EAPSU Online:

A Journal of Critical

and Creative Work

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Introduction

Kim Martin Long, Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania

This issue marks our fifth year to publish EAPSU ONLINE, a peer-reviewed journal of the English Association of the Pennsylvania State Universities, an organization of teacher scholars from the 14 state-owned universities in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Since launching this journal, we have reached out and published works from around the world, on topics related to any area of English studies. We have published scholarly articles, of course, but also pedagogical essays on theoretical and practical approaches to teaching, critical nonfiction, short fiction, and poetry.

This issue is as diverse as the universities within our Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education, and we are pleased to have contributors from all over the country and beyond. We have critical articles on literature (American, British, world), essays on pedagogy for teaching both literature and writing, personal narrative, and poetry. Critical essays span the range of approaches. Our authors are full professors and graduate students. While many come from Pennsylvania, others span the globe. This journal celebrates the discipline of "English." I will let the pieces here speak for themselves. Enjoy.

I would like to thank all of you who submitted pieces and were selected, submitted but were not selected, and who read manuscripts and provided the authors feedback. Thanks to the English Association of Pennsylvania State Universities for their support of the journal.

If you are interested in joining us here, see the end of the journal for submission guidelines. We are always looking for quality work, as well as those who want to serve as readers.

This issue goes "live" at the end of 2008, so I wish all of you a productive and prosperous 2009!

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Boulevards and Alleys: The Nineteenth-Century Cityscapes of Paris and St. Petersburg in *Père Goriot*
and *Crime and Punishment*

Janet Moser, Brooklyn College

The urban landscapes that emerge from the writings of Honoré de Balzac and Fyodor Dostoevsky offer students an enormously useful guide to the exploration of the rise and development of the modern city in nineteenth-century Europe. Balzac and Dostoevsky, writing in and of capitals as different as Paris and St. Petersburg, nevertheless share a family of complementary economic, social, political and literary concerns that provide a rewarding and appealing basis for a comparative study of these cities. The physical cities of these novels form an entangling web of streets and structures that mirrors the social drama of the newcomer trying to find his place in the modern urban center. A course centered on the reading of these works, novels contemporary with and descriptive of the rapid transformation of the nineteenth-century city, offers students a particularly rich source of authentic detail. It is through the study of Balzac's *Père Goriot*, published in 1835, and Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment,* published in 1866, that students of both nineteenth-century history and its novels can begin to understand the origins of the network of social phenomena that we have come to call modern urban life.

The paradox that the Paris of *Père Goriot* may be three decades younger but many years more sophisticated than the Russian "window to the west" portrayed in *Crime and Punishment* lends an instructive symmetry to the study of these two cities and these two novels. Balzac's Paris, while not quite yet the city of light, is never as dark as Dostoevsky's particularly Russian St. Petersburg. Still, *Crime and Punishment* remains "the first great Russian novel to deal with the life of the one city in Russia that could be compared to the capital cities of the West" (Fanger 184). And perhaps the affinity between these two cities, the deliberate effort to make of St. Petersburg the Russian counterpart of the French capital, lies at the root of Dostoevsky's passionate and life-long interest in Balzac's works.

Balzac's influence has always played a major role in Dostoevsky studies. Leonid Grossman, an early authority on Dostoevsky, neatly sums up the relationship between the two novelists: "It is difficult to find in world literature a second example of such an astonishing kinship between two writers of different countries and generations as is displayed by Balzac and Dostoevsky" (qtd in Fanger 245). For

this same critic, *Crime and Punishment* represents the "apogee of Balzac's influence on Dostoevsky" (Grossman 32). Dostoevsky first read excerpts and criticism of the translated *Père Goriot* in an 1835 issue of the "Library for Reading." For the next ten years, Dostoevsky continued to read Balzac, and in 1843, the year of Balzac's much-proclaimed visit to St. Petersburg, Dostoevsky translated *Eugénie Grandet* into Russian (Grossman 12-18). After his years of exile, throughout the 1860s, Dostoevsky consistently devoted critical attention to Balzac's works in the journals he edited, *Time* and *Epoch*. And Dostoevsky's allusion to Balzac in his 1880 speech on Pushkin attests to the longevity of the Russian novelist's youthful enthusiasm for the work of his senior French colleague.

While certain ideological and sentimental affinities clearly exist between these two authors, it is the novel of the city as the shaper of the destinies of their protagonists—the notion of making the city itself the subject as well as the setting of their hero's odyssey through the social landscape, thereby giving a fresh new twist to the old story of the rise or fall of the young man from the country seeking his fortune in the big city—that brings together these very different temperaments with their otherwise very different outlooks on urban life.

A linguistic example offers a good natural starting point for students' exploration of the differences between the quintessentially European Paris that plays such an important role in Balzac's novel and its more slowly developing, relatively isolated Russian sister-city, St. Petersburg. The etymological distinction between the Latin (civis) and Slavic (gorod or grad) words for "city" may well reflect basic cultural inclinations that fundamentally shape the speakers' different attitudes towards urban space. In the sense conveyed by the Latin-derived term, a city is the abode of its citizens, its inhabitants; the Indo-European roots for the Russian words indicating "city" underscore the concept of an "enclosed place" (Maguire 21). This need to shut out a hostile world, to guard against the influence of the West, can be seen to "shape a literary version of the city which is peculiar to Russians" (Maguire 22), a city landscape that certainly is epitomized in Dostoevsky's convincing portrait of an ominously claustrophobic St. Petersburg.

These elementary linguistic distinctions serve as a neat introduction to a brief examination of the very different histories of both cities, allowing students to gain a sense of the evolution of the city within a larger physical and historical context. Before reading either novel, students look at nineteenth-century maps of Western Europe and Russia, addressing questions of natural and political boundaries

and the different roles they play in balancing the competing tendencies to isolationist inwardness and cosmopolitan outreach that characterize our two cities and the characters of our two novels. This initial map-reading exercise prepares students to consider the relationship between geography and modernization. Reviewing historical maps of Paris from its ancient Roman beginnings to its classic nineteenth-century configuration, and similar maps of the shorter and much more centrally-managed history of St. Petersburg, gives students insight into a range of related issues: the function of capital cities within the structure of the modern nation-state; crucial nineteenth-century issues of cosmopolitanism versus nationalism; the growth of urban space; the relationship between expansion and social structure.

A reading of excerpts from literary references to these cities complements the study of the topographical and material evolution of Paris and St. Petersburg. Students are introduced to the ancestors of the Paris of Balzac's *Père Goriot* through descriptive excerpts drawn from such works as Rabelais' *Pantagruel* (1532), Montaigne's *Essais* (1575), Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloise* (1761), de la Bretonne's *Nuits de Paris* (1788) Hugo's *Les Misérables* (1862)*,* Baudelaire's *Tableaux parisiens* (1857), Zola's *Le Ventre de Paris* (1873). This exposure to a literary Paris enriches students' appreciation for the nineteenth-century Paris they will enter alongside the characters in Balzac's novel.

A similar exercise focusing on St. Petersburg, with its much later and much more deliberately-planned configuration, its construction on reclaimed swampland, introduces students to the implications of urban planning for the growth of cities and the concentrations of their populations. The literary image of the 1703 capital can be traced through various sources. In the first decades after its founding, St. Petersburg was heralded as a symbol of modernity and enlightened thinking, but a darker image emerged with the passage of time. Snapshots of a changing St. Petersburg can be glimpsed through a selection of excerpts from Russian literature: a Westernized, glittering image of St. Petersburg in Pushkin's 1823-31 *Evgenii Onegin*; a panorama of palaces and monuments in his *The Bronze Horseman* (1833); an "unreal…un-Russian" city in Gogol's *The Overcoat* (1842*)*; and finally, Dostoevsky's portrait of a fantastic, dark, suffocating St. Petersburg, a city he described in *Notes from Underground* (1864*)* as "the most abstract and premeditated city on the face of the earth" (Maguire 23-27).

Certainly, the historical and geographical forces shaping these two metropolises provide striking contrasts, and the physical and spiritual cities that emerge from the novels reflect these divergent

sources. Yet, in their responses to the introduction of new technology and related industry, to the spread of the mass culture of newspapers and cheap factory-produced consumer goods, to the influx of provincial and foreign immigrants, to the range of economic, social and psychological problems endemic to the urban life associated with these sweeping changes condensed within a brief time frame and confined to a limited geographical area, the pairing of *Père Goriot* and *Crime and Punishment* offers a compelling source for a revealing study of the nineteenth-century European city.

With this historical and literary background, students are ready to begin their reading of *Père Goriot* and *Crime and Punishment*. We begin again with topography. We look at a map of contemporary Paris specially annotated for readers of *Père Goriot*, noting the locations of and distances between key sites in the novel (Ginsburg 8-18). We follow Eugène de Rastignac, recently arrived from the provinces, in his excursions by foot and by carriage throughout the social and topographical worlds of Parisian society. This orientation to the physical city affords students a certain perspective in reading the novel, one that parallels the deliberate association of the social world of the city with its material structures, whose exterior contours and interior arrangements advance or check the novel's characters in their movement through both physical and social space. Certainly, looking at the major settings of this dramatic movement—the boardinghouse in the working class and student Latin quarter on the rue Neuve Ste Geneviève (now rue Tournefort), beneath the Pantheon and the Sorbonne; the aristocratic Faubourg St Germain on the left bank of the Seine; the nouveau riche Chaussée d'Antin—gives students a sense of the diversity of and the interplay between social milieu and physical setting in nineteenth-century Paris.

Balzac devotes the greatest attention to both exteriors and interiors in his descriptions of Madame Vauquer's boardinghouse and its surroundings. The reader moves through the streets of the Latin Quarter in an increasingly circumscribed and constricted journey from neighborhood, to street, to gate, to garden, to run-down boardinghouse. The Parisian pension itself, a creation of the nineteenth-century urban economy, is an interesting phenomenon for students to examine and contrast with the St. Petersburg rooming house calling itself a pension that is a major setting in *Crime and Punishment*.

The development of the pension in Paris was a response to both the influx of migrants to the city and the concomitant housing shortage of 1815 (Kanes 37). Madame Vauquer's pension houses an array of lodgers of various degrees of respectability, offering readers a panorama of the economically

depressed in 1820s Paris. Among the inhabitants are the unacknowledged offspring of an aristocratic father, a master criminal, a struggling student from the provinces, retired clerks and functionaries, servants, and the title character, Père Goriot, whose financial success and subsequent ruin serve as a reading of the economic ramifications of the years between the Revolution and the Restoration. In the monetary hierarchy of the boardinghouse, Père Goriot's physical ascent from the most expensive room on the first floor to the cheapest room on the top floor equally, and ironically, traces his downfall. This odd assortment of lodgers, this mingling of classes and origins, is one of the effects of the economic changes that are reshaping Parisian society. The accumulation of details in the bottom-to-top description adds to the sense of suffocating misery within this house. The owner, Madame Vauquer, is herself immediately identifiable as a symbol of the shifting social scene, for although she was "born de Conflans," a clear nod to her noble heritage, she is now the proprietress of a boardinghouse whose seediness is inescapable. The exact location of this house, on a street approaching the outskirts of nineteenth-century Parisian city limits, reflects the marginal nature of those who are confined within its walls.

Tracing the excursions of that typical nineteenth-century novelistic phenomenon, the youth uprooted from his provincial home to seek his fortune in the large city, not only allows students to venture into other precincts of the city, but also presents them with a wealth of telling details about contemporary daily life. The mud that dirties Eugène's boots as he walks to his initial encounter with upper-class society is an important introduction to the history of paving city streets. This is an excellent opportunity to discuss the condition of most Parisian streets at the time portrayed in the novel. Scenes outside the boardinghouse, in the courtyard that plays host to chickens and sewage, offer students a graphic image of sanitation and health problems that plagued many Parisian citizens. Readings from supplementary scholarly texts describing the sanitation problems associated with a growing, unsophisticated urban population acquaint students with another aspect of urban growth. Discussions of public hygiene and public health problems form an important component of students' growing awareness of urban history.

The conditions outside, the unpaved streets polluted with dirty water and sewage, lead us to consider several aspects of daily life in nineteenth-century Paris. Eugène spends some of his last money to have his boots cleaned of the dust and mud they have acquired on his walk to Mme de Restaud's

house. The whole topic of transportation within the city grows out of these early descriptions of Eugène's clumsy journey. Paris is a city whose social geography is more familiar to coachmen, who know, for example, that the Beauséants maintain two residences in Paris, than to the newly-arrived, aristocratically-born student. It is also a city in which distinctions among means of transportation are critically observed by domestics, keenly aware of the social standing of each arriving guest. The narrator notes that the sound of a passing carriage was a rare event in the boardinghouse district. But Eugène is increasingly mobile, and his social transformation from pedestrian to passenger parallels the path of his social success.

Eugène is struck by the hierarchy of carriage types that await outside the homes of the bankers and the nobility, for while "a young count's fine-looking rig" stood outside Madame de Restaud's hotel in the Chaussée d'Antin, a carriage of "incomparable luxury," one that "couldn't have been bought for thirty thousand francs," lingered in front of the aristocratic Mme de Beauséant's home in the Faubourg St Germain. Balzac's characters penetrate both aristocratic and bourgeois interiors, settings that reveal the intimate connection between material display and social status in nineteenth-century society. And for Eugène, the interior décor of Mme de Beauséant's apartments, with their "gilded stairs," forms the most striking lesson in the degree of "wondrous things" that signal real social status (52). In fact, within the space of one day, " between Madame de Restaud's blue drawing room and Madame de Beauséant's rose-colored one," Eugène, the one-time law student, has received the equivalent of three years study of "unwritten *Parisian* law" (56). He quickly learns to distinguish between the "typical mindless luxury of an upstart" that describes the interior decoration of Mme de Restaud's apartments and the truly tasteful drawing room of the aristocratic Mme de Beauséant. For models of the boardinghouse furnishings, so intricately described by Balzac, already second hand at the time the novel is set, we look at reproductions of paintings or engravings from the Revolution years. The literary portraits of life inside the houses of both the reigning aristocracy and the aspiring bourgeoisie are made more meaningful to students with visits to the period furniture galleries at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where a walking tour through a chronologically-arranged suite of galleries takes the student from the rococo interiors of the Louis XV period to rooms decorated in the Neoclassical, Empire and Restoration styles.

Balzac's detailed inventories of the interior decorations of the apartments of the different social classes in nineteenth-century Paris invite a discussion of fashion. And fashion is a particularly

appropriate subject for students of this novel, as "it essentially reflects social mobility….Fashion is the training ground for a symbolization whose function is to accustom us to the new and to discredit the old" (qtd in Moretti 134, from Marc-Alain Descamps, *Psychosociologie de la mode*, Paris 1979). Eugène is struck by the fashions he observes within each social context: Countess de Restaud's "white cashmere dressing gown, ornamented with rose-colored knots" (45); the ball gowns the Goriot daughters commission; a jacket that fit a man "almost as elegantly as a woman's frock" (46). In class, we look at portraits, particularly those by Ingrès, as models for the kinds of clothes and jewels representative of subtle gradations of new and old money upper-class tastes. And while Dostoevsky may be considerably less interested in fashion than is Balzac, his novel still offers glimpses of the new fashions that accompany new money. Luzhin, a "practical man and very busy," arrives from the provinces wearing clothes that are "a little too new and too obviously designed for a particular purpose. His elegant, spick-and-span round hat testified to the same purpose: he treated it somewhat too respectfully, nursing it carefully in his hands. A coquettish pair of real French lilac-coloured gloves also betrayed the same purpose, if only by the fact that he did not wear them but carried them in his hand for show" (II, 124).

Père Goriot not only portrays domestic Parisian life, but also gives students glimpses of the kinds of popular culture that served the growing population. The reference to the performance of the *Barber of Seville* at the Théâtre des Italiens helps situate the comic opera genre historically, and conveys a sense of the popularity of Rossini in the Paris of 1819. Beaumarchais' biting social satire of the pre-revolutionary period of the 1770s has been remodeled into Rossini's exquisite and innocuous bel canto confection in the Restoration Paris of 1819**.** This setting, along with that of the Opera, with an audience drawn from the aristocratic and haute bourgeoisie, offers students some insight into the shifting of the once-rigid class lines that accompanies the rising importance of the wealthy bourgeoisie**.** The frequent allusions to the diorama, a common topic of playful conversation among the boarders at Madame Vauquer's pension, give students an example of the popularization of modern culture among the lower classes of society. The diorama, a "display of colored two dimensional cardboard figures in a three-dimensional space, in which controlled lighting was used to impart an illusion of movement to the scene," made its debut in Paris in 1822. In a letter, Balzac described this early step towards the development of photography as one of the "wonders of the age" (Bellos 40). And Vautrin's familiarity

with vaudeville and comic operas reflects the wide appeal of these more popular forms of entertainment.

Both Balzac's *Père Goriot* and Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* appeared first as *romans-feuilletons*, installment pieces in newspapers and magazines. The success of these novels in serialized form attests to the increasing literacy of the times. Estimates show an increase in literacy in France from seven to twelve million in the half century between 1780 and 1830 (Bellos 7-8). In 1834, Paris supported five hundred lending libraries, and for a small hourly fee, readers could visit the popular *cabinets de lecture* to sit and read current newspapers and magazines (Winders 295). This remarkable widespread literacy is also reflected in the reading public's awareness of contemporary political and social issues. Along with newspapers and literary reviews, caricature began to appeal to the population. Balzac wrote the first critical article on Paul Gavarni's work in 1830, and shared with the caricaturist an interest in class, types, mores. Viewing the works of Gustave Daumier and Paul Gavarni gives students a sense of both the physical appearance of the nineteenth-century urban citizens and the controversial issues of the times. Daumier's caricatures of working-class characters parallel literary attention to this newly-important class.

The rapidly increasing circulation of newspapers offered the people of late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Europe an ever-expanding view of their world, keeping the population up to date on every aspect of urban life, including the commission of crimes (Winders 294). Balzac claimed that parts of the *Père Goriot* story were taken from a "true" story, the tempered version of the report of a father who "cried out for water, for the whole twenty hours of his death agony, without anyone coming to his aid" (qtd in Bellos, 33 from the preface to *Le Cabinet des Antiques*, Pl IV, 962). Dostoevsky's tale of the murder of a parasitic pawnbroker and her innocent sister has some antecedents in the 1865 newspaper accounts of the ax murder and robbery of two elderly women in St. Petersburg. And it is an article on crime authored by Raskolnikov that first arouses the interest of the police inspector investigating the pawnbroker's murder.

Scenes of genteel poverty in the Maison Vauquer and its surrounding neighborhood alternate with those of Eugène's excursions into the world of upper class Parisian society, but the oppressive atmosphere of the working class slums of St. Petersburg, of its rooms and its streets, remains constant and unrelieved. The economic conditions that are beginning to affect Balzac's Paris in the 1820s come

later, and more virulently, to the St. Petersburg of the 1860s. According to Bakhtin, Dostoevsky's St. Petersburg is different from Balzac's Paris because capitalism came suddenly and "caught intact a variety of social worlds and groups which had not, as in the West, begun to lose their distinct apartness" (qtd in Fanger 210). It is through Dostoevsky's recreation of this "dismal, foul, and stinking" city that readers can witness the effects of uncontrolled urban migration and poverty on this enclosed, Russian city (Fanger 184).

The relentless constriction of life in St. Petersburg is underscored in both its interior and exterior descriptions. The opening, claustrophobic domestic arrangements of the boardinghouse in *Père Goriot* find their much intensified, darker parallels in Dostoevsky's descriptions of the rooms in St. Petersburg. Raskolnikov occupies a "coffin" like room, "a tiny little cubby-hole of a place, no more than six paces long, and so low that anybody of even a little more than average height felt uncomfortable in it, fearful that at any moment he might bump his head against the ceiling"(I, 23). The rooms that Marmeladov and Sonya rent, the hotel where Dunya and her mother stay, the room that Svidrigaylov takes on the eve of his suicide, the police station: all these spaces are cramped, stuffy, angular, low-ceilinged; the staircases that lead to and away from these "hutches" are narrow and dark, reeking of the rank odors of dishwater and stale oil.

At this point in our study, students consult their maps of St. Petersburg to follow Raskolnikov on his carefully measured journeys outside his room: 730 paces to the pawnbroker's; a few feet to the Haymarket, the center of the slum he inhabits. The stifling streets he walks are as closed-in as his room, for they are filled with "stuffiness, the jostling crowds, the bricks and mortar, scaffolding and dust everywhere, and that peculiar summer stench so familiar to everyone who cannot get away from St. Petersburg into the country" (I, 2).

Both Paris and St Petersburg experienced dramatic increases in population that accompanied their economic growth. Between 1801 and 1851, the number of Parisians doubled, but the Paris of the mid-nineteenth century, even with its congestion, poverty, and crime, is not the closed-in, hellish city that emerges from the pages of *Crime and Punishment* (Nesci 152). For Balzac, Paris remains a "romantic wilderness, the scene of fantastic adventures and miraculous encounters…a fairyland in which dazzling riches and picturesque poverty live next door to each other" (Hauser 150). If the characters that people *Père Goriot* are driven by their varied responses to their economic

circumstances, and even flirt with the idea of scandalous schemes and murder, they still inhabit a city with tantalizing alternatives, with the potential to surprise.

The economic conditions of Raskolnikov and his even more miserable acquaintances, the Marmeladov family, cripple and blind these characters, condemning them to a place "of utterly dark, colourless misery" (Hauser 150). Similar to the population surge in Paris, the influx of freed serfs from the countryside swelled the population of St. Petersburg from almost half a million in 1858 to 667,000 in 1869 (Volkov 44). For Dostoevsky, St. Petersburg is "a town of half-crazy people," a place that "exercise[s] such strange, harsh, and somber influences on the human spirit" (VI, 394).

New kinds of social concerns are associated with the rising level of nineteenth⁻century urban poverty and crowding. And as students accompany Raskolnikov on his walks through St. Petersburg, they share, in their particularly Russian incarnations, the particularly urban social problems that unrelentingly confront him: alcoholism, disease, prostitution, crime. Dostoevsky's realism offers students a concrete approach to this teeming city and its problems. Students can consult newspaper accounts describing the actual street that the fictional Raskolnikov inhabits, a street of sixteen houses with "eighteen drinking establishments, so that those wishing to enjoy merrymaking liquids and who come to Stolyarny Alley do not even have to look at the signs: come into any house, even any porch--- and you'll find wine" (qtd in Volkov 44). Alcoholism as an "ism," a spreading social problem rather than an issue of personal moral character, is a recurrent theme in both the life of St. Petersburg and Dostoevsky's novel. Government commissions were formed to study the problem, and taxes were imposed in an effort to control alcohol consumption. Journals, including Dostoevsky's own *Vremya (Time)*, frequently featured articles detailing the devastating social effects of alcohol abuse (Fanger 185). The disintegration of the Marmeladov family is a direct result of the father's surrender to drink, a downward spiral that seems unstoppable.

Closely linked to the theme of alcoholism is that of prostitution. Contemporary public concern with prostitution is evident in newspaper articles describing "fallen women," and mothers who sold their own daughters into prostitution. One particular piece called on authors to see beneath the external signs of degradation, to probe the inner, psychological world of the prostitute (Fanger 185-86). In *Crime and Punishment*, Sonya maintains a childish innocence that insulates her from her life as a prostitute. The theme of enforced registration of prostitutes as a way of controlling venereal disease, a

movement that is often traced to the British Contagious Disease Act of 1862, is a topic that can stimulate classroom discussion. It is also interesting to note that the Vauquer pension, with its Cupid statue, is located only a few doors from the hospital for venereal diseases.

Crime surfaces in tempting ways in *Père Goriot*, in the provocative offers of Vautrin, in the history of Père Goriot's own accumulation of wealth, in Nucingen's shady banking and real estate schemes, and, of course, in Balzac's oft-quoted (and misquoted) assertion that "the secret of all great fortunes…is always some forgotten crime"(90). In contrasting Eugène's humble surroundings with those of the aristocratic dinner he had just left, Balzac wonders "how on earth the wealth displayed by money changers keeps from sprouting wings and flying right out of their alms-bowls…And yet when you consider how few serious crimes in fact take place…Properly drawn, the perpetual struggle between impoverished students and the city of Paris would constitute one of the most dramatic canvases of our entire modern civilization."(95). But the Paris of *Père Goriot* is not the scene of the kind of brutal murder that opens the story of *Crime and Punishment.* St. Petersburg newspapers carried stories of robberies, fires, murders, and Dostoevsky's own journals printed a series, "From the Criminal Affairs of France," which described crimes that, according to Dostoevsky, "illuminate such dark sides of the human soul" (Fanger 186).

And through the portrayal of Raskolnikov's efforts to justify his crime by giving it an ideological underpinning, linking it to one of the many new "isms" that characterize the nineteenth century, Dostoevsky introduces the theme of the "new man" common to 1860s Russia. The nihilism that Raskolnikov sometimes preaches, the concept of a division of humanity into the few extraordinary men and the masses of ordinary men, reflects popular ideology. Raskolnikov's declaration that the killing of one "louse" is justified if it benefits the many who suffer neatly recalls the conversation between Rastignac and Bianchon about the hypothetical murder of one distant Mandarin, missed by no one, but whose death alleviates others' suffering. Through these novels, students can chart the shifting ideological trends of the times, linking them to the urban social conditions in which they flourished.

Money, whether gained through business ventures, loans, gambling, theft, or, in the more traditional mode, inheritance, assumes a powerful, prominent role in the cities of *Père Goriot* and *Crime and Punishment*. In the opening scenes of *Père Goriot*, each boarder is identified by the rent he pays for his room. For Eugène, money borrowed from his poor relatives, money won through gambling, money

gained through pawning his possessions, supplies the necessities that fund his social ascension. But Eugène's need for money, just like Delphine's or Anastasie's, is part of the social requirements of the Parisian world. Money explains both Eugène's rise and Père Goriot's descent in the social hierarchy. And in a parallel, criminal world, Vautrin safeguards and distributes the money that keeps the families of prisoners from starving.

In *Crime and Punishment,* money is a factor in almost every aspect of the plot. Stories of collapsing currencies and failing businesses filled the newspapers of 1860s Russia, a country new to capitalism. In the *Communist Manifesto,* Marx and Engels describe a society where "all fixed, fast-frozen relationships, with their train of venerable ideas and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become obsolete before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned" (qtd in Moretti 145). Poverty permeates every aspect of St. Petersburg life: the streets are filled with beggars, with abandoned children performing for rubles, with organ-grinders, with bizarrely-dressed women, with drunks. Poverty accelerates the downward spin of the Marmeladov family, drives Sonya to prostitution, determines Dunya's marriage choice, explains both Svidrigaylov's marriage and his easy access to young girls. Like Eugène de Rastignac, Raskolnikov comes to the city to study. He struggles for money for tuition, for food, for rent, and even views murder in economic terms. The pawnbroker that plays a pivotal role in transforming Goriot's remaining possessions into the extraordinary sums necessary to maintain his daughters' social ambitions assumes an even more parasitic, predatory incarnation in *Crime and Punishment*. In the somber streets of St. Petersburg, the pawnbroker lives off the miseries of the truly miserable. And in the nihilistic philosophy that so tempts Raskalnikov, the murder of this "louse" can be justified by his fantasy of redistributing her hoarded money to the poor.

The concrete details of sums expended, wasted, offered, acquired in both *Père Goriot* and *Crime and Punishment*, invite a discussion of the economics of urban life. Anchored in the precise financial accounts that Balzac and Dostoevsky present, the daily routines of nineteenth-century Parisians and Petersburgians become more accessible to twenty-first century readers. We know exactly how much money Eugène receives from his provincial relatives, how much Père Goriot spends to furnish Eugène's new apartment, how much the pauper's funeral for Père Goriot costs, how much Katerina Ivanovna spends on the funeral dinner, how much Raskolnikov gives or throws away, how much Svidrigaylov

gives to the parents of young girls. The financial transactions that saturate these novels attest to the subtle and not-so-subtle connections between money and social change in these urban societies.

Money is also responsible for the dissolution of family ties, a disintegration that alters the very fabric of society. In the Paris of 1819, Père Goriot's daughters abandon their self-sacrificing father when his money is gone. Eugène de Rastignac, living in a boardinghouse among strangers, only calls upon his family for money or for help in obtaining his entry into the social world. In the 1866 St. Petersburg of Dostoevsky, the family as an entity has effectively disappeared. Raskolnikov's solitude in the run-down pension he inhabits is underscored by the absence of any mention of his fellow boarders. Raskolnikov's mother and sister would sacrifice their lives to advance his, but their sacrifice is a burden he cannot bear. Svidrigaylov is bound to his wife through her payment of his gambling debts, and he uses the money she leaves him to buy his very young next fiancé.

The portrait of the Marmeladov family, who occupy a room that is actually a passage connecting other rooms, who nostalgically recall less brutal, provincial times outside the city, only serves to highlight the disarray and desperation of their present, urban existence. As Marmeladov famously pronounces: "Poverty is no crime…But beggary…beggary is a vice" (I, 9). Raskolnikov wanders the streets of St. Petersburg and is himself mistaken for a beggar; Marmeladov's widow, accompanied by her three young children, finds her final, most devastating humiliation as a beggar. Indeed, the impoverished, desperate population of Dostoevsky's St. Petersburg, the "mournfully repellent picture" they compose, represents an indistinguishable confusion of beggars, prostitutes, drunks, lechers, a crowd among whom even "the oddest…could hardly arouse any surprise" (I, 2). And among these oppressive crowds, the unwelcome presence of foreigners—Germans, Jews, Finns—introduces a further texturing of this urban portrait, another perspective on the complex, composite urban society that St. Petersburg is becoming.

In nineteenth-century Europe, new urban conditions give rise to a new literature, one that details with precision the forces shaping the shifting of social hierarchies, the rise of new social groups, the daily lives of a population adjusting to the vicissitudes of the emerging bourgeois society of post-Napoleonic Europe. In their parallels and in their peculiarities, Balzac's *Père Goriot* and Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, written 31 years and thousands of miles apart, offer their readers a detailed experience of the nineteenth-century city. This experience can be easily enhanced by the use of

supplementary materials that enrich the understanding both of the literature and of the cities whose stories they tell. Primary sources—maps, contemporary art, fashion, decorative arts, newspaper and journal accounts—offer students multiple perspectives on the changing urban landscape. Discussions of philosophical currents (Hegel, Schiller, Nietzsche, Marx, social Darwinism), political trends, legal initiatives (registration of prostitutes, divorce law, marriage contracts, debt) provide additional insight into the intellectual temper of the times. Old social problems—crime, alcoholism, prostitution, disease—newly compounded by growing concentrations of population in fixed areas, continue to resonate in the present.

Balzac's formula that behind every fortune lies a crime provides the link between the fantasies of romance and the social realities of the novel, between literary imagination and the depiction of the world as we actually find it. On the tour that has taken us from the broad boulevards of the wealthy in Balzac's Paris to the tortuous, vice-ridden alleys of Dostoevsky's St. Petersburg, students have seen the city from many different angles, both physically and socially, coming away with a concrete image of the subtle and complex ways that inhabitants of the urban world connect to one another, an image that perhaps only the novel can provide.

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White Thighs: A Question of Fate and Sexual Politics in Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*

Sheila Sandapen, Immaculata College

In January 1914 the French aviator Marc Pourpe successfully completed the first flight from Cairo to Khartoum. Waiting for him on his desert landing was the Governor General of the Sudan, Sir Reginald Wingate, and several government officials. Wingate greeted Marc Pourpe enthusiastically with these words:

> Monsieur, I am as excited and worked up as on the day of the battle of Omdurman (1898)[1]. Permit me to congratulate you in the name of everyone here and to thank you for coming such a distance. I have conquered the Sudan step by step, in the desert you have just easily crossed. I do not hide from you the emotions which fill me, which fills us all to see today the final word in civilization: a French plane. (Lufbery 17).

The British governor had good cause to feel superior. In 1914 Western powers claimed "85 percent of the earth as colonies, protectorates, dependencies, dominions and commonwealths" (Said 8), and this latest show of skilled technology was only a reaffirmation of the superiority of the West over the rest of the world.

In her essay "Caliban the Excluded" Margaret Paul Joseph affirms the importance of technology as the enforcer of the West's power. She cites sociologist O. Mannoni, who presupposes that a relationship of interdependency exists between the colonizer and the colonized, which fulfills the unconscious desires of both (qtd. in Joseph 6). Mannoni theorizes that in literature this dual relationship as portrayed between a Caliban and Prospero and a Robinson Crusoe and Man Friday is really a portrayal of human beings, whose true natures are complex enough to contain both "monster" and "gracious being" (6). Frantz Fanon and Aimé Césaire, reports Joseph, reject this notion of interdependency. Indeed Fanon critiques Mannoni for not recognizing that Prospero and Caliban do not *need* each other, but that the latter's state of dependency (and resulting inferiority) was actually created by the former when he used his technological superiority for exploitation (Joseph 7). Joseph

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[1] In 1898 Sirdar Horatio Kitchener, governor of The British Red Sea territories (1886) and commander in chief of the Egyptian army (1892) crushed the separatist Sudanese forces of al-Mahdi in the Battle of Omdurman (1898) and then occupied the nearby city of Khartoum. For his efforts he was made Lord Kitchener.

writes, "Fanon recognized the fact that alienation is central to any analysis of colonialism." She continues:

> Marx concerned himself with the workers of the world: labor and its economic powerlessness. Fanon champions the wretched of the world: the colonized and their psychic disintegration. Robert Smith elaborates on this: "The colonized personality is alienated not only from his color and traditional community but, most importantly, through the dynamics of colonialism/racism, he is alienated from his very being as a Black person." (Joseph 7)

This psychic alienation is what ails Mustafa Sa'eed, the protagonist of Tayeb Salih's *A Season of Migration to the North*. After Hosna, his widow, takes her destiny in her own hands and kills Wad Rayyes and subsequently herself, she is widely condemned for her actions by the village on the bend in the Nile. Only two people understand her actions: Wad Rayyes' eldest wife, Mabrouka—a fellow victim—and Effendi, the narrator and "outsider" of the story. Hosna's epitaph becomes: "She accepted the stranger—why didn't she accept Wad Rayyes?" (Salih 129).

It is the "stranger's" acceptance or non-acceptance that is at the heart of *Season of Migration to the North*. The stranger is Mustafa Sa'eed, a native of Khartoum[1], a prized student of English and an economist who tries to make his home first in England and then in the small village on the bend of the Nile. Mustafa confides to Effendi that his father had died before he was born, and he had no relations through his father and mother. This he admits gave him as a child "a warm feeling of being free, that there were was not a human being, by father or mother, to tie me down as a tent peg to a particular spot, a particular domain" (Salih 19). This freedom of connection to his land, culture, and people lead Mustafa down some strange paths. As a young boy he makes the choice to attend English school and surpasses everyone's expectations. He is sent to England on a scholarship, destined to be the perfect "Black English" gentleman. The Black English gentleman is the end product of England's ideology of allowing indirect rule: letting the "natives" rule but ensuring that British interests are served. As outlined by Lord Macaulay the intent was, through education, to have a

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[1] Mustafa was born in Khartoum, which was founded in 1821 as an outpost for the Egyptian army but grew as a regional center for trade, including the slave trade. In 1884 Mahdi Muhammad Ahmad's troops laid siege to British occupied Khartoum and British General Charles George Gordon was killed. The city fell to the Mahdists on January 26, 1885. After 1898 the British recaptured the city.

class of person, Indian [or black] in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population. (qtd. in Spivak 61)

Mustafa learns his part well and becomes an economist with a doctorate, but he fails to earn the full acceptance of his colleagues as an intellectual equal. He remains the token exotic stranger to his English counterparts, regardless of his learning and English accent: his skin is too dark. Many years later, one Englishman later recalls of Mustafa:

He built quite a legend of sort round himself—the handsome black man courted in Bohemian circles. It seems he was a showpiece exhibited by members of the aristocracy who in the twenties and early thirties were affecting liberalism. It is said he was friend of Lord-this and Lord-that. He was also one of the darlings of the English left. That was bad luck for him, because it is said he was intelligent. (Salih 58)

According to the colonizers Mustafa could never be considered a true equal of the Englishman despite his accomplishments.

Mustafa plays the game, but he understands that he is and always be lacking because he cannot earn full acceptance on his own merits. A priest tells Mustafa when he is a young boy traveling solo to Cairo: "All of us, my son, are in the last resort traveling alone." This universal, inclusive statement is then followed up immediately with, "You speak English with astonishing fluency" (Salih 28). The stranger will always remain an object of astonishment.

Mustafa is an interesting oddity but not an equal to his professors and peers, and for the women he is the dark exotic "unknown." He becomes infected with the "white man's" disease, a "contagion that oozes from the body of the universe" (104) that reduces him to a thing, cutting him off from his blackness, fracturing his own psyche and cementing his alienation. In turn he takes his self-loathing and sense of raging displacement out on Ann Hammond, Isabella Seymour, and Sheila Greenwood. These women, succumbing to what Barbara Harlow terms the "sentimentalism of orientalism" believe in his otherness and his difference and want him not as a man but as a *black* man. Recalls Mustafa, "Each time she [his lover Sheila Greenwood] would gaze at me as though discovering something new." Sheila

Greenwood tells him, "Your tongue's as crimson as a tropic sunset," and exclaims"'How marvellous your black colour is!…the color of magic and mystery and obscenities." Sheila Greenwood considers her illicit encounters with a black man somehow obscene and it titillates her—"My mother would go mad and my father would kill me," she tells Mustafa (Salih 139). When Isabella Seymour first meets Mustafa, she agrees to go out with him and says, "Yes why not? . . . There's nothing to tell from your face you're a cannibal" (40) and then breaks her marriage vows for Mustafa. Ann Hammond wears an Arab robe and head dress in the bedroom, styling herself Mustafa's slave girl Sausan. Recounts Mustafa, she (Ann) "yearned for tropical climes. . . ,[and] I was a symbol of all these hankerings of hers" (Salih 142).

With his inexhaustible store of hackneyed phrases, Mustafa constructs lies for the women and likens himself to Othello, "the noble black man" when it suits his purpose. He tells outrageous stories of his homeland and is as exotic as the women want him to be. Mustafa lies to these women so he can take them back to his bedroom, "a graveyard that looked on to a garden"(Salih 30). In this graveyard lie the remains of Mustafa, the black African slain by the savagery of colonialism. Colonizing the women helps him recover what has been lost to him ("Yes this was my prey," says Mustafa on meeting a new conquest [Salih 36]). The women, however, are complicit in their seduction. They are not raped and are only mislead because they desperately want to participate in the roles he has ascribed to them, and in the case of Ann Hammond to assume the role of a slave girl (Salih 142), roles that give them satisfaction by defying their parents and convention in a bid to seek pleasure for pleasure's sake.

This is not a blame-the-victim mentality. Mustafa may project himself as the noble moor Othello to get these women; however, he is ultimately more Caliban than Othello, and the women who fall for his lies are Mirandas who entrap him in the stereotype of the highly sexed black male. James W. Coleman writes, "The language that Miranda gives Caliban forces his definition in her terms and in Prospero's: Caliban/cannibal—the savage brute whose 'purpose' is enslavement. Caliban tries to use the language for his own benefit but he cannot" (2). Mustafa lies, but he cannot break free because he has named his prey—Sheila Greenwood, Ann Hammond, Isabella Seymour—and and in so doing he has made them whole and given them the power of language and identity, something no colonizer who strives to conquer the meek, submissive and exotic women of the dark continents ever does.[1] Mustafa

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[1] Too often in "Western" literature the black woman is portrayed as exotic, nameless and often without words. In *Heart of Darkness*, Kurtz's mistress is described thus: "Only the barbarous and superb woman did not so much as flinch and stretched tragically her bare arms

tries to colonize them and hopes to infect them but finds that they are already carriers of the white man's disease—they have an innate sense of self and superiority and arrogance toward him. Effectively his Mirandas have chained him, reclaimed him, and reaffirmed his alienation from black or white culture. As a result Mustafa loses all pity for his prey and himself. He understands the foulness of his actions and his seduction of Isabella Seymour cause his "consciousness to [tell him to] desist," but he justifies it for the pleasure of the moment ("But the summit was only a step away after which I would recover my breath and rest"). Mustafa doesn't lie to himself, however. He continues: "At the climax of our pain there passed through my head clouds of old, far-off memories, like a vapour rising up from a salt lake in the middle of the desert. She burst into agonized, consuming tears, while I gave myself up to a feverishly tense sleep"(Salih 44). Mustafa seeks a moment of connection, no matter how ephemeral ("far-off memories") to his world and he is willing to court the pain for a brief moment of connection.

This would-be colonizer of women, however, meets his fate in Jean Morris. As if reciting poetry, Mustafa tells Effendi three times that "The train carried me to Victoria Station and to the world of Jean Morris" (Salih 29, 31, 33). Echoing a Greek Chorus, his words announce his fall: "The train carried me to Victoria Station and to the world of Jean Morris," he intones. It is a world he desperately craves and will seek no matter the cost. The line resonates with power; it evokes the train, the track that has been laid for Mustafa and the hopeless futility of trying to outrun his fate. Jean is the ultimate symbol of imperialism. She is white. She has a mind of her own. She is the invented Desdemona and the counterpart to Mustafa's invented Othello. Typically Desdemona is discounted by Iago critics as being too passive: "Desdemona is helplessly passive. She can do nothing whatever. She cannot retaliate even in speech; not even in silent feeling…She is helpless because her nature is infinitely sweet and her love absolute…Desdemona's suffering is like that of the most loving of dumb creatures tortured without cause by the thing he adores" (qtd. in Neely 69).

Jean Morris, however, is no passive Desdemona. She is wild, capricious, cruel, demanding, promiscuous, and is not taken in or impressed by Mustafa's "otherness." The first time she meets Mustafa she does not speak to him but gives him a look of "arrogance, coldness and something else" (Salih 29). On their second meeting she tells Mustafa, "You're ugly…"I've never seen an uglier face than

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after us over the sombre and glittering river." In *Season of Migration to the North* Mustafa names the women. He may exploit them, but he does acknowledge them.

yours" (Salih 30). As an archetype of the West, Jean Morris sees the ugliness of the white man's imperialism reflected in Mustafa. His face is the mirror of dark soul. By taunting him she is taunting herself. Mustafa is her fate, but she doesn't have to like it.

Mustafa, intrigued, pursues her relentlessly for three years. For Mustafa, Jean Morris is "a shimmering mirage" of hope that he can be accepted as [Black] English. One day she tells him, "I am tired of your pursuing me and of my running before you. Marry me." He does, and she taunts him with her naked body, which she initially will not allow him to touch (Salih 156-7). Mustafa recalls his mother telling him he had the freedom to choose how to live his life (Salih 159) but realizes that in Jean Morris — the woman he never thinks of as his wife (she is not part of him, they remain apart) and who refuses everything about him including his name—he will never be the actor, only the re-actor and the knowledge causes him to cry out in despair: "I swear I'll kill you one day" (159). His cry is aimed at the West in as much as it aimed as his wife. Jean Morris laughs at his threat; the prospect of violence excites her, but she doubts the subordinate Mustafa will ever take action.

Despairingly, Mustafa recognizes that he has gone from being the hunter to being the prey. He has been thoroughly reclaimed as a colony and lost all identity as a man. All his life Mustafa has suffered from the coldness resulting from total assimilation into the Western culture and disavowing of his African-ness. This coldness has made it impossible to claim his humanity, to laugh ("You're not a human being," says an early lover, "you're a heartless machine"). Mrs. Robinson used to laugh at the boy Mustafa and say, "Can't you ever forget your intellect?" (Salih 28). It was only his intellect that set him apart and brought him to the notice of the white elite. In Jean Morris, his English wife, Mustafa feels the fires of hell because she is unimpressed. He is tormented and then delighted by his wife. He knows himself to be both conqueror and conquered. She destroys him, but she makes him *feel* and he is no longer cold. Mustafa marvels, "Where was the cold?"

On the night of Jean Morris's murder, Mustafa returns home to find "her stretched out on the bed, her white thighs open. Though her lips were formed into a full smile, there was something like sadness on her face; it was as though she was in a state of great readiness both to give and to take" (163). For the first time Mustafa ["East"] can take from the Jean ["West"] without either lying to each other or disguising their own purpose. They make love, and they make hate. These two people are involved in a fight for supremacy, and neither will cede. It is a fight that echoes the violence that is

necessary to break from the bonds of colonization. Fanon in the *Wretched of the Earth* says, "The naked truth of decolonization evokes for us the searing bullets and bloodstained knives which emanate from it. For if the last shall be first, this will only come to pass after murderous and decisive struggle between the two protagonists" (Fanon 37).

In seeking to reclaim his sense of self as a man who is not dependent on the white colonizer, the fictional Mustafa plunges a knife into Jean's heart while he is still in her body. As she dies, the following exchange takes place:

> I love you, she said to me, and I believed her. "I love you," I said to her, and I spoke the truth. We were a torch of flame, the edges of the bed tongues of Hell-fire. The smell of smoke was in my nostrils as said to me, "I love you, my darling," and as I said to her, "I love you, my darling," and the universe, with its past, present and future was gathered together into a single point before and after which nothing existed. (Salih 165).

Mustafa strives to exorcise his demons, and it is only in the violent breaking of their attachment that Jean and Mustafa can be honest with each other: that beneath the hatred and misunderstandings could be love and need mixed with a savagery to be free of such emotions. Jean Morris calls to Mustafa: "Come with me. Come with me. Don't let me go alone" (Salih 165). And Mustafa does try to follow Jean Morris. He does not defend his actions and hopes that the white man's court will execute him because he is the "intruder [on British soil and over white women] whose fate must be decided" (Salih 94). Thinks Mustafa, "I am no Othello. I am a lie. Why don't you sentence me to be hanged and kill the lie?" (Salih 94), but he fails to stand and speak these words. In Shakespeare's version, Othello is an adopted "white," but Mustafa knows that this has never been true for him. He understands that he is more Caliban, one who has successfully raped and plundered but still somehow remains enslaved and at the mercy of the overlord.

The whites "punish" Mustafa with seven years in prison. The sentence is light because to punish him is to admit that the great British experiment has failed. They defend him first in the trial and then defend his memory by constructing a tale of him retiring as a millionaire "living like a lord in the English countryside" (Salih 56). "They" excuse Mustafa's actions without fully understanding why "he" acted.

Says Fanon, settlers know that

> [t]he native town is a crouching village, a town on its knees, a town wallowing in the mire. It is a town of niggers and dirty Arabs. The look that the native turns on the settler's town is a look of lust, a look of envy; it expresses his dreams of possession—all manner of possession: to sit at the settler's table, to sleep in the settler's bed, with his wife if possible. The colonized man is an envious man. And this the settler knows very well" (Fanon 39).

Mustafa serves his seven years and seemingly rejects his Black Gentleman status. He returns to the small village on the bend of the Nile where he starts a new life with an African wife. He tries to reconnect with the community, with the "old" ways. On the surface he seems to fit. But when drunk, he recites English poetry in an English accent, and while asleep he calls out Jean's name. His unconsciousness is haunted. Just as in England he maintained a room that evoked the "orient," Mustafa maintains a secret room in his African village complete with a fireplace, English language books, and pictures of Sheila Greenwood, Ann Hammond, Isabella Seymour and Jean Morris that captures the "occidental." Mustafa remains enthralled and continues to cling to his chains. Effendi rightly condemns him for being a fool (Salih 137).

Mustafa remains a stranger to the villagers on the bend in the Nile. He takes some part in the local business and gives them advice on how to better their lot economically but won't take office. He is incomplete. He cannot go back when he doesn't know what to go back to. His inability to conform to the traditions to his village is reflected in how he influences his second wife, Hosna, whom he treats with courtesy and gives her some feeling of empowerment. The change is noted: "All women change after marriage, but she in particular underwent an indescribable change. It was as though she were another person. Even we who were her contemporaries and used to play with her in the village look at her today and see her as something new" (Salih 101).

This new Hosna eventually express her own opinions and voices her own desires. When faced with the ultimatum of marrying Wad Rayyes, she goes to Mahjoub and demands that Effendi marry her. When Mahjoub refuses to listen, the good woman who should be tamed both by her circumcision and her 'place" in village society, acts out on her threat to kill both Wad Rayyes and herself (Salih 96). She is condemned because she fights against her fate and doesn't act in the time-honored tradition. The

villagers are trying to hold on to a past of life that is pre-colonial and Hosna's self-assertion denies the old traditions and refutes the fact that the "men are the guardians of the women" (Salih 98). Hosna must die. She is the required sacrifice as the old traditions start to give way and the villagers have a chance to build a new future for themselves that that is not a continuation of colonial life or regression to the "old ways." Her rape and death are disturbing and troubling because she doesn't consent to the appropriation of her body and is not a willing participant in the same way as Mustafa's women. Hosna cannot escape her fate because she "accepted the stranger" and sought change. She and the stranger are both casualties in war of colonialism.

Effendi, however, can survive if only he chooses to act. Like Mustafa, he also spent seven years in England earning a doctorate in poetry. At first he makes the mistake of romanticizing his homeland. During his entire sojourn in England he "dreamed" of his homeland and never loosened his ties to the idea of his home. He didn't try and colonize white women or ape white ways; he studied poetry and is insulted when Mustafa says, "It would have been better if you'd studied agriculture, engineering or medicine" (Salih 9). Effendi comes back to work in his country (he takes a position with the government) but unknowingly he has also been infected with the disease of contagion—envy, an idea that things are not idyllic, the potential for self awareness. His perception has changed. When he first returns, he views his people through a fog (Salih 1), and he questions why Hosna is being forced to marry Wad Reyyes; however, he does nothing to intervene because he is afraid that action will make him less African. He freely admits that he loves Hosna but does nothing to save her. The idea of taking her as a second wife (which he could do with his village's approval) repulses him. He recoils from a notion that seems unnatural to him. He is as complicit in Hosna's death as are the villagers, and the self-knowledge of his failure to act causes him despair and he jumps in the Nile, figuratively drowning in guilt.

Early in the narrative Effendi says, "The fact that they came to our land, I know not why, does that mean that we should poison our present and our future? Sooner or later they will leave our country, just as many people throughout history left many countries" (Salih 49). Floundering in the water, he recognizes he must let go of blame and bitterness and work toward a future. He admits, "All my life I had not chosen, had not decided. Now I am making a decision. I choose life. I shall live because there are a few people I want to stay with for the longest possible time and because I have duties to discharge (Salih 168). In order to discharge his duties, Effendi must first be willing to let go of the old

ways and ACT and he is willing, albeit a little slow.

Mustafa had recognized this potential in Effendi and as a result had named Effendi as guardian to his two sons. Ever aware of his own faults, Mustafa understood that he couldn't be good for his sons because he still clinging to what is lost and forever beyond his grasp. In order to live, Africa and her sons must move forward. It will be up to the Effendis, if only they can overcome their paralysis and act. Thus Effendi's last cry of "Help! Help!" (Salih 169) is very uplifting and filled with the possibility of hope that he may yet survive.

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Poems

Samaa Gamei, American University of Cairo

Said's *Orientalism*

I read Said the other day

I read and learned

The words we are fed and those we have been told

Are not really ours and our voices are silenced more

In, Britain, France, America, Germany and more

In, Oxford, Harvard, Princeton, Columbia, and many more

They taught and made the West, the East, the Western, the Oriental

Said, the name I never knew

The words I could never have read, had I been back home

The words that changed the meanings of every word

That taught me the power of the pen and sword

Truths are illusions which one has forgotten this is what they are

Nietzsche knew that too.

Who we are and who they are remains a question

How come we are so similar and yet we see nothing more?

Said:

He wrote about me; he spoke to me

He nursed my wounds that I never knew

Now I cry

For the man that could have changed the word had died

And the world seems more so cruel

Every day the fear bears on the soul

For what will tomorrow bring

More of Orientalism hold or a brand new world?

The Silent Block

For days, I have lingered on the borders of my world

I held my pen and papers for days

For I had lost the power, the will to make the word

For weeks, I have lingered in the attic of thought

Muted in the silence

I held my breath and hoped my soul would break--free

I screamed in my head

As my words ate at my soul

I could not breathe my words—to no avail

I squeezed my throat so my cries would fill my emptied head

I hear the voices haunting the run-down streets

Calling me in tongues I cannot read

I reach out for my pen to speak out

To talk back

I resist a lingering thought that banishes my tongue

I try to speak—I hold my pen and scribble

In code, I cannot read

I sit back and think of the banished thoughts

How come they still insist

to squeeze my words and still resist?

The Blue Stone, Heidegger, and "I": The Issue of Identity in Paul Auster's *The Book of Illusions*

Charles Cullum, Kutztown University of Pennsylvania

While there is significant agreement in Paul Auster criticism that the issue of identity is central to his fiction, discussions about the fundamental nature of that identity vary widely. For example, Warren Oberman states that Auster's fiction depicts "an existentialist confrontation with…freedom" that "must be historicized within the culture of late capitalism" (192). Steven Alford asserts that Auster moves beyond Sartre by positing the self as a linguistic construct that exists amid "other" linguistic constructs in "a postmodern fiction of difference" (29). Timothy Bewes argues that Auster's fiction is not simply language play but is the site, rather, of an ethical and aesthetic "event" of literary representation (13). Jeffrey Nealon applies Heidegger's concepts of "ready-to-hand" and "present-to-hand" to Auster's use of language in order to suggest "the potential multiplicity of the sign's references" and subjective possibility (103). In this essay, I argue that a more expansive use of Heidegger's thought from *Being and Time* can elucidate the issue of identity in Auster's 2002 novel, *The Book of Illusions*.

Heidegger defines "the entity which each of us is himself and which includes inquiring as one of the possibilities of its Being…by the term 'Dasein,'" (27) or "Being-there" (27, ftn. 1), "there" referring to Being-in-the-world. One of the "existentials," or ways that Dasein is aware of itself as existing, is state-of-mind, which Heidegger defines as "our mood, our Being-attuned" to the world and to our past in it (172). At the beginning of *The Book of Illusions*, the narrator, David Zimmer, a comparative literature professor at a small college in Vermont, is stuck in the state-of-mind of overwhelming grief caused by the death of his wife and two young sons in an airplane crash. The effect of this grief on his sense of self, on his identity, is crippling. In various ways, he seeks to deny his own selfhood. One means of his doing so is by incapacitating himself through drinking to excess every night. Another approach to evading selfhood is by his attempting to merge it with those of his deceased family members. He sits in his sons' rooms playing with their toys, sleeps in one son's bed, stands in his wife's closet, and even tries on her clothes and makeup in order to "evoke her presence" (8). At one point, Zimmer acknowledges this loss of selfhood specifically: "I was slowly getting used to being without Helen and the boys, but that didn't mean I had made any progress. I didn't know who I was, and I didn't know what I wanted,

and until I found a way to live with other people again, I would continue to be something only half human" (56).

In addition to this limitation of identity caused by his state-of-mind, Zimmer has further denied his selfhood by allowing himself to dwell disproportionately in another existential, that of fallenness, which Heidegger defines as "an absorption of being-with-one-another," or "being lost in the publicness of the 'they'" (220). In and of itself, fallenness into the world is not a negative quality; it is simply one mode of being. But to the degree that it becomes, in Heidegger's term, a "temptation" (221) to Dasein to turn away from its own selfhood, fallenness is a potential problem for personal identity. Zimmer allows himself to give in to the temptation toward fallenness. Heidegger lists three characteristics of fallenness: idle talk, ambiguity, and curiosity. Zimmer exhibits all three. He indulges in a kind of one-sided idle talk through watching television constantly; he indulges in ambiguity by not bothering to make choices or decisions; and when he decides to pursue a study of the corpus of work of silent film comedian, Hector Mann, whom he sees one night in a television documentary, Zimmer does so more out of curiosity, of wanting to take up time in an arbitrary way, than out of genuine interest.

The Hector Mann film project does, however, begin Zimmer's struggle from, in Heidegger's terms, inauthentic to authentic being. The Self, Heidegger says, is "for the most part inauthentic, the they-self" (225). This inauthenticity is, again, like fallenness, not a categorically negative quality, but rather just a part of Being-in-the-world. Heidegger contrasts the inauthentic Self to the "*authentic Self* – that is, the Self which has been taken hold of in its own way" (167). The concept of the authentic in its German expression, "eigentlich," is etymologically tied to the concept of "eigen," or "own," in the sense of Dasein's ability to be "something of its own" (68, ftn. 3). The book project and the travel required to do research on Hector Mann's extant films provide Zimmer with a limited but sufficient purpose that aids in maintaining at least a limited sense of self. As he puts it, "pressure is what I need. If I loosened my grip now, I'd fall apart. I'd fly off in a hundred different directions, and I'd never be able to put myself together again" (*Book of Illusions* 25).

Hector Mann proves to be a fascinating "subject," both in the sense of a topic to study and as an example of the problem of human identity. By virtue of his surname, he is an obvious every-person character. Later, after he abandons his film career and goes on the run because of his involvement in the accidental death of a girlfriend, he adopts arbitrarily the name–Herman Loesser--on an identity tag

in a cap he finds in a lavatory. The new first name of Herman, or Herr Mann, makes him even more of an every-person. The surname of Loesser can be pronounced either as "Loser" or "Lesser"; Hector, in his sense of guilt, believes "that he had found the name he deserved" (144).

As a silent film comedic actor, Hector distinguishes himself from the pack, as Zimmer discovers in his study of Hector's films:

> He was too tall to play an out-and-out clown, too handsome to act the part of an innocent bungler. . . . He is not. . . a loveable figure,. . . not someone you necessarily feel sorry for. If he manages to win the viewer's sympathy, it is because he never knows when to quit. . . . Hector always has a plan in mind, a purpose for what he does . . . . (32-33)

In other words, in his career, Hector manages to create a comedic character of his own, distinct from other comedic "types." This character displays a sense of "purpose," or, in phenomenological terms, of resoluteness. According to Heidegger, "in resoluteness the issue for Dasein is its ownmost potentiality-for-Being, which can project itself …upon…possibilities"(346).

The issue of possibility is a key one in phenomenology and in my discussion of *The Book of Illusions*. As Michael Gelven points out in *A Commentary on Heidegger's* Being and Time,

> since the significance of Being lies in one's recognition of the possibility of not-Being…, to understand the question of Being is to be aware of possibilities….The fact that one has possibilities other than the mode of the actual brings up the determinant of why, of all the possible ways of Being, one is in just this particular, actual mode. One cannot account for such determination except through one's own mode of Being: either I am *not* aware of the significance of Being, in which case I am determined in the actual by the persuasion of the "they" (inauthentic); or I myself resolutely determine my own being. . . . (70)

As a silent film comedian, Hector Mann is aware of his possibilities and chooses them for himself, that is, he is living authentically. But when he flees Hollywood, he stops choosing his own possibilities and attempts to lose himself in the they-self, that is to live inauthentically, and assures that his legacy will be to be no more than "a minor figure" (*Book of Illusions* 19) in the history of silent films. The story of Hector Mann, however, does not stop with the end of his Hollywood career. It continues and serves first

as a cautionary tale and then later, when Zimmer meets the still living Hector, as a monitory image for David Zimmer about the importance of--and as a pathway back to—his own authentic identity.

Personal identity is, from even before the first page, the focus of *The Book of Illusions*. The novel's epigraph is a quotation from the French romantic writer François-René de Chateaubriand: "Man has not one and the same life. He has many lives, placed end to end, and that is the cause of his misery." This sense of the multiplicity, the complexity, the problematizing of individual identity permeates the novel and is a central reason to characterize it as postmodern. That is, the novel presents a fictive world that deprivileges wholeness and traditional concepts of order, even at the most basic levels, in the same sense that Alan Wilde describes postmodern fiction: "Chary of comprehensive solutions, doubtful of the self's integrity, [postmodernism] confronts a world more chaotic …than any imagined by its predecessors and…opens itself to the randomness and contingency of unmediated experience" (129).

This randomness and contingency show themselves throughout the novel in odd coincidences and portentous but finally empty significations. For examples, Zimmer receives a letter from a friend who works for a publisher, asking him to translate Chateaubriand's *Memoirs d'outre-tombe*, which he decides to translate not as *Memoirs from Beyond the Grave*, but rather as *Memoirs of a Dead Man*, dated the same day that Zimmer was putting bookshelves in his house and happened to pick up and glance through that same autobiography. Hector's wife, Frieda, is starting to write a letter back to Zimmer to confirm an invitation for Zimmer to visit just as Hector is falling down the stairs at his house, breaking his leg and delaying Frieda finishing the letter and so Zimmer's visit to a time when Hector was too near death for Zimmer to spend more than a few minutes with him. At Hector's house, Frieda finishes a comment to Zimmer with the phrase, "Who would have expected *that*?" (*Book of Illusions* 231), when the telephone rings, and Zimmer notes, "It was a bizarre interruption, and because it came so quickly after Frieda said the word *that*, there seemed to be a connection between the two events, as if the telephone had sounded in direct response to the word" (231).

Similarly, in such a world of contingency, reality itself is questioned and questionable. The novel has numerous instances of, as the title would indicate, a sense of illusion overtaking a sense of reality. For example, when Hector sees the younger sister of his dead girlfriend, Brigid, his immediate reaction is that "Brigid was no longer dead," and then as he moves closer to the sister, "the uncanny thing…was

that even after she raised her head and looked into his eyes, the illusion persisted" (150). However, there is a positive aspect to this undercutting of reality and its corresponding sense of illusion, specifically, that the human imagination can then come into play in creating the world. For instance, Zimmer responds to the ugliness of the house he moves to after his family is killed and to his own state-of-mind living within it and with his grief with the comment that the house "was a hospital for the living dead, a way station for the mentally afflicted, and to inhabit those blank, depersonalized interiors was to understand that the world was an illusion that had to be reinvented every day" (57). In Zimmer's recognition of the positive potential of "reinventing" the world, he reveals a continuing sense of the possibility incumbent in his bleak situation, if not yet the ability to engage that possibility.

Hector, in his own retreat from authentic existence, has a similar sense of the instability of reality as he acknowledges that he has inadvertently become the confidant of his dead girlfriend's sister and thinks "reality was a groundless world of figments and hallucinations, a place where everything you imagined came true" (163) and even more so when he learns that this sister is in love with him and he writes in his journal, "*I have missed everything…. The earth is the sky, the sun is the moon, the rivers are mountains. I have been looking at the wrong world*" (172). Hector's observation, too, recognizes, almost in spite of itself, a different, positive sense of illusion: not simply that the objective world is not as solid and fixed as traditional metaphysics—what Heidegger terms "ancient ontology" and "medieval ontology" (22)—posits, but, even more importantly, that anything can happen. In other words, the sense of illusion in *The Book of Illusions* is used to make a distinction between the objective, rationalistic, Cartesian world and the phenomenological, Heideggerian world of human imagination and possibility. A hard, fixed identity—in the sense of a kind of entity among other entities—is an illusion. As the epigraph from Chateaubriand states, human beings do, indeed, have "many lives" and that lack of stasis, that multiplicity, can be perceived and lived as a burden. But it can also be perceived and lived as a kind of freedom and openness to possibility. The self, in Heidegger's terms, as Michael Gelven highlights, is not "an object, but a process…the process of our life and existence" (29).

Heidegger emphasizes that there is an authentic and an inauthentic approach to every mode of existence. So, too, this sense of illusion and the sense of possibility that adheres to it can be lived authentically or inauthentically. The most central case of illusion in the novel comes in the form of the Blue Stone. The ranch that Hector and his wife, Frieda, retreat to in New Mexico is named the Blue

Stone Ranch. After Hector and Frieda are dead, Zimmer reads in Hector's journal the origin of that name. One evening shortly before Freida and Hector are to be married, Hector is walking Frieda's dog in Sandusky, Ohio in a "vaporous" rain. He passes under streetlights "and *suddenly everything began to shimmer, to gleam in the murk*" (*Book of Illusions* 286). Hector sees "*a glow on the sidewalk*" that he takes for "*a jewel of some kind*" (286). He stoops to pick it up, but "*it was soft, and it broke apart when [he] touched it, disintegrating into a wet, slithery ooze. The thing [Hector] had taken for a stone was a gob of human spit*" (286). After Zimmer reads this account, he comments, "Now I understood why they had chosen to call their place the Blue Stone Ranch. Hector had already seen that stone, and he knew that it didn't exist, that the life that they were about to build for themselves was founded on an illusion" (287). That illusion is a function of the "old ontology," of the sense of self as an entity that exists prior to and separate from the world of which it is a part. In terms of that Cartesian self, Hector has surrendered himself to a limited, permanently defined identity, or entity, as an accessory to murder, albeit accidental homicide, and to the resultant sense of guilt. As he tells his would-be biographer, Alma, "You don't drive an innocent girl insane…, and you don't bury her dead body eight feet under the ground and expect to go on with your life as before. A man who had done what he had done deserved to be punished" (145-46).

In the process of attempting to escape Hollywood but to continuously punish himself, Hector actually changes identities often, but in a self-abnegating and inauthentic way. For example, at one point, he seeks to hide from the world literally by working as a night watchman, and he notes in his journal, "*I talk only to the dead now….Like them, I live without a future*" (147-48). But the low point in this self-abnegation occurs when, after attempting suicide but not being able to follow through, he becomes a performer in a live sex act with a female prostitute. In order not to risk being recognized by anyone who might have seen his silent films, but also in what must be seen as a symbol of his crisis of identity, Hector wears a face mask. As a sex performer, Hector feels the shame of his actions and is satisfied that, while he did not succeed at suicide, this "squalorous" activity will cause him to, "die[] more slowly" (181). As a sex performer, Hector experiences a kind of ultimate Cartesian duality: "[h]is world had split in two. . . and his mind and body were no longer talking to each other. . . . His body had taken control of him. . . . he was afraid to look at himself,. . . . He was acting like a man who had covered up all the mirrors in his house" (184).

When his sex partner finally recognizes him as a former film actor, Hector leaves the act. He heroically stops a bank robber, is shot and nearly dies, and meets and marries Frieda. This near-death experience, as in Victorian novels, has the potential to be a kind of resurrection to a new life and renewed identity, but again Hector chooses to avoid the issue of his identity–he takes Frieda's surname—and they move to New Mexico to continue to hide from, rather than to engage, the world. Thus, naming their property The Blue Stone Ranch is appropriate to this inauthentic sense of illusion.

After the accidental death of their young son, Frieda tries to help Hector cope with his grief by urging him to make films again. This decision represents another opportunity for Hector to choose a life for himself out of a range of renewed possibility and so become more authentic. He continues, however, to be burdened by the guilt of the death of his girlfriend and by the consequent promise that he made to himself to abandon filmmaking, the "one thing in the world that made sense to him" (207). And so he decides that these new films "would never be shown to audiences, [he would] make movies for the sheer pleasure of making movies" (207). Hector decrees that, moreover, within twenty-four hours of his death, all of these new films must be destroyed. Hector's purpose, or resoluteness, in making these new films, then, is highly problematic. Zimmer conjectures that Hector "could comfort himself with the thought that there was a purpose to what he was doing. He didn't make films in order to destroy them—but in spite of it" (279); however, without genuine purpose, the act of making these films becomes hollow and its authenticity questionable. Suggesting that Hector himself sees this problem at the very end of his life, after reading Zimmer's critical study of his silent films, Hector invites Zimmer to come to the ranch to see the new films, an action certain to promote the fact of the new films' existence and possibly even to result in their eventual release to the world. As Zimmer puts it, "After years of steadfast courage, Hector had buckled in to doubts and indecision, had wound up questioning everything he had done with his life in New Mexico" (319). This questioning is the mark of recognition—culminating on his deathbed, the quintessential place for epiphany--of the horizon of possibility and authenticity that has stretched before Hector since he left Hollywood but from which he has continuously turned away.

In addition to the example of Hector, another aspect of the story is also important to Zimmer's struggle toward authenticity. The daughter of a cameraman and an actress who worked on these later films at the Blue Stone Ranch, Alma Grund, arrives unexpectedly at Zimmer's Vermont home and

persuades him to come immediately to New Mexico to meet Hector and see his films before he dies. In the next three chaotic days that surround Hector's death and the destruction of his films by Frieda, Alma, too, dies. However, in that short time, Zimmer falls in love with Alma and begins to see a future. He tells her, "You'll come to Vermont…. we'll go back to work, and when our work is finished, we'll leave Vermont and go somewhere else…. I'm willing to entertain all possibilities. Nothing is out of the question" (290). Zimmer returns alone to Vermont to prepare for Alma after she completes details in New Mexico, with, through his experience with Hector and Alma, a renewed sense of authentic selfhood. As he disembarks from the airplane, he says, "I felt stronger than I had at any time in the past three years. Almost whole…almost ready to become real again" (296). Even after Alma's death a few days later, Zimmer is able, unlike what happened to him after his wife and sons' deaths, to maintain his sense of identity: "I had been planning to fall apart, to slip into my old routine of hapless sorrow and alcoholic ruin, but…something in me resisted the urge to destroy myself" (313-14). That "something" is the phenomenological awareness of the horizon of future possibility.

Finally, then, Heidegger's concepts of *Dasein*, or Being-in-the-world, and of the "authentic" and "inauthentic" modes of *Dasein*, can be used to understand how David Zimmer can be seen as a postmodern and phenomenological protagonist who discovers, in the midst of great personal tragedy, that the world still holds possibility and a kind of self-identity. Against the background of the life story of a comic silent film actor, the novel shows that an isolated "I"-self, or Cartesian "ego"—like the Blue Stone—is an illusion. However, David Zimmer learns through the cautionary tale of Hector Mann that there is identity and meaning of a type--that is, the identity of the process of living--in the form of the authentic mode of *Dasein*.

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A Question of Response: The Extent of Influence of Cary's *Mister* Johnson and Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* on *Things Fall Apart*

David W. Johnson, Indiana University of Pennsylvania

In his early (1979) comprehensive survey *The Growth of the African Novel*, scholar and critic Eustace Palmer writes, "Broadly speaking, the African novel is a response to and record of the traumatic consequences of the impact of Western capitalist colonialism on the traditional values and institutions of the African peoples" (63). This statement certainly applies to the narrative of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*; yet there is a more specific response that is worth reconsidering on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the novel's publication in 1958. Palmer and others refer to *Things Fall Apart* as a response not only to the broad force of Western capitalist colonialism, but also to specific white European novelists' portrayals of the people and culture of Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. Often enough to have become an assumption, *Things Fall Apart* has been considered a response to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. But is this, in fact, the case? Interviews with Achebe and one of his essays help to determine the literary object of the response.

In a 1962 interview after the success of *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe stated in explicit terms that the author and portrayal that most affected his approach to his first novel were Joyce Cary and his portrayal of a young Nigerian civil servant in *Mister Johnson*.

> . . . I was quite certain that I was going to try my hand at writing, and one of the things that set me thinking was Joyce Cary's novel set in Nigeria, *Mr. Johnson* [sic], which was praised so much, and it was clear to me that this was a most superficial picture of—not only of the country, but even of the Nigerian character, and so I thought if this was famous, then perhaps someone ought to try and look at this from the inside.
> (Lindfors 3-4)

His reference to Conrad was more general. When asked in the 1962 interview which writers he most admired, he answered, "I don't really think that there's any one I can say I admire all that much. I used to like Hemingway; and I used to like Conrad. I used to like Conrad particularly . . ." (6). As we will come to understand through later interviews and essays, there was deeper feeling beneath Achebe's brief

comment that he "used to like" Joseph Conrad, yet the point in time when Achebe changed his opinion remains a matter of conjecture.

One method of verifying the object of response is to examine the resemblances between *Things Fall Apart* and *Mister Johnson*, including the binary relationship of the central characters, who are clear opposites (thus suggesting the possibility that the second is a response to the first), as well as narrative elements that the novels seem to share. In the opening paragraphs of *Mister Johnson*, the author describes the effusive attention that Johnson pays to the ferryman's daughter as she ferries him across the Fada River: "Johnson sat admiring her with a grin of pleasure and called out compliments, 'What a pretty girl you are'" (1). The girl, Bamu, does not respond to Johnson's efforts to gain her attention. She recognizes him as an outsider and treats him as one: "Strangers are still rare in the Fada bush and they are received with doubt." Ostensibly through the eyes of Bamu, the novelist enumerates the features of Johnson's strangeness.

> Johnson is not only a stranger by accent, but by color. He is as black as a stove, almost a pure Negro, with a short nose and full, soft lips. He is young, perhaps seventeen, and seems half-grown. His neck, legs and arms are much too long and thin for his small body, as narrow as a skinned rabbit's. He is loose jointed like a boy, and sits with his knees up to his nose, grinning at Bamu over the stretched white cotton of his trousers. He smiles with the delighted expression of a child looking at a birthday table and says, "Oh, you are too pretty—a beautiful girl." (1)

Cary's portrayal of Johnson as a caricature of an ambitious, yet inept young African man is reinforced by the image of Johnson on the dust jacket of the stated first American edition of *Mister Johnson*. Though the same image may not have appeared on the cover of the original British publication, it is worth describing in some detail. Tall and skinny, grinning broadly, wearing a pith helmet and white suit, holding an umbrella at his side that has a broken spoke, the figure of Johnson is similar to a character in a cartoon. He stands in mid-stride in the foreground of a scene behind him that is similarly cartoonish: straw-roofed huts, a gnarled Baobab tree indigenous to Africa, and a bare-breasted young African woman in an ankle-length wrapped skirt balancing an urn on top of her head.

Perhaps in deliberate contrast to the casual tone of the opening paragraphs describing Mister Johnson are the dignified opening paragraphs of *Things Fall Apart* that introduce Okonkwo. In the novel's famous first paragraph, Achebe provides this introduction to his central character:

> Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond. His fame rested on solid personal achievements. As a young man of eighteen he had brought honor to his village by throwing Amalinze the Cat. Amalinze was the great wrestler who for seven years was unbeaten, from Umuofia to Mbaino. He was called the Cat because his back would never touch the earth. It was this man that Okonkwo threw in a fight which the old men agreed was one of the fiercest since the founder of their town engaged a spirit of the wild for seven days and seven nights. (3)

It would appear deliberate when Achebe writes that Okonkwo threw the Cat as "a young man of eighteen" after Cary wrote of Johnson "he is young, perhaps seventeen." In this way, the two central characters are identified as chronological counterparts. Though Achebe's physical description of Okonkwo is reported "twenty years or more" after his fight with the Cat, we can assume that he was impressive as a young man if he was to mature into this adult man:

> He was tall and huge, and his bushy eyebrows and wide nose gave him a very severe look. He breathed heavily, and it was said that, when he slept, his wives and children in their houses could hear him breathe. When he walked, his heels hardly touched the ground and he seemed to walk on springs, as if he was going to pounce on somebody. And he did pounce on people quite often. He had a slight stammer and whenever he was angry and could not get the words out quickly enough, he would use his fists. He had no patience with unsuccessful men. (4)

Achebe describes Okonkwo in terms that are opposite to Cary's description of Johnson. For example, Okonkwo walks on the balls of his feet as if he is going to pounce; Johnson walks "at a pace between a trot and a lope. In his loose-jointed action, it resembles a dance. He jumps over roots and holes like a ballet dancer, as if he enjoyed the exercise" (4).

The characters differ in other ways as well. Where Johnson is glib, Okonkwo speaks with a stammer. Where Johnson is mostly talk, Okonkwo is a man of action. Where Johnson brags about his importance in the government despite being a lowly clerk, Okonkwo has earned his status as a leader in

the village through warfare and economic success. In terms of commonality, both men meet a tragic end as a consequence of having committed a violent act; but Johnson's misdeed is a criminal murder in the process of committing theft while Okonkwo's crime is in defense of the rights of the village, even if committed on impulse. Based on central characters whose fates unfold within an approximate similarity of plot structure—a series of circumstances and actions (and interactions between black men and white men) that lead to a tragic end—I conclude that the opening of *Things Fall Apart* is a direct response to *Mister Johnson*, as are other aspects of the novel, for example, the villagers' celebration of the wrestler Okafo in song (50-51) in opposition to Johnson's self-celebration of his imagined prowess in song (147-48).

In a second 1962 interview, Achebe's views on his influences are similar to those expressed in the first. He acknowledges his "debt" to Cary in more ambivalent terms than in the first interview, though once again citing *Mister Johnson* as the novel that most motivated him to write the two novels that he had published at that time. The second novel was *No Longer at Ease*, which had been drafted as part of the same project from which emerged *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*.

> I had been impressed by the works of Joyce Cary and especially by one of his books, *Mister Johnson*, in which he shows Nigerian characters. He is an excellent English writer who has lived here, for he resided in Northern Nigeria during his youth, but cannot see the Hausa like a proper Nigerian and, in fact, what results is more of a caricature than a true description. Also, reading Cary impelled me to show what was false in him and brought forth a desire to write that I've had for a long time. (Lindfors 8)

Achebe does not mention Joseph Conrad in the second interview, though it should be noted that an interview subject's answers depend on the information solicited by the interviewer's questions; nor is there mention of Conrad in a third interview conducted in 1963. In the third, Achebe continues to express his objections to *Mister Johnson*. One of the two interviewers asks Achebe if, when he attended University College, Ibadan, he found any "precursors in the West African novel – English people who had written novels about your society which you could use as a model " (Lindfors 13). The author's response is direct and pointed:

> There wasn't very much when I was at college. Joyce Cary had written some books. If I may say so, perhaps he helped to inspire me, but not in the usual way. I was very angry

with his book *Mister Johnson*, which was set in Nigeria. I happened to read this, I think, in my second year, and I said to myself, this is absurd. If somebody without any inside knowledge of the people he is trying to describe can get away with it, perhaps I ought to try my hand at it. (13)

By the time of a fourth interview in 1967, Achebe had given up a full-time position as director of external broadcasting for the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation and was able to support himself from the income of his writing. *Things Fall Apart* had become a school text and sold 120,000 copies (Lindfors 21). He had published the third volume of the trilogy stemming for his original project, *Arrow of God*, and the hardcover edition of his fourth novel, *A Man of the People*, had sold out. Perhaps success had softened his criticism of Joyce Cary, or so it appeared in the interview:

> *Do you know of any European writers in African really able to portray African characters, really getting under the skin of their characters?*

> Well, I can only talk about Nigeria. The most competent writer to try was Joyce Cary – a fine writer, but he didn't succeed. His famous novel *Mister Johnson* is highly praised, especially by Europeans, but it seems to be to portray not a character but a caricature. I mean Johnson does not begin to live for me. (Lindfors 25)

Once again there was no mention of Conrad.

Given Achebe's frequent and consistent references to *Mister Johnson* in the interviews, one might ask what the evidence is that has led some scholars and critics to assume that the desire to respond to *Heart of Darkness* played a significant role in Achebe's writing *Things Fall Apart*. I was able to bring the question to Eustace Palmer by e-mail, asking his informed opinion on whether *Heart of Darkness* had influenced Achebe, and to what extent the desire to respond to *Mister Johnson* might have influenced him. Palmer answered that on the previous day in his Introduction to African Studies class, he had told his students that Achebe had written the novel "in response to the negative views of Africa put across by some Western people, in particular by Conrad in *Heart of Darkness* and Cary in *Mister Johnson*."

Palmer made a distinction between the immediacy of the two influences on the Achebe work, yet felt that both were influential:

> While the immediate stimulus for writing the novel might have been *Mister Johnson*, I am quite sure that he was also responding to Conrad's portrayal of Africa in *Heart of Darkness*, which I am sure he had read while at the University of Ibadan [sic]. In fact, as you are probably aware, he has a famous article . . . in which, among other things, he roundly condemns Conrad for racism, based on his portrayal of the African situation in *Heart of Darkness*. I also heard him deliver a lecture in which his main preoccupation was Conrad's view of Africa in *Heart of Darkness*.

Despite Palmer's certainty, it is difficult—if not impossible—to confirm that Achebe read *Heart of Darkness* while at University College, Ibadan, (1948 to 1953) or in secondary school. For one thing, as a result of Achebe's secondary school final examination, his guardian decided that he should study medicine, not literature. Achebe had scored higher in physics/chemistry, biology, geography, Bible knowledge, and mathematics (in which he received A's) than he did in English language and English literature (C's). Achebe's biographer, Ezenwa-Ohaeto, makes reference to one of the instructors in the Department of English teaching *Mister Johnson* to Achebe and other students (44), yet there is no similar reference to *Heart of Darkness*.

In a 1998 lecture at Harvard, Achebe confirmed that he was required to read *Mister Johnson* at university: ". . . we find a class of Nigerian university students in 1952 having to study that book for their Bachelor of Arts degree of London University" (Achebe, *Home* 31). The author's reference to his degree being "of London University" is because University College, Ibadan was modeled on—and supervised by—the British university. (21) Once again, there is no parallel reference to having been required to read *Heart of Darkness*.

The biographer, however, suggests that in a general way, Achebe and his fellow students were gaining insight of the type that Achebe would later demonstrate in his critique of Conrad's short novel:

> It was becoming clear to [the students] that there were different possibilities in the representation of characters that depended on the perspective of the writer. Achebe was one of the students who realized that there could be misjudgement and even straightforward discrimination and distortion. The European authors they read presented their works in such a way, according to Achebe, that the reader's sympathies were controlled: "We should have immediately identified with the Africans but this was

impossible because the dice was loaded against them, the way the story was told, the way the author took sides. Achebe began to detect the distinct positions taken in the stories he had read and this realization began to erase his secondary school innocence, when he had read stories as mere adventures. (44)

Though undated in the biography, this paragraph is based on an interview with Achebe conducted in 1983. The account of the students' changing perspective on their reading leaves room for Achebe's having read *Heart of Darkness* in either secondary school or university, but does not confirm it.

In the interview, Achebe uses an anecdote to illustrate the transition that was occurring in his and fellow students' thinking:

We were able to say: I don't think this is fair or right! I remember one of the brightest students in my class, Olumide, saying something to the effect that the only moment he enjoyed Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson* was the moment when Johnson was shot. This horrified our English teacher. But you can see that we were beginning to struggle out of the position into which we had been placed. And if one exaggerated, that should be understood. (Lindfors 113)

He was to recount this anecdote in a later essay.

The first reference in the biography to Achebe's possible objection to the work of Conrad appears in the chapter covering 1963-1966. The context is critic Gerald Moore's favorable review in 1964 of *Arrow of God*: "Moore's reaction is particularly interesting when considered of the displeasure Achebe had felt on encountering the fictional African characters of Joyce Cary and Joseph Conrad" (100). Unfortunately, the biographer provides no additional information on the origins of Achebe's displeasure with Conrad, and only the anecdote quoted above in regard to Cary (44).

The first direct reference to *Heart of Darkness* in the published interviews is found in an interview Achebe gave in April 1980 at the conference of the African Literature Association in Florida. One should note that the reference appears in the question rather than in the answer. The question and its rambling prefatory remarks are as follows:

Foreign commentators like David Carroll and Lloyd Brown appear to have got the message in your novels and this is why they have been able to write very brilliant essays juxtaposing your balanced view of Africa and the prejudiced view of Conrad's Africa, "the

heart of darkness." If you were to write a novel today, what would its message be?

(Lindfors 72-73)

Given the opening provided by the remarks preceding the interviewer's actual question, Achebe does not respond with criticism of Conrad or *Heart of Darkness* in his answer, even though he deflects the question about the hypothetical novel and responds instead to the introduction to the question. The information contained in the preface to the interviewer's question, which names commentators with whose writings Achebe appears to be familiar in his answer, suggests that Achebe might have begun to pay more attention to *Heart of Darkness* as the result of critical commentary on his growing body of work, rather than before or during the writing of his first novel, *Things Fall Apart*.

That the critics juxtaposed Achebe's "balanced view of Africa" with "the prejudiced view of Conrad's Africa" may have suggested to Achebe a critical platform from which he could engage the work of one of the most widely read authors in English literature, rather than continue to object to a lesser-known novel by the less famous writer Joyce Cary. Achebe might have concluded that engagement with Conrad would enable him to escalate his objections beyond Cary's portrayal (or caricature) of Nigeria and Nigerians to the larger topic of racism.

The lecture that became Achebe's essay "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*" took place in February 1975 at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, five years before the interviewer's leading question in 1980. The timing makes it especially interesting that Achebe chose not to follow the interviewer's lead with a discussion of – or even a reference to – a perspective on *Heart of Darkness* that he already had voiced. Perhaps the mixed response that greeted his lecture, or the responsibility of justifying charges of racism against a canonical author, served to mute his public criticism of Conrad outside of the environment of a university lecture and subsequent essay. Another possible explanation for the omission of Conrad in Achebe's answer might be that he felt that he already had expressed his views on the subject at the conference.

When I asked Eustace Palmer where and when he might have heard Achebe's lecture on *Heart of Darkness*, he responded, "I think Achebe made the remarks at a meeting of the African Literature Association, but I honestly cannot remember which one now. However, he was making about the same points he made in the race article . . . ." This may have been the same 1980 conference at which Achebe was interviewed. One can only imagine the impact of Achebe's 1975 lecture on the academic audience

who heard it. Achebe recalled that an older member of the English faculty approached him at the reception following the lecture, admonishing "How dare you!" and walked away. Another listener accused Achebe of having no sense of humor (Ezenwa-Ohaeto 190).

In the lecture and essay, Achebe framed his argument toward Conrad as arising from "the desire—one might say the need – in Western psychology to set Africa up as a foil to Europe, as a place of negations at once remote and vaguely familiar, in comparison with which Europe's own spiritual state of grace will be manifest" (Achebe, *Hopes and Impediments*, 2-3). He continues:

> This need is not new; which should relieve us all of considerable responsibility
> and perhaps make us even willing to look at this phenomenon dispassionately. I
> have neither the wish nor competence to embark on this exercise with the tools of
> the social and biological sciences, but do so more simply in the manner of a
> novelist responding to one famous book of European fiction: Joseph Conrad's
> *Heart of Darkness*, which better than any other work that I know displays that
> Western desire and need which I have just referred to. (3)

Achebe's argument of Africa as binary to Europe bears a strong parallel to the critique Edward Said would express in *Orientalism*, which would be published three years later. In 1975, Achebe said that "*Heart of Darkness* projects the image of Africa as 'the other world,' the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilization, a place where man's vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality" (3).

Having described Conrad toward the beginning of his University of Massachusetts lecture as "undoubtedly one of the great stylists of modern fiction and a good story-teller into the bargain" (3), Achebe criticized both the style and the depiction of Africans in the story. In regard to style, he cited two sentences from *Heart of Darkness* as examples of Conrad's method: "a steady, ponderous, fake-ritualistic repetition of two antithetical sentences, one about silence and the other about frenzy" (4). The first sentence was, "It was the stillness of an implacable force brooding over an inscrutable intention." The second was, "The steamer toiled along slowly on the edge of a black and incomprehensible frenzy." Achebe commented: "Of course, there is a change of adjective from time to time, so that instead of 'inscrutable,' for example, you might have unspeakable, even plain 'mysterious,' etc., etc." (4)

In regard to the depiction of Africans, Achebe quoted a long passage that he believed illustrated Conrad's attitude toward them. The portion of the passage that particularly offended Achebe was:

> . . . No, they were not inhuman. Well, you know, that was the worst of it – this suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would come slowly to one. They howled and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity – like yours – the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar. Ugly. Yes, it was ugly enough; but if you were man enough you would admit to yourself that there was in you just the faintest trace of a response to the terrible frankness of that noise, a suspicion of there being a meaning in it which you . . . could comprehend.

Citing additional passages—on an African who was the vessel's fireman , a boat "paddled by black fellows" who "had faces like grotesque masks," and contrasting descriptions of Kurtz's African mistress and a European woman—Achebe built carefully to the central point of his argument: "namely that Joseph Conrad was a thoroughgoing racist. That this simple truth is glossed over in criticisms of his work is due to the fact that white racism against Africa is such a normal way of thinking that its manifestations go completely unremarked" (11).

Given the power and politically charged nature of Achebe's argument against an esteemed literary figure, one can understand why there might be a perception that *Things Fall Apart* was Achebe's response to Conrad. Where Conrad depicted Africans as savages, Achebe wrote about them as people. In fact, in the version of his lecture published as an essay, he said he had hoped to end on just such a "positive note":

> . . . I would suggest from my privileged position in African and Western cultures some advantages the West might derive from Africa once it rid its mind of old prejudices and began to look at Africa not through a haze of distortions and cheap mystifications but quite simply as a continent of people—not angels, but not rudimentary souls either—just people, often highly gifted people and often strikingly successful in their enterprise with life and society. (18)

Upon further consideration of the West's view of Africa expressed in the media, school textbooks, and organized religion, he felt that he could not be that hopeful.

In opposition to the frenzied images conveyed by Conrad, Eustace Palmer describes in his book Achebe's portrayal of the orderly society in which Okonkwo and his fellow villagers lived:

> The elaborate religious order correlated with an equally elaborate social and administrative system ensuring decency, justice and stability. . . . The administrative, social and judicial arrangements were interrelated and linked with the religious system. Through the social structure and the various initiation rituals, the individual came to learn the norms of behaviour. (66)

Through Achebe's descriptions of the personalities, customs, rituals, and governance of the villagers in almost anthropological detail, one can understand how scholars could interpret the novel as a response to *Heart of Darkness* as well as *Mister Johnson*. However, there is no specific evidence of this in the record of conversations with Achebe or in his biography. To arrive at this conclusion, one must make the assumption that he read *Heart of Darkness* before writing *Things Fall Apart* and had it in mind as he wrote. Given the lack of evidence for this in interviews and biography, it would seem more likely that Achebe might have glossed over Conrad's short novel in school readings or that it might not have been assigned at all.

While the question of response is of historical and biographical interest, it does not diminish in any way the power of Achebe's response to *Heart of Darkness* in his lecture at the University of Massachusetts or in his teaching of African literature, often in the United States. When asked in a 1987 interview about his experiences teaching African literature, he responded:

> In America the problem is different. Here you are dealing with students who are coming out of a tradition where Africa is not really like anywhere else they know: Africa in literature, Africa in the newspapers, Africa in the sermons preached in the churches is really the Other Place. It is the Africa of *Heart of Darkness*: there are no real people in the Dark Continent, only *forces* operating; and people don't speak any language you can understand, they just grunt, too busy jumping up and down in frenzy. This is what is in the minds of these students as they come to African literature. So I find that the first thing is to familiarize them with Africa, make them think that this is a place of *people*; it's not the Other Place, the opposite of Europe or America. That is quite a task. (Lindfors 153)

Though the alternate silence and frenzy of Africans in *Heart of Darkness* create a powerful literary vision to which a powerful novel such as *Things Fall Apart* would be an equivalent response, Achebe's consistent interview comments and biography appear to indicate that his first novel was a response to *Mister Johnson* alone.

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Contextualizing Collaborative Learning: Social Justification and the Revision Process

Susan Lauffer O'Hara, Georgian Court University

In "Writing and Reading as Collaborative or Social Acts," Kenneth Bruffee draws on the writings of philosopher Richard Rorty who theorizes that knowledge is "the social justification of belief," and that justification is "a matter…of conversation, of social practice" (165). Rorty, moreover, asserts that what is special about language is that it lets us "enter a community whose members exchange justifications of assertions, and other actions, with one another" (167). Extending Rorty's theory, Bruffee argues for the need of "talking-through" the task of writing. "This audible or inward talking-through of our tasks as we do them with a community of knowledgeable peers is itself, in fact, what becomes eventually what we have been calling 'the writing *process'*"(168). With this knowledge in mind, we may well ask how we structure our classrooms to create this "community of knowledgeable peers." And perhaps more important, how do we hold students accountable for the work they do in a "community of knowledgeable peers," a collaborative learning environment and what benefits are accrued in the process?

The mere act of dividing a class into groups provides students with a social, cultural, and intellectual format, a forum for the exchange of ideas. Yet how does this social context affect the production of writing and, indeed, how do we facilitate the interaction of the group and the ultimate goal—the actual producing of a body of writing? It is not enough to provide students with a collaborative learning environment; we must provide them with catalysts to enhance this exchange of the "justifications of assertions," this "talking-through" the task of writing. My own research in this area has focused on numerous classroom experiments and more recently, anonymous student questionnaires. The results of this research has yielded a number of pedagogical methods which enhance the exchange of ideas, justify student assertions, and place writing within an interactive social, cultural, and intellectual context. One pedagogical strategy, and perhaps the most important one to the success of collaborative learning, is to require students to present their group work to the class which is then followed by a class discussion. This strategy results in a number of benefits: (1) students move from a small social context to a larger one and the social, cultural, and intellectual exchange of ideas is greatly increased; (2) student assertions are justified on a much larger scale; (3) mistakes made within a

small group become apparent and a resolution is sought; (4) students participate actively in the writing process; (5) ideas put before the class generate new ideas for students struggling with the assignment; (6) public speaking skills are gradually and regularly enhanced over the course of the semester; (7) students are held accountable for their group work. The "catalyst" of oral presentation of group work, then, generates an interactive social, cultural, and intellectual discourse that justifies student assertions and still provides them with the *confidence* to create a critical and analytical text of their own making.

In order for collaborative learning to take place, ground rules must be established at the outset of a course. The assignments for my writing courses are single author papers and all members of a group work on revision strategies for one group member per workshop (three students per group – three workshops per assignment, so each group member's paper is discussed by the collective group). The emphasis in these workshops is on revision and development of good ideas. In other words, the focus is on content, not grammar and sentence structure, etc. Students must be assured that helping another student will not jeopardize their own grade, what they perceive as their chance to obtain an "A." I tell my students I'll turn in all "As" if that is the caliber of work submitted. For my courses based on collaborative learning there is no bell-shaped curve reflecting a normal distribution of grades. Rather, students are given numerous opportunities to revise and significantly improve their grades through work within the group and through the public display of the revision process facilitated by group presentations to the class as a whole. The rules for presenting group work to the class are simple. The group must choose a group leader whose primary function is to make sure that no person monopolizes the presentation. Instead, each group member must take an active part in the presentation before the class, thereby distributing the work and the findings among group members.[1]

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[1] Since each group member is required to speak in front of the class as they present their findings, members work harder and work to make the group function effectively. Students are also required to hand in their group notes at the end of class (three group members – three sets of notes). This type of collaborative learning structure is especially helpful for women, minorities, and shy, reticent males since public speaking skills are developed slowly over the course of the semester and students learn to depend on their group members. Students are not alone in front of the class, they have the group to support them. Also, any group that falters in their presentation has the class as a whole to help them out. Because students have little experience with this type of collaborative learning environment, assignments for revision and presentation should be simple at first and then gradually increase in difficulty. Students will eventually become very candid and confess that their group has reached an impasse on how to help a member revise and ask the class as a whole to help them. If instructors emphasize patience, praise, and generosity while at the same time privileging constructive criticism, students will work to make the group effective. Lynee Lewis Gaillet, in "An Historical Perspective on Collaborative Learning," describes very similar findings in the work of George Jardine, a professor of logic and philosophy at the University of Glasgow from 1774-1826 who pioneered student-assisted learning. For an overview of the history of collaborative learning in this century, see Kenneth A. Bruffee, "Collaborative Learning and the 'Conversation of Mankind.'" For a discussion of how learning is enhanced for

Students must also be assured that their ideas will not be stolen by other students. In order to protect student ideas, then, a type of copyright is established early on. The first student to put forth an idea is protected from theft, so students are more willing to share ideas. But this "copyright" does not prohibit other students from taking an idea discussed in class and developing it in another way, using it as a jumping off point for numerous topics that take the writer in another direction. With a copyright ground rule, a whole group can actually develop topics for its members from one idea. What students learn from this is a rethinking of ideas, a "reseeing," an envisioning of extensions and opposites, a new way of seeing which aids the development of analytical and critical skills.

Social Context and the Exchange and Justification of Ideas

With these ground rules in mind, we may now explore what happens within the group which promotes a social, cultural, and intellectual exchange of ideas, what Rorty calls "justification of assertions." Through anonymous student questionnaires collected in my composition courses at Saint Joseph's University, we may obtain a window into what really happens within a collaborative learning environment. (There were two sections of first year students totaling 37 with 86% of the students responding to the survey.) What these anonymous questionnaires do is allow us to enter into a community where social practice is enacted, enacted certainly in a very structured way, but enacted nonetheless. One student found group work positive because "I learned other views and other people's opinions. Hearing what other people think made me re-evaluate my analysis and sometimes I found things that I missed out on." Another writes, "many times I wouldn't be able to interpret something then one of my partners would make a point, then I could pick-up from there." One short, but very pertinent answer reads: "Yes, it (group work) provided practice as well as an opportunity to see other people's views." Group work provided "practice" as well as "opportunity." I think this student has very succinctly, yet unknowingly, reinforced what Rorty has posited in his book *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature.* Rorty's "social practice," his theory on how beliefs are justified and how we accumulate knowledge through the reinforcement of ideas in a social context has been expressed quite poignantly

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women in a collaborative learning environment, see Mary Field Belenky, et al. *Women's Ways of Knowing: the Development of Self, Voice and Mind;* Hum Sue Yin, "Collaboration: Proceed with Caution"; and Johanna W. Atwood, "Collaborative Writing: The 'Other' Game in Town." I would also like to thank the students in my composition courses at Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia for the information they contributed via questionnaires.

by this first year student. The two comments also reaffirm Rorty's statement that members "exchange justifications of assertions" with one another. That one member of the group was unable to interpret a work until another member stated his or her opinion is important. The significance resides in the fact that after the respondent had heard a group member's assertion, he or she "could pick-up from there." The wording in this answer suggests that the author was able to add to the discussion and possibly extend the assertion of another group member. This "community of knowledgeable peers," (Bruffee's term) had evidently joined in what Rorty's pragmatism has termed the "intersubjective" realm, a common space of acquiescence among community or group members.[1] In group work, then, this "intersubjective agreement" allows and offers opportunities for group members to grow in confidence because they have the support and reinforcement of the group. One last student observation will bring this point home: "I like when the group is the entire class. Like when we wrote or read aloud our thesis or a sentence and the entire class would comment on it." Similarly, researchers have discovered the benefits of group work in improving student writers. Indeed, Reznitskaya et al. found that oral collaborative reasoning groups improved students' argumentative skills in individually written persuasive essays (171). In addition, Melina Porto argues that cooperative writing response groups focused on writer's strengths thus raising writer confidence (688).

What all these students are talking about is the acquisition of knowledge. Bruffee in his book *Collaborative Learning* discusses Shoshana Felman's view of the relationship between the authority of knowledge and the authority of teachers. According to Felman, teaching and learning are interpretive acts: "the sociolinguistic process that realigns social relations between professor and student and among students." Felman thus sees knowledge as

> Not a *substance* but a structural dynamic: it is not *contained* by any individual but comes about out of the mutual apprenticeship between two partially unconscious speeches which both say more than they know. Dialogue is thus the radical condition of learning

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[1] Richard Rorty, "Does Academic Freedom Have Philosophical Presuppositions?" *Entering into Discourse*, eds. Michael Williamson, et al. (Minnesota: Burgess Publications, 1996) pp. 119-130. See especially Katherine Henry's introduction to the text. See also James A. Reither, "Writing and Knowing: Toward Redefining the Writing Process." Reither argues for group work wherein students and teachers conduct inquiry collaboratively (291). David Bleich, "Collaboration and the Pedagogy of Disclosure," urges self-disclosure as a means of presenting the reasoning behind a critique, enhancing the feedback and gaining "collective accomplishment" (299).

and of knowledge, the analytically constitutive condition through which ignorance becomes structurally informative, knowledge is essentially, irreducibly dialogic. "No knowledge," writes Lacan, "can be supported or transported by one alone." (206)

The transportation of knowledge, then, is set up in a collaborative learning environment, but to reach its maximum distribution it must become public discourse. It cannot be contained by individuals within a smaller group, but rather must be "structurally informative" to the larger group. It is therefore *how* we structure classrooms and what catalysts we provide that creates knowledge that provides a "structural dynamic" where dialogue constitutes and becomes analysis, whereby maximum knowledge is distributed.

Generation of New Ideas and an Active Writing Process

The "intersubjective agreement" of a composition class, then, aids in the writing process by generating new ideas, expanding underdeveloped ones, and engaging students in an active writing process. Group work was often the genesis of new ideas, allowing students the freedom to evaluate an idea positively because the group has justified it. One student writes, "by letting other students read my papers they were able to give me new ideas and help me develop my paper more fully." Another student valued the expediency of group work: "The papers seemed easier and fast since I had more ideas to draw from. I benefited from the help of my peers." I especially like the following comments: papers were "easier because my group members gave me a path to follow in class and so I was able to produce a better paper." "Others could point out mistakes you missed or give you a different edge on your writing, give suggestions that you would not have thought of." The specific words these students use, "a path to follow" and "a different edge," are very telling, revealing the active interaction occurring in these peer groups. A student was given a "path to follow," a plan devised, asserted, and justified within the group, the very process of which bestowed confidence to the writer. The other student's words, "a different edge" is even more revealing and essentially more exciting to a writing instructor. These words suggest that the group was very specific—he or she could develop an "edge," focusing in on details, guiding the writer to finer distinctions, developing analytical and critical skills as a group. This development of an "edge" is a sophisticated extension of the expanding of underdeveloped ideas which is another advantage to group work in a composition classroom. Another student comments on how

group work facilitated his/her writing: "it was easier and I started to be able to write papers faster with no decrease in quality because I knew what I had to focus on and needed to develop."

What is reflected in the last student comment is an active writing process by which the group as a whole participated in an agential capacity. As agents, the group facilitates and enables, empowering students to act. One student writes: "I have a difficult time with starting papers and obtaining a thesis and with the help of other students I learned how to do this on my own." Some students as noted above responded enthusiastically to the following question: After working in class in groups, was the **writing** of your paper easier? faster? And did it produce a better paper? Or did you derive no **writing** benefits from the group work? (Of the students responding, 84% were positive.) One student responded, "Yes, yes and yes. Working in groups made the paper easier, which then made it faster. It definitely produced a better paper because working in groups always helped me see what my thesis was, if it was a good thesis, and if I had a good intro and conclusion." Another student writes, "I found that working in groups made it much easier to write my papers as well as take less time because whenever I was stuck on a particular part of the paper, my group mates would read it and then point me in the direction I needed to go…As a matter of fact, I got my best grades in writing this year." This active engagement in the writing process, this "unsticking," this directing of a "stuck" writer, is probably the greatest benefit students can derive from group work. It is what I call, although students do not know this, "constructive whining." It is this type of student, this "stuck" writer that can derive the most benefit from group justification. And it is this type of writer that is most grateful. The other student writer was helped to "see" his/her thesis. He or she was able to clarify and focus ideas. One writer sums the process up quite succinctly in the course evaluation for this class: "I liked the group work. It gave many opportunities to spot writing mistakes and improve the papers. I thought the papers we had to write were very challenging, and I really saw the improvement from the rough draft to the final copy."

Tales Retold and Social Transactions

All of this work within the group can be positively and emphatically reinforced by requiring students to present their group work before the class. Probably one of the most productive group assignments, enthusiastically endorsed by one student above, is to have the groups critique one group member's thesis statement and have them put it on the board (or classroom computer screen) along

with a very short rough outline. The group then presents the thesis and the outline to the class and discusses what problems they think the writer may encounter if he or she uses the thesis. This exercise teaches students to anticipate problems and avoid writing themselves into a corner. Invariably a group will present a thesis that is going to go nowhere, yet the group has put its seal of approval on it. They have justified it. But open the discussion to the entire class and other students will point out the pitfalls of such a thesis. What will ensue is a very productive discussion on the anticipation of problems early on in the writing process that will save students no end of grief. The class, as whole, will then proceed to rewrite the thesis statement for the student that has basically trapped himself/herself in a dead-end thesis. The student will leave the class with a new thesis and new outline stamped with the approval of the group, confident that he or she is on the right track. What has been demonstrated publicly is the freedom not only for an individual student to make mistakes, but also for the group to make mistakes, mistakes that can be easily corrected by the justification of the larger group. And it is absolutely essential that students make mistakes in order to increase learning and to hone critical skills. Certainly students need to learn the writing process, but what is even more important is the mistake-making process which is essential to their understanding of revision. Students *need* to make mistakes. A student will say, "Subconsciously I knew what I was writing was wrong, but I couldn't stop myself. Then my group pointed out my mistakes which only confirmed what I had thought earlier. But the group suggested ways to revise and I know how to improve the paper." This inability to stop oneself from making mistakes in the writing process simply has to be played out in order for the student to be empowered, to be able to control the writing process.[1] This process played out and made tangible by means of public discourse seems to me to be analogous to Kurt Spellmeyer's discussion of culture in "'Too Little Care': Language, Politics, and Embodiment in the Life-World." Although Spellmeyer is in a larger context arguing for pluralism and how "our knowledge changes once it enters the life-worlds of people unlike ourselves," I believe his discussion of culture has relevance for what we must create in the collaborative learning environment, one which privileges public discourse: "we have yet to recognize what culture *is*: neither a stock of fundamental facts and terms nor a repertoire of conventions, neither a Levi-Straussian *bricolage* of structures nor a Geertzian 'ensemble of texts,' but something closer to

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[1] Felicia Mitchell also discusses the process of control and empowerment of students using a specialized series of writing assignments. In addition, she discusses the timidity of instructors to experiment with models which are designed to empower students, or she theorizes, "we do not trust students to know what is best" (399). See "Balancing Individual Projects and Collaborative Learning in an Advanced Writing Class." *College Composition and Communication* 43 October (1992): 393-400.

tales that must be told, retold and revised until they seem real to the teller" (267). The mistake-making process that can and must be played out in public discourse becomes in a sense the "culture" of the collaborative learning classroom; it becomes a process of "tales that must be told, retold, and revised until they seem real to the teller." Students must act out their roles, going through the process of the writing, the revising, the mistake-making process, and the social justification until it all seems "real" to them. All of this becomes especially powerful if students are encouraged to defend their group's decisions if the larger group disagrees, if social justification is withheld. This process is not social consensus which privileges the group over the individual as Donald Stewart has suggested, but a struggle which must be enacted, a social act of intervention. Karen Burke LeFevre in *Intervention as a Social Art* views rhetorical intervention as a dialectical process: "first, an act that is generally initiated by an inventory (or rhetor) and brought to completion by an audience, and second, an act that involves symbolic activities such as speaking or writing and often extends over time through a series of social transactions and texts" (38). By acting out over time (I generally conduct three workshops per writing assignment), in and through the "social transactions" which occur in the "culture" of the collaborative learning environment, students learn how to take their papers apart and engage in real revision because the larger group will actually refuse to put its seal of approval on a weak paper. A type of baseline standard eventually evolves through the "exchange of justifications," all of which can be orchestrated through and by means of the processes set up by instructors at the outset of the course. What is set in motion is not only invention, but the criteria and the means to judge what is of value, all of which has relevance for our society as a whole. Thus to deny students a public forum is to deny them the very means by which our socioculture generates not only invention, but the means by which social justification occurs.

This hashing out of writing problems, these tales retold and revised are essential to collaborative learning. What students also learn is the fluidity of the writing process. They learn that problems can be avoided early on, that a thesis is not written in stone, and they have a resource on which to rely—the group, especially the larger group. By making mistakes public, the whole class eventually starts to trust their group members' judgment. Students will say in class "Our group thinks it has a dead-end thesis like we saw last week. Can we put it on the board?" Also what is especially rewarding to a writing instructor is to find out that the students are forming their own groups in the dorms to work on papers. A student

will make an appointment and say, "Beth from your 9:00 class looked at my paper last night in the dorm and she said my ideas need more development." Invariably Beth, or Jason, or Mike will be absolutely correct because they have seen similar problems demonstrated before the class by means of group work presentations. One student wrote very succinctly on a course evaluation what she liked about the course: "group work–relationships/interactions."

Knowledge Acquisition and Agreement between Inquirers

Let us now look at what happens in the classroom with these "relationships/interactions" when confronted with a specific assignment which is holistic in its approach, what Rorty would call "conversational justification." This particular example is from a second semester writing course for first-year students that is essentially an introduction to literature. The writing assignment for these students, however, was especially challenging since it required students to discuss one of two aspects of postmodernist texts: either a decentered network of "intertextual" connections or the postmodernist's avoidance of images of depth and reliance on inconclusive surface images. The subject of this analysis was Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*. Students were required to construct an in-depth analysis of one passage and show, through analysis of a later passage, the connection. In addition, students had to discuss Heller's motive in the selected passages. What follows is a portion of a student's working draft which was copied and used for group work and then the group work was presented before the class. Students were charged with the task of deciding what was wrong with the given section of the essay and what revision strategy they would recommend. The groups were given the student's thesis which was the following: "Milo and Cathcart represent the Machiavellian philosophy of greed and capitalism. Both characters use the war for their personal gain, although they have different agendas, their efforts intertwine. Heller uses these characters to show the corruption in our society, world and culture." The following is the essay excerpt the students had to discuss given the above thesis:

> Milo, not necessarily power hungry but hungry for money, will do anything for a profit. His motivation is money and there is nothing that can stop him from receiving what he desires. He does not care who he hurts while in the process of manipulation and finagling. Milo even went as far as bombing his own squadron, to make a profit from the Germans because he lost money on the Egyptian cotton enterprise.

Although many were appalled initially, Milo made a statement and managed to bring everyone in agreement:

> In a democracy, the government is the people…So we might as well keep the money and eliminate the middleman. Frankly I'd like to see the government get out of war altogether and leave the whole field to private industry. If we pay the government everything that we owe it, we'll only be encouraging government control and discouraging other individuals from bombing their own men and plane. (269)

This is gross manipulation of democracy and of the people. Heller suggests that the government protects criminals like Milo who kill for personal gain, because the people of the democracy are easily swayed. The society has become so numb to such an atrocity that although the people are initially surprised and appalled, it is easy for the perpetrator to convince the people that they should get involved in a scheme much like this one. Heller wants the reader to realize the harm in this and encourages the improvement of society as a whole to be rid of people like Milo."

I gave this assignment in a semester when I was teaching four sections of this course, and what was remarkable was that in section after section the same dynamic was played out. This exercise was near the end of the semester, so the students by that time had become quite adept at critiquing their classmates' essays. What was revealed in group presentations before the class was that every group realized that the writer's analysis of Heller's passage did not match the thesis. Group after group in the four sections (approximately two group presentations per section) pointed out that the writer had neglected to focus on the Machiavellian nature of Milo's tirade, the personal gain that he would accrue from a change in governmental policies, and the capitalistic agenda that would be served by the privatization of war and of course the ensuing corruption that Heller was highlighting. The conflict between the groups, however, resided in their suggestions for revision. One group in each presentation recommended that the student change her thesis to reflect the passage analysis. An opposing group recommended that the analysis of the passage be revised to reflect the thesis. A quick survey of the rest of the groups who were not presenting revealed a similar split in thinking. Each class became divided almost evenly between the two revision strategies. What ensued was a lively discussion of what revision process would be best for the writer with each group defending their choices. Students eventually

realized through open discussion that it would be more expedient to simply revise the passage analysis rather than develop a new thesis and rewrite the entire essay.

What was demonstrated and then reinforced publicly was that groups sometimes sanction a particular strategy which is not always in the best interest of the writer. Had I simply divided the class into groups and had them critique each other's essays or submit written critiques of group member's papers, mistakes such as the one demonstrated would have gone unnoticed and unresolved. Instead, the whole class was involved in the process of revision and learned quite dramatically the revision strategy suggested by their group may not be in their best interest and they must always be vigilant and challenge and rethink what the group recommends. This dynamic played out in a composition classroom is what Rorty would call the "getting together with other subjects," the "intersubjectivity" which he believes leads to knowledge. Arguing against John Searle, Rorty states that "you gain nothing for the pursuit of such truth by talking about the mind-dependence or mind-independence of reality. All there is to talk about are the procedures we use for bringing about agreement between inquirers" ("Academic Freedom" 123-24). Thus in the tradition of pragmatism, students in a collaborative learning environment which utilizes group presentations before the class are turned into "inquirers" where procedures bring about agreement and because and through the process of agreement, knowledge is accrued. These "inquirers" foster what Thomas Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* would call "group-licensed ways of seeing" (Bruffee 162). Students in collaborative learning environments, then, must learn not only to trust their peers, but also to question their suggestions at the same time. This trust/distrust dichotomy can only be resolved in the larger arena of public discourse. To privilege this public discourse in collaborative learning environments is to create a type of self-reflexive dialogue at the same time you are creating a Kuhnian dependence on a "group-licensed ways of seeing." What seems to be a paradoxical bifurcation of the thinking process is really an examining of self, of choices made, of sorting through suggestions from others and eventually arriving at something "real" for that individual when revising on his/her own. As discussed above, the dynamics of this process increase if you encourage groups to defend their choices in the public arena. What ensues is a debate, a contest in a public forum, a "series of social transactions" which, as LeFevre suggests, aids invention. The dual nature of this process fosters learning because students are discovering for themselves, learning to make decisions about the writing process. Creating these transactions is the challenge that instructors

must grapple with when using collaborative learning methodology in their classrooms. And it is this public hashing out of a writing problem that students can replicate in writing groups formed outside the classroom. [1]

It is this concept of a larger group consensus, of a class working together for the benefit of a single member, of interactions and transactions, of a resource to which the student can turn that makes presentations before the class so valuable. This is the type of discussion that Bruffee would call "talking-through" the task of writing. What is also superbly invaluable is the public speaking element, the skills that are gradually and regularly enhanced throughout the semester. One student wrote, "I really enjoyed working with classmates, and it made it much more comfortable to do speeches and presentations because I knew everyone in the class well." A question on the survey asked students if group work proved beneficial to understanding poems, short stories, films and essays? (Of the students responding, 91% were positive.) One student responded concerning some difficult, theoretical essays on which we had been working: "Yes, very!! When I read the essays on my own I understood them to a point, but while working in groups found many things I hadn't seen before. I think the reason for this was the whole time we worked in groups we knew that there was a possibility of presenting what we had found to the class, so we took it seriously." With this statement, it becomes evident that the impending social justification of the larger group is a catalyst for students working harder and more seriously. Another student found the group work positive because "you got to see opinions of others, so with the combination of all the ideas, a greater understanding was achieved."

This understanding leads to *confidence*, a confidence that becomes palpable as the semester progresses. The presentations to the class, the public display makes the confidence of other students tangible to the class and they realize that if their peers can achieve that level of accomplishment, they can too. This confidence, I believe, is rooted in discovery. By hashing out a writing problem in a small group and then seeking large group justification, students discover the strengths and weaknesses in their writing, they discover a way of seeing, they learn to make decisions about the writing process. The confidence gained is not only palpable, but it is also overtly expressed. One student wrote that working

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[1] I am currently working on a project that examines what happens when students voluntarily form writing groups outside the classroom. I have observed that female students in particular benefit from such groups. The project will also focus on how the formation of outside groups can be facilitated by writing instructors. For a discussion of gender influenced learning and how women react to less competitive environments see, as noted above, Belenky, Mary Field, et al. *Women's Ways of Knowing*. New York: Basic, 1986. See also Yin, Hum Sue. "Collaboration: Proceed with Caution." *The Writing Instructor* Fall, 1992. Leena I. Laurinen and Miika J. Marttunen have found that female students are more likely to "lower the cognitive complexity" of their arguments to retain social acceptability (241-42).

in groups, "made it much easier and faster. And after revising it so many times, by the time I handed it in I was confident in what I had produced." By not giving students a forum for the exchange of ideas, by not giving students a forum for the justification of beliefs, by not giving them the freedom to express their views, we are depriving them of the very forum which we as scholars hold dear. And what is more important, we are depriving students of the *confidence* which large group justification can provide.

In "Writing as Collaboration," James Reither and Douglas Vipond advocate writing projects which propose a scholarly question and situate students in research groups, engaging them in the academic discourse of a field which in turn makes them members of the larger academic community. They see collaboration as a way writers "establish and maintain immediate communities which function within the larger, "disciplinary" communities where their knowledge claims might find a fit. Developing claims cooperatively, collectively, collaboratively, the members of such a community-within-a-community learn from one another, teach one another; they support and sustain one another" (859). Reither and Vipond theorize that this type of collaboration with students, teachers and academic authors results in what they term "knowledge making." The community-within-a-community that these authors describe, the "knowledge making" that occurs as a result of this community, can be replicated on a smaller scale in collaborative learning environments which utilize large group justification. When small groups present their work to the class, they enter into the community of the larger group that teaches, sustains, and supports. It is this goal of "knowledge making," this public thinking aloud which creates fields of knowledge, disciplines of study in the academic community. And it is this thinking aloud, this "talking through" in an "intersubjective" realm which aid students not only in writing skills, but in the analytical and critical thinking to "make knowledge," to discover what is "real," to engage in social transactions which justify assertions.

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A Man's Home is His Castle: Bloodlines and *The Castle of Otranto*

Gretchen Cohenour, Wartburg College

The castle in Gothic texts is often a bounded place where ghosts haunt its inhabitants in every crack and edge of its dark recesses. Reminded of their burdens of past violence and crimes, castle inhabitants are literally confined by the "places" of the castle--physical walls, tunnels, attics, and even grounds directly surrounding the walls. How these characters utilize the places of the castle determines its purpose as a larger "space," making the edifices other bodies to control. For example, in Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, a sexual contest to secure lineage and keep the property occurs. This contest depends on how the places of the castle are used as catalysts to construct a larger gendered space of female sexuality that causes shifts in paradigms of male sexual power.

Many scholars, especially Elaine Showalter and Claire Kahane, observe that spatial imagery often correlates with the female body, especially interior domestic spaces of Gothic fiction where women's sexuality is frequently denied. This denial is shaped by several assumptions within eighteenth-century patriarchal society, namely that female experience is based on vaginal sexuality, comprised of cavity/womb-like spaces, and meant only for breeding. The female body becomes a literary metaphor. Therefore, castles, abbeys, or other domestic structures seem like not only formulaic conventions to acknowledge, but also exist as structures that reflect eighteenth-century aristocratic male anxieties about class, ownership, lineage, power, and potency.

Otranto castle represents a domestic space that mirrors the maternal (M)other, making it a pivotal image that reflects eighteenth-century cultural paranoia about contamination of bloodlines and property ownership. Often labeled the "first" Gothic novel, *Otranto*'s plot focuses just as much on domestic terrors as later female writers who echo Walpole in their attempts to show the greater dangers that lie within the home. The story begins with a wedding and a death. Manfred is the illegitimate owner of Otranto castle, inherited from his grandfather who usurped it. Manfred's son, Conrad, is about to wed Isabella, the nearest relation to the true heir of Otranto. Plans are interrupted when a supernaturally large casque (owned by Alfonso the Good, the original Otranto owner) falls out of the sky and crushes Conrad. Within minutes of the death, Manfred immediately ignites plans to divorce his older, sterile wife Hippolita, and marry Isabella himself to produce heirs. However, Isabella

flees at Manfred's proposition, beginning a long journey through the dark tunnels of the castle to escape to a convent. Theodore, the rightful Otranto heir, exists as a peasant throughout the story, and most of the main characters are unaware of his own claim to the castle through the majority of the plot. Manfred imprisons him under the casque that killed Conrad, but Theodore escapes to the tunnels Isabella flees towards, and he assists her in escaping. Upon being captured a second time by Manfred, he again escapes, but with the aid of Manfred's daughter, Matilda. Isabella's father, Frederic the "Knight of the Gigantic Sabre," arrives to reclaim his daughter, and he and Manfred enter into a sexual contest where the castle becomes the setting for all of the events.

Since the rise of *Otranto* coincides with an increased emphasis on the importance of lineage, we would do well to first consider some historical and economical links between eighteenth-century underpinnings about inheritance and Gothic works. E.J. Clery notes that legal provisions for inheriting land saw an uprising in the eighteenth century, mainly due to "strict settlement" (76). Women, however, did not obtain any significant legal rights regarding individual ownership of property until well into the nineteenth century. Parents and husbands promoted marriage, and their economic plots against and possession of young women were supported by marriage.[1] The focus on property ownership can be traced to the English enclosure movement, where land that was open in the early eighteenth century was steadily enclosed by the mid-1700s. Non-aristocrats resisted enclosure via riots, petitions to Parliament, and sometimes destruction of the property altogether. All of these efforts failed to prevent enclosures, however.

The representation of property in Gothic novels like *Otranto* may be viewed as a literary analog of enclosure resistance. The events in *Otranto* reflect a subverting of enclosure attempts, where aristocrats cannot maintain wrongful possession of property. Thus, the Gothic plot presents a social disruption of enclosure. In the novel, land is usurped from aristocracy by one considered peasant-class. The land is then seized from the social climber and restored to someone aristocratic by birth, but considered a peasant throughout the tale. It is then particularly appropriate that property in a Gothic novel is typically a grand house: an emblem of class power, the setting of exploitation and struggle, and repression of female sexuality.

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[1] The Married Women's Property Laws 1868-1882 were the first laws affording any protection for women's retention of property. Mary Shanley's article discusses property rights more in depth, namely legal avenues for reclaiming property after marriage dissolution.

A second and crucial historical and economic connection stems from the Hardwicke Marriage Act of 1753.[1] The Act very pointedly demonstrates an attempt to control female sexuality and property as capital because it supported primogeniture and a mentality of "free exchange" of daughters among wealthy landowners. Opponents of the Act claimed it reinforced dependency of both women and the poor by keeping capital out of their hands. *Otranto* did attract a wide readership with its publication.

Clemens points out that the novel offered "emotional confirmation" of a social problem that the public overlooked (34). Not surprisingly, problems with marriage and property ownership comprise many eighteenth-century fiction plots in general. The same unchecked male sexuality presented in those works, however, especially aggressive in nature, occurred in reality and was rarely publicly addressed. Acts like the Hardwicke Act likely agitated the already strained situation of women by forcing dependency on them to continue family lines.

In *Otranto*, the castle and its labyrinths become grounds for incest that signal the dissolution of familial bonds in light of possessing property. The castle becomes a space for the absolute male exercise of vicious and illegitimate desires; remote, dark, and gloomy, its malevolent setting mirrors that of the villain/owner. Clemens aptly concludes that Manfred is more of a "force" than person: "He epitomizes aggressive, unbridled, and unconscionable phallic energy, untamed by either feudal honor or domesticating feminine virtue" (35). Characterized by uncontrolled sexual tension, Manfred presents a physical threat to both Isabella and his blood daughter, Matilda; furthermore, his desperate, unsuccessful attempts to penetrate certain recesses of his own castle (since he is the key keeper) presents what may have been Walpole's critique of eighteenth-century values and laws that encouraged male sexual behavior to go unchecked. By writing a story whose plot line parallels eighteenth-century fear of contaminated bloodlines, loss of property, and even fear of darkened spaces in its settings, the story demystifies these fears by giving them a function. Doing so inverts social relations.

Specific settings like Otranto castle also function as a character against the larger ground of the text. Walpole's initial descriptions of parts of Otranto evoke images of an actual female body whose parts are defended, penetrated, and entrapped. Any conceptual model of space is inherently gendered, and as Gaston Bachelard's and Henri Lefebvre's theories point out, a given space is created by and

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[1] The "Lord Hardwick Act," passed by Parliament in 1753, was designed to prevent clandestine marriages. Lawrence Stone conducts a useful study of the history of this act and its repercussions in *Road to Divorce: England 1530-1987*.

interacts with those occupying it. Joseph Kestner's landmark study about spatiality and the novel further emphasizes this point when he argues that architecture is not just a form, but has an effect on the organizing spaces around it, including the spectators. Examining these theories in light of Gothic novels reflects how the female body and experience become enabled or disabled by the various places comprising the castle. The paranoia concerning contaminated bloodlines becomes more apparent.

Otranto's gates are normally locked, and Manfred is the key keeper who imprisons all (including himself). Only when Frederick, a male competitor for the property, arrives are the gates of the castle forced open. Such an event shatters solidity of property, transgressing the boundaries that secure Manfred's private ownership and lineage. Additionally, Isabella is a figurative key that Manfred needs to possess in order to fully secure his lineage, but fails to do so. The desire to possess and contain what is uncontainable about people and secrets partly defines Walpole's story (and all Gothic tales). The body of the castle, therefore, merits closer attention because it is a primary means of containment within traditional male power structures that these Gothic works question.

Readers can see how the castle space where the family scandals unfold call attention to the importance of boundaries: the literal and figurative processes by which society organizes itself, declaring what is "legitimate" or "proper" and even "sane." Such boundaries are the actual stones of the castle and their embodiment of the family structure or the values of larger cultural systems. Both literal walls and their implicit values create the possibility for transgression, establishing a means for imprisonment or redemption. Otranto is already a ruin by nature, comprised of "crumbling walls," and filled with "old intricate cloisters." Ruins traditionally symbolize the power of nature and, in this case, Manfred's inability to isolate and control powers of nature, especially bloodlines. Descriptions of the structure throughout the novel reflect a body steadily deteriorating from the secrets housed within: a strong body used by Manfred for repressing, but also a weak body where Manfred cannot prevent infiltration. When he attempts to control and assert possession, the castle is destroyed. Otranto exemplifies the fear created by the realization of Manfred that he is powerless and will eventually succumb to the forces that will restore the rightful heir. This is why the walls literally crumble at the end, paralleling Manfred's own undoing.

The crumbling castle walls also extend beyond the literal to figuratively frame the text itself. The castle ceases to be only interior/exterior or private/public space for its inhabitants. Rather, the

"subterraneous regions" where blasts of wind shake its doors that grate on rusty hinges make up a long "labyrinth of darkness" (11). These underground areas suggest that the space of female experience is one of repression as well as transgression, yet often based on binary oppositions: what is "female" is reduced to simply what is opposite from "male" experience. In order to fully understand the motivations of characters like Manfred and Frederic, we must examine how life, death, birth, and sexuality are present in images that suggest significances regarding the female self.

The mother represents what the woman will become if she embraces her sexual self. For example, if Isabella acknowledges the power that comes with acting as a mother if she becomes pregnant, she wields the power to control bloodlines just as much (if not more than) males. The alternative life for Isabella in a convent allows for some power of control, but further reduces her experience to a non-sexual being. To some degree, the conflict seems to fall more with the maternal female, less with the tyrannical male in *Otranto's* plot. Claire Kahane claims, "the heroine's exploration of her entrapment in a Gothic house--both she and it vulnerable to potential penetration—can be read as an exploration of her relation to the maternal body which she too shares, to the femaleness of experience, with all its connotations of power over, and vulnerability to, forces within and without (338). Isabella attempts to flee the maternal space, so as to avoid becoming another maternal vessel herself in an incestuous relationship with Manfred. This fear of vulnerability and penetration emphasizes weakness in the female body. Furthermore, this point affirms why motherless or sterile women in literature are often viewed as defective; Manfred blames Hippolita's sterility for the primary reason he must marry Isabella.

The mother's role within a family exerts an important form of social control, as many scholars like Nancy Armstrong have suggested. The castle layout symbolizes another maternal form and affects the actions of its inhabitants. As a crumbling, confusing, labyrinthine structure, Otranto is both a fractured domestic space, as well as the only element capable of hosting erotic afflictions and producing stability for families. Other scholars, like Nancy Chodorow, purport that this structure helps establish the Gothic plot as a narrative of young women in their attempts to escape from the mother [Other] who stands in the way of their individuation. The actual mother's absence or repression allows heroines to make their own histories. Isabella's struggle to flee Otranto symbolizes an attempt to separate from the

mother. The castle then becomes emblematic of a female body that provides the setting for her journey through its unknown and mysterious spaces towards a rebirth for individuation.

In viewing the maternal as an enemy of some form, it is interesting to note how Walpole's narrative presents a story of escape *to* the mother rather than away from her.

The narrative structure is vital to note since primogeniture excludes the mother, thereby emphasizing the horrors of male quests to secure lineage. Any exchange of sexual commodities, whether houses or women, between men becomes a contest that flows over into larger social control--the home/castle becomes a means of containing female bodies. The social aspect affects women in that they attempt to reject the maternal role thrust upon them. This process is not unlike what Julia Kristeva refers to as abjection: "something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself" (*Powers* 4). But, as noted earlier, in trying to abject the mother, the female only returns to her. What results is that heroines align themselves with the male villains.

Manfred's "power," as with most male tyrants, depends on women to preserve his rule, and he uses his castle to control them. Manfred exclaims from the beginning, "my fate depends on having sons" (Walpole 9). His seeks to divorce Hippolita and send her to a convent to live out her life while he continues his life with someone he views as a daughter. The absence of any protective maternal figure allows tyrannical males like Manfred to pursue his incestuous marriage plot, but Isabella takes hold of her fate by fleeing from a future as a maternal receptacle. She prevails to Hippolita as her only mother figure. However, any mother-daughter relationship between them dissolves once Hippolita openly encourages Isabella to embrace Manfred's sexual conquest. This causes Isabella to reject everything maternal and seek out the convent where she feels complete repression of sexuality would be best. The roles afforded these women display how individuation is accomplished not in escaping, but in establishing and maintaining female structures where family lines depend on matrilineage. Manfred values his lineage above any family bonds, and he ignores the value of his blood daughter's ability to continue the family line.

Patriarchy attempts literal possession of the female body in this manner. Manfred may possess the actual keys to Otranto's doors, but not to Isabella. Furthermore, the one door Manfred cannot access with his keys is the same one Isabella escapes through. Male fear of their inability to secure lineage on their own prompts the creation of desperate sexual contracts between each other over

women's bodies. The fear of sexuality generally by males is linked to attempts to destroy the mother. In this case, Manfred's (and, to some extent, Theodore's) inability to contain female sexuality results in the annihilation of bloodlines. Julia Kristeva's claims about people as "fortified castles" illuminates this point. She states that, often in literature, a "border-line" patient exists who is comparable to a fortified castle:

> Even though he may be a fortified castle, [he] is nevertheless an empty castle. . . haunted by unappealing ghosts--"powerless" outside, "impossible inside. The borderline is often abstract, made up of stereotypes that are bound to seem cultured; he aims at precision, indulges in self-examination, in meticulous comprehension, which easily brings to mind obsessional discourse. (*Powers* 49)

The "empty castle" image signifies Manfred, who attempts to protect his identity, one that is already lost in many ways since he descends from an usurper's line. He fiercely tries to maintain Otranto, but he fails to escape the abjection necessary for him to have a chance at maintaining his property. Instead, Manfred relies on his sickly son to secure his castle, as hopes with his sterile wife ended--another "empty castle." Conrad's illness foreshadows him a weakened castle that does not have the strength to live and maintain Manfred's usurped authority.

These events, combined with patriarchal suppression of female sexuality, represent the "spectre" of tainted blood, or what Fred Botting calls the "Gothic stain"--a persistent presence that provokes anxiety for many of the characters, especially males (16). The stain or "unappealing ghost" affecting social control is the supernatural presence of Alfonso, the original owner killed by Manfred's grandfather. Alfonso's presence operates as the agent of normalization to help restore the rightful owner. A curse must be fulfilled, and the characters must seal their respective fates: "The Castle and Lordship of Otranto should pass from the present family whenever the real owner should be grown too large to inhabit it" (Walpole 1). Since Manfred's grandfather usurped Otranto, the "sins of the father revisited on his children" theme dominates the plot. An execution of this theme reveals the fluidity of identity, blurring socially constructed boundaries of male and female sexual bonds. Alfonso's image torments Manfred and presents a disruption to both male bonds. Physical objects associated with Alfonso, along with his image, become more constant throughout the tale, and he becomes a pervasive force that Manfred strives to contain within Otranto's walls. Instead, his lack of control over the fortress

comes to light, and Manfred becomes imprisoned himself. The ghost of the original owner painfully reminds Manfred of the legality of true ownership, emphasizing the existing social order and pressuring Manfred even more to protect bloodlines.

Theodore's existence is the second major impediment to Manfred's goals. Theodore first appears in the courtyard when everyone has gathered to examine the helmet that crushed Conrad. Theodore is the one who notices the helmet's likeness to that of Alfonso's. Manfred becomes enraged at the suggestion that the original owner "enlarged" himself and killed his son. Upon confirming the helmet was missing from Alfonso's statue, the "folly of these ejaculations brought Manfred to himself." He declares Theodore a necromancer and the culprit. In his impatience and rising sexual frustration about losing an heir, Manfred imprisons Theodore under the helmet with his dead son, the first step leading to Manfred's own downfall. Believing the containment will kill the prisoner, Manfred ironically tucks the rightful owner under the head's "protection," the same head that has just murdered the usurper's heir.

Theodore escapes through a "fissure" in the ground that the weight of the crashing helmet produced. Moving from the protection of the original owner's "enlargement," he penetrates the "intricate cloisters" that comprise the nether regions of the lower half of Otranto. The sexual tension that stems from the castle setting is extraordinary. Upon entering the tunnels, Theodore meets Isabella as she flees from Manfred. Isabella's agility through the tunnels prompts readers to notice how she knows all facets of the castle as well as (or sometimes better than) its owner. The passageways and trapdoor she seeks parallel the female genitals and womb. Isabella is not so much drawn to the tunnels themselves, but rather she desires what lies on the other end. Arguably, she trades one prison for another if she succeeds in escaping since she could only go to a convent. However, she takes initiative in providing herself with the choice. The narrative and dialogue used by Isabella reflects her desires and drive to achieve them. This allows readers to draw a larger significance about the role of the castle in her journey towards individuation: "It gave her a kind of momentary joy to perceive an imperfect ray of clouded moonshine gleam from the roof of the vault, which seemed to be fallen in, and from whence hung a fragment of earth or building, she could not distinguish which, that appeared to have been crushed inwards. She advanced eagerly towards the chasm" (12).

The "chasm" is where Theodore enters. She reaches the "mouth of the subterranean cavern, she approached the door that had been opened" (11). She does not wonder why the initial entrance is already open because she is too concerned about being overtaken by Manfred in the dark. She hears a noise and discovers Theodore. She allows herself to be more drawn to the dark, unknown source of the sound, rather than return to a fate with Manfred. Her fear of Manfred as a sexually aggressive being "outweighed every other terror" (11) comprises her main drive to escape one horrific sexual encounter, but she essentially embraces another with Theodore.

The words and actions between the two allow readers to see a sexual experience necessary for Isabella to progress with her journey. Theodore's presence seems comforting to Isabella, in spite of the fact she acknowledges she finds herself "in a place where her cries were not likely to draw any body to her assistance" (11) with a stranger. Upon discovering he is not an ally of Manfred, she asks him to assist her on her "journey." Theodore agrees to help Isabella and begins a diatribe on how he will die in her defense and show chivalry. Isabella hastily interrupts him: "Oh! Help me find a trap-door!" (12). He says, "I am unacquainted with the castle." Disappointed and slightly exasperated, Isabella begins to direct Theodore: "find a trap-door, as it is the greatest service you can do me." She then proceeds to "feel her way" along the pavement, directing Theodore to do the same in search of "a smooth piece of brass." She claims she knows the secret to "spring open" the lock. Although the story does not provide any background telling readers as much, Isabella clearly has the knowledge of her surrounding's "secrets." After a few moments, a stream of moonlight from the chasm magically reveals the appropriate spot, and Isabella excitedly exclaims, "Oh! Transport!" She springs the lock and asks Theodore to "lift up the door" and follow her into the dark vault: "we cannot miss our way" (13). She descends the stairs, and Theodore is about to follow when they hear Manfred's approach. Isabella tells Theodore to "make haste" and shut the door. However, as Theodore hastens, he "let the door slip out of his hands: it fell, and the spring closed over it." Though he desperately tries to reopen the door, he fails, "not having observed Isabella's method of touching the spring" (13). His journey or ability to "finish" here is halted by a lack of knowledge (and experience).

Upon seeing Theodore, Manfred becomes enraged, and demands to know how he entered the tunnel. Theodore states, "one of the *cheeks* of the enchanted casque had forced its way through the pavement" and left a "gap through which he could *press* himself" [emphasis mine] (14). This initial act of

penetration into the tunnels recalls Manfred's failed attempt to control/contain his competition, regardless of the fact he did not know about Theodore's claim to the castle. Manfred becomes enraged in part because Theodore beats him to the "secret passage" and he knows Theodore participates in some acts with Isabella before he has the chance. Ironically, the "lock" that Isabella controlled is not one opened by the many keys Manfred possesses. The lock is the entrance, but also a barrier between the sexual males within the castle and the non-sexual, benign chapel that awaits Isabella. Manfred knows Theodore had access to the trap door and demands that he show how the lock was opened. However, Theodore has not matured in his own subject-in-process, as Kristeva would say. He cannot "perform" and re-open the lock, having not retained the knowledge to do so. Theodore states, "Providence, that delivered me from the helmet, was able to direct me to the spring of a lock" (15). Astounded by Theodore's incompetence, Manfred retorts, "When Providence had taught thee to open the lock, it abandoned thee for a fool who did not know how to make use of its favours" (15). Unlike Theodore, Manfred knows what the passageway represents and its value, but his own inability to open and enter the door himself shows his own lack of control in procuring the treasure.

As the true heir, Theodore constantly struggles to control an arguably aggressive desire to "prove" his masculinity and repress female sexuality in order to achieve his own individuation. Like Manfred, he mistakenly tries to assert authority among other males, almost costing him his property and lineage. Manfred imprisons Theodore a second time, but he escapes with the help of Matilda. During this second escape, he encounters Isabella again just outside of a cavern beyond the castle walls. She begins "On my knees let me thank him--" but Theodore interrupts her, claiming they should move to the "inmost recesses" of the cavern so he may better protect her. Upon retreating, Frederic arrives, causing Theodore to stand guard at the mouth of the cavern to prevent anyone else's entrance. Once again, Theodore cannot make use of Isabella's "favours." Isabella is the one Theodore needs to marry to restore the true Otranto line. Although he pledged his love to Matilda, their union cannot be successful for two main reasons: one, his lineage would be tainted with an usurper's child; two, because she was promised to Isabella's father by way of Manfred's sexual contract. Readers see an exchange of women in overlapping erotic triangles. As in stereotypical Oedipal conflicts, sons fight fathers, and fathers try to kill sons: all are suitors for the same women. The prophecy on the first page of the novel reminds us of this conflict: if "the real owner should be *grown too large*" [emphasis mine].

Since the males view the females as property that maintains bloodlines through breeding, special relationships exist between males' desires and the transfer or possession of power. Sedgwick's study on gender and homosocial desires is especially useful in helping readers deduce meaning about the primary sexual contest between Manfred and Frederic and Isabella—an erotic triangle of rivalry. She notes that women are "changeable, perhaps symbolic, property for the primary purpose of cementing the bonds of men with men" (26). The female becomes the object of exchange between men. The triangle shows the bonds that link the two male rivals are as important as the one linking each of them to Isabella. Sedgwick bases her analysis on Rene Girard's triangle and Freud's Oedipal triangle schematics, claiming that the choice of male affection is often determined not just by the beloved's qualities, but also by being the choice of the rival (21). More importantly, Sedgwick aptly points out that these schematizations do not account for differences like gender. Bonds of rivalry not only exist between males over a woman, but also could be bonds of any relation of rivalry, thereby allowing readers to analyze relations between individual males and masculine culture as well.

The main triangle composed of Manfred, Frederic, and Isabella allows readers to construct meaning about the latent sexual contests and preoccupation with bloodlines. Frederic's arrival to Otranto presents the best scene for readers to draw such conclusions. As Manfred and Theodore exchange words in the courtyard, the plumes on Alfonso's casque wave "with greater violence than before" (41). With Conrad crushed and buried underneath, the plumes shake, almost announcing the arrival of a true claim to Otranto. Since Theodore's birthright has not yet been revealed, Frederic is next in line to inherit Otranto. The agitation of the plumes also expresses sexual excitement. The sexually charged scene opens with Manfred ordering his priest to go to the "wicket" and demand what attempts "entry of his castle." He sends a religious figure to the wicket/entrance, probably assuming one would not harm a priest. The priest is informed that the "Knight of the Gigantic Sabre" means to speak with Manfred. No one realizes the knight is Frederic, yet the casque's reaction to the arrival of Alfonso's nearest blood relative "struck Manfred with terror." Reclamation by Frederic meant undisputable loss to Manfred's line. Frederic literally bears a "huge" phallic sabre. His penetration of Otranto with that sabre is a symbolic attempt to impregnate the castle body and breed out the usurper.

Ordering the gates of the castle "to be flung open" for the reception of the knight and his party, Manfred risks the penetration by the gigantic sabre. The entrance by the cavalcade reads like an

elaborate act of foreplay upon the castle as a body itself: two harbingers "with wands" come first, followed by a herald, two pages and two trumpets, then one hundred foot guards, a horse, two more heralds flanking a horseman bearing the banner depicting Otranto arms, two more pages, the knight's confessor (ironically praying his beads during this procession), fifty more footmen, two knights in complete armor with "beavers down," comrades to the principal knight, squires of the knights to carry shields, one hundred gentlemen bearing "an enormous sword" and seeming faint under its weight, and then Frederic himself with his lance (45-46). Manfred's eyes are "fixed on the gigantic sword, and he scarce seemed to attend the cartel," echoing his initial awe in reaction to Alfonso's casque--he knows his fate. Frederic dismounts and, "kneeling down" in front of the casque, "seemed to pray inwardly for some minutes." In one of the most sexual images, the casque's plumes stop agitating and as Frederic makes the "circuit of the court to return towards the gate, the gigantic sword burst from the supporters, and falling to the ground opposite to the helmet, remained immoveable" (47). The effective intercourse here with the sword as the transcendent phallus/signifier alters how characters see their spaces.

Manfred reluctantly invites Frederic in to "liquidate their differences" by the sword, but it is Frederic's sword that sees any action; Manfred knows this and becomes jealous. "Injurious as this challenge was, [Manfred] reflected that it was not in his interest to provoke the Marquis," and realized that his only chance to remain "whole" was to "invite Frederic into his castle" and obtain his consent to marry his daughter (43). Manfred wishes to negotiate with his visitor before "liquidating differences by the sword," whereby he shall have "full satisfaction" (43). While Frederic's sword may at Otranto more than Manfred's, the arrival of Frederic and his sabre is crucial to figuratively "behead" or symbolically castrate Manfred's claim and make him an empty castle/body.

The reinforcement provided by the seemingly transcendent nature of this sword is important. The language of the text strives to give the impression of divine intervention--the plumes on the casque "nodded thrice, as if bowed by some invisible wearer" (40), and Frederic responds in kind upon his arrival. His sword "bursts forth" and the plumes remain still. In completing its intercourse, the sword symbolically castrates Manfred, forcefully abjecting him from the maternal realm he struggled to control. Frederic's train then immediately proceeds to have its own post-coital feast in the great hall where, in as hospitable a manner as possible, Manfred subdues his shock at the event, claiming, "ye are

the first guests I ever treated within these walls, who scorned to hold any intercourse with me" (47). Manfred's castration in the courtyard forces him to confront his Other and may be regarded as a pattern that foreshadows the larger Oedipal triangle comprising the sexual proposal he makes to Frederic in swapping daughters. Castration, in this case, becomes the final aspect of the process of separation that makes what Kristeva considers a subject-in-process "signifiable or separate, always confronted by an Other: *imago* in the mirror [signified] and semiotic process [signifier]" ("Revolution" 101). Manfred has formally lost control at this point.

Reservations about who has the bigger or more powerful "sword" determine boundaries of male and masculine bonds: "the placement of those boundaries in particular society, affects not merely the definitions of those terms themselves--sexual/nonsexual, masculine/feminine--but also the apportionment of forms of power that are not obviously sexual" (Botting 22). Indeed, the bonds between females and males greatly depend on gender, which causes both men and women to negotiate with their societies for empowerment. The bonds between men stemming from the exchange of women provide the backbone of social form in *Otranto*. However, as Sedgwick correctly concludes, the seemingly arbitrary set of discriminations for defining, controlling, and manipulating these male bonds become a powerful instrument of social control as well.

In one last desperate attempt to savagely produce an heir, Manfred persuades Frederic to exchange daughters and essentially keep all concerns within the family. However, upon retiring to bed, Frederic is visited by Alfonso's image and warned otherwise, causing him to renege his contract with Manfred. In a rage, Manfred seeks out Isabella once more with the intent of killing her altogether. Instead, he stumbles across Matilda and Theodore. Believing he hears Isabella's voice, Manfred rashly lunges upon his daughter and fatally stabs her. In doing so, he severs all chances of extending his bloodline. The castle requires purification from what Kate Ellis refers to as the "demands of absolute obedience levied in the name of contaminated domestic ideology" (51). Matilda's body, a maternal receptacle, is sacrificed by her father's literal sword. Manfred's stabbing of Matilda represents the symbolic incestuous penetration he had planned with Isabella. However, Matilda must die because the curse of the usurper's line can only perish with her fulfill the necessary that "sins of the father shall be revisited upon the children." A union with Theodore would symbolically taint Otranto's restoration process, once again reflecting that the females determine the power here.

Matilda and Isabella are mirror images, and Manfred's pursuit of Isabella is not simply an expression of unrequited desire, but the reenactment of an ancient pattern (Morris 305) that cannot go unpunished. Readers are informed that Manfred and Hippolita are closely related by blood (Walpole 34), and Manfred's constant rejection of Matilda may reflect his anger at his lack of heir, but also that he knows he needs to avoid incestuous relations with his closest of kin. It is not a surprise then that Manfred feels his desires are justified in being relieved from his present marriage and entering into a new one with Isabella who is not blood relation. Even though she lived in his home as a daughter-figure, Manfred recognizes the bonds by blood only. These central actions of the story parallel the dissolution of Otranto castle and Manfred's dynastic degeneration.

Otranto *embodies* the family line and is relevant to Gothic fiction's role in reflecting the engendering of spaces I've attempted to illustrate here. Bachelard wrote, "A house constitutes a body of images that give mankind [sic] proofs or illusions of stability. We are constantly re-imagining its reality: to distinguish all these images would be to describe the soul of the house" (17). The first page of Otranto sets forth this "soul," forcing readers to acknowledge the irrational logic behind patriarchal approaches to securing bloodlines. When Theodore's claim is revealed, his title emerges from his mother's line, sabotaging Manfred and Frederic's claims to the property (and hence, the rivalry for the female). However, *Otranto* still ends with Theodore's engagement to Isabella, showing that the threat of incest still has not entirely vanished because both are each the closest surviving blood relatives of Alfonso. The looming danger of incest continues to threaten the order of the home realistically, even if the usurper's line has perished. Incest creates a space of the unspeakable, contaminating the ideology of purity that often surrounds domestic structures.

The castle is a fantastic "key" to our understanding of narrative and character, symbolizing several things at once: a figure for Manfred himself, his "property," his power, and the female body. Anne Williams points out how the castle represents man's culture where the arrangement of spaces determines how power is distributed: the house makes secrets in and of itself, for its function is to enclose spaces (44). If the female is the Other of male culture, then the house may be a maternal form of the Other to both men and women alike. How men and women experience this Other differ. Walpole successfully manipulates the functions of the castle to question the effectiveness of a patriarchal structure as it pertains to family and property during a time of rising materialism and capitalism.

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Oedipus Rex **and** *Death of a Salesman*: **The Case for the Evolving Nature of Tragedy**

Naomi Craven, University of Texas, San Antonio

Ever since the classical age, when the first documented tragedies emerged, critics have struggled to form a definition of the genre. Aristotle developed the first theory of tragedy in his *Poetics* as early as the third-century BC and to this day scholars of drama have tended to return to his ideas in order to determine which works fall into the tragic canon. Aristotle proposes that a good tragedy must contain certain elements. It must center on a tragic hero, who suffers within a chain of causation, but eventually falls through some fault of his or her own. However, Aristotle is more interested in exploring what features are notable in *good* tragedies than providing a classification system for the genre as a whole. His theories are then prescriptive rather than descriptive or, in other words, they spell out which qualities have produced good tragedy in the past, rather than providing a framework through which future ostensibly tragic works can be evaluated. Nevertheless, his theories are still frequently used, often with blatant disregard to his original intentions. "What is peculiar to the tragic *mimēsis*" writes Aristotle, is its production "through pity and fear of the *catharsis*" of such emotions" (49-57). This idea in particular has endured to the twenty-first century, with critics such as Augusto Boal, who over two thousand years—and libraries of literary theory—after Aristotle, agreed with his Greek predecessor that "tragedy, in all its qualitative and quantitative aspects, exists as a function of the effect it seeks, *catharsis*" (132). Put differently, for both Aristotle and Boal, tragedy is distinguished from other drama through the effect that it aims to produce on its audience, and the specific devices that it uses to produce this effect.

It hardly needs pointing out, however, that every audience is not the same. Spanning different cultures, countries, and even historical eras, the people who walk through the doors of the theater to watch the curtain rise are notable for their differences, for the heterogeneity rather than homogeny. It follows that in order to be truly tragic, tragedians must subvert the conventions of tragedy in order to play on the cultural expectations particular to their specific audience. In other words, as social conventions change, so must the means that playwrights use to produce *catharsis*. A comparison of two vastly different plays, written in remarkably dissimilar times–Aristotle's example of the classic tragedy, *Oedipus Rex*, and *Death of a Salesman*, arguably the harbinger of modern tragedy–illustrates this point.

Although the plays both pivot around a tragic hero, who suffers as a result of a flaw within himself, they diverge in the ways in which they present their ideas. This has led some critics to argue that *Death of a Salesman* cannot be regarded as a tragedy (e.g. Aarnes 95-7) because it deviates too much from Aristotle's theories. However, a close examination of the two plays determines that by subverting Aristotle's conventions, Arthur Miller does not depart from the tragic vision, but rather creates a tragedy that is both relevant to and resonates within his time.

Many literary scholars (e.g. Steinler 146) have argued that Miller's choice of hero makes it impossible for his play to be considered as a tragedy. Indeed, Willy Loman is by no means a tragic protagonist in the Aristotelian sense. Aristotle believed that the best tragic hero is one of high social standing "like Oedipus and Thyestes and the splendid men of such families" (66). *Oedipus Rex* undoubtedly conforms to this view. Sophocles clearly articulates Oedipus' high status in the character list, in which he is described as "King of Thebes, supposed son of Polybos and Merope, King and Queen of Corinth" (Sophocles 43). Furthermore, Oedipus does not merely appear as a king, but also speaks as one, leading the Priest to refer to him as "o mighty power" (Sophocles, Prologue 44). Although *Oedipus Rex,* however, undoubtedly corresponds to the idea that the tragic hero should be "of high repute and great good standing (Aristotle 66), this reveals more about the Athenian audience for which he was writing than the nature of tragedy as a whole. Aristotle himself lends weight to this argument, claiming that "it was not art but chance that led the poets in their search to the discovery of how to produce this effect in their plots" as "they have to go to the families in which such *pathē* occurred" (69). It follows that the classical tragedians did not afford such grand stature to their heroes for any literary purpose but rather because of the demands of their source material. Aristotle's notion of class hierarchy, in which women are seen as "inferior" and slaves as "low-grade" (69) reinforces this idea, indicating that within the social structure of ancient Greece, powerful men were regarded as the only people worth writing about. George Boas supports this claim, asserting that within the class-dominated society of ancient Athens, a man had to be a nobleman in order to be significant (147-48). This suggests that Aristotle's concept of the tragic hero as holding a noble position within the world was not necessarily a reflection on the literary choices made by classical Greek tragedians, but rather a manifestation of the class-based and patriarchal society in which he lived.

Furthermore, within such a hierarchical culture, creating a hero of social privilege was crucial in the production of pity, fear, and *catharsis* in the audience. By emphasizing Oedipus' position as king, Sophocles' was able to universalize the fate of his tragic hero by playing on Greek ideas about the inherent links between the monarch and the state. Oedipus frequently refers to his fellow Thebans as "my children" (Sophocles 43), and himself recognizes the connection between his position as king and his people, claiming that it is necessary to uncover Laios' killer "for my sake, for Apollo's for the sick / Sterile city" (Sophocles 46). Indeed, this idea of a connection between the crown and the state is prevalent in tragedies written within monarchic societies. For instance, in *Hamlet*, which was written in Elizabethan England, Shakespeare demonstrates an intrinsic link between the morality of the monarch and the rotten state of Denmark. However, although the idea of a suffering king, queen, or nobleman might arouse pity in those living within an aristocratic culture, it seems unlikely that it would produce similar emotions in those living in societies such as the modern day United States. Playwrights must then turn to other kinds of tragic heroes in order to create *catharsis* for their audiences.

In light of this, the low social-standing of Willy Loman does not signal a departure from the tragic vision, but rather an attempt on the part of Miller to create a hero relevant to his times. Indeed, a closer examination of the social and economic climate in which Miller was writing indicates that, in depicting the fall of the common man, the playwright did not lessen the tragic nature of his play, but conversely increased it by creating a tragic hero more likely to produce pity and fear in modern audiences than the kings of Sophocles and Shakespeare. In his ground-breaking Marxist analysis of tragedy, Raymond Williams argues that the early tragic heroes were the product of an unconscious belief held by aristocratic societies that suffering was linked to social nobility. This paradigm was disrupted by the rise of the middle-classes, who demanded that the potential for tragedy should be extended to all men (150-1). Miller himself was both aware of, and writing in response to, such ideas. In his article "The Tragedy of the Common Man," which many people believe to be his reply to criticism of his choice to create a tragic protagonist out of a salesman, he argues that in a world without kings it is necessary for dramatists to abandon the outward forms of tragedy, and instead follow it to the heart of the common man (745-6). It follows that in *Death of a Salesman*, Miller did not sever his play from tragedy by adopting a common man as his protagonist, but rather revised the tragic genre for a world in which a character's stature as a human being was no longer secondary to his station in society.

Although this suggests that cultural differences lay behind the disparate statures of Sophocles and Miller's heroes, it does leave another question unanswered: if Oedipus and Willy do not gain prestige from their social standing, then how do they acquire nobility within the eyes of the audience, and avoid appearing as deserving of their tragic fates? In *Oedipus Rex*, Oedipus attains his nobility by being not merely a king, but also a good king, worthy of his throne. Oedipus himself recognizes this, claiming that he is prominent not for his lineage, but rather because he is "the simple man – who knows nothing - / I thought it out for myself" (Sophocles 49). Indeed, the play reveals that Oedipus ascended to the throne of Thebes not because of a birthright, but through his intelligence: he managed to solve the riddle of the sphinx. This indicates that strength of character is more important than social standing in the construction of a tragic hero. Similarly, as a king, Oedipus does not revel in his own power, but rather shares it with those around him, giving both Kreon and Iokaste a share in his throne. Indeed, Oedipus' sin of pride manifests itself in terms of his kingship. As the play progresses and Oedipus loses *hubris*, he begins to demonstrate that in his heart, he wants absolute power; "still, I must rule" (Sophocles 52) he asserts when Kreon asks him if he should remain kind even if his judgment is flawed. This reinforces the idea that high social standing is not essential to the tragic hero, as status in itself does not constitute nobility. In light of this, Miller's idea of the tragedy of the common man does fall within the parameters of the tragic vision, because although the common man by definition does not hold social power, he does have the ability to be noble.

Rather than supporting the idea of Willy as a tragic hero, however, this notion paradoxically seems to negate it, as on first glance Miller's protagonist does not appear to be noble by any stretch of the imagination. Although Esther Merle Jackson's view that the motif of the salesman is "a figure who is, in our age, a kind of hero" (5) could indicate that Willy's status as a salesman lends him a form of heroism, a closer look at *Death of a Salesman* suggests something different. While Oedipus is notable for being successful at kingship, it quickly becomes apparent that Willy is a relative failure as a salesman. He frequently struggles to pay the bills, and is forced to borrow money from Charley. On a personal level, he can neither sell himself to Howard, nor his vision of the American Dream to Biff. As Charley puts it, "the only thing you got in the world is what you can sell. And the funny thing is that you're a salesman, and you don't know that" (Miller 727). Furthermore, while Oedipus is specifically designated as a king in Sophocles' character list, Miller's catalogue of participants describes his

protagonist merely as "Willy Loman" (703). Willy is then in many ways a reverse mirror image of Oedipus; while the latter gains nobility through his success as a king, Willy arguably loses stature though his failure as a salesman, suggesting that he is limited within–if not excluded from altogether–the role of tragic hero, as audiences will have trouble feeling pity and fear in relation to his plight.

Similarly, Willy has many other failings within the play that arguably lessen his appeal to audiences. He frequently lies about his prowess as a salesman, while his brand of parenting is arguably detrimental to the development of his sons. Furthermore, through his affair with the Woman, he creates a chasm between himself and his eldest son Biff that specifically damages Biff's chances of succeeding as a football player, or indeed in life in general; however, almost all of these failings can be attributed to Willy's overwhelming desire to be a profitable salesman, and succeed in his pursuit of the American Dream. For example, as Christopher Innes has noted, in exaggerating his sales prowess, Willy is simply following the directions given to him as a salesman (66), while his encouragement of Biff's lying is symptomatic of the ideas that Ben has instilled in him regarding the interrelated nature of cheating and success. Even Willy's affair with the Woman is an attempt to improve his sales, as she comes with the promise of putting him "right through to the buyers" (Miller 712). Willey then does not so much fail as being a salesman as the values of salesmanship fails him, indicating that he is in some respects at least deserving of the pity and fear of Miller's readers and audiences.

American society does not merely create Willy's failings, furthermore, but also eradicates almost all traces of his nobility. Willy's skills lie in his ability to construct things with his hands; he built the ceiling in the living room, and, at the end of the play, Biff realizes that "there's more of him in the front stoop than in all the sales he has made" (Miller 740); however, the values of a consumer-based society have indoctrinated Willy to such an extent that he does not see the value of this skill, but rather feels that he should abandon it to achieve the pinnacle of capitalism: salesmanship. Similarly, part of Willy's dignity stems from the love that his sons and wife obviously feel for him, but this element of decency is countered by the fact that only a "Singleman" (Miller 723) can succeed in sales. Arguably, Willy's greatest nobility lies in his qualities as a human being. "I don't say he's a great man," Linda asserts, "Willy Loman never made a lot of money. His name was never in the paper. But he's a good man, and a terrible thing is happening to him" (Miller 716). In other words, much of Willy's stature comes from his mere humanity, indicating that in his play, Miller was asserting the inherent nobility of the human

condition. However, Willy is stripped of his very humanity by the exhaustion that he feels as a result of his life on the road, leading to the point when he commits suicide. This highlights the extent to which society has rendered his nobility obsolete. A closer examination of Willy's death suggests that capitalist society plays an even more disturbing role than is at first apparent, as he arguably kills himself so that Biff can get the insurance money that he needs to start in business. As Robert Martin observes, there is something inherently heroic in Willy's decision to lay down his life to give Biff a chance, as "to argue that he does not gain size or stature from his struggles is to ignore the courage required for such a sacrifice" (101-3). While Oedipus' nobility is reinforced by the society in which he lives, Willy's is conversely negated, indicating that Miller was subverting the tragic genre in order to allow for social commentary within his play.

Although critics such as William Aarnes have used Willy's obliterated sense of nobility to suggest that *Death of a Salesman* is not a tragedy because its protagonist is not a tragic hero, but rather a pathetic, limited man (95), such an argument ignores the social impact of Miller's play, and the effect that his presentation of Willy had on his contemporary audiences. 1950s America did *not* see Willy as entirely feeble and limited, but rather focused on the pathetic nature of a society that limits a man in such a way. It follows from this that *Death of a Salesman* was the tragedy of a society rather than a single man, and audiences responded to this, feeling pity for Willy's plight, and fear that, as members of the same society, something similar could happen to this. The tragic effect of *Death of a Salesman* was thus heightened rather than lessened.

Death of a Salesman, however, does not deviate from the conventions of tragedy established by *Oedipus Rex* solely in its transformation of the tragic hero, but also in terms of other key elements of tragedy. For instance, Miller's presentation of the *anagnorisis* or recognition scene, which Aristotle described as the "change from ignorance to knowledge" (64), differs substantially from Sophocles' in *Oedipus Rex*. Iokaste certainly experiences some form of recognition, as after hearing the Messenger's story, she flees into the palace to kill herself. However, she never articulates her realization, and indeed hopes that the rest of the world never shares in it, wishing that Oedipus "may never learn who you are" (Sophocles 57). This leaves the main *anagnorisis* to be experienced by Oedipus, thus aligning the play with the conventional view of tragedy in which it is the tragic hero who makes the greatest leap from ignorance to knowledge. Miller's presentation of the *anagnorisis* is somewhat different. Willy does not

seem to realize the illusory nature of the American Dream to which he has subscribed, and is still misguidedly claiming "when the mail comes in he'll [Biff] be ahead of Bernard again" (Miller 739) at the end of the play. Instead, the recognition is felt by both Biff, who not only sees the false nature of his father's dreams, but also eventually realizes that there are alternative modes of living, and the audience, who when the curtain falls, are left with the disturbing truths of their own society, and an increased knowledge of the steps which they can take to avoid becoming Willy Lomans themselves. In her attempt to redefine drama for the twentieth century, Dorothea Krook proposes that the tragic protagonist does not in himself need to receive self-knowledge, but that the hero's suffering instead serves as a facilitator for the audience's *anagnorisis* (12-13). Within this new mode of recognition, the audience arguably achieves more *catharsis* than in the ancient Greek tragic schema, as the self-knowledge that they themselves have gained makes them increasingly able to expel pity and fear. By subverting the conventions of tragedy, Miller then achieves a fuller tragic vision than that of earlier dramatists, indicating that to limit tragedy to its outward conventions is to limit its scope as a whole.

This is not the only notable divergence between Sophocles and Miller's conception of *anagnorisis*, as the plays do not only show the recognition being experience by different character-types, but also in different ways. In *Oedipus Rex*, Oedipus' experience of recognition is marked by its physicality; "O light, may I look on you for the last time," (Sophocles 60) Oedipus exclaims after hearing his fate. Similarly, after realizing the full consequences of his destiny, Oedipus emphasizes the corporeal nature of his *anagnorisis* in his statement to his children that he "is damned in the blood he shed with his own hand" (Sophocles 64). It is likely that the tangible nature of Oedipus' realization influenced Aristotle's conception of tragedy to an extent. In the *Poetics*, he argues that action alone is the most important element of tragic drama, as "the mimēsis of their character is only included along with and because of their actions" (59). In other words, both Sophocles and Aristotle demonstrate how the physical, tangible nature of things was crucial to both drama, and the experience of pity, fear and *catharsis* by the audience.

In contrast, the *anagnorisis* experience by both Biff and the audience within *Death of a Salesman* is of a more psychological nature, constituting a form of internal knowledge about the self, and its relation to the world. Jackson argues that this reflects a movement within modern drama as a whole towards placing the inner consciousness rather than outward events at the center of tragic conflict (11).

This is reinforced by Miller's original stage plans for *Death of a Salesman*, which stipulated that the stage should be shaped like a man's head, thus foregrounding the play's privileging of internal thought processes over actions. Although this represents a deviation from Aristotle's conception of tragedy, it is unlikely that it would have reduced the cathartic experience of pity and fear for Miller's contemporaries. Instead, it demonstrates that Miller was altering the conventions of tragedy in order to male them relevant to a world that had experienced and absorbed both Freud and existentialism, and privileged thought as at least equivalent to–if not higher than–deed.

Although *Oedipus Rex* and *Death of a Salesman* differ on a range of levels, they do share similarities in the way in which they present both the causation of, and level of choice behind, their hero's *peripeteia*. Sophocles and Miller depict their protagonists descending into tragedy as a result of the forces operating within the societies in which they live, while both Oedipus and Willy's flaws lie in their opposition to these forces. This suggests that the two playwrights adhered to Aristotle's idea that a hero must not be entirely deserving of his fate, as such a figure would arouse neither fear nor pity (66). However, Aristotle further problematizes this issue, arguing that the hero's *peripeteia* must not be accidental, but rather occur as a direct result of the action. "There is a great difference between happening next and happening next as a result" he argues (63-6). In his overview of the tragic genre, Adrian Poole argues that many of the Greek tragedians overcame this obstacle by placing their dramas within a world infused with divinity (21). This idea is clearly present in *Oedipus Rex*, in which the crux of the play is that "no man in the world / Can make the gods do more than the gods will" (Sophocles 46). Indeed, Oedipus' fate in its entirety is predetermined by a number of oracles that predict that he will kill his father, marry his mother, and be a parent to his own brothers and sisters. The inevitability of Oedipus' fate would have been reinforced in Sophocles' own time by the fact that the play would have been performed at a religious festival, in front of an audience who already knew how the story would pan out. Sophocles further strengthens this through the foreshadowing that he employs throughout the play. In his defense of Laios, Oedipus proclaims that "I take the son's part, just as though / I were his son" (Sophocles 46), while he accuses Teiresias of "arrogance toward the city" (Sophocles 48). This suggests that by placing his action within a divinely ruled universe, and showing how man has little – if any – control over his own destiny, Sophocles is able to integrate a chain of causation into his play.

Oedipus Rex is then prevented from portraying a merely accidental reversal of fortune that would arouse neither fear nor pity.

Within this change of causation, however, Sophocles faces the further problem of how to present Oedipus as being in some way responsible for his own fate, and not just the intrinsically un-tragic figure of a pawn in the hands of the gods. He does this by showing Oedipus as refusing to believe the oracles; at one point, the king even refers to the prophecies of Teiresias as "worthless" (48). The chorus clearly sees this as an example of Oedipus trying to place himself above the gods within the hierarchy of being, thus precipitating his own fate:

> Haughtiness and the high hand of disdain
>
> Tempt and outrage God's holy law;
>
> And any mortal who dares hold
>
> No immortal Power in awe
>
> Will be caught up in a net of pain. (Sophocles 55)

Indeed, Oedipus does not merely doubt the word of the gods, but also to an extent tries to set himself up as a rival to their power. At the very beginning of the play, the Priest states "how all the ages of our people / Cling to your [Oedipus'] altar steps," while Oedipus casts himself as a god by stating that his people "claim some blessing" (Sophocles 43) from him. Therefore, by integrating the world of the divine into his play, Sophocles not only creates a clear chain of causation, but also shows how Oedipus, through his *hubris*, is partially responsible for his own fate even in a world in which almost everything appears to be preordained.

It becomes immediately obvious, however, that Miller cannot replicate the strategies of Sophocles, as *Death of a Salesman* was written in a post-existential world in which Nietszche had declared God to be dead. John Gassner recognizes in his article on the problematic nature of modern tragedy, arguing that "the pagan beliefs that served attic tragedy twenty-five years ago are no longer acceptable to modern man" (300). In *Death of a Salesman*, Miller responds to this by replacing the gods with modern society. The way in which this society operates within the play is in many ways similar to Sophocles' deities: although the restrictions are not spiritual but social, they also serve to determine Willy's fate. This is apparent in Miller's description of the set of his play, in which there is "a solid vault of apartment homes around the small, fragile-seeming home" (Miller 703). Willy himself sees nature as

a constraining force, refusing to make room for his love of nature: "The street is lined with cars. There's not a breath of fresh air in the neighborhood. The grass don't grow anymore, you can't raise a carrot in the back yard. They should've had a law against apartment houses" (Miller 705). The only way in which Willy can transgress the constrictions set up by society remains literally in his dreams, as "in the scenes of the past these boundaries are broken" (Miller 703). His socialization by modern society, represented by Ben, supports the idea that he is driven to his death by the values of a consumer oriented America. Willy completely internalizes his notion of Ben as a "success incarnate" (Miller 712), leading him to try and succeed as a salesman in "this nuthouse of a city" when it is likely that he would have achieved more "mixing cement on some open plain" (Miller 718). This suggests that, much like Sophocles, Miller created a hierarchy of being within his play that allowed for causation, thus heightening the pity, fear and *catharsis* experienced by his audience. However, the ways in which Miller deviates from Sophocles are just as revealing; by replacing the gods with society, Miller highlights the negative effect that the culture in which he lived could have on his fellow men, thus creating a truly social tragedy, relevant to modern times.

  Oedipus Rex and *Death of a Salesman* also share likenesses in the ways in which they produce *catharsis.* In the modern era, critics have tended to see Aristotle's idea of *catharsis* as expelling pity and fear as indicative of the fact that tragedy should, to some extent, have a hopeful if not happy ending. For instance, Krook argues that the final psychological response to tragedy should be uplifting (14), while Miller himself asserted that "the possibility of victory must be there in a tragedy" ("Common Man" 745). Both *Oedipus Rex* and *Death of a Salesman* achieve this by affirming the possibility of human choice, albeit in a somewhat tragic manner. Oedipus' gouging out of his eyes is arguably the only action that results from his free will in the entire play. Although Teiresias alludes to Oedipus' future blindness in his prophecy, it is not mentioned anywhere within the Delphic Oracles. The language that Oedipus uses to describe his blinding also emphasizes that it was an act that he took independently of the gods; "the blinding hand was my own" he admits resignedly, before concluding that "I condemned myself" (Sophocles 62). Similarly, Willy's suicide, however misguided it may be construed as being, is in some ways a triumph against the odds. Martin supports this claim, arguing that as Willy acts freely with courage and optimism; his suicide is tragic (102). This suggests that both Sophocles and Miller enable their audiences to feel *catharsis* in part because of the form of tragic victory over destiny that their

protagonists achieve. It follows from this that there are some elements of tragedy that will remain timeless as they pertain to the universal concept of the human condition, but that others – such as the nature of tragic heroism – must remain in flux, evolving and developing as ideas about both humanity and society change.

Considering Miller's argument that tragedy must not merely offer hope, but also the possibility of victory, it is hardly surprising that the ending of *Death of a Salesman* is more uplifting than that of *Oedipus Rex*. "I know who I am," (Miller 740) asserts Biff at the conclusion of the play, recognizing the flaws inherent in his father's dreams. This indicates that although the threatening presence of society returns at the end of the play–the stage directions state that "over the house the hard towers of the apartment buildings rise into sharp focus" (Miller 740)–by holding true to the values that make people who they are, it is possible for them to hold onto both their happiness and identities even within a society that revolves around sex and money. In contrast, although the possibility of Oedipus' free will arguably does give some hope to the end of *Oedipus Rex*, modern audiences have tended to see its conclusion as entirely pessimistic. Bernard Knox argues that this interpretation is influenced by the cultural perceptions of modern day society, and that the ancient Greeks would have interpreted it somewhat differently. Knox claims that the lasting message of the play is a reassertion of the inherent value of both religion and prophecy. To a great audience witnessing the play for the first time at a religious festival, looking for order in a seemingly disordered world, the restoration of these values would have offered hope (Knox 18-22). This supports the notion that although tragedies to some extent follow the same conventions, they are forced to subvert them to produce *catharsis* within specific audiences. Furthermore, what appears to be supremely un-tragic to one audience may just be the maneuverings of a playwright to achieve the tragic effect within a different cultural era.

A comparison of *Oedipus Rex* and *Death of a Salesman* reveals that the both plays do include many of the criteria for tragedy established by Aristotle in his *Poetics*; however, Miller deviates from and subverts many of these generic conventions in order to make his play both relevant and tragic to a society in which nobility is not measured by social status, and faith in God has been eroded. This suggests that tragedy is an evolving genre, constantly breaking the boundaries established by critics such as Aristotle in order to maintain its inherent purpose of creating fear, pity, and *catharsis* within an audience. Indeed, it seems that to suggest otherwise is to eliminate much of what is tragic to the

modern world for the sake of adhering to an unbending set of rules that were devised over three thousand years ago. As Gassner concludes, "Tragic art is subject to evolutionary processes, and tragedy created in modern times must be modern. The fact that it will be different from tragedy within three, five, or twenty-five years ago does not mean that it will no longer be tragedy; it will merely be different" (300).

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Poems

Noel Sloboda, Penn State York

Isabel Archer's Raveled Sleeves

Of care:

My husband dreams

I leave him,

I dream I

love my husband,

and my husband

loves repeats–

I love to dream

I dream,

and I love

my husband leaving

me alone

in my dreams.

Once Proudest Prisoner

Before Alarbus goes to the alter

of Rome, he takes one last look

at white walls died red and wonders

why he once thought he might scale them;

knows now what is on the inside;

knows he should have just donned

a palliament, rung the front doorbell,

asked his brethren to let him in,

to allow him back to where he goes

now from the ossuary: home again.

Identity, Empire, and the World-Banking Concept of Education

in the First-Year College Writing Classroom

Richard Zumkhawala-Cook, Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania

Throughout the 1980s and 90s "identity" became an important, if not privileged, concept in humanities scholarship and teaching as way to investigate the dynamics of social and individual meanings. Functioning as a focal point for addressing the powerful mechanisms of normativity, discipline, and justice, identity and its varied definitions continue to provide ways of exploring creative transgressions, methods of resistance and important "border-crossing" practices, all of which continually redefine and counter the well documented historical patterns of alienation and oppression. Terms like "difference" and "hybridity" have forged successfully against brutally rigid constructions of national, cultural, and sexual belonging by asserting the plurality of experience and multiple dimensions of meaning. Without question, these categories have found a home in the first-year college writing classroom as means for connecting political debates to students' experiences, to their definitions of self, and to the way they make meaning as writers in relation to the realities of the world around them.

According to Hardt and Negri's influential theoretical treatise *Empire*, however, in the age of globalization, or what they call "Empire" the rules have changed in the post-Soviet era, or at least have taken a new turn.[1] While hybrid identities, flexibile hierarchies of power, and contingent subjectivities that were once imagined as counterhegemonic cultural forms, such positions of difference and "deterritorialized" selves" now facilitate globalization's production and maintenance of marginal practices. The dominant pedagogical and rhetorical mode of identity critique indeed has attacked the binary strictures of identity that are hostile to new modes of self-definition and articulations social difference. So too, however, has globalization, which stands in opposition to these rigid boundaries, regarding them as barriers to capital development and recognizing through its logic that in the margins lay new differences, new identities, and by extension, new consumers and new markets. This, of course, is not to say that all social differences, or all identities, are embraced by Empire. We need only ask one of the hundreds of thousands of tribal peoples removed and washed out of ancestral homelands by big

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[1] While Hardt and Negri suggest that Empire began as a force at the end of World War II with the formation of the Breton Woods Institutions of the World Bank and IMF, its emergence as an organizing principle of global relations took shape after the break-up of Soviet imperialism.

dam projects funded by Enron and the World Trade Organization in India's Narmada Valley, or any worker whose life has been threatened for organizing a union at any one of the hundreds of sweatshop cities, or Export Processing Zones, throughout the world.[1] Yet Empire craves difference, and thrives on constructions of identity, but only as they are able to enter and reproduce the capitalist marketplace. As Marx argued about questions of market liberty, "It is not individuals who are set free by competition; it is rather, capital which is set free" (650). In light of Hardt and Negri's theory, this essay explores how, in an age when the "global village" is treated as a given we must reframe our discussions of identity beyond conventional metaphors of "border-crossing," hybridity, and performative acts of individual cultural resistance, and more in terms of alternative progressive networks, solidarities, and identifications that, while also resisting fixed boundaries, re-imagine identity as a collective oppositional global project. If, as Paolo Freire famously argued, that the "banking concept" of education, which treats students as empty vessels to be "filled" by authority's knowledge, involves "indoctrinating [students] to adapt to the world of oppression" (56), then is identity in today's first-year college writing classroom anything more than a tool of a "*World*-Banking" model of education?

The relatively popularity of identity as an interpretive device at the turn of the 21st century demonstrates its centrality to a number of political issues about social being, especially in describing the conflicts of ethnic, national, and racial belonging. Identity helps to harness divergent dimensions of affective and political affiliations and to reckon with the patterns of inclusion and exclusion that accompany them. It calculates how tacit belonging to a group or community and how the biopolitics of sameness and rootedness in particular histories can develop into conscious forms of self-definition. It names the boundaries of a group and the ways it is constituted, maintained and enforced. For activists, social critics, and teachers invested in engaging issues of social justice, identity initiates critiques of power and authority as collectivities organize into political forms like nations, interest groups, movements, and classes. It helps articulate social patterns of material privilege and subordination that are reproduced and disciplined by rhetorical, symbolic and technological forms.

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[1] See Arundhati Roy's *Power Politics* (Boston: South End Press,2001) for an overview of the human toll caused by dam projects in India enabled by neoliberal economic privatization, multilateral agreements, and transnational corporations such as Enron, Siemens and General Electric. See also Vandana Shiva's *Water Wars: Privatization, Polution, and Profit* (Boston: South End Press, 2003), Vijay Prashad's *Fat Cat and Running Dogs: The Enron Stage of Capitalism* (New York: Zed Books, 2002), and Greg Palast's *The Best Democracy Money Can Buy* (New York: Plume, 2003). For analyses of Export Processing Zones see chapter nine of Naomi Klein's *No Logo* (New York: Picador, 2000).

 As a number of cultural theorists have argued, however, identity most commonly functions as a deep structure of reductive individuality, one that becomes removed from history or contemporary social contexts—a pre-political or biocultural phenemonon that ceases to be a process of self-making and social interaction. It is treated as a silent and static signifier, an object to be possessed and displayed, closed off from the possibility of communication across the fortified boundaries of other particularities. Within the most visible and institutional forms of multiculturalism, identity means the acknowledgement and often "celebration" of difference, but in doing so it signals the elision of the histories of resistance, movement, subordination, and survival that have formed cultural, racial, gendered and sexual identities. As Vijay Prashad notes, it is much more common to hear the question "Why do the black kids sit together in the cafeteria?" instead of "Why do our institutions routinely uphold the privileges of whiteness?"(x-xi). Removed from its relation to other definitions of self and relations of power, identity becomes a transcendent and permanently discrete effect of largely benign "heritage" traditions and cultural roots rather than the historical and ongoing struggle for social meaning.

In this frame, we might say that identity becomes fixed—it is that which precedes you to tell you what, and to some extent who, you are. Yet if identity is so static, so individually permanent, apparently, what happened to hybridity, fluid subjectivities, the freeplay of differences, and the discourse of boundary crossing? In the same way that Michel Foucault described "power" as a technology of naming, creating distinctions, and constructing detailed knowledges, Empire claims "identity" as its own technology of global authority. Hardt and Negri suggest that forms of self expression and cultural styles are a product of Empire's own "celebration" of differences in the global marketplace at once fixed and hyper-individuated, expanding almost endlessly to generate and "include" new identities, new territories of selfhood while simultaneously defining their limits. Under this logic, once individuals discover that they "have" a certain identity, they can also embrace and discover other hybrid identities, multiple selves, which move back, forth and beyond a variety of definitions of kinship. By acknowledging the multiplicity of difference, identity may be liberated from the old master narratives of binary oppositions and repressive monolithic social categories of self and other, but it is also liberated from some of the social structures—nation-states, political solidarities, protected environmental spaces—that would restrict the growth of globalization. According to Hardt

and Negri, new ethnicities, styles of self-expression, and modes of self-determination are embraced by this carnival of borderless being, as long as they do not threaten the free flow of capital:

> The ideology of the world market has always been the anti-foundational and anti-essentialist discourse par excellence. Circulation, mobility, diversity, and mixture are its very conditions of possibility. Trade brings differences together and the more the merrier. Differences (of commodities, populations, cultures, and so forth) seem to multiply infinitely in the world market which attacks nothing more violently than fixed boundaries: it overwhelms any binary division with its infinite multiplicities. (150)

Empire does not "discover' differences in the marginal spaces of global life, but produces them and proliferates their unique distinctions as not only a part of the market, but as the very market itself. We need look no further than contemporary postmodern marketing practices, which strategize the development of more and more hybrid and differentiatied populations as target markets—one for suburban teenage girls, another for NASCAR dads, another for Latino gay men. Products are offered as reflections of cultural and personal style: Coca-Cola , for instance, boasts its hundreds of soft drink recipes for the regional cultural tastes of its worldwide consumer base. In contrast to the rigid boundaries and homogenous units that characterized the old "corporate culture," current business practices emphasize the need to be open to divergent and plural practices and to flexibly manage cultural difference in a globalized world.[1] Corporate workplaces emphasize cultural exchange, embracing diversity to maximize creativity, freeplay, and new possibilities beyond conventional boundaries of identity. The workforce purports to include all racial and cultural backgrounds, and to emphasize openness, youthful vitality and progressive thought—offices begin to look like dorm rooms as an environment of "fun" is encouraged.[2] Tolerance, cultural awareness, and the intricate processes of acculturation, assimilation and rebellion are not only carefully studied, but are understood and

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[1] See R. Roosevelt Thomas, Jr., *Beyond Race and Gender: Unleashing the Power of Your Total Work Force by Managing Diversity* (New York: American Management Association, 1991).

[2] According to Beverley Kaye and Sharon Jordan-Evans in their bestselling employee retention book for managers, *Love'em or Lose'em: Getting Good People to Stay* (San Francisco: Berrett Koehler, 2002), "Research shows that a fun-filled workplace generates enthusiasm— and that enthusiasm leads to increased productivity, better custommrer service, a positive attitude about the company and higher odds that your talent will stay" (98). See also David Krackhardt and Jeffrey Hanson, *301 Ways to Have Fun at Work* (San Francisco: Berrett Kohler, 1997).

practiced by business itself, while the managers' role is to organize these differences and their circulation in the interests of profit.

Despite the hope of diversity and flexible hierarchies that appear to liberate us from antiquated monolithic ways of thinking, Empire imposes new hierarchies and carefully maintains the conflicts of old hierarchies in order to promote the transcendence of the marketplace and its centrality as the authoritative means for producing difference. In my state of Pennsylvania, a vocal public proved powerless in attempting to cease UPN's 2004 production of an undeniably exploitative reality show that placed Amish teens in a lush Los Angeles mansion packed with the latest technological gadgets and high-end luxuries. Regardless of the many symbolic resolutions passed by legislators, the spectacle of the margins of identity mean profit, as Amish culture, or the UPN's version of it anyway, was piped through cable boxes across the nation (de Moraes). [1]

In her outstanding study, *No Logo*, Naomi Klein further illustrates how the market production of identity has worked tirelessly to corporatize constructions of youth culture in the form of "cool." Whether it is the ubiquitous "swooshing" of urban community playgrounds and parks, indie skateboarders sponsored by Vans sneakers, or the commemorative Woodstock '94 Pepsi at two bucks a can, spaces that were once cherished or reviled as intersticial creations of youth sub- and counterculture are repackaged, manufactured and mass-marketed to youth as their own. Market researchers of youth culture, or "cool hunters' comb high schools and college campuses looking for unusual styles and cutting-edge aesthetics, as consultants for Absolut Vodka, Levi's, and Reebok to make such claims as "monks are cool" (qtd in Klein 70). This search, of course, is not to pay homage to the differences that are discovered, but to sanitize them of their oppositional histories and to empty out the politics of style. Without interpretation, history, or politics, culture becomes mere advertising. This is no more evident than in the fetishization of white youth for urban black aesthetics, or, to take another example, a fashion designer's quote in a 1994 issue of *Vogue*, "It's terrible to say, very often the most exciting outfits are from the poorest people" (qtd in Klein 73). Within the frame of globalization, these differences, which are distributed on a grand scale, enforce their primacy over those that do not

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[1] Perhaps in an effort to address the public furor over the reality show, the producers delivered an ironic editorial twist. The kids from *the city* were the ones cast from clichéd identities of youth culture: a gay club organizer, a militant vegan, a first-generation Latina college student from South Central, LA, etc. The Amish kids, in contrast, while curious, proved to be remarkably unaffected by the drama of city life and were ultimately portrayed as unexotic, no doubt to the disappointment of many viewers and the likely reason for the show's brief four-episode run. See Philip Kenicott, "Amish in the City—Hollywood's Urban Descent," *Washington Post*, Thursday, July 29, 2004. C1.

fit into the marketplace. In particular, Asia's estimated one billion elite global teen consumers move comfortably through the malls of Empire, connected by NBA jerseys, Jay-Z videos, and Sony Playstations. While adults in China, India, and Vietnam tend to hold on to traditional customs and practices, the youth are consuming global cool as the means and mode of progress, change and cultural liberation. According to one New York-based ad agency's survey of over 27,000 middle-class 15- to 18-year olds in 45 countries, "Despite different cultures, middle-class youth all over the world seem to live their lives as if in parallel universe. They get up in the morning, put on their Levi's and Nikes, grab their caps, backpacks, and Sony personal CD players, and head for school" (qtd in Klein 119). Perhaps corporate globalization itself can be understood as a series of endlessly proliferating parallel universes projecting the same privileged image, differentiated not by what they produce, but only by their ability offer another vision. It is hierarchization and homogeneity through diversity. Not American, not local, but a global unity through shopping.

As teachers and scholars of writing, globalization's effects on our understandings of identity should first have us suspicious of the assumption that the embrace of identity's fluidity by the global middle-class describes the lived condition of the developing world, where, for instance, according to the World Bank a total of 1.1 billion people live on one dollar a day or less. As the global bourgeoise explores the possibilities of hybridity and fragmented selves, labor itself is made flexible through contracting, sub-contracting, and outsourcing, mobile factories move from one national tax-free, regulation-free zone to another, and a disposable and permanently replaceable workforce is sustained. Secondly, this global relationship of market identity, whether it is in the U.S., Brazil or China, constructs individual and collective meaning solely as a consumer practice. Questions of citizenship, civic participation, creative expression, even political ideology are seen through we shop, how we accumulate commodities, and how we speak to the world as participants in the marketplace. But quite obviously, the opportunities to speak back are severely limited, despite recent narrow efforts to shape markets through consumer activism. In fact, what we're left with in this structure is a one-way flow of information, where marketers, manufacturers and retailers dictate the scope of how we can make meaning for ourselves and with each other. I'm always amazed at how much pride students take in declaring themselves "good shoppers." Only rarely will someone admit to not having honed this basic skill of the globalized citizenry. Participating in politics is confined to voting and writing legislators, and

changing culture does not even register. We don't make culture, we consume it. As Arjun Apparudai has effectively argued, consumption has become a serious form of work in late industrial society, one that entails the labor of reading and negotiating ubiquitous fashion messages, finances, money management, and of disciplining our imaginations not simply towards commodities, but towards the conditions of consciousness in which buying is possible (Appadurai 30). In short, our practices of consumption in the age of globalization are developed through a host of everyday cultural and ideological literacies that deserve examination in the classroom. And as we examine this work, we must examine the possibilities of changing the paradigm that privileges consumption over citizenship.

Certainly critical pedagogy has challenged educational structures that encourage passive learning, but much of its praxis remains confined within questions of identities within America's national borders, which dangerously poses the world affecting "us" rather than addressing how the U.S. shapes the world. What, for instance, does American identity mean to Mexican families who never enter the U.S. but manufacture "American Eagle" chinos in Maquiladoras just across the Rio Grande? The large number of current composition readers that exclusively focus on concerns of American identities further attest to pedagogical practices that reify cultural and political solidarities as primarily national concerns.[1] Even closer to home the general education "Culturally Diverse Literature" course at my university explicitly restricts the curriculum to American texts. As we continue to situate writing and reading as a political, cultural, and occasionally, liberatory activity, so too must we so too must we situate identity, and its structures of privilege and oppression, within the realities of globalization.

An obvious place to start is with our educational institutions that are much more than simply influenced by corporate globalization, but are directly constitutive of it. Campus programs and college classrooms are quick to ask how they are affected by globalization but do little to actively address the ways that higher education has formed and participated in Empire for a long time. Endowments, capital campaigns, and faculty retirement accounts, accrue wealth through World Bank bonds and the stock values of multinational companies contracted by the Word Trade Organization's "structural adjustment" programs. University apparel, from sweatshirts to faculty graduation regalia, is manufactured with sweatshop labor in Asia and Latin America. International students on campus almost always come from the elite economic and ethnic populations of their home countries, but as foreign

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[1] Examples of composition textbooks that treat multiculturalism in a national vacuum include *The Presence of Others*, *Re-Reading America*, *Cultural Conversations*, *Speculations, American Mosaic, Identity Matters,* etc.

students in the U.S. their political dissent is contained by their immigrant status; like many faculty in similar positions they risk the renewal of their visas if they exercise free speech or other Constitutional Rights reserved for American citizens. Meanwhile the organization of the workforce in universities themselves more and more resembles what one would find in any global business, such as the dramatic increase of temporary adjunct lines at the expense of permanent positions, the shift to top-down management structures at the expense of faculty governance, and the influx of corporate sponsorships at the expense of public investment in independent curricula and learning spaces.[1] If we at least consider that, as Hardt and Negri argue, Empire is not a single national, cultural or organizational body, but a diffuse and deterritorialized circuitry of localities, including universities, that materially enable and expand the flow of capital and selective knowledges about it, then we can address how we, as members of an educational community, are sitting in the belly of the beast. As such, our reading, writing and learning practices are not only reflective, but *constitutive*, of globalization, and we certainly can situate our activities and our literacies as scholars and teachers in opposition to its exploitative mechanisms. How do we define productivity, for ourselves, our universities and cultures, for example, when each depends on faraway workers whose lives and environments are radically transformed by the conditions of global production? How do we interpret the continuous and often anxious transnational flow of commodities, codes and images of cultural difference generated by technologies of the global marketplace? By addressing these questions, we might in effect be producers of a challenge to the "*World*-banking" concept of education, enabling Freire's ideal of a classroom encouraging a "critical intervention in reality" (81).

Contemporary corporate globalization is not an inevitability, just as other divisive and oppressive lived logics of identity formation—race, gender, nation—are social constructions we know can made and unmade by our cultural work. Addressing the structures of power that constitute the experience of education opens the field of our subjective practices for study, re-evaluation, and at best, provides an opportunity for students to critically and *productively* engage, and perhaps resist, their manifestations. Globalization does not have to be Empire, as evidenced by the hundreds of global networks of citizens,

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[1] See *Steal This University: The Rise of the Corporate University and the Academic Labor Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2003) and Derek Bok, *Universities in the Marketplace: The Commercialization of Higher Education* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2004), and Henry Giroux, Ed. *Beyond the Corporate University* (Lanham, MD: Rowan Littlefield, 2001).

workers, activists and students that have organized translocal affiliations in the name of equality and justice, crossing the boundaries beyond capital accumulation. Unfortunately, these examples are rarely offered to us or our students as interesting or useful in the marketplace of ideas, which are largely defined by the dominant information and educational industry. The work that these people do to speak and write back to Empire's hegemony provides innovative alternatives to our identities within the narrative of the "global village" in ways that often appeal to the very principles of the university and the classroom: humanistic compassion, meritocracy, creative countercultural expression, and civic responsibility. In many ways the university offers one of the most felicitous environments for the critique of corporate globalized arrangements.

The rapid spread and success of the United Students against Sweatshops in some of the most elite institutions in North America, for example, attest to the practical application of labor rights, social justice, human dignity and educational responsibility to the university's often unacknowledged operational policies. As teachers, we should note that the USAS's strategies employ the very skills we value and encourage in our writing classrooms—extensive research of university apparel licensing contracts, close reading and discursive analyses of public statements from manufacturers and university officials, collaboratively formed arguments, rhetorical awareness of audiences that range from peers, to parents, to politicians, to college presidents—all are used to frame a whole range of public arguments meant to produce a more democratic university identity.[1] Even further, the success of USAS derives partly through its understanding of meaning as a collective, rather than individual project, a skill largely ignored by most university curriculum, and one common in the history of literacy campaigns conducted by organizations within the Civil Rights, labor and peace movements. How, for instance, are arguments produced over a period of weeks, months, or even years, rather than as single efforts, like an essay or a famed "letter to the editor" format? How does a group strategize arguments to different target readers? How can an organization of individuals construct a set of focused claims while also respecting the differences within the group? What kind of local, national, even global affiliations and solidarities can be built between groups across communities that student activists don't usually speak to, such as students from different campuses, religious leaders, labor unions, non-governmental agencies, and

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[1] For a history of the USAS moment see Liza Featherstone, *Students Against Sweatshops: The Making of a Movement* (New York: Verso, 2002).

professional organizations? How does argument require innovative access to resources, like media outlets, online networking, funding of printing, and balancing time with the everyday demands of studies, work, and family? To even pose, let alone to answer, these questions embarks on a journey of possibility, where students' identities are not merely members of the global village, but active agents— and writers—able to critically resist and change its commonly ignored cynical and mendacious operations.

Of course, first-year writing courses do not create identities, but they could nevertheless be much better in offering spaces promoting two goals of global literacy and citizenship: first, to read the institutional texts that actively define Empire and its marketplace; and second, to understand that no meaningful social action ever occurs without critique. I can anecdotally attest to the number my colleagues at my university and beyond who have constructed fine composition classes completing the first objective by effectively developing skills for reading and responding to the problems of globalization (immigration, poverty, terrorism, global warming, technological literacy, etc.). These courses, which structurally follow the design of most composition readers, serve a crucial role in both raising a more sophisticated awareness of the scope of these issues, and at their best provide opportunities for students to conduct independent research on the impact of global issues on local communities, including their own. For example, one course created the opportunity for students to interview a local manufacturer to learn about the labor its subcontracted labor in China, the source of its raw materials, and the process of its waste disposal. In another class, a student learning about genetically modified crops pursued research on corporate multinational agri-giant Cargill when he recognized its logo pasted to the window of the animal feed store in his rural (and quite Amish) hometown. Other projects have included beginning with a commodity, such as a tomato, sweatshirt, cell phone, or automobile to critically trace its global processes of production, distribution, and consumption. Equipped with the tools of global inquiry, students ideally move beyond seeing the images or products of the marketplace as merely powerful monoliths, but as the end results of a series of deliberately constructed policies, practices, and assumptions.

As important as these skills are, they do little to consider models of democratic citizenship that transform smart investigation into critique and action. In the face of the marketplace's global enormity, when students at last gain a fuller understanding of Empire's problems, they are frequently are left with

despair when asked to consider the alternatives. As Rachel Riedner and Kevin Mahoney have recently argued in their incisive and timely book *Democracies to Come*, while students can rationally comprehend massive and often frightening global inequities, they feel powerless, unimaginative, and frequently isolated when their discovery remains distant from public discursive exchanges. "[T]he communicative networks that would promote solidarity, creativity, and connection, are substituted by deliberation with the disembodied discourses of neoliberalism masked as private, self-questioning" (80). As the authors note, this despair is a longing for community rather than just more research, more textual analysis or more classroom discussion. These certainly remain important, but I argue that writing classrooms can better engage actually existing present or historical examples of collective possibility and action, where rhetorical skills are viewed as fundamental to democratic citizenship.

What if, for instance, a writing course were to foreground global social movements rather than "problems" as way not only to understand these problems, but also to investigate the relationship of rhetorical and political action to such "common sense" institutions as the marketplace, education, and government? Indeed, the separation of "issues" from political responses is an artificial one that dangerously presumes historical phenomena appear independently of the social lives of people who daily negotiate, resist, suppress and promote their instantiation. While teaching social movements is no panacea, it views identities of citizenship a starting point rather than as an afterthought, or latecomers to the game as some textbooks on globalization have it. Even further it provides identificatory possibilities for students open to seeing themselves within the framework of "solutions," rather than as powerless subjects to broad-reaching "problems." As Riedner and Mahoney suggest, "The desire for community and for happiness may be momentarily and repeatedly deferred by despair, but it is not contained. Relations of solidarity produced by social movements offer a space to respond to that desire" (80). To return to USAS, the movement has proven to be such a fertile example for classes on globalization exactly because students who study its strategies and successes are often able to identify, if not feel solidarity, with the outrage, anger, and frustration articulated by activists who likely share their social position as college students. This is not at all to say that college students can only identify with others like them, but that they their intellectual as well as affective responses become connected to discourses of possibility, hope, and are shared by a variety of communities on the move.

The teaching of movements introduces models of global citizenship outside of the marketplace,

not as idealism, or a hypothesis that our students are so well trained to dismiss, but as a reality through which identity is defined and redefined through its links to democratic forms of culture and globalization, or what Freire called the educational "process of humanization" and a curriculum encouraging "the action and reflection of men [sic] upon their world in order to transform it" (57). Identity still holds analytical and rhetorical potential as a placeholder for understanding the way we are shaped by and participate in, the world. Yet, so far, the prevailing constructions of difference and identity have described the winners in the process of the globalized market logic. As writers and writing teachers we still must explore the boundary crossing of identity, but in ways that acknowledges its relationship to the global relations of power and the seemingly entrenched reality of marketed difference. We cannot allow identity to remain the domain of civic paralysis, disengagement, and Francis Fukuyama-esque attitudes of globalization's end of history. To learn and to write is to coordinate action; the challenge is to suggest that when considering globalization, we certainly have more than one option.

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Out of Bounds, in Reverse: Melville's *Redburn* and the Painful Knowledge of the Atlantic Rim

Jeffrey Hotz, East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania

Near the middle of Herman Melville's fourth novel, *Redburn: His First Voyage. Being the Sailor-Boy Confessions of the Son-Of-A-Gentleman, in the Merchant Service* (1849), the young narrator Wellingborough Redburn, a "green" sailor on his first voyage, draws an analogy between mastering the sundry skills of a sailor and the epistemological problem of arriving at true knowledge. Redburn comments paradoxically, "he [the sailor] must be a sort of Jack of all trades, in order to master his own [trade]. And this, perhaps, in a greater or lesser degree, is pretty much the case with all things else; for you know nothing till you know all; which is the reason we never know any thing" (182). Unlike the exotic travel-adventures in the Polynesian Islands and Tahiti in his first two books, *Typee* (1846) and *Omoo* (1847), Melville's *Redburn* is on the surface a simple seaman's yarn of a voyage from New York to Great Britain, and back. Much like today, in the nineteenth-century, a trip to England would have been one of the more common international travel experiences for an American. Redburn's voyage to Liverpool, England, however, and his subsequent wanderings in Liverpool and London have deeper philosophical underpinnings. These journeys involve a shedding of prior knowledge and the recognition that all cannot be known: the impossibility of knowledge. As an example of the problem of knowledge, the two books that Redburn carries with him to assist him in his travels—Adam Smith's *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776) and his father's old guidebook of Liverpool, *The Picture of Liverpool*, which Redburn dubs, "Old Morocco"—lead only to further bafflement.

During two transatlantic voyages—from New York to Liverpool, and then on his return, from Liverpool back to New York—Redburn strives for knowledge amidst the multifaceted transactions of the Atlantic Rim. Disoriented, Redburn discovers that capitalism fails, paternal guidance is irrelevant, and cruelty is too frequently the norm. Disillusioned by the suffering he sees everywhere, Redburn asks, "Ah! What are our creeds and how do we hope to be saved? Tell me, oh Bible, that story of Lazarus again, that I may find comfort in my heart for the poor and forlorn" (257). The answer that he arrives at is similar to the findings expressed by the author of the Old Testament Book Ecclesiastes: the only truth is human suffering, an experience Melville knew personally both as a sailor and an author.

More concretely, Melville crafts his autobiographical experiences in a travel novel that advances numerous deconstructions of social and political systems—while depicting actual experiences of suffering—that are "out of bounds," only made palatable by his naïve protagonist's bumbling transatlantic passages from "New World" to "Old World," and back. Redburn describes his longing for travel as a desire to experience "fine old lands, full of mossy cathedrals" (45), to re-live his father's stories of Old Europe. However, before even leaving New York harbor, he already feels suicidal: "And then, I thought of lying down at the bottom of the sea, stark alone, with the great waves rolling over me, and no one in the wide world knowing I was there" (79). In Redburn's confessions of alienated youth and suicide ideation, Melville presents a problematic picture of the spaces of a complex intercontinental trade. Aboard the merchant ship *Highlander* on which Redburn serves and in the commercial centers of New York, Liverpool, and London, Melville introduces the reader to a larger world where money is the final arbiter of both social status and an individual's own sense of self-worth. Through Redburn's painful initiation into the sailor's world, Melville advances an early study and critique of globalization and transatlantic capitalism with its roots in the slave trade, a system that depended on the labor and the exploitation of many.

Robin Law and Kristin Mann in their article "West Africa in the Atlantic Community: The Case of the Slave Coast" describe the large Atlantic community in terms of a whole range of "transatlantic social and cultural connections" that were generated by "commercial links established by the slave trade among ports in West Africa, America, and Europe" (307). The Atlantic Rim encompasses the coasts of Europe, Africa, North America, South America, and the Caribbean, as well as the trade routes leading to the Pacific. Bernard Bailyn's recent work *Atlantic History: Concepts and Contours* (2005) offers a useful framework to understand Atlantic history and to appreciate Melville's own inchoate conception of this region, expressed through the experiences of the character Wellingborough Redburn. Bailyn describes the origins of Atlantic history in terms of the interaction of cultures in Europe, the Western hemisphere, and West Africa that helped form "a distinctive regional entity, bearing the indelible imprints of the settlement era—violent instability, cultural conflict and alienation, racism, and brutal economic dynamism" (111). Melville's narrative *Redburn* dramatizes these encounters at the microcosmic level, through the perception of the autobiographically based protagonist.

The published proceedings of the 1997 "Melville 'Among the Nations' Conference" examine

Melville's consistent internationalism and his interest in cultural contact. Chris Sten, for instance, sees Melville's stance toward the impact of Western colonialism as a form of "cosmopolitanism" that recognizes the complexities of a global society, which Melville experienced personally and deeply. According to Sten, "cosmopolitanism had become a defining activity of the imagination of Melville, in politics and art, one requiring the capacity to see and feel other people" (47). *Redburn* can be included as part of Melville's own artistic and philosophical process toward a larger global worldview, to examine global social inequities. Melville's detached authorial voice in the text—the voice of an older man reviewing the actions of a younger self—imbues Redburn's bewilderment with the depth of a person searching for answers and knowledge. Redburn himself, as the first-person narrator, never directly issues the narrative's critique of global capitalism since this is a vocabulary the narrator lacks. Yet, the work itself offers this critique boldly in the arc of the action and in Redburn's own halting intimations of the larger injustices that he is just discovering. For example, when Redburn comments, upon beholding the seemingly infinite pieces of the ship's rigging, "It is really wonderful how many names there are in the world," the reader is reminded of Melville's larger, yet incomplete aspiration: to name, in his travels, the complexities of international commerce, and at last, "to know all," with a cosmopolitan openness: a worthy yet impossible goal. The effort of naming includes seeing the painful day-to-day realities of the ship as merely the opening litany of larger social problems that the maritime economy both perpetuates and mirrors. Poverty drives men to sea before "the mast," and yet the profits of the seaman's own labor—Redburn's and the other sailors' aim in boarding—accrue disproportionately to large and absent investor interests. The common sailor is unable to prepare for such voyages, as he and his crewmates become leveled with the goods that they transport: the maritime economy renders the human body of the sailor as a commodity itself, another parcel of trade. The travel narrative describes persons and bodies damaged beyond repair in a capitalist system of trade. *Redburn* focuses on the problem of evil as a constant of human nature and suggests that the social system of capitalism, of which the Atlantic Rim is an outgrowth, is a system tailored to, and driven by, the coarsest of human wants and needs.

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To understand *Redburn*, it is important to note the strictures under which Melville wrote the book. After the dismissive reviews and commercial failure of *Mardi*, Melville quickly wrote *Redburn* and

White-Jacket in a total of four months to regain his reputation and earn money (Tanner xiii). Edwin Haviland Miller concludes that Melville, under financial duress, "wrote out of necessity with little satisfaction in what he was doing" (151). In an October 6, 1849, letter to his father-in-law Lemuel Shaw, Melville refers to both works as "two *jobs*, which I have done for money—being forced to it, as other men as to sawing wood" (Horth 138; qtd. in Tanner). Yet typical of Melville's writing is the underlying irony of *Redburn*: while a work primarily written to make money—"a job"—it attacks the capitalist marketplace that made writing such a work a necessity. An immediate autobiographical convergence between the youthful Wellingborough Redburn and Herman Melville, the author, can be seen in the protagonist and the author's shared sense of financial desperation. *Redburn* opens with a recounting of temptingly written advertisements in New York newspapers for places on board ship, what Redburns recalls as "the long columns of ship advertisements, all of which possessed a strange, romantic charm" (43). By opening his novel with the falsely glowing classified ads for sailors that might tempt a young man like Redburn, Melville suggests perhaps his own suspicions about the quality of *Redburn* itself, as a work conceived and written for the marketplace: a work designed to sell. Redburn's initiation into the Atlantic Rim corresponds then to Melville's re-initiation into the market-demands that he thought he had escaped with his early successes with *Typee* and *Omoo*. Hugh W. Hetherington aptly describes Melville's motives for writing *Redburn*: "Having found anything but remunerative the vast experiment of offering his public a voyage frankly fantastic [i.e., *Mardi*], the now impecunious young author made, with a voyage patently real, a candidly admitted bid for base shillings and dollars" (135). The advertisements at the beginning of the novel bare an ironic parallel to those that would have accompanied the publication of Melville's novel itself.

At the beginning of the novel, the ineptitude of Wellingborough Redburn, re-named as the diminutive "Buttons" (73) by the crew, reflects on the largeness of the Atlantic world he enters and his own comparative insignificance in this world. Redburn's naiveté registers the arbitrariness of an Atlantic world governed primarily by capital, and not the shared, nurturing sense of humanity that Redburn expects. Melville's construction of Redburn as a naïve character who is startlingly unprepared for the travails of the voyage demands at the outset that the reader begin to question the nature of the social arrangements of the Atlantic Rim economy itself, which stands steadfastly and seemingly unfairly against the earnest, unassuming Redburn throughout the book.

Redburn's difficulties are evident at the very beginning of his journey while aboard a Hudson River packet boat bound for New York City. Because Redburn is unable to pay his full fare and is inappropriately dressed in a gentleman's shooting jacket, many passengers stare at him. Declaring that he "could stand it no more," Redburn suddenly brandishes and points his fowling piece at a heavy-set gawking man, so that the man's large body is held "point blank, full in the left eye" (56). Although Redburn admits to being "heartily ashamed of himself" for this violent outburst, the incident arises from the alienating situation of his own poverty and his absence of guile. Importantly, the cause and subsequent object of Redburn's mental anguish are bodies: his inappropriately attired body and the body of the heavy set man in the sights of his gun.

Joyce A. Rowe sees Redburn's condition throughout the novel as being defined by a "circular bind" of powerlessness: "the more he feels that he is an economic and social (as well as filial) orphan, the more his anger toward the patriarchy that has failed him must be suppressed in the name of survival" (3). While, no doubt, an apt characterization of his psychological make-up, this circular bind also defines his relationship to the larger corporate endeavor of nineteenth-century maritime commerce. The hierarchical structure of the ship itself possesses layers of control, which in Michel Foucault's terms represents "an architecture that would operate to transform individuals […] to make it possible to know them, to alter them" (191). The system of control operates across global class and racial systems, which emanate outward and within Atlantic commerce, where human value is reified in terms of monetary transactions.

Redburn suffers deficiencies in both material resources and knowledge. Equipped with gifts from his brother and his brother's friend Mr. Jones, that include "a shooting jacket," "a fowling piece" without powder, and Adam Smith's work the *Wealth of Nations* (1776), Redburn begins his life as a sailor profoundly unprepared. Furthermore, he lacks the financial resources that would enable him to transform his circumstances, what contemporary economist Thomas M. Shapiro calls, "transformative assets"—that is, wealth and gifts inherited from previous generations that enable individuals to enjoy opportunities bequeathed to them by previous generations but which they have not earned themselves through merit. With the loss of fortune resulting from his father's untimely death, Redburn naively chooses the sailor's life as the means to overcome penury. All of Redburn's knowledge, the product of his gentleman's education, reflects an upbringing at odds with his changed circumstances. From his

initial trust in Mr. Jones's ability to secure him a good berth to his ignorance of the duties and roles on board the ship, Redburn is overmatched by the Atlantic world, which Bailyn describes as "a world in motion," and "multitudinous, embracing the people and circumstances of four continents […]" (61). Instead of evoking sympathy in others, his naiveté induces others' disdain. As a result, Redburn declares himself in anticipation of *Moby Dick*, "a sort of Ishmael in the ship, without single friend or companion" and admits that he begins to "feel the hatred growing up in me against the whole crew" (114).

Redburn's eagerness to encounter foreign cultures expresses a blend of naïve romanticism and open-minded curiosity. When the *Highlander* docks in Liverpool, Redburn enters "The Baltimore Clipper," a tavern that advertises to a mixed clientele of American and British sailors, beneath a sign depicting "a British Unicorn and an American eagle, lying down by each other" (194). Redburn rhapsodizes about foreignness: "I remained alone in the little room, meditating profoundly upon the fact, that I was now seated upon an English bench, under an English roof, in an English tavern, forming an integral part of the English empire. It was a staggering fact, but none the less true" (196). This enthusiasm is, of course, undercut by the whole weight of his travel experience, to date, including his very first encounter with the English empire in New York before his departure, when he meets an English lad from Lancashire, who becomes his bunkmate on the *Highlander*. Recognizing that the boy is "not American," Redburn describes the boy's language with puzzlement as "a curious language […] half English and half gibberish, that I knew not what to make of him" (70), before admitting that he was "a little astonished, when he told me he was an English boy" (70). Throughout the narrative, Redburn has epiphanies where he realizes that British identity admits of great variety and defies easy categorization. In addition, Redburn encounters almost simultaneously the paradox that a diverse world is also characterized by sameness: "I began to think that all this talk about travel was a humbug; and that he who lives in a nutshell, lives in an epitome of the universe" (278). The circulation of images in magazines colors Redburn's experience of the world in a leveling uniformity. For instance, in Liverpool, Redburn notices a "Moorish Arch" near a railroad, which he swears that he has seen before; when he returns to the U.S. he sees this same image in "an old number of Penny magazine" (283) that he had first read before taking his trip. Just as Redburn himself is neither unique nor special, at moments like these Redburn begins to believe that no place in the world is particularly different from any other. Yet, throughout the narrative he oscillates between unchecked enthusiasm for what he longs to see and

abject despair in what he typically finds.

The disjunction between his imagination of how the world should be and the reality of how things are defines Redburn's experience aboard the ship and his encounters with otherness. The American ship, *The Highlander*, is captained by Captain Riga, of Russian descent, and the ship's crew includes a Greenlander, an African American cook, a steward of African and European ancestry, Euro-Americans, and representatives of various Western European nations. Commenting on the crew's varied experiences, Redburn notes, "Every man of them almost was a volume of Voyages and Travels round the World" (94) whose knowledge "like books of voyages […] often contradicted each other" (94). Interestingly, the one character who, like Redburn, is described as "native New Yorker" and is thus a fellow-American, is Jackson: Jackson, however, is presented as the most "foreign character," diabolically inhuman and diseased, "such a hideous looking mortal, that Satan himself would have run from him" (107). Redburn dreads Jackson, who is a demonic figure throughout the text. No solace can be found, even with one's countrymen. At the moment when Redburn seems to understand how the world works, he is presented with information or has experiences that he cannot assimilate with he previously held to be true.

In Liverpool, Redburn finds simultaneously both the embodiment of American ideals unrealized in the United States and conditions that are worse than those in the United States. Redburn describes a positive, broadening experience of racial tolerance when on a few occasions in Liverpool he observes "our black steward, dressed very handsomely, walking arm in arm with a good-looking English woman" (277). Redburn comments that if this happened in New York the steward would have been "lucky to escape [from the mob] with whole limbs" (277). While Redburn acknowledges that at first he finds interracial mingling to be disconcerting due to his own "local and social prejudices," he asserts that the freedom the steward enjoys in Liverpool is based on the correct recognition of the steward's "claims to humanity and normal equality" (278). Redburn points out that "we Americans leave to other countries the carrying out of the principle that stands at the head of our Declaration of Independence" (278).

However, Liverpool's seeming openness stands in the face of its own past. Redburn shudders at the eighteenth-century slave trade that gave Liverpool its prominence as a commercial center through its complicity within a capitalism system predicated on global racial oppression. With this insight in mind, Redburn interprets imaginatively the "four naked figures in chains" at the base of the Lord Nelson

statue in Liverpool as stark reminders of the slave trade from which Liverpool profited. Although he is aware that he misreads these figures on the statue, who are, in fact, "emblematic of Nelson's principal victories" (222) and not enslaved men abducted from Africa, Redburn reflects, "my thoughts would revert to Virginia and Carolina; and also to the historical fact, that the African slave-trade once constituted the principal commerce of Liverpool; and that prosperity of the town was once supposed to have been indissolubly linked to its prosecution" (222). Redburn's knowledge of Liverpool's history is accurate, and his concern is prescient. The International Slavery Museum in Liverpool, which only recently opened in August 2007 on the two-hundred year anniversary of the end of the British slave trade, notes that "Overall, Liverpool ships transported half of the 3 million Africans carried across the Atlantic by British slavers" ("About the International Slavery Museum"). The International Slavery Museum is consistent with Redburn's own re-examination of the past and the connection between Western wealth and four centuries of the transatlantic, intercontinental slave trade—a convergence that many Westerners still deny or underestimate.

The second half of *Redburn* dwells, fittingly, on the image of the broken, abused body—the commodification of humanity—as a final signifier of the painful realities of the Atlantic Rim. In a scene that expresses the self-consuming and cannibalizing nature of global commerce when governed solely by the profit motive, Jackson, the New Yorker, emerges sick from the forecastle looking like "a man raised from the dead" with "the blue hollows of his eyes […] like the vaults full of snakes" (385). When Jackson fatally falls from the yard-arm into the consuming Atlantic, he is already physically dead through sickness and overwork; spiritually, Jackson, the hardened sailor, has long ago lost his humanity in his enraged nihilism and participation in the slave trade, which Jackson brags about with "diabolical relish" (107). Meanwhile, Redburn describes the emigrants on the voyage to New York in terms reminiscent, literally and metonymically, of the misery and death of the middle passage, focusing deliberately on bodies rather than people. Chapter 58, euphemistically entitled, "Many Passengers are Left Behind" describes the ravages of a cholera epidemic in steerage. Redburn states, "it was, beyond question, this noisome confinement in so close, unventilated, and crowded den: joined to the deprivation of sufficient food, from which many were suffering […] brought on a malignant fever" (374). He describes his brief descent into steerage as "like entering a crowded jail" (375). Redburn counts the deaths of thirty passengers and crew. His observations are presented with the world-weary wisdom of

Ecclesiastes—that human suffering is inevitable—while the narrative itself points more concretely to the quotidian injustices of Atlantic Rim capitalism.

Uncovering another layer of the aftermath of the economic system in the Atlantic world, Redburn describes the poverty he sees in Liverpool, where abused bodies are the norm. Witnessing a diseased mother with her two children in the Launcelott-Hey alley, Redburn laments, "What right had any body in the wide world to smile and be glad, when sights like this were to be seen?" (253). He draws the reader to the mother's humanity, asking rhetorically if it is not true that the woman's "eyes, lips, and ears [are] like any queen" (253). Unable to secure assistance for them, Redburn wonders if euthanasia would be the most compassionate option in such an uncaring society.

Redburn's journey to the Aladdin nightclub in London with Harry Bolton, his feminine-featured, youthful friend, provides the dizzying climax to the work. The Aladdin nightclub contrasts with the poverty of Launcelott-Hey and thus exposes the opulence and the corruption of London's elite, which is enjoyed at the expense of the destitute. Here, Redburn's experiences expose the reality of extreme poverty coexisting with extreme wealth within the nation. Bolton, after gambling himself to ruin, appears to prostitute himself to an older man in order to dispatch his debts. In shame, Bolton makes Redburn swear on their journey back to Liverpool "never to question me about this infernal trip to London!" (316). A nuanced depiction of Harry Bolton's hand later in the narrative can be read figuratively as a phallus, signifying Bolton's sexual violation. The physical, sexual abuse of the body connects with the broken bodies found throughout the system of commerce in the Atlantic Rim. Redburn observes that the hand's "lady-like-looking" whiteness has been "polluted with pitch" (368). Adopting Bolton's own voice, Redburn states the hand should "disappear in this foul monkey-jacket packet in which I thrust you" (368). What is seen—the loss of Harry's own innocence and perhaps his soul—is too painful to behold.

The ship, likewise, offers no refuge against the commodification of the body. On the voyage to New York, Redburn suggests that Bolton has been sexually abused by the ship's crew—"the illiterate sea tyrants" (341) in the maritime economy. Redburn confesses that he was himself lucky to avoid these sufferings on his first voyage, alluding vaguely to "circumstances which exempted me from experiencing the bitterest of these evils" (341). Here, Redburn signifies the hazing and abuse, both physical and sexual, which would often be meted out to young sailors on long journeys at sea. In an analogous

situation, Captain Riga on the voyage to Liverpool transports "a beautiful ward," the supposed daughter of a Liverpool port official, who lives in the captain's cabin; Redburn describes their interactions as "one long paternal sort of a shabby flirtation between the hoydenish nymph and the ill-dressed captain" (169). Redburn views her future prospects, as she disembarks in Liverpool, with "misgivings" (170), anticipating a future of female prostitution, where her self becomes merely the cargo of a body transferred among men.

To underscore the skewed economic systemic, the final financial rewards of Redburn's adventure on the Atlantic Rim are tellingly disappointing, depicting the ubiquitous injustice that the lower classes face within the global economy. After abstruse calculations Captain Riga determines that Wellingborough Redburn actually owes him $7.75, and that Harry Bolton's wages amount to a mere $1.50, which Harry heroically rejects, throwing the six two-shilling pieces on the desk. Harry, who is the most financially desperate character throughout the narrative and who has likely already sold his own body at the Aladdin, gives up the little money he has due to himself rather than submit, in the acceptance of this money, to the financial order that subjugates him. Redburn, meanwhile, sees himself at the end of the travel narrative as the disaffected agent, the stooge, of the system of transatlantic commerce that oppresses both himself and others, including his closest friends.

For Herman Melville's own efforts in this literary "job," despite generally favorable reviews in England and the United States, book sales were modest. In dollars and cents, Melville earned approximately $1,167.57 for the 5,468 copies of Redburn sold in the England and the United States (Tanselle). With these returns, Melville suffered again from the daunting realization of the limits of his labor in the marketplace, a reality that would haunt him throughout his literary career.

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As Chris Sten aptly puts it, Melville advances the claims and complaints of the working classes in *Redburn* by showing how "the upper classes in the world's economy rode in their coach on the wheels of the lower classes" (42). Melville's *Redburn* takes readers into the out of bounds world of the Atlantic Rim as seen through the eyes of Wellingborough Redburn. His initiation is our initiation, and his formation becomes our own; at the end of the novel, Redburn's journey, from the New World to the Old Work and back, offers a glimpse of an Atlantic World and history, where one may name yet not fully know, and where the only final truth is unavoidable human suffering, whether the cause be human

nature, laissez-faire capitalism, or the mixture of the two. It is undoubtedly significant that Redburn eventually discards his copy of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, which outlines the happy marriage of human nature and free-market capitalism, guided by "the invisible hand." This hand is replaced metaphorically by Harry Bolton's own battered hand, which Redburn wishes were made invisible, too, but for entirely different reasons; its sight induces only sickening suffering.

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On Doing a Good Deed

William Archibald, Millersville University of Pennsylvania

Early one Sunday morning not long ago, I heard the sound of an irregular car horn. Not the sort of sound that indicates a car alarm but a series of rapid beeps and then nothing and then a repeat of the sounds but in no particular pattern. It was about 6am and I was in bed when I first heard it. After I ruled out the car alarm, I thought someone was honking outside one of the student apartments on the block trying to get someone inside to come out. But then the horn stopped: ok, the car had moved on, with or without the person.

I took my coffee and settled on my backyard patio to read the Times. I always started with the book review. The horn sounded again. Over a half hour period, it stopped and started up again and again. When it stopped I couldn't stop listening for it to begin again and when it did I fixated on some idiot goading a friend in one of the nearby apartments.

Finally, I had had enough. I got up, walked out the back gate, and went to see where the noise was coming from. I wanted to shout at them, scare them into stopping the joke, and make them move on or I would call the police. This was ridiculous.

While sitting on the patio, I had narrowed it down to the apartment building with the parking lot two doors down. I walked through the trees to the parking lot and stood surveying the vehicles aligned in the lot. No sound. I walked over to the line of cars and just then one of them blasted its horn. The car wasn't up against the apartment as I imagined but parked in a space well away from the building. I moved over to the drivers' side door of a blue Jeep wagon and looked inside.

There was a woman sitting in the seat moving her head and torso rhythmically back and forth: pressing her head to the steering wheel and setting off the horn and then letting off and pressing forward again sounding the horn. I banged on the window. No response. The figure continued moving back and forth, head to backrest then head down to the wheel/horn. I tore off running back through the trees to my house to call 911.

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Before investigating the honking horn, I had been reading a review of a novel (*Black Flies* by Shannon Burke) about EMTs in New York City. The story is about a young EMT who tries not to become

calloused to the death and dying he sees. One scene from the novel sticks in my mind. The main character's partner refuses to help a suicide victim who has jumped from a building and instead returns to the ambulance to finish his take-out dinner. He reasons: The girl was already dead, so why waste a prep kit. The mother of the girl pounds on the ambulance window screaming at the man but he ignores her and continues eating.

I don't have the sort of day-in-day job that makes me callous to human suffering. I teach at a local state college and do my share of bitching about students. None of them harass me as a professor because I generally understand the stresses they are under and give them the benefit of the doubt. The students that live around me are the ones that bother me. Their drunken, all hours of the night partying, used to often ruin my disposition. The first couple of years we lived in the neighborhood, we called the cops on the house next door repeatedly. When that happened, neighborliness went out the window. Yet most students we have lived next to--at least those we could discuss issues with face-to-face--listened to our complaints and tried to be more considerate. The problem was that I often did not or would not bother to confront them and thus suffered in silence.

Keeping this in mind, my immediate response to the woman in the jeep might come as a surprise. What would you have done? I guess I could have returned to my patio and my coffee and blithely ignored the horn and the person in the car? And yes, my irritation with the horn set me against the person, but when I discovered the true source of the noise, I immediately went for help.

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When the 911 operator came on the line he asked me what was wrong. I was out of breath and thoroughly rattled, so I could hardly talk to him. My heart pounded in my chest.

"There's a woman in a car. I think she's having a seizure."

"Is there any blood."

"No?"

"Are you all right? You sound agitated."

"I'm out of breath. I ran to my house to call you."

I gave him the address and he said help was on its way. After I got off the phone I thought: why did he ask me if I were OK. Did he think the woman and I were involved? That she and I had had a fight or something?

I stood at the end of my driveway in a pair of lounge pants and t-shirt and looked up and down the street, one way and then the other. It was taking them forever. When the ambulance and police finally arrived (no siren!), I waved them into the parking lot and pointed to the Jeep. The two policeman--one, a tall gangly man with a mustache and the other, who moved closest to me, an Asian man, thin and quick--approached the vehicle, one on the passenger side, and the other from the driver's side. They started banging on the side windows trying to get the occupant to open the locked doors. Finally, he did.

Yes, it was a young man. He was dressed in a blue checkered shirt and jeans. His eyelids barely open, he attempted to respond to one cop and then the other, his head lolling back and forth. But instead of answering their questions he started mumbling some of his own: What's wrong? What'd ya want?

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I've had to call the EMTs at least three times for my wife since I've known her. Once when we were engaged and two more times since we've been married. She's a type one diabetic and a pretty brittle one at that. She's had perilously low blood sugars many times but the three times were the ones when I could not pull her back by squirting a gelatinous sugar substance into her mouth or by forcing her to drink sugary orange juice or by giving her a shot of glucagon. I hated doing the shot.

Those three times I woke up next to her, the sheets soaked, her body shaking in spasms, her skin clammy, and me unable to get her to come around. Her eyes wide open but no one's there. She doesn't hear me or feel my touch. She is somewhere deep inside her body, a body that has closed up around her and won't let me in or her out. When she would go under like this I panicked, and then I got angry.

That's the thing. She was gone but still there and I couldn't get her back. And I got scared and then mad at her. She had gone away, abandoned me, I was the victim. Weird. My fear made me call 911 but the EMTs who came were no help to me; her, yes. They never sensed my fear only saw my anger, so they got frightened and soon became angry, too. Their anger increased as they worked on her. They weren't mad at her, mostly at me, like it was my fault. I had inserted a level of fear into those rooms where for them this was a routine procedure: start a sugar drip, strap the patient to a gurney, take her to the hospital, and hopefully on the way she comes around. She's going to come around; they always do. But this blockhead (me) standing in his underwear screaming at them to do something just pissed

them off.

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The two EMTs had turned away from the scene and returned to their vehicle shaking their heads. They never even looked in on the guy. They knew.

One of the cops came over to me, holding a white index card and a pencil.

"You're the one who called it in?"

"Yes, I thought he was having a seizure or something. Is he drunk?"

"Yes, a guy trying to recover from a long night, just trying to sleep it off."

"Sorry."

"You did the right thing. Better safe than sorry.

He asked me where I lived and my name and phone number. He wrote the information down on the card and then left to go back to the man who hadn't yet stepped out of the car. I felt the tension drain out of me; my body felt buoyant. I watched for a moment more as the police talked to the guy then I walked back to my house.

Space and Time in Harriet *Jacobs's Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*

John E. Dean, Indiana University of Pennsylvania

The concepts of space and time are interdependent because when one speaks of space, she must do so in the framework of time. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines space as "Denoting time or duration," and time as "a space or extent of time." Further, as Jeffrey Nealon and Susan Searls Giroux point out in *The Theory Toolbox*, "we experience space temporally and time is registered spatially….moving through space takes time" (114). David Harvey writes in *The Condition of Postmodernity* that "we map time spatially, using, for example, wristwatches, wall clocks and calendars" (qtd. in Nealon and Giroux 114). Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* is a playing out of space and time as the narrator, Linda Brent, moves through different geographical, figurative, and narrative spaces in the space of racial time. Melissa Clark in "The Space-Time Image" notes that "time is understood as an internal subjective relation" (180), and this relation changes for Linda in her transformation from an objective presence to a subjective presence. Like most slave narratives, Jacobs's *Incidents* is a progression from a space of enforced geographical and time containment to one of free physical and linear movement. This discussion will trace Linda Brent's succession from enclosure to freedom in space and time.

Linda Brent is contained in the physical space of slavery. Her body is thus wholly confined by her slave masters. Michael Foucault writes in "Space, Knowledge, and Power" that "the operations of socialization, repression, confinement, discipline, and punishment are performed" in "the space of the body" (qtd. in Nealon and Giroux 115). At first, Linda is shielded from knowing she is a slave as she lives with her parents. Once she understands she is a slave, however, her space shrinks. She is contained by Dr. Flint, whose daughter is Linda's master. Linda escapes the space of slavery, moving toward a completely free space only by first confining herself in successively smaller enclosed spaces. In escaping her confinement in slavery, Linda's physical space both shrinks and enlarges, yet her internal space expands as she experiences more and more agency with each progressive movement in geographical space. We see this freedom in confinement as we trace Linda's movement from slavery to freedom.

Linda inhabits at least twenty geographical spaces in the narrative. The first space is at her parents' house where she is sheltered, "never dream[ing] that [she] was a piece of merchandise, trusted

to [her parents] for safe keeping, and liable to be demanded of them at any moment" (9). Her second space, which she inhabits until she is "nearly twelve years old," is with her mother's mistress, who treats her kindly. In this space, Linda does not realize the dehumanization of slavery. This may be the largest space she inhabits while consciously in slavery. When her mistress dies, Linda is moved into her third space—her mistress's "sisters daughter, a child of five years old" (11). Because of her mistress's age, Linda is directly under the influence of Dr. Flint, the mistress's father. Linda describes her first feeling of confinement in the slave quarters when she describes her "narrow bed" on which she "moaned and wept" (12). Her fourth space is a room adjoining Mrs. Flint's. Here, Linda feels no freer than in the slave quarters because Mrs. Flint keeps a jealous vigil over her. She remembers: Mrs. Flint "spent many a sleepless night to watch over me. Sometimes I woke up, and found her bending over me" (31). Linda's fifth imposed space is Mr. Flint's plantation, the space of punishment for Linda's not submitting to Dr. Flint's sexual advances. However, she escapes before being forced to go there, and goes by choice to her sixth space: "I ran on till I came to the house of the friend who was to conceal me" (79). Though Linda is not free to move from this space without fear of capture, it is her first space where she has a modicum of free agency. She is confined to a smaller geographical space because she cannot safely leave the house, but she is, at the moment, free from slavery. Her subjective space is now much larger. As we follow her spatial progression, we see that progressively shrinking spaces afford her with progressively enlarging spaces in freedom.

When she feels she has been tracked to her sixth space, she hides in her seventh space, a "thicket of bushes" for two hours (80). A poisonous snake bites her, and she "grope[s]" her "way back into the house" (80). Her eighth space is the house of a white slave owner, where she stays in "a small room over [the slave owner's] sleeping apartment" (81). Soon after, Dr. Flint tells Linda's grandmother, "I have found out where Linda is" (83). Because of her fear of capture in this space, she hurries to her ninth, "down stairs, and across the yard, into the kitchen," where Betty, the slave of the man in whose house Linda had been hiding, lifts a plank and Linda descends beneath the kitchen. Linda's space is shrinking: "In my shallow bed I had but just room enough to bring my hands to my face to keep the dust out of my eyes" (84). Once she feels that Dr. Flint does not know where she is, she moves back to her eighth space. Another escape brings her to her tenth space. Disguised as a male sailor, her space opens because she can move about freely in public. She's put on a vessel that takes her to Snaky Swamp

where her space again shrinks. She is hemmed in by bamboo and by snakes: "I saw snake after snake crawling around us. . . . The bamboos were so high and so thick that it was impossible to see beyond a very short distance" (91). From here, Linda moves into a chaotic space—back to the vessel, back to swamp, and back to vessel.

The most remarkable space for Linda is the garret above her grandmother's house, where she stays for almost seven years. This is her eleventh space. Though it is much smaller than her geographical space in slavery, in which she could move about more freely on Dr. Flint's property, the garret offers her more control over her subjective space. She watches her children and Dr. Flint through a small peephole and speaks to her family and Mr. Sands, the free man with whom she has had a child.

After her confinement in the garret partially cripples her, Linda moves on to her twelfth space, a vessel to Philadelphia sailing on Chesapeake Bay. Here both her geographical and subjective space expands dramatically. She remembers her freedom: "O, the beautiful sunshine! the exhilarating breeze! and I could enjoy them without fear or restraint" (Jacobs 124). In her thirteenth space, Philadelphia, Linda's space is temporarily opened up completely. She feels that she can now control all spatial delineation as she states, "When we reached home, I went to my room, glad to shut out the world for a while…. That night I sought my pillow with feelings I had never carried to it before. I verily believed myself to be a free woman" (127). In her next spatial movements, Linda's subjective experience of time contracts. She is geographically freer in the north than she is in the south, and thus, her time is, off and on, more her own. She moves to a boarding house in New York, and then to her Mrs. Bruce's house where she works for wages as Ellen Bruce's nanny. In this, her fifteenth space, she is confined by roaming slaveholders. Her sixteenth space shrinks as well. It is a summer hotel in Rockaway where she is told she cannot sit in a chair. Linda then confines herself to her hotel room and, in an act of agency, refuses to go to the table. Her seventeenth-through-final spaces are as follows: She stays at the house of a friend of Mrs. Bruce, moves on to Boston, and then London where she has her first taste of pure freedom from racial oppression. She remembers, "For the first time in my life I was in a place where I was treated according to my deportment, without reference to my complexion" (142). She moves to Oxford Crescent, then to Steventon, in Berkshire. Here, in her twenty-first space, she sees the struggling poor at work and notes that poor space is better than slave space:

> I saw men working in the fields for six shillings, and seven shillings, a week, and women for sixpence, and sevenpence, a day, out of which they boarded themselves. . . . The people I saw around me were, many of them, among the poorest poor. But when I visited them in their little thatched cottages, I felt that the condition of even the meanest and most ignorant among them was vastly superior to the condition of the most favored slaves in America. (143)

From Steventon, in Berkshire, Linda moves to Boston with Ellen Bruce for two years, then to Mr. Bruce's in New York, where the fugitive slave law confines her movements in space. Linda's twenty-forth space is New England, followed by the country, New York, and then the home of one of Mrs. Bruce's friends before returning to New England. Her final space is one of freedom from slavery as Mrs. Bruce tells Linda, "I am rejoiced to tell you that the money for your freedom has been paid to Mr. Dodge" (Jacobs 155). At the end of the narrative, Linda does not own property, but rather, lives with Mrs. Bruce, who bought her freedom. Though Mrs. Bruce does not own Linda, Linda confines her own space within that of Mrs. Bruce. Jacobs writes, "Love, duty, gratitude, also bind me to her side" (156). Thus, Linda seems to have only partial agency in her final space of freedom. She is free, in body, to move about as she pleases in New York, but she is subjectively fettered to yet another white person.

Another confinement for Linda is imposed silenced. Dr. Flint repeatedly silences Linda, as she remembers, "Dr. Flint swore he would kill me, if I was not as silent as the grave" (Jacobs 27). After her escape, Linda breaks out of this silent space by writing letters to Dr. Flint "that foil his schemes of possession and dominance" (Baker, Jr. 56). Jacobs frees herself from silence in her writing *Incidents*. Though writing frees Jacobs from the imposed space of silence, she is confined within the traditional slave narrative space.

Valery Smith argues that Jacobs, though presumably confined within this narrative space, breaks out of it in order to free her voice. Most slave narratives were required to "serve an outside interest: the stories are shaped according to the requirements of the abolitionists who published them and provided them with readers (Smith 223). Further, the narratives were "literary productions that documented the antislavery crusade. Their status as both popular art and propaganda imposed upon them a repetitiveness of structure, tone, and content that obscured individual achievements and artistic

merit" (224). Thus, "Harriet Jacobs's freedom to reconstruct her life was limited by a genre that suppressed subjective experience in favor of abolitionist polemics" (225).

Not only was Jacobs "restricted by the antislavery agenda," but "she was doubly bound by the form in which she wrote, for it contained a plot more compatible with received notions of masculinity than those of womanhood" (Smith 225). Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, a seminal work in the slave narrative genre, is arguably the foundational model of the slave narrative. It is overtly masculine and focuses on the individual, rather than on the community. Douglass explains that his narrative will show "how a slave was made a man" (107). Baker, Jr., notes that unlike Douglass's narrative, "[Linda] Brent's work gives a sense of *collective*, rather than individualistic, black identity" (55). Linda's strength comes from her sense of female community. Thus, she "does not seek the relationship of marriage that signals a repossession of self and the possibility of black reunification in male narratives. . . . A new bonding of Afro-American humanity consists, for Brent, in the reunion of mother and child in freedom" (Baker, Jr. 55).

In an effort to free her narrative from the patriarchal slave narrative, Jacobs, in part, uses the "rhetoric of the sentimental novel…because it provided her with a way of talking about her vulnerability to the constant threat of rape" (Smith 225). Jacobs employs the use of the sentimental genre for rhetorical purposes "in an effort to inspire her Northern female readers to respond emotionally to her story and to translate that emotion into moral behavior" (290). Michelle Burnham writes that the sentimental novel "appealed to a reader's sympathy by portraying scenes of often theatrical pathos, and by construction plots of familial separation and individual trial" (291). In several moments Jacobs escapes, however, the confined space of the sentimental plot: "Those moments include her decision to take a lover, the birth of her two children out of wedlock, and the impossibility of her story ending in marriage" (Burnham 291). Jacobs states that such escape from the sentimental form is necessary for the slave woman who "ought not to be judged by the same standards as others" (48).

Jacobs further escapes narrative constraints by leaving gaps in her narration. An exploration of these gaps demonstrates that Jacobs feels free to leave out details in order to keep them from bogging down her narrative, and to focus on the story that *she* wants to tell. Smith points out three gaps in Jacobs's narrative. The first: "Reader, my story ends with freedom, not in the usual way, with marriage" (Jacobs 156). Smith writes that in this statement Jacobs "calls attention to the space between the

traditional happy ending of the novel of domestic sentiment and the ending of her story" (234). Jacobs neglects to mention her second pregnancy (Jacobs 64). Smith states, "By consigning to the narrative silences those aspects of her own sexuality for which the genre does not allow, Jacobs points to an inadequacy in form" (235). Miss Fanny "attempts to sentimentalize [Jacobs'] situation" just before Jacobs escapes to the north (Smith 235). Miss Fanny says that, for Jacobs, she "'wished that I and all my grandmother's family were at rest in our graves, for not until then should she feel any peace about us'" (Jacobs 73). Here, Jacobs leaves a gap between the conventions of the sentimental novel and her own act of freedom.

Other narrative gaps include Ellen's having a daughter without mention of the father. The only mention Jacobs gives is, "She had an infant daughter. I had a glimpse of it, as the nurse passed with it in her arms" (Jacobs 109). In addition, Jacobs give no account of how Ben escapes, other than his "white face" doing "him a kindly service" (23). The question of whether Dr. Flint rapes Linda is a narrative gap that Jacobs tries to close by implying that he did not rape her, but when examined more closely, the question is left open for the reader's interpretation. The following examples demonstrate this ambiguity: "But Dr. Flint swore he would kill me, if I was not silent as the grave" (27); "I had hitherto succeeded in eluding my master, though a razor was often held to my throat to force me to change this line of policy" (29); In answering her mistress's question of whether she is "innocent" of sleeping with Dr. Flint, Linda replies, "'I am,'" and she does so "with a clear conscience" (30); Linda testifies, "Hitherto, I had escaped my dreaded fate" of being raped by Dr. Flint (45). Though Jacobs intends to demonstrate that Dr. Flint did not rape her, the above examples leave the reader to question what really happened. Because Jacobs leaves other obvious narrative gaps, it is possible that she is not a completely reliable narrator. She admits that her writing ability itself leaves gaps in the narrative. For example she writes, "Would that I had more ability! But my heart is so full, and my pen is so weak!" (28).

Of course, some of Jacobs's gaps are intentional. She leaves a narrative gap in order to conceal the identity of some people who help her escape: "As a matter of prudence no names were mentioned" (81). On the other extreme, we see narrative gaps filled as Jacobs makes up the dialogue between Phil and Ben, since she was not present to witness the conversation (24-25). In this way, Jacobs goes back in time to speculate what happened in a space where she was not present. In fact, Jacobs's writing of

Incidents is an act of space and time travel because she must negotiate between both memory and the present to create a cohesive narrative.

As mentioned earlier, the concepts of space and time are interdependent. Jacobs orders and exists in space; however, in order for one to have a full understanding of space, one must place it in time because "we experience space temporally and time is registered spatially" (Nealon and Giroux 114). Jacobs presents a historiagraphical narrative, placing her characters in a meaningful past that can be understood as it informs the present, yet a phenomenological reading of time in *Incidents* further informs the meaning of time for Jacobs and for her characters. Nealon and Giroux explain that "we experience time in individual, often idiosyncratic ways, but these experiences are also shaped by larger social processes. . . . How we experience time is not necessarily a function of our choosing, a simple assertion of will" (110). The characters in *Incidents* display this subjective experience of time in what Michael Hanchard notes "three conceptual facets to racial time: waiting, time appropriation, and the ethical relationship between temporality and progress" (qtd. in Nealon and Giroux 112). According to Hanchard, waiting is "the experience of time lags or disjunctures that result from the imposition of racial rule" (112-13). Waiting is experienced by "one of the plantation slaves" who is brought by his master to Dr. Flint's property for punishment (Jacobs 15). Dr. Flint orders this slave to be "taken to the work house, and tied up to the joist, so that his feet would just escape the ground. In that situation he was to wait till the doctor had taken his tea" (15). Here the slave waits to be whipped. Another example of waiting is when Benjamin is in prison waiting to be bought by another slave trader. Benjamin says, "'I am waiting [the slave master's] time'" (23). In addition, Linda's grandmother, whose mistress had "always promised her that, at her [mistress's] death, she should be set free," waits all her life for freedom that never comes (13). Finally, Linda hides in the garret waiting "for nearly seven years"; she waits to know "when these dark years would end, and [she] should again be allowed to feel the sunshine, and breathe the pure air" (116-17). In these examples, characters experience time lags that are not experienced by the slave owners because of racial rule.

Hanchard's second facet to racial time is time appropriation, which "involves challenging the temporal dimensions of inequality associated with segregation" (Nealon and Giroux 113). Linda experiences time appropriation as she is prohibited, due to Jim Crow laws, from sitting in the first class section of a train, though she has paid a first class fare. Mr. Durham tells her, "'They don't allow colored

people to go in the first-class cars" (Jacobs 128). Linda is only allowed "to ride in a filthy box, behind white people" (128). Hanchard gives another instance of time appropriation—"revolutionary time, when members of a subordinated group reconstitute themselves as a social movement and intervene in the public sphere of politics in the interests of equality and social justice" (Nealon and Giroux 113). We see this in the writing of slave narratives. Jacobs appropriates time in this manner as she addresses the women of the North directly, appealing to their pathos, in order to move them to abolish slavery: "Reader, it is not to awaken sympathy for myself that I am telling you truthfully what I suffered in slavery. I do it to kindle a flame of compassion in your hearts for my sisters who are still in bondage, suffering as I once suffered" (27). The purpose of Jacobs's narrative is to help incite a revolutionary attitude in the women of the North that would end slavery.

In *Incidents*, the most obvious of Hanchard's facets to racial time is that of temporality and progress. This conceptualization of time "refers to belief in the future as improvement on the present, often with religious references to a second coming or encounter with and the arrival of an angry God" (Nealon and Giroux 113). Thomas Jefferson in his "Notes on the State of Virginia" exemplifies this "sense of millennial time" as he addresses the consequences of slavery (113): "Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just: that his justice cannot sleep for ever" (qtd. in Nealon and Giroux 113). Examples of temporality and progress include Linda's grandmother who "trust[s] in time to be able to purchase some of her children" (Jacobs 10); she encourages Linda in saying, "'Try to bear a little longer. Things may turn out better than we expect'" (75); and her final communication with Linda reads, " 'Dear Daughter: I cannot hope to see you again on earth; but I pray to God to unite us above, where pain will no more rack this feeble body of mine; where sorrow and parting from my children will be no more. God has promised these things if we are faithful unto the end" (151). Linda demonstrates such temporality and progress as well, as she tells her son Benjamin that "perhaps we might, before long, be allowed to hire our own time, and then we could earn money to buy our freedom" (13); and as she remembers, "Obstacles hit against plans. There seemed no way of overcoming them; and yet I hoped" (68).

Linda's experience of time is a direct result of her movement in space. In slavery, her space and time are controlled by her master. Once she moves to spaces in which she has agency, however small, Linda experiences both free space and free time. Her geographical space, however, does not open up

until she escapes to the North. Here she has freer ownership of space and time, but due to the Jim Crow laws, the Fugitive Slave act, and Dr. Flint's hunting her, she does not truly own her space and time until Mrs. Bruce has bought her freedom. Even in this case Linda does not truly own her space since she rents, rather than owns, her space of property. Nevertheless, she owns her time as she works for and keeps her presumably fair wages. She feels she owes at least some of her space and time to Mrs. Bruce, but she is freer than she was in slavery. One can imagine further constraints on Linda in the North due to slave laws and racism, but her narrative helps her and others in the black community break free of these constraints. Jacobs's *Incidents* takes her experience out of private space and places it into the public in order to combat racial inequalities of space and time.

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"But Where is the Castle?": The Function of Modernist Allegory in Norman Mailer's *The Castle in the Forest*

James R. Fleming, University of Florida

"There may be no answer to this, but good questions still vibrate with honor within."

 - Norman Mailer, *The Castle in the Forest*

It would demand little stretch of our critical imaginations to conclude that Norman Mailer is among Western literature's preeminent allegorical novelists, a unique position he shares with only Gabriel Garcia-Marquez and Salman Rushdie among his contemporaries. Throughout his sixty-year career as a novelist, essayist and journalist (as well as a poet, playwright, filmmaker and politician), Mailer published over forty novels, non-fiction accounts, and collections of essays and stories, virtually all of which have explored, among a variety of other topics, the existential, mystical and metaphysical mysteries of life and death (often in the course of the same work, as demonstrated most particularly in his novels *An American Dream* and *Why Are We In Vietnam?),* as well as what he long considered to be one of the fundamental dynamics of reality: the continuing war between the forces of good and those of evil across the various battlefields (both conscious and unconscious) of the modern world. Despite his well-noted adherence to existential philosophy and concern with contemporary American politics and social issues, Mailer frequently makes use of allegorical structures in his work in order to represent the dynamic and often complicated and contradictory structures of reality and human psychology.

With the exception of Robert J. Begiebing's *Acts of Regeneration: Allegory and Archetype in the Works of Norman Mailer*, however, relatively little critical attention has been given to Mailer's use of allegory in his writings. While most critics of Mailer have failed to recognize the vital importance of allegory to his writings[1], this critical deficit is probably owed more to the popular critical resistance to

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[1] Surprisingly, Mailer has said nothing about his use of allegory (nor his use of metaphor, aside from a few passing mentions) in his writings published before 1990. However, in his 1980 interview with John W. Aldridge, Mailer discusses *The Executioner's Song* and the challenge he felt he faced with that novel to "paint this scene as it is, because in the act of presenting it, you will underline the mystery. That's why you show it with no decoration and no interpretation—for just that reason. The aesthetic imperative, if there was one, finally came down to: let the book be lifelike" (270). He admits that while Capote's *In Cold Blood* was an influence on his writing of *The Executioner's Song* "it was still very much a book written by Truman Capote . . . he novelizes more, where I determined to keep it to the factual narrative . . . what I had was gold, if I had enough sense not to gild it" (270). Mailer has also discussed his most ostensibly allegorical novels, *Barbary Shore* and *Why Are We in Vietnam*, at length, without ever touching on their obvious allegorical structures and content. But why does Mailer resist considering himself, at least publicly, as an allegorist? This might be owed to Romantic and post-

Mailer's writing over the last thirty years than to the Romantic and Post-Romantic resistance to the practice of allegory in fiction and poetry. What is most remarkable about Mailer's allegories, however, is not simply the manner in which he departs from the Postmodern tradition of allegory, but, rather, that his allegories can be located quite firmly within the Modernist allegorical tradition, in so far as he refuses to offer firm and readily discernible allegories, but instead a proliferation of simultaneous and at times contradictory allegorical interpretations within a single work.

Mailer's final novel, *The Castle in the Forest*, represents the very pinnacle of his achievement as an allegorist. While Mailer's early novels used allegory to disguise and at the same time render palpable the dark, existential realities he explored and celebrated, in his later narratives, Mailer used allegory to illustrate the complexities and contradictions of modern social structures and psychology, as well as to reunite the reader with what Mailer believed to be a spiritual dimension of life and consciousness lost to modern civilization. *The Castle in the Forest*, then, is a heavily overdetermined allegory, one which, in the Modernist tradition of Joyce, Beckett, and Kafka, resists clear allegorical interpretation. While the same can be said of all of Mailer's mature allegories, the possible interpretations and readings of *The Castle and the Forest* pile even higher than those possible for Mailer's other decidedly mature allegorical narratives, *Why Are We in Vietnam?* and *The Executioner's Song*. Throughout all of his mature allegorical writing, Mailer rejects the allegorical practices of his Postmodernist contemporaries, instead returning, time and again, to the Modernist tradition of allegory, for all of its indeterminacies and lingering, irresolvable questions.

The Castle in the Forest is offered, at least ostensibly, as a story of Adolph Hitler's family history and early childhood. The themes that are pursued throughout the narrative, however, reveal it to be richly suggestive and packed full of allegorical suggestions, to the point that the allegorical suggestions with the novel seem to overwhelm it, in turn flooding the reader with an endless array of possible and likely readings. While we can argue that *The Castle in the Forest* serves, in many respects, to offer an allegory of writing itself, this stands as but one particular allegorical reading of a narrative that suggests countless other possible allegorical meanings and interpretations. Like a number of strong Modernist

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Romantic deprivilegization of allegory, which served, in part, to position allegory as being an outmoded and archaic literary form, a prejudice which carried well into the Modern and Postmodern ages. That being said, I the answer to this question might be far simpler than that. Mailer's failure or unwillingness to discuss the important role of allegory in his writing might be owed to this impulse to keep his figurative cards close to his chest and not reveal a key element of his own literary drives and methods to his public.

allegories (the examples are countless: Kafka's *The Castle*, Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, Faulkner's "The Bear," and Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*), *The Castle in the Forest* suggests a plethora of allegorical suggestions and positions them in an overtly incommensurable correlation to each other.

Robert Begiebing argues that Mailer operates as an allegorical "visionary" throughout his writing, and that it is "to the allegorical mode that Mailer's work is to be distinguished from the fabulism (the conscious or mechanical appropriation of specific parables, epics, or myths) associated with many of his American contemporaries" (5). According to Begiebing, allegory fulfills Mailer's particular spiritual and social needs as an artist. He insists that Mailer makes regular use of "rational allegory" and, even moreover, "true allegory" throughout his major allegorical writings. According to Begiebing, "rational allegory" can be defined as

> allegory that separates from the mode its ancient function of representing a spiritual world through the details of the phenomenal world, as allegory in the 18th century tended to separate the spiritual world from the phenomenal. The appeal of rational allegory, therefore, lies solely in the direct translatability of all the allegorical material and in the writer's display o rational ingenuity and myth. (6).

On the other hand, "true allegory," in Begiebing's view, can be defined as "allegory that reunites the spiritual and phenomenal worlds. Such allegories often portray mankind's direct encounter with spiritual powers and with an inner, visionary world largely through the details of the phenomenal world" (6). True allegory, he insists, is almost always privileged over rational allegory in Mailer's work. In true allegory the conscious and the symbolic tend to operate simultaneously, in turn creating an indivisible, organic whole within the narrative at hand. Begiebing considers true allegory to be particularly crucial to Mailer's work, for Mailer regularly attempts to regenerate our primitive capacity to perceive spiritual truths by effectively restoring a lost spiritual dimension to our internal lives and external worlds.

Throughout his novels, Mailer continuously attempts to make sense of the literal through the figurative. Mailer's allegories are both historically and politically grounded (as we see, most especially, in *Barbary Shore*, *Why Are We In Vietnam*, *Harlot's Ghost*, and, indeed, *The Castle in the Forest*) and ideologically grounded (as we see demonstrated in *The Deer Park*, *An American Dream*, and *The Executioner's Song*). Of course, as M.H. Abrams makes clear, both types of allegory can be used and

sustained throughout a particular work (as we see demonstrated in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*) and are not mutually exclusive (6), which is certainly the case in Mailer *Why Are We in Vietnam?*, *Armies of the Night*, and *The Castle in the Forest*.

Robert Solotaroff argues that Norman Mailer's novel *An American Dream* is "a relatively conventional allegory," (170) and likens the narrative's allegorical method to that of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Solotaroff argues that "like Dante, the narrator of that most celebrated of all dream visions, Rojack [the narrator and protagonist of *An American Dream*] must relinquish his allegiance to the temptations of the devil and once again align himself with the will of God" (170) over the course of the narrative. He locates numerous thematic parallels between Mailer and Dante's respective narratives, contending that Mailer and his protagonist are both "always 'tending toward the encounter with [the protagonist], even as [Dante] moved inexorably toward that moment of confrontation with Satan in the depths of Hell'" (170). Solotaroff argues that by structuring his narrative as an allegory, Mailer is able to "escape from some of his critics by fleeing into the protective conventions of this literary form" (170). Solotaroff points out that many critics found *An American Dream*'s actions and events to be improbable, if not downright impossible. Solotaroff does not construct any particular theory of Mailer's use of allegory in the narrative, but rather identifies it as being allegorical simply because it is seemingly improbable. His suggestion, though, is that Mailer structures *An American Dream* as an allegory in anticipation of his critics rejecting the impossibility of his narrative for, as Solotaroff argues, "no critic has ever troubled himself with the improbability of a historical personage getting a ride on the back of a mythological animal or with how little sleep the thirty-five-year-old Dante got during his one week pilgrimage down to a confrontation with Satan and up to a vision of God" (170).

Stanley T. Gutman argues that Mailer's early novel *Barbary Shore* represents Mailer's paramount allegorical vision. He contends that with *Barbary Shore*, "Mailer has written an allegory of modern political life," (31) and a fairly straight forward and discernable allegory at that. Gutman sees the character of Hollingsworth, the antagonist in the novel, as "an agent of monopoly capitalism, of the United States, of the 'free world'." McLeod, the protagonist in the novel, then, represents "the Marxist-Leninist tradition as it has been perverted and corrupted into Stalinism, or state capitalism" (32). Gutman goes on to argue that Mailer's use of allegory represents his "view of the political scene during the early fifties" (32). While Mailer gives voice to a number of contrasting ideas and viewpoints

throughout the novel, his narrative is centered, at least ideologically, primarily upon the character of McLeod, who, at the end of the novel, issues a lengthy polemic that is representative, in large part, of Mailer's own view of the political situations of the Western world at the time. Mailer's allegory, then, ultimately develops into a mere polemic, a pronouncement of his own political, social and artistic view points. Mailer issues a definitive judgment in this narrative, and overtly privileges one ideological system over another, something that he avoids doing, at least overtly, in his later allegorical narratives.

In his next stage as an allegorist, which begins with *Why Are We In Vietnam?* Mailer begins to issue allegories that can be located fairly firmly within the Modernist allegorical tradition, in so far as he presents allegories without ready or simple solutions to them, allegories which are not immediately solvable and which balance a multiplicity of contradictory and incommensurable notions simultaneously. While Thomas Pynchon and Ishmael Reed certainly both make pronounced use of the allegorical mode in their writings, Mailer's post-*An American Dream* allegories tend to have a greater sense of intention or direction pushing behind them. Mailer's mature allegories are never clear-cut or simply dualistic; rather, it always seems as if he is attempting to develop and pronounce a social, culture, artistic, psychological or political vision in his works. Mailer's mature allegories are multi-faceted and sweeping, attached in some direct manner to reality, yet always resistant to mere simplification or correspondence to such.

Brian McHale argues that Modernist allegories are "over determined allegories, they have too many interpretations. The result of overdetermination is indeterminacy; and this indeterminacy has profound ontological consequences, for sets in motion a game of musical chairs involving the literal frame of reference" (142). He argues further that "certain postmodernist allegorists, instead of exploiting indeterminate allegory to destabilize ontological structure, seem to have opted for relatively transparent, univocal allegorical narratives, offering apparently no obstruction to interpretation" (142). Unlike a number of his Postmodern contemporaries (Thomas Pynchon, William Burroughs, Angela Carter and Ishmael Reed in particular), Mailer's mature allegories owe far more to the Modernist allegorical tradition than the Postmodern allegorical tradition, in that he does not offer allegories which are transparent and unobstructed.

McHale argues that in terms of Postmodern allegory, the "realistic" level of an allegory "can only be the words on the page in front of you" (146). Citing and expanding from Maureen Quilligan, McHale

suggests that this is especially true in the case of Thomas Pynchon. "Pynchon's characters persist in behaving as though their world were a text—which of course, literally, it is—and they its readers" (146). McHale contends that in a number of Postmodernist allegories, the fictional world is perpetually evaporating and "perpetually sliding back and forth between trope and literal" (146). In Postmodernist fiction, as Quilligan asserts, "the stage setting of an allegory begins, as it might in any fiction, but at some point in the play of the narrative the action fades, as if the lights were to go off behind the screen, so that the audience is left facing the curtain on which are printed the author's words" (qtd. in McHale 147) in turn leaving the reader stranded in the realm of the metafictional or metatetextual and effectively left somewhere outside of the narrative itself. In that respect, McHale suggests that William Burroughs is the Postmodern allegorist par excellence, for in the allegories of Burroughs, "the opposition is between the principle of control and the various avatars of the life-force that resists control. Control is allegorized in a number of ways: as power-mad bureaucrats, as junk, as parasitic viruses, and ultimately as the Word itself" (143). For McHale, Burroughs's Postmodernist allegories are ultimately quite discernable and clear-cut. The same, however, cannot be said of Mailer's allegories, despite Mailer's historical location amongst his Postmodern contemporaries.

The Castle in the Forest is, undoubtedly, an example of true allegory (at least in terms of Begiebing's conception of such), in so far as it unites the spiritual and phenomenal worlds into an organized whole, albeit one that is filtered through a daemonic narrator that refuses to offer a full conception of what his allegory is in fact signifying. Good and evil, freedom and control, life and death, the tragic and the comedic, and even truth and fiction, are not presented in any particular binarism in *The Castle in the Forest*, at least not one that is immediately discernable. In fact, the narrative does not offer any clear indication of what is and what is not being allegorized, never mind what the proper or intended interpretation of the narrative might be. Mailer instead goes to great lengths to suggest that much of what is represented is somehow allegorical, without revealing exactly what those allegorical suggestions serve to signify.

Throughout the narrative Mailer makes much of Adolph's father's obsession with bee-keeping (itself a potent symbol of the forces of creativity and militarism that would prove to be so highly influential upon Hitler's psyche), the eternal battle between the forces of good and evil and life and death (a theme which represent the very foundation of countless allegorical tales) and the narrator's

keen interest in Milton's *Paradise Lost*.[1] While all of these narrative elements signify greater allegorical meanings to the narrative, Mailer tends to simply posit them along the way without allowing us any greater insight into their significance in terms of the larger allegorical meaning of the narrative. To even begin to decipher the greater allegorical significance of *The Castle in the Forest*, we must turn to the daemonic narrator of the text himself, our only source of knowledge of what is occurring within the narrative.

The story is narrated in the first person by a daemon who identifies himself as "an officer of the Evil One" (71) or "directing devil" (77) and masked himself as a human SS officer during World War II named Dieter. Dieter's mission, before taking human form, was to monitor the family and childhood circumstances of the young Adolph Hitler in order to lead young Hitler further into darkness and evil. Dieter states that "I followed his life from infancy a long way into his development as the wild beast of the century, this all-too-modest-looking politician with his snippers of a mustache" (72) for "even the noblest, most-self sacrificing and generous mother can produce a monster. Provided we are present" (74) to influence him or her along the way. While Dieter monitored and influenced Adolph's life from the ontological position of the spiritual realm, he reveals that at a later point he became human in order to become all the closer to Hitler. He is, then, a daemonic metamorph, itself, as Bruce Clarke tells us, a highly pertinent allegorical trope. Dieter, then, is figured as a symbolic representation and personification of evil and Nazism as well as the unique historical situation that served to produce Hitler. In that respect, Dieter can be compared to the Olympian divinity Hermes, whose "proper attributes as a herald, messenger, guardian, and guide, an intermediary, as a secondary or filial terms proclaiming an Other's (parental) word, parallel the standardized attributes of daemons in general" (Clarke 3).

Both Dieter and his Greek archetype serve to classify and personify writing as a particularly daemonic activity, for, as Clarke suggests, "as scapegoat . . . wandering outcast, or stealthy outsider, the metamorph exemplifies the status of writing within a logocentric system" (5). Both Dieter and Hermes are figured as daemonic metamorphs in their respective narratives, and possess particular attachments

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[1] Dieter claims that Milton "no matter how inaccurate were his details . . . did present a pioneer demonstration of how" the kingdoms of good and evil "might have confronted each other at the commencement of that great estrangement which occurred when the earliest squadron's of angels divided into opposed camps and each was convinced that they were the ones to direct the future of human beings" (75).

to the practice of writing, and Hermes,[1] much like Mailer's Dieter, "has a . . . genius for impropriety, and comes to oversee a number of disreputable agents and activities, stealthy operators and their acts; thieves, merchants, alchemists, lovers, sophists, and rhetoricians, and their economic, sexual, and linguistic commerce," (4) and both share, as weapons, "shady rhetoric: linguistic stealth, imposed allegoresis, verbal and graphic trickery, business contracts, skill at the oath" (Clarke 5). Dieter, then, serves as the deamonic writer personified, translating and suppressing signs, shifting meaning, transferring meanings, and operating, in essence, in opposition to what Clarke refers to as "spoken logos" (5).

Clarke insists that "Whereas a mythic or scriptural metamorphosis may be the occasion for an awesome epiphany or revelation of the sacred, a literary metamorphosis cannot be taken completely seriously," (1) as, clearly, we are not supposed to take the character of Dieter completely seriously. There is a certain degree of silliness to Dieter, evident particularly in his humor and ironic self-awareness, for, as he notes, "of course, if I publish, I will then have to flee from the wrath of the Maestro . . . I could choose to enter the equivalent in our spirit-life of the Federal Witness Protection Program. That is, the Cudgels would hide me. Of course, I would have to cooperate with them. Conversions are their stock-in-trade" (80). Clarke argues that, "the more parodic the daemonic becomes, the more strongly it may be translated from mythic detachment into material significance. The manifest silliness of such characters gives them a kind of cover under which to carry powerful and serious contents" (13-14). Dieter's undertaking, despite his ironic detachment (and mutual attachment) from it, is however quite powerful and serious. He is, after all, influencing the development of Adolph Hitler, helping him to develop from a weak-willed child hindered by a pronounced Oedipus complex into the Fuehrer himself. The increasing influence of Dieter and other daemonic agents over young Adolph also represents a pronounced allegorical trope, a clear signifier that what we are reading is, quite indeed, an allegory. Angus Fletcher argues that, in narrative "the increase of daemonic control over the character amounts to an intensification of the allegory" (49). Over the course of the narrative, Dieter and his fellow daemons cultivate an increasing measure of control over the lives of the Hitler family. As Dieter's influence over the Hitler family increases and strengthens, Adolph, and moreover Dieter's narrative of Adolph's early experiences, develops into something far greater in the way of an allegory.

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[1] Hermes, as Clark notes, is a god of writing, Dieter, on the other hand, is a practitioner.

Clarke notes that "with regard to its allegorical function, the daemon typically bears a message with a moral content—good or evil whispering to the human soul" (11). Interestingly, this is virtually exactly how Dieter bears his deamonic (and clearly quite evil) messages to the Hitler family. Dieter tell us that he influences the Hitler family, primarily, by "etching" dreams for them in order to "fortify" their psyches: "we are keyed to look for excesses of every kind, good or bad, loving or hateful, too much or too little of anything. Every exaggeration of honest sentiment is there to serve our aims" for "we knew all about wish fulfillment long before Dr. Freud had anything to say on the matter" (399). Dieter and his fellow demons primarily operate through the mode of the dream, the supreme allegorical mode, and one which explorers to far greater lengths and depths in his earlier allegorical novels.

Clarke comments that in allegory, "both humans and daemons are moved by feelings: passionate daemons behave like mortal persons, passionate persons turn into daemons" (11). Again, this is particularly evident in *The Castle in the Forest*, for despite being an otherworldly being, Dieter often acts with the passion of a mortal, exhibiting not only desire and a longing for pleasure, but also a particular artistic need—he is, after all, a writer, if not a novelist. Throughout the narrative, Dieter makes frequent reference to the possible consequence of his writing of his role in Hitler's youth, suggesting that such could earn him the wrath of the Maestro for even daring to put his story on paper.

> While the Maestro has no desire to use up any part of his resources by monitoring every last one of our acts . . . he is also not inclined to let us go on ventures he has not selected . . . but now . . . one can try to steal a bit of secrecy, a private zone if you will, for oneself . . . I have grown more confident that I will be able to conceal the existence of this manuscript until, at least, it is finished. Then I will feel obliged either to print it or—destroy it . . . of course, if I publish, I will then have to flee from the wrath of the maestro . . . Ergo, I have a choice—treachery or extinction . . . by revealing our procedures, I can enjoy the rarefied pleasure (for a devil) of being able not only to characterize but to explore the elusive nature of my own existence. (80)

Perhaps Mailer is attempting to allegorize the status of the novelist in contemporary Western society. After all, as the experiences of Salman Rushdie and Milan Kundera (and the career of Norman Mailer, for that matter) have proved, writing is by no means a safe activity and the writer can, indeed, face extinction because of what he or she reveal or characterize. Clarke argues that, "daemonic creatures

are allegorical fictions that arise as exceptions to normal, natural, or mimetic production, exceptions that either underwrite or undermine the rule of the normality from which they deviate," (22) much, as we might imagine, like novelists, who themselves often function as exceptions, by the very nature of their activity, to typical modes of production and serve, almost always, to undermine the worlds from which they spring.

When writing of the significance of Milton's *Paradise Lost* to the cosmology that he propagates throughout his narrative, Dieter tells us that, "I cannot speak for the angels, but devils are obliged to be devoted to good writing. Milton, therefore, is high in our arcana of those few literary artists whom we do not have to look upon as unforgivably second-rate (because of their sentimental inexactitudes)" (75). Writing (or, rather, good writing, as Dieter is careful to insist), then, is identified by both Clarke and Mailer as being firmly within the realm of the daemonic. For Deiter, then, writing is quite literally the Devil's work. What is especially interesting, however, is Dieter's dismissal of writers who are "unforgivably second-rate (because of their sentimental inexactitudes)," writers, then, whom we might identify as Romantic and, implicitly, opposed to allegory. Allegorical writing, Dieter implicitly argues, possesses a particular power that appeals to daemons, suggesting that good writing, namely allegorical writing, is, indeed, somehow deamonic (and by extension subversive) in nature.[1] Dieter, in turn, privileges the classical over the Romantic, the formal over the organic, and the traditional over the revolutionary. Given Mailer's own Romantic nature, in particular his revolutionary, experimental, and imaginative focus throughout his career, it would seem that Dieter's criticism is not meant to be taken literally, or as a pronouncement of Mailer's own view. If anything, Mailer is suggesting that the formal and classical forms of art are but tools of evil, and that Romantic ideology is but an escape or resistance to such.

At the end of the novel, Dieter (still in human form) is captured by the Allies and taunts a Jewish/American military officer during his interrogation into executing him, in turn allowing him to

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[1] A particular anxiety surrounding the fleeting significance of writing in the contemporary world is also evident throughout the narrative. Dieter notes that:

> I have been able to do this work without attracting the attention of the Maestro. And that is possible only because in these latter-day American years, he is more attuned to electronics than to print. The Maestro has followed human progress into cybertechnologies far more closely than the Lord . . . Since the Maestro is heavily engaged, and his present existence is more arduous than ever—I believe he deems himself closer to eventual victory—I feel free to venture out. (80)

This anxiety surrounding the cybernization of Western life and the possibility of it leading to the downfall of narrative has been a constant theme in Mailer's writing throughout the past few decades.

vacate that body and "move on," (464) not to mention help corrupt yet another soul along the way. He concludes his narrative by offering, ostensibly, something of an explication for the mysterious and unexplained title of his text:

> All that remains to discuss is why I have chosen this title, *The Castle in the Forest*. If the reader, having come with me through Adolph Hitler's birth, childhood, and a good part of his adolescence, would now ask, "Dieter, where is the link to your text? There is a lot of forest in your story, but where is the castle?
>
> I would reply that *The Castle in the Forest* translates into *Das Waldshloss*.
>
> This happens to be the name given by the inmates some years ago to the camp just liberated . . . not many trees are in sight, no any hint of a castle. Nothing of interest is on the horizon. Waldschloss became, therefore, the appellation given by the brightest of the prisoners to their compound. One pride maintained to the end was that they must not surrender their sense of irony. That had become their fortitude. It should come as no surprise that the prisoners who came up with this piece of nomenclature were from Berlin. If you are German and possessed of lively intelligence, irony is, of course, vital to one's pride. (465)

Despite his attempt at offering an explanation as to the title he has chosen for his narrative, however, Dieter offers no further or substantial insight into the meaning of his title and, in effect, the allegorical meaning of his narrative, other than his suggestion that it is, indeed, meant to be ironic. Stephen Melville asserts that, "irony slides toward allegory as it recognizes its involvement with other minds and persons—and as it does so it confuses and complicated the line between what we might otherwise want to distinguish as . . . art and life" (60). Perhaps these closing lines represents yet another of Mailer's attempt to further explicate the fine line between life and art and truth and falsity, not to mention irony and allegory and classical and Romantic. While a clear binarism would seem to exist between Hitler's victims and his daemonic mentor, Mailer attempts something of a deconstruction of that structure here, suggesting, indeed, that they share, in the wake of Hitler, a particular ironic awareness and a need to give name or signature to whatever event(s) they have experienced. It is, then, from this recognition that irony spawns allegory. Both Dieter and the survivors of Hitler's campaigns can give a name the enterprises he spawned—the irony being, it would seem, that they give the very same

name to these enterprises—for what we possess, solely, is language and narrative, no matter our position, be it that of the daemonic, or that of the oppressed or the oppressors. When he writes of the unwillingness of the survivors to surrender their sense of irony despite their experiences, Dieter might as well be writing of himself and his own experience within the locus of Adolph Hitler. While there is, in fact, plenty of interest on the horizon of this text, locating just what that might be remains the question, a point which Dieter (and, indeed, Mailer himself) seems to recognize as he concludes his narrative by stating that "there may be no answer to this, but good questions still vibrate within" (467).

Indeed, good questions continue to vibrate within the text even after its conclusion, leaving the reader to wonder exactly what the allegorical significance of the narrative might ultimately be. Is Mailer suggesting that the plight of Dieter is analogous to that of Hitler's victims? Is Mailer suggesting that the experiences of Hitler as recounted in the previous pages will result in numerous castles in the proverbial forest, numerous genocidal leaders and crazed political leaders? Is Mailer offering an allegory of writing, with Dieter representing all that which is dark and diabolical in the act of writing? Or is Mailer, perhaps, affirming the importance of writing, particularly in terms of the manner in which it might bear witness to the horrors of both the past and the present and make the truth known through language? Is the inexplicable irony the survivors of Das Walschloss meant to be comparable to the inexplicable irony of the Postmodern movement? Is the *Castle and the Forest*, then, an allegory of the genesis of Postmodern thinking and artistic practices in the wake of Hitler and the Holocaust?

While there is much in the way of forest in Mailer's narrative, there are also many castles and, indeed, many vibrating questions which, by the nature of the narrative's allegorical structure, can never be fully answered. And in that, perhaps, we can locate Mailer's ultimate point in this narrative: the suggestion that in the wake of Hitler's regime and the Holocaust, allegorical reading and interpretation are impossible to locate or fully affirm, for, as Dieter suggests in the epilogue of his narrative, "nothing of interest is on the horizon" (465).

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Lady Audley as the Cunning "Other": An Economic, Sexual, and Criminal Attack on the Victorian Patriarchal Mindset

Jennifer M. Woolston, Indiana University of Pennsylvania

In *The Spectacle of Intimacy: A Public Life for the Victorian Family*, authors Karen Chase and Michael Levenson astutely diagnose a disquieting fact about one of Mary Elizabeth Braddon's most popular novels by asserting, "[r]eaders quickly understand that what makes the command of Helen Maldon / Lucy Graham / Lady Audley is so sinister is that it is concealed beneath an exquisite mask of flaxen hair and blue-eyed delicacy," (204). It is certainly no secret that Braddon's sensation novel, *Lady Audley's Secret* achieved rapid success with readers when first serialized in both *Robin Goodfellow* as well as *Sixpenny Magazine* during the early 1860s (Pedlar 187), although contemporary readers may wish to know precisely why this seemingly formulaic text received such a passionate following. At this time, sensation fiction as a genre had already began to take shape, and many themes found within Braddon's work appeared elsewhere. Barbara Leckie points out that sensation novel debates had begun in the Victorian social sphere, where the very act of looking at printed text was likened to "stimulants, dram-drinking, opium-eating, and drugs" (112), as it was thought to be a potential addiction, especially for impressionable female readers. While readers found themselves engaged in the voracious and controversial consumption of sensation fiction, literary critics sounded several cautionary alarms as to the contents of the works themselves.

Critical outrage towards *Lady Audley's Secret*, Voskuil posits, "stemmed directly at the mode, not the mere fact, of Lady Audley's theatricality: that she has exposed Victorian femininity *as* an act is less alarming than the way in which she plays it" (615). In light of the cultural attitudes surrounding the theatricality of Lady Audley's performed femininity and the social anxieties relating to the discernment of truth in such situations (Stern 39), one may receive a hint as to why novels such as this one achieved immense and immediate popularity. This having been said, critics would be remiss in leaving the analysis of the title character's performance on a visual level, as this is merely one component in the cycle of Lady Audley's gender-role defiance. Within the novel, Lady Audley is marginalized in a variety of ways, but rather than embracing the subservient female status afforded to her, she surreptitiously transforms her alienation into aggressive avenues of manipulation. In *Lady Audley's Secret*, Mary

Elizabeth Braddon creates a place where the title character consciously becomes an economic, sexual, and criminal "Other," therein effectively foreshadowing the theories of Simone de Beauvoir while simultaneously serving to destabilize Victorian notions of passive femininity.

In *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir rightly asserts that the "category of the Other is as primordial as consciousness itself. In the most primitive societies, in the most ancient mythologies, one finds the expression of a duality—that of the Self and the Other" (16). The idea of the "Other" has been inextricably linked to the idea of the female, with the male embodying the prized position of the "Self." With the male being the primary, the female then becomes marginalized as the secondary subordinate figure. This line of thinking effectively serves to erase the woman from positions of power, privileging her counterpart through a biologically essentialist argument. de Beauvoir also explains that, "what peculiarly signalizes the situation of woman is that she—a free and autonomous being like all human creatures—nevertheless finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the Other" (29). Women do not choose to be "Others" although they, in de Beauvoir's view, do little to change this power structure. In light of Victorian texts such as *Lady Audley's Secret*, this theoretical bent provides room for woman's autonomous action—in that certain acts are committed both *because of* as well as *under the guide of* this imbalance of power.

In Braddon's novel, Lady Audley serves as an economic "Other," climbing the social ladder through marriage while additionally being defined by her ensuing worldly possessions. Marriage to Sir Michael was a dream come true for Lucy, and when he proposed to the governess, she exclaimed, "Remember what my life has been; only remember that. From my very babyhood I have seen nothing but poverty … I cannot be blind to the advantages of such an alliance" (Braddon 16). Marriage, it seems, was a very fortunate end to Lucy's poverty, although its very proposition aligned her with the opposite of wealth. Instead of being a rich socialite, Lucy came from the opposite end of the economic spectrum. Here, in a very basic way, Lucy is defined as "Other" in that she is lucky outsider about to enter the world of opulence, with little to offer aside from beauty to call forth such a match. In *Murder and Moral Decay in Victorian Popular Literature*, author Beth Kalikoff attests to the idea of Lucy as the socially peripheral "Other" by asserting, "In *Lady Audley's Secret,* aristocrats are not dangerous; those who intrude into higher social classes are. Because she has committed a social crime—she married her titled former employer—Lady Audley is suspect from the start. This inappropriate coupling is emphasized by

the grotesque difference in their ages" (92). Lucy clearly commits a social crime in Kalikoff's view, although it should be noted that it is because of her "Other" status that Lucy captures Sir Michael's attention, as she generously gives of her time and money to the community at large. Lucy transforms herself through her new social status, therein obtaining the freedom to act opulently in any manner that she chooses. Action, then, becomes an additional way through which Lucy may invert her status as the "Other." Instead of budgeting her time and money—she can now exist with added mobility, allowing for a small blurring of the often gendered notion of public and private spheres.

Mobility is a defining factor in Lucy's arrival at the Dawson's residence, as she chooses to cast aside her old life for one of her own design. Nicole P. Fisk draws attention to this clever maneuvering when she argues that,

> unlike Clara, when Lady Audley wants to act, she does so, instead of merely fantasizing about what she would do if she were a man. It is not coincidental that George's letter and Lady Audley's letter are almost identical; George writes, "[I am] going to try my fortune in a new world," and Lady Audley writes "I go out into the world. . . to seek another home and another fortune." (25)

Instead of embracing the tired trope of feminine passivity, Helen becomes "Other" in that she openly acts despite social (and legal) conventions which forbid such selfish maneuvering. Helen transforms herself into Lucy, who is extremely feminine on the surface. Lucy does not wish to be masculine, but her actions signify the occupation of an intellectual borderland, separating her from the common crowd of Victorian females. Feminine performance is what allows for Lady Audley's success, as she effectively succeeds in her fortune-hunting, and becomes—at least for the men around her—equated with her possessions. In "Mad, Bad, or Difficult? Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* and the Enigma of Femininity," Fiona Peters speaks to this phenomenon by noting, "Read thus, woman, viewed as both the cause of desire and desirous object, can use the masquerade to undermine her position as image by evoking the gap she has previously been denied, in other words it gives her power" (201). Simply put, Lady Audley ceases to become a threat due to her alignment with material goods. Braddon effectively characterizes the title character through elaborate descriptions of the Lady's dressing quarters. In one passage, Braddon notes that the "atmosphere of the room was almost oppressive from the rich odors of perfumes in bottles whose gold stoppers had not been replaced. A bunch of hothouse flowers was

withering upon a tiny writing-table. Two or three handsome dresses lay in a heap upon the ground, and the open doors of a wardrobe revealed the treasures within" (70). Instead of examining Lucy's character, the members of her household seem heavily invested in viewing the spectacles of her opulent lifestyle. In this sense, one may also view Lady Audley as an "Other" in that she becomes the object of envy and curiosity—rather than appreciated as an animated human being. Essentially, the alignment of Lucy with the material world dehumanizes her, as she becomes two-dimensional. Lucy may not suffer from this marginalized "Othering" as it affords her the freedom to move publicly and in the attempted commission of her crimes without drawing much attention to herself.

Conversely, just as wealth and material goods allow Lucy freedom of mobility, these opulent trappings also limit her autonomy through the blackmail imposed upon her by Luke and Phoebe. When looking through Lady Audley's belongings early on within the novel, Luke and Phoebe discover the contents of a secret drawer, and confiscate the baby's hair contained within it (Braddon 34). This moment foreshadows the economic blackmail which will occur later in the text, while highlighting the greed of the lower class characters. Lady Audley, then, becomes the wealthy "Other" to Luke and Phoebe, as she owns "diamond things" which would "set them for life" (Braddon 34). Additionally, Lady Audley aligns herself with Phoebe physically by noting, "You *are* like me and your features are very nice; it is only color that you want" (Braddon 60). Lady Audley is once again the "Other," in that she possesses natural beauty, whereas Phoebe desires chemical alterations in order to achieve the same ocular effect. In both cases, Lady Audley is a privileged "Other" which is not a status typically afforded to women. Instead, women were frequently seen as interchangeable, and merely defined by their biological sex and physical accoutrements. Voskuil comments upon women's fluid and alienated status by asserting: "Just as Helen Maldon had become Helen Talboys, then Lucy Graham, and finally Lady Audley, the maid could be transformed into the mistress" (624). One woman could easily become another through a name change or a bottle of hair coloring, although these shifts alone would not alter the fact that the females themselves still occupied a subaltern place within the heavily gendered domestic and social spheres. Even a privileged "Other" still remained a virtual outsider in the social hierarchy.

Aside from occupying a place as an economic "Other," Lady Audley is also depicted as a sexual "Other" within Braddon's novel. In order to position Lucy as an opposing female force, Braddon discusses Sir Michael's feelings for this first wife:

> He had never loved before. What had been his marriage with Alicia's mother but a dull, jog-trot bargain, made to keep some estate in the family that would have been just as well out of it? What had been his love for his first wife but a poor, pitiful, smoldering spark, too dull to be extinguished, too feeble to burn? (12)

The passion that Lucy excites in the older man is paralleled with the lack of desire that the previous woman evoked. Instead of being commonplace, Lucy is defined as an extraordinary "Other" figure, and heavily defined by her stunning outward appearance throughout the novel. Simone de Beauvoir comments upon this physical "Othering":

> For the young girl, erotic transcendence consists in becoming prey in order to gain her ends. She becomes an object, and she sees herself as object; she discovers this new aspect of her being with surprise: it seems to her that she has been doubled; instead of coinciding exactly with herself, she now begins to exist *outside*. (361)

Instead of being defined by internal traits or characteristics, women who experience this form of "Othering" become exclusively defined by their outward beauty. Lady Audley becomes a captivating sexual force within the text, transfixing all those around her with her surface charms. Braddon notes that Sir Michael could not resist Lucy's "soft and melting blue eyes; the graceful beauty of that slender throat and dropping head, with its wealth of showering flaxen curls; the low music of that gentle voice" as these aesthetic charms are what drew him to her during their first meetings (12). Instead of questioning Lucy's past or engaging the girl in a spirited intellectual debate, Sir Michael concerns himself with her singular defining characteristic—her beauty. Lucy's face, body, and mannerisms are what set her apart from other girls, and in a sense, they constrict the ways in which the men of Audley Court view her. Simultaneously, Lucy is afforded a certain measure of freedom and power through this sexual "Othering" as she is able to manipulate those around her through her innocent costume.

Katherine Montwieler comments upon this phenomenon by noting that "Braddon presents Lady Audley in two fundamentally different ways: as a childlike beauty and as a powerful, self-interested woman. Both figures were popular tropes within the literature of the day. And, like any good woman,

Lucy cultivates her childishness" (49). Lucy's child-like beauty and mannerisms were nothing new to readers of Sensation fiction, although this sexualized mask allowed other characters the initial opportunity to underestimate her power, desire, and underlying motivations. Elizabeth Tilley asserts, "[i]t is Lady Audley's 'uncontrolled' sexuality and her notions of economic and social mobility which so enrage a patriarchal society bent, perversely, on de-sexing and babyfying women, clearly because they are dangerous to the hierarchy in any other form" (202). A woman reduced to infantilism seemed unthreatening to the patriarchal mindset, as her outward appearance and mannerisms cast her into the ranks of subordinated "Other." What a move like this fails to take into account, however, is that outward appearances do not always signal a character's internal capabilities. Montwieler mistakenly argues that, "Lady Audley is an active decorative object, a mechanical doll who knows how to act appropriately in any given scene" (51). Instead of merely viewing Lady Audley as an empty spectacle, one may notice the limited power that the objectified gaze affords to her. Lucy is a character who crosses boundaries without apology. Voskuil supports this claim by writing, "Braddon had created an unnatural monster—a childish, blonde creature who looked the part of the Victorian wife but who then belied the appearance by acting out a brazen materialism and murderous self-assertion" (615). Lady Audley takes the role of the child and very potently acts out against it. Lissa Paul discusses the social attitudes surrounding this "Othering" behavior by noting, "Children, like women, are lumped together as helpless and dependant; creatures to be kept away from the scene of action, and who otherwise ought not to be seen or heard" (150). Rather than buying to the notion of quiet and docile passivity, Lady Audley takes her woman-child status and transforms it through the outward manifestation of action. Tilley argues, "For here is the most interesting fact about this particular sensation novel: the Angel in the House has become the Demon; the golden-haired beauty so praised and protected has become a female vampire" (199). The fact is that Lady Audley is not as innocent as the narrator of the text would initially have readers believe.

Despite the fact that her "fragile figure, which she loved to dress in heavy velvets and stiff rustling silks, till she looked like a child tricked out for a masquerade, was as girlish as if she had but just left the nursery" (Braddon 55), very few of the Lady's autonomous actions within the text could be described as innocent in nature. While Lady Audley remains "the heroine over whom men fight, the exchanged commodity in a masculine economy" (Roberts 13), she does exert a certain amount of

influence over those around her through her sexuality. Lady Audley is not the common woman, and readers of Braddon's text are constantly reminded of this fact via the incessant praises of her "feathery golden ringlets" (Braddon 333). Hair essentially becomes a halo of sorts, but instead of beatifying the title character, Braddon chooses to showcase the ways in which women can manipulate the oftentimes limiting social roles afforded to them.

Yet another way that Lady Audley becomes the sexualized "Other" within the text is through her homoerotic relationship with her maid, Phoebe. As previously mentioned, the two women share some surface physical similarities—although Lady Audley's beauty is much more effervescent than her maid's charms. Natalie Schroeder, in "Feminine Sensationalism, Eroticism, and Self-Assertion: M.E. Braddon and Ouida," analyzes Lady Audley's behavior towards her female companion through a homoerotic lens. When writing about her maid, Braddon notes, "Treated as a companion by her mistress, in the receipt of the most liberal wages, and with prerequisites as perhaps no lady's maid ever had before, it was strange that Phoebe Marks should wish to leave her situation" (110). Readers are not told of the prerequisites which accompany such a position, although they are alerted to the warm relationship between the two women. When Phoebe announces her intentions of marrying Luke to her employer, Lady Audley responds by saying, "I tell you you shan't marry him, Phoebe. In the first place, I hate the man; and, in the next place, I can't afford to part with you" (Braddon 111). Does she refuse to part with her companion as merely a matter of convenience, or is there a love relationship occurring? "Undercurrents of homoeroticism also account for Lady Audley's strong objections to Phoebe's marriage" (Schroeder 92). While a physical relationship between the two women is not discussed at length at any point within the text, there are hints of an affectionate coupling. "Lady Audley's self-indulgent manner of attaining warmth—by wrapping herself in luxurious covers and by demanding a caress from Phoebe—suggests both masturbation and lesbianism" (Schroeder 92). What is certain is that Phoebe is enamored with her employer, as she often passionately describes her Lady's living situation. Early on within the novel, Phoebe reflects on her employer's admirers when traveling abroad by telling Luke:

> You should have heard her laugh and talk with them; throwing all their compliments and
> fine speeches back at them, as it were, as if they had been pelting her with roses. She set
> every body mad about her wherever she went. Her singing, her playing, her painting, her

> dancing, her beautiful smile, and sunshiny ringlets! She was always the talk of a place, as
>
> long as we stayed in it. (Braddon 32)

Even though this speech lacks a explicit sexual tint, Phoebe's admiration of her mistress shines through her glowing words—revealing the presence of a deep attachment. One may wonder if a fluid sexuality is part of Lady Audley herself, existing as an additional facet of the secrets that she keeps. In relation to this idea, Leckie observes that in "sensation novels, sexuality is intertwined with epistemology; the novel's secret, fuelling and informing the reader's and the detective's desire for resolution, after all, is always a sexual secret" (151). While Lady Audley's commission of bigamy is an irrefutable sexual secret, so too may be her hidden physical attachment to Phoebe. Simone de Beauvoir writes that man "takes great pride in his sexuality only in so far as it is a means of appropriating the Other—and this dream of possession ends only in frustration" (195). This assertion may signify fluidity on the part of the female's desire, which would certainly explain Lady Audley's penchant for receiving the attentions of both male as well as female members of her household. Whether Lady Audley experiences lesbian desire or not, she is still categorized as the "Other" or object of much outward male desire. Lady Audley's hold on sexuality both limits the ways in which others view her, as well as affords her a sense of increased social power. Schroeder speaks to this duality: "Sexuality becomes a key element in determining feminine power and self-assertion. Through these channels, Victorian women readers got a taste of independence or self-authenticity" (90). Rather than becoming a passive receiver of the male gaze, Lady Audley embodies desire and uses it as a tool for manipulation. This corporal tool may serve to inspire readers, as it does not effectively limit the heroine in any way, shape, or form. Rather, when wielded conscientiously, it creates a limited avenue through which women can assert their desires upon their male counterparts.

Lady Audley is also represented as the criminal "Other" throughout her attempts to commit murder, her status as a bigamist, and her refusal to accept the passive social scripts dictated to Victorian women. It should be noted that Lady Audley is aware of the danger that her attempted crimes place her in, but relies on her varying statuses as "Other" to conceal these threats. When feeling dread at the prospect that Sir Michael may discover her past, she reflects:

> [I]ntermingled with that thought there was another—there was the thought of her lovely
>
> face, her bewitching manner, her arch smile, her low musical laugh, which was like a peal

of silvery bells ringing across a broad expanse of flat pasture, and a rippling river in the misty summer evening. She thought of all these things with a transient thrill of triumph, which was stronger even than her terror. (Braddon 305)

Instead of feeling afraid of detection, Lady Audley's sexualized "Other" role serves to mask her criminal activities. In other words, while observing her face, one may miss what her hands are doing. The body is an important piece of Lady Audley's criminal display, as her confession itself is grounded in a physically embodied performance. Voskuil comments upon this occurrence: "When Robert Audley confronts her with the proof of her guilt, Lady Audley confesses her madness in the spectacular displays of the theatre" (633). Instead of merely admitting to her schemes, Lady Audley whirls around the room, effectively aligning herself with both the figure of the madwoman as well as the trope of the actress (Voskuil 633). Everything hinges on her outward performance as she struggles to avoid the fate of her similarly charming mother. The very fact that Lady Audley dares to abandon her son, push George down a well, and attempt to kill Luke aligns her with the opposite of passive femininity, and in effect, transforms her into the marginalized active "Other."

Ellen Miller Casey observes, "In her sensation novels, Braddon sees through Victorian propriety to a counterworld of feminine rebellion" (81). A large component of this rebellion rests with the woman's alienation—this is an imposed status that both cloaks and inspires direct rebellious action. Lady Audley does not rant and rave in the manner that traditional insanity implies. Instead, her actions are predetermined and surreptitiously implemented with a singularity of purpose. Fisk comments upon Lady Audley's alleged madness by arguing that "it seems more likely that the doctor recognizes intelligence, as he says he does, as well as self-assertion, characteristics that, when possessed by a female, threaten the patriarchy" (25). Lady Audley's sanity, then, is what places her in the realm of the criminal "Other," as it relegates her to a territory that Victorian women are not supposed to transgress upon. Women are supposed to tacitly accept their social place, and the refusal to do so signifies immediate danger to the traditional status quo. Fisk speaks to this perceived social danger, noting that although "Lady Audley is not guilty of murder, she is guilty of overstepping a woman's boundaries, and is therefore dangerous to patriarchal society" (25). Her madness, then, may be a refusal to accept the social scripts that Victorian society pressed upon her. Kalikoff argues that in "*Lady Audley's Secret*, crimes logically emerge from an environment in which social status is valued above everything. Lady

Audley, however, is ultimately responsible for her bigamy and murder because of her cunning, arrogance, and ambitious use of her sexuality" (94). While there remains no question as to Lady Audley's actions, it should be noted that her various positions as "Other" and the lack of power that these states afford her served to spurn her towards action. Perhaps the madness, in this sense, is merely the symptom of a limited and gendered cause. Lady Audley is the inversion of proper behavior and her descent eerily mirrors Robert's ascent. Within "From Do-Nothing to Detective: The Transformation of Robert Audley in *Lady Audley's Secret*," Vicki Pallo notes:

> Robert's conversion has not only sealed Lady Audley's fate; he is himself permanently transformed. At the novel's end, he has become a pattern member of society: a successful barrister, a landholder, and a husband. All traces of his previous asocial behavior has disappeared just as surely as Lady Audley herself has and he is now a "model citizen" of his time. (475)

While Lady Audley sinks from view, Robert becomes celebrated as a proper gentleman. This inversion of social roles once again speaks to the idea of Lady Audley as the "Other," due to the fact that her suffering is marginalized in favor of Robert's ascendance. One does not hear much from her when she is institutionalized, as the focus of the text erases her, contains her, and moves forward. Lady Audley becomes an anecdote—an unpleasant memory which can be ignored in favor of more pressing domestic realities. Her mysteries will remain forever hidden, as "it seems that which Lady Audley has been hiding all along remains invisible and undisclosed" (Stern 46). The Lady, in this case, becomes aligned with a terrifying social fraud. While this transgression is contained and erased by the end of the novel, the fact remains that Lady Audley's actions and desires served to titillate Victorian readers into a sense of disquieting emulation.

Lady Audley's Secret shook the Victorian patriarchy on its hinges, as it featured a heroine, "even if she must be catagorised as 'mad' or 'bad,' is always difficult and dangerous, transgressive and assertive" (Peters 208). Instead of conforming to the standard gender ideals of the time, Braddon presents readers with an exciting, decadent, and intelligent alternative to grim housewifery. Lady Audley herself embodies the "mid-Victorian fear of the wicked woman whose manipulative sexuality allows her to pursue dreams of wealth, social status, and power" (Kalikoff 84). Through giving voice to such a fear, Braddon serves to speak against the existing models of passive femininity. If reading

sensational novels was likened to an female addiction, this very desire "is also the indication of an emerging agency, very much alive and awake, only waiting to be felt and detected like the undercurrent of the body it ignites" (Leckie 153). Fisk notes:

> Unlike Alicia, Clara, and Phoebe, Lady Audley shirks these undesirable obligations, thereby challenging patriarchal power. In the end, Lady Audley serves as a sacrifice: even though she is prevented from exercising her female independence by being locked away in an asylum, she has opened the way for the remaining female characters to achieve domestic power and to fashion a new life. (24).

Rather than conforming to the marriage model, Lady Audley breaks away from convention through her bold outward actions. Instead of accepting the rule of a man, Lady Audley effectively becomes her own keeper of private thoughts and secrets. At the end of the novel, the remaining female characters have found filial bliss, although there is a change present. Gender boundaries, although intact, become slightly blurred due to Lady Audley's success as an "Other." Since the fixed categories no longer serve their purpose, a new script must be written. Fisk speaks to this phenomenon:

> In the final chapter, the reader is introduced to Robert's and Clara's baby and, in a novel in which gender is initially of the utmost importance, this baby remains genderless. Lady Audley has defied her filial and marital obligations, has successfully entered into a man's world, and, although she does not survive the journey, she has enabled other women to do so. Robert's and Clara's baby remains genderless because it no longer matters whether it is male or female. (26)

Gender becomes a site of anxiety within the novel, and as such, the patriarchal binary becomes destabilized. Lady Audley has successfully, through her manipulations of her multi-faceted "Othered" positions, broken new ground for Victorian female audiences to begin to consider exploring.

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***Ulysses* and Generations**

Patrick S. Herald, Saginaw Valley State University

The influence of generational difference is often ignored in literary studies, which generally defers to period labels such as modernism and the Victorian age to define individual authors' identities. Curiously, important cultural signifiers such as "Baby Boomer" and "Generation X" have not prompted a literary project to consider generational impact on the texts of authors other than those who are placed within the "Lost Generation." Even this label is used most commonly to treat the authors it contains as more emblematic of the modernist period than others—an act which both undermines the importance of other authors at the time (especially American writers who were not expatriates), and again cedes greater power to the period label of modernism. The importance of generations in literature is not a new idea, as Michael Soto points out in a discussion of Emerson, who he says "advances a generational model of literary history because it offers an organic alternative to static notions of ages, epochs, or other more 'objective' alternatives to periodization. One is not born into a generation, he suggests; one *lives* into it, one *reads* into it" (21). A generational perspective of James Joyce, himself about one generation removed from the infamous Lost Generation (17 years older than Hemingway), helps point us toward further perspective of his writing, as well as other texts associated with the time. Such a survey reveals the multifaceted nature of generations, which can be broad and sociohistorical, personal and familial, and literary. Generations are also revealed as an influence Joyce and others found impossible to ignore, which had an indelible impact during World War I and the following years, and which function as both a divisive and connective force.

Prior to writing *Ulysses*, Joyce created for the short story "The Dead" a character poignantly aware of a coming change, and a generational one at that. At a dinner party, the forty-ish Gabriel, while giving a speech in honor of the hospitality of the elderly hosts Aunt Kate and Aunt Julia, proclaims:

> —A new generation is growing up in our midst, a generation actuated by new ideas and new principles. It is serious and enthusiastic for these new ideas and its enthusiasm, even when it is misdirected, is, I believe, in the main sincere. But we are living in a skeptical, and, if I may use the phrase, a thought-tormented age: and sometimes I fear that this

> new generation, educated or hypereducated as it is, will lack those qualities of humanity, of hospitality, of kindly humour which belonged to an older day. (2188)

A conventional read of this passage would relegate it to a mere proto-modernist exclamation of longing for the lost past. Focusing on Gabriel's conception of generations, however, reveals the speech to be relaying an anxiety about the coming generation, one member of which he has a failed conversation with earlier when he bumbles an attempt at a joke. Gabriel is anxious before the speech, anticipating that he "would only make himself ridiculous by quoting poetry to them which they could not understand. They would think that he was airing his superior education. He would fail with them just as he had failed with the girl in the pantry" (2174).

This anxiety is one echoed by others in the years surrounding World War I as well. As Bonnie Kime Scott writes in *The Gender of Modernism*, "Loy suggests that modernism demands creativity of the audience, and Stein finds that having an audience alters the lecturer's sense of her own words" (15). Gertrude Stein is often credited as the creator of the label "Lost Generation," the most famous example being the epigraph to Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, which reads "'You are all a lost generation' – Gertrude Stein in conversation" (7). Stein's account in *Everybody's Autobiography* actually attributes the invention of the term to a hotel keeper:

> It was this hotel keeper who said what it is said I said that the war generation was a lost generation. And he said it this way. He said that every man becomes civilized between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five. If he does not go through a civilizing experience at that time in his life he will not be a civilized man. And the men who went to the war at eighteen missed the period of civilizing, and they could never be civilized. They were a lost generation. Naturally if they are at war they do not have the influences of women of parents and of preparation. (53)

As in Hemingway's novel, the war seems to be the deciding factor for other writers of the "Lost Generation." In *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Paul Fussell describes such a generation, writing that "[o]ut of the world of summer, 1914, marched a unique generation. It believed in Progress and Art and in no way doubted the benignity even of technology. The word *machine* was not yet invariably coupled with the word *gun*" (14). This account adds new depth to the term "lost" with its description of the generation's beliefs, which were subsequently shattered by the horrors of World War I.

World War I returns the discussion to Joyce, who is generally not discussed in terms of the Great War's influence, as he neither took part in it nor explicitly treated it in his fiction. In "Nestor and the Nightmare: The Presence of the Great War in *Ulysses*," though, Robert E. Spoo provides a valuable insight into how Joyce's writing is actually suffused with World War I, using *Ulysses* (much of which was written during the war) as a case study. Spoo makes the argument that "[t]he second episode of *Ulysses* is, on even a casual perusal, suffused with war" (139). This is a link worth pursuing, and indeed, the lecture Stephen Dedalus delivers to his students about an ancient battle takes on new meaning when considered in relation to the war taking place as Joyce wrote "Nestor." A student's recollection of a quote and Stephen's subsequent thoughts are: "—Yes, sir. And he said: *Another victory like that and we are done for.* That phrase the world had remembered. A dull ease of the mind. From a hill above a corpsestrewn plain a general speaking to his officers, leaned upon his spear. Any general to any officers (24) . As Spoo points out, while Joyce was composing "Nestor" in 1917, "generals were trying to explain to themselves as well as their officers how such a Pyrrhic event as the Somme could have taken place" (140). By looking at *Ulysses* in these terms, new connections between Joyce, World War I, and generations arise.

The presence of World War I in *Ulysses* is not confined to the thoughts of Stephen Dedalus. In the "Eumaeus" section of *Ulysses*, as Leopold Bloom reflects on the generational gap between himself and Stephen as well as the prejudice with which he himself was treated earlier in Barney Kiernan's pub, "he was only too conscious of the casualties invariably resulting from propaganda and displays of mutual animosity and the misery and suffering it entailed as a foregone conclusion on fine young fellows, chiefly, destruction of the fittest, in a word" (657). While Bloom is certainly describing propaganda as a sort of brainwashing influence on "fine young fellows," the statement does not have to be confined to mental casualties. As Spoo writes, the "destruction of the fittest is a grim potentiality lurking behind the schoolroom scene in 'Nestor,' for the boys Stephen teaches in 1904 . . . will be officer material in ten years. They were being killed as Joyce created their fictive counterparts" (144). The text is not ignorant of this fact.

Ulysses portrays the schoolchildren as little soldiers, especially in the text surrounding Stephen's counsel of the aptly (and probably not coincidentally) named Sargent. After their brief tutoring session, Stephen sends him off to play with the other boys:

> He stood in the porch and watched the laggard hurry towards the scrappy field where sharp voices were in strife. They were sorted in teams and Mr. Deasy came stepping over wisps of grass with gaited feet. When he had reached the schoolhouse voices again contending called to him. He turned his angry white moustache. –What is it now? He cried continually without listening. (29)

Deasy, in addition to Sargent, is an important figure in "Nestor," as well as in its relation to the war and generations. Spoo describes Deasy as "a happy warrior of the nineteenth-century type, full of hardy Victorian optimism and high-sounding imperialistic rhetoric, exactly the type who promoted and welcomed the war and continued to defend it even after it had become a nightmare" (141). This seems an accurate description, especially considering how Deasy addresses the younger generation "without listening."

Deasy is both full of imperialistic rhetoric and ignorant of the cries of younger generations. Mr. Deasy makes the claim that "[a]ll history moves towards one great goal" (*Ulysses* 34). This itself is disguised wartime rhetoric. Paul Fussell describes how in World War I the "objective of an attack [was called] *the goal*" (22). Deasy is the type to create just the kind of propaganda Bloom is so rightfully wary of. Fussell describes such a case of wartime deception:

> The journalistic formula "The Race to the _____" was ready to hand, familiar through its use in 1909 to describe Peary's 'Race to the (North) Pole' against Cook. Rehabilitated and applied to these new events, the phrase had the advantage of a familiar sportsmanlike, Explorer Club overtone, suggesting that what was happening was not too far distant from playing games, running races, and competing in a thoroughly decent way. (9)

By coding and allegorizing the young students as soldiers in the war, Joyce speaks to this public, yet mostly unnoticed, phenomenon. In addition, Joyce portrays Stephen as both relating to Sargent and rejecting Deasy. Like a father looking at a son, Stephen thinks, "Like him was I, these sloping shoulders, this gracelessness. My childhood bends beside me" (28). After a spout of Deasy's rhetoric, on the other hand, Stephen says "—I fear those big words . . . which make us so unhappy" (31). Stephen reflects on Deasy's words again when he overhears the children: "Shouts rang shrill from the boys' playfield and a whirring whistle. Again; a goal. I am among them, among their battling bodies in a medley" (32).

Stephen's thoughts are a reminiscence of his own schoolyard days, but they also call to mind the war rhetoric Fussell describes and the propaganda which concerns Bloom.

Stephen's suspicion of his elders was not uncommon during World War I. It appears that the rhetoric of those who continued to believe in the war even after it had become so abominable was also rejected by the youth of the time. George Orwell comments on this trend in *The Road to Wigan Pier*: "By 1918 everyone under forty was in a bad temper with his elders, and the mood of anti-militarism which followed naturally upon the fighting was extended into a general revolt against orthodoxy and authority. At that time there was, among the young, a curious cult of hatred of 'old men'" (170). Again, discussion of the war leads back to the notion of generations, whether in the hopeless optimism of the generation marching into 1914 that Fussell describes, or the dissension among youth acted out by Stephen and reported by Orwell. And indeed, Stephen relates to his students in a way suggestive both of a generational divide and a military element. As Spoo notes, Stephen's "compassion for Sargent has some of the overtones of the English officer's concern for his men, a concern which . . . often resembled a paternal responsibility" (Spoo 145). The threads running between the Great War and generations in *Ulysses* are inseparable.

A generational perspective necessarily centers on Stephen. With the exception of Deasy, characters two or more generations removed from him have little in the way of a voice. Conversely, he has many interactions with his immediately older generation in Bloom and others of Bloom's age, as well as the immediately younger generation in his students and siblings. The lack of a much older generation is not unexpected. Gertrude Stein's *The Making of Americans* discusses the tendency for us to be unable to picture previous generations in their prime, or as peers:

> We, living now, are always to ourselves young men and women. When we, living always in such feeling, think back to them who make for us a beginning, it is always as grown and old men and women or as little children that we feel them . . . . Nay, we never know ourselves as other than young and grown men and women . . . . No, old generations and past ages never have grown young men and women in them. (4-5)

If this is the case, Deasy with his "coughball of laughter . . . dragging after it a rattling chain of phlegm" (Joyce 36) and the librarian in "Scylla and Charybdis" who is "creaking to go, albeit lingering" and performs a "[t]wicreakingly analysis" (184) are revealed as beyond the comprehension of Stephen's

generation. Stephen is too far removed from Deasy, for example, to be capable of coming to an understanding of him as a "grown young man," which he once was, and which could potentially shed light on what conditions and experiences shaped him into the anti-Semitic and imperialistic braggart he is.

Stephen's views are inescapably influenced by religion. Although it is clear from his attitude and statements, such as describing God as "shout in the street" (Joyce 34), that he has rejected the conventional beliefs of his Jesuit upbringing, Stephen's thinking is—at least in part—a response to that upbringing, whether he rejects it or not. Doody and Morris note in "Language and Value: Freedom and the Family in *Ulysses*" that it is "quite clearly the theological bias of Stephen's thinking that makes him long for an ideal whole that denies difference" (232). This longing for a whole partly explains Stephen's mental anguish and uncertainty throughout the text and also how his rejection of religious tenets helps define his view of the world. Gregory Castle explains a fundamental difference between Stephen and Mr. Deasy as well as Haines, who has been staying with Stephen and Buck Mulligan in the tower, noting that as "representatives of an imperial culture . . . Deasy and Haines . . . apotheosize history, narrate the past according to the logic of a process (both deterministic and transcendental) outside of human experience which leaves them blameless partisans" (311). For Stephen, on the other hand, "historical authority and value rest not in a divine manifestation but in materiality, in 'shocks' of time" (Castle 312). If this is the case, Stephen finds meaning in individual and defining historical moments—such as World War I.

Stephen's view of history, though, still relies on a biblical framework, albeit a different one than that put forth by Deasy and Haines. He is unable to come to terms with the generative repetition of nature:

> In the materiality of nature—in the rhythms which he interprets as a "fourworded wavespeech"—Stephen finds the supreme expression of this historical alternative. But despite the potentially positive message of renewal within the eternal return of nature, he turns away from the pointless and futile repetition of the sea, "to no end gathered: vainly then released, forth flowing, wending back: loom of the moon." (Castle 312)

Stephen's rejection of nature is also a rejection of his religious upbringing. His musings on the waves were perhaps inspired by one of his students' comments, "—A pier, sir, Armstrong said. A thing out in

the waves" (24). When considered together, these two passages suggest that Stephen is a sort of pier. Despite Castle's notion that he turns away, a pier is a stationary structure—a relation which illustrates that while Stephen may mentally reject this renewing aspect of nature, he is unable to avoid it.

Stephen's consideration of the waves also calls to mind a "Lost Generation" text, the other half of the epigraph to *The Sun Also Rises*:

> One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth
> forever. . . The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to the place where
> he arose . . . . All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from
> whence the rivers come, thither they return again.
> --Ecclesiastes (Hemingway 7)

The similarities between this selection from Ecclesiastes and Stephen's reflections on the waves further illustrate Stephen's rejection of the Christian metanarrative. His views are contrasted by those of Bloom, who is one generation older than Stephen, and with whom he makes up a dyad which becomes a primary focus of *Ulysses*.

Bloom, rather than rejecting nature, reflects on it and takes it in stride—it is more like a fact of life to him than something which can be rejected or accepted:

> I daresay the soil would be quite fat with corpse manure, bones, flesh, nails,
> charnelhouses. Dreadful. Turning green and pink, decomposing. Rot quick in damp earth .
> . . . Of course the cells or whatever they are go on living. Changing about. Live for ever
> practically. Nothing to feed on feed on themselves (*Ulysses* 108-9).

At first describing decomposition as "dreadful," Bloom nonetheless goes on to accept it as a natural process necessary for the world to continue to generate objects, life forms, even people. Castle uses this idea to say that "Bloom's alternative is grounded in the reconstitution of the flesh in a cyclical process of death and rebirth, generation and degeneration . . . the same natural world that Stephen rejected as futile in 'Proteus'" (316). Bloom, however, also "feels the isolation of his own position. His rejection of the Christian master narrative . . . leads inevitably to a kind of spiritual exile, a permanent condition of alienation and otherness" (Castle 316). While this is true, the very aspects of his personality which cause his exile make Bloom's character strongest. Critics "debate Bloom's Jewishness" (O'Grada 18), and Doody and Morris assert that "Bloom does not need single centers, for he gathers his identity

in finding himself in various contexts of definition" (233). With great irony, Joyce creates in Bloom a heroic figure whose very fragmented nature makes him superior.

Paradoxically, Bloom is a more complete human being than Stephen due to the multiplicities in his identity. He is adaptive and versatile, and he and Stephen "can never be confused because Stephen cannot yet face experience in the way Bloom can, nor can he accept himself as Bloom does" (Doody and Morris 235). Interestingly, Fussell notes a wartime trend which paid special attention to division and wholeness:

> Another phenomenon implying a special sensitivity to 'division' is the post-war popularity, perhaps especially at the University of Cambridge, of the famous injunction on the title page of Forster's *Howard's End*, which was published four years before the war: "Only connect." To become enthusiastic about connecting it is first necessary to perceive things as regrettably disjoined if not actively opposed and polarized. (106)

The popularity of this phrase is perhaps representative of the modern condition, which seems inextricably tied to feelings of disconnection and uncertainty. When taken into consideration with regard to *Ulysses*, it also opens the door for a comparison between the character of Leonard in *Howard's End* and Stephen. Both characters are young, lost in life, in need of connection, and both seek understanding of the world through literature (although Stephen is more educated and privileged). Bloom offers Stephen such a connection, and also serves as an example that disconnectedness is not in and of itself a bad thing.

The father/son relationship between Bloom and Stephen is well documented. As Hugh Kenner notes, "*Ulysses* may be (most imperfectly) summarized as the story of Bloom's futile effort to treat Stephen as a son. Stephen in *Ulysses* is no longer in search of a father, as he was in the *Portrait*. He is obsessed by a dead mother, and as for fathers, living or mythic, elected or adoptive, his present instinct is to get clear of them" (17). Bloom is indeed in search of a son. His own child, Rudy, died virtually upon being born. After hearing Simon Dedalus, Stephen's father, go on a verbal tirade about Stephen's friendship with the somewhat unscrupulous Buck Mulligan, Bloom is at first annoyed. He comes to a realization, though, thinking, "Noisy selfwilled man. Full of his son. He is right. Something to hand on. If little Rudy had lived. See him grow up. Hear his voice in the house" (89). There is a sense that Bloom would be an excellent father to a son, or at least he would aspire to be one. Stephen's suspicion of

fathers of all kinds—religious, biological, or otherwise—seems logically less applicable to Bloom. Far from being controlling, Bloom reflects on Rudy that he "could have helped him on in life. I could. Make him independent. Learn German too" (89). Bloom would want a son to be independent, something seemingly of great importance to Stephen; he would only want to "help him on."

The generational gap between Stephen and Bloom, ironically, is what causes them to be unable to come to an understanding about fatherhood, which would not have been desirable for Bloom in the first place without that very gap. As Doody and Morris note, Stephen "cannot yet face experience in the way Bloom can" (235), and as a result, is unable to understand Bloom's concept of fatherhood. In the "Scylla and Charybdis" episode, Stephen makes the claim that "[f]atherhood, in the sense of conscious begetting, is unknown to man. It is a mystical estate, an apostolic succession" (207). Bloom's understanding is greater than Stephen's, though. In "Hades," he reflects upon that very "conscious begetting": "Give us a touch, Poldy. God, I'm dying for it. How life begins. Got big then. Had to refuse the Greystones concert. My son inside her" (89). When Stephen asks, "Who is the father of any son that any son should love him or he any son?" (207), he is, tragically, describing Bloom, whose Rudy certainly would have loved him and been loved by him, and with whom Stephen too could have such a relationship (although maybe not as long as Simon Dedalus remained in the picture).

Ulysses considers generations not only in subject, but also in style. The massive stylistic shifts the text undergoes have been the subject of much critical work. "Oxen of the Sun," with its survey of notable English styles, can be seen as a portrait of generations of authors, traveling from Old English through the styles of such authors as Mallory, eventually into nineteenth century styles, and finally ending with Joyce's take on Dublin slang. Walton Litz writes of the "Ithaca" section that Joyce "was acutely aware that 'Ithaca' culminated his risky 'scorched earth' policy of constantly altering the novel's styles and narrative methods, so that 'the progress of the book is in fact like the progress of some sandblast,' each successive episode leaving behind it 'a burnt up field'" (39). If each successive episode is a treatment of the story despite the style of the last, making each a sort of revision, it is pertinent to consider with it Soto's observation that "the act of historical revision remains the prerogative of each succeeding generation" (17). It could be said that Joyce undertook a continual revision of literary history with *Ulysses*, finally concluding with what is often considered to be a feminine style, which also marks his final novel, *Finnegan's Wake*.

It appears Joyce's place among the generations was also something he consciously considered. Richard Ellman reports that as a "young man Joyce notified Henrik Ibsen by letter, and W.B. Yeats by word of mouth, that higher and holier enlightenments lay beyond their reach and would have to await their successors" (*Joyce and Homer* 567). This is a confirmation that Joyce did consider succeeding generations to be potentially superior. He also felt the authors of previous generations "were already receding into the past, precursors and not saviours. Joyce saw himself as advancing beyond them into the future of literature" and in "Trieste he read in Vico that Homer, and Dante after him, were figures of *ricorso*, that stage in a historical cycle when the whole cycle was known and leaped beyond" (Ellman, *Joyce and Homer* 567-8). The idea of *ricorso* is quite reminiscent of Stephen's conception of "shocks" of time, and also points to Joyce as feeling like a part of the future, perhaps hoping to be a figure of *ricorso* himself. In an unexpected move, though, Joyce makes Bloom the protagonist of *Ulysses*, wiser to the world and more empathetic than Stephen, who, like the young Joyce, hopes to canonize himself among his peers with his interpretation of Shakespeare, an interpretation which again, in great irony, hinges on the notion of generations, something which, if Stephen were to properly recognize it, would open him up to Bloom's preferable worldview.

Beyond the canonistic notion of generations, Joyce also considered them on a more personal level. Spoo writes that "*Ulysses* seems continually to be asking, What should a father do for his son? What does a son owe his father? Is there a vital connection, beyond blood, between them?" (143). That "vital connection" is something Joyce both noticed and mentioned to others. After the death of his father, Joyce wrote the following to Harriet Shaw Weaver:

> My father had an extraordinary affection for me . . . . Hundreds of pages and scores of characters in my books come from him . . . I got from him his portraits, a waistcoat, a good tenor voice, and an extravagant licentious disposition . . . but, apart from these, something else I cannot define. But if an observer thought of my father and myself and my son too physically, though we are all very different, he could perhaps define it. It is a great consolation to me to have such a good son. His grandfather was very fond of him and kept his photograph beside mine on the mantlepiece. (*Letters* 360-1)

Joyce was indelibly influenced by his father in all aspects of life: his writing, his voice, his attitude, even a bit of his clothing style. He notes that he also received something from him that he "cannot define,"

perhaps the "vital connection beyond blood" *Ulysses* seeks between father and son. The state of being a father and a son deeply affected Joyce, who once remarked that "[t]he most important thing that can happen to a man is the birth of a child" (Ellman, *James Joyce* 212). This calls to mind Bloom's reflection on "conscious begetting" and Molly's ensuing pregnancy – here Joyce identifies more closely with Bloom than the younger Stephen.

An appropriate final reflection on the influence of generations in Joyce and his writing involves a selection from the "Ithaca" section of *Ulysses*. Bloom, upon at last entering Molly's bed after his trying day, may or may not smile; the text does not reveal which—but it does reveal why, though, if he does:

> If he had smiled why would he have smiled?
>
> To reflect that each one who enters imagines himself to be the first to enter whereas he is always the last term of a preceding series even if the first term of a succeeding one, each imagining himself to be the first, last, only and alone, whereas he is neither first nor last nor only alone in a series originating in and repeated to infinity. (731)

If Molly's bed (or perhaps Molly herself) is imagined as the world, this forms a very apt description of generations. Each imagining itself to be the first to bring its ideas forward, each imagining itself as "young grown men and women," as Stein would say, nonetheless becomes another repetition of the waves which Stephen gazes at and unsuccessfully attempts to turn from, and which Bloom embraces.

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Collaboration: Another "Line" for "Mass Production" of Students

Wikis as a Case Study

Majid Al-Khalaqi, Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Our complex culture demands creative decisions from larger proportions of the workforce yet this same complexity robs folks of the confidence to make timely choices.

Therefore,

Create an idea-sharing environment where incomplete can be linked together and from this, creative solutions emerge.

—Ward Cunningham (2007)

In fact, I might venture to say that the wiki is the most significant development on the Internet since the web browser.

—Stewart Mader (2008)

The DVD player is on. "Welcome to the real world" strikes me most as I watch *The Matrix*. Not only does this matrix exist in a virtual world but, more important, it presents it as the *real* world. And this supposed reality manifests itself in the form of copies of what look like humans. Of course, I am not concerned here with a Marxist critique of the film; rather, I am trying to give the reader a sense of the postmodern context that embraced what theorists call "University *Inc*"(see, for example, David Downing). Aside from the many details and explanations that can be said about the effects of the market and economic factors on the policies and practices of universities as they prepare students for the job market, the growing use of collaboration—as a tool that should be used in a class—raises a number of questions: Why collaboration? Why the wiki? What about the voice of the *individual* writers? What are the pros and cons for this technique? In this essay, I will be answering these questions as specifically applied to the wiki interface, which is increasingly used as a tool for collaboration; I will argue that although wikis can be the most effective tool for collaboration, they could have a negative impact on the individual's creativity in the long run.

Much has been said about collaboration in the form of scholarly published books and articles. Of course, I will not review here what has been said, but, still, let me briefly refer to the notion of collaboration as an introduction to collaboration through the wiki interface. The concept of collaboration can be traced back hundreds of years: "Historically, collaborative writing groups have existed since at least 1728," Julia Goussva notes, "and have proven to be an effective tool for improving essay quality and the intellectual level of participants" (472). I will discuss the second part of this statement later, but let me go back to the date Goussva states as the starting point for collaborative writing groups. I think that specifying a date for something that is inherited by human nature can be misleading. If I think of collaboration aside from writing, I can, with great certainty, say that collaboration started with the existence of the first man and woman of our kind: their children were collaboratively "produced." It would be interesting to develop this childbirth phenomenon into a metaphor for the product of collaborative writing.

In the child's case, the collaborative parents have a relatively limited control over the features of their product, if one considers the matching of the two parents (their appearance, genetics, etc.). The point of childbirth marks the point of no return: If at this point one of the parents shows some dissatisfaction with some of the features of the baby—say, for example, "I wish she had a smaller mouth"—it won't be possible to reinsert the child into the uterus for some readjustments.

In writing, however, collaboration takes a different course, and the process can be open-ended—especially in traditional collaboration, by which I refer to the forms of collaborative writing that lead to a "finished" piece of writing that can be published as a book, in a scholarly journal, or elsewhere. Does that mean that "unfinished forms" do exist in writing? The definite answer is "yes." The more recently-emerging technologies have provided us with unlimited possibilities for developing writing practices and, of course, for collaboration. These technologies (for example, online forums, emails, blogs, wikis, etc.) vary in their approaches and practices.

Before elaborating on the kind of open-ended collaboration such emerging technologies make possible, I will refer to the evolution of the concept of collaboration by comparing one of the early arguments proposed for collaborative classrooms with the way classroom collaboration practices have—most recently—evolved. Because I am not focusing on the historical development of

collaborative practices in education, I will just highlight areas where I see the focus shifting from application of collaboration to control.

In 1984, Kenneth Bruffee defended the incorporation of collaboration into both literature and writing classes, basing his argument on Lev Vygotsky's collaborative theory, research in other fields like medicine, and an essay by Michael Oakeshott. Central to Bruffee's argument was Oakeshott's concept of "internalized conversation": "We are the inheritors, neither of an inquiry about ourselves and the world, nor of an accumulating body of information, but of a conversation, begun in the primeval forests and extended and made more articulate in the course of centuries" (qtd. in Bruffee 638). For Bruffee, this internalized conversation could be translated into writing, and he saw collaboration as a means for developing that kind of conversation. "Besides providing a particular kind of conversation," Bruffee maintains, "collaborative learning also provides a particular kind of social context for conversation, a particular kind of community—a community of status equals peers" (642).

Although I might agree with most of Bruffee's argument, I should mention some angles that must be considered as we take the discussion of collaboration to the next level, more than twenty years later after the publication of Bruffee's essay. Of course, we have gone beyond making a case for collaborative work in education. Much of the discussion, I would say, turned to argue for how to incorporate collaboration, rather than whether or not to do so. And to the contrary of Bruffee's enthusiasm, I am arguing that we have, in fact, emphasized collaboration to the degree that poses danger to the individual agency that should not be sacrificed in favor of "total" collaboration. True, the kind of collaboration Bruffee argues for, as can be inferred from his essay, can be productive, for he talks about the kind of collaboration that involves peer-reviewing. In other words, the individual develops an individual piece of writing while getting some feedback from peers, which can benefit the student (supposing that he or she gets some useful feedback from a peer who takes the peer-reviewing process seriously). However, the discussion of Collaboration I am concerned more about now is the kind of collaboration that involves a collectively-produced piece of writing. In such a case, a number of components, dynamics, and social dimensions determine the "value" of the end-product of the collaborative process.

Of all the components of the collaborative activity, the group itself stands out as central. On some theoretical grounds, working in groups, rather than individually, has a positive effect on the

outcome of the writing process. Angela O'Donnell refers to the "developmental psychological theories" of Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky and explains how, based on Vygotskian theory, the benefit of collaboration can be mutual between the individual and the group: "Individuals may benefit in a collaborative group because there is an opportunity for their learning to be scaffolded by a more knowledgeable or experienced peer. The group may also come to shared understandings and involve individuals at different levels of participations" (4). Indeed, if one assumes that the individual has something to offer to the group and that the group can satisfy the needs of the individual, collaboration will be a fruitful experience from which all can benefit. Another issue, however, appears here to be of critical importance, i.e., group dynamics and formation. True "there is an opportunity," but let us be cautious and say it is not guaranteed, as this supposed learning experience will necessarily depend on a number of factors, such as the nature of the group itself.

A theory for group formation and dynamics should be developed and should answer the following questions: What do we mean by "shared understandings"? What kind of groups can theoretically agree on and share some understandings? What roles would be given to individuals within collaborative groups? And what if the group members share similar experiences and backgrounds? These questions have been addressed by scholars, yet partiality in treating the issues arising from them remains a problem. A good example is the discussion of inclusion and the assigned roles within the collaborative group in respect to gender (e.g. Christine Tully and Khristine Blair).

I will not develop a theory for collaborative groups in this introductory essay. Rather, I will elaborate on one dimension that deals with what I might call the evolution of collaborative groups to the point where they deconstruct the necessity of their existence by the mere fact of their being collaborative. The dimension that strikes me most comes from a phrase used repeatedly by John B. Smith: "Collective Intelligence." "The notion of *collective intelligence* (CI)," Smith asserts, "is that a group of human beings can carry out a task as if the group, itself, were coherent, intelligent organism working with one mind, rather than a collection of independent agents"(Italics in the source, 1). With the same connotations, "collective wisdom" is used by, for example, Jane Klobas in her discussion of wikis: "Wiki can also be considered to be a 'philosophy,' in its ideal form, a view that the wisdom of many will always be superior to the thoughts of an individual" (13). Similarly Pru Mitchell writes, "The wiki is a technology that can facilitate the approaches to learning inherent in theories such as collective

wisdom and connectivism" (123). The idea behind all these discussions of collectivism takes me back to my initial reference to *The Matrix*.

In *The Matrix*, a postmodern[1] world exists, where copies fight against and try to destroy Neo, the representation of the creative human. I view the movie as a perfect metaphor of what too much emphasis on collaboration can end up doing to our individual creativity and, perhaps, originality. The many virtual copies *collaborate* to destroy Neo, for the individuality that his life manifests imposes danger to the world of copies: Neo (the supposedly "true" human), unlike virtual humans, cannot be reproduced or replicated. The collective intelligence of virtual humans of the matrix makes them act as one, and if one, two, or more are lost in battle, they can be easily reproduced through replication. Thus, the importance of the individual becomes less apparent and is reduced to the value of a copy that can be replaced upon need.

Similarly, students themselves can be seen as products of education, products that will be used to fuel the economy. Just like any other product in a capitalist market, some original (creative) copies will not make "good" profit. Instead, a mass production of students[2] who carry certain shared qualities would be supported by the policies of the market. Collaboration can be a supportive tool for such a policy of producing students with almost similar abilities. One can argue that in a collaborative setting it would be possible that the shared understanding accomplished by the group is that of the average member of the group. Although some empirical research will be necessary to support this point of view, I would say that by the advance of time and with elongated periods of collaboration, the more enthusiastic collaborators will have to "pull" other members up to their level of enthusiasm, or, else, they will have to sink down to an average level, perhaps below average. Of course, such a dark scenario will mean that "better" students will not only be slowed down but, worse, will be trapped in a point where opposing views hinder the advancement of the collaborative project. In this state, which would be theoretically the equivalence of what physics defines as a state of equilibrium where movement

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[1] One of the features of a postmodern society can be seen in the many copies that replace originals (see, for example, Mary Klages, 2007). In other words, I might go to the market and ask for an *original* CD of a Microsoft Product, but, of course, that CD is just a copy among thousands of similar copies. The originality of it is a mere illusion, perhaps to secure the company's mass production.

[2] See, for example, "On the Poverty of Student Life" (De la misère en milieu étudiant), published in 1966 by members of the Situationist International and students of Strasbourg University.

forward is no longer possible, high level of creativity would be scarified in favor of coping with the limiting conditions of the group.

Let me turn now to the wiki interface as a case study and see how the above-mentioned issues can apply to this relatively new technology. What is a wiki? Many who might come across this term would think of *Wikipedia*, a web-base encyclopedia launched in 2001 (e.g. Anja Ebersbach, Markus Glaser, and Richard Heigl), even without knowing the connection; they might even think "wiki" refers to Wikipedia. Nevertheless, it is a good starting point, for the reference to Wikipedia will bring to mind the idea of a community (worldwide) working collaboratively to develop and keep working on an "unfinished" piece of writing. As Gunter Dueck states, "One stone of that Pyramid is from me!" –That might something a Wikipedia contributor might exclaim" (vi).

A number of definitions can be found for the term wiki, but of course they all share the central concept of collaboration. The word wiki itself can etymologically be traced to the Hawaiian wiki-wiki, which means "quick" or "hurry" (e.g. Will Richardson). This term will accordingly give a sense of time saving, which can be considered a major advantage to other traditional forms of collaboration. By "traditional," I am referring to pre-electronic, computerized tools, such as regular mail and meeting in person, but also to less effective online technologies, such as blogs, forums, and emails.

To understand the difference between the wiki technology and other commonly used technologies, let us have a look at some of the definitions of the term:

- "A wiki (pronounced wee-kee) is a web page or site that can be modified by anyone who visits the site." (Green, Brown, and Robinson 24)
- "Wikis are tools with which lots of people with a minimum of organization, planning, money and time can create something together and communicate with each other from several scattered computers or over the Internet. Wikis are the technology for what first path of volunteers with a common idea." (Gunter Dueck v)
- "Wikis are programs that, for the first time, radically expand the possibilities of the Internet as a large-scale technical system for 'democratic use.'" (Ebersbach, Glaser, and Heigl 359)

➧ "A wiki is like a party that doesn't have to stop. It's a party that doesn't get crowded because new rooms appear when needed. It's a timeless party where you can try each conversation over and over until you get it right." (Cunningham xvii)

Moving from the scientific definition to the subtle simile adds a number of perspectives to our understanding of what wikis are and what they are all about. The first one gives the reader the idea of openness as implied in the phrase "by anyone who visits the site." But more important is the indication that the visitors can do more than just viewing the page: They can edit its contents.

As one reads through the second definition, three ideas strike us: One is the efficiency of this technology as user-friendly tool, in terms of time, money, organization, etc. Second comes the idea of virtual existence. In other words, a collaborator can be participating in a project from anywhere in the world where Internet access can be obtained. And last is the concept of a group of people having a "common idea." I do not agree completely, however, with the implication that wiki collaboration requires having a common idea, for it might not be the case always. Although reaching common grounds would be a prerequisite for any collaboration, the process of collaboration can take a different course. If, for example, someone opens a *Wikipedia* article that is not in his or her field of expertise, finds a grammatical mistake, and, then, corrects it, he or she will be collaborating to the article in some way, although without sharing a common idea with the "expert" who starts the article.

The third definition introduces a social dimension by referring to democracy. Collaboration is democratic in nature (e.g. Richardson; Ebersbach, Glaser, and Heigl) and, thus, the individual has to cope with what the majority agrees on even if this might be in contradiction with his or her views. However, the issue of inclusion might be raised here, as those who may be disadvantaged in a group, for any reason. Yet, wikis provide collaborators with tools such as easy and equal access, which help overcome some of the problems associated with traditional ways, such as the difficulty to devote more time and space for negotiating controversial issues. In this respect, Richardson affirms that in wiki collaboration, students are developing skills not only on the level of the mechanics of writing but also by acquiring other skills that will open new possibilities for learning:

> [Wiki collaboration is] a very democratic process of knowledge creation. In using wikis, students are not only learning how to publish content; they are also learning how to develop and use all sorts of collaborative skills, negotiating with others to agree on

correctness, meaning, relevance, and more. In essence, students begin to teach each

other. (65)

At the same time, the group will need to negotiate and reach a compromise when arguments escalate or points of view clash. This negotiation would inevitably be aware of and would ideally include collaborative individuals in a dialogue, but, as Paulo Freire puts it nicely, "Dialogue further requires an intense faith in humankind, to create and recreate, faith in their vocation to be more fully human (which is not the privilege of an elite, but the birthright of all). Faith in people is a *priori* requirement for dialogue" (90). In other words, dialogue should be preceded by accepting and endorsing other members of the group. But once a responsible dialogue is initiated, students can benefit from arguments. Clark A. Chin sums his notes as well as recent research and hypotheses by a number of scholars on the role of argumentation in developing students' skills as problem-solvers by asserting, "[A]rgumentation benefits performance [of students] on a broad range of problem-solving tasks" (359). Nonetheless, one should remember that any democratic practice will entail the inevitable exclusion of some individual views if the majority "votes" against them.

Written by the father[1] of the wiki technology, Ward Cunningham, the last definition compares wiki collaboration to an open party. A party that does not end will necessarily need people to keep it going. Openness, in this case, entails easy accessibility, but also spaciousness. Yet, easy accessibility grants movement in both directions: entering and leaving. Once you participated in the party, you can leave. In fact, your presence in the crowd might not be even visible. If the organizers of the party decide to produce a video of what Cunningham calls a "conversation" in this "timeless party," they might decide to delete your part, or add music and other montage effects that make your voice less apparent—marginal.

Now that these selected definitions have given us a sense of the role wikis play in collaboration, I will briefly mention how a wiki would be different from a blog, or an email. The Fundamental difference comes from the origin of the word "wiki" itself, as I mentioned above: A faster approach to collaboration can be perceived as central to the use of the wiki interface. Other differences could be summarized in what Stewart Mader calls "the mechanics of each" (55). Let me specifically cite two essential differences between a wiki and the two other tools:

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[1] "The first wiki, with the name WikiWikiWeb, was developed in 1995 by Ward Cunningham" (Ebersbach, Glaser, and Heigl 10).

- "Unlike emails, which "pushes" discrete copies of the same information to each person, and then requires that the separate revisions be somehow combined, wiki "pulls" people together to work on the same text" (Stewart 3).

- "Wikis enable many-to-many communication, while blogs primarily support one-to-many communication; in addition, blogs are based around a timeline (the sequence of contributions by the author), while wikis focus on content (although [. . .] it is possible to track changes in a wiki over time)" (Jane Klobas 7)

Aside from the technical differences that can be understood from the above-mentioned quotes, one can tell that wikis, basically, enhance the collaborative experience by enabling a number of users to simultaneously work collaboratively on a writing project. Furthermore, the changes can be tracked, which is helpful, especially for teachers who want to know who does what in a collaborative wiki assignment. Unlike Klobas reference to wikis as content-focused, Dan Woods and Peter Thoeny classify wikis into four categories. It is, however, process-focused wikis, say Woods and Thoeny, that include educational wikis (56).

Thus, the idea of the process clearly emerges at this point as a major base behind the development of the wiki interface. Paul Allison, for example, talks about the importance of wikis in teaching the writing process (qtd. in Arja Veerman and Else Veldhuis-Diermanse 133). But, again, it is not my concern to discuss how wikis can help both instructors and students to develop a better sense of the writing process. Rather, I am looking ahead to see what ultimately happens to the individual in the collaborative process. Of course, the process in the wikis will not be any different from that I have elaborated on earlier in my discussion; i.e., the individual's contribution and creativity become invisible, if not totally undermined or rejected by the democratic prerequisite of a "localized" collaborative project. I use the word "localized" to differentiate between an open-to-all wiki, such as *Wikipedia*, and a wiki controlled by a school or an instructor. Yet, even a localized wiki will be deemed destructive to the individual agency if not used in a balanced way with other individually-produced projects.

Why, then, should instructors be advised to use wikis if the end-product can be problematic? And would I use a wiki for collaborative writing projects in my classroom? I will start by saying "yes" to the second question, and from there turns to the first. Collaboration should be a means, not the ends, of our educational policy. Indeed, as Veerman and Veldhuis-Diermanse state, "In collaborative learning

situations, students actively search for information, engage in critical discussion, ask questions, discuss answers, make proposals, and reply to other proposals" (327). But this whole experience should aim at polishing the abilities and creativity of the individual, not the collectivity of the group. If the enthusiastic individual begins to sense that, no matter how he or she competes, the laziest in the collaborative group will be given as much credit as everyone else, the collaborative project will, too, begin to fall apart (as did the Marxist project).

In sum, I argue for a more responsible use of collaboration and of wikis, so that while students benefit from the experiences of the members of the collaborative group, they should be able to demonstrate their individual abilities through other individual projects. In our classrooms, collaboration, in general, and wiki collaboration, in particular, have not reached the point of destructiveness yet. I can, however, tell with certainty that we are moving towards a classroom dominated by collaborative projects. Before that happens, I think instructors should re-examine the ways and degree to which collaboration can be implemented into classroom pedagogies without negatively affecting the individual agency. It is only then we, together with Neo, can save our humanity from the world of copies—the matrix.

> Please grant me the serenity to accept the pages I cannot edit,
> The courage to edit the pages I can,
> And the wisdom to know the difference
>
> —The Wiki Prayer.
>
> (qtd. in Green, Brown, and Robinson 34)

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Performance and Perspective on a Space-Lost Bulb: The Value of Impressionism in Stephen Crane's "The Blue Hotel"

Todd W. Nothstein, University of Pennsylvania

Stephen Crane's "The Blue Hotel" provides a revealing glimpse of a widening gap between ideal models of the masculine individual and the actual identities available to individual American men at the close of the nineteenth century. As unwitting objects of a society's interpretive gaze, Stephen Crane's male characters grapple with their inability to define themselves as self-made men in the hopeful Franklinian tradition while still enacting intelligible forms of American masculinity. Literary Impressionism, meanwhile, provides Crane with a powerful formal structure for the theme that every act of self-definition occurs in a climate of relentless scrutiny.

In "'This Registers the Amount of Your Purchase': The Price of Expectation, the Force of Context," Meredith Farmer argues that protagonist of "The Blue Hotel," the protean figure labeled the Swede, is effectively killed by his "perceptual lock-in" and that "The Swede's violent action toward him [the gambler who kills him] is by no means proportional to anything – except, perhaps, the Swede's frustration that his expectations have been constantly defied" (70, 72). While fundamentally correct, Farmer's treatment reiterates a traditional gloss on the story that the Swede forces reality to conform to his expectations. A more penetrating element of Crane's social commentary becomes visible when we attend to the fact that the story is not merely an indictment of rigid expectations, but a lamentation of the fact that broad, undetailed cultural narratives are supplanting individual conscious judgment. It is not that the Swede forms his perceptual judgments without *any* context, but that he forms them under the influence of *another,* distant, context of a bland umbrella culture.

I assert that any reading of the Blue Hotel is enhanced by four basic propositions: 1) The Swede is both an individual and a symbol of American culture at large; 2) Any given identity is a social performance that must be understood by an audience in order to function as a livable identity; 3) There are various narratives of masculine identity disseminated in the culture contemporary with the story, and the Swede attempts to access one of them as his own identity performance, namely that of the rugged western adventurer; and 4) The function of Impressionist literary technique in the story is to highlight the impact of a perceiver's location on perceived objects, and thus draws attention to the

exchange of gazes and interpretations rather than merely the Swede's stubbornness and lack of adaptability. With these principles in mind, it becomes clear that when the Swede dies with his eyes fixed on the legend "This registers the amount of your purchase" (Crane 352), the price paid is in fact his life as a rational, self-conscious individual who produces his own identity through reflective, purposeful social performance. The Swede is a man whose intellect is so saturated and colonized by homogenizing social forces that he ceases to exist except as a mythic symbol of conformity to commercialized narratives of identity. He can either perform his identity through his own rational assessment of what he ought to be, or he can conform to broad social categories that will be understood throughout American society. He cannot, Crane argues, do both. The others at the hotel are in danger of meeting the same discursive end as the Swede.

The Impressionist techniques most relevant to this reading of "The Blue Hotel" are an unobtrusive narrator and the reduction of characters to the basic qualities of type, their specificity irrelevant except as points in a larger picture. Given the combined cultural fallout of slavery, the Civil War, and the continued disenfranchisement of women when the story is published in 1899, it is reasonable to hypothesize that the idea of "citizen," for Crane, is fraught with doubt over individual eligibility to consciously contribute a unified self to the larger picture. A preoccupation with the reception of individual identities by the culture at large can be observed in "The Blue Hotel," which perhaps inaugurates the twentieth-century thematic tradition of tragic self-made men, epitomized in the novels of Fitzgerald and Faulkner. Protagonists tortured over an inability to transcend their material realities famously characterize the twentieth century American novel. In "The Blue Hotel," the ill-fated Swede sacrifices corporeal existence to a West that is intelligible only in relation to the prevailing fictions of the day. The story employs Impressionist techniques to accentuate a gap between ontological reality and the intelligible performance of identity.

In his *Stephen Crane and Impressionism,* which remains in my judgment the most comprehensive treatment of the subject, James Nagel explains, "If the 'fidelity to actuality' premise creates certain philosophical difficulties, it is nevertheless useful in reaffirming that Realism presumes to describe reality and that, unlike Impressionism, determining what is real is not a central issue" (33). Impressionism, thus, comments on our access to the real and simultaneously strives to accurately represent that which is experienced as real. Naturalism remains, like Realism, predicated upon a stable

conception of reality, and invests art with the task of rendering the truth of nature beneath or beyond social influences. The universalizing, ponderous narration of Realism and the determinism of Naturalism recede in Impressionist narration in favor of visual images and a substantially limited point of view. Limited characters are not duped victims of fate, but existentially limited by their situations in time and space. Without narrative commentary, the perception of characters and their development is confined throughout Crane's oeuvre, to the moments at which the perceiving center of intelligence, which may well shift as a plot unfolds, "has some reason to think of them . . ." (Nagel 28). Nagel explains that characters "are often known by descriptive epithets developed from their most observable characteristics. A character will be labeled the 'cowboy' if he is the only such in a group, or the lieutenant if his rank distinguishes him among other soldiers" (28). This method of characterization provides a vehicle for the social observation that identity must be intelligible to others, and that we often engage categories of existence such as "cowboy," "Easterner," and "Swede," inasmuch as our identities are perceived in a social context.

Restricted perspective is a condition of social/spatial embeddedness, and I assert that it is this precise inescapable human condition with which Crane is most uniformly concerned. There is a fascination, throughout Crane's work, with the phenomenon of looking, and perhaps more importantly, of being looked upon. To read is to risk being read–from a restricted point of view. With a tone of resignation, "The Blue Hotel" merges individual identity performance with its large-scale societal version in the Swede. Though the Swede clearly observes the others from his vantage point, throughout the bulk of the story the reader's perceptual sympathies rest firmly with the others gathered at the Palace Hotel. From the beginning, the story's narrative voice distances itself from "the East." Though omnisciently aware of the "brown-reds and the subdivisions of the dark greens of the East " (Crane 325), our narrator must rely on a description of Eastern travelers' reactions in order to assess the blue hotel as garish. The possibility of omniscience is raised and exiled to the margin of the plot as soon as the fundamental elements of the scene are established. The point of view quickly becomes local, and the reader is left to feel the sting of the Swede's insults against the locals and the locality.

The story's unexpected denouement, however, rips the perspectival rug out from under the reader and dissolves the ethical structure of the universe observed throughout the story with the addition of one detail, perfectly observable from within the Palace Hotel, but requiring a vantage point

the author has not previously emphasized. Ultimately, the story is a struggle for the right to determine who will interpret whom. The group gathered at the hotel forms a temporary, microcosmic society, the culture of the hotel, and it includes all of the men gathered at the Palace Hotel except the Swede. The hotel culture's constituents share a common, limited physical location with established behavioral norms. Scully expects that his hospitality as a hotel owner will be paid for and received in good faith. It is further expected, by the hotel culture, that the right of other guests to hospitality, and a reasonably comfortable refuge from the blizzard which rages outside, will be duly honored by all. The Swede's first clear violation of these codes, although he works up to it with a marked lack attention to them, is his wild accusation, "I suppose there have been a good many men killed in this room" (Crane 329). These words cast aspersions on the hotel's status as the secure haven Scully so proudly offers.

From their shared behavior codes the hotel culture also derives shared interpretive methods. The different elements of the hotel culture collude to form paradigms through which they will collectively understand the Swede's behavior. Initially the group strives to preserve certain standards, regardless of the Swede's comportment. The Easterner urges understanding for a man whose fear seems genuine, if not at all justified. This gesture of empathy, however, opens up the perspectival opportunity with which Crane prepares the reader for the story's conclusion because perspectival empathy reminds us that the hotel culture is not the only interpretive community in the story. The Swede arrives with a complicated frame of reference, held by a larger and more distant society, which determines his conceptualization of the human elements of the "West" whom he encounters in Ft. Romper. Thus the Swede represents a generic American citizenry that has assimilated legends of the West into the perspective through which it views individual elements of the story's present in Ft. Romper, Nebraska. As a member of a generic audience for mass-marketed constructions of the West, the Swede must turn a particular angle of observation upon these individual elements for the setting to be the romantically dangerous place intelligible to the culture he represents beyond the hotel.

Although the Swede functions as a surrogate for society at large, he also exists throughout as a text read by the hotel culture. They receive him as an individual. As the story progresses the Swede imposes his reading, a generic imprecise vision of the American West gleaned from dime novels, upon the other characters who gather at the Palace Hotel. He then moves to articulate his own role within the social context as he perceives it and remains stubbornly insensible to the other men's offense at,

and resistance to, being read through the Swede's particular patina. A tracing of this process, through a series of perspectival shifts, unearths evidence for the Easterner's concluding assertion that the gambler who finally kills the Swede is "a culmination, the apex of a human movement" (Crane 354).

James Ellis, in "The Game of High-Five in 'The Blue Hotel,'" observes that Crane employs the card game of High-Five as a symbol of the transmutation from the microcosmic to the macrocosmic" (440). The specifics of High-Five symbolize the transmutations because the accumulation and redistribution of points in the game parallels shifting power relations within the hotel culture. Collusion against the Swede in the game implies a general social collusion that eventually results in the Swede's murder. The answer to the cowboy's final cry, "Well, I didn't do anythin' did I?" (Crane 354), is intimately related to the Easterner's other theory, key to the plot, of the Swede as a thoroughly swept-away reader of dime novels. The correctness of both is, as Ellis grasps, expressed by the shifting of perspective entailed in periodic transmutations from the microcosmic to the macrocosmic. The two theories function as a single point of entry into the structure of the story as a staging of paranoid interaction between shifting and competing discourse communities: one microcosmic and the other macrocosmic.

The Easterner offers his first theory in the fourth section of the story after Scully, in section three, smoothes over a tense confrontation between Johnnie and the Swede by following the Swede to his room to put him at ease. Although the location of events has been consistently limited within the hotel, and most often the front room, important events seem to correlate with characters' coming and going. Scully, for example, is absent when the Swede makes his first offensive declaration, but we are not informed of his activities or location. The men return to the front room after dinner, and the first indication that Scully is not among them comes when, "A door opened and Scully himself entered" (Crane 330). Johnnie is put on the defensive about his treatment of the Swede in another shift in the composition of the scene marked by Scully's return. In section four, which occurs simultaneously with section three, the remaining constituents of the hotel society strive to construct an explanatory discourse through which to observe and comprehend the Swede while he and Scully are out of the picture. The Easterner begins their exchange:

'Oh, I don't know, but it seems to me this man has been reading dime novels, and he

thinks he's right out in the middle of it-- the shootin' and   stabbin' and all.'

'But,' said the cowboy, deeply scandalized, 'this ain't Wyoming ner none of them

places. This is Nebrasker.'

'Yes,' added Johnnie, 'an' why don't he wait till he gits out West?'

The traveled Easterner laughed. 'It isn't different there even-- not

in these days. But he thinks he's right in the middle of hell." (Crane 335)

The Easterner might hope to slow the mounting pressure to lash out against the Swede; however, the reaction of Johnnie and the cowboy proves that their acceptance of the Easterner's theory does not generate sympathy. The cowboy is scandalized, offended by the possibility that he is being viewed through the lens of dime novels. His objection, however, is not to the idea of judging another's performance in this way, but to the specific practice of reading them that way. A cowboy in Wyoming, by our present cowboy's lights, remains quite eligible for the Swede's distrust. Johnnie similarly defers the concept of the West away from his particular location in a cultural-spatial matrix. The offense of the Swede, then, is reading them when they have considered it their purview to read him. The core of their objection, though, lies not just in being objectified in a reader-to-text relation, but in being perceived without regard to the performance through which they mindfully attempt to construct their identities. The Swede corrupts their own performances of identity in applying the corrosive veneer of the dime novel and observing them through the resulting patina.

The first interpretive acts of the Swede surface in the, "series of small ceremonies," by which the travelers, "were made to feel that Scully was very benevolent" (Crane 326), the Swede marks himself as an outsider in his disdain for their ritual. The cowboy and Swede wash enthusiastically in the basins Scully magnanimously provides, "The Swede, however, merely dipped his fingers gingerly and with trepidation" (Crane 326). This rejection of a welcoming ritual might, in itself, give offense, but the evidence for the Easterner's claim lies in the trepidation. He fears the water implying that he thinks it something other than an expression of hospitality. Scully's performance of a keeper of principled hospitality, which is quite deliberate and made visible by the narrator who explains, "He handed the towel from one to another with an air of philanthropic impulse" (Crane 326), goes ignored by the Swede. The group's return to the front room after washing is punctuated by the Swede's ocular activity. Crane writes:

> The Swede said nothing. He seemed to be engaged in making furtive
>
> estimates of each man in the room. One might have thought that he had
>
> the sense of silly suspicion which comes to guilt. He resembled a badly
>
> frightened man. (327)

Failing to make small talk with fellow travelers, the Swede initially empties his identity of consciously projected characteristics to which the others might feel obliged to attend. At dinner he asks a few vacuous questions. His demeanor leads the narrator, who appears to speak for those observing the Swede, to conclude that, "He seemed barely to listen to Scully's extended replies" (Crane 327). When he does talk his questions are formulaic, but his host takes them in good faith and answers at length. The narrator, though, reminds us once again of the Swede's ocular movement, "His eyes continued to rove from man to man" (Crane 327). The most prominent feature of the Swede is that he looks at the others. He ignores Scully's extended replies, in which the host might consciously put forth his own sense of self, thus inviting suspicion. Before leaving the dinner table the Swede tips his hand to the reader:

> Finally with a laugh and a wink, he said that some of these Western
>
> communities were very dangerous; and after his statement he straightened
>
> his legs under the table, tilted his head, and laughed again, loudly. It was
>
> plain that the demonstration had no meaning to the others. They looked at
>
> him wondering and in silence. (Crane 327)

The wink and laughter is smug, suggesting that he wants them to know that he knows something about them. The statement that Western communities are very dangerous functions as an accusation. The group is slow to grasp it, however, since they don't all think of Nebraska as the West, and none of them imagine Ft. Romper especially dangerous. In short, this man is determined to believe that he is in danger. No representation of identity that the others put forward will interrupt his fantasy.

All of this supports the Easterner's supposition that the Swede is caught up in a vision of the West constructed through the prism of the dime novel. The Swede continues this behavior of looking at, but refusing to see, the identities others perform up to his death. During the first game of High-Five that includes all of the key characters, the others forget the Swede's odd behavior because they are absorbed in the exchange of points. They all put forth various personalities within the game. The cowboy is a "board-whacker," and Johnnie his audience. The Easterner and the Swede wear "miserable

faces" when the cowboy whacks the board, and Johnnie laughs heartily about it. They must play their cards without knowing what the others hold, and they play in teams of two so someone shares the standing of each player. This mirrors the local situation with which the hotel group operates. Each player tries, with his ally, to put forth a particular impression of who he is, or what cards they may hold, without giving the others an advantage in imposing an identity upon them.

This metaphor could operate with many games a group might play, but Ellis describes the particular importance of certain cards numbered as "fives" as heavy counters toward the winning achievement of fourteen points. Ellis also notes that Scully finally enters the local power struggle as a fifth person in the metaphorical game once the Swede accuses Johnnie of cheating. At this point, Scully abandons his hospitality doctrine and lets the fight go forward. So the microcosmic society of the hotel seemingly coalesces around a heavy counting (hotel owner) fifth entity finally joining the other three against the Swede. In point of fact, however, Johnnie loses the fight against the Swede quite decidedly, so this fifth player doesn't determine the winning of the struggle. Nevertheless, the first game of High-Five ends with Scully out of the room when the Swede chooses to make his accusation that, "I suppose a good many men have been killed in this room" (Crane 329).

The Swede looks at this place and its people and, with no visible evidence, concludes that many men have been killed in the front room of the Palace Hotel. This application of a preconceived description and arbitrarily attached back story is precisely what renders the Swede a symbol of a more generic culture or audience. Everyone at the hotel looks and assesses, but the others are limited in their observance to what can be seen from their location in time and space. The Swede stands outside of this location culturally, and bears witness to an undetailed picture of the blue hotel and its "dangerous" Western community. Perspectival distance, though creating a wider field of vision, does not necessarily lend itself to objectivity or accuracy. He can only grasp the most generic depiction of any Western environment as it exists in broad cultural circulation. The Easterner, therefore, is correct. Dime novels, or a cultural phenomenon like them, must inform the Swede's perception. Otherwise he could not, from a limited vantage point within the hotel, believe the things he says.

The Swede, however, is a heavy counting card. As an outsider who, unlike the Easterner, insists on maintaining a distant vantage point despite his current social surrounding, he remains situated in a different set of cultural influences than those in play for the others. Thus, he reminds the hotel culture

that it is a component of a larger image and the other elements of that image can make it appear quite different from its view of itself. The Swede, because he looks with the gaze of a society rather than that of an individual, represents their opportunity to be recognized by that society as the selves whom they struggle to be. But the Swede will only see what is consistent with his imaginative purpose. The perceptual politics and performative gestures of the hotel culture are trumped by the fact that the wider American society demands conformity with the expectation of a culturally current, commercially successful legend.

Scully tries to convince the Swede of his gentle nature by showing a picture of his deceased daughter, bragging about his older son who is a lawyer in Lincoln, and reassuring him that Ft. Romper is an up and coming "met-tro-pol- is" with a plan to install "ilictric streetcars" (Crane 332-3). Scully is a self-made man in the Franklinian model as a tradesman so committed to good publicity that he twice refuses the Swede's money because he would rather go unpaid than to have it said in town that someone left his hotel in fear. The Swede, however, acknowledges nothing of this performance. Scully's effort at reassurance leaves the Swede afraid to drink the whiskey he offers, and when he does drink Crane informs us, "as his lips curled absurdly around the opening and his throat worked, he kept his glance burning with hatred, upon the old man's face" (Crane 334). In the world of "The Blue Hotel," thus, a brush with a greater unit of sociality precipitates a loss of rational self-consciousness. The Swede moves from disregard to hatred as Scully struggles to reassure him. This brings us to the Easterner's second theory—that of social culpability for the Swede's death which is also elucidated as true when we consider the Swede's metamorphosis from a symbol of the generic American culture to a specific representative component of that culture that enacts an identity discourse appropriate to his perception of his surroundings. This performance gets under way as he returns to the front room after the above described chat.

Upon their return, Scully is even more deferential toward the Swede, who apparently understands that his threat of leaving puts Scully in a difficult position. He exhibits a new attitude of dominance over the hotel. Crane writes:

> The Swede began to talk; he talked arrogantly, profanely, angrily.
>
> Johnnie, the cowboy, and the Easterner maintained a morose silence, while old Scully appeared to be receptive and eager, breaking in constantly with sympathetic

> ejaculations. Finally the Swede announced that he was thirsty. He moved in his chair,
> and said that he would go for a drink of water.
>
>   'I'll git it for you,' cried Scully at once,
>
>   'No,' said the Swede, contemptuously. "I'll get it for myself.' He arose with the air of
> an owner off into the executive parts of the hotel. (336)

The modulation of point of view here is subtle yet momentous. The narration has never been tightly associated with the mind of the Swede. Earlier, with, "He resembled a badly frightened man," for example, we get an accounting of the Swede's motivations filtered through the hotel culture. With the glass of water exchange, the perceptual politics have shifted. The point of view delves further into speculation of the Swede's mental state, and the narration of his feelings becomes more direct. Where his appearance once "resembled" a frightened man, he now plainly manifests contempt. His speech does not appear or sound arrogant, profane, and angry. These are direct adverbs describing the manner in which he speaks. The trepidation we have previously observed in the Swede is replaced by aggressive self-declaration. Resolutely reading hospitality as subterfuge, he evidently feels entitled to mount a performance as a Western tough.

Scully's continued passivity, meanwhile, contributes to the success of the Swede's bully performance. As their frustrations mount, and Scully's desperation to be seen as a rational citizen entrepreneur in a rising urban hub escalates, the Swede becomes the discursive owner of the hotel. The symbol of a generic audience now seeks to take up a role as a "self-made man." Craving reciprocity from him, Scully shows increasing willingness to serve as his audience, to take him as the man he portrays. His version of the self-made man, however, is a reflexive rehearsal of a rugged, belligerent, independent bully which the Swede imagines as a livable Western identity. This execution of identity, which reduces the others to receptacles of his performance, will escalate their rage and increase the real element of danger. When the Swede catches Johnnie cheating at the second game of High-Five, the aggressive self-definition in his challenge to the cheater, "Yes fight! I'll show you what kind of man I am! I'll show you who you want to fight! Maybe you think I can't fight!" (Crane 341), reveals that he seeks control over their interpretation of his masculinity and identity. What he fails to comprehend is the power of their concern for being looked upon and judged in a manner inconsistent with the performance they put forth.

The cowboy elucidates a deep local concern for interpretive reciprocity in his response to the Easterner's dime novel theory:

> "He ain't no Swede," said the cowboy, scornfully.
>
> "Well what is he then?" cried Johnnie. "What is he then?"
>
> "It's my opinion," replied the cowboy deliberately, "he's some kind of Dutchman." It was a venerable custom of the country to entitle as Swedes all light-haired men who spoke with a heavy tongue. In consequence the idea of the cowboy was not without its daring. "Yes sir," he repeated it's my opinion this fellow is some kind of Dutchman."
>
> "Well, he says he's a Swede, anyhow," muttered Johnnie, sulkily. (335)

The phrase "some kind of Dutchman" underscores the random choice of this vague label presented as if it were a thoroughly considered, rational opinion. The cowboy knows, however, that the Swede has not given Scully, or any of them, their normal due as representatives of *their* identity types. Thus, he makes the daring move of discursive retaliation. He will not give the Swede the customary benefit of a trusting audience. Johnnie's response further indicates what is expected in the exchange of identity performances. If he says he's a Swede, Johnnie can't imagine that there's anything to be done about it. So when the Easterner identifies dime novels as the particular genre the Swede imposes upon them, he concretizes their sense of interpretive violence inflicted on this social location. The fact that Johnnie actually cheats according to the Easterner is subordinate to the fact that the Swede is looking for a cause to fight. After the fight, the Swede gloats thinking he has proven himself their superior in the tradition of the dime novel adventurer, and struts off bragging to saloon patrons that he's just, "thumped the soul" out of their neighbor. The victims of his discursive attack, however, are first held accountable for their complicity in it.

Notice the important emergence of a woman's gaze after Johnnie's humiliating beating. During her brief engagement with the story's principals, "the mother straightened herself and fixed old Scully with an eye of stern reproach. 'Shame be upon you !' she cried. 'Your own son, too. Shame be upon you!'" (Crane 346). Scully indeed is ashamed. He reached such a point of vexation with the Swede that he abandoned his passionate principles of hospitality. He gives no argument in defense of this disintegration. The woman who speaks, though, is external to the masculine context of Scully's identity performance. The "mother" can see a certain version of the bigger picture. She can recognize lack in

Scully's hospitable innkeeper performance, but as a woman she is free of any stake in the Swede's denial of interpretive reciprocity. Consequently, the shame she bestows is the spectral judgment of the distant and imagined society that the Swede ahs represented at other points in the story. The generic, undeveloped quality of this feminine character reveals that the shame at hand is more in the minds of men like Scully. It is a haunting internal fear of being judged wanting by the distant, dispassionate social conglomerate as such men perform consumable masculinities like the "self-made man," the "cowboy," and the "Easterner." After the fight, the "mother" looks upon Scully and marks a gap between the civilized image of this hotel, consistent with the performance of a self-made Franklinian "tradesman," and the reality of his behavior.

At any point, however, the development of this gap could have been diffused by an avoval of the politics of performance, and an admission of the slow developmental process by which performativity reconfigures material reality. Instead, the hotel denizens amplify their role-playing to the point at which their defensiveness blossoms into a theatrical fist fight. Had they admitted the one characteristic that makes the Palace Hotel vaguely like the Western cliché that the Swede imagines, namely the fact that Johnnie is known to cheat at cards, the process of Ft. Romper's development toward the more civilized construct to which the hotel aspires could have been maintained as a work-in-progress, and the Swede's refusal of interpretive reciprocity dismissed as aberrant. In other words, shame inheres in the presumption that one should already, prior to the advent of self-conscious identity performance, be the thing that one wishes to become. Attempting to hide performativity, draws attention to it. The hotel culture, however, partially preserves its performative integrity through one crucial gesture made by Scully.

The Swede first offers Scully payment in section three when Scully has followed him to his room to talk him out of leaving:

> "You don't owe me anythin'," said the old man, angrily.
>
> "Yes I do," reported the Swede. He took seventy-five cents from his
> pocket and tendered it to Scully; but the latter snapped his fingers in disdainful refusal.
> However, it happened that they both stood gazing in a strange fashion at the three silver
> pieces on the Swede's open palm.

"I'll not take your money," said Scully at last, "Not after what's been goin'

on here." (Crane 333)

With the words "at last" Crane identifies this act of looking as protracted and serious. Here two men look upon the same objects, and see them the same way. The blizzard makes leaving impractical, and one wonders for what the Swede intends to pay. Granted, he has had one meal at the hotel, but he has not spent the night there, and if he genuinely feels his life has been threatened, then his sense of fiscal propriety seems misplaced. On the other hand, Scully might well feel justified in taking it if the man actually means to leave. Scully has fed him, offered him a wash basin, and tolerated the needling of his son and guests. Scully, however, may realize the Swede's intent during this long silent gaze at the coins. The Swede means to buy something that is not sold at the Palace Hotel: the romantic danger of dime novels. The best evidence for this is the fact that he does ultimately leave the hotel after the fight with Johnnie, and finds an establishment where he can be more easily accommodated. At this point in section three, he has partially fulfilled his consumerist desire for a brush with treacherous surroundings, and offers seventy-five cents as payment just as he would expect to pay for a dime novel that turned out unsatisfying. Scully's refusal suggests he understands the developing discursive struggle. He will not accept payment for this imposed interpretation of his self-construction.

The image of money surfaces twice more in the story. The Swede appears on the hotel stairs and descends from his room to make his final departure. Crane writes, "His entrance was made theatric" (346). This use of the passive voice begs the question: by whom? Neither side can be excused from this making of the theatric given that every theater requires both performers and audience to complete an exchange of representation. Before making his exit, the Swede hostilely returns to the issue of payment, "'I s'pose you'll tell me now how much I owe you?' The old man remained stolid. 'You don't owe me nothin'" (Crane 347). The Swede expresses shock but finally comes responds, "I guess you're right, I guess if it was any way at all, you'd owe me somethin'. That's what I guess" (Crane 347). This hypothetical construction, "If it was any way at all . . ." is dumbfounding. It must be *some* way. That is, unless the Swede conceives of the exchange of performative self-inventions to utterly substitute pretense for reality rather than to serve as a liberatory modality for the creation of livable identities.

The payment, to the Swede, is mere form. He would deserve more adventure for his money, if it were "any way at all," but since everything is pretend to him, he makes the standard, yet empty, offer

of payment. Scully's rejection, however, indicates an understanding of pretend as a producer of material reality. He cannot take money for a service inconsistent with his self-construction and remain committed to it as a livable identity. As soon as the Swede ventures out into the blizzard, having exhausted the patience of the hotel's discourse community, and evidently finding it inadequate to his purpose, his money is quickly accepted. When the Swede buys a drink at the saloon, Crane effectively zooms in on the "highly nickelled cash-machine" (349). Its function is carefully detailed, " A bell rang; a card labeled '20 cts.' had appeared" (Crane 349). A prized and shiny feature of this new context is the machine which takes an account of what is owed to whom.

The Swede commences bragging about the beating he gave Johnnie, and attempts to compel saloon patrons to drink with him. Having proven himself in a fight, he believes himself a respected force in a wild West milieu. He then quickly meets his death Crane writes:

> The Swede had grasped the gambler frenziedly at the throat, and was dragging him from his chair. The other men sprang up. The barkeeper dashed around the corner of his bar. There was a great tumult, and then was seen a long blade in the hand of the gambler. It shot forward, and a human body, this citadel of virtue, wisdom, power, was pierced as easily as if it had been a melon. The Swede fell with a cry of supreme astonishment. (352)

The Swede who, until now, has thought that sentient beings were available for molding to the purpose of his greater entertainment cries in astonishment as this material world of material performance rises up against his tyranny. Describing the human body as a "citadel of virtue, wisdom, power," emphasizes the inviolable quality of consciousness which holds the potential for rational development. The Swede's refusal to acknowledge this core value with respect to fellow citizens, reduces him to the status afforded an unthinking melon.

Inasmuch as the Swede functions as a symbol of a culture that expects reality to be consumable and responsive to consumer demands, "The Blue Hotel" suggests a possible consequence for that society. This environment that values with the response of a consumerist audience more than the contemplative rational determination of self, renders individuals an unconscious vessel of market trends. Thus the Swede, as a specific unit of the consumerist culture, unwittingly engineers his death because treacherous surroundings are the current stock-in-trade of the entertainment culture in which

he is immersed. This assertion is bolstered by the chilling final impression from the Swede's vantage point, "The corpse of the Swede, alone in the saloon, had its eyes fixed upon a dreadful legend that dwelt atop of the cash-machine; 'This registers the amount of your purchase'" (Crane 352). As a society in which the rights of citizenship remain bitterly contested and arbitrarily truncated, America, catheter in the character of the Swede, brings about its own destruction by coming into a local scene of civic self-construction and usurping the consciousness it finds there. In short, the Swede came looking to inflict perceptual violence on others and the cost is his material existence. The individual ceases to exist if performance is reflexive rather than rational.

This indictment of the Swede as a colonizing force upon the civic consciousnesses of the characters he finds in Ft. Romper is, however, only part of the story's message. As indicated earlier, a key argument of this reading is that the Easterner's dime novel theory and his social complicity theory interlock, and that the truth of the former guarantees the accuracy of the latter. The Swede functions both as a symbol of the broad American culture and as a specific instantiation of that culture. The movement of society in general, then, is the "human movement" of which the gambler who stabs the Swede is the "apex," according to the Easterner's post-mortem analysis. The Easterner notices the local responsibility of each of the principal characters as constituent elements of the same culture the Swede symbolizes. In their zeal to be looked upon, and read in a particular way, by the larger culture, the local men neglected to turn a critical eye toward the cultural conglomerate they themselves are charged with constructing as citizens of democracy. These conditions generate Crane's primary message about perspective when understood through the phenomenon of Johnnie's cheating, and the famous image of "the space lost bulb," through which Crane describes the grandly indifferent, amoral, perspective of the distant universe surrounding the earth. Johnnie's cheating is the primary piece of evidence offered by the Easterner in his assertion that, "This poor gambler isn't even a noun. He is a kind of adverb. Every sin is the result of a collaboration. We five of us, have collaborated in the murder of this Swede" (Crane 354). The five, thus, must be considered as a source of local responsibility for a national cultural condition.

As an adverb the gambler marks the character of the action, but neither its planning, nor even its execution. The Easterner is moved, however, to recognize himself as one of five collaborators because, "Johnnie was cheating. I saw him. I know it. I saw him. And I refused to stand up and be a man.

I let the Swede fight it out alone" (353-54). But why, if the Swede was so complicit in his death as to project endless imagined villainy onto his host and fellow travelers, should it matter so much at the end that Johnnie was guilty of the offense for which he received a solid beating anyway? Ultimately the issue is one of what was seen and by whom.

The surprise ending revealing that Johnnie did in fact cheat situates the reader in an interesting relationship to the culpability theory. It is a fact that we too have missed. In all likelihood, the mind's eye of the reader has been firmly fixed on the Swede, along with the locally generated gaze of the story's narrative center of consciousness, except for the occasional modulations of point of view allowing for visual details from the Swede's perspective. This occurs when we are situated to see through the corpse's eyes and gaze upon the legend of the cash register. Another such modulation occurs when the group of men is guided into the blue hotel and the front room is first surveyed. The first scene within the hotel walls prefigures the coming conflict:

> Beside the stove Scully's son Johnnie was playing High-Five with an old farmer who had whiskers both grey and sandy. They were quarrelling. Frequently the old farmer turned his face toward a box of sawdust-- colored brown from tobacco juice-- that was behind the stove, and spat with an air of great impatience and irritation. With a loud flourish of words Scully destroyed the game of cards, and bustled his son upstairs with part of the baggage of the new guests. (Crane 326)

The setting is established with a tension beneath the surface away from which principal characters, in this case Scully, direct our attention. As in mystery novels, the story is structured to deflect attention from the most crucial details and direct it toward false clues.

This tense effect is amplified by the gritty detail of the sawdust, browned by tobacco spittle among the room's furnishings. Here Crane allows something of the stereotypical roughness of a western setting to supersede the impression Scully would have his guests extract. If any of the guests happened to listen or look more intently than the others in the brief moment before Scully destroys the game, might he not have discovered the cause of the quarrel between Johnnie and the farmer? And failing that observation, would the fact that Johnnie had already quarreled with another card player not impact the community's attitude toward future games with him? It is reasonable to suppose that the Swede, as a reader of dime novels, attends to these details that develop rather than merely advance the

plot. Although he must rely on the most superficial features of the context to see the hotel as a stereotypical Western setting, this glimmer of dime novel ambiance reveals the culpability of our hotel denizens. The hotel culture forgets that it is responsible for a kernel of truth in the image of itself gathered by the external culture. Obsessed with the gaze of their audience, they let themselves be manipulated by the Swede's imposed narrative rather than by their own rational consciousness. Scully's shame that his hotel may be a little rough around the edges with a box full of sawdust and spittle lurking behind the stove, and a son with a vexatious propensity to cheat in fun, obscures his performance of the hospitable tradesman. The culture that convenes at the Palace is so consumed with being looked upon by the Swede, attempting to derail his oppressive interpretations, that its constituents never represent *themselves* enough to cohere into a rational local unit. Shame paralyzes their efforts of self-construction. Crane's meditations offer a way of reversing this human movement, which finds its apex in our adverbial gambler, consisting of a regard for perspective, and a resolute espousal of *a* perspective as an independent rational self in the Franklinian mold.

When the Swede departs the blue hotel and enters the unforgiving natural force of the blizzard that has kept the hotel culture united against the surrounding elements, Crane adjusts point of view enough to speak for a nebulous sibylline humanity without leaving what our now lone Swede can see and understand. Crane writes:

> We picture the world as thick with conquering and elate humanity, but here, with the bugles of tempest pealing, it was hard to imagine a peopled earth. One viewed the existence of man then as a marvel, and conceded a glamour of wonder to these lice which were caused to cling to a whirling, fire-smitten, ice-locked, disease-stricken, space lost bulb. (348)

Here we find a cold distant characterization of humanity in a simile that seems ludicrous to the reader ensconced within "elate humanity." The scale of vision which reduces us to lice offers no sympathy and emphasizes helplessness. We are "made to cling," by unseen forces, to a space-lost bulb afflicted with blight and catastrophe. The context of the observation, coming between the Swede's unnecessary victory at the hotel and the hubris of his assumption that he can bully anyone in the town as he heads for the saloon, further contributes to the interpretation that these forbidding natural conditions humble and humiliate human beings through Crane's manipulation of perceptual scale. The image provides a

reminder that there is always a larger, more distanced perspective even than that of the American society represented by the Swede. In conclusion, however, an Impressionist world view, which attends to the relationship of constituent details to conglomerate wholes, mitigates this pessimism.

In the "space-lost bulb" passage, the sense of distance from a drifting, inhospitable earth is made observable through the particularity of the blizzard with which one of its lice is faced. The lesson of this passage is not that the distant, "objective," perspective is more accurate, or even possible for a context-bound human. Consider the "glamour of wonder," along with the line that follows those I have already cited, "The conceit of man was explained by this storm to be the very engine of life" (Crane 348). From above and afar humanity is miniscule, helpless, and blight-stricken. This perspective, though, is no more complete than the dime novel depiction of Western life. The broad image of humanity from a distant vantage point depends upon the locations and interactions among constituent points within that image. Crane urges fidelity to what can be seen from one's limited location in space and culture. The purposeful occupation of a socially embedded vantage point better serves humanity and all its constituents within detailed contexts. It is this endeavor that the Easterner regrets having abandoned. Indeed the cowboy, along with the others, didn't do anything in response to observable details, and this failure to avow what one sees is the crime for which the Easterner holds his society accountable.

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At the Edge of the Abyss: A Case for Teaching Race and National Identity in

Victor Hugo's *Bug-Jargal*

Timothy Gerhard, SUNY Cortland

> The writers and poets of the nineteenth century have the admirable good
> fortune of proceeding from a genesis, of arriving after an end of the world,
> of accompanying a reappearance of light, of being the organs of a new
> beginning. This imposes on them duties unknown to their predecessors,--
> the duties of intentional reformers and direct civilizers.
> --Victor Hugo, *William Shakespeare* 377

In 2004 appeared a new English-language translation of an early work of romantic historical fiction by Victor Hugo, *Bug-Jargal*, published in 1820 as a short story and significantly revised and republished as a novel in 1826, just two years shy of the famous *Préface de Cromwell*. The translator and editor of this critical edition, Chris Bongie, provides a lengthy introduction and a wealth of diligently-researched and translated material in the appendices, all of which serves to situate the work historically, politically and culturally. Given a recent discussion in the *PMLA* of the need to widen the temporal and geographical scope of English-language postcolonial studies ("Editor's Column" 636-48), this new edition of *Bug-Jargal* should broaden the discussion of a work which has recently received renewed attention in Francophone Studies as well. *Bug-Jargal* should interest professors of English (and French) who teach courses related to the Caribbean, postcolonial studies and American studies; furthermore, an allegorical reading of the proposed interracial romance in the novel highlights how this romance portrays a transnational identity crisis which Hugo and the French experienced at the time and the ramifications of which persist in the Western world today.

Bongie recognizes *Bug-Jargal* as "among the more substantial nineteenth-century European novels to have dealt with issues of race in general, and certainly the most substantial to have dealt with the Haitian Revolution in particular" (29). With revolutionary warfare as the backdrop, Hugo's French narrator d'Auverney recounts the tale of his adventures in St. Domingue to other French soldiers in 1793; from beginning to end the novel is simultaneously a consideration of the slave uprising in St.

Domingue in 1791 (which marks the beginning of the Haitian Revolution) and a reflection upon the French Revolution. This intricate linking of the French Revolution and the question of slavery forces the reader to focus squarely upon the historical changes occurring in both spheres in the 1790s and on the question of race which problematizes France's emerging national identity up to and well beyond the writing of *Bug-Jargal* in the 1820s. According to Bongie, although Hugo "was *reading with a vengeance*" (italics his) as he perused historical sources in the writing of his novel, "on the lookout for whatever might help him further a negative, parodic interpretation of the events in Saint Domingue," the novel at the same time "is not (simply) an exemplary instance of colonial discourse but one that makes room, obliquely, for a postcolonial vision—of subaltern resistance and cultural hybridity, for instance—to which it is ostensibly opposed" (31,37).

Since its publication, critics from both sides of the Atlantic have studied how Hugo represents the uprising of slaves in a former French colony and as yet have not arrived at a consensus as to whether the novel is *négrophobe* or *négrophile*; it is in fact the inability of critics to decide definitively on this issue that invites further discussion of the representation of race in the novel. The most well-researched and convincing condemnation of Hugo's portrayal of black and mixed-race characters in *Bug-Jargal* is Léon-François Hoffman's 1996 article, "Victor Hugo, les noirs et l'esclavage." This article, at once a close reading of the novel and an investigation into any reference to Blacks made by Hugo over the course of his career, sees the protagonist Bug-Jargal himself as "le porte-parole des anciens colons et de leurs partisans" ("the spokesman of the former colonists and their supporters") (56). As regards other important characters of color: "le chauvinisme empêchera toujours Hugo de rendre le moindre hommage aux premiers esclaves dans l'histoire de l'humanité à s'être libérés par leurs propres moyens" ("chauvinism will always prevent Hugo from rendering the slightest praise to the first slaves in the history of humanity to have liberated themselves by their own means") (56). Hoffman, whose works builds upon the research done in his 1973 book, *Le nègre romantique*, also decries the depiction of the slave population in the novel:

> La leçon implicite semble être que les Noirs ont été voués à l'esclavage non
> par la loi injuste du plus fort mais par une disposition innée, et que si on les
> élevait à la dignité humaine en les arrachant à leurs maîtres blancs, il n'auraient
> rien de plus pressé que d'obéir à leur nature en recherchant un autre esclavage.

(The implicit lesson seems to be that the blacks have been doomed to slavery

not by the unjust law of the strongest but by an innate disposition, and that if

one lifted them to human dignity by tearing them away from their white masters,

they would only be all the more in a hurry to obey their nature by searching   to be

slaves once again.)

(70)

Hoffman finds in Hugo's later writings (including a dream sequence from 1845 which depicts black slaves as physically and morally repulsive) proof that the great humanitarian, while a champion of many liberal causes from the late-1820s onward, was never able to be such a champion in regard to Africans, whom he rarely mentions in later writings (55). Even though late in his career Hugo did write a several letters opposing slavery, Hoffman questions Hugo's overwhelming silence concerning the subject, and he is not surprised to find Hugo writing in *le Discours sur l'Afrique* in 1879: "Allez, Peuples! emparez-vous de cette terre. Prenez-la. À qui? à personne. Prenez cette terre à Dieu. Dieu donne la terre aux hommes. Dieu offre l'Afrique à l'Europe. Prenez-la!" ("Go, People! Seize this land. Take it. To whom does it belong? To no one. Take this land for God. God gives this land to men. God offers Africa to Europe. Take it!") (87).

This critique of the novel and of Hugo's purported lifelong inability to see people of African heritage as dignified human beings might suggest that this colonial text can be easily dismissed by twenty-first century readers and that it really has no claim to a spot in an already crowded curriculum. In Hoffman's view, Bug-Jargal's painful recounting of his family's suffering does nothing to alter his status as lapdog to the whites; slave leader Biassou's challenge of colonialist discourse does nothing to alter the portrait of him as both ridiculous and terrifying; and the dwarf Habibrah's speech that he is a man and not an animal does nothing to change his status as a disgusting hybrid and incarnation of evil. Yet one does find these speeches in the novel, and those who argue that *Bug-Jargal*, if considered in its historical and literary context, is actually *négrophile*, give these speeches, to mention just one aspect of the text, much greater weight.

As prominent a Hugo critic as Laurence M. Porter argues in 2002 that the author of *Bug-Jargal* was not in fact a political reactionary, nor was he a detractor of Africans, but rather, like his hero Bug-Jargal, a rebel whose outward adherence to the monarchy (and to the virulent anti-African sentiments of the displaced colonists) reflected only a wise knowledge of his audience and his social position. Porter states that "Hugo's rejection of slavery is reflected in the affinities between the black and the white hero," (8) that Biassou's murders "illustrate the meta-racial motif that killing helpless people is hideous," and that Hugo's "grotesque portraits of ferocious rebels of color allow him safely to express his opposition to slavery indirectly in the rebels' eloquent discourse that insists on their humanity" (13). Finally, Porter claims that Hugo "ascribes primary blame for the atrocities in Santo Domingo to the colonists" (13). Whereas Hoffman emphasizes Hugo's use of animal metaphors (monkey, dog, spider) in his seemingly excessive descriptions of the deformities of Habibrah (60), Porter reads this character not specifically as a deformed mixed-race creature but as one in a long line of dwarfs created by Hugo for dramatic purposes whose "skin color matters less than his psychology" (17).

Just as Hoffman is unable to convincingly dismiss aspects of the text which do indeed seem like early postcolonial statements (such as the speeches highlighted by Porter), Porter's lack of engagement with such a seminal article as Hoffman's—as well as his quick and inaccurate assessment that Hugo opposes slavery in this novel—reflect an inability to categorize the novel as supporting the cause of the revolutionary slaves. One thing is certain: In this romantic historical tale, Hugo created a fictional space in which to dramatize the revolutionary events which carried the black and mixed-race population of St. Domingue onto the stage of history; while doing so, he was inevitably struggling to understand himself as a product of a revolutionary historical moment.[1]

To attempt to make a determination on Hugo's representation of whites, blacks and mixed-race characters in *Bug-Jargal* requires that the reader study historical, cultural, literary and biographical

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[1] The autobiographies of Maurois and Robb testify to the fact that the French Revolution affected Hugo's family in a very personal and dramatic fashion; further investigation of other historical sources reveals the dramatic impact of the Haitian Revolution in Restoration France in the 1820s, as well as a verifiable instance of Hugo writing that the Haitians owed his family an indemnity (his maternal grandfather was part of the maritime bourgeoisie and a slave trader), perhaps suggesting a more personal investment in the writing of his novel. This is discussed more at length in Bongie, ed. *Bug-Jargal* 16-33, and the most extensive review of biographical and historical sources of the novel can be found in Cauna's "Les sources historiques de *Bug-Jargal*."

documents concerning slavery and the society of St. Domingue at the time of the Haitian Revolution, the representation of black characters in French literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the French Revolution as it relates to the slavery question and to the development of Victor Hugo as an author. By reading, for example, Carolyn Fick's *The Making of Haiti* on the treatment of slaves and slave resistance, Hoffman's *Le nègre romantique* on the literary representations of Africans in French literature in the centuries leading up to the Romantic period, Maurois's and Robb's biographies on the intertwining of the Revolution and the family life of the young Hugo, or even Hugo's own theoretical writings about Sir Walter Scott, Chateaubriand and other literary influences (some of which are collected in the Bongie edition of *Bug-Jargal*), one can begin to contextualize and then to understand Hugo's representation of black and mixed-race characters during the period of the Restoration in France.

Consider Hoffman's comment about the absence of Africans from Hugo's subsequent work, and consider Christopher Miller, for example, studying in one chapter of his recent work *The French Atlantic Triangle*, "how France attempted to come to terms with the Haitian Revolution, long after it was over, through a calculated plan for forgetting" (246). Consider also Laurent Dubois, writing in "In Search of the Haitian Revolution" in *Francophone Postcolonial Studies*: "The many important lessons to be learned about the Haitian Revolution (…) are only beginning to take their rightful place in broader debates in colonial and postcolonial studies" (27) and concluding: "There is redemption to be found in searching for the Haitian Revolution, for in its story lie lessons about the racial orders that continue to haunt us and about ways to confront them" (34). This search for the Haitian Revolution certainly affects the United States as well, owing to the large movement of Black Haitians up to the U.S. during and following the Haitian Revolution, the involvement of the U.S. in Haitian politics throughout the twentieth century and the continuing connections forged by Haitian exiles living in the U.S. today. A consideration of the Haitian Revolution should not be absent from a study of the Anglophone Caribbean nor should its importance be forgotten by scholars in American Studies. If one considers the wealth of experiences which an interpretation of this novel offers, it is difficult to argue that the novel does not represent an excellent window for studying this foundational moment of Haitian (and American) history as well as the relationship of race and national identity in Haiti, France and elsewhere.

In the second section of this paper, by focusing specifically on the relationship between romance and politics in *Bug-Jargal*, we can investigate more closely the complicated relationship of race and national identity which, to use Dubois's phrase, haunted the nineteenth century and which persists today. In *Foundational Fictions*, Doris Sommer studies the affective power of nineteenth century Latin American novels in which lovers, who must cross racial and ethnic lines in order to love, help construct nations in Latin America. Sommer seeks "to locate an erotics of politics," and she demonstrates throughout the book how popular love stories serve as allegories which "make the different strata of society comprehensible to one another, that is, to promote communal imaginings" (14). Weaving together historical and literary analysis and expanding on Benedict Anderson's analysis of the cultural roots of national identity, Sommer shows how a romantic story gives "an emotive mooring to the social and political formations it articulates" (51), in essence fomenting the creation of a state in which the lovers can overcome their (often melodramatic) obstacles and consummate an otherwise interrupted romance. Sommer asks: "Is it possible, for example, that outside of Latin America, too, political passion was being grounded in erotics?" (32) By focusing specifically on the relationship between romance and politics and between fiction and history in *Bug-Jargal*, , we can investigate more closely, to use C.R.L. James's phrase "the guilty conscience" of the French Revolution and its connection with the postcolonial world of today (James 80-81). What sort of "communal imaginings" were being promoted by a Frenchman writing about the "French" Caribbean, in a space contiguous to and in some ways overlapping Latin America and the Anglophone Caribbean?

What occurred for the black Haitian population in 1791 and beyond echoed what was happening in France: a people entered into history; a nation was being born. As Frauke Gewecke states:

> Avec l'insurrection des esclaves de Saint Domingue et la répression qui
> s'ensuit de la part des blancs—cause d'inconcevables atrocités de part
> et de l'autre—le nègre révolté sortit de son existence purement littéraire
> pour faire son entrée dans l'Histoire, en se dressant, figure colossale et
> effrayante, en danger réel et concret.
>
> (With the revolt of the slaves of Saint Domingue and the repression which
> followed on the part of the whites—cause of inconceivable atrocities on both

sides—the revolutionary black man left his purely literary existence in order

to make his entry into History, by rising up, a colossal and frightening

figure, a real and concrete danger.)

(55)

These newly historicized black figures appear in the pages of *Bug-Jargal*, and yet the first problem of interpretation arises with the startling contrast between the romantic yet realistic opening (the René-like French narrator recounting his arrival in Saint Domingue, the unfortunate situation of the slaves on his uncle's plantation and his love for his cousin Marie) and the mythic proportions of the first two characters of African ancestry, Bug-Jargal (presented immediately as a poetic soul and then as a physical and moral black giant) and the mixed-race character foil Habibrah (presented as a buffoon and a physically and morally deformed creature, with a scientific footnote describing him as a "griffe" whose blood has no more than 32 parts white and no less than 96 parts black).   According to Kathryn Grossman, Hugo, following Scott's model, was the first writer to introduce the historical novel in France (20), yet these characters are not the historical creations that a George Lukács would prefer to see. Energized by the artistic possibilities engendered by the French and Haitian Revolutions and yet horrified by the political realities, Hugo wrote famously in 1824: "La littérature actuelle peut être le *résultat* de la revolution, sans en être *l'expression*" ("Literature today can be the *result* of the Revolution, without being the *expression* of it") (cited in Peyre 84; italics are Hugo's). Writing about the new literature in 1828, Hugo speaks of his muse collecting avidly "les bassesses et trivialités de la vie" (the baseness and trivialities of life"): "Le grotesque, *il faut qu'il soit décrit*, c'est-à-dire *anobli* (…) une révolte de populace est une bonne fortune pour elle" ("The grotesque, *it must be described*, that is to say *rendered noble* (…) a revolt of the populace is a lucky event for it [the new literature]") (cited in Souriau's *Préface de Cromwell* 271; italics are Hugo's). This muse of 1828 is consistent with the muse of 1823 who welcomes on the stage and "ennobles" grotesque revolutionary characters (white and black) yet cannot accept being part of or supporting the French Revolution. Yet as one studies the clash between the historical and the mythical in the novel, one must take into account that this is the work an author who considers himself to be, as he says, among "*ce petit nombre d'esprits délicats*, d'âmes

exaltées et de têtes sérieuses qui représentent moralement les peoples *civilisés*" ("*the small number of refined minds*, of elevated souls and serious thinkers who represent morally the civilized peoples") (cited in Maigron 111; italics are mine).

As a child of the French Revolution and as a self-proclaimed representative of civilized people, Hugo frames his story of the slave revolt in St. Domingue: He invents the French narrator and then in the-story-within-a-story brings onto his stage a black character who has a basis in the historical record yet who is recast as a mythic creation not fully in keeping with the written testimonies about the colony to which Hugo had consulted—for the historical Toussaint Louverture did save his white owners from harm during any early slave revolt (the original impetus for this tale), yet Toussaint was not a tall and strong man, nor was he in love with the woman of the house, to name just two important differences.[1]

Bug-Jargal's noble declaration of love for Marie sets into motion the conflict of the novel (a slave leader's love for a white woman and then a colonial way of life troubled by the historical uprising of people of African descent): "Tremble, ô blanche fille d'Hispaniola. Alors, tu regretteras l'amour qui eût pu te conduire vers moi, comme le joyeux katha, l'oiseau de salut, guide à travers les sables d'Afrique le voyageur à la citerne" ("Tremble, oh white woman of Hispaniola. So, you will long for the love that could have led you to me, as the joyous katha, bird of salvation, guides across the sands of Africa the voyager to the well ») (52). Hidden in the woods, Bug-Jargal's poetic voice proposes to Marie a marriage of black and white for which "j'oublierais tout, royaume, famille, devoir, vengeance" ("I would forget everything, kingdom, family, moral obligations, vengeance") (91); this ideal union, which will produce the beauty of a sunset (51), finds immediately its mocking double in Habibrah's statement that he is the shining example of such as union (54-55). The novel, as Dominique Jullien argues in 2005, is indeed "construit sur la figure de l'antithèse et de double" ("constructed on the figure of the antithesis and the double") (81), and the action begins with the notion of interracial marriage as both sublime and grotesque, and Hugo is both "promot[ing] communal imaginings" and rejecting the same. Considering that many writers of the revolutionary period, such as Bryan Edwards of Jamaica, thought Africans incapable of experiencing love (Dayan 190) and that the sentiment against the Black revolutionaries was indeed vehement in France in the early nineteenth century, the proposal itself must be seen as pushing against the racial boundaries of Restoration France , although analysis of this point would require a

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[1] Please see Bell's 2007 biography of Toussaint Louverture for a discussion of the historical figure.

lengthier analysis of literary precedents such as *Oronoko , Adonis, Zoflora* (studied in greater depth in Hoffman).

Both Marie and d'Auverney are shocked by the mysterious black man's proposal, which d'Auverney classifies immediately as "un amour impossible" ("an impossible love") (59). After all, d'Auverney has declared the "décret désastreux" ("disastrous decree") of May 15, 1791 to grant political rights to men of color born of free parents to be an affront to the "l'amour-propre, peut-être fondé" (self-esteem, perhaps well-founded") of the white population (43), he has already had a duel with a mixed-race character who dared dance with Marie, and he has planned to marry Marie and produce children who will, it is presumed, share his same "pitié bienveillante" ("well-meaning pity") (40) for the slaves. Though, as Porter suggests, Bug-Jargal's song is presented as serious and noble, neither here nor elsewhere in the novel will this proposal be seconded.

As the genre of theatre exemplified the staging of state power in Corneille's time (for example in *Le Cid*), so does the impulse toward romantic historical fiction exemplify the main political preoccupation of Hugo's time, which is the discovery of the people as an historical force joined with the exhilaration and angst felt by those who were caught up in the rapid changes of the social structure. Hugo's unique and very un-Walter Scott-like insertion of largely mythologized characters into an account presented as historical reflects his desire to create a dramatic moral tale full of the heights of the sublime and the depths of the grotesque; it also reflects the novelistic discourse of the time about blacks in which the blackness of the character is decorative and in which the black protagonist is a royal figure who has little in common with the black masses and whose exceptional character earns him the understanding of a white man (characteristics described in Hoffman, *Le nègre romantique* 64, 50-51, 60).

Hugo places the black rebel on the stage of his very theatrical (and indeed very Corneillian) historical drama, yet he is recast as a mythical black Hercules with the linguistic abilities and intelligence of a white (d'Auverney describes Bug-Jargal's forehead as surprisingly large for a black man [58]). Furthermore, Bug-Jargal is defined immediately in terms of his devotion to Marie, to whom he proposes in the beginning and for whom, presumably, he chooses to sacrifice himself in the end when he realizes that she is betrothed to d'Auverney. The black man's first reason for being on the stage in this fiction, which is itself very concerned with national destinies, is to worship Marie from afar.

For Hugo's earliest critic, St. Beuve, Marie represented "grace, virginal beauty, and the blissful virtues of existence" (*Bug-Jargal*, Ed. Bongie 290); for today's critics, she must certainly represent Hugo's very limited view of the capacities of women. For the purposes of this analysis, this passive yet important character must also symbolize, as textual evidence proves, the sacred principle of a French national identity which is threatened by both the French and Haitian Revolutions.

 D'Auvenrney wants to understand this man who loves his betrothed, and Hugo scores a huge success in showing how the white narrator seeks to understand yet repeatedly misreads his black counterpart. In other instances, however, the distance between the three temporal planes (author, narrator, protagonist) is flattened and the anti-revolutionary and/or anti-black/anti-mulatto ideological position is clear (one could cite Rouvray's speech, the condemnation of Biassou's cruelty and that of the hypocritical white *négrophile* as well).

Upon making enquiries about Bug-Jargal after this noble man saves his fiancée's life and is later arrested for lifting a hand to defend a slave against d'Auverney's cruel uncle, d'Auverney learns of his royal African past and wishes to know more; in Bug-Jargal's jail cell, d'Auverney wonders about the thoughts and emotions he perceives in the unknowable gaze of the black man ("un mélange indéfinissable de mille sentiments opposés, une étrange expression de haine, de bienveillance et d'étonnement douloureux" ("an inexplicable mixture of a thousand opposing feelings, a strange expression of hatred, pity and sad astonishment") [67]), and he does so a full 120 years before Sartre, would take up this discussion of the black man's gaze in his famous preface to Senghor's first-ever edition of French-language African poetry, *L'Orphée Noir*. "Il fixa avec indifférence son regard sur le mien. Il me regardait en face comme un inconnu," ("He fixed his gaze on my with indifference. He looked me straight in the face as if I were unknown to him") reports d'Auverney (67). Bug-Jargal (known early in the narration only as "Pierrot," although the reader knows his real identity from the exposition of the novel) is a receiver and sender of mysterious messages (70,73), he communicates in a language of signs unknown to the Frenchman and he is, as he says in Spanish, a carrier of contraband (74).

But if this carrier of contraband will not be able to love Marie, neither will d'Auverney, who marries and is to pass his wedding night with Marie, a promise which is interrupted by the outbreak of the slave revolt and d'Auverney's obligation to serve as head of a militia; "ma pauvre Marie dormait ou m'attendait" ("my poor Marie slept or waited for me") (77). The novel is erotically charged from this

point. The trajectory of the next phase of the novel takes d'Auverney away from the nuptial chamber where the passive Marie awaits him on their wedding night, to the erroneous perception by d'Auverney that Bug-Jargal has stolen Marie during the revolutionary events to perhaps rape and kill her, to the awakening of d'Auverney-as-prisoner before the black dancers, the *griotes*, whose horrific and lascivious dance he describes as the very incarnation of evil and whom the reader sees as the very antithesis of Marie. "Des chrétiens," ("the Christians") as d'Auverney describes them (100), were not able to defend themselves against the slaves. Lost in this "flot de barbares et de sauvages" ("wave of barbarians and savages") (170), his dreams significantly of Marie, whom God had given him (178-179). The loss of Marie, it is to be remembered is synonymous with the loss of the uncle's plantation and the way of life they knew.

He dreams philosophically of losing touch with reality:

Les hommes, les choses, les faits, passent alors devant nous avec une physionomie en quelque sorte fantastique; et se meuvent comme dans un rêve. Tout est changé dans l'horizon de notre vie, atmosphère et perspective (…) Alors tout ce qui est nous paraît impossible et absurde ; nous croyons à peine à notre propre existence, parce que, ne retrouvant rien autour de nous de ce qui composait notre être, nous ne comprenons pas comment tout cela aurait disparu sans nous entraîner, et pourquoi de notre vie il ne serait resté que nous.

(Men, things, facts, pass then in front of us with a sort of fantastic aspect; and they move as in a dream. Everything has changed in the horizon of our life, ambiance and perspective (…) And then everything that is before us seems to us impossible and absurd; we hardly believe in our own existence, because, not finding anything around us that once made up our being, we do not understand how that could have disappeared without carrying us along with it, and why of our [former] life there would have remained only ourselves.)

(176-77)

Having lost touch with his nation which has been shaken by the apparently corrupt principles of both the French and the Haitian revolutions, the capture of Marie and his own capture have taken d'Auverney to a place which is "singulièrement sauvage [et qui] m'était absolument inconnu"

(singularly savage [and which] was absolutely unknown to me") (107). Of these satanic women who replace Marie (and we think back to Hoffman's criticims at this point), he says: "L'horrible rire de chaque sorcière nue, à certaines pauses de la danse, venait me présenter à son tour, en appuyant presque son visage sur le mien" ("The horrible laugh of each naked witch, at certain pauses in the dance, came to present itself to me in turn, almost pressing her face against mine") (111). This vision of black eroticism, this picture of black religion, horrifies and terrifies d'Auverney.

Perhaps more importantly, toward the end of the novel, after d'Auverney-as-prisoner has described for chapter upon chapter the horrible corruption of political and religious truths by Biassou and his accomplice Habibrah, Bug-Jargal, who has in fact been protecting Marie (in his spare time when he has not been leading his section of the revolutionary armies) appears in Biassou's camp to save d'Auverney and to condemn the very product of the interracial union he earlier proposed when he says of Biassou: "Le monstre (…) Comment n'ai-je pu prévu quelque perfidie? Ce n'est pas un noir, c'est un mûlatre" (The monster (…) How could I not have predicted some treachery ? He is not a Black, he is a mulatto") (208). Concerning Biaasou and Habibrah, who represent the corruption of true religious and political principles, Bug-Jargal condemns what he describes as their ferocious fanaticism and ridiculous superstitions.

"Croyez-moi," ("Believe me") says Bug-Jargal in one of the more disappointing moments toward the end of the novel, "les Blancs sont moins cruels que nous" ("the whites are less cruel than we are") (189). Bug's voice, reports the narrator, and his aspect "donnaient à ses paroles une force de conviction et d'autorité impossible à reproduire" ("gave his words a force of conviction and authority impossible to reproduce") (190). More importantly, Bug-Jargal at this moment evokes the name of Marie, the virgin, which Bug-Jargal claims is a principle which has been disrespected by the profane mass in which Biassou and Habibrah have foisted upon the black populace. Yet when Bug-Jargal has condemned the way Biassou has profaned the sacred name of Marie, d'Auverney is slightly troubled: "Il y avait peut-être une expression plus tendre encore que la vénération religieuse dans la manière que Pierrot prononça ce nom. Je ne sais comment cela se fit, mais je m'en sentais offensé et irrité" ("There was perhaps an expression more tender that that of religious devotion in the manner that Pierrot pronounced this name. I don't know how it happened this way, but I felt offended and irritated") (189). Through the eyes of d'Auverney, the French reader has witnessed a slave become a man, and he has

expressed his revolutionary desire, yet he still exists in the text only inasmuch as he worships Marie, and neither the political nor the erotic desire can be consummated. Bug-Jargal will sacrifice himself and be shot shortly after realizing that Marie has married d'Auverney.

And yet the novel ends tragically for the rest as well. Marie will die in later revolutionary events. D'Auverney retains what he describes as "a French honor" at the end of the novel, yet he has entered into an abyss in which he cannot understand himself. Upon concluding this melodramatic novel, Hugo finds himself, at age twenty-six, like his French narrator d'Auverney, his doomed African king Bug-Jargal and the object of their desire, Marie, at the edge of an abyss. (The original cover of the novel, as shown in the Bongie edition, in fact showed the French hero being pulled by Habibrah over the edge of a cliff into an abyss.)

This abyss—the destructive force of the revolution which swallows up his two main characters—represents Hugo's passionate yet frustrated engagement with the political events of his time. Given the emergence in both France and Haiti of the people in history and of the nation as a new beginning of communal relations, he portrays the uprooting of the old political order and places in doubt the emerging political order. This novel ties the birth of two nations to two interrupted romances, and we indeed discover here "an erotics of politics" and witness the symbolic foundation of a new transnational order no longer based on slavery pure and simple but rather upon the universal ideal of the Rights of Man and the emergence of the black man as an historical figure; the former Hugo will learn first to accept and then to champion, while the latter, because of the guilty conscience of the Revolution, will be actively forgotten throughout the nineteenth century.

And yet having experienced through quotations the type of vision d'Auverney-the-protagonist (and sometimes d'Auverney-the-narrator and Hugo as well) have of this newly historical black populace, is the novel worth reading today? This is a drama which the young Hugo needed to write for personal and artistic reasons, and if it does not endure as a masterful work of art in the way that *Le Cid* endures, if its melodrama and plot machinations can only largely amuse twenty-first century readers, it is still a highly readable, page-flipping read and should be studied for the discussion of race and national identity which it generates. Because it forces us to examine squarely the representation of race in the early nineteenth century and to consider the historical roots of this racial encounter as well as its legacy, *Bug-Jargal* is in fact a text which neither Francophone Studies nor American studies should

ignore. For a twenty-four year old man, Hugo wrote an interesting tale about the Haitian Revolution; since he, along with most of his compatriots soon set about forgetting Haiti and the problem of race, it is important to use the contextual material we now have available to have an honest discussion of the subject. As to whether the novel is truly *négophile* or *négrophobe*, the jury is still out.

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(De)Constructing the Self through Narrative: An Exploration of Second Language Methodology[1]

Stephen M. Swartz, St. Bonaventure University

In recent years Second Language Acquisition research has begun to include research into construction of self by second language learners. This effort parallels the research being done in first-language composition studies, where the self is believed to serve as a major influence on writing and on a writer's identity. The concept of the self and the self as Subject has been widely discussed elsewhere. For our purposes in this paper, let us consider that what we refer to as *self* or *subject* in writing or speaking is actually a projection of the self, hence an identity which is subconsciously chosen as a lens through which the author or speaker affects a persona to achieve several purposes simultaneously. The first purpose is to create an ethos that will assist in the communicative nature of the text or the utterance. Another important purpose, according to Lacan, is to defend the ego. It is this *ego* which acts as the self, and through our writing and speaking we convince ourselves we exist (Fink, 1995, p. 42-3). When we deal with language, according to Lacan, we essentially use the features of the language as a chain of signifiers that, taken together, produce meaning for us. In short, our awareness of the self comes when we use language to construct our world, placing ourselves in opposition to an inscrutable Other. Kramsch (2000) considers how language serves as mediation between the self and the other through signs of various sorts. As we grow up, learning our first language, we construct a self based on that system of signs and signifiers; therefore, we *are* what may be called an L1-self. In learning a second or additional language, we begin to construct an L2-self, in part by using knowledge from our L1 database, created through use of our first language. In Second Language research, the focus has begun in recent years to include more consideration of the construction or reconstruction of the self as a primary function of language learning.

In the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), this research has typically taken one of two approaches. First, researchers have looked at the cognitive aspects of language learning (Watson-Gegeo, 2004), seeking to understand how each person constructs self and identity as a language learner. In studying constructions of self in a second language (L2) situation, this approach considers the cultural and social aspects of language learning. Atkinson (2002) invites us to understand the

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ramifications of this wider view of language experience as "a means by which second language learners can be seen as real people, doing something they naturally do—not as mere research subjects, or mere students, or mere sites for language acquisition" (p. 539). Rather than studying second language acquisition in terms of language features and mental processes of input/output, Savignon and Sysoyev (2002), in studying Russian students' experiences with learning English, suggest the need for second language instruction to incorporate more sociocultural information to make learners more aware of the L2 in authentic native language (L1) contexts. Whether the research concerns L2 acquisition or L2 writing, the social and cultural contexts of every aspect of the experience are important to understanding how teachers can better apply what we already know about language acquisition.

The second approach focuses on the use of narrative inquiry and, though controversial, has opened a new wing of research into language acquisition. Like the above studies, it relies on the idea that by understanding a language learner's experiences with language learning, researchers might shed light on the process of language acquisition. Often the only way to access some of this personal, embedded information is to directly address it through the language learner's own account. By having L2 learners recall the challenges and the success or failure of their efforts, a new source of data may be applied to the field. Questions of validity and reliability have been raised, of course, because the human mind is not so static, predictable, and less measurable hence less accurate when it comes to a person recalling past events, much less thoughts and feelings about the event. Nevertheless, there are ways in which narrative data is useful and worth incorporating in language acquisition research.

In both L1 and L2 disciplines, the construction of self is studied, in part, by examining narrative accounts of people recalling their experiences using language. When it comes to construction of self in either an L1 or L2 context, the waters are further muddied by definitions of self, by how we understand 'self,' and by how researchers seek to obtain data about the self and an individual's construction of self. We can see how people have constructed the self through their writing and through oral histories, yet the essence of how the self is constructed remains elusive. The only way to get at that data is through self-recall through narrative that relies on memories of disparate events in a person's life. However, narrative data has been considered problematic due to the presumption of its invalidity and unreliability. While there are legitimate contexts where narrative is suitable and valid as research data, there remain concerns. There are ways in which narrative data is useful and worth incorporating in

language acquisition research. For example, by comparing different experiences with the same language task we can come to some insight about the process and perhaps adapt practice to meet the needs of different learners.

Therefore, it is my aim in this paper to explore the use of narrative as a research methodology, especially in the field of Second Language Acquisition. I will address the concerns researchers have about narrative's validity and reliability. Since the field of Composition has been accepting narrative research for some time now, much of what I will discuss comes from a first-language (L1) context. However, I believe that by comparing L1 narrative methodology, and the concerns which arise in considering it, I will be able to bring a new perspective on the use of narrative in a second-language (L2) context.

Contexts for Construction of the Self in Narrative Research

My[1] reading of "Second language learning as participation and the (re)construction of selves," a chapter in Aneta Pavlenko and James P. Lantolf's book *Sociocultural Theory and Second Language Learning* (2000), serves as a touchstone for the present inquiry and also provides a stable base from which to consider narrative as a vehicle for constructing the self. Pavlenko and Lantolf introduce and discuss the use of narrative, chiefly through the medium of first-person reporting of life stories, and attempt to rationalize its use in Second Language Acquisition research. Coming from L1 composition, this initially seemed odd to me, mostly because the use of narrative as a data source is well-grounded. In fact, those in composition have gone so far as to introduce the *autoethnography* for use in certain contexts. Yet it is the scientific model taken from linguistics that SLA research has used for so long that limits research using other methods: validity and reliability, measurability, repetitiousness, and predictability do not fit with narrative. Also, my training in creative writing gives me skills in deception, especially with narrative, enabling me to "see" these issues "from the other side"; as I construct fake selves for entertainment purposes, I come to understand how real people construct their real selves through the real experiences of their lives. This makes me naturally suspicious of any story, of its

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[1]It may be significant to note here that, by writing in first-person, I also am constructing a self, one which simultaneously shows me as a writer-researcher and which also allows me to create a narrative about my research into narrative research. The Second Language Acquisition metaphor of *participation* is apt here, inasmuch as through this narrative I am able to participate in the community of SLA researchers, even though I am, by my own admission, an outsider from L1 Composition Studies who brings to the discussion table some considerations of my own field and my own experience with narrative.

believability, even when the text is a memoir told by a real person and not a fictional character created in such a way so as to seem real.

The idea of using narrative, despite the comparison of living a life with telling a story (Bruner, 1990), continues to leave us with questions of what constitutes truth. There is *scientific truth* based on observable phenomena, and there is *narrative truth* based on our human sense that something is plausible, possible, probable—in short, *believable*; it is true to us because it *seems* true. What can we say about the "truth" of someone's life? Who knows better than the person living it? When studying a situation such as someone moving from one community and a first language to a new community and a second language, as Pavlenko and Lantolf do, there is data which cannot be brought forth in the artificial setting of the scientific model. Data about the self, or about linguistic experiences founded in daily life and in participation in a community of practice, cannot be easily studied using the traditional methods of SLA.

Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) introduce the idea of language learning and self construction and begin to discuss the validity of narrative inquiry itself. To access information about language learners' self they rely on the "autobiographical work of several American and French authors of Eastern European origin" (p. 161) which provide insights into how L2 learners struggle to find a balance between their old worlds and their new worlds, between their L1 selves and their new L2 selves. The approach Pavlenko and Lantolf take focuses on "the role of cultural resources and history in the organization and mediation of mind" (p. 174). They conclude that L2 learning "is not just about taking part in new cultural settings; it is about a profound struggle to reconstruct a self" (p. 174). This idea mirrors my reading in psychology where life stages are compared to chapters in a book we write about ourselves (e.g., Bruner, 1986; McAdams, 1993). Since this is done through language, it is necessarily a narrative, a stringing together of separate episodes which form a signifying chain in the Lacan model. The definition of *narrative* is usually a sequence of events; hence, a chain of signifiers. A story is what happens, and what happens *next*, often liberally sprinkled with thoughts and reflection about what happens and what will happen next, thus creating new chains and new signifiers.

When visiting the world of metaphors, I have always described this chain as an "arc of life" with points and tangents along the arc which each stand as individual things and not a string of episodes linked like a chain, each like the other. Pavlenko and Lantolf address this concept by citing Harré and

Gillett (1994) in regard to a self being composed of "four coordinated manifolds": "a location in space or a point of view; a location in time, or a 'trajectory or path through time'; a location of responsibility, or agency; and social location in a 'manifold of persons, ordered by status, age, reputation, and the like'" (p. 163). To these, I would like to add *psychological situatedness*, which considers the psychological background or foundation of a narrator, itself based on how we incorporate experiences into our self and identity (see Swartz, 2008). Likewise, the transition of a person from one community of practice to a new one causes a shift of perspective for viewing one's self and the need to construct a new self. This process can be seen unfolding through narrative, through the telling of the events that carry the transition and through the person's journey back through the experience, revisiting memory and possibly making new connections.

In comparing narrative sources of data with categorical sources, Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) cite Polkinghorne (1988), who suggests researchers have "an awareness that 'time is the major dimension of human existence' and recognizes the indispensable role of situatedness in human life activity, including what is mental, while the latter type of knowing is assumed to be impervious to the effects of time and space, thus giving rise to the sweeping foundational claims typical of traditional scientific theorizing" (p. 158-9). This situatedness is also what makes narrative inquiry so interesting: balancing the human variables and still making sense of what is signified—not to mention that narrative resolves the need to humanize raw data consisting of statistical numerations.

From a psychological perspective, narrative research allows us to see how a single event, as one signifier, impacts all the other events; we can step back and see how one point fits in the "arc," and thereby understand a life in perspective. Linde (1993) suggests that stories are "coherence systems" that serve to place a new event into a certain context that makes it meaningful for the one experiencing it. As such, according to Harré and Gillett (1994), "failure to integrate new events into these systems of coherence or to alter the plot of a life story appropriately, frequently results in confusion, strangeness, and conflict and can, on occasion, lead to deep cognitive and emotional instabilities that end tragically" (In Pavlenko and Lantolf, 2000, p. 160). In an L1 composition classroom, for example, a writing prompt such as *What experiences have made you who you are today?* serves to focus students' attention on the subconscious (i.e., memory) for the purpose of examining a chain of signifiers that have meaning for the individual. In narrative, we also have an examination of signifiers but one which may not be apparent to

the individual prior to being compelled to write or speak about them. Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) argue, the learning of a second language in a second place creates a second self, a new construction of identity and the start of a new chain of signifiers.

For Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000), the narratives of several people from Eastern Europe provide insight into second language learning and the construction of self in L2. Each of these cases show us how the imperfection of transition results in the individual's loss of L1 identity while not fully integrating into a new L2 identity. This leaves them in a third situatedness, straddling two identities, neither of which serves them well enough. The need to make sense of their world, to match their experiences with their coherence system, to gain or regain perspective on the world—these are all the functions of language and the primary reason for using language. In the cases studied by Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000), these adult L2 learners, involuntary bilinguals, are forced to reconstruct themselves, a process which has taken them half a lifetime and so is unusually difficult at their age. It is a shattering of their original chain of signifiers, and thus results in a loss of meaning and a loss of situatedness. These narratives can show *how* this happens as well as offer explanations of the results.

Narratives of Reflection as Autoethnography

Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) share the story of Eva Hoffman, a Polish-Jewish émigré who recounts her experiences with the transition from one life to another in her book *Lost in Translation* (1989). As this book is autobiographical, readers and researchers have a solid, personal context for understanding her struggles. Similarly, in many autobiographic accounts we are expected to accept what the author tells us. And yet some memoirs are proven to be fiction, such as in the case of James Frey, who wrote about his time in a drug rehabilitation facility in *A Million Little Pieces* (2003) only to be publicly exposed on *Oprah* for filling his memoir with fabrication and exaggeration. Or when Sudanese author Kola Boof writes in *Diary of a Lost Girl* (2007) about her reluctant affair with terrorist Osama bin Laden in an unflattering way, perhaps dangerously exposing her anti-Arab, anti-Islam agenda—or possibly just soliciting some empathy or notoriety in her victimhood, as some of her critics claim. In the case of Hoffman, however, Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) explore her descriptions of language experiences, the transition from an L1 to an L2 and the different communities that accompany the change. Through this study they reveal insights into second language learning.

Their study raises issues of validity and reliability in narrative, which usually takes the form of diaries, journals, and transcriptions of oral histories. Similar questions have been raised in L1 composition studies, especially with the growing use of reflective writing as a source of data (e.g., the researcher writing about the journey of the research and the experience of being the researcher). In such cases, drawing upon the researcher's embedded knowledge of the topic or the researcher's personal experiences with the topic are starting to become accepted. The researcher studying life stories of their subjects compiles data that can be compared with data from other case studies. This method is appropriate and useful in certain contexts.

However, when the researcher bears most of the data about the topic under study, how can that data be accessed? The only way to access that kind of personal data is through a direct exploration of one's self, which is necessarily reflective. Thus comes the idea of the researcher researching himself, and researching his process of researching the topic. *What do I know? What have I discovered in this process? How does what I have discovered through reflection fit with other sources?* Though there is certainly room to consider researcher bias here, questions such as these enable narrative to be placed into a context whereby narrative data can be considered valid—at least in L1 composition and other Humanities research. In SLA research, this is usually not the case (e.g., a subject's language input and output must be quantified in order to prove something). In L1 composition studies, however, there is a growing trend to treat 'writers writing about writing' or 'teachers writing about teaching'—essentially narratives about practice—as viable sources of data that can be useful to other practitioners. This has been called "lore" and, for many, stands separate from research. Autobiographical writing, such as what Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) have studied, usually takes the form of confession, of revelation, of history from a certain vantage point or position, a certain *situatedness*. And yet, when the author tells not only about his life but considers aspects or events of that life in a careful and objective manner, in a reflective context where new connections are made, we can consider that autobiography to be an *autoethnography*. The autobiographies of Ewa Hoffman and Kyoko Mori, writing in *Polite Lies* (1997), offer similar accounts of the struggle to find a voice, a self, in a bilingual context. In essence, these autobiographers are observing and studying themselves. It is this similarity of experience between different cases which researchers seek in doing narrative studies of language learning.

As introduced above, Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) report on bilingual authors who write about

their experiences learning a new language and adapting to a new community, and how they constructed new selves in the new language. These bilingual authors write about themselves and about their daily experiences. Not only are these accounts autobiographical but they are naturally reflective: each author thinks about what she has experienced, putting the experience into a context where meaning can be found. These memoirs become a limited kind of ethnography, a study of a group in their natural environment (in these cases, each constitutes a "group" of individuals). These bilingual authors observe themselves and report what they discover about *themselves.* But do we believe them? Is it reliable? What criteria can we apply to a personal narrative to assign it a degree of credibility?

According to Hammersley & Atkinson (1983), ethnography comes chiefly from cultural anthropology and refers to a research method involving the observation and description of a cultural community. As such, the ethnographer "participates, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions; in fact collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues with which he or she is concerned" (p. 2). Recently, ethnography has been useful in exploring such cultural communities as high school students (Hersch, 1998; Wiseman, 2002) and sports organizations (Sands, 2002). Sometimes the data the researcher requires resides primarily or significantly within the mind and collection of experiences of the researcher. When a researcher employs the ethnography, the researcher may seek an understanding of the processes by which the researcher has been able to produce something, whether a body of knowledge or a particular viewpoint.

The emergence of autoethnography from narrative inquiry in composition studies parallels the introduction of narrative inquiry in SLA research. In both instances there is a need for some measure of reliability. In composition studies researchers may look at the process(es) of composition, the thinking and writing and revising. For SLA researchers, the focus may be on the process(es) of learning a language from brief encounters to full acquisition, or may narrow the study to particular features of language learning. In each case researchers must access information which is usually only available within the mind of the subject. To get at it requires researchers to prompt the subject to reveal memories, experiences, reflection and share it with researchers, typically through interviews or narrative writing of one kind or another. Therefore, whether it is the researcher studying himself, as in L1 composition studies, or the SLA researcher studying language learners' experiences with language

learning reported through their narratives, both present questions of validity and reliability.

However, this rich source of data also opens doors to new ways of understanding the subject, especially in SLA where language teachers can effectively observe and describe their own practice as language teachers. Hammersley (1992) points to Stenhouse (1975), who argues that "when teachers become researchers investigating their own practice, this results in educational research that is more relevant and also transforms teaching" (p.135). If the goal of the research is to understand practice—e.g., how language learners actually learn and use language—then the study of the learners and their experiences, as well as the experiences of those teaching the language, seems obvious. The narratives of both language learners and teachers/practitioners can offer data not otherwise available. Hammersley (1992) argues that research must serve practitioners' needs and the practitioner in the environment of the practice is the ideal observer (p. 137), just as the language learner is in an ideal location to observe the learning experience. In SLA, the effort in understanding how learners acquire language is aimed at transforming language instruction. Regarding invalidity of narrative data, especially that coming from the researcher through reflection, Hammersley states that

> while closeness to and involvement with the phenomena being investigated have some relevance for the validity of findings, the epistemological assumption that sometimes underlies this argument—that knowledge comes from contact with reality—is unsound. This is because all knowledge is a construction; we have no direct knowledge of the world. (p. 143).

Practitioners, however, have access to their own intentions and motives in ways that another observer does not, and so they have a deeper understanding of their behavior that an outsider could ever have. The authors in the cases reported in Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) also have their own ways of constructing reality, of constructing two realities, in fact, and it is this kind of personal data which makes narrative study useful. The practitioner and the memoirist will both have long-term experience with the setting and know its history and other relevant information which would take a long time for an outsider to acquire. The practitioner and the memoirist both already have relationships which aid in data collection. The same is true of the language learner who has a lifetime of language experience and a database of challenges, successes, and failure to offer as data—often only revealed through oral or written narratives.

In support of Pavlenko and Lantolf's (2000) promotion of narrative research, we may consider that autoethnography is not something new; it has been used as a research method in several ways outside of SLA. In each case the researcher found useful data from his own experiences. Holt (2001) developed an autoethnographic account depicting his experiences as a Ph.D. student trying to come to terms with teaching at the university level for the first time, focusing on a series of clashes between his personal teaching history and the teaching ideology of the research institution. Holt drew inspiration from another autoethnography, Sparkes (1996), which concerned his experiences as "a white, male, middle class, former elite athlete with a chronic back injury that ultimately curtailed his sporting career" and "linked his personal experiences to social, sporting, medical, and academic discourses via a thorough sociological self-exploration" (Holt, 2001). Holt reports his impressions of that effort:

> Although the content and purposes of Sparkes' story differed from my own, I was attracted by the powerful and emotive way in which his experiences were communicated. I especially liked the connections he made between his personal experiences and the wider (sub) cultural settings in which he was located (i.e., sport, the medics who 'treated' him, his family, and his academic career). I thought autoethnography could be a useful way for examining my teaching experiences in a self-reflexive manner.

These examples suggest how certain information can only be discussed in personal terms, how it can only be retrieved as data when told as story, and how autoethnography allows the researcher to access and report that information.

Tierney (1998) asserts that "autoethnography confronts dominant forms of representation and power in an attempt to reclaim, through self-reflective response, representational spaces that have marginalized those of us at the borders" (p. 66). Sparkes' (1996) and Holt's (2001) autoethnographic research works well precisely because they report on their experiences of being, as Holt writes, a "somewhat marginalized figure portraying the personal tensions I experienced integrating my pedagogical approach with the mandates of the university teaching program" (2001). This mirrors the accounts of bilinguals that Pavlenko and Lantolf studied, where the bilingual writers wrote about their marginalization due to their location between two worlds and struggled to reconstruct their selves. To understand the gap, we compose narratives which enable us to place signs into chains. To bridge the

gap, we build more signifying chains which we sometimes call stories.

Defining Standards of Practice in Narrative Research

Cognitive studies show us that one of the best ways we learn is through the vehicle of narrative (Perl, 1979; Gardner, 1983; Egan, 1986; Bruner, 1990; Jackendoff, 1994; Egan, 1997; Tomasello, 1999; Pinker, 2002). While facts and figures must be rote memorized to be "learned" (recognized), the form of communication we call *story* has combined within it both the vehicle for knowledge transfer and the packaging which makes the transfer desirable to the recipient. Narrative follows the natural thought processes of the mind: setting, character, action, problem and resolution, and so on. We begin with what we know and follow through the exploration, constantly comparing everything new with what we already know—adding to existing chains and starting new chains. Bruner (1990) notes that story "mediates between the canonical world of culture and the more idiosyncratic world of beliefs, desires, and hopes. It renders exceptional comprehension . . . . It reiterates the norms of the society without being didactic" (p. 52). We have to accept that story—*narrative*—is the oldest, the most natural, and in many ways the most effective vehicle for meaning-making and knowledge transference. Academia relies on facts not fiction, yet "[v]alidity is subjective rather than objective: the plausibility of the conclusion is what counts. Validity, in short, is an interpretive concept, not an exercise in research design" (p. 108). Narrative theory provides the vehicle for this construction of identity and connection— except that there are lingering debates about the true value of narrative.

In "Against Narrativity," Strawson (2004) writes what could be a paraphrase of Pavlenko and Lantolf's (2000) chapter:

> I argue against two popular claims. The first is a descriptive, empirical thesis about the nature of ordinary human experience: 'each of us constructs and lives a "narrative" . . . this narrative *is* us, our identities' (Oliver Sacks); 'self is a perpetually rewritten story . . . in the end, we *become* the autobiographical narratives by which we "tell about" our lives' (Jerry Bruner); 'we are all virtuoso novelists. . . . We try to make all of our material cohere into a single good story. And that story is our autobiography. The chief fictional character . . . of that autobiography is one's self' (Dan Dennett). The second is a normative, ethical claim: we ought to live our lives narratively, or as a story; a 'basic condition of making sense of ourselves is that we grasp our lives in a *narrative*' and have

an understanding of our lives 'as an unfolding story' (Charles Taylor). A person 'creates

his identity [only] by forming an autobiographical narrative – a story of his life', and must

be in possession of a full and 'explicit narrative [of his life] to develop fully as a person'

(Marya Schechtman). (p. 428)

This view of narrative allows us to consider the life stories of language learners as valid sources of SLA research data. However, if we are to allow narrative to be a useful research method, how are we to assess its reliability, especially when so many think of narrative as fiction?

Questions of validity and reliability were raised by the reviewers of Holt's (2001) autoethnographic research. There were no criteria for evaluating such research. Richardson (1995; 2000) suggests that autoethnography could be evaluated by questions like *Did the paper have an emotional or intellectual impact?* This may seem to be similar criteria to any creative writing, where the effect on the reader constitutes a kind of truth. Where one reviewer complains that "your paper does not show clear relationships and patterns, does not have completeness in the narrative, nor does it hold the phenomenon up to serious inspection," Holt responds that since the project is about a person's life experiences we must understand that life is not orderly, does not always provide easy patterns, and, until one dies, remains incomplete.

Ellis (1995) argues that a story [i.e., narrative] could be considered valid if it evokes in the reader a feeling that the experience is authentic, believable, and possible. That has always been the test of good fiction, too. To differentiate good fiction from a research project involving self-reporting, Richardson (2000) sets out five factors for reviewing personal narrative, including analysis of both evaluative and constructive validity techniques:

1) Substantive contribution. Does the piece contribute to our understanding of social life?

2) Aesthetic merit. Does this piece succeed aesthetically? Is the text artistically shaped, satisfyingly complex, and not boring?

3) Reflexivity. How did the author come to write this text? How has the author's subjectivity been both a producer and a product of this text?

4) Impactfullness. Does this affect me emotionally and/or intellectually? Does it generate new

questions or move me to action?

5) Expresses a reality. Does this text embody a fleshed out sense of lived experience?

(pp. 15-16)

Autoethnographic manuscripts might also include as criteria: dramatic recall, unusual or special phrasing, and evocative metaphors and imagery which invite the reader to "relive" certain events with the author. These guidelines may provide a framework for directing both investigators and reviewers.

This set of criteria should apply even to SLA research that relies on narrative reporting. In Mori's (1997) account of losing pragmatic competence in her native Japanese, she writes: "[T]hirty seconds into the conversation, I have already failed an important task: while I was bowing and saying hello, I was supposed to have been calculating the other person's age, rank, and position in order to determine how polite I should be for the rest of the conversation" (p. 11). Following Ellis (1995) and Richardson (2000), Mori's *autoethnography*—she includes analysis of her own actions, hence observation and description—may be accepted as reliable. This brief explanation of a Japanese custom seems authentic because of the details she writes. That she also provides a context for our understanding of the importance of the custom further enhances our acceptance. We do not have a sense that she is fooling us, that she is exaggerating or merely attempting to elicit sympathy. Her writing style is evocative yet restrained, objective yet personalized, in short, believable.

Hoffman's (1989) autobiography includes this passage:

I wait for that spontaneous flow of inner language which used to be my nighttime talk with myself. . . . Nothing comes. Polish, in a short time, has atrophied, shriveled from sheer uselessness. Its words don't apply to my new experiences, they're not coeval with any of the objects, or faces, or the very air I breathe in the daytime. In English, the words have not penetrated to those layers of my psyche from which a private connection could proceed. (p. 107)

While Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) remark on her suggestion of inner language á là Vygotsky and Bakhtin, we can see in her writing the analysis and the objective yet personal reporting. We also know that her reason for reporting is because it is a serious matter to her and, because she ranks it significant

enough to mention, we accept the information as reliable. We might wonder why she would include something about inner language—except as a suitable illustration of the futility of her language learning and language adaptation experiences. However, it is because it is *key* to her construction of self that we *believe* her. By comparing personal experiences, as Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) have done, it is possible to begin to construct a broad theory about such issues as second language adaptation, L2 learning and the construction of self, border-crossing, and cross-cultural and sociocultural modification in an SLA context.

Self-knowledge, even when objectively reported, nevertheless remains problematic in SLA research. Because such data relies on the intangible qualities of the mind it will always be suspect. How can a memory be accurate? How can one's interpretation of an event be valid? How can biases be avoided in narrative accounts of personal experience? How do we know the truth of the story? These are all places to dismantle the self-reflective autoethnography, the narrative and oral history data sources.

Problems with Memory, Recall, and Narrative Reliability

Empirical studies described in volumes edited by Neisser and Winograd (1988) and Winograd and Neisser (1992) outline the many potential sources of inaccuracy in memory recall. The age of the person when an event occurs, the age of the person when recalling, the reasons for recalling, the novelty of the event when put to memory, the effects of the circumstances at the time of creating the memory, and the influence of researchers in soliciting memory recall all have significant impact on the accuracy of the memory recall ability as well as the substance of what is recalled. Through countless studies, memory recall has been found to be habitually biased and slanted to serve the self. Autobiographical memory tends to be more accurate, not surprisingly, when we recall events that involve us versus events we merely observe, such as something on television. It is anecdotal now that eyewitnesses to a crime can be easily led to give the "correct" account of what they saw. Similarly, we want to give to our researchers what they ask for. Neisser (1982) collects and comments on dozens of case studies of remembering, testifying, forgetting, and performing acts of memory recall in order to show the wide range of memory ability, and thus the equally wide range of fallibility. Meares (2000) reports that emotions have significant influence on both memory retention and event recall. What we can recall, and more importantly recall accurately, varies substantially between different people and

different circumstances, both in how the original event is set into long-term memory and the particular conditions later when the recall is instigated.

Narrative obviously requires a person to recall in vivid detail events, thoughts and feelings from long ago—or even from the immediate past. We all know the unreliability of our memory, from forgetting where we parked or not matching the name and face of someone we met only a few days before. The problem with narrative inquiry comes when we must rely on memory as a source of data. Schacter (2001) notes the faultiness of memory and categorizes these imperfections, while Thompson et al. (1996) explore the recall accuracy of people keeping diaries. In both, the unreliability of memory is often profound. Schacter (2001) shares the famous case of Binjimin Wilkomirski, whose 1996 Holocaust memoir won great praise "for portraying life in a concentration camp from the perspective of a child," yet Wilkomirski

> had spent much of his adult life unaware of these dramatic childhood memories, coming to terms with them only in therapy. Because his story and memories inspired countless others, Wilkomirski became a sought after international figure and a hero to Holocaust survivors.
>
> The story began to unravel, however, in late August 1998, with Daniel Ganzfried, a Swiss journalist and himself the son of a Holocaust survivor, published a stunning article in a Zurich newspaper. Ganzfried revealed that Wilkomirski is actually Bruno Doessekker, born in 1941 to a young woman named Yvone Berthe Grosjean, who later gave him up for adoption to an orphanage. Young Bruno spent all of the war years with his foster parents, the Dossekkers, in the safe confines of his native Switzerland. Whatever the basis for his dramatic "memories" of Nazi horrors, they did not come from childhood experiences in a concentration camp. Is Doessekker/Wilkomirski simply a liar? Probably not: he still strongly believes that his recollections are real. (p. 2-3)

We are all capable of distorting our pasts, some deliberately, some subconsciously.

One study by psychiatrist Daniel Offer at Northwestern University demonstrated just how far off our memories can be from actual events. In the study, men in their late forties were asked a series of questions about their experiences in their first year of high school, questions such as *Did your parents encourage you to be active in sports?* and *Did you receive physical punishment as discipline?* The

answers the men gave to questions were strikingly different than the answers they gave to the same questions 34 years earlier when they were high school students. Fewer than 40% of the men recalled any parental encouragement to be active in sports while 60% of the men, when adolescents, reported encouragement. In their freshman year, nearly 90% of the men reported receiving physical punishment, but years later only one third recalled such punishment. (Schater, 2001, p. 3)

Memory is often faulty yet in predictable ways. Schacter (2001) divides these malfunctions into "sins" of omission, where "we fail to bring to mind a desired fact, event, or idea," what he calls transience, absent-mindedness, and blocking, and sins of commission: misattribution, suggestibility, bias, and persistence (p. 4-5). These flaws can provide significant doubt about the reliability of narrative data. *Transience* refers to a weakening of memory ability over time; the longer away from the event the fewer details can be recalled. This is noticeable in some people only minutes later, such as with those suffering from Alzheimer's disease, while most show the loss over days, weeks, months, and years. *Absent-mindedness*, aside from anecdotal experiences, involves a breakdown at the interface between attention and memory, usually due to our being preoccupied with one thing while we are attempting to place another thing into our memory. In such a case, the desired information is not lost over time but in fact is never registered, or not sought after once it is placed in memory. *Blocking* is where we try desperately to retrieve information, even when we are focusing specifically on recalling the information. We may have the information suddenly arrive hours or days later but for some reason is not immediately available.

The "sin" of *misattribution* is caused by assigning a memory to the wrong source, such as mistaking fantasy for reality—what we want to be true somehow becomes true in our minds. We may also misattribute when we believe some information was read in a newspaper when, in truth, it was told to us by a friend. Similarly, *suggestibility* refers to ideas or information which become implanted due to leading questions or remarks. We tend to want to recall information we are asked to recall; we want to please our interrogators. *Bias*, on the other hand, is the result of socialization influencing us and is subject to our editing and rewriting, both consciously and subconsciously, to fit with a pattern of experience we wish to see as reality. Thus, what we recall may be skewed to represent how we wish the event to have happened, or how we might want to see ourselves or have others see us in relation to the event. *Persistence* refers to unwanted memories which seem to be recalled without our conscious

choice to recall them. Disturbing events, even though we wish to forget them, stick around in our short-term memory. More serious instances may be disabling or life-threatening.

Thompson et al. (1996) describe various psychological issues, such as Freud's concept of *repression*, that can interfere with accurate recall or completely prevent a memory from being recalled. When a person has had a traumatic experience, for example, the event may be shoved so deeply into the mind that the person is unable to realize he experienced the event. We must also realize that "memory for the content of events changes over time from being largely reproductive (i.e., based on retrieval of a quite detailed memory trace) to being largely reconstructive (i.e., based on knowledge of the structure of the type of event and of the characteristics of the individuals, objects, and places involved)" (p. 5).

In narrative research, Nelson (1993) theorizes three sources of information that are used in reconstructing events: generic event memory, autobiographical memory, and episodic memory. *Generic memory* is where we measure events on a scale of regularly recurring time cues, such as days of the week or months. The cyclical nature of these cues aids in placing the memory in perspective. *Autobiographical memory* includes events of significance to the person and thus is presumed to be more stable and accurate even though it is linear rather than cyclical. Of particular importance are transition events that mark the boundary between two life periods or between two geographical locations. *Episodic memory* concerns individual events which are not necessarily significant to the self but stands as important for its details and relations between events. Information from episodic memory can fill gaps in autobiographical memory. Thus, memory and learning have the general adaptive functions of guiding presentation and predicting future outcomes. The most useful memory for that purpose is generic memory, which describes routines for recurrent situations, but which can only be formed through repetition.

On the other hand, autobiographical memory, which is what is brought to bear in first-person narratives, is different in that

> the initial functional significance of autobiographical memory is that of sharing memory with other people, a function that language makes possible. Memories become valued in their own right—not because they predict the future and guide present action, but because they are shareable with others and thus serve a social solidarity function. (p. 12)

Nelson (1993) suggests that this is a "universal human function, although one with variable, culturally specific rules" which is "analogous to human language itself, uniquely and universally human but culturally—and individually—variable" (p.12). Given this relationship, it is the social function of memory that underlies all of our storytelling, history-making narrative activities.

How we try to recall also has great influence on accuracy. Linton (1975) studied her own memory strategies through diary practice. She categorized strategies four ways: 1) memories of events in which the exact date was known, 2) those for which the general period was known, 3) those for which time could be determined between two events, a target and a reference, with known dates, and 4) those which required guessing. Friedman (1987) also studied memory strategies, placing them into five categories: recall of exact time, landmark relations, cyclical schema relation, duration since event, and guessing. Friedman found that recall of exact time cues occurs less than 10% of occasions. Linking a memory to a landmark event (e.g., the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the U.S.) seems to improve recall 20 to 30% over memories not linked to landmark events. Despite memory strategies, our recall remains imperfect and susceptible to sometimes tremendous inaccuracy which can be disruptive in SLA research. Furthermore, those who write in their second language about their experiences adapting to a new community and a new language seldom can address these flaws in memory. They must also negotiate meaning in a new language, which likely limits their range of expression or restrains their ideas in not being able to express an idea with the words they know. Rather, we expect authors to tell us about their lives and experiences in meaningful ways; there is a purpose in the telling and so we want to accept their narratives as truthful, and therefore valid data for SLA research.

Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) conclude their chapter with a final appeal for "the relevance of personal narratives of the type examined in the present study for SLA research," even though

> such data might very well be interesting and relevant to our enterprise, were he/she to include them in a scholarly paper, he/she would not be taken seriously by our colleagues. We believe that our analysis further widens the space within second language research for first-person tellings as legitimate data. (p. 174).

In essence, the participation metaphor through which the authors look at these first-person accounts makes narrative data useful and meaningful: "Participation for those whose narratives we have explored is not just about taking part in new cultural settings; it is about a profound struggle to

reconstruct a self" (p. 174). In other words, when language learners such as those studied by Pavlenko and Lantolf, encounter a new community of practice and write about their experiences of border-crossing, their act of "crossing a cultural border is about 'renarratizing' a life" (p. 174). While it may not offer universal answers, narrative research can provide a case study of one individual in a particular circumstance that can then be generalized and compared with other case studies in order to begin forming a theory. The best benefit in narrative research, however, may be how examining lives through first-person accounts changes the researcher.

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Notes on the Contributors

Majid Al-Khalaqi is completing his PhD dissertation in Literature and Criticism at Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

William Archibald is an assistant professor of English at Millersville University of Pennsylvania, where he teaches composition and rhetoric. He teaches both First-Year Composition and Advanced Composition as well as rhetoric classes such as Visual Rhetoric.

Gretchen M. Cohenour completed her PhD at the University of Rhode Island and teaches British studies at Wartburg College.

Naomi Craven graduated from the University of Durham in 2005 and continued her studies at the University of Texas San Antonio, earning her Masters degree in 2008. During this time, she published one book length study on women and art in the nineteenth century, and has presented at several national conferences.

Charles Cullum, professor of English at Kutztown University of Pennsylvania, earned his PhD at Temple University and publishes on postmodernism.

John E. Dean received his Ph.D. in Literature and Criticism from Indiana University of Pennsylvania in May 2008. His dissertation explores mid-nineteenth-to-mid-twentieth-century New Mexico as a contact zone to which Euro-Americans traveled in order to reinvent themselves.

James R. Fleming is a Kirkland PhD Fellow in English at the University of Florida. His research currently focuses on the role of psychological trauma in British Romantic poetry. His critical writing has appeared in *ImageText* and *Romantic Textualities*.

Samaa Gamei, on the faculty of the American University in Cairo, is completing his PhD at the University of Rhode Island.

Timothy Gerhard is an Assistant Professor of French and Spanish at SUNY Cortland. His research focuses on Francophone Studies, with a special interest in immigration issues. He publishes in a variety of journals—in French, Spanish, and English—on issues related to immigration and transnationalism, as well as the use of literature in language classrooms.

Patrick S. Herald has won multiple Michigan Press Association awards for his writing in the *Valley Vanguard*. He has presented papers on Ian McEwan and James Joyce and is currently working on a reference work forthcoming from Facts on File, Inc. He serves as a graduate tutor at the Saginaw Valley State University Writing Center.

Jeffrey Hotz is Assistant Professor of English at East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania. His book *Divergent Visions, Contested Spaces: The Early U.S. through the Lens of Travel* (Routledge, 2006) compares depictions of travel in non-fiction and fiction from the 1780s to the 1850s.

David W. Johnson is a former journalist, working on his doctorate in English literature and criticism at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. He is a graduate of Harvard College and Boston College University's College of Communication.

Janet Moser is Associate Professor and Director of Freshman Composition in the English Department at Brooklyn College, CUNY, where she teaches courses in comparative literature and composition.

Todd W. Nothstein holds a Ph.D. in English from the State University of New York at Buffalo, and his scholarly work has appeared in *Lifewriting Annual* and *The CEA Critic*. He is adjunct lecturer in the English Department and in the Cinema Studies Program at the University of Pennsylvania.

Susan Lauffer O'Hara is an Assistant Professor at Georgian Court University where she teaches composition as well as literature courses. She is the author of several published articles on Mary Wroth, and her book manuscript on Wroth's sonnet sequence is currently under publication consideration.

Stephen M. Swartz has a PhD in Composition and TESOL from Indiana University of Pennsylvania and currently teaches at St. Bonaventure University in New York.

Sheila Sandapen is completing her PhD at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, and she currently is an adjunct instructor at Immaculata University.

Noel Sloboda teaches at Penn State York and serves as dramaturg for the Harrisburg Shakespeare Festival. His first poetry collection, *Shell Games*, was published in 2008 by Buffalo-based independent press sunnyoutside.

Jennifer M. Woolston is pursuing her English Literature and Criticism Ph.D. at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. She is a Teaching Associate at IUP and formerly taught at Robert Morris University in Pittsburgh.

Richard Zumkhawala-Cook teaches literature and composition at Shippensburg University. He is the author of *Scotland As We Know It: Representations of National Identity in Literature, Film and Popular Culture.*

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