seeing the errors of his ways, could just keep on exploiting it. In fact (according to Ike's twisted conjecture in this passage) maybe man should exploit nature because then he would be doing it a favor, at least it would then have a purpose for its continued existence, therefore never becoming "served" or "outmoded."

Ike ends this section on the wilderness with a hunter's fantasy of a dark, enigmatic, and seductive delta "what was left of it seemed now to be gathered and for the time arrested in one tremendous density of brooding and inscrutable impenetrability at the ultimate funneling tip" (327). Ike's visualization of a mysterious blackness expresses the same sentiment found in Thomas Jefferson's "Notes on the State of Virginia," in which he clearly 'writes' blackness into an extreme 'Other' position, one that is at the deeper and darker end of the color spectrum:

> And is this difference of no importance? Is it not the foundation of a greater or less shade of beauty in the two races? ... Are not the fine mixtures of red and white, the expression of every passion by greater or less suffusions of color in the one, preferable to that eternal monotony, which reigns in the countenances, that immovable veil of black which covers the emotions of the other race? (271).

For Ike and Jefferson, blackness is seen as something that is separate from them, at odds with their whiteness, which would explain why Ike would speak of it as being "inscrutable" while Jefferson would see it also

inscrutably hidden behind a black veil. Furthermore, because blackness is viewed as a mystery to white men, they are also inadvertently drawn to solve it. Blackness, especially female blackness, thus becomes a fetish for white men like Ike and Jefferson, and in "Delta Autumn," the blackness of the delta's womb becomes a quality that white hunters lust after, just like their other white male counterparts. Therefore, as the white farmers and plantation owner's found the allure of black fertile soil hard to ignore, white hunters like Ike, are also drawn deeper and deeper into their fantasy of a black wilderness that has wildlife for them to kill. And in the process of their hunting, these hunters too, come to rape the black female delta, penetrating it with the driving of their cars on the roads that violate the landscape (320).

Ike's obsession with the black delta is clear, for he has been coming on the same hunting trips "each last week in November for more than fifty years" (319). Despite his old age, Ike cannot stop this hunting addiction, and wishes to keep both his age and his obsession hidden:

> They called him 'Uncle Ike' now, and he no longer told anyone how near eighty he actually was because he knew as well as they did that he no longer had any business making such expeditions, even by car.
>
> In fact, each time now ... he would tell himself that this would be his last. But he would stand that trip—he still shot almost as well as he ever had, still killed almost as much of the game he saw as he ever killed; he no longer even knew how many deer had fallen before his gun—and the fierce long heat of the next summer would renew him. (320)

As readers, we are confronted with a character that clearly enjoys killing animals, although we are not sure why he enjoys it so much. As a matter of fact, why do these white men enjoy killing deer when they know that the deer population is declining? Ike says so himself that in the

past "A man shot a doe or a fawn as quickly as he did a buck, ... But that time was gone now" (319-20). Even Henry Wyatt remarks on how the times have changed and the game population along with it (328), and yet they still hunt. The only difference being, they no longer kill, not because it is wrong or unethical, but simply because it would affect their future hunting: "We dont kill does because if we did kill does in a few years there wouldn't even be any bucks left to kill " (331). Therefore, the white hunter's relationship with the female in nature (the does) is only defined in terms of how her fertility could best be used for his pleasure and entertainment. In this case, femininity is only a value worth preserving in the doe because it could be made to preserve wild game. Female nature could thus be seen as exploited in both the men's acts of destruction and preservation.

Another informal tradition that the hunters have adopted and continue to observe within their hunting culture, is the practice of finishing up their supply of store-bought town meat before they hunt, as Ike explains to the men: "Eat," he said. "Eat it all up. I dont want a piece of town meat in camp after breakfast tomorrow. Then you boys will hunt. You'll have to"(328). By reducing themselves to a mock animal-like situation whereby if they do not hunt, they will starve; the men justify their exploitation of wildlife while also leaving themselves guilt-free. However, this does not undo the fact that any killing that the hunters commit, will harmfully affect the already suffering deer population. The men are completely blind to this fact, just like they were ignorant of how the scarcity of deer they have now, is a repercussion stemming from their past hunting of deer. Even Ike naively believes that their present actions will not impact the environment: "this puny evanescent clutter of human sojourn which after a single brief week would vanish and in another week would be completely healed, traceless in the unmarked solitude." (337). Because Ike and his men believe that they do not leave any evidence of

their rape on the wild, they are free to come back every year and repeat their violent acts with no consequence to themselves or nature. With this mindset, it is no wonder that Ike ends the section with a strange vision inspired by a romanticized violence being committed by "the old men he had known and loved," which he sees "moving again among the shades of tall unaxed trees and sightless brakes where the wild strong immortal game ran forever before the tireless belling immortal hounds, falling and rising phoenix-like to the soundless guns." (337-8). Ike thus imagines an ideal nature as being one that could be eternally exploited to the perpetual delight of the male hunter.

For Ike the exploitation of natural wildlife is only part of the appeal of hunting; from it he also derives a sense of home and ownership: "That roof, the two weeks of each November which they spent under it, had become his home ... Because this was his land—" (335). Ike repeats this idea of the ownership of nature once more on page 337, only this time he opens it up to include "all" men:

> Because it was his land, although he had never owned a foot of it. He had never wanted to, not even after he saw plain its ultimate doom, watching it retreat year by year before the onslaught of axe and saw and log-lines and then dynamite and tractor plows, because it belonged to no man. It belonged to all; they had only to use it well, humbly and with pride.

Thus once again, nature in "Delta Autumn" is seen as an object to be owned, if not by one man, than at least by all men. It is thus seen as a distinctively male-owned property and its sole purpose is to service male needs for activities that reinforce their masculinity against the backdrop of the black delta's vanquished femininity.

As "Delta Autumn" draws to a close, the connection between the historic exploitation of the black wombs of female slaves and the ongoing exploitation of the black delta ▽ womb is physically manifested in the

womb of Roth McCaslin's lover. Like the potent fertility of the black soil, the woman is pregnant with Roth's child within six weeks of their stay in New Mexico (341). Ike views man's farming of the wilderness (326) for his own interest and benefit, like the relationship with his pregnant "lover"; it is arranged only as a physical connection with no promises of emotional attachment, which proves to be more difficult for the woman than Roth (341-2). In this relationship, Roth clearly has the advantage, and if we examine the way he arranges this relationship, we would notice that it is a white male advantage derived from the constant definition of his whiteness set against her blackness. Roth is able to have sexual relations with her and yet use his white "code" to get out of any romantic or marital obligations; all he has to do is pay her through some anonymous bank account; that frees him of any shame from other white folks, and frees him of any guilt that he might feel (342). The system that Roth develops is therefore akin to the plantation one because it allows white men like him to subjugate and exploit "inferior" female blackness, in whatever form it comes, whether it is the black female as the land that he inherits, the wildlife he hunts, or woman he abandons.

Eventually, Ike too, comes to believe that he could exert his white male authority on Roth's lover and her black womb:

> That's right. Go back North. Marry: a man in your own race. That's the only salvation for you—for a while yet, maybe a long while yet. We will have to wait. Marry a black man. You are young, handsome, almost white; you could find a black man who would see in you what it was you saw in him, who would ask nothing of you and expect less and get even still less than that, if it's revenge you want. Then you will forget all this, forget it ever happened, that he ever existed— (346)

Ike could be seen here as a white man who wishes to control (like the Yazoo river's black overflowing waters) the currents of the woman's black

blood; he wishes to divert it, along with her fertility, back towards the North so that it could mix with its "appropriate" race. Ike obviously feels that he needs to impose his white male influence on her but for what he condescendingly sees as her own good. Thus this desire of his resembles how men have repeatedly rearranged nature to suit their own needs, their own ideas of how it should be. On the one hand, Ike realizes that what man has done to the delta is wrong because it has given rise to all sorts of social ills:

> This Delta, he thought: This Delta. *This land which man has deswamped and denuded and derivered in two generations so that white men can own plantations and commute every night to Memphis and black men own plantations and ride in jim crow cars to Chicago to live in millionaires' mansions on Lakeshore Drive, where white men rent farms and live like niggers and niggers crop on shares and live like animals, where cotton is planted and grows man-tall in the very cracks of the sidewalks, and usury and mortgage and bankruptcy and measureless wealth, Chinese and African and Aryan and Jew, all breed and spawn together until no man has time to say which one is which nor cares ...* (347)

Clearly Ike sees how man's lust for the delta and their manipulation of it has proven to have many destructive consequences for southern society. Yet despite knowing the negative effects of man's control and manipulation of nature's fertility, Ike still seeks to control and influence the black woman's fertility, purely because he cannot stand the idea of miscegenation, it is far too disturbing for him. Thus, like the white man's desire for an organized nature and the controlled management of its fertility in his farm land, Ike wants to manage the woman's fertility and find a place for it in the white social landscape. Unfortunately for the woman, Ike believes that her place is not to be found here in the South — she has to be extracted from the southern soil, and she along with her

seed, has to be supplanted elsewhere in the North.

Throughout "Delta Autumn" the story of nature has been one of control and exploitation. Guided by their inheritance of both traditional racist and sexist attitudes against black females, the white male characters in this novel have attained and sanctioned their power over nature through their projection of black female "Otherness" onto the Yazoo river delta. Having been cast into inferiority, the rape done against the black female ▽ delta is thus easily accomplished with ruthless efficiency in repeated acts of violence and destruction. Black female fertility in both land and women is thus seen as an object condemned to be under the constant control of superior white men, who believe they know best how to cultivate and harvest it, albeit for their own interests.

Works Cited

Burkart, Julia. "Gender Roles in Slave Plantations". *Plantation Society and Race Relations: The Origins of Inequality*. Ed. Thomas J. Durant and J. David Knottnerus. Westport: Praeger, 1999. Print.

Coleman, James M. *Deltas: Processes of Deposition and Models for Exploration*. Boston: International Human Resources Development Corp, 1982. Print.

Collard, Andrée, and Joyce Contrucci. *Rape of the Wild: Man's Violence Against Animals and the Earth*. Bloomington: Indiana U P, 1989. Print.

Faulkner, William. "Delta Autumn". *Go Down, Moses*. New York: Vintage, 1970. Print.

Jefferson, Thomas. "Notes on the State of Virginia". *A House Divided: The Antebellum Slavery Debates in America, 1776-1865*. Ed. Mason I. Lowance, Jr. Princeton: Princeton U P, 2003. Print.

Saikku, Mikko. *This Delta, This Land: An Environmental History of the Yazoo-Mississippi Floodplain*. Athens: Georgia U P, 2005. Print.

Sturgeon, Noël. *Ecofeminist Natures: Race, Gender, Feminist Theory and Political Action*. New York: Routledge, 1997. Print.

White, Deborah G. " Ar'n't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South." New York: Norton, 1985. Print.

"Wrested." *Merriam-Webster's On-line Dictionary*. Web. 21 Apr. 2010

---. *Oxford English Dictionary*. Web. 22 Mar. 2011

Woofter, Thomas J. *Landlord and Tenant on the Cotton Plantation*. New York: Negro U P, 1969. Print.

Gabriel's Queer Difference in Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen*

by Jessica Mathers

Jessica Mathers received her B.A. in English from California State University, Long Beach in 2008 and returned to pursue her M.A. in English in 2009. She currently teaches English as a second language.

"Queer difference," Daniel Heath Justice writes, "is seen as deviance, something to be shrouded in shame and self-recrimination or denial, something outside the apparently fixed boundaries of 'real' Indianness" (208). "Sadly," Justice explains, "the sexphobic, antiqueer, and patriarchal bigotry of many Christian denominations has penetrated quite deeply into the values and concerns of Indian Territory" (208). Justice speaks from the perspective of a member of the Cherokee Nation, but this observation can be extended far beyond the boundaries of Oklahoma to, for example, Manitoba, Canada. Pervasive both inside and outside of the Indian community, queerness is seen as anomalous, something not just seen as deviance but as something to be eradicated. Queers of all colors are killed, beaten, or violently forced to perform the heteronormative behavior prescribed by the colonizers of the New World who still retain

many of their discriminatory old values.

In *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, Tomson Highway explores what it means for a queer Indian to challenge what is prescribed by performing an identity outside of the "boundaries of 'real' Indianness," and certainly outside of the boundaries of the white, heterosexual, male culture which dominates North America. Gabriel "Dancer" Okimasis pulls his older brother, Jeremiah, back from the disillusionment of white history and uses his "queer difference" to powerfully resist assimilation and spread awareness of the horrendous violence being enacted upon those who fail to be absorbed (though the "deviant" subculture would likely see this as far from a failure) into the white static of a narrative that refuses (but desperately *needs*) to be corrected.

Queer narratives by Native authors function as a resistance against assimilation in several ways. Wendy Pearson argues that these narratives "interrogate colonialist discourses" that displace Indian culture into the past where it is "absolutely irrecoverable" (170). Pearson observes that the colonialist "discourse attempts to render native cultural expression not merely as marginal, but as impossible … his strategy of displacing Indian culture into the past, which is at once essentializing and silencing, is not entirely dissimilar from the discursive strategies by which cultural expressions of queerness are rendered invisible to the heterocentric gaze" (171). She argues that the Old World's colonization of the Americas "is a triumph of discourse, particularly of the discursive constructions that make history heterosexual" (170). Thus far, the colonizers discourse certainly has been, as she observes, a triumph; yet, Highway's novel offers a counter discourse that pushes the queer perspective into view.

Pearson sees Highway's novel as one that "reverse[s] the normative European perspectives on history and narrative" (172) and one that also critiques the "societal structure that permits and even encourages the idea that harm is only of importance if it occurs to someone who occupies

the ideological position of subject within the dominant culture—that is, white, male and heterosexual" (175). To be a queer Indian, or queer at all, is extremely dangerous because the pain inflicted upon those who do not match the standards set forth by the dominant culture is considered *justified*. The harm which occurs is meant to "set queers straight," and the goal is not just to "straighten out" their sexuality, but to align them with the values of a society which sees itself as having the ultimate authority.

Justice's goal in "Notes Toward a Theory of Anomaly" is to "encourage a more intellectually and emotionally generous understanding of queer desire and identities within tribal communities" (209) and the same goal could be noted for *Kiss of the Fur Queen*. In this novel, Jeremiah is a prime example of how the "the sexphobic, antiqueer, and patriarchal bigotry of many Christian denominations has penetrated" the Indian community of, in the case of Highway's novel, Manitoba and the surrounding Canadian territories. Though, with an optimism accompanied by the wink of the Fur Queen, Highway shows how it is possible to fight, or *write*, against this penetrating discourse.

Through Gabriel, Highway tells a story that revises the narrative imposed upon queers by challenging the violent discourse of the antiqueer patriarchy. One of the most clearly illustrated scenes in which Gabriel challenges this discourse is when he is dreaming of dancing with Carmelita Moose, a young girl who attends the same school as he. Highway writes, "The firefly reappeared and disappeared again as it approached the row where the dreaming Gabriel Okimasis was furiously engaged in a do-si-do made particularly complicated because his partner, Carmelita Moose, kept floating up, balloon-like, so that, while his feet were negotiating quick little circles, his arms had to keep Carmelita Moose earthbound" (77). At this point in the novel, both Gabriel and Jeremiah have been forced to perform new roles for the white culture; instead of dancing for the caribou around a fire with their long braids swinging in the air they

dance the do-si-do around a Christmas tree with cowboy hats on their heads. For Gabriel, however, this dream indicates another role that both men and women are encouraged to perform: heteronormative sexuality. Queers, like Indians, are *forced* to *perform* like the dominant culture.

As Gabriel dreams, Father Lefleur creeps into the boys' dormitory and molests him. The dream itself, in Gabriel's case, is actually more violent than the molestation occurring outside of his dream state. Goldie notes that for many gay young men, constant, un-closeted images of socially accepted forms of intimacy surround them. Gabriel's dream represents what he sees as tolerated; heterosexuality is a "dance" he must publicly perform to be accepted. The sexual encounter initiated by Father Lefleur, Goldie argues, can be viewed as Gabriel's homosexual awakening. Goldie writes, "Arguably, in a society ruled by compulsory heterosexuality it can be a necessary awakening: without the intervention of the older homosexual, the young gay man can be left in a quandary of impossible recognition" (210). Thus, through this experience Gabriel's eyes are opened to the fact that other homosexuals do exist, and he is shown "that a sexual desire which seems invalid or even unthinkable has the potential to find reciprocity with another human being" (210). This validation, however, comes at a high price.

Although this encounter signals the beginning of Gabriel's awakening to and eventual acceptance of his own sexuality, Father Lefleur's behavior is far from excusable or justified. Gabriel is still a child and is unable to fully understand the gravity of the situation. Highway writes, "He didn't dare open his eyes fully for fear the priest would get angry; he simply assumed, after a few seconds of confusion, that this was what happened at schools, merely another reason why he had been brought here, that this was the right of holy men" (78). Later, Gabriel deals with the abuse with humor, a tool for dealing with trauma that Kristina Fagan sees as a pervading force throughout the novel. Though seemingly counterintuitive, Fagan argues

that "it is not surprising that the boys find something funny in their abuse. For them, residential school was an absurd mix of Catholicism and sexuality, of caretaking and abuse, of celibacy and sado-masochism" (209). Highway is undoubtedly a humorist, but he portrays residential school in this way for more than just laughs. One of most obvious messages Highway sends here is what he sees as the immense hypocrisy and contradiction of the Catholic Church. Yes, Highway does intend to challenge this Christian denomination. There is no way around that. He perceives the system of beliefs that it teaches as *sickening*.

In the years following this moment of awakening for Gabriel, he must cope with not only the molestations but also with the fact that, as Pearson also observes, he and his brother are "bitterly divided by Gabriel's homosexuality" (172). When Gabriel decides to start practicing ballet, he hides his extracurricular activity from Jeremiah, telling him that he was instead enjoying a much more acceptable sport for a male: bodybuilding. Gabriel's hesitance to reveal the truth ends up justified when Jeremiah finds Gabriel's ballet slippers. Repeatedly, Jeremiah aggressively questions Gabriel's possession of the ballet slippers, referring to the soft, satin shoes as a "nebulous" concept (194). For Jeremiah, the problem is not that the ballet slipper itself is in any way nebulous (he is able to define the shape, color, and its use) or even that it is a nebulous concept within the Cree language. What is troublesome for Jeremiah is that a ballet slipper on the foot of his brother causes his brother's *sexuality* to become nebulous.

In "A Note on the Trickster" which Highway places at the beginning of his novel, he writes, "The most explicit distinguishing feature between the North American Indian languages and the European languages (e.g. Cree, Ojibway), there is no gender." The infiltration of the European language and belief system, however, has altered Jeremiah's perspective. He makes a clear distinction between genders and doles out punishment when the "correct" gender behavior is not performed. Highway makes it

very clear how detrimental he believes this system of thought, one which propagandizes the "male-female-neuter hierarchy," is to the Indian culture when he states that "the core of Indian culture would be gone forever" without this "central hero figure" which is "neither exclusively male nor exclusively female, or is both simultaneously." If Western thought is able to radically shift Cree and other native beliefs, just as it has Jeremiah's, the trickster figure in all of its various forms will, like queers, be eradicated.

Jeremiah also calls the ballet slippers "bizarre footwear" (194), but again it is not the pair of slippers themselves that he sees as bizarre (or, more appropriately, queer). Voice cracking and clearly in homophobic panic, Jeremiah questions, "What the hell was going on?" (194). The discovery of the slipper is uncomfortable, confrontational, and has the potential to become outwardly hostile when Jeremiah thinks to himself, "What was this guy, anyway, one of them limp-wristed pansies?" (196). Even more disturbing than the fact that Jeremiah's homophobia interrupts the family dinner is the fact that very quickly after his realization Jeremiah refuses to see Gabriel, this guy, as his family at all. The extent to which the values of the "white folks," as Abraham calls them, have infiltrated the Indian community is so extreme, so detrimental, that it has the capability of causing a rift between brothers. The narrative of heteronormativity is powerful, violent, and invasive. Gabriel, who is just beginning to discover his queer identity, knows that this hostility is possessed both by his own brother and by the boys at school whom Gabriel fears will call him "a poof, a sissy, a girlie-boy" (196). As Native storytellers know, these words, all words, are not *just* words. Words hold great power. Words can cause damage.

Words may also manifest as actions, powerful in their own respective, and more visibly apparent, way. The hostility the reader witnesses within Jeremiah's thoughts and words manifest as actions after Jeremiah sees Gabriel engaged in a sexual act with another man for the first time.

Jeremiah violently confronts Gabriel, slamming him against the wall. The fight continues, both brothers invested passionately in his respective cause, and becomes increasingly violent and hostile. Highway writes, "Clutching at his belly, Jeremiah whimpered, 'What would Dad say?' His body went limp, his voice sepulchral, 'Sick. That's what he'd call –" (208). But before he can finish Gabriel crushes Jeremiah with his body weight; homicidal thoughts surge through his mind as he fights to protect both his physical body and his queer identity from the "sick propaganda" of the Catholic Church.

Gabriel reverses the word "sick" that Jeremiah thrusts upon him to describe his sexuality back onto the culture from which the term originated, the culture which utilizes the term to transform homosexuality into a disease (evidence of which, it claims, is the AIDS epidemic among the queer population). In the same way, Highway uses the tools of the "white folk," text-based storytelling, to challenge the stories *they* have produced. Instead of subscribing to and using the Judeo-Christian God for his storytelling purposes, Highway envisions Weesageechak, the "clown who bridges humanity and God—a God who laughs, a God who's here, not for guilt, not for suffering, but for a good time" (Highway 298). Instead of writing a devout holy man who unfailingly serves God, Highway revises the priest figure into what he envisions as a corrupt emblem of the Catholic Church, a Weetigo who feasts on the innocent children who are molested in God's sanctuary.

The fight between Gabriel and Jeremiah would not be the last time Gabriel faces the violence from an antiqueer culture. At the powwow on Wasaychigan Hill, an Indian reserve, Gabriel is confronted by a "demonized assembly" (249) full of booze and bigotry. A man approaches Gabriel and asks, "[W]here's your panty-hose, Flossy?" (250); Gabriel turns to Jeremiah and pleads for help. Highway writes:

> But though the pall had lifted from Jeremiah's eyes, the dryness

> in his throat had thickened, the perfect alibi. For how else would he face the truth: that he was embarrassed to be caught in cahoots with a pervert, a man who fucked other men? On an Indian reserve, a Catholic reserve? He reached into the box, grabbed two bottles, and walked into the night. (250-51)

The scene is terrifying. Here, Highway clearly illustrates what Justice has observed: that the values of the Christian denominations have undoubtedly infiltrated the values of the Indian community.

Jeremiah and Gabriel attended the powwow "to thaw their cold war of thirteen years" (239), but it is instead inflamed as Jeremiah walks away and leaves Gabriel to the queer bashers. Gabriel turns to escape when one steps forward and yells, "Hey, faggot! Where the fuck you think you're goin'?" (251). Highway ends here and leaves his reader to imagine the sort of violence that continued as his words ceased to describe them. He establishes that this violence happens both inside and outside of the text and that the hatred ***must stop*** outside of the text for it to stop inside of the text. Highway places Gabriel within a tribal community where both Jeremiah and Gabriel had hoped to find healing, but instead they witness grotesque violence and hatred by Indians by whom they had hoped to be accepted.

Highway shows his reader that there is no escaping an angry, antiqueer mob, but what his narrative does do is offer hope that this anger and prejudice can be revised. Jeremiah represents this revision, this possibility to create a narrative that peacefully includes queers, Indians, and queer Indians. When Gabriel and Jeremiah reunite after the night at the powwow, Gabriel rightfully punishes Jeremiah for his actions; yet, the punishment Gabriel serves Jeremiah is very much unlike the punishment he received for displaying behaviors deemed sickening. Jeremiah's punishment is piano playing, the art that he had quit fifteen years before. "What is this?" Jeremiah asks Gabriel, "Penance?" Gabriel

responds, "Yes. For running like a rat from those spineless fagbashers. Yes. Play!" (265). Jeremiah gradually realizes what he has done to his brother, and it is in this scene that Highway shows his reader what can change such a close-minded way of thinking: art. The rest of the novel shows the two brothers coming together through their own respective modes of artistic expression, which help them understand and respect each other. The importance of art is known well by Highway, who Coral Ann Howells argues "uses his narrative and dramatic art in a struggle to restore Aboriginal people's belief in the psychological and spiritual value of Native traditions" (152). In Jeremiah, it can be seen how these values *can* be restored.

Highway's novel beautifully and powerfully exemplifies the restorative quality of art as well as its highly political nature. It also exemplifies an admirable optimism and a hope for change that is by no means unreachable. I am not a part of the Indian community, and therefore I will not suggest that I aim to speak *for* the Indian community; however, as a part of the LGBT community my voice can be heard cross-culturally where antiqueer violence is felt among all genders, races, cultures, and religions. Whereas I can only speak for now as loudly as I can scream, Highway has picked up the megaphone that is *literature*, and it is my hope to help his message be carried as far as it can go.

Works Cited

Fagan, Kristina. "Weesageechak Meets the Weetigo: Storytelling, Humour, and Trauma in the Fiction of Richard Van Camp, Tomson Highway, and Eden Robinson." *Studies in Canadian Literature* 34.1 (2009): 204-226. Print.

Goldie, Terry. *Pink Snow: Homotexual Possibilities in Canadian Fiction.* Ontario, Canada: Broadview P, 2003. Print.

Highway, Tomson. *Kiss of the Fur Queen.* Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1998. Print.

Howells, Coral Ann. "Towards a Recognition of Being: Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen* and Eden Robinson's *Monkey Beach.*" *Revista canaria de estudios ingleses* 43 (2001): 145-159. Print.

Justice, Daniel Heath. "Notes Toward a Theory of Anomaly." *A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16.1 (2010): 207-242. Print.

Pearson, Wendy. "How Queer Native Narratives Interrogate Colonialist Discourses." *Economies of Representation, 1790-2000: Colonialism and Commerce* (2007): 169-181. Print.

Visions of Death and Desire: Exploring Embodied Ethics in Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*

by Zoë Roth

Zoë Roth holds a B.A. (Honors) from Goldsmiths College, University of London and a M.A. in Comparative Literature from King's College London, where she is currently undertaking a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature. She also holds an Arts & Humanities Research Council Studentship. Her research concentrates on the relationship between embodiment and literature in twentieth-century European literature.

After Bataille: The Gratifications of Death

In the alternative ending for Réage's pornographic novel *Histoire d'O*, O, learning that her lover no longer desires her, requests his permission to commit suicide. In doing so, she demonstrates Susan Sontag's contention that "it's toward the gratifications of death, succeeding and surpassing those of eros, that every truly obscene quest tends" (106). Both death and desire have the effect of the emptying or dissolution of the self characterized by O's decision. Sontag's description of the corresponding effects of death and desire has resonances with Georges Bataille's depiction of their mutual motivation, characterised by the formula that opens his critical text, *Eroticism*: "eroticism is consenting to life even in death" (11). For Bataille, human beings are essentially discontinuous; they are discrete

subjects inherently distinct from others. He considers this discontinuity the result of reproduction, which creates one separate subject from another, while death represents the possibility of continuity (12-13). Desire mimics death's continuity, substituting "for the individual isolated discontinuity a feeling of profound continuity" (15). Bataille asserts that experiences of desire, whether physical, emotional or religious, are always mediated by this desire for continuity, even if the only way it can be achieved is through violence or death.

Violence is the domain of desire because "it is clear that there is the most violence in the abrupt wrench out of discontinuity. The most violent thing of all for us is death which jerks us out of a tenacious obsession with the lastingness of our discontinuous being" (16). O's decision exemplifies the relationship between death and desire not only because of the dissolution of the self it represents, but because of its inherently *violent* aspect, ritualizing the violence of common death. As Bataille states, "the whole business of eroticism is to strike to the inmost core of the living being, so that the heart stands still ... The whole business of eroticism is to destroy the self-contained character of the participators as they are in their normal lives" (17). Most erotic encounters do not, of course, end in death. The power of the erotic lies in its ability to mimic death's continuity, through the presence of another person, without carrying us to its brink: "continuity is what we are after, but generally only if that continuity which the death of discontinuous beings alone can establish is not the victor in the long run" (18-19).

Bataille's theorization of death and desire, as well as his fiction, which incessantly reworks these themes, continues to inform critical debates of these subjects. He is often the major reference point for critical discussions in a "post-Bataille" world, what Jean-Luc Nancy describes as "after Bataille, with him and beyond him" (38). This is no less evident in the work of Angela Carter. While her books have most often been

related to a feminist literary project that subverts patriarchal narratives, little attention has been paid to the way she engages with Bataille's work. However, the *mis-en-scene* of eroticism and pornography in *The Bloody Chamber* (1979) profoundly evokes the relationship between death and desire posed by Bataille, offering a radical (re)vision of a post-Bataille landscape, in which love and desire can never truly escape the "gratifications of death."

Carter's work resembles the *experience* of reading Bataille's fiction very closely, one that inevitably leaves the reader simultaneously stirred and disturbed. Bataille's literary influence can be measured by Carter's use of an oneiric idiom derived from his Surrealist and Modernist vocabulary. Like the limit between death and desire, Carter's work inhabits the ambivalent interstice between pornography and literature. Her stories, like Bataille's, are constructed through a careful *mis-en-scene* of desire that juxtaposes pornographic conventions with a rococo tone. However, Carter moves beyond Bataille by specifically considering the ethical constraints of desire, and illustrating the possibilities of a new ethical paradigm founded on transgressive experiences of alterity and encounters with the Other, which develop into relationships of empathy and love.

O's wish to commit suicide in the face of the death of desire implicitly introduces the question of ethics. Her choice reveals the problems of freedom and subjection inherent to desire, which magnify the hierarchies of power that govern social relations by revealing subjects to each other in their most vulnerable states. Mutual pleasure, as Simone de Beauvoir says, offers the possibility of equality, but in doing so desire also calls into question the very relations of power that govern it (22). Sexual desire, unlike international law, condenses the problem of ethics because it vastly reduces the field of experience and the number of subjects involved; it is no longer a question of general, but specific relations. An ethics of desire interrogates the relations of power inherent to the most intimate

of human encounters. Ethics is not simply a question of right or wrong, but schematizes the intricacies of human experience. The notion of embodiment accounts for this intricacy by understanding subjectification as produced through lived, corporeal experience, accounting for both the wide, general field of experience the subject exists in, and the subject's own corporeal subjectivity located within this milieu. The importance of an ethics of desire enacted through an embodied schema must not be underestimated, for it governs the *liveability* of the subjects caught up in the forces of death and desire.

Death and the Maiden: Carter's Desirous Imaginings and Deadly Encounters

Carter's lush, baroque stylistics contribute to an erotic mis-en-scene similar to Bataille's *Histoire de l'œil*, in which even the landscape becomes part of a metaphoric and metonymic system of desire. This is one of Carter's most prevalent narrative techniques, creating a textual environment suffused with eroticism. Such stylistic details lend her stories a performed quality and conspire to create a theatre of the obscene, in which a fourth wall of symbolic indexes and literary references tenuously withholds the violent eroticism of the story from erupting into pornographic profanity. However, beneath Carter's proliferate textual signs, an essential nakedness stretches that forms a fundamental part of her narrative and is expressly related to the power of obscenity. Nakedness, as Bataille says:

> offers a contrast to self-possession, to discontinuous existence, in other words. It is a state of communication revealing a quest for a possible continuance of being beyond the confines of the self. Bodies open out to a state of continuity through secret channels that give us a feeling of obscenity. Obscenity is our name for the uneasiness which upsets the physical state associated with self-possession, with the possession of a recognised and stable individuality. (17-18)

The physical state of nakedness allows subjects to access its metaphoric condition, in which confrontations of the flesh serve to reveal subjects to each other in moments of vulnerability and continuity, bare from the adornment of cultural conventions. For Carter:

> flesh has lost its common factor; that is the substance of which we are all made and yet that differentiates us. It has acquired, instead, the function of confusing kind and gender, man and beast, woman and fowl. The subject itself becomes an *objet de luxe* in these elaborately choreographed masques of abstraction, of alienation. (*Sadeian Woman* 146)

However, nakedness must not be confused with nudity. In historical artistic representations, nudity or "the nude" serves to highlight or fetishize cultural conceptions of sexuality; despite "appearances" is not a subjective state, but an aesthetic convention. As John Berger contends in his discussion of the tradition of the nude in the Western artistic tradition, "a naked body has to be seen as an object to become a nude … Nakedness reveals itself. Nudity is placed on display" (54); in fact, "nudity is a form of dress" (ibid). The line separating nudity and nakedness represents a tenuous border between the teeming, lurid pageant of social discourse on sex and reproduction, and the almost stark, profane transgression of the naked state, providing the central stylistic tension between the baroque ornaments of Carter's prose and pornographic transgression.

The pornographic quality of Carter's œuvre is not merely scintillating; it extends to the generic conventions of her stories. Structurally, pornography corresponds to the thematic conception of nakedness, because it will "always render explicit the nature of social relations in the society in which they take place" (Carter, *Sadeian Woman* 20). This generic confrontation that derives from pornography is evident in her re-imagining of fairy tales, which simultaneously reveal and disrupt the traditional social structures expressed in these stories. Pornography

lurks under the surface of Carter's prose, threatening at any moment to disorder the narrative, to dissolve into "the disruptiveness of sexuality, its inability to be contained" (16).

This careful balance between pornography and literature is crucial to the central tension of the title story "The Bloody Chamber." In this re-writing of Blue Beard, the pirate is cast as the Marquis and the action is set in a remote and cut-off Breton castle (the resemblance to Sade's Chateau de Silling should not be underestimated). A world in which the pornographic and the literary, violence and desire, exert their forces upon each other is carefully constructed through every stylistic layer and symbolic detail of the story. Carter implicitly understands Bataille's maxim that "the domain of eroticism is the domain of violence, of violation," reflecting this sentiment in a letter from the Marquis' first wife stating that "the supreme and unique pleasure of love is the certainty one is doing evil" (Bataille 16; Carter, *Bloody Chamber* 26). The Marquis' wedding present to the unnamed narrator is "a choker of rubies, two inches wide, like an extraordinarily precious slit throat," which she wears when he takes her to see *Tristan and Isolde* (11). As she walks through the foyer "all eyes were upon me. The whispering crowd ... parted like the Red Sea to let us through" (10). The aesthetic effect is one of "the white dress; the frail child within it; and the flashing crimson jewels round her throat, bright as arterial blood" (10). The tension here between seeing and the gaze is the same as the one between nudity and nakedness, or the visibility of the nude as an aesthetic genre, premised on the conspicuousness of women as sexual objects (Berger 62). This tension is figured in the choker that functions as a convention of the nude—epitomized by the black choker worn by Victorine in Manet's *Olympia*[1]—which threatens to implode under the pornographic disruptiveness of the real nakedness it also recalls: the girl's true subjective condition: "And I saw myself, suddenly, as he saw me, my pale face, the way the muscles in my neck

stuck out like thin wire. I saw how much that cruel necklace became me. And, for the first time in my innocent and confined life I sensed in myself a potentiality for corruption that took my breath away" (Carter, *Bloody Chamber* 10). The choker vacillates between positioning her as an object to be gazed at by the crowd, and revealing her true, "naked" state as she gazes at herself in the mirror. The choker is the boundary between nudity —the self-conscious spectacle of her visibility as an aesthetic convention —and nakedness, the disruptive obscenity of her exposed state. In its recollection of a bloody wound, it is an embodied apparatus signaling its own constructed nature, both preventing the narrative from collapsing into pornographic chaos and accentuating this possibility. This dissension is again emphasized in the *mise-en-scene* of the bridal chamber that hovers on the boundary between desire and death, as her new husband "with so much love, filled my bedroom with lilies until it looked like an embalming parlor" (18). The metalepsis reinforces the structural tension in the story, which is also apparent in the girl's confrontation with the display of her husband's murdered former wives. This in turn recalls the spectacle of her image captured infinitely in the dozens of mirrors the Marquis has installed in her room, through which he has "acquired a whole harem for myself!" (14). Desire leaves its obscene trace, like a sexual act, on the body of the narrator, like "the lilies I always associate with him; that are white. And stain you" (15).

The spectacle of desire is intimately linked to blood, with the "bloody chamber" itself recalling the blood of menstruation, the sex of a woman and the womb. Yet, even more pertinently, the womb recalls the grave. As Carter says, "the curious resemblance between the womb and the grave lies at the roots of all human ambivalence towards the womb and its bearer [...] the womb is the earth and also the grave of being; it is the warm, moist, dark, inward, secret, forbidden, fleshly core of the unknowable labyrinth of our experience" (Carter, *Sadeian*

Woman 108). The sepulchral aspect of the bloody chamber is in fact the natural eventuality of the womb's function. The girl's encounter with the murdered wives of her new husband in that chamber is the specular vision of her own sexuality; desire's violent and bloody doubling back onto itself that results in its deathly inevitability. The bloody chamber provides the stage of her sexuality, reflecting the first stirrings she felt with the Marquis, which mixed equal parts disgust and pleasure, violence and desire, when "I longed for him. And he disgusted me" (Carter, *Bloody Chamber* 22). It is virtually "the unknowable labyrinth" of her (in) experience, the inevitable encounter along the route of eroticism, where her desires are reified into a symbolic scene. However, the erotic force that joins the girl and the Marquis cannot result in a truly reciprocal relationship. The Marquis' face "seemed to me like a mask, as if his real face, the face that truly reflected all the life he had led in the world before he met me, before, even, I was born, as though that face lay underneath this mask" (9). He only opens himself to his wives in the erotic encounter and at the moment of their death, when his true desires are revealed, just as his "mask" falls off at the moment of orgasm: "I had heard him shriek and blaspheme at the orgasm; ... And perhaps I had seen his face without its mask; and perhaps I had not" (18). Despite the erotic possibilities in the relationship between death and desire evoked by the sensuous scenes, the ambivalent ending of the story reveals that an erotic relationship that must end in the death of one does not offer the subject a real opportunity to reveal himself in true "nakedness"; to have his subjectivity fundamentally altered by erotic encounters with the Other.

While Carter undoubtedly understands "the connection between the promise of life implicit in eroticism and the sensuous aspect of death," she cannot conceive of an ethical schema to support this equation in which death plays a supporting role (Bataille 59). Instead she envisions an alternative mode of being whereby desire achieves the continuity of death,

without having recourse to this inevitability. What ensues is not just a transgression or inversion of boundaries and systems, but an undoing of them. This is most profoundly witnessed in "The Tiger's Bride" where the Beast occupies place in which "nothing human lives" and where the only human is a simulacrum: "a marvelous machine" with "a musical box where her heart should be" (Carter, *Bloody Chamber* 59-60). The Beast assumes a human form through the mask of "a beautiful face; but one with too much formal symmetry of feature to be entirely human" (53); whose grotesqueness recalls the face of the Marquis.

The girl's disgusted reaction to the Beast's demand "to see the pretty young lady unclothed nude without her dress" belies the fact that he is only insisting on what is natural for him as an animal (58). Yet her refusal to disclose the human vulnerability of her flesh cannot prevent the Beast from revealing himself to her as "a great, feline, tawny shape whose pelt was barred with a savage geometry of bars" (64). This stark exposure to his naked state is figured as an experience of alterity. As "a profound sense of strangeness slowly began to possess" her, she feels her "breast ripped apart as if I suffered a marvelous wound" (63-4). This wound recalls the bloody choker in "The Bloody Chamber," but becomes a way of ripping through the social conventions of "flesh" to reach a state of nakedness. Her embodied response to his alterity initiates a transgression of the ethical system denoting that she, a "young girl, a virgin," is denied "rationality just as they denied it to all those who were not exactly like themselves, in all their unreason" (63). This initiates a process whereby she becomes 'so unused to my own skin that to take off all my clothes involved a kind of flaying" (66). As her human form begins to fade, she offers herself to the Beast in her vulnerability, and "a tongue, abrasive as sandpaper" begins to lick away the bodily ethics she is trapped in (67). As the tiger emerges from the girl, as if from an imagined memory, "each stroke of his tongue ripped off skin after successive skin," until "all the

skins of my life in the world" are peeled away (ibid). Desire, performed through the transgression of an ethical schema, reveals subjects to each other in a relationship of continuity.

Seen in relation to this story, the disturbing conclusion of "The Bloody Chamber" is illuminated. In this story, death is the inevitable culmination of an asymmetrical relationship of desire, which would logically end in the annihilation of one subject. It would have served to formalize the individuality of the Marquis as an autonomous and discrete individual, much in the way that the Marquis de Sade envisioned his most powerful characters. While the Marquis remains closed off in his desire, the effect of the erotic force between the girl and the Beast of "The Tiger's Bride" envisions an ethics of alterity. Continuity emerges through a pleasure in strangeness that reveals the otherness in us. Indeed, as she moves toward this state "nothing about him reminded me of humanity" (64).

The Ethics of Desire and the Embodied Subject

Sexual desire implicitly recalls the continuity between two or more subjects and, in doing so, invokes ethics, which is the question that governs such relations. Ethics mediates the problems of equality, power and subjugation implicit in the violent and vacillating forces of desire. Just as sexual desire is never far from bodies, neither are bodies ever very far from ethics. They are the *sites* of an ethics of desire, just as they are the place on which the Marquis de Sade plays out his fantasies of flagellation, mediating between the fantasmatic and the physical. Ethics are continually evoked in the desiring relations in the texts, from desire's "gratifications towards death" that are written on the body in "The Bloody Chamber," to an embodied ethics of alterity in "The Tiger's Bride."

If Bataille has determined the nature of our discussion of desire, the figure of the Marquis de Sade has accompanied the trace of ethics

throughout. Sade attempted to conceive of a concrete ethics of desire in his writing to apply to his own practices (Beauvoir 4): collapsing representation and reality. Sade and Bataille's respective systems both address death, although their views on the subject are not the same. Bataille considers the violence of eroticism paramount to its power, but does not believe this violence must be carried to its most extreme limit in order for desire to be fulfilled, whereas for Sade, murder is the most rational expression of the violence of desire (Bataille 25-6). However, Bataille's understanding of death as the wrench from discontinuity to continuity does not adequately allow us to explore the ethical question, because it presumes that all subjects experience this violence in the same way; death is "democratic" in this regard. For Sade, murder in the throes of erotic ecstasy serves to solidify one subject's individuality through the annihilation of another. Sade's value does not only lie in the opportunity for ethical analysis he provides, but the embodied relationship that this ethical question implies. Death is an inherently intimate affair contingent on the embodied relationship between subjects.

As Beauvoir states, "shedding blood was an act whose meaning could, under certain conditions, excite him, but what he demanded, essentially, of cruelty was that it reveal to him particular individuals and his own existence as, on the one hand, consciousness and freedom and, on the other, as flesh" (15). The cruelty of this atrocious act must not be allowed to obscure how death and desire are inherently bound up with the embodied relations between human beings, for they are acted upon and through subjects as "flesh." The importance in Sade's conception of murder, which both simplifies and grossly exaggerates the ethical question of desire, is that it cannot be exercised from afar. By reducing the sexual encounter to its most extreme (or basic) state, he reveals the hegemony implicit in desire. We must not lose sight of the deeply asymmetrical relationship that consumed Sade's concern with

the construction of his individuality. Only through proximity is murder or death erotic, because the intimacy of the contact touches one in an *embodied* manner. Sade is led to valorize flesh, because it is only when a value is placed on something that it can be denigrated (15). Nevertheless, his inability to lose himself in the flesh of or empathize with the Other ultimately constrains his ethical vision. Sade fails to understand that "the state of emotional intoxication allows one to grasp existence in one's self and in the other, as both subjectivity and passivity. The two partners merge in this ambiguous unity; each one is freed of his own presence and achieves communication with the other" (21-22). Despite the deep inadequacies in Sade's understanding of desire, his valorization of flesh introduces embodiment into the relationship between desire and ethics, forcing us to reconsider Bataille's conception of death and desire through an ethical paradigm.

Sade holds an important place in Carter's work. Despite the problems she sees in his œuvre, she appreciates the clarity of his social relations, namely that "the whip hand is always the hand with the real political power" (Carter, *Sadeian Woman* 24). Sade also eschewed the yoke of women's reproductive function, by subverting the value of sex as a means of procreation. His influence contributes to an ethical schema in Carter that is always embodied, and which allows subjects to access the alterity in themselves through encounters with the Other.

The embodied site of her ethics is the womb in "The Bloody Chamber." As the organ that has gained the most cultural and historical connotations in relation to notions of femininity, the womb mediates the girl's embodied experience of her own desire, in addition to its cultural associations as dangerous and transgressive. The girl's encounter with the vision of her own corruption in this space is not incidental. In placing the womb as the site of ethics, Carter uses the girl's sexual corruption to debase a hierarchical system, which places feminine experiences of embodiment

outside of the realm of reason. The spirit of this transgressive ethical space is more clearly expressed in "The Tiger's Bride" where its instigates the interrogation of an entire structure of embodied experience, in which alterity and strangeness offer the possibility of undoing hierarchical structures of subjugation. Yet, despite the Sadeian qualities of her stories, they do not approach Sade's ambitious ethical project of collapsing representation and reality. Embodiment becomes subsumed under the highly representational apparatus of Carter's stylistics, becoming a textual effect, surrendered to the very fantastical forces that initially recalled it. Regardless of the highly fantastical nature of Carter's prose, she demonstrates the value of stepping outside of ourselves to touch other subjects in moments of extreme vulnerability, ultimately opening ourselves to a process of enriching transformation.

Bataille's attempt to theorize a sovereign life founded on the proximity of death and eroticism elides the bare power that this life is subjected to, occluding the hierarchies of power governing the relationship between death and desire that are revealed through ethics (Agamben 112). We must not allow desire to drift into death, or conflate the two because they both offer access to continuity. Embodiment provides a form of continuity that is predicated not on the death of subjects, but their living presence, allowing us to move into a world in which the productive forces of desire are no longer constrained by a deathly logic. The importance of this must not be underestimated, for in the most intimate of human encounters, the gratifications of death threatens us all.

Notes

[1] See French 112-114, for a discussion of Manet's painting in relation to the disruption of metaphor by metonymy in Bataille's *Histoire de l'œil.*

Works Cited

Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life.* Trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen. Ed. Werner Hamacher and David E. Wellbery. Stanford: U of Stanford P, 1998. Print.

Bataille, Georges. *Eroticism.* London: Marion Boyars, 1987. Print.

---. *Histoire de l'œil. Œuvres Complètes.* Vol. I. Paris: Gallimard, 1970. Print.

Beauvoir, Simone de. *Must We Burn Sade? Marquis de Sade. The 120 Days of Sodom and other writings.* Ed and Trans. Austryn Wainhouse and Richard Seaver. London: Arrow Books, 1990. 3-64. Print.

Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing.* London: Penguin, 1972. Print.

Carter, Angela. *The Bloody Chamber.* London: Vintage, 1995. Print.

---. *The Sadeian Woman: An Exercise in Cultural History.* London: Virago, 2000. Print.

French, Patrick. *The Cut: Reading Bataille's Histoire de l''œil.* Oxford: U of Oxford P, 1999. Print.

Nancy, Jean-Luc. "The Unsacrificeable." *Yale French Studies.* 79 (1991): 20-38. Print.

Réage, Pauline. *Histoire d'O.* Paris: Jean-Jacques Pauvert, 1989. Print.

Sontag, Susan. "The Pornographic Imagination." Georges Bataille. *Story of the Eye.* London: Penguin Books, 2001. 83-118. Print.

Exchange and Restoration: Sacrifice as a Commemorative Act in *Iphigenia at Aulis*

by Michelle Jansen

Shelly Jansen is a Ph.D. Candidate of Comparative Literature at SUNY Binghamton, who is currently working on her dissertation entitled "For-Giving: The Economy of the Revenant," which explores the relationship between gender, exchange, and reconciliation as portrayed in the tragicomedies of Euripides and Shakespeare. Her areas of specialization include Ancient Greek literature, tragicomedy, the Gift economy, mythology, the Fairy Tale and distance education. She holds a B.A. in English from the University of Rochester and an M.A. in English from SUNY Brockport.

While many critics of *Iphigenia at Aulis* have focused on Euripides's traditional deus ex machina or have noted a comparative study with Aeschylus's *Oresteia*, few have examined the commemorative acts of Iphigenia or the tragedy in terms of memory. My argument seeks to illustrate Iphigenia's sacrifice as a form of re-cognition in order to explore how the female body might function as a site of commemoration and restoration. There is a crucial need to highlight the functions and representations of memory, both private and public, in this text. This is particularly true given the exceptional blurring of cultural distinctions of the *polis* (political sphere) and *oikos* (household) throughout the tragedy, a distortion that de-places not only the content of memory, but also the

nature of remembrance. Throughout this paper the Greek terminology will be used wherever possible. Some key terms include *oikos* meaning household or domestic sphere; *polis* or the political sphere; *kleos* is one's honor, fame, or glory; *agon* or a competition, usually verbal. By investigating these concepts, we can better understand how the female body functions in this text as in terms of an institutionalized site of commemoration. Iphigenia can be viewed then as a form of currency between men, between mortals and the divine, between the *oikos* and the *polis*, but also a fixture that represents both the collapse and the renewal of these antitheses.

Representation of Iphigenia as Object

Euripides's representation of Iphigenia is developed initially through a layering effect. He first introduces Iphigenia as part of Agamemnon's retelling of Calchas's prophecy, the seer's interpretation of Artemis's divine will. Iphigenia, though the heroine of this tragedy, is initially referenced instead of revealed, characterized as a necessary object for sacrifice instead of a singular self. As the scene continues and Agamemnon describes to the servant his struggle to decide the proper course of action, Iphigenia is represented through Agamemnon's tablet. His re-written letter to Clytemnestra requests that, despite the contents of his prior letter, she should not bring Iphigenia to Aulis. It is important to note that Agamemnon writes and rewrites many drafts of his tablet, effectively revising his daughter through this process as well. Thus Iphigenia is portrayed at first as a figure in removed, indirect speech, and second as a character in a text, all within the first hundred lines of Euripides's own text. These layers of representation that keep Iphigenia removed from the audience's knowledge allow a space for Agamemnon's "dramatization of indecision" (Sorum 528) to perpetuate. By keeping Iphigenia in a removed space, Euripides provides the viewer an opportunity to focus on

Agamemnon's fluctuations and ever-altering position in the construction of his daughter's tragic fate.

Furthermore, upon the arrival of Iphigenia and Clytemnestra to Agamemnon's tent, we are presented with Iphigenia as an image instead of as a real woman. Iphigenia is called upon by her mother to stand next to her and "give these foreign women a *picture* of [Clytemnestra's] happiness" (Euripides ln 628-9, my emphasis). Again Iphigenia is not portrayed through or by herself as an active agent, but rather through the intervention or representation of others. This passivity is illustrated once more through the Chorus as they link Iphigenia in a sacrificial metaphor proclaiming:

> Like a dappled heifer
> a pure heifer brought down
> from the mountain caves of rock
> bloodying your throat with gore.
> You were not brought up
> where the shepherd blows his pipe or where the herdsman whistles
> but by your mother's side, to be dressed as a bride one day.
> (Euripides lns 1082-8)

The sacrificial imagery solidifies Iphigenia's representation as a victim of violence led to the altar. Like all things worth sacrificing she is "constructed as so dear, yet so expendable" (Olivia 55). Moreover, even the portrayal of Iphigenia as a girl presents her in a subservient position in contrast to her mother. Her composition as passive object pervades the Chorus's depiction as she is "to be dressed" instead of performing the act herself. Additionally, the phrase "as a bride one day" emits a curious subtlety as Euripides hints that she will be "dressed as" a bride, but not officially serve that position: she *is* not a bride, but falsely *dresses* as one, wearing the *image* of bride but never completely fulfilling that role.

The obscured depiction of Iphigenia is heightened by Agamemnon's vague yet connotative words to his daughter at her arrival. He tells her that a long separation awaits them, a fact that may point to either the impending Trojan War or her death. Continuing, Agamemnon then reveals that "a voyage yet lies in store for [Iphigenia] as well" (Euripides ln 666), however it is unclear whether this trip refers to her supposed future marriage with Achilles or her sacrifice and thus her impending journey to Hades. Agamemnon's purposeful ambiguity further blurs not only the representation of Iphigenia herself, but also her *telos*: for which ritual is she present? A marriage that symbolizes the blending of two households and potentially the perpetual reproduction for the *polis* or a sacrifice that will both solidify the relationship between the divine and mortal realms and allow for the initiation of the Trojan War? Here Agamemnon's misrepresentation of Iphigenia's body confounds "the language and ritual of marriage and of sacrifice" (Sorum 534) as he informs her that he must make a sacrifice, but it is uncertain if he is referring to the traditional sacrifice before the marriage ritual, giving his daughter up in marriage, or her sacrificial death. As Foley notes, sacrifice and marriage are "homologous rites" (84) as both are concerned with forms of consumption (e.g. sexual or physical) as methods of preservation and survival. While Foley insists that "both rites involve a *voluntary* death, real or symbolic, designed to ensure social survival" (85, my emphasis), the willingness of participants is highly suspect, as will be discussed further in the following sections.

The Crisis of Collapsing Cultural Distinctions

From the very beginning of the tragedy, the audience is confronted with a state of crisis. This crisis, however, manifests itself in a collapse of the *polis* and *oikos* and therefore multitudinous blurrings of cultural distinctions. The initial scene of Agamemnon's anxiety signifies not

only his indecision regarding Iphigenia's death, but also his vacillation between his roles as a head of the army and as head of the household. Ironically, through his debate with Menelaus, his brother and fellow leader of the Greeks, Agamemnon resolves to place his brother above his daughter, and thus the *polis* over the *oikos*. Even more ironically, while Agamemnon makes this decision, Menelaus, despite his insightful observation, "Am I to win Helen by losing a brother—the last person I should lose—exchanging good for evil?" (Euripides lns 486-7), inevitably chooses to fight for his wife instead of calling off the Trojan expedition for Agamemnon's sake. With this decision firmly achieved and the arrival of his family, Agamemnon ultimately elects to confront Clytemnestra and Iphigenia at Aulis, potentially and symbolically amid the soldiers as though on the battlefield. The very presence of the women at the martial site confounds the established conventions of the *polis* and *oikos*, which order that women should be "kept in seclusion in the home" while men ought to be in charge of civic and military affairs (Howatson 599). Similarly, the very reason for their presence epitomizes the obscuring of the boundaries between the political sphere and the household. By merging the rituals of marriage and sacrifice, Euripides effectively depicts a society where the once orderly distinctions between home and nation are now indistinguishable.

The collapse of the political and social spaces in the tragedy is particularly embodied in the site of the tent itself, which is the main setting for the play. However, it is important to note the various entrances and exits of the characters with regard to the tent and its purposes. Upon greeting his daughter outside the tent, Agamemnon is overcome with grief at the thought of sacrificing Iphigenia. Their conversation accentuates the propriety of the state and is underscored by Iphigenia's devotion to her father. Here Iphigenia reiterates the conventional social values of the Greek society as well as her desire to rupture them as she laments, "Alas! If only it was proper for us both that I should sail with you!" (Euripides 664-5). Still, Agamemnon insists that his daughter will encounter a different voyage, through which she will forget him.[1] When Iphigenia inquires further into the matter, her father admonishes her that it is inappropriate for her to know more. Symbolically intertwining the needs of the *polis* and the *oikos*, Iphigenia turns her attention to Troy, emphasizing her desire for the war to be settled in order for Agamemnon to return home.

Agamemnon, content that Iphigenia is unaware of her pending sacrifice, instructs her to go inside the tent, saying that "it is not pleasing that girls should be seen in public" (Euripides 678-9). The tent then acts as a kind of veil for Iphigenia; it parallels the veiling of the bride at a wedding, keeping her concealed from the public's eye. The tent thus functions as both the site of political strategies for the impending war as well as the socially mandated covering of the virginal bride. Moreover, upon learning of her father's true intentions, Iphigenia, while "mourning her prospective loss of life" (Rabinowitz 46), attempts to modestly hide herself within the folds of the tent from the gaze of Achilles, as though veiling herself at her wedding before her bridegroom. By veiling herself with the tent, Iphigenia symbolically gathers and embraces the fabric of Greek society before "marrying" Greece through her sacrifice. Clytemnestra, however, scolds her saying that "this is no time for false delicacy, considering what has happened" (Euripides ln 1345), recognizing the need for modified rites and conventions in this space of collapsed spheres.

Achilles's presence further heightens the blurring of conventions beyond the example of the tent itself. Desiring to discuss with Agamemnon the anxiety of the soldiers still waiting to embark for Troy, Achilles approaches the tent only to be greeted by Clytemnestra. It is through this meeting that the two understand that they have

both been deceived by Agamemnon, as war commander and husband, respectively. Agamemnon thus utilizes Iphigenia's sacrifice/wedding as a tool of deception within both the political and social spheres. Whereas Iphigenia's sacrifice will provide the divine providence and guidance for Agamemnon's war strategies to prevail, the artificial marriage boasts false promises of reproduction as well as the "death" of the virginal Iphigenia.

Yet the merging of *polis* and *oikos* is so pervasive that even the non-marriage itself exhibits elements of perversion. When discussing the necessary preparations for the marriage, Clytemnestra is eager to participate in the ritual and give her daughter away. Agamemnon, in a desperate attempt to force Clytemnestra to return home, insists that he will "give away [her] daughter with the Achaeans to assist" him (Euripides ln 729). His determination to misappropriate the feminine role in the marriage ritual reveals a significant violation in convention and, as Clytemnestra herself notes, "such things must be treated seriously" (Euripides ln 734). While Agamemnon suggests that it would be more proper for his wife to return to her duties at home, she refuses, telling him to take care of the necessary preparations outside and she will handle the indoor ones. Though Clytemnestra reinforces the standardized functions of the father and mother in the marriage ritual, she interrupts the accepted hierarchy of patriarchal order as she rejects Agamemnon's authority.

However, Clytemnestra is not the only individual questioning Agamemnon's authorial rule. Iphigenia's arrival at Aulis has been well recognized by the Greek army as their salvation as they understood too well Calchas's prophecy and the need to sacrifice their leader's daughter. Achilles, distraught and angered by Agamemnon's deception, resolves to marry Iphigenia in order to salvage his proper reputation along with the virgin girl. When the army discovers Achilles's intentions, their martial discipline decays into the bedlam of an unruly mob. The chaos of the trained soldiers and their willingness to defy regulations further

illustrates the corrosion of the *polis*. Interestingly, while Odysseus does not play an active role in the tragedy, his presence seems to haunt the text as well as Agamemnon's decision-making process. It is Odysseus who hears Calchas's prophetic interpretation and is the only one who can verify it. He incites the army, suggesting to them that if Iphigenia is not produced soon to be sacrificed, he will lead the mob and seize the virgin, carrying her to the sacrificial altar. Thus Odysseus, certainly known for his deceptive character, deteriorates from the crafty leader of men to the organizer of anarchy.

Agents of Memory and Exchange

Upon recognizing herself as a sacrificial victim, Iphigenia pitifully supplicates her father by evoking Orpheus: "If I had the voice of Orpheus, father, with the / power to persuade by my song so that I could make rocks / follow me and charm all those I wished to with my / eloquence, I would have used it" (Euripides lns 1211-14). This invocation of Orpheus, however, is a questionable strategy. She refers to him as a persuasive figure, one whose power of rhetoric and lyricism conjures even rocks and animals to listen. Nevertheless, this reference to Orpheus must be looked at within the larger scope of the hero himself. Euripides uses a fine sense of ironic parallelism as the daughter of Agamemnon, an epic hero, calls upon the son of the muse of epic poetry.[2] Furthermore, Iphigenia's allusion to Orpheus suggests her own limited or selective memory. Orpheus is not only renown for his lyricism, but also for his heroism, his deeds done to save both the *polis*, as depicted in the story of the Argonauts, as well as the *oikos*, as illustrated through his attempt to save his wife, Eurydice. Orpheus's heroic journey to the underworld fails only when he gazes upon Eurydice and she must die yet again, returning to Hades. Thus Iphigenia's desperate invocation of Orpheus is a failed image of life over death not only because he is unable to bring back

Eurydice, but also because of his own death; in the end, Orpheus's lyrical rhetoric is unable to prevent him from being torn apart by an angry mob of women.

Iphigenia's own tearful rhetoric of Orpheus, her pleas for Agamemnon to remember his role as her father, to recall their intimate connection, fails. She insists on her capacity as an agent of remembrance as she states that she can remember Agamemnon's words of devotion from her childhood, but that he has forgotten them (Euripides ln 1231). Knowing that her speech may not have the necessary effective influence, Iphigenia requests that Agamemnon kiss her "so that as [she] die[s] [she] may have this at least as a remembrance of [him]" (Euripides lns 1239-40). Her urgency for a physical memento of his affection illustrates her desire to envision her father in his position as head of the *oikos*. Still he refuses noting Calchas's prophecy and the Greek army's desire to fight at Troy. Thus, ironically, while the Greeks aspire to end the rape of their women, Agamemnon must symbolically rape his own daughter by sacrificing her.[3] Moreover, one would be remiss not to note that Iphigenia must sacrifice her virgin body in order for the Greeks to pursue a war that is initiated by the rape and abduction of Helen, the most beautiful body in all Hellas. Iphigenia's sacrifice then will function in an Adornian sense, as a "restoration of the past" (41) as it is the necessary means to restore Helen to her rightful place: out of Troy and into Menelaus's *oikos*. Her sacrifice will serve not only as a means of exchange between the mortal and divine realms, as traditionally held, but also as a form of symbolic currency between men as well: Agamemnon must pay dearly in order for Menelaus to reestablish, or buy back, his wife. Both women are depicted as an *agalma*, "an object of inestimable value and prestige" (Wohl 25), which characteristically marks gift-exchange in antiquity. Possessors or givers of *agalma* are themselves marked as valuable, and therefore aristocratic (ibid). Thus these men must "give back" *agalma* in order to

re-store their homes and state, and Iphigenia must give herself in order for Helen to be returned.

Upon hearing Achilles's depiction of the angry mob and his brave willingness to essentially sacrifice himself for Iphigenia, his would-be future wife, Iphigenia experiences a sudden reversal: she decides to voluntarily sacrifice herself.[4] Iphigenia's only resort to escape mob violence, to escape the same wretched end as Orpheus, is to appear a *willing* victim of its power. If she presents herself as a "voluntary victim who consents to be sacrificed to save the *polis*" (Henrichs 178), then she can not only concretize her image as a savior of Greece, but also avoid the excessive violence of anarchy. As Sorum suggests, "unless people are free and responsible agents, human action has insufficient meaning to be a subject of tragedy" (528). The *appearance* of agency has proven sufficient as a prerequisite for sacrifice as depicted here in Euripides's account.[5] Moreover, Euripides effectively employs multiple senses of the concept to give oneself.[6] As Nancy illustrates, giving oneself can suggest giving oneself *to* oneself, or "to the outside, before all else" (26) or to be "thrown outside without ever having previously secured one's ground" (26). By allowing Iphigenia the illusion of choice, despite the obscured reality that she "has no meaningful alternative" (Rabinowitz 47), Euripides presents her as a self who has established her "ground," established her duty and her self in the face of violence. This representation is crucial in order for her sacrifice to be imbued with meaning for not only herself, but also for the state as she is a willing victim in order "to ensure the safety of Greek women, to affirm the honor of her country, to reconcile Achilles and the Greek army, and to save Achilles from death on her behalf" (Sorum 540-1).

Thus Iphigenia embraces her fate and offers her virginal body to the *polis*.[7] She reminds Clytemnestra that she herself bore her "for the common good of the Greeks, not for [herself] alone" (Euripides lns

1396-7).[8] Iphigenia emphasizes that she has not been created strictly to fulfill the personal desires of her mother, but rather for Greece itself. As with many tragic figures of Euripides, Iphigenia illustrates a sense of clairvoyance as she interprets her death to be a way to secure her "fame as the liberator of Greece" (Euripides ln 1383). Thus her *kleos* will be established through her body at the very moment when her body is marked by the sacrificial sword. Though her sacrifice serves as an image of defloration, Iphigenia also transgresses gender boundaries with her voluntary offer as traditionally "male honor was rewarded with fame" while female honor received the "respectability of silence" (Rabinowitz 36). While Rabinowitz focuses on Iphigenia's body as a contested site, contradictory in its "representation of male honor and power" (42), Iphigenia's language also provokes an *agon* of traditional gender roles. Her language takes the form of an oath, a rhetorical device that was traditionally utilized by male citizens of Greece. Iphigenia's speech act thus further "challenges the gendered hierarchy" (Fletcher 29) and allows her to control her own representation, a self-fashioning that emblematizes her as a "potential threat to the male hegemony" (Fletcher 30), both through the form and content of her language.

Still, the marking of her body with the sword further reiterates Iphigenia's sacrifice as a kind of perverted marriage, a marriage to all of Greece, her self-chosen groom. By illustrating and envisaging her sacrifice as a form of marriage, Iphigenia is permitted a "stereotypically masculine and public fame without disturbing her femininity" (Rabinowitz 48). Through her own self-presentation, Iphigenia dismisses any male authority, erecting her own and choosing her "husband" of Greece.[10] In her triumphant, self-constructing proclamation, Iphigenia interprets her act:

> I give my body to Greece. Sacrifice me and sack Troy.
> This shall be my lasting monument, this shall be my children, my marriage and my glory. It is right that the Greeks should rule the barbarians, mother, and not barbarians Greeks. For they are slaves and we are free. (Euripides lns 1398-1402)[10]

By giving her body to the *polis*, Iphigenia forfeits her ability to produce conventional tributes to Greece such as children. Nevertheless, in its ultimate last act, her body will perform not only as a fixed representation of devotion to the *polis*, but also as a "spatial carrier" for Greece (Rehm 22). Her virginal body is pregnant with spatial connotation as she embodies a devout piety for the *polis* and allows the Greek military to envisage war in the distanced space[11] of Troy as a possibility through the destruction of her self. Her body then still functions in the Aristotelian sense of matter as she provides potentiality, which induces a future (Butler 31), even if that future is achieved through violence.

Though Iphigenia's sacrifice illustrates, as Foley indicates, how "cultural distinctions are collapsing" (40), her voluntary effort negotiates more than a mere blend of these disparate elements. Desiring to die nobly for her state, Iphigenia epitomizes a superimposition of the hegemonic *polis* over the *oikos*. She does not merely "accept a changed status for the benefit of the community" (Foley 89), but rather appropriates this new position and all its duties and obligations, as she interprets them. During the speech before her sacrifice, Iphigenia requests that her mother and sisters do not mourn her death. By forbidding Clytemnestra to "cut off a lock of [her] hair, or clothe [her] body in black robes" (Euripides ln 1435) Iphigenia effectively denies the traditional rituals of the *oikos*. Instead, she is consumed with thoughts of her sacrifice as a form of commemoration for the *polis*. Moreover, Iphigenia herself functions as an establishment of the political sphere, dictating to her mother new regulations. She commands not to be remembered as her mere daughter who serves a familial position in the *oikos*, but rather now as an agent of memorialization and the necessary catalyst for the *polis* to demonstrate its supremacy over

Troy. Her site of sacrifice serves as a site for re-interpretation of the Greek spheres as she forbids mourning in favor of memorialization. Iphigenia then not only constructs herself as a commemoration for Greece, but also prescribes how that self will be remembered, represented and who will be permitted as agents of remembrance.

However, with her actual sacrifice, we must question the veracity of Iphigenia's memorialization. Taken to the altar and giving her consent to her father, Iphigenia's sacrifice is interrupted as her body is exchanged for a deer. As Henrichs notes, reiterating Aristotle's *Poetics*, "tragic violence that results in corpses never takes place within the physical confines of the theatrical space, or in the presence of the audience" (176-7). This scene is therefore depicted through the words of the messenger, who conveys his message to Clytemnestra. Giving his speech, however, the messenger emphasizes that the entire Greek army, as well as himself, stood staring at the ground, and did not *see* the exchange. Rather, just as the initiation for Iphigenia's sacrifice is an interpretation of a portent sign, so too is her exchange through the sacrifice as she is interpreted to be saved by Artemis herself. Symbolically, Artemis is a goddess who facilitates young girls at times of transition such as marriage, childbirth, etc. Thus, she supports women in liminal spaces such as Iphigenia at her sacrifice, on the threshold of life and death, virginity and symbolic "womanhood", etc. Iphigenia epitomizes the "the principle of ritual substitution" (Henrichs 183) as her human sacrifice is subverted as she is exchanged by an animal. The exchange of sacrificial victims restores normalcy (Henrichs 183) and provides a return to civilized practice, thus quelling the chaotic liminal space of collapsed spheres. Through the presence of the deer, the sacrifice re-creates appropriate contact with the gods that transcends time and place" (Foley 91).

With the re-establishment of proper rites and conventions, how then should we consider Iphigenia's memorialization, which appeared so

intertwined with liminality? By suspending the process of Iphigenia's sacrifice, Artemis further immortalizes the virgin far beyond the scope that Iphigenia herself could perform on her own, with her own body. In actuality, Iphigenia is swept up by Artemis and taken to Tauris, to the margins of the known world, to serve as a priestess to her altar, forever sacrificing lost foreigners to the goddess. Iphigenia must dwell at Artemis's altar in the liminal space of sacrifice, praying for her own restoration. As priestess, she purifies her victims, eliminating all difference through her exclusive knowledge and language of Artemis's rites. She thus becomes the mechanism through which all difference is equated and also nullified. Her function is to perpetuate the valorization of "non-ritual forms of violence against the ritual background of animal sacrifice" (Henrichs 174), to disseminate the very model that provided her with a space for self-identification and purpose within the *polis*.

Yet what then does this form of ritual commemorate? While Iphigenia's sacrifice potentially could commemorate the Greek state, the act is disrupted for a traditional animal sacrifice, which characteristically commemorates the preservation and continuation of human life (Foley 86).[12] Iphigenia's sacrifice, however, initiates Greece into a war, the ultimate site for the loss of human life, and her liberation by Artemis's intervention contributes further to the destruction of human life at Tauris. The question remains: does Iphigenia's sacrifice contribute to the act of commemoration, and if so, what does it commemorate? As the site of anarchy[13], a heterogeneous space that fuses the sacred and the profane, the *oikos* with the *polis*, Iphigenia's sacrifice cannot function as a site of commemoration. Her capacity to memorialize, either traditionally through her reproductive female body or as a monument to all of Greece, is thus ironically sacrificed in order to ensure the restoration and naturalization of the *oikos* and *polis*. If the physical sacrifice of Iphigenia was allowed to occur, her act would only commemorate a state of chaos,

a *polis* in crisis as exemplified by the martial desire (*eros*) for her own virginal blood and the inappropriate eroticization of her rite. Thus, though Iphigenia's act provides a temporary space for her to construct her own self, the divine interruption permits the re-structuring, or resurrecting, of Greece itself from its self-induced anarchism in order for it to endure and conquer.

Notes

[1] It is questionable whether the lines "A voyage yet lies in store for you as well and on it you will forget your father" (Euripides lns 666-7) are correct due to a corruption in the original text. Others have translated these lines to suggest that Iphigenia's voyage will allow her to always remember Agamemnon. Regardless, the voyage itself is intimately bound with the question of memory and preservation.

[2] While Orpheus's heritage is not specifically known, it is often suggested that Calliope, the muse of epic poetry, was indeed his mother. This conception of his parentage is particularly fitting given Orpheus's own lyrical talents (Howaston 399).

[3] As Wohl indicates, images of virgin sacrifice are often connected to defloration. Traditionally, if a virgin were to die, they would experience a bloodless death such as strangulation. However in sacrifice, the cutting of the throat represents the piercing of her vagina (Wohl 72). Thus the sacrifice also acts as a form of transformation as it can change "a virgin into a woman" (Rabinowitz 33).

[4] It is important to note that Iphigenia's willingness is unique to Eurpides's tragedy and does not appear in Aeschylus's *Orestia*. In that version of the myth, Iphigenia is bound and gagged for the ritual. Additionally, Aeschylus's play does not depict Iphigenia as being saved through the replacement of a deer by Artemis as Euripides's version does.

[5] The appearance of agency or consent was traditionally required in sacrifices. In the case of animal sacrifice, often water or wine would be poured over the victim so that the animal would shake and "nod" its head in consent (Howatson 504). Though such tactics are not used in this tragedy, Euripides does reiterate Iphigenia's acquiescence for the human sacrifice, which is a "corrupt sacrifice" that denotes violence "proliferating uncontrollably" (Foley 40).

[6] Iphigenia's "gift" does not coincide with Derrida's concept of a genuine gift, because, among other reasons, she re-cognizes her act as a gift. Still, her sacrifice cannot be seen as a commodity exchange, with Iphigenia as a subject instead of an object, because that which she is giving is not *outside* of herself as the Marxian definition requires.

[7] Schmidt distinguishes the difference between suicide and sacrifice in antiquity by illustrating that such deaths as Antigone, and arguably Iphigenia, are sacrifices in that these figures die because of a sense of solidarity instead of solitude, as Empedocles's willing leap into Etna portrays (158-9).

[8] Other translations such as that by Edward Coleridge, translates this line differently suggesting that Iphigenia should be considered "as a public blessing to all Hellas" emphasizing both her civic duty as well as her capacity as a form of benediction for the state.

[9] Yet her "authority" is intimately bound to the men and the male gaze as Iphigenia desires "to be seen and remembered by all of Greece" (Rabinowitz 47), a Euripidean

irony as it is the very fact that she is indeed viewed by the army that drives her death.

[10] Much could be made of Iphigenia's discussion of freedom and freewill in terms of this version of the myth and the other variations. Euripides provides Iphigenia with the semblance of free-will thus highlighting the irony of her depiction of the Greeks as free, while she herself could ironically be considered a captive of the Greeks and her own fate, an free individual giving up her life for a corrupt state.

[11] Rehm emphasizes that distant spaces can be particularly evoked by represented by a focal character who serves as a "centre of sympathetic attention" (22).

[12] If Iphigenia had participated in an animal sacrifice in the traditional role of virginal basket-carrier, her contribution may have been commemorated with a statue or inscription verifying her as a source of honor for Agamemnon's *oikos* (Scodel 113).

[13] The Chorus reiterates this point saying, "anarchy holds dominion over laws / and mortals cannot make common cause in the struggle / to avoid the anger of the gods" (Euripides lns 1095-7).

Works Cited

Adorno, Theodor, and Max Horkheimer. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. 1944. Ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. Stanford: Stanford U P, 2002. Print.

Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*. New York: Routledge, 1993. Print.

Derrida, Jacques. *The Gift of Death*. Trans. David Wills. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995. Print.

Euripides. "Iphigenia at Aulis." *Euripides: Iphigenia among the Taurians, Bacchae, Iphigenia at Aulis, Rhesus*. Trans. James Morwood. Oxford: U P, 1999. Print.

Fletcher, Judith. "Women and Oaths in Euripides." *Theatre Journal*. 55 (2003): 29-44. Print.

Foley, Helene. *Ritual Irony: Poetry and Sacrifice in Euripides*. Ithaca: Cornell U P, 1985. Print.

Henrichs, Albert. "Drama and Dromena: Bloodshed, Violence, and Sacrificial Metaphor in Euripides." *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*. 100 (2000): 173-188. Print.

Howatson, M.C. *The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature*. 2nd ed. Oxford: U P, 1989. Print.

Nancy, Jean-Luc. "Image and Violence." *In Ground of the Image*. Trans. Jeff Fort. New York: Fordham U P, 2005. Print.

Rabinowitz, Nancy Sorkin. *Anxiety Veiled: Euripides and the Traffic in Women*. Ithaca: Cornell U P, 1993. Print.

Rehm, Rush. *The Play of Space: Spatial Transformation in Greek Tragedy*. Princeton: Princeton U P, 2002. Print.

Scodel, Ruth. "Virgin Sacrifice and Aesthetic Object." *Transactions of the American Philological Association*. 126 (1996): 111-128. Print.

Schmidt, Dennis J. *On Germans and Other Greeks: Tragedy and Ethical Life*. Bloomington: Indiana U P, 2001. Print.

Sorum, Christina Elliott. "Myth, Choice and Meaning in Euripides's *Iphigenia at Aulis*." *The American Journal of Philology*. 113.4 (1992): 527-542. Print.

Wohl, Victoria. *Intimate Commerce: Exchange, Gender, and Subjectivity in Greek Tragedy*. Austin: U of Texas P, 1998. Print.

Salvation Through Laughter: Nanapush in Erdrich's *Tracks*

by Nichole Thibodeau

Nicole Thibodeau's initial involvement in the literary world was as a poet and visual artist in her hometown, Taos, New Mexico. She received her B.A. in Studio Art from Bethany College in Lindsborg, Kansas, and her M.F.A. in Painting from Fort Hays State University in Hays, Kansas. She is currently pursuing a M.A. in English with a concentration in Writing at Fort Hays State University.

Continuing a tradition that challenges the inundation of white culture, Erdrich's *Tracks* presents a narrative that contributes to the ever-evolving Chippewa oral story-telling tradition. The novel is a fictionalized account documenting the loss of sacred lands on a reservation near Lake Matchimanito in North Dakota. Two narrators, Nanapush and Pauline, paint a portrait of the events leading up to the loss of the land. Pauline, an overzealous nun of mixed heritage, provides a source of amusement and represents the antagonistic affect of the inundating white culture. Based on the mythological Chippewa trickster, Nanabozho, Nanapush continually defends and upholds the cultural knowledge and values while persuading his niece, Lulu, to resist assimilation into the white culture. Through a comparison with Nanabozho, Erdrich's inventiveness becomes apparent. Nanapush is less likely to make mistakes than his mythological

counterpart, but just as likely to participate in healing ceremonies, or revenge-related activities. He is a storyteller who possesses the ability to embarrass, scold, and tell uncouth jokes. As the protector of the Chippewa, Nanapush retains both cultural and personal power through adapting the essential trickster characteristics of the healer, storyteller, and shape-shifter to the changing cultural climate.

Before analyzing the qualities that Erdrich used in the creation of her character, it is important to realize the position Nanabozho holds in Chippewa culture and mythology. Since the Chippewa did not have a Latin-based form of writing, the name Nanabozho appears with many different spellings including "Nanabush," "Manabozho," and "Wenebojo," but for the sake of clarity will remain Nanabozho unless it is appearing in a quote (Johnston 159; Burnouw 9; Leekley 13). According to Thomas Couser in his article "Tracing the Trickster: Ojibwe Oral Tradition, and *Tracks*," Nanapush is a crucial element for the accessibility of the novel to non-native readers as they may have difficulty understanding some of the magical realism or spiritual events that occur. Erdrich based the character Nanabozho as "the traditional trickster and central figure of Ojibwe narrative, who combines aspects of the human, the superhuman, and the animal; the sacred and the profane; the clown and the revered cultural hero. Indeed, it is the very nature of the trickster to combine or reconcile opposites" (Couser 58). He is not simply good or bad, but a character of transformation and complexity. Basil Johnston, author of *Ojibway Heritage*, agrees:

> Nanabush was a paradox. On the one hand, he was a supernatural being … on the other hand, he was the son of a mortal woman … He was sent to the world to teach the Anishnabeg [Chippewa], to help the weak, and to heal the sick … Nanabush was a messenger of Kitche Manitou; an intermediary on earth between different species of beings. (159)

These characteristics create a being that is powerful, yet accessible and easy to understand.

The Chippewa creation myth features Nanabozho as a central character and even a co-creator of the earth. According to Winsbro, the story unfolds in approximately eight episodes: Nanabozho's birth (from a virgin mother), Nanabozho's revenge (of his mother's murder), the theft of fire, and Nanabozho's incorporation into a family of wolves (76). The narrative continues with the murder his wolf-brother (by a water lion), Nanabozho slaying the water lion, water lions flooding the earth in retaliation, and culminates with Nanabozho recreating the earth with the help of other animals (76). Throughout the creation story cycle, Nanabozho exhibits the human flaw of jealousy and often repays violence with violence. He is cunning at times but also shortsighted. Despite his seeming selfishness, Nanabozho is continually accomplishing something that benefits the community as a whole.

While Nanabozho is the central character in creation mythology, the shamanistic Nanapush is the one who would most likely tell tales of Nanabozho. The tales and rituals are a form of cultural healing that mirror the actions of mythological Nanabozho. Nanabozho's beneficent presence transfers into Nanapush's actions as he continually saves Fleur and Lulu. The major connection between the actual healing ceremony, which Nanapush performs, and Nanabozho's status as a healing entity, is embodied in the power of names and words and their significance for the storyteller healer. For the Chippewa, names hold the power to govern one's health and spiritual wellbeing. As a shaman, Nanapush may have to practice the traditional cure of "'sucking' the cause of the disease from the patient's body; or ritually assigning a new name bearing the power of a new mystical identity" (78). In addition, speaking, singing, and telling stories play an important part in the healing process.

Fleur's healing ceremony with Nanapush provides a connection to

Nanabozho, his mythological counterpart. Author Victor Barnouw's book *Wisconsin Chippewa Myths & Tales* elaborates on the healing ceremony and its place as a Chippewa religious practice. Barnouw explains that the most important Chippewa religious group activity "was the Midewiwin, or Medicine Dance … of postcontact origin, it contained many ancient aboriginal features, notably the origin myth about Wenebojo, the trickster-culture hero, part of which was told in the course of the ceremony" (9). Although Nanapush does not tell the creation story during the healing ceremony, he is defining himself as a shaman. Nanabozho is the central character in creation mythology, and the shamanistic Nanapush is the one who would most likely tell tales of Nanabozho during a Medicine Dance.

Nanapush performs the ceremony for Fleur when she is suffering from a sickness of fear related to the loss of her second child. Nanapush tells Lulu "she kept you close and then she kept you closer. You could not wander from her sight even for a moment" (Erdrich 186). The death of her child is beginning to drive Fleur mad and makes her a perfect candidate for the Medicine Dance as "[a]pplication for membership in the Midewiwin could result from a sickness or from the death of a close member of the family" (Burnouw 9). According to Nanapush, the only way to cure Fleur is to have her participate in a ceremony to remove the death of her child from her body and psyche.

Nanapush describes the ceremony as coming to him in a dream. Not only does it allow him to plunge his hand into a pot of boiling stew, he is also able to "reach into the body itself and remove … the name that burned, the sickness" (Erdrich 188). In addition, Winsbro informs that the creation "*midéwiwin*, the Chippewa curing society and its rituals" is attributed to Nanabozho (77-8). While Nanapush does not reach into Fleur's body to remove the name of her dead child, he does reach into the boiling water and retrieve a piece of meat which she eats "quietly,

chewing slowly, taking strength" (Erdrich 189). While Fleur eats the meat, she listens to Moses Pillager sing and beat the sacred drum.

Pauline interrupts the ceremony declaring that she is "'sent to prove Christ's ways'" (190). While Pauline is not welcome at the curing ceremony, Nanapush tolerates her presence because it is not polite "to banish any guest" (189). Pauline is not only a guest, but she is family, whether she admits it or not, Pauline is related to the Kashpaws (Beidler, *Reader's Guide* 25). She relies on the traditional practices to overstay her welcome and prematurely end Fleur's healing ceremony, compromising her own cultural roots. Pauline's interruption aligns her with the historical group of "Catholicized Indians, [who] often looked with suspicion or fear upon the Midewiwin, suspecting it of being a school of sorcery. There was, indeed, much fear of sorcery among the Chippewa," resulting from the isolation of family groups during the winter months (Barnouw 10). Pauline finds it easy to create tales of Fleur's sorcery because the general receptivity of the population.

While Pauline is proud of her new Christian faith, Nanapush knows that his healing power will be lost if he is too proud. He states, "I never made the mistake of thinking that I owned my strength, that was my secret. And so I was never truly alone in my failures. I was never to blame entirely when all was lost, when my desperate cures had no effect on the suffering of those I loved" (Erdrich 177). He is humble and mirrors Nanabozho's ability to provide for the people, but at the same time never acknowledges the powers that provides him access to the spirit world. In addition, Nanapush attributes the failure of his powers to the waning influence of Chippewa gods and the decline of his culture in general as he despairs "who can blame a man waiting … arms outstretched? Who can blame him if the visitor does not arrive?" (177). Healing is reliant on the patient's (or listener's) presence, on a higher power, and the presence of the one performing the ceremony.

Nanapush's healer status would be incomplete without his ability as a consummate storyteller. Nanapush also has the ability to dominate a conversation with Death as well as drown out "the well-intentioned but meddlesome, ethnocentric Father Damien and, by implication, the reader, another outsider-listener. (Drowning is the worst means of death imaginable to a Chippewa.)" (Rainwater 148; parentheses in original). Erdrich is acknowledging the reader, but at the same time asserting a tone of dominance toward the non-native reader and outsiders of Chippewa cultural knowledge. Erdrich's commentary responds toward the stereotypes and assumptions surrounding Native Americans by utilizing Nanapush to drown out the reader's ignorance. Simultaneously, Erdrich integrates the reader as a participant and an essential audience member at the healing ceremony.

Through Nanapush's narration, Erdrich is attempting to quiet the voices of white culture and society long enough to tell a story that can challenge and personalize some of those same stereotypes. Peter Beidler's article "'The Earth Itself Was Sobbing': Madness and the Environment in Novels by Leslie Marmon Silko and Louise Erdrich" argues that both authors are not necessarily working against stereotypes, but "complicating" them (113). One stereotype discussed is that Indians "are the victims of white conquerors who have despoiled their land" and that insanity stems from this destruction (114). While the characters in *Tracks* are victims of the white man's mistreatment of the land, the concept of victimization is complicated by Nanapush's narration. Fleur and Nanapush in particular, resist the label of "victim" through strength of character, perseverance, and retaliatory acts. The narration itself is a form of resistance.

The storyteller is responsible for the form that the story takes, but also influenced by the presence of the audience. Nanapush's narration in *Tracks* is directed at his adopted granddaughter, Lulu, and all that he tells her has a purpose. Joni Anderson's chapter "Cultural Critique

and Local Pedagogy: A Reading of Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*" provides important insight into Nanapush's skill with words. Adamson states: "he is illustrating for Lulu how Fleur's ties to the living breathing landscape of the manitou [spirit] provide her with an alternate vision, one that assures her that the official landscape is not necessarily the real/true, but only the existing reality, which is transformable" (Anderson 109). This is a positive interpretation of the distressing events represented in the novel. The events are not what they seem; reality is not as firmly situated as it first appears. He is creating a way for Lulu to live in hope and freedom, even when it seems as though her options are limited. Lulu is integral to the formation of the story.

The readers are also in the position of the listener, although the story is not directed at them. The act of reading forces the reader into the position of eavesdropping as they "overhear" Nanapush's narration, which is an uncomfortable, yet surprisingly powerful position. The storytelling tradition does not revolve around fixed recitation as subtle variations occur often. Barnouw refers to experiments that "have shown that individuals change stories slightly in the course of repeating them, and after a number of repetitions the story may be quite changed" (11). There are even larger changes if the story travels from one tribe to another or from one culture to another. Rainwater emphasizes the importance of the act of listening in *Tracks*. She asserts: "Even a superficial reader of *Tracks* must notice Erdrich's apparent preoccupation with listening ... Erdrich frequently prods the reader to think about the implications of listening to other people's stories" (146). Listening is particularly dangerous in relation to the spirit world. Eavesdropping spirits can become overly interested in humans while "[l]istening to some spirits can drive a person 'windigo'" (147). The story is either narrated by spirits, leaving the reader in danger of being driven "windigo," or the reader is an "eavesdropping spirit." Both options leave the listener in a precarious and

animated position while underlining the power of words.

Part of being a good storyteller is the ability to tell a joke. While Nanabozho's actions are sometimes humorous, they are not always intelligent. Nanapush also creates physical devices that 'ensnare' his victims in humorous ways, but more often, he involves himself in wordplay and intelligent feisty banter. Nanapush's humor ranges from the benign to the treacherous. Some of the tricks Nanapush plays on Pauline are embarrassing, but others are physically harmful. One example of a harmless, yet embarrassing joke is when Nanapush discovers that Pauline has vowed not to relieve herself more than twice a day. Nanapush tells her a portion of the creation myth that includes the watery rebirth of the world. With the assistance of sweetened tea prepared by Margaret Kashpaw, the telling of the story causes Pauline to break her oath. The sugar in the tea is a rare treat for Pauline, one of the many pleasures she guards against, and she greedily indulges. The tea itself can be interpreted as the cultural 'nourishment' Pauline continually longs for and denies herself. The girl in the story grabs on to a "sticking-out thing" that speaks to her and says, "if it kept sticking out and saved her, she must do what it wanted afterward" (Erdrich 149). When the water recedes and exposes the sticking-out thing, Nanapush reveals that it belonged to his ancestor, and Pauline is now expected to repay him for saving her from the flood. At this point in the story, Pauline has realized that she drank too much tea, and she begins to do a little dance. Nanapush fills a skin with tea until it bursts and spills on the table, causing Pauling to run to the outhouse.

The breaking of Pauline's vow is a victory for Nanapush, and the punch line to a cunningly devised joke. He has proven that her god is weaker than his, and that her body cannot be denied its natural inclinations. Although Pauline thinks the Christian God is more powerful than the Indian spirits, she never seems to reach a point of salvation or even a state of grace. She is continually punishing her body

to appease God, but there seems to be little reward. Pauline is constantly focusing upon a "heaven where I would be finished with such earthly humiliations" (150). It seems that God is uncommunicative compared to the many different forms of evidence for the existence and power of the Manitou and their communications. It is Pauline, more than any other character, who believes in Fleur's powers and the god in the lake.

Pauline's obsession with Christianity is an insult to the spirits of her ancestors. To some extent, she still owes Nanabozho for saving her people from the mythological flood. Pauline's Christianity leaves no room for the expression of sexual passion, while vulgar humor is one of the central characteristics of the mythological Nanabozho and his representative, Nanapush. The joke has sexual components, but it also serves to embarrass Pauline into remembering that she is still part of the tribe. In a sense, Nanapush's joke revolves around the fact that he would never have sexual thoughts or relations involving Pauline. It also pokes fun at her denial of her own sexuality, and indirectly challenges her rejection of her own people.

While Nanapush used sexual humor to embarrass Pauline, he also uses his sexual expertise to instruct Eli when he wants to win Fleur. Nanapush's instruction helps Eli succeed, and Margaret provides a report of the resulting exhibitionism. They were seen having sex "[a]gainst the wall of the cabin … down beside it. In the grass and up in trees" (Erdrich 48). Although it is clear that Nanapush is no longer able to participate in such acrobatics, evidently he is an excellent teacher. Nanapush is courting Margaret throughout the novel, but their relationship is more about a wordy repartee, than physical interactions. She jokingly refers to Nanapush's "two wrinkled berries and a twig" and Nanapush promises that the "twig can grow" (48). They flirt and fight in equal amounts until Nanapush eventual wears down her resistance.

Nanapush's sexual expertise is also a weapon used for combating the

ever-present and judgmental eyes of the church. Father Damien asks if Nanapush is going to wed Margaret and Nanapush tells him "I'm having relations with Margaret already … That's the way we do things" (123). Nanapush is rejecting the idea that a church wedding is superior to traditional Chippewa weddings. He is also poking fun at the Christian tradition of waiting to have sex until after marriage. It is an example of one of his more benign retorts, which contrast sharply with Nanapush's reactions to more offensive individuals.

The characters who feel the sharpest sting of his "jokes" are usually his enemies. In this way, Nanapush parallels the mythical Nanabozho. His power lies in his ability to punish his enemies in humorous and humiliating ways. Clarence Morrissey is the victim of a particularly malevolent joke as a form of repayment for beating and humiliating Nanapush and Margaret. Nanapush uses a piano wire from the church to create a snare. Morrissey is caught in the snare and only survives by holding himself up by the tip of his toes. He gets out of the snare, but is forever scared on his throat. Nanapush tells Father Damien that this is the reason Morrisey wears a scarf around his neck when he attends church. It is particularly ironic that Nanapush uses the piano wire for the snare. The wire can be seen as a representation of the true enemy: the church and white culture encroaching on Indian traditional life. Not only was Morrissey nearly hung, he continues to attend the church which houses the piano. Nanapush brags to Father Damien, "I snared him like a rabbit," which is a surprising comparison as Nanabozho often took the form of a hare (124). Nanapush is fighting back in an intelligent manner. If Morrisey's experience taught him anything, it was humility through the embarrassment of the life-threatening experience. Many of the native people in the novel are in a position of helplessness, like a hare in a snare. They need to make money to keep their land, but there is no way for them to make enough money in time to pay for their land.

Humor is also used as a means of survival against the threat of starvation. When Eli visits, Nanapush jokingly says he has "a herd of this Indian beef corralled out in the woodpile and branded the government way … I'm planning on holding a roundup" (99). There is no herd, and it is likely Nanapush is referring to the Chippewa themselves as "Indian beef" "corralled" by the winter cold, their hunger, and the imposed governmental restrictions. Nancy Peterson's essay entitled "Indi'n Humor and Trickster Justice" connects Native American humor with feminist theory. She states that "laughter as a survival strategy is created precisely out of defeat" although it could also rise out of "triumph and justice" (168). It would be presumptuous to think that the white man is responsible for Native American humor; surely, Native Americans faced previous hardships. While the novel does not end in a particularly humorous manner, Fleur's actions and Nanapush's ability to infiltrate the white bureaucracy suggest the possibility that they will have the last laugh. It is likely that the laugh will not be one borne out of defeat, but out of victory. The novel defines the power and vitality of the Chippewa confronting hardships, but it also gives voice to issues surrounding cultural assimilation. Strength lies in the ability to change and to laugh at difficulty, not in bitterness, but in acknowledgement of one's own accomplishments.

The possibility for survival lies in the trickster characteristic of metamorphosis or transformation. Nanapush is unlike the mythical Nanabozho because of his portrayal in a euro-centric version of the past. By restricting Nanapush, Erdrich is creating a more believable man out of the myth. On the material plane, Nanapush does not transform into another creature or object; he chooses the form of an old man. Nanapush does travel in the body of his younger self when he remembers his wives. As Nanapush instructs Eli on how to show his love to Fleur, he is able to re-experience his relationships with the "Lying Down Grass," the "Dove," the "Unexpected," and "White Beads" (Erdrich 45). Nanapush says, "I remembered the old days … and wore out the boy's ears, but that is not my fault. I shouldn't have been caused to live so long, shown so much of death, had to squeeze so many stories in the corners of my brain. They're all attached, and once I start there is no end to telling" (46). However, he has the ability to be part of the white man's world as well as the old world, which can be attributed to his flexibility as a shape-shifter.

Nanapush's ability to transform also allows him to act as an intermediary between Fleur and the people in the village. Interpretations for Nanapush's actions and characteristics rely upon the manner in which Fleur's character is defined. According to Pauline, Fleur "was the one who closed the door or swung it open. Between the people and the gold-eyed creature in the lake … Fleur was the hinge" (Erdrich 139). Fleur holds the potent power of the lake god and the people fear her, but they also need her because she represents the old ways and is the last of the Pillager clan. In many ways, Nanapush acts as the messenger between Fleur and the people. Fleur is the larger, sometimes terrifying form of Manitou and Nanapush is the intermediary between that power and reality. According to Couser, Nanapush is also acts as a hinge "between the magic and the realism" (58). Nanapush exists in both worlds, and is powerful as well, but he manages to be more approachable than Fleur. Nanapush's position is an intermediary between Fleur and those who are less powerful.

Nanabozho's transformative abilities are especially evident in the story "The Theft of Fire," which appears in *The World of Manabozho* by Thomas B. Leekley. The story begins in winter, with grandmother Nakomis and Nanabozho sitting in their wigwam, without the warmth of a fire. Nakomis tells Nanabozho that a blind old cripple, who lives on an island with his two daughters, guards the only fire. Nanabozho decides that he must steal some fire to keep grandmother and himself warm. Nanabozho disguises himself as a hare to entice the cripple's unsuspecting daughters:

"Nanabozho the Manitou, the miracle worker had become Manabozho, the great hare. But there was nothing very great about his appearance as he shivered beside the half-open hole in the ice" (Leekley 13). Although he is a powerful being, he easily takes the form and accompanying limitations of a hare (and successfully steals the fire). Johnston explains Nanabozho's power of transformation as the ability to become anything else, but then suffer the limitations of that form. He states, "It was the human ideals of courage, generosity, resourcefulness, kindness that made him lovable; as it was the human limitations of ineptitude, indecisiveness, inconstancy, cunning that made him a figure of fun" (Johnston 160). Nanapush does not necessarily experience the same limitations as Nanabozho, but he is nonetheless limited by circumstance and age. Whatever his limitations, Nanapush is continually concerned and working to preserve his tribe and his family.

As the representative of Nanabozho, Nanapush has significant differences that point toward the tensions of cultural assimilation. The shape that Nanabozho takes often has limitations, but he is also immortal and lives outside of time. He is forever sexually virile and youthful. Couser argues that the transformation of Nanabozho into a man signifies cultural decline: "historicizing the trickster entails acceding to the tragic emplotment of Indian history—the trajectory of a fall from a golden precontact age" (61). Nanapush's powers are limited because of the diminishing power and spiritual strength of the tribe and because he is no longer young.

Despite his aversion to writing, Nanapush's most resourceful act of salvation comes from his transformation into a bureaucrat. He saw that power now relied on one's ability with words on paper or "chicken-scratch that can be scattered by the wind" (Erdrich 225). His abilities as a storyteller did not hold the same power within the white culture. Although Nanapush does not respect the written word or the culture that

brought it, he recognizes that he must participate with the encroaching culture if he wants to survive. The punishing snare used on Morrissey also transforms into a 'loophole' of opportunity: "To become a bureaucrat myself was the only way that I could … find a ledge to kneel on, to reach through the loophole and draw you home" (225). Nanapush is learning how his intelligence can help beat the white man at his own game.

Actual accounts of Native American success at finding legal loopholes are numerous. Paterson revealed a cunning strategy that allowed for legal gambling on reservations in California, a loophole concerning the definition of "Indian Lands" resulting in tribes buying new land and using it for casinos (Patterson 170-1). The trickster victory may not be far off. Fleur is able to see beyond her lifetime and when she "laughs as a bear manitou, Fleur is surely thinking several moves ahead in the game; she is foreseeing conditions beyond the story told in the novel, conditions under which contemporary legal tricksters have been able to effect a kind of bingo justice" (172). The time-bending and prophetic abilities of Fleur and Nanapush help to lighten the end of the novel as they look toward a time when their power will return.

Although Nanapush is mortal, unlike his mythological counterpart, Nanabozho, he lives on in Erdrich's novel. His disrespect for the written word is ironic as this is what sustains and creates him. In the end, Nanapush's immortality increases with every publication and reading of the novel. Although Nanapush does not realize it, "his storyteller's trickster power as Erdrich's ventriloquist increases with the use of the 'pressed trees' as leaves of books" (Rainwater 151). Nanapush, is most obviously, a vehicle for Erdrich to express her own beliefs and intentions. However, she can also be interpreted as Nanabozho, a co-creator of the Chippewa. Her story is a re-creation of the past and holds the power of myth. While the myth of Nanabozho may seem separate from reality, it must be remembered that a myth is "defined as a sacred story which is

usually accepted as true in the society in which it is told" and furthermore, the Chippewa "have no category of fiction, since they consider their tales and myths to be true" (Barnouw 4). Erdrich is changing ideas about the Chippewa, which in turn can result in changes in reality.

The power of transformation is more potent in the hands of a writer, than in the hands of her creations. While transformation is an enchanting power to possess, it would be misleading to attribute Nanapush's survival and tenacity to his transformative abilities. Without laughter and the associated oral-story tradition, Nanapush would not be able to instruct or define what he was defending and protecting. Humor and the ability to entwine the listener in a story remain central to the Chippewa cultural identity. In addition, they allow him to punish enemies in ways that embarrass successfully. Often his jokes only reveal unflattering truths about his victims, truths that they are loath to expose to the public (Morressey's scar, for example). In addition, the many forms of joking provide a stronger form of defense than transformation. There would be no victory if Nanapush assimilated fully into white culture. Transformation is important as a form of camouflage in the cultural crossfire, but is severely limited without humor, joking, and punishment through trickery.

Nanapush's qualities as a trickster character are an integral element in dealing with, overcoming, and defeating the invasive white colonialist influences. In addition, he exists as an initiator in a time of conflict, upholding his cultural identity. Erdrich's capacity to transfer Nanabozho's characteristics to her narrator signals her interest contributing to the oral story-telling tradition in a new medium, the written word. While Fleur's culminating act is one of violence, Nanapush's decision to nurture and educate Lulu presents a progressive solution. The subtlety of his actions grants him the perfect disguise for underlying intentions of unyielding and persistent resistance. Nanapush's spiritual and personal strength

diminishes the weak image perpetuated by the stereotype of the "vanishing Indian" while emphasizing the negative elements of cultural assimilation. His trickster characteristics of healing, storytelling, and transformation successfully aid Nanapush on his journey of resistance and survival, while humor and laughter serve as cultural reminders directing attention back toward tradition and mythology. Erdrich's depiction of the loss of Chippewa land is transmuted into a more powerful and meaningful event that helps to inform and remind this generation and those to come.

Works Cited

Adamson, Joni. "Cultural Critique and Local Pedagogy: A Reading of Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*." *American Indian Literature, Environmental Justice, and Ecocriticism: The Middle Place*. Tucson: U of Arizona P, (2001): 89-115. Print.

Barnouw, Victor. *Wisconsin Chippewa Myths & Tales; and Their Relation to Chippewa Life*. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1977. Print.

Beidler, Peter G. "'The Earth Itself Was Sobbing': Madness and the Environment in Novels by Leslie Marmon Silko and Louise Erdrich." *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 26.3 (2002): 113-124. Print.

Beidler, Peter G. and Gay Barton. *A Reader's Guide to the Novels of Louise Erdrich*. Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1999. Print.

Couser, Thomas G. "Tracing the Trickster: Nanapush, Ojibwe Oral Tradition, and *Tracks*." *Approaches to Teaching the Works of Louise Erdrich*. Ed. Greg Sarris, Connie A. Jacobs, James R. Giles. New York: Modern Language Association of America (2004): 58-65. Print.

Erdrich, Louise. *Tracks*. New York: Harper and Row, 1988. Print

Johnston, Basil. *Ojibway Heritage*. New York: Columbia P, 1976. Print.

Leekley, Thomas B. "The Theft of Fire." *The World of Manabozho: Tales of the Chippewa Indians*. Illus. Yeffe Kimball. New York: Vanguard Press, 1965. 11-19. Print.

Peterson, Nancy J. "Indi'n Humor and Trickster Justice." *The Chippewa Landscape of Louise Erdrich*. Ed. Allan Chavkin. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 1999. 161-181. Print.

Rainwater, Catherine. "Ethnic Signs in Erdrich's *Tracks* and *The Bingo Palace*." *The Chippewa Landscape of Louise Erdrich*. Ed. Allan Chavkin. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 1999. 144-160. Print.

Winsbro, Bonnie. *Supernatural Forces: Belief, Difference, and Power in Contemporary Works by Ethnic Women*. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1993. Print.

The Gift of the Telescope: Women, Natural Philosophy & Landscape in Haywood's *Eovaai and The Female Spectator*

by Annabel Adams

Annabel Adams received her B.A. in English from the University of California, Irvine and is currently completing her final semester at California State University, Long Beach for her M.A. in English. Her academic interests include ecocriticism, food politics and the representation of hyphenated identities in literature.

Much of the criticism written on Eliza Haywood's *The Adventures of Eovaai, Princess of Ijaveo* focuses on categorizing the text's form and its sexual and political alliances. There is merit in describing *Eovaai*'s hybrid structure as simultaneously political satire and scandal fiction, and in delineating, as Earla Wilputte did, its narratological tensions. Clearly, establishing the real-life counterpart of each character in the text is important to historical veracity and to the cultural production of history. However, there is more to *Eovaai* than its form and its representative political alliances. Rhetorically, *Eovaai* participates in a cultural dialogue about human nature, man's control over the physical landscape, and female participation in scientific inquiry and spectatorship. Though publication of *Eovaai* precedes Haywood's periodical *The Female Spectator*,

the works participate together in countering conventional hegemonic discourses. For example, in dialogue with a male reader identified as "Philo-Naturæ" (though it is likely the reader was Haywood herself), Haywood discusses how women may participate in natural philosophy alongside men. In *Eovaai* specifically, Haywood draws upon, and then complicates, the metonymic value and literary mythos of the garden metaphor, as well as the symbolic relationship between the physical landscape and (gender) politics. Together, *Eovaai* and *The Female Spectator* destabilize the conventions relegating women to passive roles, and create a sexless aesthetic and epistemology centered on active engagement with natural philosophy and self-reflection. In order to effectively convey this significance, I will first contextualize the general cultural discussion relating to human (female) nature and the physical landscape—particularly as seen in eighteenth-century garden and landscape design. I will then describe how Haywood encouraged female interaction with the physical landscape as a means to acquiring knowledge in *The Female Spectator*. Lastly, I will narrow my focus to the text of *Eovaai* and its representations of the garden and physical landscapes, particularly in three garden scenes—the first being Eovaai's loss of the jewel in the royal garden, the second being Halafamai's intervention in Ochihatou's grotto, and the third being Atamadoul's trick on Ochihatou in her mistress' garden. I will argue that these scenes in *Eovaai* anticipate Haywood's view of a sexless epistemology based on an empirical and active relationship with nature as delineated in *The Female Spectator*.

A significant relationship between landscape aesthetics and a dominant ideology developed in the eighteenth century. The garden and estate became sexualized and politicized both literally—via landscape designers and architects—and figuratively—via the Lapsarian mythos—to propagate an aristocratic/male-centric/English identity that relegated the female existence to a passive role. Landscape artists objectified physical

features of the garden and estate, such as rivers and mountains, to the point that they could be "moved about—and *re*moved—at will, given sufficient amounts of money and proper instruments of demolition" (Fabricant, "Aesthetics" 58). Because landscape became a symbolic currency within the burgeoning agrarian capitalist class, landscape designers such as William Kent, who designed the Stowe estate (which I will discuss shortly), put much thought and planning into how they would design the physical landscape so as to evoke the proper sentiment. The desired sentiment was usually paradoxical—nature as sublime and awe-inspiring and yet controlled. There is both a political and sexual component to this paradoxical desire. The political component centers mostly on the agrarian capitalists' desire to create a uniquely English landscape by predicating its style on Augustan antiquity. This reversion to Augustan landscape design also transferred to the literary landscape. In fact, as John D. Hunt indicates in his essay, "Emblem and Expressionism in the Eighteenth-Century Landscape Garden," the return to Augustan antiquity in landscape design marked an intentional and decisive shift whereby both estate owners and authors sought an English identity outside of the political unrest of the 1730s. For example, Kent's style at Stowe deviated from the self-consciously formal and geometric patterns of the "main park" and instead "returned to the golden Age—whether Classical or Christian—to a natural style reminiscent of Milton's 'picture of Eden'" (Hunt 296). In other words, features of the land were made to participate in this literary and political vision. This vision was not limited to political and sexual discourse, however. It also included an epistemology whereby grottos, such as the one at Stowe, Stourhead and Pope's at Twickenham, became sites for meditation (ibid). Because both the representation of the landscape and one's participation with it carried so much political/sexual/epistemological weight, many prominent political figures, including Joseph Addison and Richard Steele—authors of the

periodical, *The Spectator*—consistently relegated women to the sidelines, both as features of the landscape that could be controlled (and contained) and as passive participants in the garden. Therefore, the landscape carried emblematic value as an icon that projected and provoked the discourse of a hegemonic ideology privileging men.

The return to the Golden Age carried sexual significance as the garden and estate became interchangeable schemas implemented (both physically and figuratively) to limit the female sexual potential to threaten the social order. According to Carole Fabricant in "Binding and Dressing Nature's Loose Tresses: The Ideology of Augustan Landscape Design," Eighteenth-century Augustan gardening had an "all-important sexual dimension" that has been mostly ignored by landscape historians (110). This sexual dimension or "gynecological spirit of inquiry" gave way to the "aesthetic but no less sexual contemplation of the gentleman builder or planter dedicated to beautifying the landscape, to rearranging a terrain that could boast of such features as 'Venus's-Looking-glass' and 'Venus's Navel-wort'" (110). This convergence between landscape and sexual politics reveals an underlying system of values whereby woman, the overtly sexualized Venuses, could remain pleasing to the male gaze and yet not threatening to it. In other words, women and landscapes alike were expected, paradoxically, to be sensuously pleasing and titillating and yet controlled within prescribed territorial (and moral) limits. Three of the most prominent figures promoting this paradox are William Kent, Alexander Pope (who deemed Haywood a dunce in *The Dunciad)* and Joseph Addison, co-editor and founder of *The Spectator*. It was these men, with large estates and/or political offices, who actively participated in relegating women to the position of metaphoric (and literal) footnotes. It is no wonder that one of Haywood's biggest critics, Pope, "an emblem of the ideal Augustan community" (Fabricant, "Binding" 112), sought to control the physical landscape, writing that we should "let the 'genius of the place' suggest the contours of the garden" (Bell 471). It may very well have been that he feared Haywood's literary landscape and its deviance from the controlled nature of his estate gardens and grottos. Addison, similarly concerned with male control, argued that "the poet, like Milton's God fashioning Eve out of a mere rib, 'has the modelling of Nature in his own Hands (sic), and may give her what Charms he pleases'" (Fabricant, "Binding" 113). Haywood complicates the male desire; as an author, she owns a creative space alongside Milton and his male counterparts. Furthermore, she is an author who expresses deviating opinions on the garden aesthetic and the female role within it.

Haywood participates in the very cultural dialogue relegating women to passive and trivial roles, particularly in how she rewrites both the symbolic and literal relationship between women and the garden. While much has been written on the emblematic nature of the garden in literature of the eighteenth century and its relation to women and their Lapsarian fall, the garden in *Eovaai* is more than a symbol for women's fall from grace. In fact, because *Eovaai* is framed as a "Pre-Adamitical" history, the text precedes the fall thereby creating a space where women exist outside the mythos of the fall. Much like landscape design, amatory and pious narrative fictions written during the span of 1700-1740 employed metaphors informed by this mythos of the garden in order to confirm sources of power that maintained the social order (London 103). The garden, then, serves metonymically for the natural world that the text represents (and that the author wishes to historicize). In her chapter, "Placing the Female: The Metonymic Garden in Amatory and Pious Narrative, 1700-1740," April London remarks that Haywood's texts specifically employed a "rubric of erotica—certain scenes in which setting, dialogue, and character would support an implicit model of human behavior (101). Chief among these is "the garden seduction: a ritual enactment in which all features contribute to the pervasive sexuality"

(101). This "pervasive sexuality" has a lot to do with a woman's subjectivity, which she often realizes in the garden. In fact, London claims that the heroines of amorous fiction in the style of Manley, Haywood, and Aubin were suppliant and "natural victims" in its garden scenes. Specifically, she argues: "Woman, like nature, may initially resist man's ordering hand, but the impulse to yield to his pressure is finally irresistible. Only some fortuitous interruption can finally save the Haywood heroine from her 'natural' inclination to surrender" (111-2). When we look at *Eovaai* specifically, we can see where London's generalization proves inadequate. The garden in *Eovaai* is not easily dichotomized according to gender and, instead, is a place where power is negotiated and where sexual desire and political authority become fluid. We see this clearly when Atamadoul makes Ochihatou the "victim" of his own desire. The male's inclination to surrender to desire, then, is no less natural than the female's.

While not contemporaneous, Haywood's *The Female Spectator* and Addison and Steele's *The Spectator* participate together in a cultural dialogue about man's control over the physical landscape, female participation in scientific inquiry and the role of the spectator. Written by four female personae, arguably all Haywood, *The Female Spectator* urges experience for middle-class women (Spacks xiii). If we follow the chronology of eighteenth-century journalistic endeavors—*The Spectator* (1711-2), *The Female Spectator* (1744-46) and, also important though not as widely circulated, Samuel Johnson's *The Rambler* (1750-2)—a common thread of, or preoccupation with, the ocular is clear. By the journals' titles alone we can see the value of spectatorship and active pursuits in the physical landscape and its confluence in cultural productions. Landscape design may be considered an ocular pursuit—that is, a pursuit focused on that which is seen and on the artifice (and spectacle) of man-made nature. These ocular pursuits, however, are hegemonic devices: landscape designs create an aristocratic/male-centric identity that subverts female

existence to a passive/bystander role; literary metaphors of the garden, also, participate in a hegemony favoring men over their Eve-like counters. The implications of this perspective, then, are that men do the seeing and their gaze alone can possess and reform their objects. *The Spectator*, which promulgated social and moral standards, often suggested that artist's (or man's) gaze could heighten nature's beauty via design. Similarly, it often suggested that women should prefer passive enjoyment of their gardens to the activity of public life (Bell 475)—clearly aligning man/artist/controller against woman/nature/that-which-is-to-be-controlled. However, Haywood ruptures this dialogue on the ocular as a hegemonic device when she appropriates the term for her own journal and precedes it with "*The Female*." While Bannet informs us that *The Female Spectator* explicitly contested *The Spectator*'s "attempts to exclude women from the public sphere, both as writers and political players" (83), she does not address how Haywood largely does this by appropriating, then revising, the very emblems used against her sex—the garden and nature.

While the majority of entries in *The Female Spectator* deal with marriage and decorum (and some seem rather complicit in relegating women to the domestic sphere, I'll admit), the entries relating to nature and the garden mark a shift where Haywood undoubtedly advocates for women exerting agency in an active role rather than a passive, bystander's role. In one instance, Haywood encourages her readers to "not only be knowledgeable about gardening," but also, "work at the task themselves," asking, "Why should our gardeners be wiser than ourselves?" (Bell 476). In a letter written by a male reader identified as "Philo-Naturæ" (though it is likely the reader was Haywood herself), the writer discusses how women may participate in natural philosophy alongside men. He defines natural philosophy as which "Nature herself teaches" and notes that if a person indulged her "Curiosity," she'd yearn to be instructed in it (Spacks 189). Thus, Philo-Naturæ advocates for a tactile and empirical

philosophy—the very active engagement with nature that Addison, et al, have designated as man's pursuit. Philo-Naturæ encourages Haywood to go outdoors and engage with the seeming trivialities of nature. He even states that women could join men in discovering for the Royal Society, but anticipates that his male peers might object (ibid). It is important that he anticipates the potential for male rejection because it confirms that there is a collective acceptance (and exercise) of separate spheres—at least to the degree that women stepping more actively into the realm of scientific discourse could prove threatening to the status quo.

In her discourse with Philo-Naturæ, Haywood reveals her own scientific beliefs and ambitions that destabilize a gender-dichotomized science. In "Unsexed Souls: Natural Philosophy as Transformation in Eliza Haywood's *Female Spectator*," Kristen Girten argues that Haywood's epistemology created a space for women to exist alongside men in the pursuit of reason via empirical investigation in a way that deviated from both her female and male contemporaries. While natural philosophy was generally accepted as an important part of the British female's education, it had typically taken the form of an amusement (56). When Haywood goes on an outdoors adventure with fellow female spectators in response to Philo-Naturæ's prompting, and makes use of a microscope, we can see how the act of investigation and self-reflection become acts that defy the male hegemony. In regards to a group of caterpillars, Haywood notes, "There are a Sort, who at first Sight appear more ugly than any of the rest: —They seem all of a dirty brown Colour, and are covered with Hair of the same Hue, which is long and coarse, like the Bristles of a Boar; but when you come to examine them, you will find Beauties you little expected" (162). This empirical observation is mirrored in *Eovaai* when Eovaai uses the perspective to see Ochihatou for who he really is. It is a scene that plays out inversely to this caterpillar observation because instead of noticing Ochihatou's beauty, Eovaai sees his gross deformity.

Haywood clearly sees empirical observation, which is truly examining the nature of a person or thing, as offering both the ability to see a thing's intricate beauties and the potential to see its guise. Since Ochihatou fails to use natural philospohy to his advantage, he serves as an indication that empirical investigation has the potential to inverse power relationships.

Haywood's participation in scientific discourse allows her to carve a space out for women's participation within the dialogue. Girten insists that Haywood's diction shows an influence from two characteristics of England's "new science:" the first being that the trivial and seemingly mundane can be meaningful and instructive objects, and the second that Christian meditation attests to the sameness of the sexes' souls (57). Girten suggests that Haywood viewed meditation and self-reflection as enabling women to challenge their "supposed inferiority to men" and providing a context in which men and women could experience God and nature on equal terms (66). Merrit focuses on how Haywood's epistemological vision sought to "enlarge women's natural capacity for rational thought" since, for Haywood, "there is 'no Sexes in Souls' as there is in Addison and Steele" (178). This is a significant development because it provides a model for female knowledge that is in contention with male hegemonic discourses. Instead of nature serving to parole women and maintain a clearly delineated male/female dichotomy, Haywood's model advocates a sexless epistemology where nature serves to reveal empirical truths rather than to disguise them.

Though publication of *Eovaai* precedes Haywood's periodical, it shares Haywood's model for female knowledge endorsed in *The Female Spectator,* and together they participate in countering hegemonic discourses by encouraging women's active engagement with nature and self-reflection. Early on in the novel, a footnote informs us that "Eovaai" means "delight of the eyes" (55). It is precisely Eovaai's nature as "spectacle" that worries her father who strives to remove all value

from, and perception of, her status as such and to place value, instead, on a Lockean system of rationality. We know from Haywood's discussion of "true beauty" and the mirror in *The Spectator* that she saw beauty as highly subjective and, therefore, fleeting. She argues that "if we took but half the Care embellishing our intellectual Part as we do of setting off our Persons, both would appear to much more Advantage" (Spacks 258). A distrust of beauty and outer appearances, or rather, the necessity to question them, pervades *Eovaai*. Because Eovaai becomes an orphan at the passing of her father, *Eovaai* reads like a bildungsroman in which the protagonist's growth is predicated on the refinement of her vision and, I extrapolate, intellect. In other words, Eovaai grows—and escapes harm—as she learns to filter both what she sees and the information that is fed to her. By presenting Eovaai as the ornamental woman—the spectacle open for the male gaze—Haywood is able to both caution the reader about the dangers and shortcomings of artifice, and also offering the alternative of an active female agent who complicates the hegemony of sight. It is significant that Eovaai only begins truly *seeing* after she begins using the telescope that Halafamai gives to her in the garden. It is only then that she is able to surpass the destruction that has been fated to the characters that privilege false visions and artifice, such as Ochihatou.

We should now look at the rhetorical function of *Eovaai's* gardens since they play an essential role in how Haywood's characters navigate their sexuality and selfhood. The first significant plot-twist in *Eovaai* occurs when Eovaai sits in the royal garden and reflects on her father's death. Upon examining her carcanet—the heirloom her father presented to her upon his death—she causes the jewel to separate, which allows a bird to sweep it up and fly away with it. Shortly thereafter, the Earth thunders, fires spark, and lightning strikes, frightening Eovaai who had questioned, just a moment earlier, why someone of her "weak sex" would have been entrusted with such an important item. It becomes clear early

on that representations of characters in natural landscapes will not be restricted to sexual encounters, but will also provide a space for self-awareness and confrontation with expectation:

> As she was one day sitting alone in her Garden, ruminating on the last Words of her Father, and the strict Injunction laid on her concerning the Carcanet, Emotions, to which hitherto she had been Stranger, began to diffuse themselves throughout her Mind; she took it from her Breast; she examin'd it over and over, and the more she did so, the more her Curiosity encreased (sic): She saw the Stone contain'd in it was of an uncommon Lustre, but cou'd not conceive how it shou'd be of so much consequence to her Happiness as she been told; and perceiving some mystic Characters engraven on the Inside (sic), which yet were seen through the Clearness of the Stone, she resolv'd to consult all the learned Men of her Kingdom, for the interpretation. So presuming is human Nature, that we cannot thankfully and contentedly enjoy the Good allotted us, without prying into the Causes by which it comes about: The *wherefore*, and the *why*, employ the Speculations of us all; and Life glides *unenjoyed* away in fruitless Inquisitions. (57)

This passage sets up the relationship between the garden mythos, human nature and the pursuit of knowledge. We see that Eovaai, via the narrator, has internalized the culture's diction and sentiment by referring to herself as the "weak sex," and we are immediately reminded of the Garden of Eden as Eovaai toys with the sexual symbol of her carcanet. However, Eovaai's fall here, or her potential fall, rather, has less to do with her as a sexual being and more to do with her not reaching her intellectual potential. A footnote by the commentator responds to Eovaai's "pondring on the mysterious Words (sic)," arguing that women are "incapable of making solid Reflections" (57). It is with this misogynistic comment

that we understand what is at stake here—not so much whether Eovaai's (sexual) curiosity will be her fall, but whether she will prove or disprove the female sex's intellectual ineptitude, as dictated by the commentator. Additionally, we become aware that, as readers, we cannot accept the narrator's lamentations at face value when he remarks that "human nature" inspires people to pry into the cause of things. Clearly, the reader is meant to question the delineation between active and passive agency and the extremes of both. If Eovaai only accepted things and people at face value, than she would never see Ochihatou in his true form. Alternately, being too sexually curious makes Eovaai an easy target for Ochihatou. Curiosity, then, is an important attribute because it can lead to actions of instant gratification or to tempered actions and self-reflection. This balance between desire and curiosity is one that Philo-Naturæ in *The Female Spectator* considered of particular importance to "sovereign princesses" (194), which demonstrates how political landscapes heighten the tensions of temperance. Interestingly, Philo-Naturæ mentions that Queen Elizabeth and Queen Anne are examples of those women in power in England who have acted like the bees by tempering their passions.

Haywood describes the garden landscape in detail in each scene and clearly does so to remind the readers of both the literary and cultural symbolism attached to it. For instance, Ochihatou sends a Leviathan-like creature to capture Eovaai and transport her to Hypotofa. It is in Hypotofa that Eovaai falls under the spell the landscape's beauty:

> She looks round, and finds every thing delightful as the Dwellings of the Blessed, when, after a Life of Care, they receive their Virtue's Recompense in the World of Eos: The Verdure of the plains, enaml'd with the most beautiful Flowers, charm her on the one side, and magnificent Buildings on the other: As she advances toward the latter, she is more and more struck with the Grandeur and Elegance of everything she sees, and is so taken up with Admiration, that she forgets she is a Stranger, destitute of Servants, Friends, or even the means of supporting herself. (69)

Even though an apparition of Eovaai's father had warned her to question what she sees, she is still struck with the "Grandeur and Elegance of everything" (69). In *The Female Spectator,* Philo-Naturæ writes that spectators should not "content themselves with admiring [nature's] superficial Perfections, but pass from thence to the Reflection with what wonderful Fertility it is endowed, and what Numbers in another Season will be produced from its prolific and Self-generating Seed" (189). Eovaai's fault here is her failure to go from a superficial appreciation to a deeper reflection. The "magnificent Building" that Ochihatou shows her may very well symbolize the "Worthies" represented Stowe, but as much as it conveys magnificence, it also represents the ability to fall victim to artifice.

In "The Key to Stowe: Toward a Patriot Whig Reading of Eliza Haywood's *Eovaai,*" Elizabeth Kubek argues that because Haywood had aligned herself with Henry Bolingbroke's politics and because *Eovaai* was a political text (even if not overtly so), we may read *Eovaai* as a guidebook for understanding the literary and political significance of Bolingbroke's garden estate Stowe. Kubek reads *Eovaai* with an eye on comparisons between the text and the text of Stowe to show a congruency with the physical landscape and the literary landscape. While I agree, and even argue here, that we can find parallels between descriptions of physical structures and emblems in *Eovaai* and their real counterparts existing contemporaneously, I find that Haywood leaves these descriptions open for interpretation and critique. I argue, instead, that even if Haywood supported Bolingbroke and appreciated the statues of the Worthies, the "magnificent" buildings in *Eovaai* represent a warning that Haywood later gives in *The Female Spectator:* not to lose yourself in the beauty of the

garden when you have real urgencies, such as "getting Bread for [your] family" (Spacks 244). Because Eovaai is transfixed by the beauty of the sights, she loses her sense of self-preservation. It is when recalling her father's words that Halafamai enters the scene and provides her with the tools to access her mind rather than her senses.

The intrusion of science, or natural philosophy, in the garden mythos is no more clearly conveyed than when Halafamai or "Truth" visits Eovaai in a moment of sexual desire. Haywood rewrites the garden scene so that instead of it being a place for subjectivity and pervasive sexuality, it can be a place where one refines her vision and self-reflection. Kubek provides a very insightful analysis of the garden scene as a replacement for Tory iconography. However, I would add that this scene goes beyond the political – it is a general appeal to the merits of an active and reflective life. Eovaai is left in Ochihatou's grotto and "languished for his return" when a "celestial being," described much like Venus wearing a "flowing robe" that covers her legs and breasts just enough so as not to "offend Nature," appears and gifts her a telescope (92-3). While Kubek has remarked on the phallic nature of the telescope and its participation in male hegemony (which would make Eovaai, arguably, subject), it is not a sexualized symbol. We should consider the telescope as part of Haywood's later diction of the "magnifying lens of natural philosophy" in her discussion with "Philo-Naturæ" in *The Female Spectator.* Philo-Naturæ argues that women should make more use of "the Glasses" (i.e. magnifying glass) as much as men do and claims and remarks that they are just as portable as a snuff-box (Spacks 191). It is significant that this scene occurs in a grotto because it provides a counter to Pope's self-serving vision of the grotto as a camera obscura. Haywood's grotto becomes the scene of investigation rather than a projection or compression of nature.

Rhetorically, Halafamai's intrusion prevents Eovaai from fulfilling her literary fate—her Eve-like fall in the garden. Importantly, Halafamai's

gift enables Eovaai to see people for who they are, so that instead of seeing contrivances of human nature (a parallel to landscaped and constrained, palatable and digestible "nature"), she sees the truth in all of its confusing complexity. The narrator describes Ochihatou's art as enabling him to "transform himself into the reverse of what he was: Not that he had Power to change the Work of Nature, or make any real Alteration in his Face or Shape, but to cast such a Delusion before the Eyes of all who saw him, that he appeared to them such as he wished to be, a most comely and graceful man" (62). Haywood had a distrust for contrived nature. She argues in *The Female Spectator,* "Let everything grow as the Soil and Air directs and savage Simplicity be the only Beauties of a Rural Scene" (249). While she does seem to have appreciated the Augustan style of landscape rather than the earlier self-conscious geometric designs, she is also wary of artifice in general. Like a garden landscape, Ochihatou is contrived, relying on what others see him to be rather than what he truly is. Thus, we see Ochihatou's self-imposed subjectivity, and when Eovaai sees the truth of his deformity, she is horrified. The perspective comes to use again when Eovaai watches Ochihatou and Atamadoul have sex. She voyeuristically watches their deformed bodies as if seeing what might have been had she never been given the telescope and had, instead, submits to a desire that had been based on an illusion of Ochihatou's appearance.

Additionally, Halafamai's intrusion counters the dominant epistemology equating men with empirical investigation and women as passive agents. Kubek considers Halafamai's presence similar to a maternal spirit that provides an alternative to "masculine *a priori* control and education" (237). I agree with her conclusion that the garden setting in this scene is of primary importance since Eovaai, unlike other female characters in scandal chronicles (and unlike previous scenes within the text where she does cave, somewhat, to lustful desire), escapes the

prospect of sexual transgression. I think there is more, however, to the scene than her conclusion that Haywood's solution to female sexual transgressions is "the influence of feminine virtue, in the form of a 'spirit' capable of employing 'masculine' vision as instrument" (237) and the "training [of Eovaai's] 'feminine' epistemophilia toward the Good" (229). While this is an interesting idea, and one that lends itself to ecofeminist readings, I think the solution Haywood offers is more about a sexless inclination to natural philosophy rather than a feminine virtue. Instead, the solution Haywood offers is gaining experience through mindful and intentional vision and self-reliance. Halafamai does not dictate the truth to Eovaai, but rather provides her with a tool to obtain it on her own. Natural philosophy, via the symbol of the perspective, levels female and male agency since both are at risk of falling prey to artifice and in need of the "transformative power of empiricism" (Girten 63). We know, for example, that Ochihatou had a viable education, but his parents took a passive role and he ended up relying on magic – an extremity of curiosity – rather than a temperate pursuit of knowledge that would improve his rational faculties.

Conflating both Venerean and scientific symbolism, Haywood's Halafamai revises Milton's depiction of Eve and thus alters the Venerean iconography that preoccupied landscape artists. In "The Mythology of Love: Venerean (and Related) Iconography in Pope, Fielding, Cleland and Sterne," a chapter in *Sexuality in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, Douglas Brooks-Davies describes Milton's Eve as "always a Venus, queen of the garden of Eden (which means 'pleasure' and was connected by the mythographers with the name Adonis), associated and even identified with flowers, and particularly the Venerean roses and myrtle. Venus through identification with Flora, was goddess of flowers and gardens" (177). Halafamai represents this Miltonic conflation of Venus and Eve, described here as inoffensively half-naked with golden tresses and a flowing

robe. Her present, yet somewhat restrained, sexuality and simultaneous association with science, create a figure that is both sexually charged and enviable. Significantly, many estate owners, particularly Horace Walpole, considered Milton the originator of the English landscape (Bending 220). Even though Walpole's texts postdate both *Eovaai* and *The Spectator*, it is important that Milton became a symbol of the very landscape codes that Haywood seems to address here in her texts. Walpole's association with Milton ties into the larger Augustan desire to go back to Milton's Eden. This Eden, however, leaves much to desire for the female who is invariably linked to the Eve of his *Paradise Lost*. Haywood's creation of an Othered garden where virtue may still exist concomitantly with female sexuality and scientific inquiry is an alternative and counter to an arbitrary male hegemony.

The garden encounter between Atamadoul and Ochihatou is an additional scene that complicates the gender relationships typically presented in similar settings in amatory and pious fiction. By presenting a scene in which an authoritative male character falls victim to his own lustful excess and is duped by a female character, Haywood destabilizes the typical garden metaphor. This inversion shows how clearly human nature and metaphors within themselves cannot be so easily gendered, and that control and contrivance are malleable concepts. In describing the scene of encounter, Atamadoul says:

> The wish'd for Moment being arrived, I went into the Garden, wrapp'd up in a Veil he had often seen the Princess wear, and had taken notice of for the Curiousness of the Work, it being the finest blue Net in the World, embroider'd all over with silver stars. There was so little difference between us in shape and Stature, that a Person less prepossess'd that it cou'd be none but herself who came to meet him, might have been easily deceived: He enter'd at the same time I did; and perceiving me

at a distance, ran to me, catch'd me in his Arms, press'd me to his Bosom with an Ardor which shew'd the Vehemence of his Passion. (129)

Ochihatou, who is consumed with lustful desire, mistakes Atamadoul for her mistress. Atamadoul should be considered, like Ochihatou, as one who can manipulate the ocular to her advantage. However, unlike Eovaai's temptation in the garden, Ochihatou's predicament is not interrupted by a celestial being. Instead, Ochihatou falls victim to the very manipulations of artifice that he employs. In *The Female Spectator,* Philo-Naturæ cautions that "Reason, 'that Sovereign Power,' as the Poet says, 'of knowing Right from Wrong'" can fall prey to "influence of ill Passions" (193). The solution is to temper the impulses—"Ambition, Lust and Avarice, those Fiends that persecute and lay waste half the Human Species [and], pervert the beauteous Order of Nature" (194). It is because Ochihatou is so "prepossessed" and acts so hastily that he cannot see whom the figure really is that he sweeps up in his arms. Ochihatou's punishment for Atamadoul is to make her the victim of the very idle spectatorship that he himself fell victim to (and that Philo-Naturæ warns against); he turns her into a monkey and keeps her in his room so that she must idly watch his sexual conquests. Atamadoul might very well represent the statue of a monkey gazing at itself at Concreve's Monument at Stowe—a monkey that, Hunt argues, represents the satirist's art (301). The irony is that Atamadoul represents the very fear of Haywood's satire – the fear that the female sex will sit idly by, overtaken either by desire or stupidity, rather than take the rational leap from superficiality to self-reflection.

Haywood's Eovaai negotiates both literary and cultural conventions in ways that proffer a new aesthetic where gendered constructs fall short. The eighteenth-century preoccupation with the ocular, and spectatorship, reveals a hegemony privileging the male experience and gaze at the expense

of a marginalized and sexualized woman—both in the estate garden and literary garden. Haywood's text offers an alternative where the pursuit of natural philosophy allows both sexes to truly see and interact in the world. The paradigm of knowledge offered in *Eovaai* closely parallels the one instructed in *The Female Spectator* where experience and reflection can nullify a gender-dichotomized science/rationality. Thus, in Eovaai we see how important the link is between vision, power, reflection and landscape. Ochihatou's fate cautions Eovaai's readers against relying on a superficial understanding of the world, or of choosing artifice and desire over rationality. We cannot deny the proto-feminist undertones of Haywood's work—a work that presents an alternate aesthetic to the Lapsarian garden mythos and the male-dominated eighteenth-century estate garden. As if to respond to Addison who viewed nature as subservient to "the eye of the beholder," Haywood gives women the gift of the telescope and shows how men need to use it, too.

Works Cited

Bell, Susan Groag. "Women Create Gardens in Male Landscapes: A Revisionist Approach to Eighteenth-Century English Garden History." *Feminist Studies* 16.3 (1990): 471-491. *MLA International Bibliography*. EBSCO. Web. 2 Nov. 2010.

Bending, Stephen. "Horace Walpole and Eighteenth-Century Garden History." *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 57 (1994): 209-226. Print.

Bannet, Eve Tavor. "Haywood's Spectator and the Female World." *Fair Philosopher: Eliza Haywood and* The Female Spectator. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell U P, 2006. 82-103. Print.

Brooks-Davies, Douglas. "The Mythology of Love: Venerean (and Related) Iconography in Pope, Fielding, Cleland and Sterne." *Sexuality in Eighteenth-Century Britain*. Ed. Paul-Gabriel Bouce. Oxford Road, Manchester: Manchester U P, 1982. 176-197. Print.

Fabricant, Carole. "Binding and Dressing Nature's Loose Tresses: The Ideology of Augustan Landscape Design." *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 8 (1979): 109-135. Print.

------. "The Aesthetics and Politics of Landscape in the Eighteenth Century." *Studies in Eighteenth-Century British Art and Aesthetics*. Ed. Ralph Cohen. Berkeley: U of California P, 1985. 49-81. Print.

Girten, Kristin M. "Unsexed Souls: Natural Philosophy as Transformation in Eliza Haywood's *Female Spectator*." *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 43.1 (2009): 55-74. Print.

Haywood, Eliza. *Adventures of Eovaai, Princess of Ijaveo: A Pre-Adamitical History*. Ed. Earla Wilputte. Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 1999. Print.

------. "The Female Spectator." *The Selected Works of Eliza Haywood*. Eds. Kathryn R. King and Alexander Pettit. Vol. 3. London: Pickering and Chatto, 2001. Print.

Hunt, John D. "Emblem and Expressionism in the Eighteenth-Century Landscape Garden." *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 4 (1971): 294-317. Print.

Kubek, Elizabeth. "The Key to Stowe: Toward a Patriot Whig Reading of Eliza Haywood's *Eovaai*." *Presenting Gender: Changing Sex in Early-Modern Culture*. Ed. Chris Mounsey. London: Associated University Presses, 2001. 225-254. Print.

London, April. "Placing the Female: The Metonymic Garden in Amatory and Pious Narrative, 1700-1740." *Fetter'd or Free? British Women Novelists, 1670-1815*. Eds. Mary Anne Schofield and Cecilia Macheski. Athens: Ohio U P, 1986. 101-23. Print.

Merritt, Juliette. "Reforming the Coquet? Eliza Haywood's Vision of a Female Epistemology." *Fair Philosopher: Eliza Haywood and* The Female Spectator. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell U P, 2006. 176-192. Print.

Spacks, Patricia Meyer. *Selections from* The Female Spectator *by Eliza Haywood*. New York, NY: Oxford U P, 1999. Print.

Milton's Colonial America: Ecology, Empire, and Stewardship in *Paradise Lost*

by Christopher Black

Christopher Black is originally from Southern California and his father taught in the history department at California State University, Long Beach for many years. He grew up on campus and graduated from the university in 2000. He received a teaching credential in 2002. After teaching high school for a few years, he went back to graduate school at California State University, Fullerton and received an M.A. in Early American Literature in 2006. For the past five years, he has been working on a Ph.D. in Early American Literature and teaching writing at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater. He will complete his degree at the end of next year and hopes to defend his dissertation on Early American Criminal narratives in May 2012.

This article is dedicated to the memory of my undergraduate teachers in the Department of English at CSULB who are no longer with us: Dr. A. Robert Bell Professor Emeritus of Medieval and Renaissance Literature and Dr. John B. Williams Professor Emeritus of Early American Literature. These exceptional scholars continue to inspire me in my academic life and career.

John Milton's imperial epic *Paradise Lost* compares God's created colony of Eden to the newly established British settlements in the Americas. During the early period of seventeenth-century British imperial expansion, colonial promotional literature painted a picture

of the Americas as a vast storehouse of unlimited renewable natural resources that held the promise of sustaining Western Europeans. Explorers, colonists, and entrepreneurs saw the New World as a viable alternative to the overuse of land and natural resources that was occurring in England on a daily basis. Pamphlets and tracts promoting the benefits of settling in the New World were ingrained in the English populace and gave the people hope for a better quality of life. In his study of Milton's rhetorical influence on Early American colonial promotional literature, J. Martin Evans observes that "From 1609-1624 the London bookstalls were inundated with sermons and treatises either prophesying or proclaiming the success of the English plantation in Virginia" (12). Colonial promoters such as Captain John Smith, Richard Hakluyt, and Sir Walter Raleigh claimed all one needed to do was uproot oneself and head for the colonies to find newfound wealth and prosperity. Evans asserts that by the time Milton was composing *Paradise Lost*, there were between twenty-five and thirty thousand settlers in New England and thirty-six thousand in Virginia (12). Because the British people equated the unspoiled pastoral world with the American colonies, Milton's Garden of Eden resembles a settlement in the New World that sustains mankind in its prelapsarian state, yet is threatened by environmental exploitation of natural resources as a result of Satan's ability to cause mankind to fall and covet the forbidden fruit that they were not intended to have[1].

Published during the height of British colonial expansion, *Paradise Lost* portrays an environmentally balanced prelapsarian wilderness that is constantly threatened by the desire of Milton's colonial Satan to exploit natural resources and maintain dominion over the land. Unlike other colonial literature that promoted unrestrained expansion and population growth, Milton's colonial epic argues for responsible use of natural resources that have been given to Adam and Eve. In Milton's colonial epic, man's self preservation is directly tied to Adam and Eve's ability to

maintain their connection to pastoral nature and become good stewards of the land. Milton's definition of stewardship implies that an individual should take from nature no more than he needs to sustain himself. In the case of the garden, God created an environmentally balanced wilderness that could provide for all of humanity's needs as long as Adam and Eve agreed to only take from the garden what was necessary for their survival. In Book Four Milton explicitly describes the environmental balance that exists in nature when he writes:

> His far more pleasant garden God ordained.
> Out of his fertile ground He caused to grow
> All trees of noblest kind for sight, smell, taste
> And all amid them stood the Tree of Life
> High eminent, blooming ambrosial fruit
> Of vegetable gold; and next to Life
> Our death, the Tree of Knowledge grew fast by:
> Knowledge of good brought dear by knowing ill (4. 215-22).

Installing Adam and Eve as protectors of the garden and the surrounding landscape, God encourages his children to be fruitful and multiply, yet inherent in his contract with humanity is the requirement that nature must be preserved so mankind can survive. God's children must be satisfied to eat the fruit from the trees that the Holy Father has provided for them. Fruit from the Tree of Knowledge may be tempting, but God warns the tenant farmers of the garden that eating forbidden fruit will only lead to a desire for more than they need to live.

In their prelapsarian state, Adam and Eve live off the resources of their sacred landscape like Native Americans before their contact with Western European Colonists. Adam and Eve are planted in the garden on the final day of creation just like the other species of plants and animals that God places in Eden. Critic Collin G. Galloway analyzes the connection between early modern perceptions of Native Americans

in their precolonial state and the natural creation of Adam and Eve in Milton's epic poem. He asserts, "Native traditions trace tribal presences in their homelands back to a time beyond memory; many traditions tell how the people emerged out of the ground" (9). Galloway argues that these indigenous creation myths resemble the creation imagery that Milton provides in *Paradise Lost* through their emphasis on the importance of maintaining the pastoral environment to humanity. God plants Adam and Eve like native species of trees and they thrive off the ecologically balanced landscape of Eden. In the same manner as the Native American's Western European Colonists encountered in the New World, Adam and Eve are tied to the sacred space that they live in for their survival. God's children are tied to the earth and cannot be separated from it. When Eve sins, Milton describes her transgression in terms of the landscape. It is not Eve that feels the pain of her sinfulness it is earth that is painfully impacted by the after effects of her transgressions. The fall has dire consequences for humanity, but it also has repercussions for mankind's relationship to the earth and the environment.

The fall of humanity results in the destruction of the innocent pastoral world of Eden and the rise of a colonized landscape that is exploited and commodified for the use of postlapsarian humanity who have put their desires for material gain over the welfare of the greater community. Andrew Hadfield asserts in his postcolonial critique of contact with indigenous peoples in *Paradise Lost* that, "Milton represents the people of the Americas as innocent prelapsarians abroad in the mire of the postcolonial world, forcibly joined to the sophisticated postlapsarian peoples through intercontinental contact" (176). Satan's crossing of the watery void to arrive at Eden brings Adam and Eve into contact with a postlapsarian traveler from Milton's republic of Hell. Satan's territory is the antithesis of Eden because he exists in a realm that values greed and avarice in the form of excessive acquisition of natural resources.

Satan is described in colonial terms as a colonizer that is obsessed with Gold and other precious metals. Commenting on the connection between ecological preservation of the pastoral landscape of Eden and British imperialism, Diane Kelsey McColley maintains, "As to ecological imperialism ... God creates, Satan plunders" (112). For Milton, God creates Heaven, Hell, and the Garden of Eden. In his role as colonizer, however, Satan is determined to take from nature whatever he desires to sustain him.

Adam and Eve in their prelapsarian roles as environmentally conscious stewards of the land were radically unlike the colonial promoters of Milton's day. Galloway argues that the proto-science philosophy of Francis Bacon and Rene Descartes viewed nature as a vast storehouse of utilitarian commodities that could be easily extracted due to the use of new technology. Capitalist investors and explorers portrayed increasing access to the lands and territory of the New World as an inexhaustible and bountiful wilderness that was ripe for the taking. Furthermore, Galloway argues that Calvinist theology held the natural world was exclusively engineered to sustain human life. As a result of these new attitudes toward the natural world, nature was beginning to be seen as a commodity necessary to fuel the British economy, promote imperial expansion, and justify the unregulated use of natural resources. Galloway writes, "Early European sailors, it was said, could smell the pine forests of North America long before they could see land. Even unseen, the land held abundance and promise" (8). For seventeenth-century British society, pastoral wilderness in Old and New England was seen as an inexhaustible resource that allowed the empire to continue to thrive and grow. In the same manner as the protagonists of Milton's epic poem, Adam and Eve, the British people saw themselves as caretakers of the landscape commissioned by God to oversee the natural world. However, in the postlapsarian seventeenth-century environment, the Western European

desire to expand their dominion over the pastoral world always involved the exploitation of the land and its natural resources. By the 1660s, the future of England's vast forests was in jeopardy as a result of the economic boom in shipbuilding, house construction, and the development of the copper mining industry. Forests that had remained untouched by industrial society for thousands of years were rapidly being destroyed due to the continued desire for timber and precious metals. In the Old World as well as the New World, the unspoiled pastoral wilderness gave way to farms, grazing lands, and industrial mining concerns. In the American Colonies, the preservation of pastoral wilderness was overshadowed by the growing need for natural resources.

In the Miltonic sense, this attitude of environmental exploitation resembles Satan's actions in Book two of *Paradise Lost*. Milton's Hell is a postlapsarian fallen environment into which Satan and his followers have been expelled. Hell is described as an extremely restrictive environment where Satan's power and dominion over land and people has been extremely limited. There is no more room in Hell for Satan to expand and grow. In the same manner as God the father, Satan's power comes from his ability to control people, maintain power, and gain territory. In the opening of Book two, Milton's Satan is described as a wealthy power hungry monarch. Milton writes, "High on a throne of royal state which far / outshone the wealth of Ormus and of Ind / Or where the gorgeous East with Riches hand / Show'rs on her kings barbaric pearl and gold / Satan exalted sat, by merit raised" (2.1-5). Satan's throne is adorned with exotic oriental pearls and gold—precious metals gathered from the depths of the earth. Milton's description of the despot's throne implies that Hell has a surplus of gold and other precious metals that seventeenth-century colonists were eagerly searching for in the New World. While Milton's Hell has a surplus of these resources, Satan is not satisfied with maintaining control over Hell alone. In the opening of

Book Two, the devil speaks like a colonial promoter when he proposes launching another offensive against Heaven. "Powers and Dominions, deities of Heaven / For since no deep within her gulf can hold / Immortal vigour, though oppressed and fall'n / I give not heav'n for lost. From this descent" (2.11-14). The conflict that ensues between Satan's forces and God's angels is a battle for control of territory. Satan and his followers must be able to spread their corruptive influence if they are to have dominion over the created world. Heaven is the seat of power that Satan wished to subdue. However, because his attempt to take control of God's kingdom in Heaven is unsuccessful, Satan needs to find another territory to exploit and colonize. God has created the Garden of Eden as his sovereign territory where the newly created species of man will be fruitful and multiply, yet Satan also seeks a New World where his followers can increase their power.

After his defeat, Satan hears about the New World and the race of man that God is about to create in rhetoric that resembles the tone of a colonial promotional pamphlet. Seventeenth-century tracts described the New World as an alien civilization ripe for the taking filled with exotic people and species that existed to benefit the European. Colonial literature often argued that the Western European civilization would improve the New World and make it habitable. Like the authors of colonial propaganda Satan is attracted by the prospect of a newly created territory and its innocent people. Satan asserts:

> … There is a place
> If ancient and prophetic fame in Heav'n
> Err not, another world, the happy seat
> Of some new race called Man about this time
> To be created like to us though less
> In power and excellence, but favoured more
> Of him who rules above. So was His will

Pronounced among the gods, and by an oath

That shook Heav'ns whole circumference confirmed (2.345-54).

This description of the New World emphasizes the exploitative nature of colonization. Satan emphasizes in line 349 that the species God is about to create is like him and his followers, yet weaker in their faculties. In Satan's view, this species of man exists to be exploited and corrupted. God favors Adam and Eve, yet it is through their corruption that the satanic colonizers will gain dominion over God's New World colonies. Satan cannot subvert God's authority and power in Heaven so he will attempt to do so in the New World of Eden.

In Book Six, Satan mines natural resources from the dark depths of the earth to wage war on Michael and Gabriel. Satan proposes:

This continent of spacious Heav'n, adorned

With plant fruit, flow'r ambrosial, gems, and gold,

Whose eye so superficially surveys

These things, as not to mind from whence they grow

Deep under ground, materials dark and crude

Of spirituous and fiery spume, till touched

With Heavn's ray and tempered they shoot forth

So beauteous, op'ning to the ambient light (6.474-81).

On the surface the precious gems of gold are not inherently destructive, yet when Satan fashions these commodities into machines such as cannons, they are used to cause harm to God's servants. Because Satan is an independent agent, he chooses to use these elements of nature for his own destructive purposes. Satan's power as a colonizer comes from his ability to fashion the commodities of ambrosial gems and gold into destructive elements of warfare. Satan is specifically searching the depths of the earth for these materials so he can maintain dominion over his territory in Hell and eventually the New World.

While God and Satan both have colonial aspirations, God's colonialism involves intelligent use of the land and its resources to benefit humanity. The republic of Heaven is pastoral and not subject to imperial exploitation of land and resources. Milton's God in *Paradise Lost* opposes the seventeenth-century viewpoint that nature is an inexhaustible resource. In its prelapsarian state, Eden seems to be an abundant landscape, yet Adam and Eve are specifically instructed not to exploit paradise. They are to take from it what is necessary to live and grow. In contrast, Satan does not share this viewpoint; territory, natural resources, and lower order of species exist for his benefit alone. Instead of maintaining the balanced environment of Eden, he seeks to enslave God's people and conquer the colony to use it for his own purposes. Satan is successful in convincing Eve that if God truly had her best interests in mind he would not restrict the trees from which they may eat. In his extensive study of ecological preservation in Milton's epic poem, Ken Hiltner argues that there is an explicit connection between Satan's desire to exploit the natural world and Eve's coveting of the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge. Hiltner observes, "When Satan first hears of the command regarding the Tree of Knowledge, he simply assumes that God intends 'To keep them [human beings] low whom knowledge might exalt/ Equal with Gods'" (43). Satan argues that the trees and the territory of Eden exist for the benefit of mankind's development, yet God argues that in the end the land is his and he knows what is best for his children.

Satan persuades Eve that eating the forbidden fruit will make her equal with God and she will be able to rule in Eden without restrictions. Like Satan, Eve is attracted by the prospect of controlling nature and determining her destiny. As critic Robert Fallon argues the political imagery of colonial dominion in *Paradise Lost* portrays the fall of man as akin to the environmental conquest of a colony in the New World. Satan successfully convinces Eve that eating of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge

will provide her with increased power over the natural environment of Eden. Analyzing Satan's attempt to control Eve and colonize the garden, Fallon states, "Not to be deterred, he insinuated himself back into Eden and finally comes before Eve in disguise as a serpent, where now he must draw on all his diplomatic skills, demonstrated during his encounters enroute, to persuade her to betray her lord" (75). Satan argues that God's limiting of Adam and Eve will keep them in ignorance and will not allow them to grow beyond their current status. As a colonial emissary of the republic of Hell, Satan argues that if Eve allies herself with the devil she will be granted more power in paradise and her life will be improved through the acquisition of supreme knowledge from eating of the forbidden fruit.

Because Satan places so much emphasis throughout *Paradise Lost* on finding new lands and territory to colonize, his ability to expand beyond the boundaries of his homeland is vital for his survival. Bruce McLeod's examination of early modern geography in Milton's epic poem implies that the discovery, conquest, and ecological exploitation of newly discovered lands and territory is the focus of the colonial conflict between God and Satan in *Paradise Lost.* McLeod maintains, "Implicit in the intellectual fervor of this period is the prophetic belief that expansion is not only England's manifest destiny, but also tantamount to survival ..." (52). In their promotional literature, John Smith, Sir Walter Raleigh, and Richard Hakluyt, like Milton's Satan, all stress the necessity of imperial expansion to the survival of the mother country. In the same manner as the devil in Milton's epic poem, the seventeenth-century colonial adventurers were searching for God's unspoiled pastoral wilderness that they could exploit for the benefit of England's population.

Both Satan and England's colonial adventurers must cross a watery void to reach the shores of the New World. In Milton's view they are both searching for a utopian world that they can use toward their own ends.

Discussing the explicit connection between the exploitative colonialism of Milton's Satan and British colonists, critic William C. Spangermann observes:

> Satan, the seeker after this undiscovered land, bears all the traits that readers of Hakluyt and Purchas had come to associate with New World voyagers. He is curious (2.838-39), restive under constraint, resolute (1.252-53), personally ambitious (2.7-8), imaginative (2.11), energetic (2.13), and a self made man (4. 859-61) who like Columbus and John Smith, identifies his own advancement with the commonweal. (107)

According to Milton, Satan and the British Colonial adventurers both cross great oceans to infiltrate and conquer the unexplored wilderness. Eden is consistently described throughout *Paradise Lost* in terms of the New World. Because Milton's descriptions of other worlds are so closely tied to the newly discovered American Colonies, his use of the term has specific implications for seventeenth-century British citizens. Amerigo Vespucci first used the term "New World" to describe western lands in the fifteenth-century. Milton was writing for an audience that had been exposed to promotional literature since the sixteenth-century. Paul Stevens argues in "Milton and the New World: Custom Relativism and the Discipline of Shame" that the newly established American colonies represent a post lapsarian landscape ecologically degraded by the continued presence of European colonists. For Milton, the notion of America is not attractive. The poet consistently associates the American colonies with "life at the margins, with wilderness, savagery, expulsion, and shame" (92). Stevens observes, "The implication is that, in *Paradise Lost*, in Satan's wonder at the new world of God's creation, we witness a displaced version of Milton's wonder at the New World of America" (92). In the eyes of seventeenth-century British colonizers, America was like a newly discovered planet that according to promoters and explorers, held

the promise of a new start for the English people. However, Milton seems to remain skeptical about unrestrained colonial expansion and sees the New World as forbidden fruit that man should not eat.

While it is apparent that the New World and the American colonies do figure prominently in Milton's poetry, Stevens observes that almost all the specific allusions to America are negative. He comments, "Though there seems little doubt that New World discovery narratives did influence Milton in his depiction of Satan's voyage to Paradise, what is puzzling is that almost all his explicit references to [colonial] America are negative" (92). Geographically Milton's Edenic paradise appears to be located in a fertile territory like Virginia or New England. This is particularly apparent because Eden is unlike the mother country where the pastoral wilderness was disappearing at such a rapid pace. The New World was an attempt to recreate European civilization through colonization. However, Milton's ambivalence toward the New World suggests that the poet is concerned about the colonial project. Satan and the colonizers arrive at the shores of paradise only to contaminate the New World and to exploit its resources and people. For Milton, America resembles the postlapsarian Garden of Eden as a result of its contact with Western Europeans.

Stevens argues that Adam and Eve become colonized Native Americans after their fall from grace. Eve's eating of the fruit from the tree of Knowledge and her subsequent interaction with the serpent, results in her expulsion from Paradise and causes the couple to be ashamed of their abusive actions toward the land. Adam and Eve have been disposed from their native territory and they are no longer ecologically connected to place. Evans and Stevens both point out that in the seventeenth-century the American Colonies were the place that the mother country often sent the unproductive dregs of society. Thus, as a result of this expulsion of the lower classes, convicts, and other miscreants America resembles Satan's colony in Hell. The New World may very well be the epitome

of Eden in its pre-colonial state, yet it becomes fallen and corrupted in a postcolonial world. According to Stevens, "The colonists of the New World are not, then, the chosen ones but those excluded from the life-giving community of the new nation; they are to be pitied as our poore expulsed brethren of New England" (92). Stevens argues that the expelled colonists of the mother country are like Adam and Eve when they are evicted from Eden. They have corrupted the garden and they will have to learn to sustain themselves in the postlapsarian-colonized world that does not automatically provide for their every need. Adam and Eve must find new lands, resources, and sources of territory to settle and to survive.

Eager colonists of the seventeenth-century set sail for the New World with visions of the landscape that resembled Milton's description of the ideal world in *Paradise Lost*. Eden is a vibrant and fruitful wilderness that is ripe for the taking of colonists. British citizens immigrated to the New World with the ideology that nature existed solely for their benefit. Dominion over nature was necessary to preserve the human race. McColley's study of ecology and early modern imperialism concludes that, "Global colonization and commerce, combined with new scientific and technical methods, promoted dominion over nature from a conception of moral eminence to one of managerial power over plants and animals and profitable commodities" (117). In the postlapsarian world of the British Empire, the survival of humanity and Western Civilization takes precedence over the preservation of the natural world. Fertile land, Gold, and natural resources exist to benefit the colonists that have been planted in the New World. The seventeenth-century colonial mentality maintained that God created nature for our benefit; therefore it is the duty of humanity to reap the benefits of the abundant resources in the New World. McColley maintains that Milton's God acts like a colonial investor because he gives Adam and Eve dominion over Eden. However, they are instructed not to take from nature more than is necessary to

survive. In its prelapsarian state, the species of human and non-human creatures are equal and there is no defined order of species within the colony. Prelapsarian Eden is a communal living environment where natural resources are shared equally.

Sharon Achinstein claims in "Imperial Dialectic: Milton and Conquered Peoples" that in the Judeo-Christian tradition of the seventeenth century, the natural world in its pastoral innocence was not unlike America before the Western Europeans set foot on the shores of the New World. Achinstein references John Locke's assertion, "Thus in the beginning all the world was America" (67). Here Locke agrees with the authors of seventeenth-century colonial promotional literature who described the lands and territory of America as an abundant wilderness that could sustain humanity for generations. Unlike Britain where the forests were rapidly disappearing, the woods of New England seemed to stretch on forever. Colonial investors and settlers were eager for the opportunity to subdue this virgin territory and make a living off the land. The exploitative attitude towards these newly discovered forests resembles the covetous attitude of Satan towards Eden in Book Four of *Paradise Lost*. Satan looks down on the virgin wilderness of the newly created world, arriving on the outskirts of the garden. Milton writes:

> So on he fares, and to the border comes
> Of Eden, where delicious Paradise
> Now nearer, crowns with her enclosure green
> As with a rural mound the champaign head
> Of a steep wilderness, whose hairy sides
> With thicket overgrown, grotesque and wild,
> Access denied. And overhead up grew
> Insuperable heighth of loftiest shade,
> Cedar and pine, and fir, and branching palm,
> A sylvan scene, and as the ranks ascend

> Shade above shade, a woody theatre
> Of stateliest view. Yet higher than their tops
> The verdurous wall of Paradise up sprung
> Which to our gen'ral sire gave prospect large
> Into his neither empire neighbouring round (4.131-45).

At this moment, Satan stands on the edge of paradise looking down upon the vast forest that surrounds the garden and protects unsettled territory from the outside world. Various species of trees including cedar, pine, fir, and branching palms grow tall on the horizon. The trees are full of "fairest fruit" and nature in this New World appears to have a surplus of renewable natural resources. In Satan's view this pastoral wilderness exists to be plundered and exploited for his own benefit. Hadfield compares Milton's description of the rural mound with overgrown hairy sides to a virginal vagina resisting male advances. By attempting to infiltrate Eden, Satan seeks to implant his contaminating power into Eden to disrupt pastoral nature.

Milton utilizes this sexual imagery to portray Satan as a sexually aroused male ready to plant his destructive seed into the heart of feminine nature. According to Hadfield, "Satan appears as a rapist, a potent male ready to ravish and exploit the untouched lands before him, imagery which recalls Sir Walter Raleigh's description of Guiana as a countrey that yet had her maydenhead, never sackt, nor wrought, the face of the earth hath not been torne" (175). Satan seeks to implant his deadly seed into Eden just as Raleigh seeks to mine the earth and plunder Guiana. In the same manner as the British venture capitalists, Satan cannot subdue this natural landscape and gain access to its abundant resources without cutting down the forest barrier that separates Eden from the outside world. This act of colonization provides access to the plentiful raw materials of Eden that are necessary for Satan to gain dominion over the garden. Satan like the seventeenth-century colonists could not make

new lands and territory habitable without destroying the vast forests to establish communities, cultivate the landscape, and create civilization.

Seventeenth-century industrialists argued that the British landscape had become so overpopulated that there was not enough land and resources to accommodate the growing population. Therefore, the commonwealth had to find new land and territory to settle and colonize. Evans argues that there were two central arguments that justified the colonization of the New World: the Purgative and the Expansive. According to Evans, "Purgative arguments were based on the widespread belief that England's population had grown so dramatically during the sixteenth-century that the country was bursting at the seams" (30). Colonization in the New World was seen as a viable ecological option, because it relieved England of the surplus population and as a result gave Britain greater access to land that could support the growing population. Expansive arguments did not focus on social issues, rather these arguments focused on the benefits of personal and spiritual renewal. Expanding English trade was synonymous with expanding the Christian community. Both of these models of Colonial expansion are represented in *Paradise Lost*.

The expulsion of Satan and the fallen angels from Heaven is God's purging of the corruptive influences that poison Heaven's native soil. This view is supported by the fact that the colonial territory where Satan is sent to live out his exile is located in the most remote part of the world. Satan's prison is described as a place that is far removed from the pristine territory of Heaven. Milton writes, "Such place Eternal Justice had prepared / For those rebellious, here their prison ordained / In utter darkness, and their portion set / As far removed from God and light of Heav'n / As from the centre thrice to th' utmost pole. / O how unlike the place from whence they fell!" (1.70-75). This description of Satan's prison resembles the seventeenth-century attitudes toward the colonies in the Americas. In line 70, the narrator refers to Hell as the place that Justice

has prepared for the rebels. Satan and the fallen angels have literally been sent out into the dark and foreboding wilderness away from the light of Heaven. Satan is a corruptive influence within heaven so he must be expelled to prevent the fall of God's kingdom. In the same manner as colonists sent off to penal colonies in the New World, he will have to make his way in the hostile territory of Hell.

Many of the colonists sent to the New World were unemployed or underemployed and as a result were seen as a corruptive influence in British society. Rather than remaining in the mother country, these social miscreants were often sent off to labor in the colonies. Evans observes, "In tract after tract America was represented as a vast penal colony in which the nation's unemployed malcontents, criminals, dissenters, and heretics could conveniently be confined at a safe distance from civilized society" (33). Because of their idleness and inability to maintain steady employment in Britain, shipping this segment of the population off to work in the New World was seen as a type of cleansing of the commonwealth. Renaissance England, who supported the purgative position, argued that the colonies were a type of cesspool where British excrement could be rapidly disposed of. Ridding society of its corruptive elements was seen as necessary to preserve the stability of British society. Because the lands on the other side of the pond were largely unpopulated, this territory was seen as a natural environment to send the lower classes so that they could reform themselves and become productive members of society.

While transplanting convicts and the unemployed to the colonies was seen as purgation, there was also an aspect to this re-population of people that directly appealed to the expansionist argument. Because these people were largely unemployed in Britain, they benefited the mother country by learning trades such as farming and mining that provided needed food and resources for the British economy. Milton's Hell in *Paradise Lost* is

essentially a penal colony for the expelled angels from Heaven, yet it becomes a center of colonial exploration when Satan begins to look for other territories and sources of natural resources to exploit. The residents of Hell seek to establish a garden of their own where they can gain power over nature through control of land and territory. Satan and his followers depart, "On bold adventure to discover wide / That dismal world, if any clime perhaps / Might yield them easier habitation, bend" (2.571-73). While this first attempt to find a more suitable environment to colonize is unsuccessful, Satan has his eyes on the New World of Eden that God is about to create.

As a colonizer, Satan is not concerned with the preservation of the pastoral landscape. He sees nature as a commodity to be shaped and molded to his own desire. McColley writes:

> *Paradise Lost* poetically debates issues concerning the health of the natural and the politic bodies still present in ecological discourse today: the nature of the dominion granted in Genesis; the implications of monotheism for human attitudes toward nature; the effects of Mammon on air, water, and earth; and the need for human justice to other-than human-beings (167).

Unlike the venture capitalists of Milton's era that plunder the landscape to further the industrialization of Early Modern society, Adam and Eve as tenants of the garden draw from the inherent fruitfulness of their surroundings, because they only eat from the trees and plants that contain renewable resources.

Milton's Edenic paradise is the ideal society because it represents the ideal balance between mankind's need to survive and the preservation of pastoral nature. As long as Adam and Eve maintain the garden, cultivate the land and take from it only what is necessary to live, the world will remain environmentally sound. Critic Mary C. Fenton claims that God's emphasis in *Paradise Lost* on providing an ecologically balanced territory

for his chosen people can be traced back to God's covenant with the Israelites in the Old Testament. According to Fenton, "In Old Testament History, beginning with the Abrahamic covenant the hope for the future is deeply involved with the promise of physical territory and thus Milton shows that historically land ownership and land management have been central to individual liberty and to religious and political reform" (152). In Milton's view, land ownership defines an individual's place in the world and determines one's destiny. In their prelapsarian state, Adam and Eve's relationship to paradise is that of faithful indentured servants that preserve nature for God's glory and not their own personal welfare. Because the chosen son and daughter of God have a surplus of food and natural resources, they need not desire more than what God has promised.

Adam and Eve must continue to demonstrate to God their worthiness to remain in Eden by taking care of the plants and animals in nature and protecting the crucial environmental balance that exists in paradise. Fenton observes, "For Milton an individual does not deserve land if he cannot or does not care for it aright and the ultimate function of land is in the service of preserving it and enhancing it in order to glorify God ..." (163). In the seventeenth-century context, those individuals within society that are not putting the land to good use for the welfare of the common people are not living up to God's belief that nature should benefit the entire community. While cutting down the vast ancient forests of the commonwealth may benefit Britain economically, it also has the effect of placing the future of the landscape in the hands of the privileged few. The landed gentry are using natural resources for their own economic and financial gain while at the same time disenfranchising the common man. In contrast to the concept of Christian Stewardship of the land, which is theocentric, Satan's desire for land emphasizes dominion, not duty or service.

Evans argues that Milton's God in *Paradise Lost* plays the role of

an Imperial and Colonial investor when he instructs Adam and Eve to cultivate the garden on his behalf. From this point of view, it can be argued that God acts not unlike the seventeenth-century British colonists that cut down the ancient forests of the New World to benefit the growth and expansion of the economy. This argument interprets God's command to multiply literally implying that nature exists solely for humanities benefit. While nature does sustain all of God's creatures, the divine creator's instructions to Adam and Eve are not entirely clear. In Book 7 God states: "Be Fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth, / Subdue it, and throughout dominion hold / Over fish of the sea, and fowl of the air, / And every living thing, that moves on the earth" (7.531-34). This edict appears to be straightforward, yet there is no distinction from God as to how much human use of nature is acceptable. While logging and farming benefit the entire population of Paradise, certainly uncontrolled exploitation of natural resources can threaten the quality of human and animal life. McColley appropriately asks the question "What kind of subduing of the earth and dominion over living things that move does the mandate from Genesis support, and how does dominion over other animals relate to tyranny over human beings?" (113). What appears to be God's intention is that his children preserve the ecological balance that is present within nature. This assertion is supported when Michael shows Adam the future of mankind's relationship to the landscape in the postlapsarian world. Milton writes:

> His eyes he opened, and beheld a field
> Part arable and tilith, whereon were sheaves
> New-reaped, the other part sheep-walks and folds.
> I' th' midst an altar as the landmark stood
> Rustic, of grassy sward. Thither anon
> A sweaty reaper from his tillage brought
> First fruits, the green ear, and the yellow sheaf

> Unculled, as came to hand. A shepherd next
> More meek came with the firstlings of his flock
> Choicest and best, then sacrificing laid
> The innards with their fat, with incense strewed
> On the cleft wood, and all due rites performed (11.429-40).

In place of the pristine, untainted landscape of paradise, Michael shows Adam a landscape that has been overused and scarred by the grazing of cattle and sheep. When Michael opens Adam's eyes he sees a landscape that is divided—half is being used for the planting of crops and the other half is being used for grassland. Unlike Eden this landscape is not environmentally sound. The farmer's herds of sheep interfere with the ability to grow crops that could benefit society.

The postlapsarian world that Michael reveals to Adam is the end product of over farming and industrialization. Humanity has not lived up to their responsibility as good stewards of the land because they have allowed their desire for natural resources to overshadow their duty to preserve nature. The epic narrator notes, "There is, said Michael, if thou well observe / The rule of not too much, by temperance taught / In what thou eat'st and drink' st, seeking from thence / Due nourishment, not gluttonous delight," (11.530-34). It is not that God does not expect mankind to use natural resources for the benefit of him and his progeny, but what is sinful is the excessive use of these resources. Having access to natural resources does not corrupt man; it is the uses to which man puts these resources that Milton questions. God's kingdom in Heaven and the prelapsarian territory of Eden are both ecologically balanced environments that have not been corrupted by the influence of excessive exploitation of natural resources. The British colonies in the New World are sinful according to Milton because they emphasize the exploitation of natural resources for the benefit of the few. Liberty and freedom for Satan is achieved at the expense of Adam and Eve. One individual's

colonial gain results in another's destruction. In contrast to other colonial promotional literature of the period, *Paradise Lost* emphasizes ecological balance rather than unrestrained expansion. The colony of Eden is a resource that sustains mankind it is not a storehouse to be plundered.

Notes

[1] In the Miltonic sense, the term prelapsarian refers to the innocent state of Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost* prior to the fall of humanity. Throughout my study, I use this term to analyze the innocent state of Milton's protagonists prior to their post-colonial contact with God's fallen angel Satan.

Works Cited

Achinstein, Sharon. "Imperial Dialectic: Milton and Conquered Peoples." Rajan Balachandra, and Elizabeth Sauer. Eds. *Milton and the Imperial Vision*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne U P, 1999. Print.

Calloway, Collin G. *New Worlds for All*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U P, 1997. Print.

Evans, James Martin. *Milton's Imperial Epic: Paradise Lost and the Discourse of Colonialism*. London: Cornell U P, 1996. Print.

Fallon, Robert Thomas. *Divided Empire: Milton's Political Imagery*. University Park: Pennsylvania State U P, 1995. Print.

Fenton, Mary C. "Hope, Land Ownership, and Milton's Paradise Within." *Studies in English Literature*. Vol. 43 no 1 (2003): 151-80. Print.

Hiltner, Ken. *Milton and Ecology*. London: Cambridge U P, 2003. Print.

Hadfield, Andrew. "The English and Other Peoples." Ed. Thomas N. Corns. *A Companion to Milton*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2001. Print.

McColley, Diane Kelsey. "Milton and Ecology." Ed. Thomas N. Corns. *A Companion to Milton*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2001. Print.

McColley, Kelsey. "Ecology and Empire." Eds. Balachandra Rajan and Elizabeth Sauer. *Milton and the Imperial Vision*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne U P, 1999. Print.

McLeod, Bruce. "The Lordly Eye: Milton and the Strategic Geography of Empire." Eds. Balachandra Rajan and Elizabeth Sauer. *Milton and the Imperial Vision*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne U P, 1999. Print.

Milton, John. *Paradise Lost*. London: Penguin, 2000. Print.

-----. Paradise Lost. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2005. Print.

Spangermann, William C. *A New World of Worlds: Redefining Early American Literature*. New Haven: Yale U P, 1994. Print.

Stevens, Paul. "Milton and the New World: Custom Relativism and the Discipline of Shame." Eds. Balachandra Rajan and Elizabeth Sauer. *Milton and the Imperial Vision*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne U P, 1999. Print.

"Ceci n'est pas un conte": Glissant's *La Lézarde* and the Treachery of Words in Postcolonial Discourse

by Christopher Flood

Christopher M. Flood is currently a doctoral student in French and Francophone Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles. He earned a B.A. in Philosophy (2005) and an M.A. in French Studies (2007), both from Brigham Young University. His research interests include satire, philosophy and theology in literature, and New World Francophonie. His current research focuses on the use of the body in political and religious satire to depict linguistic, cultural, and philosophical crises.

At this point in western culture, it would be difficult to stumble upon a line like the one taken as the title for this study, and not immediately draw on the intellectual 'baggage' generated by eighty years of study and comments on René Magritte's celebrated surrealist painting *La trahison des images* (*The Treachery of Images*, 1928-9), which is frequently referred to by the famous text accompanying the image of a pipe and which declares: "Ceci n'est pas une pipe" ("This is not a pipe"). More to the point, it is unlikely that a writer as meticulous and deliberate as Edouard Glissant would unwittingly permit a formulaic phrase so encumbered by meaning and tradition to slip into his work unintentionally. So, when the narrator of Glissant's powerful and enigmatic novel, *La Lézarde*,

repeatedly makes this succinct yet evocative declaration throughout the text, he jarringly divulges an underlying concern of the entire work: the treachery of words. Indeed, the study of language in colonial experience has always informed postcolonial critique, and it is this particular aspect of postcolonial discourse that seems to preoccupy Glissant. Thus, in this instance, a comparison of Glissant's work to Magritte's celebrated painting begets a unique and profitable reading that bridges the gap between Glissant's theoretical writings and his fiction, while inviting broader reflection on the power of language at its most fundamental level. Through a subtle examination of common, yet culturally significant words and their theoretical consequences, Glissant draws the reader's attention to the constructs (political, social, intellectual, etc.) that are imposed on them.

Throughout both his literary and theoretical writings, Glissant noticeably, and often overtly, emphasizes certain words and ideas: *conte* ("tale"), *histoire* ("history" or "story"), *tragédie*, *sacrifice*, *mythe*, *légende*, and *livre* ("book"). These words seem so simple in definition and application; yet that perceived simplicity may very well camouflage a theoretical transcendence that risks to deceive all who write, read, speak, or hear them. In fact, these particular *arche*-words, to borrow a Derridean construction, are so elementary and deceptively simple that to question their definitions or usage might seem pedantic or gratuitously subversive. However, it is precisely the apparent simplicity and transparency of these culturally fundamental words that invite further scrutiny; this is, indeed, one of the more prominent processes at work in *La Lézarde*. In the middle of what appears to be a *conte*, Glissant's narrator declares that it is, in fact, not a *conte*. The reader is faced with the disturbing possibility that a seemingly self-evident, formative linguistic notion may, in reality, mask an unexpectedly weighty, unfamiliar, and even foreign cultural construct. But this is not an unexpected phenomenon within

the postcolonial experience. As the Martiniquais philosopher and anti-colonial revolutionary Frantz Fanon wrote:

> To speak … means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization … Every colonized people—in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality—finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. (Fanon 17-8)

Glissant, a Martiniquais writing in the colonizer's French, manages to recreate within a single linguistic framework what is surely a common experience among the colonized—that words often communicate much more than seems immediately apparent. Indeed, an analysis of these fundamental *arche*-words shows that they are not merely signifiers innocuous in and of themselves, rather, in the hands of oppressive colonizers working to impose their own culture upon a colonized population, they become instruments of oppression. Where words are expected to disclose or communicate meaning, these simple words that bear so much cultural weight, can be used to deceive and subjugate as a colonized people are compelled to force their civilization into a non-native linguistic framework that perpetuates an alien worldview. It is precisely this type of linguistic drama that motivates the subtle subversion and critical examination of language found in Glissant's work.

The plot focuses on a group of young, idealistic rebels who designate one of their own to murder a government official sent to follow their local river, the Lézarde, and determine whether it is a *fleuve* (a river that empties into the sea) or a *rivière* (a tributary). This common French distinction, generally unexpressed in English, has traditionally contributed to regional self-perception, as well as strategic and economic prominence, all of which are implied in this account and contribute the

novel's motivating dilemma wherein an otherwise nominal distinction is rendered crucial by the potential increase in local intervention by an unwelcome, external political entity. Moreover, the Lézarde bears cultural significance as life-sustaining water and food for those living along its crooked path running down from the Edenic mountains to the wide, ambiguous sea. To those humble villagers, it is simultaneously a necessity of life and an indomitable flow of history and memory. Regardless of unknown geography, it has linguistically always been *une rivière*, but that simple and fundamental fact, along with their cherished way of life established upon it, is threatened by an external political force with dubious motives and linguistic authority. It is here that a discussion of *La Lézarde* intersects with that of Magritte's famous painting.

What manifests itself in *La Lézarde* as the disconcerting shock of linguistic rupture, comes across as a whimsical *jeu de mots* in Magritte's painting; or, at least, that is the commonly chosen mode of aesthetic encounter. One can imagine the chuckling voice of an admirer first deciphering the visual riddle: "Of course it's not a pipe, it's only a picture of one!" This illustrates one of the most interesting aspects of *La trahison des images*, that the viewer almost instinctively separates the writing from the image of the pipe, reductively assuming that the writing must then refer to the image. Thus, upon encountering the script accompanying Magritte's almost photographically-accurate painting, the viewer come reader reduces all the meticulous details that otherwise form an image, or we might even say an idea, into a single, monosyllabic scribble composed of nothing more than three lines and a point, the cursive text of the word *pipe*, via a referential relation to the equally textual, demonstrative pronoun *ceci*. This obscure relationship between text, word, and idea offers a glimpse of the philosophical dilemma that gave rise to the famous twentieth-century *linguistic turn* that so profoundly impacted the disciplines of philosophy and literature. One of this movement's earliest

figures, Ferdinand de Saussure, posited in his seminal *Cours de linguistique générale* a uniquely systematic approach to linguistics that imagined the written word as a more efficient means of representation than more complex, detailed images.[2] Building on these ideas and applying them specifically to Magritte's painting in a short theoretical critique also entitled *Ceci n'est pas une pipe*, Michel Foucault asked whether the script in the painting itself is not a sort of image, a *calligramme* as he calls it, which would open the text to different readings. He can then ask, as he does, what would be the *meaning* of the sentence if it were applied self-referentially? (Foucault 24-5) Is it then the word *pipe* that is not what it seems it should be? Or, is it possibly the demonstrative pronoun *ceci* ("this")? There are multiple layers of representation at work in the painting. The depicted pipe is itself nothing more than an image, a representation. While linked epistemologically to something tangible, this is obviously not the case ontologically. The spoken word *pipe* is a signifier, with the written word *pipe* being a signifier of a signifier. Likewise, *ceci*, as a demonstrative pronoun designating the spoken and/or written word *pipe*, is then a signifier of a signifier of a signifier. But where does this chain of deferred signification end? At the concept of *pipe* in the artist's head? Not if we accept Jacques Derrida's classic critique of Saussure. For Derrida, the concept of *pipe*, as for any other signifier, is inherently and perpetually unstable, bearing a relational trace of everything that it is not.[3] Thus, to apply these ideas to Glissant's sentence, "ceci n'est pas un conte," it is necessary to first accept the potential impossibility of discovering what a *conte* is and, therefore, to limit this study to a discussion of what it is not.

In *La Lézarde*, the narrator recounts, "Et l'enfant que j'étais et l'homme que je suis ont ceci en commun : de confondre le conte et l'histoire" ("The child that I was and the man that I am have this in common: they confuse [tale] and history") (*Lézarde* 109; *Dash* 82).[4] Here is the first criterion, if it is possible to confuse the two, then, within

this context—they are not synonymous. Thus, *conte* is not *l'histoire*. It is the common dilemma of literary forms that they generally seem to be pitted against history (conceived as an authoritative account of the collective past); poetic license almost inherently conflicts with cold facts. Glissant writes, "history insofar as it is the 'reflection' of a collective consciousness today is concerned with the obscure areas of lived realities" (*Caribbean Discourse* 69). However, Glissant continues, writing that it is a "complacent kind of person who believes that history is just a sequence of events, to which therefore there will always be an *outcome*" (*Caribbean Discourse* 70). For such individuals, and they are not few in number even today, the world is teleological and reduces to a simplistic cause and effect model. Viewed within this Eurocentric, Hegelian mode, history is ultimately and reassuringly governed by transcendent reason, and thereby imbued with an illusive, yet comforting, semblance of order and balance. Not surprisingly, this is also the underlying illusion and aim of tragedy, the third of the proposed *arche*-words.

As Nietzsche argued in his *The Birth of Tragedy*, tragedy is considerably more than a mere art form; it is a fundamental mode of expression that comprises a uniquely lucid means of realizing the world. Tragedy, as Nietzsche conceived it, is essentially the offspring of two opposing aesthetic forces, the Apollonian and the Dionysian; the former represents the dreamlike façade that orders and individuates the otherwise indulgent, frenzied, and primal unity of the latter (Nietzsche 38-9). The most Dionysian part of traditional tragedy, according to Nietzsche's model, and arguably its most recognizable feature is the chorus. There is an interesting potential link here to *La Lézarde*, as many have read Glissant's profuse use of parenthetical statements (according to Elinor Miller, 345 parenthetical remarks in a novel that was, in its original printing, only 241 pages) precisely as a modern Caribbean recreation of the tragic chorus (Miller 17). Accepting Nietzsche's notion of the chorus

as a Dionysian representation reinserting the otherwise restrained primal chaos of reality into the artificial order of the Apollonian illusion, there is indeed a resemblance (Nietzsche 58-60). However, the reader is not left to speculation alone when imagining Glissant's theoretical and literary engagement with the tragic form.

Glissant writes in *Caribbean Discourse* that he "grappled with [the] idea of the new tragedy," which he found surprisingly "hard… to pin down" (87). A first preclusive aspect of Glissant's new tragedy is that he imagines as its principle characteristic that it "would not necessitate the ritual sacrifice of the community's hero" (87). It is truly difficult to imagine tragedy without the hero's sacrifice; in fact, according to Girard's well known and convincing formulation of tragedy as "l'équilibre d'une balance qui n'est pas celle de la justice mais de la violence" ("the balancing of a scale that is not that of justice, but of violence"), it is impossible (Girard 72). Glissant confronts this very question in *La Lézarde*. As the protagonist Thaël considers his mortal choice of whether or not to murderously sacrifice Garin, a man whose death could bring stability and peace, it seems that he and the narrator simultaneously ponder the differences between reality and legend: "Le sacrifice d'une vie humaine est chose haute dans la légende. Mais dans le réel terrible? Ce qu'il cherchait, cet ordre, cet équilibre, un homme en avait-il le secret? Suffisait-il de tuer cet homme pour aussitôt connaître la sérénité?" ("The sacrifice of a human life is highly regarded in [legend]. Is this also true of stark reality? Was one man the key to the order and the balance that were his ultimate goals? Was this one man's death enough to attain peace of mind?") (*Lézarde* 60; *Dash* 49).[5] This brief passage is simultaneously enlightening and misleading. According to Girard's formulation, a group decides that one individual is guilty of breaking the previous harmony, and so he or she is sacrificed. However, if this death restores the harmony, the sacrificed individual becomes the community's hero and, eventually,

god. Thus, Garin, not the protagonist, would eventually become the community's unlikely hero. As previously cited, the sacrifice of the hero was one of Glissant's principal concerns and here the sacrifice of an odious outsider problematizes the whole function and consequence of the tragic sacrifice. The difficulties of Glissant's new tragedy emerge. Moreover, Garin's eventual assassination aside, he is not the real victim intended for sacrifice; it is Thaël. In an ironic twist, the cowardly, young, bourgeois activists' rebellion against the oppressive *other* takes the form of exploitation when they choose to sacrifice an even lowlier individual, the *montagnard* peasant (Murdoch, *Creole Identity* 32). But Thaël is not a fool; he knows the legends far too well. The text divulges that he understands the process and his imminent place in it; he realizes that it is through his sacrifice that the community hopes to find peace. He is chosen to be the hero, which for Girard comprises the idea of sacrificial victim. He will pay the price for murdering Garin with his life, whether in prison or through execution. Thaël, despite Glissant's apparent attempt to the contrary, cannot help but fulfill the classic, mythical hero's journey outlined by Joseph Campbell.

Campbell divides the journey into three parts that he labels departure, initiation, and return (Campbell 36). Each of these parts is further broken down into the steps of the journey, including the initial refusal of the call, supernatural aid, temptation, and the return to the source. Thaël completes them all as outlined by Campbell, until the great shock at the end of the book: the seemingly unnecessary and savage death of his main love interest, Valérie. However, the *apparent* gratuitousness of her death only recalls the ineluctable exigencies of myth and tragedy and the author's seemingly grudging adherence to those forms. It reinforces the unwilling orthodoxy of the mythical journey portrayed in *La Lézarde* while emphasizing the simple and traditional mortal telos of the account: Thaël's mission never focused on anything more than the assassination of

a man whose presence threatened a community's peace. However, when the fatal moment finally arrives, Thaël struggles with his accepted place in the myth he lives.

At the end of their long journey together, from the source of the Lézarde river to the sea, Thaël manifests the same hesitation already voiced by the narrator. He waits. He cannot accomplish his task in cold blood; so, he awaits some provocation. As the two attempt to cross the bar, an image that, like the title quotation, cannot help but trigger reminiscences of prior encounters with exterior works of art, Thaël finally finds his catalyst. Not surprisingly, given this discussion of the cultural weight of words, his rage is unleashed by semantics. With exultant spite, Garin declares that the Lézarde is in fact a *fleuve* and not a *rivière* (*Lézarde* 152; *Dash* 112). It is only a word, a signifier of a signifier, but it risks changing the whole of life in the little village and in the mountains from which the Lézarde flows. In the end it is only a word that costs Garin his life.

The scene in which Garin drowns is disturbingly ambiguous. Who committed the terrible deed? Was Thaël guilty of murder? He did, after all, lunge at Garin causing the boat to overturn. But it was Garin who had insisted on the fatal crossing. Furthermore, Garin announces amid the chaos that he was, in fact, aware of Thaël's plans throughout the journey from the source, thus, it is as if he were complicit in his own death. In the end, it was the sea that claimed him; nonetheless, Garin's death upset equilibrium of violence and its restoration would seemingly cost Thaël the hero's price. But fate is unexpectedly diverted when a policeman interrogates the battered Thaël after he washes ashore.

For the first time, the reader discovers Thaël's full name, Raphaël Targin, the otherwise missing letters from his last name being an anagram for Garin, the name of his victim (Murdoch, *Creole Identity* 46). It is a clever authorial device reminiscent of Glissant's declaration in *Caribbean Discourse*, "myth *coils* meaning around the image itself" (71). It likewise

echoes the linguistic significations at the heart of the narrative: Thaël and his victim are united in a play of words. Thaël's charge was to kill part of himself before his ultimate sacrifice, which is also part of Campbell's hero journey. Unfortunately, Garin, the sea, and the fisherman who witnessed the event all confounded the mythic climax, and it is this ambiguity at the level of individual accounts—stories and histories—that liberates the foreordained victim from his destiny. The accounts function like myth, which according to Glissant "disguises while conferring meaning, obscures and brings to light, mystifies as well as clarifies and intensifies *that* which emerges, fixed in time and space, between men and their world," he continues, "it explores the known-unknown" (*Caribbean Discourse* 71). Nowhere is this better exemplified than in Garin's ambiguous death and the confusion that seemingly acquits Thaël. However, this unfulfilled sacrifice will claim its right on another. Like Garin, Thaël's fellow orphan and love interest, Valérie, functions as the protagonist's double and, therefore as a suitable substitute (Murdoch, *Creole Identity* 57). As Thaël's mirror and love, she will suffer the consequences destined for him. Thus, in a scene reminiscent of mythology's Actæon who was torn apart by his own dogs, Valérie is mauled by the dogs that Thaël, her reflection, has loved and to whom he has given "noms de légende" ("names from legend") (*Lézarde* 12).[6] True to Glissant's description of Creole folktale, Valérie's death and Thaël's response to it are "striking in the graphic nature of [their] images" (*Caribbean Discourse* 125). The violent debt is paid as is expected in "[u]ne histoire inévitable" ("an inevitable history/story") (*Lézarde* 152).[7]

One might imagine this to be a disappointment for Glissant, that he was unable to overcome the literary styles imposed by the colonizer's culture and language. However, one could only come to that conclusion by assuming that Glissant, like Thaël "pensa qu'à la fin il avait quitté la légende ..." ("concluded that he had left behind the realm of [legend] ...") (*Lézarde* 76; *Dash* 60).[8] This is not the case. Glissant writes, "une histoire vaut par ce qu'elle apprend, et par ce qu'elle fait connaître ..." ("the value of a story lies in what it teaches, and in [what it makes known]") (*Lézarde* 108-9; *Dash* 82).[8] This leads to the second factor inhibiting Glissant's new tragedy and to the last of the *arche*-words proposed, *livre*.

A *livre* ("book"), as a tangible object composed of written words, represents the European tradition in opposition to the Caribbean oral tradition, which Glissant privileges in his theoretical writings. Not surprisingly, this same orality characterizes his fiction. In all his literary works, *La Lézarde* being a prime example, form and style converge as the author recreates the cultural experience of Caribbean storytelling. Glissant writes in *Caribbean Discourse*, "if I could return to the poets who have appeared in our midst, I would tend to choose the oralization of the written," he continues, "the rhythm is that of the folktale... there is all the confusion of our relationship to time, a ruined history, which we must give shape, restructure" (*Caribbean Discourse* 244). Orality, in Glissant's writing, represents much more than a local style of storytelling, it is the foundation of the Caribbean experience. As Renée Larrier writes, "on the plantation the medium through whom the collective *cri* was transmitted was the oral storyteller" (Larrier 276). Moreover, for Glissant this orality is inherently linked to both the geography and the culture that inform so much of his work. He writes, "the Caribbean tale outlines a landscape that is not possessed: it is anti-History... its characteristics are formed in such an approach," he continues, "the sudden changes in tone, the continuous breaks in the narrative and its 'asides,' the accumulation of which creates a nonuniform whole" (*Caribbean Discourse* 85). Thus, he forms the basis for a nontraditional narrative form that simultaneously privileges nonlinear chronologies and the oral over the written. While tragedy similarly possesses an oral quality, it cannot embody the Caribbean folktale because it is already bursting with European signification. Glissant

writes that in tragedy, "it is an elite that reveals and shares (is forced to share) the elitist force of tradition" (*Caribbean Discourse* 201). If tragedy can only ever embody a European elitist tradition, then the only means of recreating it so that it might portray another culture would necessarily begin with its undoing, or, as it is a literary mode, its unwriting.

Glissant seemed to embrace this process as both a theorist and an author of fiction. Peter Hitchcock writes that for Glissant, the circumstances of the *marrons*, from whom Thaël is descended, do not represent "some nostalgic impulse of revolutionary desire," rather "a poignant *de*-scription of the (neo)colonial condition" (Hitchcock 48). *La Lézarde* represents an attempt at just that, the unwriting (de-scription) of colonial culture. H. Adlai Murdoch explains that, "the narrative of *La Lézarde* deliberately and consciously enacts a proliferation of the subject positions, both as a means of subverting the linear, chronological framework which is the legacy of a colonial discourse, and of reflecting the intrinsically pluralistic nature of the postcolonial identity" ("(Re) Figuring Colonialism" 9). Elsewhere Murdoch explains that Glissant intentionally forms nonlinear narratives in order to "further contextualize the desire for a discourse that does not retrace the boundaries of colonial oppression" (*Creole Identity* 26). Time in general, not just the sequential narrative structure forced upon historical events, is subverted in Glissant's construction. He writes, "the fragmented nature of the Caribbean folktale is such that no chronology can emerge, that time cannot be conceived as a basic dimension of human experience" (*Caribbean Discourse* 84).

Nowhere is this fractured nature of time and narrative more apparent than in the narrator himself. Miller asserts that, while there are three distinct narrative voices, they are all, in fact, one individual writing from different points of view (17). He sometimes fulfills the omniscient, extradiegetical role one commonly expects from a narrator. Other times he is a character in the story, sometimes a child and sometimes looking

back as an adult. In all of these cases, the narrator expresses a certain self-awareness, i.e. that he is recounting a story to an audience—this is the character charged by Mathieu and the other characters to write the history (*Lézarde* 237; *Dash* 174). It is most significant that the narrator recounts the story in this oral style. As Michèle Praeger writes:

> One of the duties of this literature of orality is therefore to be absolutely historical. But the "non-history" suffered by the Antilleans, in the sense that they were not in "control" of their fate when they were uprooted, taken from their native country, and in the sense that their history has not been recorded, or has been recorded by the Universalist Master, has prevented them from having access to a "collective memory." (46)

The narrator fulfills this need for a collective memory. He recounts various conversations all taking place simultaneously. He indicates to the reader what the different characters are thinking. He even manages to recount the intimate moments that nobody witnessed. This is accounted for when, just after Mathieu's request, the others all offer their own ideas of how the story should be told, "comme un témoignage … comme une rivière… comme un poème" ("like a kind of testimony … like a river … like a poem") (*Lézarde* 237; *Dash* 175). All of these voices offer themselves up to the collective memory of *La Lézarde*.

These stylistic and formal choices, though overt instantiations of Glissant's theories, do not overcome the most obvious limitation of the work: that it is written. For Glissant the written is always deficient. He writes, "the written requires nonmovement: the body does not move with the flow of what is said," he continues, "The body must remain still; therefore the hand wielding the pen … does not reflect the movement of the body, but is linked to (an appendage of) the page" (*Caribbean Discourse* 122). As though shackled to the page, the writer and, thus, the reader are bound. Orality, to the contrary, inherently incorporates

variation based on the role of the individual in storytelling, which "gives [the storyteller or singer] back the creative role within a community," though this community "does reserve the right to a collective censorship limiting the degree of improvisation as ... the 'developing of oral literature is submitted to the condition of its reception'" (Praeger 46). Where the rigid precision and permanence of empirically decipherable writing limits possible meanings, orality, through homophony and pun for example, invites a proliferation of meaning. Glissant offers a revealing example of this aspect of orality in Thaël's exclamation "La mer des Caraïbes!" ("Caribbean sea"), which, particularly given the ambiguity surrounding the utterance in the story, when spoken aloud could also be heard "La mère des Caraïbes!" ("the mother of the Caribbeans") (*Lézarde* 220). This much more profound *hearing*, as opposed to reading, embraces the culturally generative landscape and simultaneously transforms it into the source of Caribbean identity.

Contrasted with this fluid orality, the literary culture of the colonizer is oppressively material, a quality Glissant sees as objectionable and sadly contagious. He laments in *Caribbean Discourse* that Creole "is becoming more French in its daily use; it is becoming vulgarized in the transition from spoken to written" (121). Furthermore, the degradation embodied in writing is, to a degree, unavoidable. He writes, "so we raise the question of writing; we ask a question of writing, and each time it is through writing... the book is the tool of forced poetics; orality is the instrument of natural poetics" (244-5). The paradox in his new tragedy is the same as this expressed paradox of writing. It will always exist within an elitist, European form; thus, the colonizer cannot be expelled from it.

"Ceci n'est pas un conte."

Here, unlike in Magritte's painting, there is no image to automatically assume as the object of the phrase. Thus, it might easily be taken to refer

only to the greater text of which it is part, a small puzzle piece self-referentially intimating the larger picture of which it is part. If this is the case, then its application should be simple. As defined by tradition, a *conte* is intended as a cautionary tale—a story whose utility lies in deterring or, even, detouring a hearer otherwise en route toward an undesirable circumstance or possibly tragic fate. But *La Lézarde* lacks any explicit moral. The only detour Glissant inscribes within the text corresponds to his use of the word in *Caribbean Discourse* to describe "the ultimate resort of a population whose domination by an Other is concealed: it then must reach *elsewhere* for the principle of domination, which is not evident in the country itself: because the system of domination ... is not directly tangible" (*Caribbean Discourse* 20). Throughout his work, Glissant overtly attempts to unwrite the subtle oppression embodied in the colonizer's literary and linguistic forms. So, if *La Lézarde* is not a cautionary tale, it is not a *conte*. One could then argue that the narrator's statement is, in fact, quite accurate and not at all profound. But that would be simplistic and reduce an intentionally complex theoretical work of literature to mere diversion. There must be something more.

Applying the ideas Foucault proposed in regard to Magritte's painting, the demonstrative pronoun *ceci* can refer to numerous, less obvious referents, including the word that seems grammatically to be its object. Could this statement mean that the word *conte* is not a *conte*? Words only mean what they do within the cultural context of which they are part. A simple straightforward definition of the word *conte* does not really exist; or rather, the common, simple definitions are deceptive. *Arche*-words, like *conte* (or equivalents in any language), do not simply designate categories, they are the foundational structures of knowledge. Like the dogs with names derived from legends, these structures devour and simultaneously comprise all that would otherwise try to escape them. Glissant could not create a new tragedy because the structures that are already in place

violently subsume every literary effort to escape them. The inevitability of the story is not just a function of tradition; it is necessarily contained within language itself. That this cultural inevitability is always already present in language means that it affects much more than literature; it is part of life and perception. Thus, Thaël, this boy who was "nourri de contes et de mystères" ("nourished with tales and with mysteries"), can rightly declare "Nous avons trop vécu de légendes …" ("We have lived for too long on legends …") (*Lézarde* 12, 15).[11] Thaël's, and by extension Glissant's, efforts to escape the transparent yet overwhelming weight of culture is evidenced in his statement, "Cette fois il n'y aura pas de conte. L'histoire est simple …" ("This time there will be no [tales] told. The facts are straightforward …") (*Lézarde* 166; *Dash* 121).[12] However, in the end, the author, through the voice of his hero, accepts an overarching and inevitable reality inscribed into the colonizer's literary tradition and language. Just before her death, Thaël tells Valérie, "Tu es ma réalité, oui, et tu es ma légende …" ("You are my reality, yes, and you are my legend …") (*Lézarde* 253; *Dash* 186). Reality is simultaneously a function and a product of concepts and practices like *conte, histoire, tragédie, sacrifice, mythe, légende*, and *livre*. It is the recognition of this inescapable aspect of reality and working within it that characterizes Glissant's notion of Caribbean identity, an identity that embraces its circumstances rather than attempting to tunnel through them to a distant, unattainable, unified primal identity.

Notes

[1] Translated by Michael Dash as "this is no folk tale" (*Lézarde* 109; *Dash* 82). Most English translations of Glissant's *La Lézarde* are taken from Michael Dash's 1985 edition of *The Ripening*. Translations without an English language reference are my own.

[2] The ambiguity and possible paradox comprising the dual meanings of the French word *histoire* (*story* and *history*) have long inspired theoretical debates and informed careful readings. Generally, contextual clues and syntax help the reader discern which definition an author intends (e.g. the use of definite or indefinite articles or, quite commonly, the use of a capital H to indicate *history*). However, there are many instances in which authors intentionally avoid precision, playing on the ambiguity and multiple meanings implied, as is occasionally the case in Glissant's *La Lézarde*. When precision is possible, the distinction will be carefully maintained; when such precision is not possible, other words might be used to avoid committing to one definition at the expense of the other (see note 12).

[3] This was one of Derrida's primary criticisms of Saussure and many others in his *Of Grammatology* (*De la Grammatologie*). See pp. 29-73.

[4] A concise summary of Derrida's argument made in *Of Grammatology* can be found in his *Writing and Difference* in the chapter "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences".

[5] Here I altered Dash's translation for the sake of continuity in my study, which is based on the original, and fidelity to Glissant's word choice. Glissant's original reads "le conte et l'histoire," which Dash translated as "legend and history." As will become apparent, Dash regularly alternates between various possible translations of many of the words specifically considered in this study, seemingly conflating several ideas that, I believe, Glissant was carefully differentiating. The translator's prerogative, to be sure, is an interesting side note to my thesis, but one that is probably best left to an examination of translation theory. Regardless, when it affects my examination, I will alter his translation in brackets, as I have done in this case, and explain my change in a note.

[6] Dash rendered *légende* as "mythology."

[7] Dash's translation is simultaneously more verbose and less explicit than Glissant's original: "Then he heard the dogs. Sillon! Mandolée! they had been named, since he had grown up in a world of legend and mystery" (*Dash* 19).

[8] Dash omits the crucial concept of *histoire* from his translation, transforming this short but poignant phrase from Glissant's text into an apposition reading, "relentlessly proceeding" (*Dash* 112).

[9] Dash translates *légende* as "myth" (Dash 60).

[10] Dash ventures into specificity where Glissant seems to have intentionally maintained ambiguity. The original reads: "… et par ce qu'elle fait connaître, les pays, les autres choses différemment arrangées, et puis la couleur de la terre natale…"; Dash reads the items on that list as more specifically direct objects of the preceding rather than a list of possible components ("…and in its ability to make us know other lands, the way things are done elsewhere and the colour of our land…") (*Lézarde* 109; *Dash* 82).

[11] Dash translates the first line, "nourri de contes et de mystères," as "since he had grown up in a world of legend and mystery" (Dash 19). He again translates *contes* as "legend" and, more unfortunately, omits the significant image of Thaël having been nourished with them.

[12] Here Dash translates *conte* as "stories." His translation of *l'histoire* as "facts" is an interesting and ultimately safe choice – given the linguistic ambiguity and lack of contextual clues. It seems quite possible that Glissant was playing on that suggestive ambiguity, but it is, unfortunately, impossible to translate into English.

Works Cited

Campbell, Joseph. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces.* 2nd ed. Princeton: Princeton U P, 1972. Print.

Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology.* 1st ed. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U P, 1976. Print.

---. *Writing and Difference.* Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1978. Print.

Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks.* Trans. Charles Lam Markmann. New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1991. Print.

Foucault, Michel. *Ceci n'est pas une pipe: deux lettres et quatre dessins de René Magritte.* Montpellier: Fata Morgana, 1973. Print.

Girard, René. *La Violence et le sacré.* Paris: B. Grasset, 1972. Print.

Glissant, Edouard. *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays.* Charlottesville: U P of Virginia, 1989. Print.

---. *La Lézarde.* Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1958. Print.

---. *The Ripening.* Trans. Michael Dash. London: Heinemann, 1985. Print.

Hitchcock, Peter. "Antillanité and the Art of Resistance." *Research in African Literatures* 27.2 (1996): Print.

Larrier, Renee. "'Crier/Ecrire/Cahier': Anagrammatic Configurations of Voice in Francophone Caribbean Narratives." *French Review* 69.2 (1995): 275-83. Print.

Magritte, René. *La Trahison Des Images.* 1928. Print.

Miller, Elinor S. "The Identity of the Narrator in Edouard Glissant's 'La Lezarde'." *South Atlantic Bulletin* 43.2 (1978): 17-26. Web. 23 Dec 2010.

Murdoch, H. Adlai. "(Re)Figuring Colonialism: Narratological and Ideological Resistance." *Callaloo* 15.1 (1992): 2-11. Web. 23 Dec 2010.

---. *Creole Identity in the French Caribbean Novel.* Gainesville: U P of Florida, 2001. Print.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner.* 1st ed. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. Vintage, 1967. Print.

Praeger, Michèle. "Edouard Glissant: Towards a Literature of Orality." *Callaloo* 15.1 (1992): 41-48. Print.

Saussure, Ferdinand de. *Cours de linguistique générale.* Éd. critique. Paris: Payot, 1990. Print.

Plagiarism in the Digital Age

by Sandra Leonard

Sandra M. Leonard holds a Masters of Literary Linguistics from University of Nottingham and is now pursuing her Ph.D. in Literature and Criticism at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Concurrently, she teaches English Composition part-time at University of Delaware and Montgomery County Community College. She has a special interest in digital media and linguistic methods of analysis.

Though many educators and institutions see plagiarism as an occasional moral anomaly that can be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, in this digital age plagiarism has become a growing trend for a majority of college students. According to UK researcher, Roger Bennett, "in the 1940s around 20–25% of all students were routinely reported to have admitted to cheating in some way. By the 1990s the figure was typically 60–65%" (138). In his own 2005 study, Bennett found that his results correlate with other current studies (Hammond) indicating approximately 80% of university students from mixed ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds have engaged in plagiarism at some point their academic careers (150).

To add to the severity of the situation, the frequency of plagiarism is beyond the capability of the university to handle. Researcher Neil Selwyn

found that 62% of his sample of undergraduate students admitted to some form of online plagiarism occurring within a period of only 12 months (468). Applying Selwyn's figures to the number of enrolled undergraduates at a sample institution such as University of Delaware in 2010 (16,661 students), the University's Office of Student Conduct would be inundated with 10,329 cases of plagiarism per year if every case of plagiarism was detected and reported ("Office of Student Conduct" and "Facts and Figures"). Since plagiarism is often an offence that carries with it immediate expulsion, it is obvious that no number near sixty-two percent of the student body is being arbitrated by university officials at any institution let alone this single university. This serious discrepancy is an indication of how many cases go undetected or unreported, which is a university crisis based on a misunderstanding of the true causes of plagiarism. In formulating an environment that is fair, safe, and productive, plagiarism runs counter to educational goals in the modern University, but the problem has outgrown the means to handle it.

Many teacher guidebooks explain plagiarism as a result of a basic lack of knowledge and skill in writing, research, and documentation ("Educational Tips"). While these issues, including cultural differences, careless note-taking, and academic pressure may certainly contribute to the problem, they do not explain both the dramatic increase in plagiarism as well as professors' lack of success in combating it. All of these reasons have been present to varying degrees throughout the history of the university system and most could be solved in a freshman composition course; however, the above figures from Bennett's study showing that about 80% of university students have plagiarized, included only students who had *already taken* first-year composition courses and were well-aware of the definition of plagiarism before they engaged in the act (149).

The growth of this crisis has been concurrent with the emergence of the "Net Generation," as Don Tapscott, author of *Grown Up Digital*

dubs the age group 11 to 31 that have grown up with digital tools and media incorporated into nearly every facet of their daily lives. That the surge in plagiarism is in step with the rise of computer access as a dominant form of communication in the first world suggests more than merely coincidental correlation. According to electronic literature critic, Katherine Hayles, digitality has crept into most facets of everyday life: "in developed societies almost all communication, except face-to-face talk, is mediated through some kind of digital code" (132). The issue of plagiarism is also wrapped up in our society's paradigm shift to the digital, as critic and net artist, Mark America, claims, "*defying intellectual property rights is no longer an experiment: it's the nature of the web*" (339, emphasis original). The relationship between plagiarism and technology is not limited only to the means by which plagiarism occurs, but the way in which all information is gathered, stored, created, and evaluated. This paper will attempt to understand what it is about the digital age, beyond (but including) simple ease of access, that makes plagiarism such a seemingly viable option to students in higher education with the goal to understand it before addressing practical solutions. Issues of imitation, dematerialization, decontexualization, the role of the reader, academic policy, and the commodification of the university will be discussed to hypothesize the complex causes of plagiarism.

Immaterial to Dematerialization

Imitation is at the forefront of any discussion on plagiarism; the legitimacy of this imitation, the intent of the act, or the degree of the imitation that qualifies could be, and has already been, argued but any discussion of plagiarism necessarily involves the concept of imitation, which has a rich literary history. Like the two faces of Janus, or two sides of the same coin, imitation has been cast as capable of both great good and evil; on one hand imitation is the creator of poetry, and on the other the

misappropriation of it. In the general profession of promoting thought, dialogue, analysis, and engagement, educators today are not so different from Plato, who railed against poets and teachers for relying on formulaic patterns to do the thinking for them. He criticized the influence of such mimesis, which required no engagement with ideas and ran counter to his agenda for the dialectic, thoughtful argumentation and discourse. According to Eric Havelock (using Milman Parry's discoveries about Homer) the poets of Plato's day, responsible for maintaining history and cultural narrative, were necessarily forced to repeat knowledge in mimetic, formulaic ways because patterns are required to aide accurate memory in oral performance (2-1, 2-2, 2-3). Plato, however, could be critical of the mimetic oral tradition as opposed to the dialectic in part because he had access to a superior technology and, with it, an entirely new way of thinking. Writing was this new technology, and Plato was on the cusp of a dramatic paradigm shift, *just as we are today*. Whereas Plato's paradigm shift made the flourishing of history, science, and imagination possible by freeing a culture from the shackles of limited memory, digitality has freed us from the material page.

These shifts, from immaterial to material to dematerialized digital culture, are ideological as well as practical transformations. In terms of the ideological, the shift from orality to literacy gave us a critical distinction: the separation of the knower from the known (Havelock 11-1). Because written text divorces itself in a physical way from its author, it also separates our understanding of knowledge from its origin, the person who created it. With the birth of literacy, came the birth of plagiarism. Before this point, misattribution may have been possible, and one can imagine the hypothetical Greek who would say he wrote Homer's *Odyssey*, but according to Walter Ong, the aspiration to literary creativity in the way that we understand it today was simply not part of the oral culture. Though oral cultures value variation of myths, memorizing large

quantities of text requires investing a great deal of energy, which "inhibits intellectual experimentation" (41). Our modern idea of creativity relies on this separation of the knower and the known, that a work could be external to the person who created it. Richard Kearney notes that during the Enlightenment, "the *mimetic* paradigm of imagining is replaced by the *productive* paradigm" (155, emphasis original). Born in the Enlightenment and Romantic eras, the creative act became a lamp whose "internally generated" rays give value to truth, rather than the mimetic mirror of the Hellenistic Age (Kearney 156). Likewise, the externalism in writing is expressed and conceptualized as materiality, by production on the page. Even if plagiarism were possible before literacy, condemnation of it did not exist because people did not view words as objects, capable of being owned and therefore also stolen (Ong 128-29). The act of being able to physically touch a work has resulted in our current conception of creativity and therefore its opposite: plagiarism.

Now, with the influence of a physically-based productive paradigm of creativity, we are moving into an age where text has most of the advantages of materiality and exteriorized production, but also a functional dematerialization in the state of what is produced. In practical terms, students have been quick to take advantage of the benefits afforded by easy access to a great deal of knowledge as well as cutting and pasting that knowledge into easily malleable word-processing documents. Before the digital age, students who wished to plagiarize would have to coerce others for help, risk exposure at a copy machine, or retype/rewrite portions of an essay or book. Now, with five mouse-clicks in the privacy of one's own home, a document can be appropriated. Digital technology has simply made it easier to plagiarize.

Our Exterior Brains

The advent and acceptance of digital technology changes our ideologies concerning knowledge, language, and originality, and perhaps will someday amount to a paradigm shift as large as that between orality and literacy. As Jean-Francois Lyotard, in his seminal work *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* discusses, "It is reasonable to suppose that the proliferation of information processing machines is having, and will continue to have … an effect on the circulation of learning….the nature of knowledge cannot remain unchanged" (4). Though Lyotard was writing at a time when computers relied on paper punch-cards, he anticipated our current condition: that of a near total reliance on digital machines to store knowledge. In terms of another prescient work, one is reminded of Vannevar Bush's conception of the Memex machine that could store virtually everything (and everything virtual) from sound files, to date books, to bookshelves of knowledge, to movies, which could be linked by ideas and found instantly. Though Bush was writing in 1945, Memex machines are essentially what we have today, and now we have more information on our laptops than we could possibly store in our brains. Lyotard goes on to say that this change in the nature of knowledge in the postmodern age results in a further "exteriorization with respect to the 'knower'" than writing has been capable of thus far (7). The digital separates the knower from the known on a grander scale with the author and the text, and therefore the author and the reader, growing ever more distant. Information, being portable and widely accessible, is an ever-present extension of our selves, creating a climate in which readerly disconnection with the author and rampant appropriation is almost rational. Just as Plato prophesized, with the use of writing we would: "appear to be omniscient and will generally know nothing" (88). To an even greater extent than Plato imagined, our smart

phones and laptops make it possible to rely less and less on our memories and more on our exterior-brain: the computer.

De-authoring and Re-authoring

Due to the mutability of the text in digital contexts, the author is further exteriorized. As an example, Kenneth Goldsmith, in an essay entitled, "The Bride Stripped Bare: Nude Media and the Dematerialization of Tony Curtis," demonstrates how easily texts can be ripped from their contexts and "stripped bare" of authorship and origin, paving the way for misinterpretation, and manipulation much more substantially than Plato could have conceived when he was wary of the printed word being taken out of context without the speaker present to explain and defend it. In Goldsmith's demonstration, a fairly bland *New York Times* article about Tony Curtis becomes decontexualized, de-authored, digitally summarized, and finally "pornolized," or recontexualized using an online program that replaces several words on a webpage with R-rated slang. Goldsmith argues that this is a significant act because the Internet has made this sort of manipulation possible; it is the nature of all text on the Internet to become destabilized, which, for Goldsmith, indicates an all-encompassing loss of ownership (57-8). While this certainly may result in greater ease of avant-garde remixing, which is one of Goldsmith's goals, it also has implications for willful student plagiarism. While plagiarism became *possible* with the separation of knower and known, and *easy* with the capacity to digitally cut and paste, it becomes *acceptable* with the "stripping" or de-authoring of texts.

Though the written text gained permanency and materiality in the shift from orality to literacy, the digital age has resulted in a far more vast separation of knower and known, while promoting an opposite trend in materiality. Texts, in an online context, are once again gaining an oral-like immateriality. The digital word, unless printed out or "saved,"

exists only in cyberspace: ephemeral, and capable of becoming virtually altered or lost forever with the failure of a server or the misinterpretation of code. While printed books have hundreds, thousands, or millions of copies, there is only one Internet (in the popular sphere) and it exists temporally. Giselle Beiguelman, a nomadic poet, whose works appear for only a few seconds on cell phones and hijacked electronic billboards, states, "It is part of a deep cultural movement rebuilding the reading place as temporal interface" (286). Save for physical entropy, the written text is (excepting for the multifarious interpretations of the reader) static because it is material; however, in the digital arena the user sees an ever-shifting landscape in which a webpage may be a reliable source one day, but have altered content, or be "dead" as a broken link the next. The best case study for shifting content may be *Wikipedia*, wherein the reader may change, replace, and delete content in an anonymous fashion and have it be available to all other readers until another reader decides to change it again, perhaps after a matter of seconds. While all of this seems quite normal to us now, the dematerialization of the text amounts to a change in our way of thinking about information. To expose just how far we have come to accept the digital, Vannevar Bush's 1945 conception and description of his Memex machine is instructive: "It is exactly as though the physical items had been gathered together from widely separated sources and bound together to form a new book" (8). Bush describes the Memex *in material terms* because no other conception was widely possible; today the nature information has indeed changed.

These changes to information and text have also changed the role of the reader. Even the name of the role is altered in a digital context: changing from "reader" to "user." Whereas "reader" or "viewer" implies a certain, at least physical, passivity, the title "user" gives agency and power to the reader. The "reader" is a spectator, but the "user" can assume the role left empty by the original author and become a co-author, invited

to use, manipulate, distort, and even appropriate the text. Trends in digital art demonstrate this, where interactivity is often a key component: "In electronic literature, authorial design, the actions of the machine, and the user's receptivity are joined in a recursive cycle" (Hayles 155). This, in turn, invites the question: where is the line between use and appropriation?

Ownership in the Digital Age

The combination of dematerialization, de-authorship, and reader agency breaks down the boundaries of ownership, as Mark Amerika, declares:

> Net-based work, however creative or intellectual it might be, takes information out of the world of material goods and puts it into the rapidly morphing terrain of digital reproduction, manipulation, and dissemination. This move from material objecthood to virtual objecthood constitutes one of the most significant changes in cultural history and forces us to rethink the way in which we approach our work as "property." (340)

In this sense, the web becomes a sort of communal public property, belonging to all. Plagiarism is no longer banned in this context, but accepted and even lauded. It is in this way that the remix artist is accepted by popular culture. However, even Amerika sees the perils of this ideological shift when taken to a greater degree as he states:

> One question that immediately comes to mind, as we go forth into the technojungle mix of wild web growth and savage pla(y)giaristic practice, is what sort of advantages would there be in protecting an artist's work from all of the potential interactive participants? The most obvious answer is so that the artists responsible for creating the work can get paid for it. (339)

The digital road leads to a material paradox, which has both economic

and social reverberations. Though print-like letters on the digital page *suggest* materiality, and enable an external production characteristic of material text (Ong), digital text problematically *acts* ephemeral, which *denies* material objecthood. This paradox encourages a simultaneous commodification and rampant piracy of online material. The question: "is online material communal or individual property?" becomes not a moral issue but an economic and legal one. Christopher Ricks illustrates the vast gulf of misunderstanding between students today of the "Net Generation" and most professors and administrators when he states, "Plagiarism is a dishonesty. This can be swept to one side … leaving not the dishonest but—assimilating plagiarism now to copyright—the illegal. It is natural to move to infringement of copyright when thinking of plagiarism, but crucial that one should be aware of moving" (223). Though most professors may see plagiarism in this moral light, the majority of today's students do not: "Less than a majority of the students (46%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that plagiarism was 'fundamentally immoral and shameful'" (Bennett 149). The issue for students, instead, has become a problem of value in the economic sense rather than the moral: "Knowledge is and will be produced to be sold, it is and will be consumed in order to be valorized in a new production: in both cases, the goal is exchange" (Lyotard 4). Essays can indeed be bought online at (mostly) legitimate and legal websites that claim they are merely providing and selling content not encouraging illegal or immoral behavior. Sites such as *Cheathouse.com*, *Custom writings.com*, and *Essay Papers Inc.* have professionally designed, legitimate-looking pages often utilizing images of happy graduating students, diploma in hand. These sites have all the trappings of legitimacy in a consumerist sense, with payment plans, hotlines, money-back customer service guarantees, and testimonials from pleased customers. The testimonials and message boards too, are consumer-centered and not in any way self-conscious

of the morality of the act; on one board, as if providing feedback for purchasing any other online product, a student writes, "Thanks for your excellent service. I have now received all of the 3 custom essays that I ordered from you, and would not hesitate to recommend you to my friends (Thanks again for the wonderful service)" (Essaywriter.co.uk). If the net is seen in a wholly economic light by students it is no wonder that they plagiarize. Treating the entire Internet as a single shop, if there are sites where students can buy essays it seems to follow that if there is no charge, then the content must be free. This distinction of 'free' material paired with a newfound agency of the reader means that a consumer is much more than a reader, or spectator to the text. Digital consumers not only read, but can manipulate, distort, remix and make the text their own. Ownership in the digital age has a much wider scope as the consumer becomes a surrogate author and the only perceived barrier is legal and economic. Though file-sharing and plagiarism require somewhat different actions and have very different consequences, if we disregard the rights of authors, plagiarism becomes piracy: they both break the same strictures of ownership. Furthermore, in this de-authored context, which is the implied nature of the Internet, if the information is perceived as "free," then no exchange is required and no rule is broken. In this way, the crime of plagiarism is confused with the economic crime of copyright infringement, as in peer-to-peer file sharing, which is far more accepted, gaining a certain amount of acceptability even among those of a non-digital generation, which has led economists and social theorists to agree that, "social condemnation of digital piracy is not strongly felt" (Balestrino 21).

This distinction between the paid and the free causes legal and economic concerns to be fore-grounded over any moral considerations. The concept that the student is stealing in any way does not compute. In the digital age, one could ask of plagiaristic practices: *How does the*

student steal? There is no price to use much of the information on the Internet and the act is so easy as to be seemingly encouraged. *And whom does the student steal from?* The text is de-authored, decontextualized and, in many cases, attributed to a faceless entity or corporation. Or, like *Wikipedia*, authored by multiple users, perhaps even including him or herself. The student, having been primed for collaboration and teamwork, is more than willing to "accept help" for his or her project. *Where does the student steal?* The student sees desired information located in an ever-shifting milieu. He or she captures it in the medium of immateriality, not understanding the implications of material ownership when the information is transformed from ephemeral to printed page but aware that a shift in the medium could happen at any time in the temporal digital space and the captured information will not be missed. *Finally, what does the student steal?* Even Ricks admits that this isn't an easy question: "What then, if anything is stolen? We often say 'the credit' but even here there is almost always something misleading, the definite article. The plagiarist does not take the credit, he takes credit, credit to which he is not entitled … it cannot be reprehended in quite the terms in which theft ordinarily is" (240).

The deepest irony is that the University itself promotes the views that make plagiarism possible, all the while condemning, misdiagnosing, and misunderstanding the complex problem. Through the University's own commodification, academia has become, what Bill Readings labels an "autonomous bureaucratic corporation" (40). This commodification, while it may be seen as practically necessary in a capitalist system, has seeped into the culture of the college, allowing students to perceive themselves as "buying" an education and teachers as "working for" the student. Though the teacher has the authority to issue grades, this commodification removes the teacher from the position of authority in regards to the larger academic policy, instituting instead the bureaucracy

itself, which is further removed from the classroom and the paper-reading process. Furthermore, coursework also continually encourages sharing knowledge and relying upon others rather than individual learning and growth. While the skill of learning to work with others is certainly valuable, particularly in business situations, it also teaches the covert lesson of dependency on a community. This dependency ends up being detrimental for the student who expected to learn collectively, think collectively, share collectively, but then asked to create an original text on his or her own. In this manner the student is betrayed, and may turn to plagiarism as a way not only to cover for his or her weakness, but to gain power over the system of education.

Finally, the misunderstanding of the true causes of plagiarism by administration has put undue pressure on the professor, and has often necessarily forced him or her to be dishonest in regards to the school policy reserving the reporting of plagiarism only for severe cases. Though 90% of lecturers have detected at least one case of plagiarism, only about 33% have ever reported a case in their entire careers (Dordoy qtd. in Procter 505). Pressure may stem from the educational philosophy that is often roughly summed up as "students don't fail; teachers do" and further bolstered by teacher guides as well as articles such as "Plagiarism 'Is the Fault of Indulgent Lecturers.'" These articles and guides contain methods of designing curriculum, plagiarism proofing papers, educating on research and documentation methods, and using checker sites such as Turnitin.com, but all of these techniques only address the symptoms and not the root causes.

If the conflict over plagiarism becomes an all-out ideological war (and perhaps it has already) the students will win out against all advocates of a non-digitally-based conception of originality and creativity, including both teachers and the administration. In fact, according to postmodern theorists, academia has already lost: the text is no longer stable, no

longer necessarily authored; knowledge is the purview of the commercial databank and not the mind; and creativity includes remixing and imitation. The university is laboring under modernist ideals (Readings 6) and an Enlightenment model of creativity, while the students are fully inundated with the postmodern and the digital. Just as something of the culture of orality is incompatible in the shift to literacy, the ideologies between the digital and the non-digital are, to some extent, irreconcilable. However, this is not to say that the digital "Net Generation" *must* plagiarize. Though some elements of our own tightly held ideologies must be discarded (i.e. students will never be convinced that the digital text is actually a physical object), reconfiguration of the keystone concept to plagiarism is possible. To paraphrase Christopher Ricks and Alexander Lindey (in his *Plagiarism and Originality*), *plagiarism is a moral issue*. Because morals are subjective, an injunction against plagiarism is perhaps capable of being re-infused into the culture. However, as we have had to reconfigure our conception of text in the digital age, we must also reconfigure our conception of plagiarism. Plagiarism cannot be wrong because it "steals." This classification is meaningless and often incorrect. Plagiarism also cannot be wrong because it is dishonest, as the user is acting in accord with the nature of the Web. In order for plagiarism to be immoral in the digital age, it must be regarded by the net generation as a violation to the digital community at large. Plagiarism is wrong in the digital age because instead of building the community with new information structures, plagiarism terrorizes, injecting "stripped" texts into ill-fitting contexts, merging works not with the intent to create, but to overpower. Plagiarism in the digital age is an assault on text, and in order for it to be viewed as wrong it must be recognized for what it does: aggressively violates the digital community as a whole.

The biggest and most lasting change we can effect to halt the growth of plagiarism and other moral infractions is to work to build the Web into

a community with the moral foundation of mutual respect. According to Michael Heim, "As the on-line culture grows geographically, the sense of community diminishes … A global international village, fed by accelerated competition and driven by information, may be host to an unprecedented barbarism" (83). However, the answer of encouraging students to shut down and log off only exacerbates the problem as students will continue to use technology "like air" with or without our encouragement or permission (Trapscott 18). The Web today is still a frontier with unequal access and unequal participation. What is truly needed is for educators to log on and participate in the community by adding engagement and structure. "While interacting with each other through the Internet, students develop a shared understanding of what is acceptable," (Ma et, al 72) and educators should not be removed from this process of community building. On the contrary, in order to encourage students to be responsible in the digital world, the university too must become a player in it, not only for a greater awareness in order to catch the offenders, but to make the digital into a society based upon mutually accepted rules, where peers, having access to the Internet in the same way, will act as checks to moral behavior. This is a project begun in many institutions and classrooms with the use of online classroom space such as Blackboard, Sakai, and Moodle, as well as blogging, networking, texting, tagging, and following between students and instructors, but the project still has lengths to go for universal and meaningful involvement. Students need to be encouraged to gain mastery over digital tools and familiarity with the internet landscape in responsible ways, exercising care over our digital environment. Instead of merely telling students that plagiarism is "wrong," instructors should explain why it is harmful in a believable and acceptable way. While students may not feel beholden to a faceless databank where seemingly everything they could want is available and accessible but unfairly withheld, as a community the Web becomes a network of people who are deserving of rights, responsibility, and respect.

Works Cited

Amerika, Mark. *Meta/Data: A Digital Poetics*. Cambridge: MIT P, 2007. Print.

Balestrino, Alessandro. "It is a Theft But Not a Crime." *European Journal of Political Economy* 24.2 (2008): 455-469. Print.

Beiguelman, Giselle. "Nomadic Poetry." *New Media Poetics*. Ed. Adalaide Morris and Thomas Swiss. Cambridge: MIT P, 2006. Print.

Bennett, Roger. "Factors Associated with Student Plagiarism in a Post-1992 University." *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 30.2 (2005): 137–162. Print.

Bush, Vannevar. "As We May Think." The Atlantic Online Archive. July 1945. Web. 25 June 2010.

"Cheathouse.com" Web. 27 June 2010.

"Custom Writings.com" Web. 27 June 2010.

"Educational Tips on Plagiarism Prevention" Plagiarism.org. Web. 26 June 2010.

"Essaywriter.co.uk" Web. 27 June 2010.

"Essay Papers Inc." Web. 27 June 2010.

"Facts and Figures" Office of Institutional Research at University of Delaware. Web. 19 March 2011.

Frean, Alexandra. "Plagiarism 'is the fault of indulgent lecturers." *The Sunday Times Online*. October 18, 2006. Web. 27 June 2010.

Goldsmith, Kenneth. "The Bride Stripped Bare: Nude Media and the Dematerialization of Tony Curtis." *New Media Poetics*. Ed. Adalaide Morris and Thomas Swiss. Cambridge: MIT P, 2006. Print.

Hammond, Michael. "Cyber-Plagiarism: Are FE Students Getting Away with Words?" Lecture. Association of Northern Ireland Colleges. 17-19 June 2002. *Education-line*. British Education Index, 25 June 2002. Web. 19 Mar. 2011.

Havelock, Eric A. *Preface to Plato*. New York: Universal Library, 1967. Print.

Hayles, Katherine. *Electronic Literature: New Horizons for the Literary*. Notre Dame, Indiana: U of Notre Dame P, 2008. Print.

Heim, Michael. "The Erotic Ontology of Cyberspace." *Reading Digital Culture*. Ed. David Trend. Malden, Massachusettes: Blackwell, 2001. Print.

Howard, Rebecca Moore. "Sexuality, Textuality: The Cultural Work of Plagiarism." *College English* 62.4, (2000): 473-491. Print.

Kearney, Richard. *The Wake of Imagination*. New York: Routledge, 2001. Print.

Lindey, Alexander. *Plagiarism and Originality*. New York: Harper, 1952. Print.

Lyotard, Jean-Francois. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Trans. by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1984. Print.

Ma, Hongyan, et al. "An Empirical Investigation of Digital Cheating and Plagiarism among Middle School Students." *American Secondary Education* 35.2 (2007): 69-82. Print.

"Office of Student Conduct." University of Delaware. Web. 26 June 2010

Ong, Walter. *Orality and Literacy*. New York: Routledge, 2007. Print.

Plato. "Phaedrus" *Symposium and Phaedrus*. Trans. B. Jowett. New York: Dover Thrift, 1994. Print.

Procter, Chris. "The Plagiarism Panic and the Partial Academic." Conference Paper. 27 June 2010. Web. 27 June 2010.

Readings, Bill. *The University in Ruins*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard U P, 1999. Print.

Ricks, Christopher. "Plagiarism" *Allusion to the Poets*. New York: Oxford U P, 2002. Print.

Selwyn, Neil. "'Not Necessarily a Bad Thing …': A Study of Online Plagiarism Amongst Undergraduate Students." *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 33.5, (2008): 465–479. Print.

Shelley, Percy Bysshe. "A Defense of Poetry." *Criticism: The Major Statements*, Ed. Charles Kaplan. New York: St. Martin's P, 1986. Print.

Tapscott, Don. *Grown Up Digital*. New York: McGraw Hill, 2009. Print.