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Photo shows Elisabeth "Bessie" Holmes Moore (1876-1959), a young tennis champion who won her first U.S. title in 1896. (Source: Flickr Commons project and New York Times, 2008)

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Amy Branam Armiento, Irving's Tory: Using Crèvecoeur, Franklin, and Paine to Read "Rip Van Winkle"

Abstract: This paper recounts a series of classroom activities that resulted in a dynamic, thoughtful discussion about Benjamin Franklin's "The Way to Wealth" (1758), Thomas Paine's *The American Crisis, No. 1* (1776), and J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur's "Letter III. What Is an American" (1782) impact on interpreting elements of Washington Irving's "Rip Van Winkle" (1819), especially his eponymous character.

"How do you engage students in reading early American literature – how do you make it interesting?," asked one of my prospective colleagues during an interview for an early Americanist position many years ago. I was taken aback. In all of my years of study, it had not occurred to me that antebellum U.S. literature would be perceived as uninteresting. Sixteen years later, the question and its implications continue to loom at the edges of my pedagogical consciousness.

Admittedly, some students struggle to read early American texts. Variant spellings, antiquated vocabulary, meandering sentence structure, and obscure allusions challenge us all. Therefore, I have implemented reading strategies to help students overcome these obstacles. Once the students comprehend the texts, I am able to interest them in a historical and political world seemingly alien to them. These early texts contain within them the perspectives of those who witnessed the formation of a new nation, its ideals, and its deficiencies; therefore, they possess a mystique unparalleled by later, more accessible, literary movements. To illustrate my approach, I will recount how I sequenced readings to facilitate a dynamic intertextual discussion of Washington Irving's "Rip Van Winkle" (1819). The convergence of Benjamin Franklin's "The Way to Wealth" (1758), Thomas Paine's *The American Crisis, No. 1* (1776), and J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur's "Letter III. What Is an American" (1782) with Irving's tale culminated in a wonderfully gratifying class discussion in my 200-level U.S. literature survey course.

Rather than use a textbook, my students obtain these texts through digital humanities websites. In addition to alleviating textbook costs, these digital texts are ideal in terms of access and portability. If the students have an Internet phone, the reading assignments are always available to them. I also use these resources to teach information literacy, explaining how to determine if a purported literary site is reliable and credible (I have a separate assignment in which students review the sites used for texts in this class). Many students prefer to listen to a text while reading it, which digital options often provide. Moreover, some

of the websites include publication information and facsimiles of the original documents that lead to additional discussions of a work's materiality, e.g. illustrations and maps. For all of these reasons, I and my students find the digital texts superior to texts reproduced in literary anthologies/textbooks. For Franklin's "The Way to Wealth," we use an 1810 illustrated edition on Project Gutenberg. The Library of Congress website has posted a transcript of Paine's *The American Crisis, No. 1*, alongside a photograph of an original pamphlet. Crèvecoeur's "Letter III. What Is an American" may be found on the Yale Law School's The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy site. Both The Internet Archive and Project Gutenberg have copies of multiple editions of *The Sketch-Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.*, which includes "Rip Van Winkle."

During the two weeks prior to the Irving assignment, the class interrogates how early American writers try to pinpoint just what an American is. The texts by Crèvecoeur, Paine, and Franklin describe (and, as we discuss, perhaps prescribe) attributes of Americans based on geographical locations and their perceived concomitant personality traits. For example, Crèvecoeur proclaims, "Men are like plants; the goodness and flavour of the fruit proceeds from the peculiar soil and exposition in which they grow." Then he identifies three types of Americans sprouting from a "peculiar soil": "those who live near the sea," "those who inhabit the middle settlements," and "those who live in the woods." He explicitly draws correlations between place and the inhabitants' morality, intellect, and even evolutionary stage.

In preparation for our discussion and to aid with reading comprehension, I request that my students create lists as they read the text:

- Make a list of Crèvecoeur's traits of an American – be sure to pay particular attention to how he describes Americans located in specific places and belonging to specific religious dominations.
- Identify which groups are excluded from being designated American.

This approach seems to work well, for any student can locate at least a few of the traits. Therefore, I find that the students are well-prepared for the group activity I have planned for the day. I assign small groups to prepare a short presentation based on their lists. Each group is assigned one of the following: coastal residents, the farmers, the backwoodsmen, the relationship between an American and religion, and general descriptors of Americans found at the beginning and end of the letter. Depending on the size of the class, I will combine

coastal residents and farmers into one group's task since the section on those who live near the sea is relatively brief.

The students present a summary of Crèvecoeur's observations for their assigned categories. Time permitting, we derive some enjoyment from considering how accurate he is even today. For instance, our university is nestled in the Appalachian Mountains of Western Maryland; therefore, we have students who can relate to some of Crèvecoeur's descriptions of the backwoodsmen. Also, many of our students grew up "downstate" near Baltimore, Annapolis, and Washington DC. They like assessing how well Crèvecoeur's judgments have held up over time for these coastal areas. We have fewer farmers represented in class; however, our rural area is near many Pennsylvania farms, and of course, some of these former backwoodsmen have "evolved" (I might tease à la Crèvecoeur) into middle settlement folks.

Although I assign Crèvecoeur, Paine, and Franklin in the same week, students do not read them in chronological order. Rather, I arrange the sequence so that my students can become familiar with how I would like for them to mine the texts for specific information as the reading challenges of each text increase. In my experience, it works best to use this order: Crèvecoeur followed by Franklin then Paine.

Franklin's "The Way to Wealth" provides a comedic interlude while transmitting messages about what it means to be an American. The irony is that Franklin's Americans are also English, which provides a glimpse into the transition from one's identity as an English subject to a more independent colonist. Moreover, this is the first work on my syllabus that is not an historical or a religious document or a poem, which is a welcome change for many of the English majors and minors.

I ask the students to complete the following tasks while they read this text:

- Note the names of the two narrators in the text.
- Find two or three traits Franklin uses to characterize Americans.
- Select your favorite aphorism to share with your classmates.

When the class meets, we discuss frame narratives, humor (e.g., incongruity), and Poor Richard's insistence on community members upholding the values of industry, frugality, and charity. Students trade their favorite aphorisms, and we discuss how these pithy sayings can be used to remind colonists to strive to live up to the expectations championed by the text. The students are entertained by the human folly Poor Richard himself demonstrates in

needing to be reminded of his own tenets. Plus, the sustained popularity of the aphorisms in our culture underscores Franklin's influence on how U.S. citizens perceive themselves. Knowing that we are about to cover Paine, I emphasize that none of Franklin's readers envision themselves rebelling against England. However, we see that they think of themselves as capable of governing their own behaviors and choices, which may portend an independence not experienced by their counterparts in Great Britain. Depending on how much time we have, I may introduce them to the theoretical underpinnings of the Scottish Enlightenment, especially those attributed to the Third Earl of Shaftesbury and his formulation of the moral sense. This discussion can work well with an introduction to Jeffersonian agrarianism by emphasizing the new radical thought that man (and eventually woman) did not need to be governed (or subjected), for he (and eventually she) possessed an innate sense to discern right from wrong and to think for oneself. If I do not have the opportunity to bring up these ideas during this class session, I cover them during the Paine discussion along with the divine right of kings and the *Rights of Man*.

I also call attention to the way in which Franklin's text parodies the sermon form (which my students were exposed to with John Winthrop's "A Modell of Christian Charity" and Jonathan Edwards's "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"). I point out that Franklin's derisive treatment of the sermon form and Father Abraham's unconverted congregants validate the concerns these ministers expressed regarding their congregations' fall into declension.

When it is time for the Paine assignment, I am cognizant that many students need more guidance to navigate this text. What I think is most challenging about Paine's text when compared to the other two is the number of historical allusions. I provide a brief primer on the events leading up to the Revolutionary War before we read Paine, but the references to Howe's maneuvers, to the Tories, and to King George III's tyrannies no longer outrage U.S. readers in the way they would have for militiamen in 1776. Therefore, I direct students to imagine they are revolutionaries, fighting a war in which the odds appear to be against them. Here are the questions I ask them to be ready to answer:

- Who are the enemies of those in favor of an independent nation?
- What are the traits of a revolutionary?
- What are the different ways in which Paine refers to King George III?
- What does Paine mean by a "sunshine patriot"?

I warn them that reading the text can be somewhat difficult if they are uninterested in military strategies, but I want them to think about these sections as if they are living at the time of the revolution. I liken the text to news commentary in that we are given not only the facts but also an interpretation of those facts. I stress that these freedom fighters do not have the ability to view instantaneous reporting on unfolding events, which we often take for granted in our own time, and I suggest that Paine's pamphlet can be viewed as a primitive form of "breaking news."

These directed questions work well. When we convene for discussion, we begin with an irreverent exercise—reviewing all of Paine's insults against the king. The students respond to this activity with delight, especially those in their late teens and early twenties who have been raised in this country. Their innate distrust of monarchs is fomented by years of rhetoric idolizing individuals who have rebelled against political despots, and their age group's proclivity for a Manichaeian worldview causes them to bristle at the injustices committed by the king. Even today, students exhibit a sort of Bakhtinian carnivalesque joy while repeating Paine's insults, such as "a stupid, stubborn, worthless, brutish man" and "a common murderer, a highwayman, or a house-breaker."

In the wake of this merrymaking, I highlight the danger Paine faces for engaging in this type of speech. I point out that the insults apart from the call for rebellion against the monarch is defined as seditious libel at this time, a fact that we often forget about today due to our First Amendment rights. Next, we delve into the substance of our inquiry about what it means to be an American by recognizing the Tories as Paine's (and the revolutionaries') adversaries. Once we identify this enemy, i.e., the Tories, the students juxtapose their lists of Paine's attributes for Tories against the one they created with the traits of a revolutionary, which leads to a greater understanding of how Paine creates his ideal representation of an American. I point out how his rhetorical structure clearly exposes his sympathies and antipathies.

In addition, I hone in on Paine's appellation "sunshine patriot" to discuss another rhetorical move—his use of sarcasm. Many—but not all—of the students discern the sarcasm during their first reading. Therefore, I isolate this part of the text and discuss it in relation to Paine's later scathing anecdote of a Tory father who would postpone an inevitable war, resulting in an irrevocable, terrible fate for his children. Tracking the ways in which Paine uses various techniques to convey the image of an ideal American in opposition to the selfish and cowardly Tories interspersed among them is important to tease out during class discussion.

Near the end of discussion, we reflect upon why the Tories may have held their political positions for reasons not elucidated by Paine. I also use this time to mention the ill-fate of those Native Americans who had sided with the British during the Revolutionary War, a fate similar to the one experienced by those indigenous people who sided against them during the French and Indian War. The irony is tragic. In addition, I tie the text into local history. Our university is located on Braddock Road, which is named after General Edward Braddock. When I gesture toward the road outside of our classroom windows, students literally turn their heads to view the modern-day incarnation of this colonial military route. This moment in class is significant, for it is a striking instance of the past in our present and a reminder of this seemingly remote place being a strategic military point during the mid-1700s. This fact leads us to additional discussions that take into account the Native American perspectives we have read thus far.

After wrapping up the Paine discussion, I change up how I usually setup the next reading. Instead of posing a list of tasks focused solely on the upcoming reading or creating a question that links the present day's reading, i.e., Paine's text, to the text for next class, I "skip" back to Franklin's "The Way to Wealth." As the students read, I ask them to note the ways in which Irving's work is similar to Franklin's. I do this for a couple of reasons. First, I believe students need the break from the density of Paine's work. Second, I have faith that many of the students will be able to recall the information in the recent Paine discussion, and at this point in the semester, I foreground the relationship between Franklin's and Irving's imaginative pieces because I need them to make a shift from analyzing what thus far has been primarily nonfiction works to fiction and poetry, which is the thrust of the remainder of the course.

On an elementary level, most students observed that both texts use frame narratives and double narrators: Poor Richard and Father Abraham in Franklin corresponds to Geoffrey Crayon and Diedrich Knickerbocker in Irving. After uncovering this obvious parallel, I wanted to challenge them to think more critically, especially in terms of tone. The ironical tone present in Franklin is quite apparent when Poor Richard is discovered nearly violating his own advice on frugality but is prevented from such foolishness by hearing his own words invoked by Father Abraham before the "vendue" opens. In Irving, the ironical treatment of Rip is more difficult to grasp, for its discernment relies on intertextual connections. To tease out this aspect, I asked, "Is Rip Van Winkle Irving's picture of a model American?"

The first brave soul raised his hand and responded with great confidence in the affirmative. He felt that Rip must be a good American in that he escaped the petticoat tyranny of his wife; he was able to, in a sense, obtain his desire. Indeed, this student said that Rip was free, which led him to think that Rip must be a symbol of the American Revolution. I confess my question was somewhat disingenuous, and many students were ready to counter the notion that Rip was an ideal. One student argued that, rather than be industrious for himself and his family, he is “ready to attend any body’s business but his own” (61-62). Indeed, in case the reader is a bit slow at observing the parallel, another student asserted that Irving includes a play on a Poor Richard aphorism: Rip “would rather starve on a penny than work for a pound” (63).

Similarly, they perceived Rip’s inability to keep his farm as a clear violation of the expectation of the farmers in Crèvecoeur’s middles settlements as well as a transgression against Franklin’s call to be industrious:

[Rip] would never refuse to assist a neighbor even in the roughest toil, and was a foremost man in all country frolics for husking Indian corn, or building stone fences; the women of the village, too, used to employ him to run their errands, and to do such little odd jobs as their less obliging husbands would not do for them. (61)

Rip’s conduct is a perversion of Franklin’s instruction to “not depend too much upon your own industry, and frugality, and prudence, though excellent things; for they may all be blasted without the blessing of Heaven; and therefore, ask that blessing humbly, and be not uncharitable to those that at present seem to want it, but comfort and help them.” Rip’s avoidance of most of Poor Richard’s advice seems to be even more galling, for he demonstrates that he is capable of being, at the least, industrious, yet he refuses to act accordingly for his own benefit – or his *own* wife’s (as the students are quick to mention).

At this point, a student raised her hand and noted that Rip is identified as a Tory. We looked to the passage where Rip declares himself “a poor quiet man, a native of the place, and a loyal subject of the King, God bless him!” (83). At which the mob immediately responds: “A tory! a tory! a spy! a refugee! hustle him! away with him!” (83).

This revelation led the class back to the readings by Crèvecoeur and Paine, and I would like to describe some further details that were highlighted in those previous class discussions. When I taught Crèvecoeur’s “Letter III. What Is an American,” we discussed the unfortunate biography of Crèvecoeur in relation to his identification with the Tories. Although

Crèvecoeur had purchased land in New York, married, and started a family, he wanted to head back to France temporarily to deal with his family estate. His departure coincided with the beginning of the American Revolution, and the British mistook him for a spy; therefore, his own side (so to speak) arrested him. This intrigue remained imprinted in the minds of the students, perhaps because we also mentioned him when we went over Paine's *The American Crisis, No. 1*.

For Paine's work, I made sure to draw their attention to Paine's point that the Tories enticed the British army to leave New England for the friendlier atmosphere of "the middle states" where these loyalists were concentrated. Many students remembered this part, which helped to explain Rip's fervent, albeit displaced, allegiance after he awoke. Paine's vivid language when describing the Tories had impressed the students; Paine characterizes a Tory as "a coward; for servile, slavish, self-interested fear is the foundation of toryism." According to Paine, they will not join Lord William Howe's British army because, although they may share the opinion that the British are right, they are not "brave" enough to "take up arms." Indeed, Paine cries out for their expulsion and to divide their property between those who are fighting for an independent nation.

In refutation of the original student's observation of Rip as a model American, many students (including the original student who made the comment) continued to locate textual evidence to establish that Rip was anti-American. One student realized that readers could view Rip's escape into the mountains as his decision not to engage in the battle with his wife or the American Revolution. Indeed, "petticoat tyranny" in the tale had a parallel in Paine's declaration in reference to the King. Paine writes, "Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered." A classmate posited that, like the Tories, Rip "slept" through, or did nothing, during the Revolution. Someone else highlighted that Rip is depicted as a shiftless, self-interested, and an all-too-ready reveler once he meets Hendrick Hudson and his men. Rip's portrayal is not unlike Paine's description of the king as "a sottish, stupid, stubborn, worthless, brutish man." Many of the students noted that Rip could not keep his farm and that he roamed around with his fowling piece, noting that this behavior was reminiscent of Crèvecoeur's unflattering portrayal of the backwoodsman. Moreover, in what I thought was quite an astute observation, one student cited the description of Rip's gun after the twenty-year nap. Irving writes: "in place of the clean well-oiled fowling piece, he found an old firelock lying by him, the barrel encrusted with rust; the lock falling off, and the stock worm-eaten" (75). Although the students did not go further, I noted that Rip's reaction is to think that he had been "robbed" of his gun and,

perhaps even his dog, resembled Paine's recommendation for how to treat the Tories. When he returns home, his house has "gone to decay—the roof fallen in, the windows shattered, and the doors off the hinges" (79). Much like the Tory party, the home was now "empty, forlorn, and apparently abandoned" (87). Again, the student who had made the connection between Paine's indictment of the cowardly Tories and, to use her words, Rip's "impotent gun," also noted how easy it was for Rip to change his political stance when it was in his self-interest, i.e., when the mob is about to seize him for such traitorous ties. Indeed, Irving discloses that Rip "was no politician" (91).

All of these discussion elements led the students to the question of whether Rip should be laughed at or admired. This is an important question to address, for Rip ostensibly has a happy ending. However, most students, through their own use of the text to corroborate their readings and through the ideas of other writers about who is an ideal American, tended to view Rip as a laughingstock rather than a role model. In the end, the class did not reach a unanimous decision about whether Rip was someone Irving desired readers to admire or to deride. To assert that Rip did not have some appealing traits would be incorrect. Rip serves as a direct and appealing challenge to the rigor of Franklin's model. On the other hand, Rip is clearly depicted as a man with little credibility and even a fool, which is evident in two statements at the end of the tale. First, Rip had "arrived at that happy age when a man can do nothing with impunity" (90). Second, whenever Rip would retell his story, "Some always pretended to doubt the reality of it, and insisted that Rip had been out of his head" (92).

At this apparent impasse, I imparted to the students that this ambiguity is the stuff of so-called great literature and that these types of moments are why literary scholars exist: to make their cases for or against how to read texts. Udo J. Hebel's *The Construction and Contestation of American Cultures and Identities in the Early National Period* (1999) contains two essays that reflect this very debate: Jon-K Adams's "Family Relations and the American Revolution" and Kurt Müller's "'Progressive' and 'Conservative' Concepts of American Identity: Washington Irving's Response to the Franklinesque Model." These students had just reenacted part of this scholarly debate. I mentioned these articles to them because I cherish these moments when our undergraduate students can anticipate lines of inquiry scholars continue to wrestle with today. Although I posed the questions, I underscored for them that they produced the evidence to support their stances. To be sure, they did not use phrases such as Müller's "ironic reversion of the Franklinesque plot" (146-7) or Adams's "the representation of political relations in terms of family shifts" (71), they began to uncover these

phenomena in the text using their own vocabularies, often noting evidence these scholars bypass. In effect, the students are “levelling up” from novice to advanced beginner, which is the language some educational psychologists have relied upon to assess one’s progress toward achieving mastery of a subject, discipline, or area.

This debate made for a lively class discussion, leaving a palpable feeling that foretold similar experiences would defy the hasty generalization that early American literature is uninteresting. Through the grouping of Crèvecoeur, Franklin, and Paine with Irving, the students became more engaged with all of these texts. Rather than just read the works as self-contained pieces arising out of ephemera, they realized that literature often draws from its recent and contemporary socio-political moments and, by taking the time to try to understand these moments more fully, Irving’s “Rip Van Winkle,” like so many literary works, can become much richer in this interstitial space. As the semester continued, the students used this method to enhance their interpretations of our assigned readings. With my guidance, we practiced strategies to figure out when and how it was appropriate to place texts in conversation with one another. Most importantly, my machinations led to the centering of the students’ voices and, consequently, to the revelation that they were entering into a community of scholars.

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Paul Thifault, Parody as Pedagogy in Nabokov's *Pale Fire*

Abstract: This article notes the pedagogical advantages of focusing on obscure references to T.S. Eliot's poetry in Nabokov's *Pale Fire*. In addition to reviewing Nabokov's specific allusions to Eliot and some of the existing critical responses to these allusions, the article illustrates how providing students with prior exposure to Eliot's poems can help them approach *Pale Fire* with a scholarly authority that in turn helps undergraduates to appreciate Nabokov's satire of academe and to consider critically questions of methodology in literary interpretation.

Following the publication of his puzzling novel *Pale Fire* (1962), Vladimir Nabokov was asked in an interview if he took a "perverse delight in literary deception" (Nabokov, *Strong Opinions* 11). The question might just as well be posed to the book's academic devotees. Perversely, many of us appreciate Nabokov's narrative sleight of hand because it entices and prohibits us from snapping into place the text's uneven pieces while laying bare the deceptive potential inherent in the critical enterprise. Readers of *Teaching American Literature* will likely recall that the entirety of Nabokov's novel consists of an edition of "Pale Fire," a poem by one John Shade, that is surrounded by increasingly unhinged critical commentary by one Charles Kinbote. Refuting interpretations of the novel that seek to tease out a reliable narrative from within its frames, David Packman points out that *Pale Fire* "calls attention to its own textuality" as a fictional "assemblage of documents" (72). Thus, Packman rightly argues, the most illuminating critiques will focus on the arrangement of "one document beside another" (74). I could not agree more, but the eyes of my undergraduates glaze over when I say things like "the novel calls attention to its own textuality." Students, especially English majors, *will* appreciate the sort of interplay that Packman describes but only if they can help discover it for themselves. Put another way, *Pale Fire* could be a dream text for a highly self-reflective introduction to the academic study of literature, but our abilities to explain its merits are hampered by our students' unfamiliarity with the academic critical discourse it lampoons.

Short of assigning lots of literary criticism, the best way to produce this self-conscious awareness of what we should or shouldn't do when we interpret literature is to build a critical discourse in the classroom based on the students shared experience of an earlier text or text. In other words, we need to find a way for students to occupy an authoritative critical position in relation to the text. As Rachel Trousdale notes, without giving students some autonomy and confidence in approaching *Pale Fire*, they are invited to think "this book is over my head but my professor will give me the answers" (Meyer et al., 4). To help cultivate this autonomy

for students, I propose in this essay a pedagogical focus that shifts from the novel's *intratextual* play to its *intertextual* allusions, which may in turn provide concrete primary source examples of the abstract methodological debates of our discipline (while also creating some durable threads in the loose fabric of an American literature survey or course on modernism). In particular, I suggest that a focus on the novel's references to commonly taught works by T.S. Eliot is a convenient way of raising an array of questions about literary interpretation—questions that in turn help students begin to appreciate the novel's pseudo-critical apparatus and confront their own assumptions about methodology.

The novel's ambivalent references to Eliot are well-known to Nabokov scholars. Most recently, Peter Lowe has offered a comprehensive and sustained reading of *The Waste Land* (1922) in *Pale Fire*, persuasively arguing for levels of intertextual richness and complexity that "make Nabokov's rather dismissive references to Eliot seem oddly out of place." To such a critical discussion, my close readings may at best add some amplification and perhaps some additional evidence by way of "Prufrock." My goal instead is to highlight the unique pedagogical advantages of teaching this complex Eliot-Nabokov connection as a means of generating students' self-reflection on the act of literary interpretation via primary sources. Illuminating classroom approaches to the novel will also help elevate *Pale Fire* to what I believe should be a central position in the teaching canon for its reflections on close-reading and intentionality. By recognizing *Pale Fire's* value in the classroom for its reflections on critical methodology and its ties to literary history, we might also preserve Nabokov's place in twenty-first-century literature programs during a moment of national reckoning in which the taboo subject matter of his most canonical work, *Lolita* (1955), becomes especially fraught for non-specialists.

Pale Fire has traditionally been seen as a difficult text to teach because of its ironic posture. Irony, by definition, is exclusionary, and the fun Nabokov has at the expense of academe requires a reader familiar with that world (i.e. it takes one to know one). This puts undergraduates, new to academic discourse, at a great disadvantage and is partly responsible for *Pale Fire* losing out to *Lolita* on most of our syllabi that include Nabokov. Yet by including and strategically emphasizing aspects of *Four Quartets*, *The Sacred Wood*, "Prufrock," and *The Wasteland* (the latter two of which are highly anthologized poems likely to appear on most modern American surveys), instructors can arm students with a primary source expertise in Eliot that, when we arrive at *Pale Fire*, leads to an independent, organic appreciation of Nabokov's subtlety and wit. The fact that Eliot and Nabokov, one generation

apart, spent time in the academy and left behind many reflections on the state of literary study also provides opportunities for further independent research by students.

The approach and reflections I provide here grew out of an earlier, misguided assignment related to Eliot in which I asked specific groups of students to track down and report on all the various references in his highly allusive poetry. The uninspired, cut-and-paste nature of their presentations was unanimous except for that of one group who actually happened to recognize Eliot's reference to Dante's *Inferno*. Several of the students had been in an epic poetry class together, and out of their enthusiasm, an animated discussion of Eliot's re-purposing of medieval theology developed. As an instructor who benefitted from this happy accident, I realized that I might better set the conditions for powerful undergraduate research by being more far-sighted in sequencing course readings that allow students to see literary/critical connections for themselves. Now, across an array of American literature courses, and drawing on Wai Chee Dimock's notion of a "networked field," I regularly assign small groups of students to reflect on literary responses across time: Sherman Alexie looking back on Mary Rowlandson, Mark Twain looking back on James Fenimore Cooper, or James Baldwin looking back on Harriet Beecher Stowe.

In a published roundtable on teaching *Pale Fire*, Priscilla Meyer mentions a similar approach of drawing on some students' possible familiarity with Eliot (among others) in order to invite student subtext presentations (Myer, et al. 19). In the same forum, Will Norman suggests the possible utility of asking students with this pre-existing knowledge of Eliot (among other modernists) how *Pale Fire* "raises the stakes" of high modernist works like *Four Quartets* (qtd. in Myer et al. 22). Without denying the value of these approaches, I am advocating for an even more purposeful inclusion of Eliot's work in the course syllabus to create at least one consistent basis of knowledge from which the entire class can draw.¹ I am particularly fond of the Nabokov-Eliot connection because it has the added bonus of requiring exceptionally careful close reading on the part of students to determine whether or not allusions are even being made, which in turn fosters growing interest in literary criticism itself,

¹ While noting the value of students being familiar with Nabokov's "literary predecessors," Dale Peterson doubts the pedagogical rewards of "a close collateral reading of another long poem in English" (qtd. in (Myer, et al. 32). I agree that such a reading would be of limited use if purely meant to complement *Pale Fire* in, say, a course on Nabokov. The course I have in mind would be one in which Eliot's work would regularly appear, ideally earlier in the semester. I am less concerned with finding a text that explicates the full range of allusions in *Pale Fire* but rather one that is peculiarly effective in unlocking questions of literary methodology and shining a light on Nabokov's satire of academic criticism.

as students start to critique one another's interpretations and start to confront the idea of methodology. Meditating on the half-hiddenness of Eliot allusions supplies ideas for comparative, primary source exercises for those of us who regularly teach Eliot and Nabokov in undergraduate surveys of American literature and/or in courses on literary theory. In such classes, wherein students struggle with abstract or jargon-filled secondary source materials, the primary source "quartet" of Shade, Kinbote, Nabokov and Eliot presents a comic introduction to critical discourse and a good opportunity for students—as they hunt and weigh these allusions—to occupy a Kinbote-like position of, as my students say, "trying not to read too much into it" (and it's lovely when your students begin to accuse each other of acting like Kinbote when they venture wild interpretations of other texts). The tortured and half-submerged relationship between these various constituents also helps deepen students' appreciation of the slippery nature of literary allusions while drawing on staple theories of undergraduate courses like Harold Bloom's *Anxiety of Influence* (1973). Lastly, while references to many of Eliot's works abound, the specific relationship between Nabokov's *Pale Fire* and Eliot's work that I spotlight here may encourage instructors who regularly teach American modernism to make room for Nabokov or take a trial sabbatical from *Lolita*.

Although instructors are likely to fixate on the novel's sendup of critical commentary, traditional-age college students initially identify with the plight of the teenaged Hazel Shade. By gently pointing students toward Eliot allusions, instructors can harness student interest in Hazel and connect it back to the plane of the novel's scholarly satire. Indeed, doing so can help students recognize the central ironies of the novel and the importance of teenage melodrama in Hazel's demise. This is because references to Eliot's poetry are most detectable in Hazel Shade's apparent affinity for and thematic resonance with Eliot's *Four Quartets*. If we take on faith that John Shade exists (that he is not a creation of Kinbote), and moreover that his 999-line poem constitutes a reasonably reliable autobiography, then Eliot's presence in "Pale Fire" has more to do with Hazel than John; in other words, Shade the poet invokes Eliot *because* of Hazel's affinity for him, and for the ways in which Eliot's poetry has in the past united the Shades as a family.

As Lowe recounts, "it is actually through Hazel that Eliot's verse enters *Pale Fire* to a significant degree." The central passage to spotlight occurs in the poem's recounting of a rare night of domestic harmony, as Hazel asks her mother for the definitions of several words and ends up receiving answers from both parents (Nabokov, *Pale Fire* 46). The three obscure

words she seeks help with— “grimpen,” “chthonic,” and “sempiternal”—are all drawn from Eliot’s *Four Quartets*, although it is left to the reader to identify the reference. The degree to which the reader is meant to pick up on this allusion is difficult to determine. Brian Boyd observes that the original readers of *Pale Fire* would more readily have recognized these terms, given the ascendancy of Eliot’s poem in the academy of the early sixties (108). I would argue, nevertheless, that the words are so distinct that an alert reader would, at the very least, guess that some allusion is being made. The mystery and our drive to solve it only deepens as the reader consults Kinbote’s misleading notes (to which I’ll return). But if instructors make a point to have students look up these key words in the context of teaching *Four Quartets* earlier in the term, students’ understanding of the coded and tricky moves of Nabokov’s novel becomes palpable at this moment in *Pale Fire*. The hermeneutics-of-suspicion mindset so vital to understanding *Pale Fire* can become grounded in the students’ own existing, empowering knowledge of Eliot.

The scene in which Hazel seeks information about Eliot’s vocabulary is also an important one for holding discussions of the unreliability of narrators within *Pale Fire*. Typically, such discussions in literature courses are sparked by facts later revealed in the text that contradict an overt statement made by a narrator. At best, these conversations result in mediocre student essays about how stories are always colored by the perspectives of the teller. *Pale Fire*, however, moves beyond facile claims about the limits of human perspective (or trying to figure out if the narrator is lying to us) to questions about what we might call interpretive ownership—what happens when an artist’s interpretation of his or her own text seems at odds with the collective interpretation of its readers?

Speaking of his daughter, Shade claims “it does not matter what it was she read” (Nabokov, *Pale Fire* 46). Refusing to name Eliot, Shade glosses his daughter’s reading material as “some phony modern poem” (46). Priscilla Meyer points out that Shade “does not recognize what poem Hazel is reading” (131), but as Boyd writes, Shade’s own poetry “engages with Eliot . . . in a way that shows that he knows in detail the poet he seems impatiently to dismiss” (193). For these and other reasons, Lowe sees Shade as essentially “deceiving himself” about the importance of Eliot. Many critics note that Hazel’s choice of materials is, after all, of great thematic importance to the poem Shade constructs, as well as to the novel on the whole. On the level of plot, the Shades are very interested in Hazel’s literary habits. The Shades even delude themselves with the suggestion that her appetite for literature might substitute for her lack of romantic and social encounters. The poet recalls that

“[o]n days when all the streets / Of College Town led to the game, she’d sit / On the library steps, and read or knit” (338-40). Sybil Shade, attempting to console herself and her husband, points out that “virgins have written some *resplendent* books” (323). The poem “Pale Fire” itself gives us significant reason to treat seriously the specific reading material of the outcast, suicidal Hazel, as well as to view that material as integral to the formation of her personality. Recognizing the novel’s self-contradictions in its attitude toward the other works of literature it references can set the stage for students to approach the far more mystifying unreliability of Kinbote.

The Nabokov-Eliot issue can also extend classroom discussions of narrator reliability to the reliability of the extratextual comments authors make about their work. While usually adamant in denying his resemblance to his characters, Nabokov admitted to sharing some of John Shade’s views (*Strong Opinions* 18). Both Nabokov and the fictional poet John Shade verbally reject Eliot and claim unfamiliarity with his poetry while simultaneously using him in important ways in their writing that reveal a close understanding of his work. In an interview, Nabokov dismisses Eliot in the following way:

I was never exposed in the twenties and thirties, as so many of my coevals have been, to the poetry of the not quite first-rate Eliot and of the definitely second-rate Pound. I read them late in the season, around 1945, in the guest room of an American friend’s house, and not only remained completely indifferent to them, but could not understand why anybody should bother about them. But I suppose that they preserve some sentimental value for such readers as discovered them at an earlier age than I did. (*Strong Opinions* 43)

Here Eliot is aligned with Pound, who Nabokov calls elsewhere “a total fake,” “a venerable fraud,” and a writer of “pretentious nonsense” (*Strong Opinions* 102, 136, 102). Similar language of fraudulence resurfaces in Shade’s mockery of Eliot’s “phony modern poem” (46). Further, Nabokov’s description of his experience with Eliot’s poetry may shed some light on Shade’s ambivalence toward the poet. Like Nabokov’s “coevals,” Hazel Shade has “discovered” Eliot’s poetry as a teenager, and perhaps attached a sentimental value to it that her father condescendingly excuses. Nabokov’s view of Eliot as a poet mostly suited to the sentiments and perhaps pretensions of youth shed some light on his ideas for crafting this portrait of the emotionally disturbed young Hazel. Bringing into the classroom Nabokov’s extra-textual discussions of Eliot almost always leads to a productive and grounded discussion of the relevance of an author’s commentary in interpreting a text (which in turn

channels Eliot's own discussion of authorial intention in 1919's "Tradition and the Individual Talent").

By focusing in the classroom on the father and daughter's relationship to Eliot, students are also primed for a discussion of the degree to which narrators and speakers should be considered mouthpieces for their authors. While seeming to cast off Eliot into the realm of teenage melodrama, Shade writes a deeply personal autobiographical poem, completely antithetical to Eliot's oft-caricatured ideal of a fragmented, poetic personality of impressions.² For related reasons, Lowe resists labelling the Eliot allusions as parodies, and Boyd has noted that these references are conducted in "a spirit of homage" to Hazel (Boyd 203). Putting aside the function and label of these references, students will easily spot the linguistic and poetic shifts that occur when Shade's poem veers into mimicry of Eliot's voice. The references thus provide a solid occasion to discuss matters of style, and what makes a voice like Eliot's seem "modern" and/or "phony" to a poet like Shade.

Nabokov's varied uses of Eliot help students move beyond an assumption (voiced by my students occasionally, often from a position of insecurity) that allusions are merely a way for an author to show off his/her reading. Instead, students can see how allusions can signal tensions or anxieties within a text about its relationship to other texts. References to Eliot, for example, mix Shade's mockery of Eliot's aesthetic with his heartbreak over his daughter's suicide. The first of these tempered parodies occurs before we even learn of Hazel's affiliation with *Four Quartets*. Shade writes: "Infinite foretime and / Infinite aftertime: above your head / They close like giant wings, and you are dead" (122-4). The parody seems to target one of (what Denis Donoghue might have called) Eliot's evolving "musical" motifs in *Four Quartets*: "Time present and time past / Are both perhaps present in time future, / And time future contained in time past. / If all time is eternally present / All time is unredeemable" (lines 1-5). It is this elusive refrain—repeated throughout Eliot's poem with ever more elaboration—that Shade comically squeezes into a heroic couplet, concluding with the abrupt and unceremonious "and you are dead," as if to emphasize the pretentious wandering and expansiveness of Eliot's poem. At the same time, the parody distills a great tenderness for Hazel. The lines about past and future, clearly recalling *Four Quartets*, are also "over Hazel's head" in that she needs the Shades to explain words from the poem to her—the memory of

² In *The Sacred Wood*, for instance, Eliot writes: "The poet has, not a 'personality' to express, but a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality, in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways" (46-7).

which Shade treasures. Despite the parody, the phrase “and you are dead” implicitly recalls Hazel’s death, and the line sweetens at the end with the lepidopterous image of closing wings—an image close to the heart of both Shade and his creator.³

Students who struggled through Eliot’s poetry earlier in the course often find their efforts validated by Shade’s parodying of Eliot’s alleged pretentiousness and elusiveness. Encoded in these poetic near-parodies, though, is Shade’s heartfelt lament at his daughter’s inability to adapt to the social and physical world. The poetic disparity between Shade’s style and Eliot’s reinforces Hazel’s inability or unwillingness to move from her lonely, fantastical realm and into the practical realm of the Shades. As Hazel dives deeper into *Four Quartets*, Shade denies us the definitions of these words (suggesting their meaninglessness to Shade). Yet Sybil also deliberately tries to interrupt her daughter’s reading with thoughts of the physical and practical:

“Mother, what’s *grimpen*?” “What is what?” “Grim Pen.”

Pause and your guarded scholium. Then again:

“Mother, what’s *chtonic*?” That, too, you’d explain,

Appending: “Would you like a tangerine?”

“No. Yes. And what does *sempiternal* mean?” (368-72)

Sybil offers Hazel a tangerine out of a concern for her daughter’s weight. We know this from an earlier exchange in which the Shades agree that their daughter should eat “less starch, more fruit” (303). The positioning of this offer as an interruption of her reading aligns Eliot’s poetry with Hazel’s increasing indifference to her body. The treatment that Shade and his wife give to Eliot’s poetry mirrors their apprehensions about their daughter. Both Sybil the character, in her attempt to divert Hazel, and Shade the poet—

in his refusal to identify Eliot, the poem, or the meaning of Eliot’s terms—displace and repeat their parental gestures of censure and socialization. (It could be worth mentioning, anecdotally, that some English majors relate to this passage in which their own budding intellectual curiosities are met with worry and indifference by parents concerned about practical matters.)

Students may notice that references to Eliot reemerge on the night of Hazel’s suicide. Yet these parodies, aimed once more at the pretension of high modernist poetry, allow Shade

³ Nabokov has said that he finds “hunting butterflies” and “studying them” more rewarding than “the pleasures and rewards of literary inspiration” (*Strong Opinions* 100).

to highlight the seriousness and horror of Hazel's suicide. As the Shades await Hazel's return, they flip through TV channels with mounting anxiety. Sybil alerts John that "later a *quartet* of bores, / Two writers and two critics, would debate / The Cause of Poetry on Channel 8" (my emphasis) (410). At this moment, the poem openly criticizes what Shade sees as the boring and elusive nature of Eliot and others. Yet as the Shades wait nervously for Hazel, "Pale Fire" morphs into a parody of Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," which students will easily recognize if studied earlier in the term. Like the excessive indecision of Eliot's title character, the Shades move about the house, anxiously scanning through TV channels and offering different hypotheses to explain or justify their daughter's absence. Meanwhile, as Hazel rides the bus, she decides "*there was no sense / In window-rubbing*" (italics in original⁴) (446). The image of fog "rubbing" itself against a window appears three times in the first twenty-five lines of Eliot's "Prufrock."⁵ Further, John Shade writes: "I was in time to overhear brief fame / and have a cup of tea with you: my name / Was mentioned twice" (423-6). Students will be quick to point out that Prufrock also overhears bits of conversation about himself as well as the pretentious conversations of the women who "come and go / Talking of Michelangelo" (lines 35-6). Before coming down "in time" for tea with Sybil, Shade tells us he went upstairs to "read a galley proof" (417), echoing Prufrock's insistence:

There will be time [...]
 Time for you and time for me,
 And time yet for a hundred indecisions,
 And for a hundred visions and revisions
 Before the taking of a toast and tea. (lines 23, 31-34)

Perhaps most importantly, Shade's canto ends with Sybil's drowning, just as "Prufrock" concludes with an image of drowning.⁶ Of course the specificity of Hazel's suicide set against the more elusive and comic Prufrock leads to a degree of parody. Yet we find Shade's Eliot

⁴ Kinbote explains that he has "italicized the Hazel theme" in this section (Nabokov, *Pale Fire* 196).

⁵ The lines from Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" read as follows: "The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes," (line 15), "The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes" (line 16), "the yellow smoke that slides along the street / Rubbing its back upon the window panes" (lines 24-25).

⁶ "Prufrock" concludes with the lines "We have lingered in the chambers of the sea / By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown / Till human voices wake us, and we drown" (lines 128-30). This also resonates with Hazel's suicide, insofar as it results from an inability to adjust to the physical, non-literary world.

allusions starting to move from half-hearted mockery to a more legitimate invocation of their rhetorical power.

Directly following the “quartet of bores,” another highly literary moment flashes across the screen:

A nymph came pirouetting, under white
Rotating petals, in a vernal rite
To kneel before an altar in a wood
Where various articles of toilet stood. (47-8)

Boyd notes a jab at Eliot in the near inverted spelling of the poet’s name in “*toilet stood*,” which of course resonates with Hazel’s reversing of words and Kinbote’s alleged realization of the reverse spelling of T.S. Eliot (Boyd 203). Yet more ingeniously, the passage’s allusion to Pope’s “Rape of the Lock” brings us back from Hazel to Shade, the Pope scholar. Finally (and ironically), Shade and Hazel are brought together via Shade himself being mentioned on the pretentious literary TV program, right after Robert Frost (426). This inclusion of Shade into the literary discourse he despises may suggest what I have already hinted at—that as his daughter’s death approaches, Shade’s poem begins to legitimately mirror the tone, content, and literary status of Eliot’s work.

Instructors who assign *The Waste Land* earlier in the term will also create opportunities for students to unpack the complexities of how texts overlap in *Pale Fire*. After Hazel’s death, the poem “Pale Fire” engages in its most sustained and overt parody of Eliot. During a reflection in which Shade contemplates the “nothingness” sure to follow after Hazel’s death, the poem suddenly breaks into a chain of snappy dialogue:

“What is that funny creaking—do you hear?”
“It is the shutter on the stairs, my dear.”
“If you’re not sleeping, let’s turn on the light.
I hate the wind! Let’s play some chess.” “All right”
“What glided down the roof and made that thud?”
“It is old winter tumbling in the mud.”
“And now what shall I do? My knight is pinned.” (57)

I would hardly be the first to point out that Shade clearly intends this passage to mirror the tone and content of the “A Game of Chess” section from *The Waste Land*:

Footsteps shuffled on the stair. . . .
“What is that noise?”

The wind under the door.

“What is that noise now? What is the wind doing?

Nothing again nothing. . . .

“What shall I do now? What shall I do? . . .

What shall we ever do?” (lines 107-34)

Just as in the other instances I have cited, this “parody” carries with it a deep tenderness for Hazel, and its very presence in the poem suggests the power that her memory (and perhaps her spiritual entity) continues to exert on the Shades. Yet by invoking Eliot in this particular instance, Shade performs his most grueling, painful allusion that recaptures much of Eliot’s actual pathos.

A useful in-class assignment is to have student groups re-read Eliot’s “Game of Chess” against this section of Shade’s poem to ask whether or not it constitutes a parody, paying attention to language and theme. On the one hand, Shade’s contempt is exemplified in his silly reduction of Eliot’s lines to: “I hate the wind! Let’s play some chess” (656). Yet, on the other hand, by inviting careful reflection, students may note that the actual lines in *The Waste Land* that Shade targets here are attempting to do the same thing he is—provide an accurate and devastating picture of loss within the framework of seemingly conversational and superficial language. After the hopeless “What shall we ever do?,” the tone of Eliot’s poem, notably due to its missing verbs (and hence, of motivation), implies the speaker’s acknowledgement of the superficiality of her means of alleviating loneliness: “The hot water at ten. / And if it rains, a closed car at four. / And we shall play a game of chess, / Pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a knock upon the door” (lines 135-8). This last image clearly resembles the Shades who had waited a year ago in vain for a knock upon the door signaling Hazel’s return.

Yet the speaker also resembles Hazel in her loneliness and lack of sexual contact, which engender in her a growing neurotic, paranoia. In Eliot’s poem, Lil, too, bears a great resemblance to Hazel in her unattractive appearance as well as in the implication that because of her looks, she will not be able to retain male sexual attention. Shade might absent certain of these Eliot-inspired lines in which he might recognize himself and Sybil, most notably in the way Eliot’s characters gossip behind Lil’s back and in the speaker’s superficial insistence that Lil better her physical appearance. The sexual agency to which the speaker pushes Lil, despite her nearly dying of an abortion, might resonate (in Shade’s mind) with Hazel’s death, which may have been spurred on by the humiliation of an unsuccessful blind

date set up by her father. It is certainly not necessary to drive the point this far or precisely in this direction, but I include this interpretation to signal merely that what Shade almost excludes from Eliot is as revealing as what he includes. In this way, students might see Shade perform what Bloom describes as the process of “misprision” by which the current poet deliberately misreads the previous poet in order to clear a space for his or her own work.

When I teach *Pale Fire*, I proceed as if the Eliot mystery “begins” with Hazel in “Pale Fire” the poem, but in doing so I admittedly take for granted that the reader progresses from poem to commentary, rejecting the strategy Kinbote recommends.⁷ Herbert Grabes has suggested a number of possible methods of reading *Pale Fire*, noting that “it is impossible to determine which alternative is the best, let alone which is intended by the author, although the impact on the reader varies considerably according to the sequence of reading matter” (56). In any case, Nabokov weaves Eliot so pervasively into his novel that even if the reader begins with Kinbote’s commentary, he or she will be introduced to Eliot’s thematic significance in all its mystery and ambivalence. Since my reading in the classroom has developed from the poem to the commentary, I usually encourage students to treat Kinbote’s notes as evidence of an expanding ambivalence surrounding T.S. Eliot.

Opportunities to reflect on the boundaries and functions of literary criticism abound through a focus on Nabokov’s allusions to Eliot. Students will be excited to point out that Eliot’s two major cameos in “Pale Fire”—Hazel’s definition sequence from *Four Quartets*, and Shade’s overt parody of “A Game of Chess” of *The Wasteland*—go officially unacknowledged by Shade and that Kinbote continues this policy in his editorial notes. In the commentary corresponding to Shade’s disparagement of a “phony modern poem,” Kinbote writes: “*Line 376: poem: I believe I can guess (in my bookless mountain cave) what poem is meant; but without looking it up I would not wish to name its author. Anyway, I deplore my friend’s vicious thrusts at the most distinguished poets of his day*” (194).

On the most obvious level, Kinbote’s hesitance to name Eliot reveals his own limitations as a scholar, as well as it gives Nabokov an opportunity to further the mystery of

⁷ In regards to his critical commentaries, Kinbote recommends that the reader “consult them first and then study the poem with their help, rereading them of course as he goes through its text, and perhaps, after having done with the poem, consulting them a third time so as to complete the picture” (Nabokov, *Pale Fire* 28).

Kinbote's location⁸. If Kinbote does not recognize Eliot—if his alleged location is just an excuse for his poor scholarship—then his subsequent defense of the alluded-to poet accentuates his “royalist” political personality and his being an uncritical stooge for authority and prestige. If we believe he does recognize Eliot, this same nature is revealed, with the additional bonus of mockingly aligning Kinbote with Eliot in their high esteem for religious tradition.⁹

As we have seen in the poem itself, the elusiveness of Eliot's verse allows Nabokov to express symbolically and thematically Hazel's distance from the physical world, accentuating the rift between Hazel and Shade. Similarly, Eliot's alleged pretensions in religion and literary scholarship function in the commentary to alert the reader to the differences between Kinbote and Shade. As we can see, Kinbote severs Shade's adjectives “phony” and “modern” in the title of the commentary so that it reads simply “poem,” already suggesting his editorial liberties and raising questions with students about the ethical boundaries of scholarly editing and critical commentary. In other words, it makes visible, often for the first time, the human agency in the critical apparatus surrounding their course texts.

In addition to furthering the academic, mental, and political characterization of Kinbote, this entry almost begs the reader to determine the poem to which Shade refers. The absence of Eliot's name here in the critical commentary where it belongs makes it all the more odd when his name does appear, in a note regarding Hazel's mild dyslexia. Kinbote writes:

Lines 347-348: She twisted words: . . . I am quite sure it was I who one day, when we were discussing “mirror words,” observed (and I recall the poet's expression of stupefaction) that “spider” in reverse is “redips,” and “T.S. Eliot,” “toilest.” But then it is also true that Hazel Shade resembled me in certain respects. (Nabokov, *Pale Fire* 193)

⁸ Kinbote here claims to be in a “bookless mountain cave” though earlier he complains about the noise coming from a nearby amusement park (Nabokov, *Pale Fire* 13).

⁹ T.S. Eliot eventually became a devout Anglican and well-known advocate religious traditionalism. Kinbote throughout the novel reveals his reverence for apostolic authority, most explicitly in his elaborate citation (I suppose from memory) of “Pope Pius X, Giuseppe Melchiorre Sarto,” the specific Pope who Aunt Maud had seen (Nabokov, *Pale Fire* 113).

Critics have made much of this implied relationship—symbolic or actual—between Hazel and Kinbote. In drawing on this moment, as well as a teasing reference to Sir Walter Scott, Boyd has offered a reading in which the dead Hazel Shade communicates the fantasy world of Zembla to Kinbote, as part of an intricate and indirect manner of speaking with her father (152-60). For the classroom, such theories will probably overtax the exercise, but as I hope to have made clear, the Eliot-Nabokov connection is both accessible and subtle enough to invigorate careful close-reading of the novel that helps students reflect on the novel's textuality while introducing key concepts related to authorial intention, influence, impersonality, and the function of the critic.

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Matthew Harrington, Racial Fraternalism in Washington Irving's *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*

Abstract

While commonsense tells us that the 19th-century U.S. was obsessed with individual success and Self-Made Masculinity, civic duty continued to be a significant component of national identity. Frontier fiction is one genre which this debate between civic duty and individualism. Most frontier narratives explore heroes who travel to the West where they must survive the wilderness, resist the temptations of "savagery," and navigate various roles in white/Indian affairs. While these heroes participate in America's expansion, they are torn between the freedom of the frontier and their duty to the polity. Yet, not all frontier novels resolve this dilemma in the same way. In this project, I specifically attend to Washington Irving's *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*. Rather than imagine Bonneville as another larger-than-life hero, Irving explores the lucrative benefits of what I am calling "racial fraternalism." In the narrative, Bonneville fraternalizes with the Indians to learn about Indian habits and foster beneficial relationships.

Frontier literature is often thought of as a genre of conflict, where white men prove their masculinity by besting nature, "savages," and leading the nation in its Manifest Destiny. In the nineteenth century, readers were encouraged to emulate the frontier hero, sympathize with his mission, and imagine their own ability to defend the nation's borders. Readers are told that violence and conflict are what won the frontier. There is, however, a faction of frontier narratives that tell a more complex and nuanced story of how the frontier was won; it was not simply an "us vs. them" mentality. Relationships between white settlers and Indians were significant in America's development. As early as the American Revolutionary War, Indians were integral "partners" for both the Americans and the British; each side depended on their Indian allies to win battles and cut off trade routes to diminish the opposing forces. Through expansion, fur trade, and even military expeditions, the American government enlisted men to establish relationships with the potential Indian allies. Whereas common knowledge might suggest that an ideal frontiersman is a militant man of action, Washington Irving's *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville* reinvents the frontiersmen as a forest diplomat by employing what I am calling "racial fraternalism." Irving's fictitious version of Captain Bonneville's adventure explores the reality that the frontiersman can be a man who seeks alliances with friendly Indians rather than viewing them all enemies. In this retelling of Bonneville's journey, Irving imagines how frontiersmen can forge alliances with the Indians; in these alliances, frontiersmen are awarded food, shelter, safety, and valuable military intelligence. In this article, I argue that Irving's Captain Bonneville imagines the militant frontiersman as a man whose success is not defined by violence or action but rather by his

ability to navigate fraternal relationships with Native Americans to avoid unnecessary violence.

Before moving on to Irving's narrative, I will first work to define what I mean by "racial fraternalism" by breaking it down into its two major components: fraternalism and nineteenth-century racial ideologies. Our understanding of nineteenth-century fraternalism is indebted to Dana Nelson's *National Manhood* and Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*. Anderson theorizes that the nation is an imagined community: "It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (6). Anderson continues, "[f]inally, it is imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (7). Anderson argues that a nation is comprised of people who imagine themselves as part of something larger despite the inequality amongst its members. Nelson, specifically focusing on masculinity as a community, argues that national manhood conditions individuals into competition by promising security and success but never actually granting it: "White men are promised relief from the anxieties of economic competition in the warm emotional space of civic fraternal sameness, of 'brother moderation.' But over and over national manhood's competitive individualism and hollowing logic of representivity vitiates the anticipated pleasures of fraternal exchange" (x). For Nelson, this imagined fraternity of manhood unifies men because they are the same but forces them to compete and risk failure as part of a larger national project. On its most basic level, racial fraternalism is an imagined community comprised of white men and Indians. Like Anderson and Nelson suggest, this fraternity imagines equality and security for both parties, but in reality, it is exploitative and unequal.

The second part of racial fraternalism is derived from the racial ideologies of the Jefferson and Jacksonian eras. Nineteenth-century racial thought believed that whites were superior to every other race. One example of this was racial paternalism, which viewed the racial Other as a dependent. According to George Fredrickson, nineteenth-century racial paternalism was a response to the slaves' "child-like" disposition; this paternalistic thought believed that black Americans needed to learn from white men to become more civilized. Fredrickson argues that racial paternalism "deprived the Negro of the inherent ability to compete on equal terms with the ruggedly aggressive Anglo-Saxons" because, if freed, black Americans would still be under the rule of white men, and it "tended to undermine the notion

of white moral responsibility and capability” (126). Whereas white men believed the black Americans to be naturally subservient, their relationships with the Indians were much more complicated. There was often this belief that the Indians are a stronger race than the slaves, and this added a heightened fear of rebellion and violence.

Specifically, in regards to Indian Removals, the Whig Party often argued against aggressive measures. In 1830, Whig representative Theodore Frelinghuysen argued that Americans need to be able to think of their history with honor: “Sir, if we abandon these aboriginal proprietors of our soil...how shall we justify it to our country? To all the glory of the past, and the promise of the future” (Qtd. In Rolater 200). Ashworth, too, tells us that “Whigs were equally firm believers in white superiority....Whigs could find a place for blacks or Indians in the hierarchy they envisaged—even if it were the bottom place” (222). Whig thought argued for moral treatment of Indians, even if they were to be removed. Significantly, however, unlike slaves, they believed Indians to be independent people. According to Anthony Wallace, some reformers did not think Indians to be “savages” but rather “untutored natural men” (33). Reformers believed that Indians could be taught to be civil and even allies.

Of course, white frontiersmen did not believe that Indians were their equals. My definition of racial fraternalism stems from the belief that an imagined community between white men and Indians can reap mutually beneficial rewards, such as improved trade, gifts, hospitality, and protection. Indeed, Irving is not the first author to imagine this type of relationship with the Indian. In Louise K. Barnett’s *The ignoble Savage*, she argues that some literature employs the “good Indian” trope: “For the good Indian, saving the white friend or beloved from bad Indians is the most typical and approved action. Whites reciprocate the affection they receive from Indians and often run risks for them; the difference is that whites, unlike Indians, do not experience suffering and death in these episodes” (93). Again we must return to Anderson who argues that, “it is imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (7). White men were often the primary beneficiary, taking advantage of Indian knowledge, camps, and hunting parties for their own good. But as Irving’s narrative presents, so long as white men are willing to participate in Indian customs, a fraternal bond can be forged that offers protection, food, military intelligence, and, most significantly, creates allies against hostile Indians and other threats. Therefore, racial fraternalism here refers to the relationships forged between white frontiersmen and friendly

Indians; what may seem to be an equal give and take between the two parties is of course unequal as the white men are often receiving more than they give.

As I observe, in this fictitious rendering of Captain Bonneville's adventure, Irving sought to celebrate a frontier hero who reflects on the diplomatic nature of expansion and white/Indian relationships. Irving's narrative is founded on the idea that a fraternal bond between white men and Indians can prove beneficial for white travelers and the nation's expansion. In both *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville* and *A Tour on the Prairie* (Irving's adventure on the frontier), Irving explores how fraternal relationships with the Indians ensure safe passage and trade and allow white men to gain essential knowledge of Indian territories, enemies, and movements. Not only did the American government want to establish a working knowledge of Indian land for speculation, but that knowledge would also aid the military in times of conflict.

Irving's *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville* is a fictional rendering of Captain Bonneville's real-life adventures in the frontier who was instructed to "note particularly the number of warriors that may be in each tribe or nation that you may meet with; their alliances with other tribes, and their relative position as to a state of peace or war, and whether their friendly or warlike dispositions towards each other are recent or of long standing" (955). To gain this knowledge, as we learn from Irving's version of the narrative, Bonneville cannot be an outsider but must fraternalize with the Indians through trade and respecting their customs and principles. Daniel Walker Howe's *What Hath God Wrought* identifies that trade between whites and Indians was a significant factor in peace and mutual relationships. Specifically, Howe recalls American/Indian trade "prompted the most powerful tribes of the Great Plains to conclude a peace agreement with each other in 1840 so they could concentrate on lucrative buffalo hunting instead of warfare" (48). Historically, fur traders, frontiersmen, and leaders like Bonneville would act as mediators and develop relationships with the Indians that would prove to be financially lucrative through trade and help travelers navigate the wilderness knowing they had Indian friends for support.

Rather than turning Bonneville's adventures into a heroic quest that might align more with other frontier narratives of his time, Irving's *Bonneville* preserves a sense of intimacy with Indian customs to promote peace, prevent conflict, and form diplomatic relationships. In Irving's narrative, Bonneville and his men peacefully interact and even coexist with the Native Americans. These relationships prove lucrative for the white travelers during times of despair, such as when they need food, better equipment, or a safe place to rest. Historians such as

White tell us that mountain men and frontiersmen were not as independent as they were believed to be; white men would not have been as successful in their frontier explorations if it were not for the Indian liaisons they gained through personal relationships (46). What Irving does, then, is explore the nuances of developing these fraternal relationships at various stages of his adventure. At times, he is simply exchanging goods for knowledge, and other times the Indians and white men find themselves in the need of each other's services. But one thing is made clear, actions have consequences, and Bonneville's ability to navigate these relationships directly impacts the success of his mission.

I begin my close reading of Irving's racial fraternalism with Bonneville's first interaction with a native tribe. Bonneville and his men meet the Kansas Indians, where Bonneville immediately befriends their chief, White Plume: "White Plume was so taken with the courtesy of the captain, and pleased with one or two presents received from him, that he accompanied him a day's journey on his march, and passed a night in his camp, on the margin of a small stream" (*Bonneville* 647). Bonneville's willingness to participate in trade and Indian customs is awarded as White Plume reveals valuable information about his tribe's feud with other Indians, bee hunters, and more. Irving describes the scene as two men "in soldier-like communion," and indeed, the benefits of the conversation could help prevent future conflicts through valuable military intelligence (648). Bonneville learns how other white men, like bee trappers, have turned friendly gatherings into scenes of "disputes and conflicts" (649). Leaders like Bonneville are critical to the success of the narrative; they keep the peace between white men and Indians and foster bonds that keep friendly Indians loyal. Bonneville not only gains valuable intelligence for his own journey but also intelligence that can be brought back to his superiors in the military.

Even though nineteenth-century white men believed they were superior to all other races, there is also a need for Bonneville and his men to prove their worth as useful allies. Leverenz, Kimmel, and more have repeatedly argued that men are always being observed and must constantly prove themselves; this is no different on the frontier. In Irving's narrative, then, focuses on how white men must prove themselves to these Indians. In a scene where both white men and Indians are deprived of food and provisions, the Nez Percés offer to share what little they had due to their fraternal bond with the white travelers: "They had no provision left but a few dried salmon, yet finding the white men equally in want, they generously offered to share even this meagre pittance" (694). In response, Bonneville "detached a few men...to accompany the Nez Percés on their hunting expedition, and to trade

with them for meat for the winter's supply" (694). Now, Irving argues that this relationship goes back and forth into a revolving door of goodwill. The Nez Percés offer food, Bonneville offers to accompany the Indians on their hunting expedition, and Bonneville's crew gets to trade for enough meat for the winter. By participating in the hunting party, Bonneville and his men seek to prove that white men can be just as useful on the frontier as the natives and therefore add value to their relationship.

Bonneville's show of goodwill continues to benefit his crew when they meet the Upper Nez Percés, cousins of the Nez Percés. Upon their first meeting, the Upper Nez Percés immediately invite Bonneville and his party to their camp to eat and share goods with them. Upon accepting, Bonneville learns that this outreach of goodwill is a product of his earlier fraternal bonds with other Indian tribes, such as the Nez Percés: "He soon found, too, that he was well known among them, by report at least" (834). Because of his reputation, Bonneville and his men receive shelter, food, and receive Indian goods to aid them on their journey. Specifically, the chief of the Upper Nez Percés offers Bonneville the tribe's best horse. Bonneville, wanting to keep this avenue of allies open, offers his rifle to the chief as a reciprocal gift: "Captain Bonneville was suitably affected by this mark of friendship; but his experience in what is proverbially called 'Indian giving,' made him aware that a parting pledge was necessary on his own part, to prove that this friendship was reciprocated" (836). Bonneville's willingness to partake in Indian customs repeatedly proves beneficial as he is often gifted tools and provisions that help him and his men continue on their journey.

Of course, offering to hunt with the Nez Percés does more than just build Bonneville's reputation; it also proves to the Indians that white men are capable hunters and survivors. According to Nancy Shoemaker, Indian tribes often judged white travelers based on their actions and prowess; in 1784, the Iroquois called the English "women" because they were not as fortified as the French, who were according to the Iroquois, "Men" (247). Shoemaker continues to argue that the English "had to exhibit some signs of military force to guard against this perception of effeminacy" (248). In sending out his hunters with the Nez Percés, Bonneville is reminding the Indians that while their goodwill is welcome, the white men are not effeminate and indeed able to hunt and survive on their own because they are "Men." For white men to continue to receive the benefits of this fraternal bond, they must prove that they are worthy of it. Indians were less willing to bond with effeminate men as they were with men of militant values.

Captain Bonneville's knowledge and willingness to entertain Indian customs of gift-giving and be a friendly companion gave him and his crew food, shelter, knowledge, and even the best horses for their travel. While Irving's narrative is dedicated to this peaceful relationship, other frontier narratives also offer glimpses at the benefits of racial fraternalism, such as James Fenimore Cooper's *The Prairie*. Early in Cooper's novel, the Leatherstocking Tale's hero, Hawk-eye, seeks to protect travelers from Indians, not through violence but through his ability to navigate their customs and discourse peacefully: "we are now to be questioned; and if I know any thing of the policy of our case, I should say it would be wise to choose one among us, to hold the discourse...I would venture to say, that man should be the one most skill'd in the natur' of an Indian, and that he should also, know something of their language" (43). In this novel, Cooper's protagonist is less of an action hero and more of a man who can negotiate and foster peacefulness. Later, too, Hawk-eye's Indian companion, Hard-Heart, proclaims that he "has never struck the stranger. They come to his lodge and eat, and they go out in safety. A mighty chief is their friend!...His arm will never be lifted against the stranger" (335). Irving and Cooper both imagine mutual respect in which white men are offered food, shelter, and safety from their Indian allies.

Of course, literature is full of examples where racial tensions and white greed get in the way of potential bonds, inevitably leading to conflict. Edgar Allan Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* ends in disaster because the white men attempt to use the Tsalians and exploit their land rather than develop a diplomatic relationship with the natives. To the white men of *Pym*, the Tsalalian "savages" are seen as non-human or uncivilized and in an animal-like state that can be controlled or taken advantage of for the colonizer's gain. Although the white men do not attempt to kill the Tsalians, they try to eradicate their way of life. The "savages," according to Pym, "supplied [the crew] with provisions" and gave them scurvy grass which "proved of incalculable benefit in restoring those of our men who had shown symptoms of disease" (353). The "savages" gave the white men food, medicine, and even provided "the erection of suitable houses" for the crew to live comfortably (353). Pym continues: "They had uniformly behaved with the greatest decorum, aiding us with alacrity in our work, offering us their commodities, frequently without price" (355). Without considering how the islanders might perceive a change, the white settlers began to create their market and modernize the island to acquire their goods. A combination of the "savages" as being perceived as helpless, uncultured creatures, and, also, seeing what types of amenities the island has to offer, "induced Captain Guy to wish for a thorough investigation of the country,

in the hope of making a profitable speculation in his discovery” (345). The white fantasy, however, comes to a crash when the unsuspecting white men are ambushed by the Tsalians and killed. Gardner sums up this transformation:

At first, they take the people of Tsalal for ignorant but cooperative savages, and they begin to establish a colonial system of harvesting the *beches-de-mere* in abundance on the island. The blacks fulfill all of the whites’ expectations: displaying cartoon-like gestures of delight and superstition, eager to please and easy to master. But behind this facade, the inhabitants of Tsalal plot the massacre of all whites on the island. What follows is a race war of apocalyptic proportions. (147)

In Poe’s *Pym*, the white travelers underestimated the Tsalalians as inferior and non-competitive. The white men overlooked them and thought of the natives as simply tools for their visions. But, as Poe makes abundantly clear at the end of the narrative, these natives are capable people, which is proven when they overtake and massacre nearly all white men. Poe’s fantasy broadly contemplates the dangers of integration between “savages” and the white community. Irving’s narrative, in turn, imagines bonds of mutual interaction (both white men and Indians can maintain their way of life in separate spheres). Poe presents a scenario where the white men dominate and subjugate the Other. Irving’s narrative differs because Bonneville does not seek to exploit Indian resources or enact major reform; instead, Irving’s Bonneville subscribes to a more organic view of race that could perceive value in Indian alliances. The Indians remain true to their heritage; neither Bonneville nor his men attempt to “civilize” them. Instead, these two cultures work together as separate peoples with similar interests. Again, we return back to the Whig belief of inequality. Irving avoids conflict by accepting that each group of people (both white men and Indian on the frontier) have a role to play. Rather than attempt to change or control the Indian, Bonneville finds value in letting each group remain autonomous. The Indians never force Bonneville and his men to change their habits, and the white men do not attempt to reform their Indian allies.

Irving’s narrative celebrates the frontiersman who avoids violence and conflicts; this, of course, is in stark contrast to America’s immoral history with Indian Removals. Historically, late eighteenth century settlers “clearly preferred the preemptive strike as the best defense. Sometimes the raids deep into Indian territory were dictated by military priorities and officially sanctioned. At other times they were spontaneous and unauthorized” (Rowe 2). Rowe further demonstrates that some conflicts were counter-attacks by Shawnees after “sacking the town”

of Indians (3). While Rowe focuses on small militias, her scholarship does highlight a problem—often conflicts were started by the white men and Indians simply retaliated. For example, in 1820 a tribe of Iowas returned to their summer hunting ground only to run into settlers who were north of their settlements. According to Rowe, each group believed the other was trespassing, and the settlers “called on friends and relatives in other settlements to help them drive the Indians out” (95). When Fields Trammel, a veteran Indian fighter, called for a parley with Big Neck, the white settlers fired on the Indians; white settlers broke from the code of combat and killed the unsuspecting Indians during a moment of parley (Rowe 95). While many narratives seem to suggest that Indians were the ungoverned “savages,” history tells of white men acting immorally and unjustly. Irving’s martial masculinity rejects this version of the immoral frontier but rather seeks fraternal bonds and forest diplomacy to avoid conflicts and find peaceful solutions.

Rather than perceive the Indians as only “savages” and weapons of destruction, Irving suggests that they too can be peaceful and allies for the advancing nation. In an early interaction with the Nez Percés, Bonneville gained a new appreciation for Indians: “They are, certainly, more like a nation of saints than a horde of savages” (697). Indeed, Irving and other frontier authors and observers rejected the idea that Indians were all simply “savages.” Crèvecoeur’s, St. John argues that “they [Indians] have not, they will not take up the hatchet against a people who have done them no harm” (217). Irving, and indeed Crèvecoeur, seem to imply that if violence begets violence, peace might beget peace. Irving’s *Bonneville* does not classify all Indians as “savage” like many other frontier narratives; instead, Captain Bonneville can distinguish between “savage” enemies and Indians who can be allies. Frontiersmen, like Bonneville, who can forge a fraternal bond with Indians, benefit from their relationships and work towards a morally just version of national expansion. Irving is not attempting to dissuade the nation from removing the Indians. Still, his narratives illustrate that there are some tribes—those friendly to the white nation—who have the capacity aid in America’s Manifest Destiny.

According to Michal Peprnick, other frontier authors, such as Cooper, make similar arguments about the Indian’s capacity to assist the nation in its expansion: Cooper’s Indians “may serve as scouts, guides, hunters, or temporary military allies, but that is the highest degree of acculturation they are allowed in Cooper’s fiction” (104). The *Leatherstocking Tales* explore the benefits of these types of Indians who side with Hawk-eye and act as mediators or even warriors to protect white citizens. Neither Cooper nor Irving argue for assimilation nor

reject the expansion. For Irving and Cooper, Indians who can ally themselves with the white nation will continue to move westward and simply disappear without conflict. The fantasy is, then, that Indians can remain a free people while aiding in America's expansion until they vanish.

Of course, Irving is not the only to promote a diplomatic approach to frontier conflicts in literature. Early in Simms' *The Yemassee*, Gabriel Harrison attempts to give Yemassee Chief, Sautee a new dog after a Spanish sailor killed his hunting dog. Even though the Spanish sailor began the conflict, Harrison sought to keep the peace when Sautee seeks vengeance. Harrison proclaims, "Are we not friends? Are not the Yemassee and the English two brothers, that take the same track, and have the same friends and enemies?" (54). In this hostile interaction, Harrison pushes the narrative that the Yemassee and English are brothers and friends rather than enemies; he reminds Sautee of their peaceful trades, exchanges, and bonds. Harrison's leadership very much mimics that of Irving's Bonneville. Both of these leaders seek to use their friendly history with the Indians as a way to avoid violent conflict.

One of the many white privileges in this fraternal bond is how Bonneville and his men avoid conflicts with unfriendly Indian tribes; instead, they encourage their Indian allies to be the combatants. This is made most evident when the Blackfeet confront Bonneville and the Lower Nez Percés. While Bonneville benefits from the Percés protection, he refuses to help them battle against the Blackfeet:

Captain Bonneville again took up the point. 'it is true,' said he, 'the Great Spirit has given you a heart to love your friends; but he has also given you an arm to strike your enemies. Unless you do something speedily to put an end to this continual plundering, I must say farewell. As yet, I have sustained no loss; thanks to the precautions which you have slighted: but my property is too unsafe here; my turn will come next; I and my people will share the contempt you are bringing upon yourselves, and will be thought, like you, poor-spirited beings, who may at any time be plundered with impunity.' (717)

Bonneville's speech reveals how racial fraternalism seeks to benefit without sacrificing. Bonneville and his men are not safe due to the Blackfeet threat. Yet, he is unwilling to help. Instead, Bonneville puts the responsibility on the Nez Percés to fight their own battle and, in a way, suggests that the Nez Percés' inability to handle their own rivalries is why the white men are also in danger. Bonneville exposes the inequality in racial fraternalism; he is willing

to accept the benefits of their bond with the Nez Percés but does not accept the same risks during times of conflict.

Another example of Bonneville leading Indian conflict without actually participating in it comes after the Blackfeet infiltrated the camps of the Nez Percés and stole many horses. Yet again, Bonneville puts all the responsibility on the Nez Percés and encourages them to take their vengeance:

Accordingly, convoking their chiefs, he inveighed against their craven policy, and urged the necessity of vigorous and retributive measures, that would check the confidence and presumption of their enemies, if not inspire them with awe. For this purpose, he advised that a war party should be immediately sent off on the trail of the marauders, to follow them, if necessary, into the very heart of the Blackfoot country, and not to leave them until they had taken signal vengeance. Beside this, he recommended the organization of minor war parties, to make reprisals to the extent of the losses sustained. 'Unless you rouse yourselves from your apathy,' said he, 'and strike some bold and decisive blow, you will cease to be considered men, or objects of manly warfare. They very squaws and children of the Blackfeet will be sent against you, while their warriors reserve themselves for nobler antagonists.' (717)

Ultimately, what Bonneville is doing, is encouraging Indian allies to confront the “savage” Indians. He uses masculine verbiage to drive them towards action. Bonneville is the instigator without actually participating in the confrontation. This is reminiscent of how the young nation sought to “peacefully” acquire Indian land, such as with the 1803 Peoria treaty. According to Rogers: “In this treaty, the Peoria signed away the remaining lands south and east of the Illinois River...[and] In return...received annuities ...in addition to the ‘immediate care and patronage’ as well as the ‘protection’ ... against other Indian tribes. This language of care and protection runs through many of the Native American treaties of this region. However, the governmental reach of the Unites States often did little to protect the Illinois” (53). Like the young nation in the treaty, Bonneville refuses to participate in Indian vs. Indian violence but still benefits from the insinuation that white men and friendly Indians can work together for a peaceful frontier. Irving’s racial fraternalism fantasizes that white men will be protected from “savage” Indians by their potential allies in future wars without returning the same benefits.

During times of prosperity and peace, Irving’s fraternal fantasy imagines how white men and Indians can coexist on the frontier and enjoy the freedoms of nature for brief periods

of time. Without the threat of a “savage” attack, or the fear that his men will go hungry, Bonneville reflects on how the rugged frontier can be a utopia to the man who lives off the land:

For the greater part of the month of November, Captain Bonneville remained in his temporary post on Salmon River. He was now in the full enjoyment of his wishes; leading a hunter’s life in the heart of the wilderness, with all its wild populace around him. Besides his own people, motley in character and costume: Creole, Kentuckian, Indian, half-breed, hired trapper, and free trapper: he was surrounded by encampments of Nez Percés and Flatheads, with their droves of horses covering the hills and plains. It was, he declares, a wild and bustling scene. The hunting parties of white men and red men, continually sallying forth and returning; the groups at various encampments, some cooking, some working, some amusing themselves at different games... a ‘populous solitude.’ (709)

This scene is significant for two reasons: first, it imagines coexistence. Bonneville tells us that not only is his crew an assortment of men, but the Indians in the camp are also from different tribes. Secondly, it proclaims that because of this coexistence, Bonneville can let his guard down and prosper. I argue that a sense of security while on the frontier is an overlooked component of expansion. Not only is he reaping the benefits of these men working together to gather food, but there is a sense of security that is often hard to find.

Bonneville’s tranquil moment with his Indian allies is reflective of Crèvecoeur’s “Distresses of a Frontier Man.” According to Bishop, writers believed that the frontier was a space where men could enact fantasies and desires and to escape the restraints of civilization, embracing a more free life style (368). Crèvecoeur’s James sought the frontier as a space to escape the conflicts of war, and finds “a place where one never has to declare one’s allegiances, where his only responsibilities are to his family, his immediate neighbors, and to the land itself” (Bishop 369-370). Crèvecoeur imagines that moving to the frontier will allow him and his family to escape the pressures of society, war, and having to choose between his two countries:

Thus shall we metamorphose ourselves from neat, decent, opulent planters, surrounded with every conveniency which our external labour and internal industry could give, into a still simpler people divested of everything beside hope, food, and the raiment of the woods; abandoning the large framed house

to dwell under the wigwam, and the featherbed to lie on the mat or bear's skin. There shall we sleep undisturbed by frightful dreams and apprehensions; rest and peace of mind will make us the most ample amends for what we shall leave behind. These blessings cannot be purchased too dear; too long have we been deprived of them. (222)

Crevecoeur and Irving both fantasize about this tranquil escape from the responsibilities of society and the peaceful relations that can be built between the two peoples. They seek to escape and avoid conflict. Indeed, there was an allure to this life. Crevecoeur suggests that "[t]here must be something more congenial to our native dispositions than the fictitious society in which we live" (214). Crevecoeur fantasizes about the simplicity of Indianness, suggesting that by living among them, he and his family can be more free. Irving too believes that the community between white man and Indians can form a "populous solitude" or rather a state where men can coexist without the trials and trepidations of white society (709).

Of course, Irving's narrative is grounded in reality and does not imagine this fraternity as a solution to the "Indian Problem;" *Bonneville*, like almost all frontier narratives during the Jacksonian era, is rooted in the belief that Indians cannot coexist within white society and must remain on the frontier or disappear altogether. *Bonneville* also reflects on the problems that arise when two groups of people lay claim to the same resources. Even during this peaceful period, *Bonneville* identifies concerns: "[b]y degrees, the populousness of this encampment began to produce its inconveniences. The immense droves of horses, owned by the Indians, consumed the herbage of the surrounding hills....Game, too, began to grow scarce" (710). Even with peaceful Indians, the finite resources suggest that two independent peoples cannot survive on the same land. Indians and martial frontiersmen must constantly be on the move so as not to dry up local resources.

In *Bonneville*, this fraternal relationship is deeply rooted in the belief that Indians should be a free, independent people; therefore, for Irving, Indian reform is not a method to introduce Indians as members of white society but as a tool to better mold Indians into valuable allies. According to Irving, "[t]he disposition of these tribes is evidently favorable to a considerable degree of civilization. A few farmers, settled among them[.]...A Christian missionary or two, and some trifling assistance from government, to protect them from the predatory and warlike tribes, might lay the foundation of a Christian people in the midst of the great western wilderness, who would 'wear the Americans near their hearts'" (926). Irving argues that the friendly Indians can become more sympathetic towards the American nation

with a little development. By protecting Indians from more hostile “savages,” the American frontier can garner a useful ally. Greene argues that “Indian defenders relied on a rhetoric that emphasized the progress of the Indian race, the sanctity of national treaties, a professed concern for national “honor” (a very real concept to Whigs but one almost comically abstract and inapplicable for Jacksonians), and the bare moral impropriety and indecency of Removal” (20). In “Traits of an Indian Character,” Irving highlights “the stern resolution, the unbending pride, the loftiness of spirit, that seemed to nerve the hearts of these self-taught heroes, and to raise them above the instinctive feelings of human nature” (Traits). Irving’s *Bonneville* and “Traits” both draw attention to the significance of Indian reform for the military man. While some viewed reform as a method of integrating Indians into white society, early Americans believed that Indians needed to be reformed to be allies in times of combat. During the War of 1812, the British had a hard time containing the violence of their Indian allies. According to Taylor, “Americans bitterly complained that the British failed to protect the prisoners taken by the Indians” (206). Even the *Baltimore Whig* proposed that the Americans “hang four or five Indians for every American massacred” (Qtd. in Taylor 206). Irving’s narrative, therefore, believes that even as frontier allies, Indians can and should be reformed.

Irving’s narrative spends one chapter mainly discussing the morality and religiousness of some of these Indians; this suggests that Irving believes that some Indians have the capability of reform if under the right leadership. According to Irving, “[t]he Skynses, like the Nez Percés and the Flatheads, have a strong devotional feeling, which has been successfully cultivated by some of the resident personages of the Hudson’s Bay company” (924). The chapter continues to identify that Sunday is a religious day for the Indians and how the chief prompts those in the religious ceremonies to “good conduct; to be diligent in providing for their families; to abstain from lying and stealing; to avoid quarrelling or cheating in their play and to be just and hospital to all strangers who may be among them” (924). Of course, these are all the same doctrines of American Christianity, and Irving attributes it to the teachings of previous white men: “With these religious services, probably derived from the white men, the tribes abovementioned, mingle some of their old Indian ceremonials” (924). Bonneville observes that Indians can indeed learn and adopt white culture. Bonneville, then, insinuates these Indians can grow to be more superior than other Indians who reject white influence: “in the cultivation of moral and religious habits; drawing a comparison between their peaceable and comfortable course of life, and that of other tribes: and attributing it to their superior sense of morality and religion” (925). According to Anthony Wallace, “[t]he statesmen who made

Indian policy during the early federal period were advocates of 'Indian reform'....they saw the Native Americans not as an inferior species (as some of their compatriots thought) but as untutored natural men, possessed of reason and capable of learning both the best and worst habits of civilization" (33-34). Significantly, *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville* imagines this fraternal bond between Bonneville and the Indians on the frontier as a conduit for white men to teach and tutor friendly Indians, thereby transforming them into ideal allies. As white men influence the Indians, they reform them just enough to find peaceful allies on the frontier.

The Adventures of Captain Bonneville does not pretend that racial fraternalism is the cure for the American conflicts with Native Americans or even the "Indian Problem." Irving's fraternal fantasy is deeply rooted in the reality that not all Indians are potential allies and that Indians must ultimately disappear for America's expansion. If the British and the French used Indians as a weapon against the new nation before, what stops them from doing it again? Irving reminds readers that while some Indians and tribes are sympathetic towards white Americans and capable of bonds, others are not. According to Kennedy, the real Captain Bonneville called for a strong US military presence to subjugate "roving hordes" of Osage, Pawnee, and Kansas Indians to make them "dependent" on government assistance (357). Goetzmann, too, adds that Bonneville sought to devote time to "what has come to be called the strategy of 'small wars.' That is, he was to note the number of warriors in each Indian tribe, their alliances, their state of war or peace, etc., and most important, their manner of making war" (149). Whereas the real Bonneville called for military subjugation, Irving's romantic retelling of Bonneville's adventures calls for individuals with the capability of both fraternal bonds and readiness for militant combat. Irving states that the "Crows and Blackfeet, who were such terrors in the path of early adventurers to Astoria, still continue their predatory habits," and "[t]he life of a trapper, therefore, is a perpetual state militant, and he must sleep with his weapons in his hand" (640). Throughout his study on the mountain men, fur traders, and adventurers of the frontier, Goetzmann repeatedly highlights how these men often had "to hide, and then flee for [their] life, from an Indian war party out on a summer hunt of its own" (117). For example, Jedediah Smith, an American pioneer, attempted to turn a profit on the frontier. Still, without the assistance of friendly Indians, Smith and his crew were constantly in danger of the Blackfeet: "In the spring of 1830 Smith led one more hunt, this time west to the heart of the Blackfeet country around the Judith River tributary of the Missouri. But the Blackfeet were everywhere and trapping was not profitable" (Goetzmann 141). Goetzmann's historical telling of these frontiersmen confirms Irving's reality—war and

conflict were not profitable. Therefore, Bonneville refuses to participate in conflict; instead, he motivates his Indian allies to confront the Blackfeet alone.

Whereas other frontier narratives fantasize the white man's conquest over the Indian, Irving's frontier narratives seek a more diplomatic approach and even go so far as to suggest that violence might impede progress. Irving shows how even the threat of potential conflict stops an expedition party in its tracks. In one instance, Bonneville and his men were in fear of being pursued by "savage" Indians: "[t]he alarm was given; they all came to a halt, and held a council of war" (667). Irving continues, "[a]s it would be necessary to remain some time in this neighborhood, that both men and horses might repose, and recruit their strength; and as it was a region full of danger, Captain Bonneville proceeded to fortify his camp with breastworks of logs and pickets. Those precautions were, at the time, peculiarly necessary, from the bands of Blackfeet Indians, which were roving about the neighborhood" (669). Back when Bonneville and his men were with friendly Indians, both white men and Indians felt free to travel and hunt as they saw fit. Now, with the fear of "savage" Indians on their tracks, progress quite literally stops. Instead of focusing on expansion, Bonneville's crew are now preoccupied with defenses and safety. Fear of violence also prevents men from obtaining simple amenities such as food and fire because of their proximity to the more "savage" Indians (780).

Irving's *Bonneville* goes to great lengths to avoid direct conflict with Indians. At one point, the Blackfeet outnumbered Bonneville's party; rather than test their strength, Bonneville and his men resorts to cunning tricks: "His situation was perilous; for the greater part of his people were dispersed in various directions. Still, to betray hesitation or fear, would be to discover his actual weakness, and to invite attack" (871). Bonneville spreads his men out across the woods to create the impression that he had more men than he did to avoid conflict. Wallace argues that Indian wars were becoming less popular during the nineteenth century because of the number of white casualties (99). Irving's frontier narrative takes a different approach to frontier masculinity; rather than commend violence, Irving's *Bonneville* celebrates the leader and diplomat who forges relationships and peaceful avenues for other American travelers. Bonneville is a successful soldier and leader, but Irving's narrative privileges peace and diplomacy. Irving could have presented Bonneville as a militant hero of Indian conflict. Instead, Irving celebrates the diplomat, the man who values peaceful interactions above all else.

In the first annual Richard Slotkin American Studies Inaugural Lecture at Wesleyan University, Slotkin argued that in a national myth, the hero's response to a crisis is what the audience is invited to emulate or consent to; he went on to argue that part of this myth is the idea of "unfinished business" in which the audience is invited to finish or continue on the work of the hero. In other, more popular, frontier narratives, the hero is a battle-torn man emulating physical masculinity, sacrificing himself to his societal duty. Washington Irving, on the other hand, imagines martial masculinity as profoundly rooted in fraternalism and peace. Irving's *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville* attempts to rewrite what we might consider a "frontier hero." Up until the 1820s, Jeffersonian America tried to implement policies that would invite coexistence and paternalism with the Indians. During the Jacksonian Era, many Indian Haters rejected these laws and sought violence and vengeance. Washington Irving's narrative aims to reclaim moments of peace and coexistence. We might even argue that Irving's drive for peaceful fraternalization was ahead of its time. After the Civil War, the American government created the United States Indian Peace Commission, which was "designed to put the task of negotiating with Native American tribes in the hands of 'civilian and military leaders with interest and competence in Indian affairs'" (Stern). For Irving, masculinity is much larger than physical conquests, paternalism, or land acquisition, but ideal frontier masculinity is embodied in a man who can keep the peace and spearhead effective negotiations. Racial fraternalism, imagined in Irving's frontier romance, proposes a form of masculinity that aligns more with peace movements and rejects unnecessary violence. Irving's ideal martial man is indeed a negotiator, an ally, and a man who forges relationships to ensure safe expansion. While Bonneville and his men stand ready to hunt, kill, and respond to threats, their diplomacy means they do not have to. The test for masculinity, according to Irving, is not in the act of violence but rather in diplomacy first and violence as a last resort.

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Abstract: Although student-driven film adaptations of literary works require a substantial amount of classroom time, careful scaffolding, and access to specific electronic resources, these projects can promote active learning, meaningful collaboration, and media literacy among students.

Introduction

In a widely-quoted statement on the interconnectedness of practice and theory, the influential filmmaker and theorist Lev Kuleshov argued: “Teaching filmmaking without being cognizant of the fundamental cinematic theories demeans film craft to the mere level of an amateur workshop. And the opposite: studying film history and theory without a corresponding experience in the elemental aspects of filmmaking leaves theoretical research without a solid basis, forcing students to plunge into abstraction.”¹⁰

Kuleshov’s statement about the need for theory and practice to inform one another applies not just to the teaching of filmmaking but to practically all forms of teaching and learning in the post-secondary literature classroom.

As part of a month-long, grant-funded workshop in the summer of 2017, I guided five small groups of local middle school and high school teachers (with three to four teachers per group) through some of the theoretical and practical aspects of planning and producing a short film adaptation of a scene of their choice in Harper Lee’s 1960 novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Only two of the teachers had prior experience with film-editing software, and none had previously transformed a short scene from a literary work into a short film. Over the course of some six hours, in increments of one-and-a-half hours spread across four consecutive afternoons, each group produced a short film adaptation of a scene of its choosing. I have used a similar process in Literature and Film, a lower-division undergraduate course required of students completing my university’s Secondary Education program in English or English Language Arts. This piece describes a general process to guide participants through the stages of creating a short film adaption of a literary work and illustrates the process by presenting the work completed by one group of teachers at each stage of the project.

Required Resources

¹⁰ quoted in Vlada Petric, “Relating Courses in Filmmaking and Film Studies,” *University Film Study Center Newsletter* 4, no. 5 (June 1974): 1.

- One or more smart phones or other video recording devices per group
- One or more computers equipped with video-editing software per group

Day 1: Reviewing the Concepts

Using two short scenes in the film *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962, dir. Robert Mulligan) that are not present in Lee's novel, I reviewed several formal concepts in film theory with the teachers. These concepts included composition (framing, foreground, background, etc.), lighting, camera position (distance, angle, movement, perspective, etc.), sound (narration, direct dialogue, soundtrack, synchronous and asynchronous sound, etc.), the filming process (shots, multiple takes, etc.), and the editing process (montage and continuity editing, transitions, etc.). Seated at computers loaded with the software program Camtasia, the participants practiced a series of basic film editing techniques: they spliced two short clips, deleted a short section within one of the clips, manipulated the dimensions of the frame, added a soundtrack, and converted the resulting video to mp4 format.¹

The participants then formed groups and discussed their possible choices for a scene in Lee's novel to film. I recommended picking a short, self-contained scene (some 2-3 pages from the novel) that included physical action and direct dialogue and that would allow each group to incorporate at least two formal concepts in their adaptation. As homework, the teachers completed their individual reading of Lee's novel and continued to think about possible scenes to film.

Day 2: Writing the Screenplay

In small groups, the teachers agreed on a specific scene and began writing the screenplay. They began with the text of the novel and made modifications as necessary. The teachers added or deleted material, and they frequently transformed summary dialogue or narration into direct dialogue and actions. As a group, they determined who would play which role and what exactly they would need to film the scene, paying attention to setting and props. They rehearsed the screenplay at least once and continued to make small modifications. They also began planning their use of specific formal elements of film. As homework, the teachers were instructed to practice their lines. (The overall success of the filming on Day 3 depended largely on the teachers' ability to embody their roles and to deliver their lines from

¹ Free video-editing software packages such as Window Media Maker or iMovie have many of the same functions as commercial software such as Camtasia.

memory, with some room for variation or improvisation, rather than to read their lines from a sheet of paper. In future workshops, I plan to ask participants to record how much time they spent practicing their lines, what challenges they faced, and how confident they felt before returning to the workshop the next day.)

Day 3: Filming the Scene

The teachers took stock of their props, settled on a filming location, reviewed the screenplay, and rehearsed a final time. Before each group headed to a different location in or outside the building, I reminded them to film their scene in multiple, short clips (of one minute or less) and to consider filming the entire content of the scene at least twice, preferably with a change in camera angle and/or distance in their second filming of the scene. The groups returned to the computer classroom after filming their scene and uploaded the raw, unedited footage to a shared drive. We reviewed the footage by the different groups and discussed editing strategies. I also used the opportunity to introduce the term “rushes” and to talk more about the film production process. No homework was assigned. (In future workshops, I plan to incorporate short, individual reflections by each person on the group dynamics in general and on the distribution of work among members of the group while filming.)

Day 4: Editing the Film

The groups pieced together sections of the series of clips they had filmed on the previous day. The members of each group initially clustered around one computer. In four groups, all members were involved to varying degrees throughout the editing process: asking questions, making suggestions of their own, and expressing their responses to others’ suggestions. In one group, however, three members left the editing process entirely to the fourth member. Again, no homework was assigned. (If I had incorporated individual written reflections on group dynamics and workload distribution earlier in this activity, I might have more easily identified and addressed the low level of involvement among members of that one group.)

Sample adaptation by one group of teachers

Day 1: The group chose a short passage (less than two full pages) at the beginning of chapter 3 of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, in which Walter Cunningham Jr. visits the Finch home at

lunch time and alarms Scout by pouring syrup all over his food. The selected passage reads, in part:

While Walter piled food on his plate, he and Atticus talked together like two men, to the wonderment of Jem and me. Atticus was expounding upon farm problems when Walter interrupted to ask if there was any molasses in the house. Atticus summoned Calpurnia, who returned bearing the syrup pitcher. She stood waiting for Walter to help himself. Walter poured syrup on his vegetables and meat with a generous hand. He probably would have poured it in his milk glass had I not asked what the Sam Hill he was doing.

Filming the scene as written required at least one interior room with a table and chairs and perhaps a useable door. Further, the scene required props for a dining room and a kitchen, including a pitcher of syrup and at least one plate of food. Other groups chose passages that called for a wheelchair and an outdoor setting (the porch scene with Mrs. Dubose); a paper bag and an outdoor setting (the courthouse lawn scene with Dolphus Raymond); a football, a newspaper, a small box, and an indoor setting (the scene announcing Mrs. Dubose's death); and pajamas or bathrobes, a blanket, and movement from an outdoor setting to an indoor setting (the night scene of the fire at Miss Maudie's home).

Day 2: The group's screenplay shows several places in which narration or summary dialogue in the novel was transformed into direct dialogue and action. For example, the group modified the syrup moment in their scene to include stage directions and direct dialogue:

Walter piles food on his plate.

Atticus: Have you had any problems with the boll weevils in your cotton,
Walter?

Walter: Do you have any molasses in the house, Mr. Finch?

Atticus calls: Calpurnia

Calpurnia comes into the dining room from the kitchen.

Atticus: Calpurnia, would you bring the syrup pitcher for Walter?

Calpurnia returns with the syrup pitcher on a silver platter. Walter pours a generous serving of syrup over his vegetables and then his meat. Calpurnia stands waiting for him to finish.

Scout: Walter, what in the Sam Hill are you doing?

Day 3: The group recorded at least 6 short clips, for a total of 3.5 minutes of film, closely following the screenplay and filmed in the order in which they appear in the screenplay: [clip 1](#), [clip 2](#), [clip 3](#), [clip 4](#), [clip 5](#), [clip 6](#). The two longest clips are just under one minute each and contain substantial dialogue. The shortest, with no dialogue, lasts only 12 seconds. While filming, the group members modified their screenplay. For example, they noted a lull between when Calpurnia leaves to retrieve the pitcher of syrup and when she returns with pitcher in hand. They added a brief, improvised exchange between Atticus and Scout that meshes with the content of the early chapters of the novel:

Atticus: Calpurnia.

Calpurnia enters.

Calpurnia: Yes sir, Mr. Finch.

Atticus: Could you get the syrup pitcher for Walter, please?

Calpurnia: Right away.

Calpurnia exits.

Atticus: How was your first day of school, Scout?

Scout: Alright, I guess. The teacher was fussing at me for the way I read.

Calpurnia returns with the syrup pitcher on a platter.

Calpurnia: Here you go, Walter.

Walter pours a generous serving of syrup over his vegetables and then his meat. Calpurnia stands waiting for him to finish.

While filming, the group made only one significant change to the camera distance, position, or angle: they adjusted the camera when shifting the scene from the dining room to the kitchen. However, they were clearly planning to make additional changes. As the syrup is being poured, one group member can be heard in the background explaining to another member: "We're just gonna do this in a close up-like edit..."

Day 4: The group used features in Camtasia to make formal changes to their finished



Figure 1: Initial shot versus edited shot

film. They added a title screen—with “Hush Your Fussin”—at the beginning of the film as well as a list of credits at the end. They used the crop tool in several places to “fill the frame,” focusing the shot on the actors and action and removing several distractors: the screen, the electronic display, and the outlets on the wall. They also changed the overall schema from full color to sepia to suggest the Depression-era setting of the novel. (See Figure 1.)

The teachers included a closeup of the syrup as it is poured. To add a bit of lightheartedness that was not entirely out of place with the humor inherent in the early chapters of Lee’s novel, and to replace the soft exchange between two off-screen group members, they incorporated a stanza from the 1951 song “Black Strap Molasses.” (See Figure 2.) As in Lee’s novel, the humor in the group’s short film helps make the heavy-handed didacticism more palatable to the audience.



Figure 2 Closeup of the Syrup Pouring, with Song

A comparison of Figures 1 and 2 also shows a strategic use of props. The teachers used different tablecloths and different food items to help the viewer distinguish between the two settings—the dining room table and the kitchen table—in their filmed scene.

The final version of the film runs 2 minutes and 42 seconds. [A captioned final version of the film is also available.]

Conclusion

In future semesters of Literature and Film and in future workshops with teachers, I plan to add a fifth day of reflection on each group's process and performance. The participants will view the film they created and follow along in the screenplay. Using a variation of the model of "Think–Pair–Square–Share," each person will write a short reflection on the overall experience, share that reflection first with other members of the group and then—as a group—share with everyone in the course or workshop.¹

For example, they might comment on the collaborative nature of the project and the distribution of labor within their group. They might reflect on the flexibility or rigidity of the process (noting that specific lines spoken in the film do not always match exactly with the words in the screenplay, for example, or lamenting that a literal translation from novel to film limited their creativity²). Additionally, they might write about the specific and general understanding and skills they gained by completing the group project.

Course instructors do not need extensive experience with staging or filming a literary work to plan and implement this sort of assignment. In my experience, participants quickly tap into what they already know about visual media and often learn quickly on their own how to achieve the effects for which they are aiming. The instructor needs to provide clear guidelines and formal constraints for the project (including allotted time and expected outcome), but the instructor also needs to learn to step back and, as stated by D. Heathcote, "to interfere very subtly," allowing students the space and opportunity to address challenges as they occur.

² For an overview of the active learning theories behind the technique of "Pair and Share," see ABLConnect at Harvard University at <https://ablconnect.harvard.edu/pair-and-share-research> .

³ For a discussion of the literal-traditional-radical continuum for talking about the range of possible adaptations of literature into film, see Chapter 1 in Linda Costanzo Cahir, *Literature into Film: Theory and Practical Approaches* (Jefferson: MacFarland, 2006).

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Abstract: In her semi-autobiographical stories, Zitkala-Ša critiques religious-centered Anglo-European education being forced upon Native American children as an instrument of political domination and rhetoric of “assimilation.” In the narrative, the Native women’s pedagogy, industry, labor, affection, and oral stories are contrasted with the “banking” practices of “paleface” middle-class teachers at the missionary boarding school. This paper argues that educated and served as a teacher in a boarding school, Zitkala-Ša strives to alert particularly an uninformed white audience about subordinating linguistic and cultural injustices in boarding schools while informing readers about empowering tribal education which forms the basis of critical thinking to fight for social change and sustainable democracy. Situated within the theoretical framework of critical pedagogy, this study examines the intersections between Indigenous values and critical pedagogy and the complexities between teaching and learning to better understand the Yankton way of life and the US government’s Indian education policy at the end of the century.

Introduction

Zitkala-Ša’s¹ semi-autobiographical stories published between 1900-1902 critiques religious-centered Anglo-European education being forced upon Native American children as an instrument of political domination and rhetoric of “assimilation.” The young narrator in “Impressions of an Indian Childhood” and “School Days of an Indian Girl” depicts her women-centered tribal upbringing in Lakota society and school experience in a Quaker boarding school by drawing a sharp contrast between her maternal Native epistemology and Anglo-European education which obliterates her indigenous identity with forced linguistic and cultural instructions. The young narrator’s veneration of Native women’s pedagogy, industry, labor, affection, and oral stories are contrasted with her bitter reproach about the “banking” practices of “paleface” middle-class teachers at the missionary school. The former cultivates passion for social responsibility, the intellectual development, and critical and creative thinking while the latter aims to replace Indigenous knowledge with that of Western to produce obedient English-speaking citizens. Educated and served as a teacher in a boarding school, Zitkala-Ša becomes a critical agent to alert particularly an uninformed white audience about subordinating linguistic and cultural injustices in boarding schools while informing readers about empowering tribal education which forms the basis of critical thinking to fight for social change and sustainable democracy. Situated within the theoretical framework of critical pedagogy, this study examines the intersections between Indigenous values and critical

¹ Gertrude Simmons is Zitkala-Ša’s birth name, and Gertrude Bonnin is her married name. She published stories under the name of Zitkala-Ša which means Red Bird in Lakota.

pedagogy and the complexities between teaching and learning to better understand the Yankton way of life and assimilationist Indian education policy at the end of the century.

Critical pedagogy adopts principles from critical theory associated with Frankfurt School of social theory and philosophy that “investigate[s] social change by providing knowledge of the forces of social inequality that can in turn, inform political action aimed at emancipation (or at least at diminishing domination and inequality)” (Rush 9). As critical theory emphasizes, critical pedagogy stresses the transformation of oppressive educational structures and challenges any form of domination with the aim of emancipation and self-determination of the individual. The primary concepts of critical pedagogy are developed in 1970s by Brazilian educational theorist Paulo Freire who considers education as a project for freedom. According to Freire,

Education either functions as an instrument that is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes “the practice of freedom,” the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. (34)

For individual and social transformation, critical pedagogy becomes an instrument and “a political and moral practice that provides the knowledge, skills, and social relations” and “enable students to explore the possibilities of what it means to be critical citizens while expanding and deepening their participation in the promise of a substantive democracy” (Giroux, *On Critical Pedagogy* 155). It rejects political indoctrination, values meaningful learning, offers students new ways of thinking about themselves in relation to the larger social and political forces, and encourages them to take the responsibility as informed citizenry to intervene in the structures of power and governance.

For critical pedagogy, educational practices should be meaningful, empowering, and transformative. It emphasizes transforming knowledge rather than consuming it, while it is against the anti-democratic and ant-intellectual educational models.² Critical pedagogy

² Freire explains the anti-democratic models with “‘banking’ concept of education as an instrument of oppression” versus “the ‘problem-posing’ education as an instrument for liberation” (7). While the banking model is based on student-teacher contradiction, problem-posing is world-mediated and stresses mutual process between student and teacher. In the banking model, “Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor....The more

responds to issues and conflicts of the time and is dedicated to create “democratic public spheres where individuals can think critically, relate sympathetically to the problems of others, and intervene in the world in order to address major social problems” (Giroux, *On Critical Pedagogy* 13). It allows students to question the unquestionable and the boundaries of knowledge and actively participate in the process of self-definition by focusing on “understanding the profound impact of neo-colonial structures in shaping education and knowledge” (Kincheloe 10). Being aware of hegemonic power structures follows the next stage of action for transformation. In this sense, critical pedagogy is about developing critical consciousness, evaluating institutions and the ideologies of authorities, questioning constructed realities, and taking social and political action. It lays out the power relations not only between the teacher and student, but also between dominant and subordinate groups, and the state and citizens. Education systems are political, and power, politics, and pedagogy simultaneously inform each other. Thus, critical pedagogy provides insights not only about educational practices of teachers and the policies of the government, but also the larger political, racial, social, and cultural issues in the nineteenth century.

Indigenous Education

The objects of critical pedagogy and Indigenous education intersect since developing the child’s sense of self in Indigenous educational policy is related to the ideas about gaining self-control and critical consciousness in critical pedagogy. The development of a child to a complete human being serving her own community is the essence of Indigenous educational approaches. For Indigenous people, “education has traditionally been a way to learn about life in ways that are directly tied to learning experiences involving nature, participant observation, hands-on practices, and storytelling,” and it focuses on “student self-awareness and identity, and that promotes critical thinking and critical consciousness” (Lee 2, 3). The diversity of experiential and hands-on learning contexts ranges from personal development activities to community-based experiences. Instead of a public school setting, students are educated within the community experiencing cultural worldviews, values, beliefs, and practices. The cultural transmission instils critical Indigenous consciousness and a sense of commitment to community in the child, and “The emphasis on community as a whole

students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world” (72, 73).

distinguishes Native American communities from Western in a variety of ways” (Knowles Jr. and Lovern 128). The cultural transmission occurs through connection with the community where experiential learning is practiced with dialogic method of teaching and learning. It is individually oriented, and self-social-and cultural understanding is cultivated.

“Impressions of an Indian Childhood,” combined with other stories and Zitkala-Ša’s non-fictional essays in *American Indian Stories* (1921), illustrates the tribal education the young narrator receives from her mother and the community whose educational methods depends on reflection, praxis, and dialogue that engage the child’s voice. The mother who is often “sad and silent” becomes the first teacher who educates her daughter about the history of the tribe, sovereignty, analytical, social, and communication skills, domestic economy, and civility. The meaningful dialogues between the mother and daughter similar to the Socratic discussion are based on asking and answering questions. This practice of argumentation is an essential step towards opening up the space of resistance towards authority, teaching students to think critically about the world around them, and recognizing interpretation and dialogue as a condition for social intervention and transformation in the service an unrealized democratic order (Giroux, *On Critical Pedagogy* 147).

The argumentative conversations stimulate intellectual curiosity and critical and reflective thinking about the child’s sense of self in relation to others and the world. In one of these dialogues, the daughter asks her mother if she can go to the river without her supervision. Referring to the forced removal of Native Americans from their land, the mother replies, “If the paleface does not take away from us the river we drink” (69). Because the mother poses a problem arousing her daughter’s curiosity about “the paleface,” young narrator follows with a second question: “Mother, who is this paleface?” (69). Using the question as an opportunity to describe the Indian-white relations, the mother replies, “My little daughter, he is a sham,—a sickly sham! The bronzed Dakota is the only real man” (69). The mother explains who the “paleface” is through a series of dichotomies of geographical background, skin color, and morals comparing the “paleface” with “bronzed Dakota” and “sham” with “real.” The mother leads her daughter to have a personal inquiry and comprehend the embedded power relations. The meaning making process about her place within these relations historically and socially helps the daughter gain insight and a new understanding about the circumstances that shaped them. With the awareness and self-knowledge, critical analysis begins to realize the networks and dynamics of power and knowledge. Before the narrator interacts with “the paleface” in boarding schools, she receives initial information

about them through her mother's biographic and historic explanations and first-hand experiences.

Through a critical pedagogy of place, concerned with the context, the mother shows how power works through spaces and allows the daughter to gain a socio-cultural perspective about the tribal history and the politics of land. She aims to foster the connection between the self and community, exploration of the past and present, and human and natural world. According to David Orr (1992), the study of place "has a significance in reeducating people in the art of living well where they are" (130). The mother underlines the struggles of human in connection with the land and connects the past and present to transfer history to her daughter. She uses hills to educate her daughter about "the paleface" by unveiling family history, which is directly connected to tribal history. Pointing at the hills where the narrator's uncle and sister are buried, the mother explains how they got sick and died on the way to the camp. She utters, "We travelled many days and nights ... we were driven, my child, driven like a herd of buffalo" (69-70). Ironically, years later, the daughter experiences the same fate with her ancestors when the narrator feels as "one of many little animals driven by a herder" on the first day in the boarding school (91). Her statement points out to the displacements of Native Americans due to the US government's removal policy by uncovering the past through the sociocultural analysis of colonialism that involves the daughter in the process of Indigenous epistemology. This allows the narrator to observe and critique oppressive power structures and envision alternative possibilities for her community. It fosters empowerment in her to protect and sustain the land, culture, language, and values.

By moving from the specific details about family members to a general conclusion about the tribal past, the mother uses inductive reasoning for experiential and intergenerational learning. Demonstrating the complex interrelationships between land and culture and the subjugation of people and the land, she mentions, "There is what the paleface has done! Since then your father has been buried in a hill nearer the rising sun. We were once very happy. But the paleface has stolen our lands and driven us hither. Having defrauded us of our land, the paleface forced us away" (69). Regarding land, Native Americans and Anglo-Europeans have different worldviews as Knowles, Jr. and Lovern explain

The Native American testimony focuses on discussions of sacred elements of land and the invaluable relationship between Tribal existence and the land as well as the

plants and animals that exist on the land. Contrastingly, the Western discussions focus on use of land for human consumption, the primary component of conservation discussions, and the scientific orientation toward resource development. (130)

While the land is connected to family, tribe, ancestors, and sacred for Indigenous people, in the hierarchical structure of Western world, it is a capital, property, and subordinate just like the Native people. The secular anthropocentric human-nature relationship disrupts Native Americans' sacred attachment to the land and environment. The mother adopts a pedagogy of place to underline the relationship between place and oppression, and how identities are shaped within material spaces. The dialogue between the mother and daughter instills the importance of human and non-human connection in the child and builds a sense of responsibility to protect the land and the community. Engaging the child with the history of land cultivates her body, spirit, and intellectual simultaneously and establishes her place within the ecological system as a part of it. It creates strong bonding with the land and consciousness of place that can broaden the scope of the child about cultural politics to act on her own situationality.

Although the land is taken from them, the mother strives to maintain tribal customs and traditions by passing them down to her daughter with interactive and participatory activities. The mother educates the daughter about domestic work, home economics, and bead working which develop her analytical skills and creative thinking. For instance, the mother works on small moccasins to teach her daughter one of the tribal traditions. The daughter carefully watches her mother, who has "buckskin in one hand and an awl in the other" and these hands-on classes are the beginning of "practical observation lessons" (74). The mother requires original designs for her "lessons in beading"; however, she also gives the daughter freedom about color and pattern choice. It suggests that the mother does not desire her daughter to repeat and memorize her designs; rather, she inspires her daughter to be creative by respecting her choices and decisions. However, the daughter is rebuked when her beadwork is not symmetrical. This instruction technique generates self-evaluation, reminding that she responsible for her creation. Encouraging hands-on learning, both Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi and Friedrich Fröbel "stress upon manual and expressional work of various kinds, weaving, gardening, modelling, bookbinding, drawing, and the like" (Hayward 95). The mother directs "the expressive impulse of the children, the art instinct" (Dewey, *The*

School 44) into tangible forms which is one of the many ways of leading children's interests in communication, construction, and artistic expression into creative embodiments.

Not only mothers, but also elders take responsibility of educating children about tribal civility and education during storytelling times, such as when the mother invites neighbors for dinner in summer. The narrator describes how she waits "wishing all the time that they would begin the stories [she] loved best" before each person takes turn to tell a legend, and when she cannot wait any longer, she whispers to her mother to "ask them to tell an Iktomi story" (72). In Lakota mythology, Iktomi is a traditional trickster character who is a "humanized representation of the spider," and trickster stories are used to convey moral values and proper behaviors to children audience (Hafen ix). Examining the role of storytellers and stories to transmit educational messages and promote wellness, Felicia Schanche Hodge et al. asserts,

These storytellers were teachers who shared the history and memory that contained the tribe's collective wisdom; they were trained to present stories in ways that reflected ancient knowledge. Their audience was expected to listen attentively from beginning to end, to learn these stories for future generations, and to maintain the continuity of the story through time. (3)

Discussing roles of adults and cultural activities in children's' learning, Barbara Rogoff mentions that "Storytelling, advising children on how to act, and correcting children with teasing are important forms of informal learning in many communities" since "the setting and the drama of the story create the context" (367). In addition, stories are used in a traditional pedagogical method among Native American tribes: "Stories are indexed for appropriate and inappropriate behaviors; they provide examples to emulate or to shun. They teach children and remind adults where they fit in, what their society expects of them, and how to live harmoniously with others and be responsible, worthy members of their tribes" (Hodge et al. 3).

During storytelling activities, "The learner is likely to be highly motivated by the opportunity to make a genuine contribution to the family through close participation and interaction in the sphere of adults, and by the assumption, shared with family and neighbors, that it is normal to learn the skill or information at hand" (Rogoff 371). When the storytelling time comes, the old woman starts her story: "The increasing interest of the tale aroused me, and I sat up eagerly listening to every word" (72). The narrator, who is not a passive listener

during these storytelling times, narrates and participates in the entertainment and “could not help joining them” when “the old women made funny remarks and laughed so heartily” (72). Gerald Vizenor claims, “Tribal identities would have no existence without active choices, the choices that are heard in stories and mediated in names; otherwise, tribal identities might be read as mere scriptural simulations of remembrance” (176). The storytelling time with adults stimulates the little girl’s imagination and she personalizes the objects around her; as she watches “the stars peeped down upon [her], one by one” (72). Furthermore, the storyteller and the listeners, wolves, owls, and the bright flames from the fire join the conversation through “howling,” “hooting,” and “leap[ing] up into the faces of the old folks as they [sit] around a great circle” (72).

The stories told by various members of the tribe prepare a fantastic setting where children can activate as well as cultivate their imagination. Stating that “the imagination is the medium in which the child lives,” Dewey argues, “the imagination is some special part of the child that finds its satisfaction in some one particular direction ... that of the unreal and make-believe, of the myth and made-up story” (*The School* 55). After the story of a warrior finishes, the narrator asks the meaning of the blue lines on the story teller’s chin. The old woman addresses her as “my grandchild,” indicating how elders and the community embrace children as family members, and how, mothers, fathers, and community elders become responsible for the education of children through storytelling.

As an outcome of their learning, children apply what they have heard and seen from the elders during playtime. They take the role of the storyteller and listeners; one of them “was telling of some heroic deed recently done by a near relative, the rest of [them] listened attentively, and exclaimed in undertones, ‘Han! Han!’ (yes! yes!) whenever the speaker paused for breath or sometimes for [their] sympathy” (75). About one of her favorite games, the narrator continues, “As the discourse became more thrilling, according to our ideas, we raised our voices in these interjections” (75). During these impersonations, children learn to be storytellers as well as attentive listeners. In addition, they learn manners, nuances of public speaking, rhetoric, and a tribal tradition passed down from generation to generation.

However, this intergenerational dialogic bonding is interrupted and later broken by the arrival of missionaries who are the harbingers of a new phase of education Native children will receive that alienate the children not only from their self but also the community in which they grew up with stories, maternal and communal affection, and care. The alienation of the narrator starts on the day she leaves her mother to go to an Eastern school with missionaries

who came to their village to recruit children. When the daughter leaves “the lonely figure” of her mother vanishing slowly, her heart fills with regret for being “in the hands of strangers” (86). In the narrative, the mother symbolizes the homeland, past, and history while young Zitkala-Ša is the present and future. The vanishing figure of the mother in the distance indicates the vanishing indigenous heritage and connection with the past. On a macro level, separation of the daughter from the mother symbolizes a separation of Native Americans from their mother-land due to force and imposed treaties of the US government. Zitkala-Ša portrays the fate of her tribe through the separation of the mother and daughter. As the lands of Native Americans are taken by the white man, she is also taken from her mother by “palefaces.”

The Indian Education Policy and Boarding Schools

Although there were mission schools among the Cherokee in 1801 and at Sale Creek and Hiwassee in 1803 (Knowles, Jr. and Lovern 57), the US government officially began to fund education efforts with The Civilization Fund Act of 1819 that encouraged religious organizations to “Christianize and civilize” Native Americans, in other words, the church and state cooperated to work on the project of “civilization.” By the end of the century, a series of Acts were passed and treaties were signed between the Indian Nations and the US government, and they had substantial impact on Indigenous life due to the allotment of Indian lands, reservation system, and assimilative educational policies. The Indian Removal Act in 1830 displaced Native Americans while systematic efforts began to educate them through vocational training to prepare them for the industrialized society. When the Act of 1882 allowed the abandoned army barracks to be used as schools for Native Americans, boarding schools era started with the foundation of several schools over the country. In fifteen states, twenty-five schools were under the control of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) by the end of the century (Grande 17). The main purpose of Indian education policy implemented in these schools with the support of the federal government was to civilize and thus assimilate Indian children through destroying Indigenous customs, the cutting of hair, English-only mandates, and forced religious education. In 1889, the Commissioner Thomas J. Morgan summarizes the Indian educational policy, writing, “When we speak of the education of the Indians, we mean that comprehensive system of training and instruction which will convert them into American citizens. . . .The Indians must conform to ‘the white man’s ways,’ peaceably if they will, forcibly if they must” (qtd. in Knowles, Jr. and Lovern 71). Physically separated from their

families due to schools historically located away from their native setting, Indian children were placed in a new environment and forced to abandon their culture, religion, language to conform to White values. The intent of such system was simply to deculturalization by ripping students of their Indigenous heritage. The “inferior” students were immersed in the “superior” Eurocentric Western worldview.

Being both a student and then teacher in a boarding school, Zitkala-Ša depicts what it means to receive Western education, which is the primary cause of her alienation along with physical, emotional, and cultural displacement. The school depicted in the narrative is a “massive brick building,” where the narrator trembles with “fear and distrust of the palefaces” and “was frightened and bewildered as the captured young of a wild creature” (86). She feels dehumanized on her first day of school at the age of eight when “rosy-cheeked paleface woman” tosses her in the air, as opposed to her mother, who never “made a plaything of her wee daughter” (89). Her private space is invaded, and she is treated like a toy rather than a human in her new school. After her mother’s lessons, she is “wild with surplus spirits, and found joyous relief in running loose in the open,” as opposed to the schoolroom, where she is in a “small white-walled prison” and “alive, in [her] tomb,” but “destitute” (75, 112). This metaphorical death is due to “lost freedom” because “homeless and heavy-hearted,” she had a new “life among strangers” (89, 101). Instead of being in “a cold race whose hearts were frozen hard with prejudice,” she wishes to go back to her village to unite with her mother (101). Describing herself as “a wild creature,” the narrator indicates that the school building functions as a cage for Native American children when a “paleface woman” stands in front of them “in a halo of authority” (96). Freire states, “Oppression is domesticating” (51), and the narrator’s statement suggests “civilizing” Native American children as if domesticating wild animals. The word choice highlights the dichotomy of wild/civilized, creature/human, and subordination/authority and how she perceives herself inferior in a new school environment.

For her alienation, the teacher-narrator blames Western education, writing, “In the process of my education I had lost all consciousness of the nature world about me” (111). Alienation from “the nature world” symbolizes her estrangement to her past, Native American identity, and tribal culture. On the other hand, she does not find belonging in Western culture and “made no friends among the race of people [she] loathed” (112). As a result, “Like a slender tree” she “had been uprooted from [her] mother, nature, and God” (112). The conflict between the two worlds leaves her in a limbo, without roots, past, or faith. Describing the oppressed as “dual beings, ‘housing’ the oppressor within themselves,” Freire mentions that

“they cannot be truly human” (95) due to the oppressor’s dehumanization. Since the narrator “could read and write” the language of the oppressor, she suffers from duality, saying, “I was neither a wee girl nor a tall one; neither a wild Indian nor a tame one” (97). Internalizing the consciousness of the oppressor, the narrator has an identity paradox and suffers as a contradictory and divided being who cannot find a place in either Indigenous/tribal or white American culture.

With linguistic, cultural, religious, and physical enforcements, Native children were stripped physically and emotionally from their past and heritage depicted in one scene where the violent teachers try to integrate Native American children into the social structure of the white world by cutting their hair, in other words, cutting the relationship with their past. Although Judéwin, one of the oldest children, suggests submitting to relentless teachers, the narrator resists verbally, shouting, “No, I will not submit! I will struggle first!” and later physically “by kicking and scratching wildly” (90). Cutting hair is going against her first teacher—mother’s teachings, as she explains, “Our mothers had taught us that only unskilled warriors who were captured had their hair shingled by the enemy” and “short hair was worn by mourners, and shingled hair by cowards” (90). “The enemy” is “paleface women” while “unskilled warriors” are Native American children who are forced to adopt a physical change, which is the beginning of an assimilation process. Cutting hair is a physically forced practice of banking education to fit Native children into the school system of Western culture. Students are expected to become receiving objects and forced to accept the world of institutionalized oppression presented by their teachers. Besides her voice and sense of self, the narrator loses her spirit when the scissors cut her braids stating, “Then, I lost my spirit” and “I no longer felt free to be myself, or to voice my own feelings” (86). In Native American epistemology, “The self is comprised of three elements: mind, body, and spirit” (Knowles, Jr. and Lovern 129). Each of them is different aspects of the self and internally and externally related. The teachers, however, are determined to eradicate the Indigenous cultural context of children by “colonize[ing] the mind and enslave[ing] the body” (Malott 122) and turning them into objects.

In order to support language and religious instructions along with domestic training in boarding schools such as Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania, first of its kind, students were sent to live with “white families” during vacations. Former lieutenant and the founder of Carlisle, Henry R. Pratt (1881) overtly states, “Taking the students away from association with those who spoke his own language, and placing him where he could hear and speak nothing but English” improved their English while making them more “self-reliant,

and stimulated to greater industry,” (188) and quotes from the letters of families, all of whom were very pleased to have an Indian child work for them. Through this “individualizing” process as “the most rapid and complete plan,” Pratt (1881) asserts students learn civilized habits and gain knowledge “far better than we can give at this school” (188). Besides this assimilation agenda, Pratt (1881) also reflects his concerns about the future of Native Americans, writing, “He [shall] be fitted to take his place as a citizen in this country, a man among men, when he shall no longer be treated like a spoiled child, alternately petted and punished, but when he shall have alike the privileges, freedom, and responsibilities of other citizens” (188). In 1916, Dewey criticized the idea of education as “a process of preparation or getting ready” for “the responsibilities and privileges of adult life” (*Democracy* 63), while, according to Pratt, Native Americans should metaphorically and literally grow up into civilized white men as well as possess certain qualities in order to be considered human.

Educated in a Quaker-run institution that kept “children for three years, with no vacation,” the narrator with other children are forced to learn English and banished to use their Native languages since “students were not expected to become bicultural but rather to substitute the Christian majority culture for their own” (Spack, “Disengagement” 174). English was taught “not as an additional language but rather as the only language worth of acquisition” (Spack, “Disengagement” 175). As the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1882, Hiram Price states, “The Indian must be made to understand that if he expects to live and prosper in this country he must learn the English language, and learn to work” (qtd. in Knowles, Jr. and Lovern 70). In 1887, another Commissioner J. D. C. Atkins writes, “The first step to be taken toward civilization, toward teaching the Indians the mischief and folly of continuing in their barbarous practices, is to teach them the English language” (qtd. in Knowles, Jr. and Lovern 70-71). The statements of both commissioners highlight the purpose of only-English campaign in boarding schools to “kill the Indian and save the man.” Stephenson C. Malott claims, “The primary goal of replacing the Indigenous culture with the foreign settler culture was to transform the peoples’ relationship to the land, making them willing accomplices in their own subjugation and rendering the process of colonization that much easier for the oppressor” (121). It manifests how these institutions were designed to promulgate white American hegemonic pedagogies to replace Native American linguistic and cultural heritage.

Contrary to mutual communication between children and their mothers, the language barrier between “paleface teachers” and Native American students becomes the primary

challenge in the boarding school. This is one of the reasons why “the ears of the palefaces could not hear [young Zitkala-Ša]” on the first night of the school when both mother and aunt are not “near to wipe [her tears] away” (89). Since teachers cannot communicate through language, they use bells as a means of communication. “A loud-clamoring bell” wakes the children up in early winter mornings and it is rung again for “roll call” (96). Another small bell is tapped three times before meals, meaning “stand up,” “stand still,” and “you can eat after the prayer.” “Still deaf to English language,” all the narrator hears are “harsh noises” such as bells or “annoying clatter of shoes on bare floors” and “many voices murmuring an unknown tongue” that imprison her in a “bedlam” (92, 89). The school turns into a prison and a mental hospital where the narrator feels lost while voices around her become foreign. Gazes, stares, and harsh voices are the new ways of non-verbal communication instead of English—the new language.

The language barrier leaves Native American students, voiceless, creating more trouble, such as misunderstandings between the teachers and children who are punished due to their lack of language ability. In traditional education, Knowles, Jr. and Lovern mention, “Students who adapt, adopt, and succeed in the dominant system are rewarded. Those who struggle or do not adapt, adopt, and succeed are deemed “failures” and are designated a lesser position in the public school system” (135). As a result of teacher’s ignorance and children’s language incompetency, many misunderstandings occur and bring “unjustifiable frights and punishments into [children’s] little lives” (93). The narrator narrates an incident about children who say “No” when the teacher asks, “Are you going to obey my words the next time?” (92). Although one of the oldest and the only English speaker, Jedéwin teaches them to say “Yes,” he cannot predict the question of the teacher. Ultimately, children are scolded for playing with snow and giving the wrong answer to their teacher, who completely misses the point since children do not understand English (93). By being indifferent to a child’s background, the paleface teacher ignores students’ previous language skills and personal histories while forcing them to produce new knowledge and expecting correct answers to her questions in an unfamiliar language. However, without building a connection between their previous and new knowledge, the teacher demands obedience from children who cannot comprehend her alienating rhetoric.

Because boarding schools had English-only directive rejecting bilingual education, Native American students were not allowed to use their native languages. This practice ignores child’s cultural and linguistic background because it “not only changes the child’s

linguistic orientation to the world but also her ontological and phenomenological position shifts as well” (Knowles Jr. and Lovern 163). If students violated this rule, “disciplinary measures including solitary confinements and beatings were used” in many off-reservation schools (Spack, *America’s* 35). bell hooks (1994) defines standard English as “the oppressor’s language” and “the language of conquest and domination” 168) used as a weapon to shame, humiliate, and colonize while the language barrier gets deeper and deeper when the narrator suffers “in silence rather than to appeal to the ears of [teachers] whose open eyes could not see [her] pain,” and she passes days like “a dumb sick brute” (96). Discussing Zitkala-Ša’s use of silence, Elizabeth Wilkinson claims that “the lack of communication is not a problem of language difference but is a defect on the part of the white educators of perceptions and sympathy generally” (50). Zitkala-Ša sarcastically implies that the teachers do not need a language to see the damage they cause in those children. On the other hand, the silence of the oppressed “suggests a structure of mutism in the face of the overwhelming force of the limit-situations” (Freire 106). However, Freire states that the oppressed who “are apt to react in a passive and alienated manner,” like the narrator, “tend to try out forms of rebellious action” little by little (64).

Conscientizacao: Decolonizing the Mind

The language barrier diminishes gradually after a year when the narrator expresses herself in broken English which activates her agency, transforms her disadvantaged situation, and launches a sense of empowerment. She liberates her mind by reconceptualization of antidemocratic schooling and forced language learning. Regarding the relationship between language and power, hooks states, “Language disrupts, refuses to be contained within boundaries” (167). The narrator uses misunderstandings as a way of retaliation against the teachers, saying, “As soon as I comprehended a part of what was said and done, a mischievous spirit of revenge possessed me” (93). With the acquisition of the new language, the lost spirit of the narrator is replaced by a “mischievous spirit.” It provides a new way of thinking and perceiving the world. After the language of the oppressor grants her a mischievous spirit, she begins doing “evil” deeds against teachers who brutalized Native American children due to their lack of English abilities. For example, she is sent to the kitchen to mash the turnips for dinner as a punishment for a conduct. Taking the risk of being punished again, the narrator smashes the turnip jars for revenge and feels “triumphant.” When she sees that no turnip is served for the dinner, she expresses, “I whooped in my heart

for having once asserted the rebellion within me” (94). Her act is violent and transgressive because she does not obey her teacher’s order and breaks the jars. Through violence, she speaks the language of the oppressor with the hope to restore her damaged freedom and lost spirit. The narrator’s defiance is a form of resistance discussed by hooks, who mentions that English, the oppressor’s language, “would need to be possessed, taken, claimed as a space of resistance” (hooks 169). The rebellious narrator creates this space through misunderstandings in order to recover from trauma and liberate herself in language.

The more the narrator improves her English, the more she uses the language of the oppressor as a destructive instrument to talk back against the dominant discourse. Through literacy, she critically reads herself and the world and establishes her own identity. After winning first prize in an oratorical competition at Earlham College, which Zitkala-Ša attended from 1895 to 1897, she attended the State Oratorical Contest and won second prize (Spack, “Disengagement” 175). The narrator depicts her experience in these competitions and how she not only represents her school, but also her people who are silenced, Othered, and displaced. Seeing students’ racist looks, stating, “Here again was a strong prejudice against my people,” and “the slurs against the Indian that stain the lips of our opponents” bother her before the speech (102). Uncomfortable stares turn into verbal insults when some college students draw a “forlorn Indian girl” and write “squaw” on a white flag. Despite the negativity and insult to her community, the narrator wins one of the awards in the competition. Satisfied with “the little taste of victory,” she feels “the evil spirit” inside when “the white flag dropped out of sight,” suggesting the triumph she gains due to her mastery in English. As Craig S. Womack suggests that Native writing and “language as invocation ... will upset the balance of power” (17), the narrator power relations through her speech used as a venue to represent and talk on behalf of her people.

Through critical reflection, the narrator problematizes the situation of her community and seeks potential solutions for both her oppression and the institutional and ideological subjugation of her people. Regarding critical reflection, Gordon E. Dehler et al. mentions, “They activate prior knowledge, relate old to new in reflective ways, reach conclusions, and assess those conclusions before settling upon them. When this occurs, students have become independent or, in the language of critical pedagogy, ‘emancipated’ learners” (503). The narrator gains the ability to assess the problem by analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating and activates the process of decolonizing her mind.

Decolonization is to challenge colonialism through critical consciousness of one's self and the world. It is the realization of how power and knowledge is employed for domination and how liberating the mind from hegemonic structures renders to possible change. One of the important components of decolonization is to uncover the history. Winola Wheeler describes,

Decolonization is about empowerment—a belief that situations can be transformed, a belief and trust in our own peoples' values and abilities, and a willingness to make change. It is about transforming negative reactionary energy into the more positive rebuilding energy needed in our communities. (qtd. in Wilson 71)

The process of recognizing dominant ideas and confrontation with them are defined as “decolonization” which also “means unlearning much of what dominant culture and schooling teaches, and learning more socially just and ecologically sustainable ways of being in the world” (Gruenewald 6). The critical perception of reality leads to transforming action and decolonization that “moves us beyond mere survival and becomes a means of restoring health and prosperity to our people by returning to traditions and ways of life that have been systematically suppressed” (Wilson 71). Freire defines this process as *conscientizacao*, “learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (Freire 35). The first stage of this critical consciousness is the confrontation with the culture of domination (54). This confrontation occurs when the oppressed perceive the world of oppression differently. The second stage is “the expulsion of the myths created and developed in the old order” (55). It is an act of resistance to act upon the social injustices through Consciencization— “the freeing up of the Indigenous mind from the grip of dominant hegemony” in order to achieve transformation (Smith 2). Thus, reflection and action are prerequisite of transformation. Individuals are aware of their own potential and value to transform the oppressive elements and create a change for them and for the community.

Reflection upon her situationality leads Zitkala-Ša to use the language in diverse ways for cultural and political agendas and to take action in her personal life and her community. Representing the oppressed who “participate in the revolutionary process with an increasingly critical awareness of their role as Subjects of the transformation” (Freire 127), she changes her status from an object to a “Subject” and utilizes literacy/language to reproduce a social and political discourse to develop a critical and liberating dialogue with herself and the reader. This creative way of expression is “both a medium and a constitutive force for human agency

and political action” (Giroux, *Theory and Resistance* 227) to challenge the authorities of literary, political, and cultural power structures. She critically intervenes in the white world and rhetoric of domination and is aware that “To be voiceless in a society is to be powerless, and literacy skills can be emancipatory only to the degree that they give people the critical tools to awaken and liberate themselves from their often mystified and distorted view of the world” (Giroux, *Theory and Resistance* 228). She not only learns the mechanics of reading and writing in English, but also uses it to share the struggle of the oppressed with the world to produce Native narratives.

Not only speeches, but also writing stories, essays, and tribal legends, Zitkala-Ša uses literature to have a dialogue with the reader and call for political and social reform. Entering the literary scene with stories published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, she challenged the stereotypical depictions of Native Americans in conventional literature. Addressing the cultural and language loss by engaging the reader in the process of enacting transformative change, Zitkala-Ša envisions facilitating collective action. She reclaims Indigenous identity and heritage and engages in the debates about American identity by claiming Native Americans’ rights as citizens and challenging mainstream misrepresentations in order to create new discourse. Informed by Lakota culture, her creative writings are resistance against white encroachment and various forms of pacifications for cultural dominance. Informed theoretically, stories transform the structures of power in a concrete context. They are a space where theory and praxis merges to transform the oppressive realities. In addition, the stories are the production of both creative and critical thinking as Sharon Bailin and Harvey Siegel mention the relationship between analytical and generative aspect of thinking: “An individual first researches a problem in a logical, analytical way (critical thinking), then suspends critical judgement and generates large numbers of ideas (creative thinking), then reactivates critical judgement to evaluate the proposed solutions (critical thinking)” (187). Stories are generated ideas of evaluation about the problem of oppressive education. This innovative approach is a critical response to the problem’s solution. Although Western hegemonic indoctrination influences how Zitkala-Ša perceives herself and the others, she is informed by her Indigenous background to enter the critical dialogue about social, economic, and political forces for institutional reform in government policies. Zitkala-Ša writes to defend Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies of knowledge by highlighting that the subordination in school within educational context expands to a larger domination of Indigenous people in political sense. Her stories underline the importance of democratic education where students are

accepted with their cultural backgrounds and respected, and the object of education should not be a practice of imposing one culture while erasing the other. Critical pedagogy comes into play here to change the structures of schools as social institutions which maintain the status quo and promote inequalities. The relationship between democracy and pedagogy offers the possibility of change outside the boundaries of the classroom by producing alternative bodies of knowledge produced by marginalized groups.

Conclusion

As an influential Native American writer of the nineteenth century, Zitkala-Ša proposes a critique on cultural sovereignty through Western education in her semi-autobiographical stories compiled in *American Indian Stories* (1921). To decolonize and deconstruct Western epistemologies, she utilizes her stories as pedagogical materials to inform the reader about the oppressive practices in boarding schools merely founded and operated for the purpose of “civilizing” Native American children. The inhumane practices implemented in the boarding schools demonstrate how education is used as an instrument of domination rather than liberation. According to critical pedagogy, education should liberate and foster intellectual and emotional empowerment for the better transformation of society. It focused on cultivating critical consciousness of power relations and realities and act upon to transform them. Depicting the relationship between schooling and wider society, young Zitkala-Ša in the narrative becomes aware of the oppressive structures in the boarding school and act to change it by using English as a resistance. Since schools are sites of sociocultural reproduction and historically play a role for the establishment of dominant ideology and the rationality for civil obedience to the authority, she places her resistance within the wider context to show how power is not only produced in schools but in everyday institutions. Her fictional and non-fictional writings aim to defy the Indian educational policy along with other hegemonic political and cultural policies forced upon Native Americans.

Showing alternative identities in the Western world is liberatory, and Zitkala-Ša provides compelling insight and new ways of understanding about power and knowledge that shapes everyday life and experiences. As a revolutionary praxis, her creative writing is a way of acting on the world to change it. On one hand, it honors Indigenous knowledge, local customs, practices, and values while on the other, it shows how such critical and creative means are essential for material and social transformation. Empowered by her culture as a fully developed person, Zitkala-Ša produces a Native perspective for the betterment of both

Indigenous and white communities and reminds the reader the possibility of change through democratic education policies. Telling her story in English, used to obliterate Native culture, is ironically serve for the physical, cultural, and literary rejuvenation and survival of the very same culture. By critically using language and literature as a means of expression, she demands cultural sovereignty through democratization in education because to become aware and critically consciousness about sovereignty cultivates emotional responses for social change. Her literary endeavor is educational against the ideology and the curriculum of the dominant culture in a way to highlight the importance of Indigenous educational philosophies and transmitting it to younger generations.

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Abstract: It is common for literature professors to point to empathy as a direct result of reading, and we often use this result as a defense of the classes we teach and, sometimes, as a defense of our jobs. In a world increasingly looking for objective, quantifiable results, literature professors continue to scramble to find ways to justify what we do. Although far from quantifiable, empathy-as-outcome remains one of our go-to answers. This defense often takes for granted empathy-as-outcome, though, and any literature professor is well aware of how empathy is by no means a guaranteed outcome of reading, especially not for our students. With this in mind, this essay echoes similar calls for intentional and explicit efforts in our classrooms to create reading experiences and class discussions in which empathy is the intended outcome.

Specifically, George Saunders's short story, "Puppy," from his 2013 collection *Tenth of December*, is used as an extended example of how a text can accommodate discussions of empathy in the classroom. "Puppy" focuses on two main characters, Marie and Callie, who have a brief interaction centered on one getting a puppy from the other. In a quick succession of events, the story presents challenges to students related to viewing the actions of others without judgment or bias. To put it simply, "Puppy" challenges students by calling for empathy for both Marie and Callie while making those empathetic readings particularly challenging and uncomfortable. Ultimately, this essay describes in-class experiences of teaching "Puppy" in a sophomore survey course and uses these experiences to offer an answer to our ongoing challenge of how to actually achieve empathy as an outcome in our classrooms—an outcome we so readily welcome and so desperately desire.

As teachers of literature, many of us use the term "empathy" often. We regularly cite empathy as a central byproduct of reading, using this as one of our main defenses of the utility and usefulness of reading. In a society constantly asking, we claim literature's value to be its role as a road to empathy. In his aptly titled essay, "Literature and Empathy," Michael Fischer takes a close look at this empathy-as-defense of literature, mapping out nuances and ultimately citing literature as a device for tangible change in our lives, a tool to impact our everyday interactions with other people "in supermarkets, movie theaters, and other public places" (459). As Fischer says, "Literature can regenerate these interactions by awaking empathy in us—with profound long-term political consequences" (459). This connection made between literature and empathy is commonplace in literature classrooms, as I said above and as exemplified in Kathryn Warren's 2017 piece from *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Warren begins the piece with the same line she uses during the first day of every literature class she teaches: "Reading literature makes us more empathetic" (B16).

Like Fischer and Warren, I've given much attention in my classrooms and in my own head to this relationship between literature and empathy, and I have made intentional effort in my classes to depict the relationship to my students. In what follows, I present ways in

which I try to draw out the connection between literature and empathy in my sophomore-level survey course of American literature after 1900. In this class I use short stories from authors such as James Baldwin, Sandra Cisneros, and Lorrie Moore to facilitate in-class discussions about seeing other people in ways we did not before. These are not the only texts we read in the class, but they—along with a specific story from George Saunders—are the ones I most overtly tie to discussions of empathy. In this essay I present my pedagogical strategies with a specific Saunders story, “Puppy,” and how I try to use this story as an overt lesson on empathy. “Puppy” forces me to consider a perspective different than my own in particularly powerful ways, and I value the story’s ability to do the same for a large portion of my students. If empathy is a valuable outcome of reading, as my colleagues and I so often claim, it is imperative for me to find ways to actually seek and discuss this outcome in the classroom. I see stories like “Puppy” as especially effective tools for doing just this, enabling my students to earnestly consider lives different from their own, while simultaneously being confronted with their own preconceived notions and false assumptions of others.

Originally published in *The New Yorker* in 2007, “Puppy” is one of ten stories collected in Saunders’s *Tenth of December* (2013). Compared to some of the other stories in the collection, “Puppy” is relatively short—less than 15 pages—and straightforward. The first story in *Tenth of December*, “Victory Lap,” alternates between three characters in a rather discomfiting way, including made up words (“Egads!” [4]; “Yoinks” [11]), untranslated French, and italicized stream-of-consciousness. “Escape from Spiderhead” is almost 50 pages long with geographical diagrams of a sexual family tree and more made up words (“MobiPak™” [45] and “Darkenfloxx™” [55]). Another story, “Exhortation,” is written as an interoffice memo, while “The Semplica Girl Diaries” is more than 50 pages long and takes the form of a series of short journal entries from a trafficked woman serving as a lawn ornament for a rich family. As these short descriptions highlight, *Tenth of December* is full of stories that challenge readerly expectations of form, perspective, and content, and long-time readers of Saunders have come to expect this. His stories have always done this, with perhaps no better example than *Lincoln in the Bardo* (2016), his one full-length novel that is—somehow—unlike any novel written before it. Compared to the experimentalism and defamiliarization of these other Saunders stories, “Puppy” is rather simple.

The story alternates between the perspectives of two women, Marie and Callie. It starts with Marie, a wealthy mother of two on a “Family Mission”: to pick up a puppy from

Callie's house, a poor mother of three desperate to get rid of this puppy to make her husband happy because they cannot afford to feed it. We know Marie is rich because she drives a Lexus (35) and her son, Josh, has his face stuck in his Game Boy, playing a game for which Marie considers buying him "the Italian Loaves Expansion Pak" (41) as a reward later. Marie reflects on how her husband, Josh, does not ask questions about what she spends on her credit card (33). On the other hand, we know Callie is poor because of the condition of her house: there are "dog turds" on the rug (38), a spare tire on the dining-room table (38), and a "crankshaft on a cookie sheet" (41). Callie finds relief in a reminder to herself that she has "sixty [dollars] hidden away" (42), revealing her lack of financial security. While Marie and Callie share the same physical space for only a handful of minutes in the story, it is in this interaction where Saunders so brilliantly challenges his readers. The structure of the story seduces the reader into seeing each woman in a certain way, but almost immediately forces us to reconsider those initial judgments.

We begin with Marie in the car with her two kids, Josh and Abbie. We get a glimpse into some of Marie's inner thoughts, including her self-talk. Almost immediately we can sense Marie's self-consciousness and insecurities, trying to get her kids to pay attention to things outside of the car and working to convince herself how great her life is and how great her children have it. This is highlighted in a quick comparison she makes to her own childhood: "Oh, family laughter was golden; she'd had none of that in her own childhood" (32). The overt use of exclamation points and lines like "ha ha ha!" (31), "Oh, God, what a beautiful world!" (34), and "Ho HO, ho HO!" (35) further emphasize Marie's desperation to believe in the goodness of her life. She is sure she loves her kids and is giving them a great life. She thinks to herself: "These were not spoiled kids. These were *well-loved* kids" (34). Again, she says this in direct comparison to her own past in which she was left "standing in a blizzard for two hours after a junior-high dance" (34). Marie would never do this to her own kids. She is not that mother. She is also not the mother that "locked one of them in a closet (a closet!) while entertaining a literal ditchdigger in the parlor" (34). The first section of the story ends with Marie thanking God for her blessed life and for "grace, and new chances every day to spread that grace around" (35).

From here we immediately switch to Callie's perspective, and Saunders wastes no time making it clear how different her life is from Marie's. Our first view of Callie is of her looking out her back window at her son, Bo, who is playing in the backyard. We are not exactly sure what he is doing, but the stakes are rather high, as Callie thinks to herself: "When Bo

got older, it would be different. Then he'd need his freedom. But now he just needed to not get killed" (35). We learn that Bo tends to run away, and one time he even ran across an interstate. As Callie puts it: "Darted. That's how he crossed streets" (35). Bo ran away, and his doctor admonished Callie that if she does not "get this under control," the boy is "going to end up dead" (35). We learn that Bo is on medication that makes him "grind his teeth and his fist would suddenly pound down. He'd broken plates that way, and once a glass tabletop and got four stitches in his wrist" (36). It is clear Bo has significant health problems, and it is also quite clear Callie's situation is not adequately geared to properly handle them, as indicated from the information earlier about Bo escaping the backyard more than once before and being found in dangerous situations. Callie also has financial concerns, as mentioned earlier, and we know she cannot afford to feed this puppy, which is why she is so hopeful Marie and her kids will take it. She also wants the puppy to be taken so as to relieve her husband, Jimmy, of the horrible task of having to put the puppy down, which we learn he has done previously "that time with the kittens" (36). Whereas Marie's life is one of comfort and privilege, Callie's is assuredly one of struggle and desperation.

Midway through the story, we learn exactly what Bo is doing in the backyard, and we get this information through the view of Marie. After arriving at Callie's house and seeing the disarray mentioned above, Marie pulls aside the blinds and

was shocked, so shocked . . . to see a young boy, just a few years younger than Josh, harnessed and chained to a tree, via some sort of doohickey . . . When the boy ran, the chain spooled out. He was running now, looking back at her, showing off. When he reached the end of the chain, it jerked and he dropped as if shot. (39-40)

To make the image even worse, he then takes a drink of water from a dog bowl (40). Marie is understandably horrified by what she sees, and when Josh joins her at the window, "she let him look" because she thinks this image will teach him how "the world was not all lessons and iguanas and Nintendo. It was also this muddy simple boy tethered like an animal" (40). Not knowing Marie has just seen Bo chained to the tree in the backyard, Callie nonchalantly asks Marie what they are going to name the puppy, to which Marie responds, "I'm afraid we won't be taking him after all" and quickly leaves the house. Back in the Lexus, Abbie is in tears about leaving the puppy, but Marie stands by her decision: "Marie was not going to contribute to a situation like this in even the smallest way. Simply was not going to do it" (41). In fact, the last thoughts we get from Marie concern her calling Child Welfare where she knew

someone who would “snatch this poor kid way so fast it would make that fat mother’s thick head spin” (41).

Saunders presents us with a situation that, by any measure, is horrible. A young kid, chained by the neck to a tree and drinking water from a dog bowl—who can blame Marie for her reaction? Would we not all react in the same way? *Of course* Child Welfare should be called! *Of course* Callie is a horrible mother! The brilliance of the story, though, is the manner in which we first share in Marie’s disgust, but then are forced to confront a much more complicated truth to the situation. Saunders manages this by not having the story end with Marie. Instead, the last two pages jump back to Callie’s perspective, this “fat faced” woman who has chained her young son to a tree in her backyard.

As mentioned earlier, we learn at the beginning of the story about the problems Callie faces with Bo. We know he has escaped the backyard more than once, and we know his tendency to run has put him in life-threatening situations. From Callie’s perspective, the chain around his neck is a logical—although temporary—solution to the problem. As she thinks early in the story, “Today he didn’t need the meds because he was safe in the yard, because she’d fixed is so *perfect*” (36). From her perspective, Callie is doing exactly what she is supposed to do to keep her son safe. Once Marie and her children storm out, the story ends with a final scene in which Callie does something perhaps as horrific as chaining Bo to the tree: she takes the puppy to the field behind her house to kill it. As mentioned before, they cannot afford to feed another animal, and since Marie is not going to take it, Callie knows the only option is for Jimmy to kill it as he did previously with the kittens. We are told that experience impacted Jimmy, though, so Callie’s idea to do the killing herself is actually an effort to help Jimmy by “making his life easier” (43). She is not happy about it, to be sure, and she has trouble accepting what she is about to do. But she reminds herself why she is doing it, which also serves as a reminder to the reader why she is doing it.

While walking towards her eventual destination, she considers the nature of love: “Maybe that’s what love was: liking someone how he was and doing things to help him get even better” (43). She first thinks of this in relation to her killing of the dog and how it will help Jimmy, but the story ends with her thinking about this definition in relation to her decision to chain Bo to the tree. For Callie, love means accepting people for who they are and doing what you can to make their lives better. This is exactly what she does for Bo: “Like Bo wasn’t perfect, but she loved him how he was and tried to help him get better” (43). She hopes for a happy life for Bo in the future, and that all starts with him being safe in the present. We know

he runs away, so to keep him safe she must keep him at home. We also know he is miserable when stuck inside all day, where he “ended the day screaming in bed, so frustrated” (43). But in the backyard he is able to look at flowers, to get sunlight, and to have some sense of freedom. The backyard is also where he has escaped in the past, ending up in life-threatening situations. So, to be in the backyard, he must be contained in some way, and the way Callie finds is with a chain around his neck, as horrible as it looks and sounds. The final lines of the story emphasize Callie’s self-affirmation of her choices: “Who was it that thought up that idea, the idea that had made today better than yesterday? Who loved him enough to think that up? Who loved him more than anyone else in the world loved him? Her. She did” (43). She is on her way to kill a puppy after leaving her handicapped son in her backyard chained to a tree, but the final image we get of her is one of adamant love.

For many of my students, this final image presents a challenge. I teach at a small liberal arts institution, and the demographic makeup of my students makes “Puppy” a particularly effective lesson in empathy. To put it simply: On the spectrum of Marie to Callie, the vast majority of my students are more Marie than Callie. While this is not necessarily true for *all* of my students, many of them have never had to worry about whether or not their families would have enough money to feed an extra puppy. They do not have dog turds on their living room floors, nor do they have tires in fish bowls. Instead, most of my students have spent time in cars like a Lexus, and many of them have also had their faces stuck in their phones while on the way to buy something else. I do not say this in judgment of my students, nor do I deny the realities of struggle and challenges in their lives. But from a financial perspective, my students mostly do not relate to Callie. And when they first read “Puppy,” their reaction to seeing Callie’s house and to seeing Bo chained in the backyard is the same as Marie’s. They too are horrified by what they see, they too want to get out of the house as quickly as possible, and they too think the proper authorities need to be called. Like Marie, my students look at Callie with judgment and condemnation, and they want to reach out to Bo and let him know there is a better world out there if he could only get away from his horrible mother. This view of Callie is so important, as this is what makes the last two pages of the story mean so much to my students, to me, and to our conversations on empathy.

In his article, Fischer provides the common definition of empathy we so often use in our defense-of-literature stance. Empathy is a product of literature in that “we readers expand our awareness of other points of view, thereby making us more responsive to the rights and needs of others” (439). Fischer further expands on what exactly he means by being “more

responsive” to the needs of others: “The empathetic imagination of readers, strengthened by literary experience, over time transforms their actions as citizens, enlarging their circle of concern to include others previously denied attention and respect” (440). Again: this is how we most often talk about empathy in relation to how reading literature makes us more empathetic. We read books and see other people in ways we did not see them before. Sounds simple enough, but in my own experiences as a student and now a teacher, I have found that the empathetic experience of literature does not always just happen. It is not automatic, nor is it guaranteed. To put it another way: empathy is not always the result for readers.

Related to this last point, Fischer mentions two recent pieces as examples. Nadine Dolby’s 2013 article from *Liberal Education*, “The Decline of Empathy and the Future of Liberal Education,” focuses on ongoing trends in higher education and how, according to Dolby, these trends move away from a focus on empathy. As she says, “As budgets tighten and the focus of higher education shifts toward skill-driven courses and outcomes-based competencies, and away from a broad education in the humanities and social sciences, the ability to develop a culture of empathy erodes even further” (63). In 2021, reading this quote from a 2013 piece is a rather astounding experience, as Dolby’s then-accurate depiction of a trend towards outcomes and skills is only more accurate today. A very different piece, “Not Even an Earthquake Stirs Students’ Empathy” by Ranjan Adiga, gives a more personal take on a lack of empathy on college campuses. A native of Nepal, Adiga was teaching at a liberal arts university in Utah during the time of the horrible Nepalese earthquake, which killed more than 8,500 people and left millions homeless. Adiga speaks about his expectations to receive sympathy from his students, knowing he was from Nepal. There was a sort of class party planned the next day, and Adiga “secretly hoped that my students had had a discussion to cancel the celebration out of courtesy. I was wrong” (A64). After talking through his experience, Adiga offers a strong call to fellow teachers at the end of his piece: “While recognizing that for each student the instigating moment of curiosity is different, we must recognize the empathy vacuum in our classrooms and, as an extension, in society” (A64). Outside of the scope of higher education, though, a similar bell has been and continues to be rung in American culture, diagnosing a similar “empathy vacuum” in society broadly. If being empathetic means seeing and respecting those different from us, we have no shortage of articulations of how this is not happening in our current political, professional, or personal contexts, nor do we have a shortage of parties to blame or culprits to single out. While our answers for why are different, the degree to which we collectively seem to be lamenting a

cultural lack of empathy is undeniable. Thus, we return to the message we have been sending from our run-down English buildings for decades: If we need more empathy, we have the source: the liberal arts! And, more specifically, literature!

I am one more voice sending this same message, and I concur with so many colleagues before me as to how the arts can truly offer hands-on empathy practice for students. But, like Fischer, I contend that it takes much more than simply assuming empathy is a logical outcome of reading. Sometimes it is, but other times, at least based on my own experiences, it takes purposeful and explicit discussion of the hurdles so often in the way of our empathy. To return to “Puppy,” many of my students have the same reaction to Callie as Marie does: They see her as a bad mother, but more than this, they see her as a bad person. She has chained her child up to a tree, and she walks to a field to kill an innocent puppy. How can they like this person? Who would? She deserves to have Child Welfare called on her, and she deserves to lose her child. This is their reaction, and we talk about this reaction in class. I bring attention to Callie’s actions, and I ask my students to consider why she does these things. I pose questions about her economic situation, as well as Bo’s health situation, and I ask them to explain to me what other options she has. I ask them to explain to me what they would do in her situation, to try and consider what it might be like to be Callie. There is nothing particularly special about these questions, as I see them as the obvious questions Saunders is posing, and it usually takes little time for some students in the room to start realizing the logic of Callie’s decisions, as well as the desperation of her situation. Not all students come to this view, and many stand firm in their declaration of her decision to chain Bo to a tree as, unequivocally, bad parenting. But the conversation takes shape, and it is not about whether or not all of the students agree to see Callie in a universal way. What is important, though, is that they are all at least *seeing* her. She is no longer just the poor, fat-faced woman with a filthy house that happens to be a bad mother. Instead, she is a person, living her unique life by making daily decisions based on her situation. As Adiga says in his article, “Empathy is as much about inquiring as it is about caring” (A64). These in-class discussions are my attempt to get students to at least ask about Callie, which—as Adiga says—might be the essential ingredient to empathy.

Some students have a totally different initial reading of “Puppy,” though. Instead of seeing Callie as the bad mother, I always have a handful of students see Callie as sympathetic immediately, with Marie as the unsympathetic, “bad” mother. These students see Marie as the rich, snobby, spoiled woman unable to see past her own privilege. Callie is in a

bad situation, doing the best she can, and Marie is the one being judgmental. Who does she think she is, rushing to judgment of this poor, struggling, trying-her-best mother? What does Marie know about *actual* hardship? How dare she call Child Welfare without even asking for an explanation from Callie? If she had just taken the time to try and understand the situation—if she had the slightest bit of empathy—then maybe she could have actually understood why Bo was chained up, and maybe she would have still taken the puppy, and maybe all of the main problems of the story could have been solved. Some of my students read the story this way initially, whereas others start to have this view of Marie after our in-class discussion of the story. For those who initially see the faults in Callie’s decisions as a mother, there is a point in which the tide of frustration turned towards Marie.

With both of these readings in mind, it seems as if many of my students need a protagonist and antagonist. They need the “good” and “bad,” and they need a winner and loser. They read “Puppy,” and they think that one of the women needs to be sympathetic, while the other must be antagonistic. Saunders’s story, of course, is much more nuanced than this, and “Puppy” resists the “good/bad” binary, because as we get a sympathetic explanation of why Callie does the things she does, we also get a view of Marie’s past and her own motivations for her matriarchal style and choices. As mentioned earlier, during her moments of self-talk, Marie references multiple scenes of neglect and perhaps even abuse from her own childhood. Although she does not dwell on these memories, it is clear how much these experiences play a role in Marie’s current life. She wants to give her kids everything because she was given so little; she must tell herself she is a good mother because it is crucial that she be better than her own. She is desperate for her household to be full of laughter, because “she’d had none of that in her childhood, Dad being so dour and Mom so ashamed” (32). And while she knows that some people might accuse her of “spoiling” her own kids, “at least she’d never drunkenly snapped at one of them, ‘I hardly consider you college material’” (34), which is something her own mother did to her. If we feel sympathy for Callie by the end of the story, understanding why she does the things she does, we are left with no choice but to feel the same for Marie. If we conclude the chain around Bo’s neck is actually a symbol of Callie’s unconditional love for him, we must also recognize Marie’s horror at what she sees as a logical reaction based on her own childhood of neglect and mistreatment.

The brilliance of “Puppy” is in the way Saunders poses the challenge of empathy so directly in front of each reader. A mindful reader of this short story, a reader that is paying

attention to what is on the page, is forced to reconcile difficult truths. There are rather horrible things in the story, both experienced and inflicted by the two main characters. Upon reading the story for the first time, individual readers will certainly have their own reactions to these horrible things, often resulting in seeing one mother as “good” and the other as “bad,” or perhaps even seeing both in the same negative way. But upon subsequent readings, Saunders challenge to us crystallizes: How do we react to characters’ unlikeable actions when we are given sympathetic explanations for why they do them? When our gut reaction is to dislike characters doing unlikeable things, how do we handle explicit passages providing context and explanation for *why* those things are being done? To put it one more way: “Puppy” forces us to look at people we do not want to look at, to actually pay them close attention, and to consider them in ways we hope to be considered ourselves. In short, “Puppy” calls on us to be empathetic.

Towards the end of his piece, Fischer describes what he sees as the underlying thrust behind all “defenders of literature” discussed in his essay. For Fischer, the empathy-as-defense position is essentially based on the goal of “moving [people], or, more exactly, have literature move [people], through powerful stories, images, and words that reactivate their slumbering empathy and, with it, their tolerance, generosity, and love” (458). The outcomes of empathy are huge, and what is at stake with wakening our “slumbering empathy” is perhaps more pressing than anything else. As I mentioned early in this essay, we are quite good at collectively lamenting a societal lack of empathy, and it is not difficult for us—especially professors of literature—to critique how bad we are at being intellectually and culturally hospitable to other people. The “empathy vacuum” is here, as we so often say, and our empathetic tendencies are “slumbering” more than ever. Our antidote: stories. But saying this is true is not enough, and commiserating about how much society no longer cares about literature—a clear tool of empathy!—at conferences and in faculty meetings is not going to solve the problem. For stories to make us more empathetic, we have to actually engage with stories in empathetic ways and, just as importantly, we have to find and teach texts that enable explicit conversations about the challenges and consequences of empathetic interactions with other people.

The third book of Rachel Cusk’s Outline Trilogy, *Kudos*, is a series of conversations between the narrator and various individuals she meets in her seemingly ordinary life as a writer. Like the rest of the trilogy, these conversations are random but thorough, often touching on topics of love, identify, and existence. Midway through *Kudos*, while at a meal as

part of a literary conference, a woman named Sophia describes to the narrator the essential message of another author's writing, named Luís: "We live with an almost superstitious belief in our own differences, she said, and Luís has shown that those differences are not the result of some divine mystery but are merely the consequence of our lack of empathy, which if we had it would enable us to see that in fact we are all the same" (139).

Sophia's praise of Luís's writing as a message on empathy resonates with a central message of "Puppy" and much of Saunders's other writing. As readers, our default setting often seems to be one of focusing on differences between ourselves and characters, allowing us to make judgments and to objectively comment on character actions and fates. As Sophia says in her description from *Kudos*, this is perhaps a result in our "superstitious belief in our own differences." We need to find differences to we can more easily define others and, more importantly, define ourselves. We are who we are not, so to speak. But empathy flies in this face of this default setting. Empathy disrupt the belief in difference while it forces us to reconcile sameness.

Empathy, in particular, makes us find ourselves in others, and vice versa. Perhaps it is not as simple as "we are all the same," as Sophia says, but on a certain level, I think it might actually be that simple when it comes to the value of empathy. In many ways, Marie and Callie are clearly different, but—as Saunders makes us recognize—they are also clearly the same in essential ways. They are both mothers doing what they think is best for their children and for their own life situation. They both have pasts and presents informing their judgments, and both are confident in what they do. If we read the story with empathy, we see these resounding similarities, and we also see both Marie and Callie in ways that undoubtedly resonate with our own lives. This is uncomfortable in ways, but it can also be freeing, allowing us—as Fischer claims—to be more tolerant, generous, and loving.

If our literature classes are to live up to our claim as a solution to the empathy vacuum in our world, I suggest we do everything we can to put texts in front of our students that would increase the likelihood of their reading being a lesson in empathy. For me, these texts are ones like "Going to Meet the Man" by James Baldwin, in which he forces readers to see the humanity in a cruel, racist sheriff. Or a story that asks questions about why men are abusive and how societal expectations of masculine men lead to horrible outcomes to men and women alike, such as "Woman Hollering Creek" by Sandra Cisneros. Or even a story, like Lorrie Moore's "How to Be an Other Woman," that considers what it is like to be the "other woman" and how that experience—although clearly antagonistic on the surface—has its own

element of sympathy and struggle. Or, finally, a story like "Puppy," in which the sight of a young boy, chained to a tree and drinking from a dog bowl, can actually be a representation of fierce, determined, and unconditional love from a mother to her son.

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Eric Rauch, Bartleby, the Lawyer's Soul

Abstract: In Herman Melville's short story, "Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street," Bartleby is the narrator's soul. Here, I define the soul as being the spiritual component of an individual rather than his/her corporeal nature. The soul takes into account all people and physical entities as being a part of the individual's persona and personality. In this way, the narrator-lawyer is an amalgam of his scrivener's personalities. Each of the scrivener's occupies a stage in the lawyer's life. In effect, the lawyer is a mystic, taking account of his past, present, and future simultaneously. The lawyer can also be considered to be a work of art through which the lawyer-narrator learns. Here, there is a connection between the walls and doors and the scriveners who occupy the law office. Here, as readers, we must explore reasons as to why Herman Melville, through the lawyer-narrator, establishes a connection between the walls and the scriveners. These are several of the main themes and components that comprise the current text.

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December. It was one night during holiday time in New York City, the end of the year, a man of color in disheveled clothes, walked toward my father, my mother, my sister, and me. I was in my teens at the time and could not protect myself from potential harm. My father, a big man, shielded my family and me, not knowing what this man was about to do. The man looked homeless and, potentially, had a mental illness. With good fortune, the man walked calmly away and nothing of incident happened. When juxtaposed with the short story, "Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street," and the plight of the character, Bartleby, we can view this story and the incident with the homeless man as having some great significance. The main and central import of the story is the degree to which we can empathize with those less fortunate like the homeless man and like Bartleby. When does compassion end and prudence take over?

The mark of every great artist is the degree to which the artist's works elicit interpretation. The mark of every great character is the extent to which the character elicits interpretation as well. Jorge Luis Borges, in his essay, "Everything and Nothing," discusses this nature of the artist. (115-117). More specifically, in this essay, William Shakespeare arguably the best author and artist of all times has a dialogue with God. The great artist, Shakespeare, has an infinity of selves and souls and his characters are a reflection of his own persona. The essay concludes with Shakespeare telling God he wants to be one and not many. He wants to be a body not a soul. God then tells Shakespeare, that he, too, is everything and nothing. Through this prism, we must interpret Herman Melville's short story, "Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street." For in this story the eponymous character, Bartleby, has been interpreted ad infinitum. In one sense, Bartleby is everything and nothing.

By narrating the story, so too is the narrator-lawyer. Throughout the past 150 years or so ever since its publication, this work has been interpreted in many, many ways. Dan McCall, in *The Silence of Bartleby*, even calls it the “Bartleby industry”, since since its publication, there have been hundreds of articles and writings about this enigmatic character and this enigmatic text and story.

As for any complex work of literature we must explore answers to the questions posed by the text. Herman Melville’s “Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street,” is no exception. Thomas R. Mitchell writes that “The most important question which Melville’s choice of the lawyer as a first-person narrator raises is quite simply this: Why is the lawyer telling us this story at all?” (33). Here, I argue that the narrator is attempting to find his own soul when contemplating Bartleby. He is seeking his soul amidst the corporeal nature of reality. The second most central question is whether the lawyer-narrator changes throughout the work: Does Bartleby serve to change and humanize the lawyer? Here, I suggest that the narrator does change and has found his soul in the guise of Bartleby. In the end, Bartleby dies in the prison and the lawyer’s soul is released to the universe, thereby, some would say, changing all of humanity, though one cannot be certain.

The focus of the text I am writing is the following: What is the significance of the walls and other structures in the work? What literal and/or metaphorical significance do they contain? Why does the lawyer discuss the connection between the walls and the personalities of the scriveners? The nature of the walls and other structures is the central focus of the current text.

In the 1980s, I was a student at Cornell University, and I learned of “Bartleby, the Scrivener,” when I enrolled in a course with Dan McCall, the writer of *The Silence of Bartleby*, one of the few full-length works on this story, and the editor of *Melville’s Short Novels*. I began a college essay on this story, with the following introductory statement: “In Herman Melville’s short story masterpiece, “Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street,” the lawyer-narrator is an amalgam of the scrivener’s personalities.” In this current text, what am I purporting to say that is new? What can I say that will make a contribution to the Bartleby Industry? In essence, I state that, in this story, Bartleby is the narrator’s soul. The soul can be defined as how, as corporeal beings, we can learn from the peoples and the texts that surround us. We can take into ourselves the persona and personalities of family, friends, employers, employees, acquaintances and all of humanity.

Walls and Other Structures

The central metaphor of the text is the significances of the walls and other structures in the story. There are several types of walls and structures in the story: the white and black walls of human perception that are the exterior of the law office; the glass folding doors; the green screen; the dead walls (or non-walls); and the prison walls.

In 1 Corinthians 13, in the Bible, perhaps the most important and influential text in human history and human existence, we through a glass darkly after the fall of humanity. We see humanity and all human conceptions through a prism, through mirrors. These mirrors act as walls or physical structures. We do not know human history in toto, but through degrees. We do not arrive at totality in terms of meaning and truth, but through our distinctly human free will. The central dichotomy here is the physical and the body. Walls are physical and they define human relations and relationships. In 1 Corinthians 13, it is written that “When I was a child, I spoke as a child. I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, darkly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, then I shall know just as I also am known” (11-12). When we conceive of man, we see through a glass, through a prism. When we conceive of God, we see face to face and have a connection with God and a relation to all of humanity. Mirrors comprise human beings while the externality of mirrors constitute man’s connection with God.

When we contemplate the nature of the walls, we find them to be both physical and literal as well as metaphysical and metaphorical. Marvin Fisher writes that the story takes place in “a law office where the four employees are literally and figuratively walled in by the circumstances of their employment and by the social assumptions embodied in their employer and walled off from any hope of mobility or self-fulfillment by the same concept or class structure” (60-61). One of the main aspects of the work is whether we can transcend the issue of class in our world and recognize more equitable workings of society. This, too, haunts us today. We must ask the question as to why Bartleby stares at the walls. The walls are not just about the capitalist system, however. They are more existential in nature, involving issues of more philosophical intent, man’s relation to the universe. We must ask the question: “Why does Bartleby stare at the walls, refuse to follow directions, and finally decline to live? The main answer I explore in this text is why Bartleby has, in Leo Marx’s words, “confused the walls built by man with the wall of human mortality” (253). This confusion is what ultimately kills Bartleby and what haunts the lawyer-narrator.

One of the horrors of the work is that a human being can be seen as a symbol or metaphor. Bartleby is an abstraction and a metaphor. He is not a real person in the work; he has no personality, but is an idea, a metaphor, a symbol. He humanizes the lawyer. In this way, James C. Wilson writes that “His words are ironic in that he cannot respond to Bartleby as a living human being, but only as an abstraction—an abstract concept of humanity” (346). Here, too, “the walling up of Bartleby’s remains in the walls of Wall Street could stand as a metaphor for his entire story” (346). The walls connote the lasting, enduring quality of the work. Bartleby, too, is a metaphor, a work of art, that compels the narrator to learn.

Bartleby is cut off from other people. Bartleby is not a social being: he is an idea. He has no humor. He has no meaning except as interpreted by others. He cannot define himself. Who is he? What are his motives? What does he enjoy? What is he afraid of? Does he have any friends? The list goes on. And the lawyer, try he must, does not find many answers except for the epilogue at the story’s end, an epilogue which has little certain meaning. Here, too, Wall Street can be a prison. There is little if any spirituality in Wall Street. When it works, it is the height of our meaning as a people and values freedom and the entrepreneurial spirit; when it fails, it deprives man of deeper moral meaning and human imagination.

As a collective, we need walls and physical structures; as individuals, we need walls, too, for walls give us our personal identities. Yet Bartleby, much like Ahab, tries to pierce and transcend these collective and individual walls to arrive at greater truth and greater meaning in life and in all existence. As human beings, we have limits. This makes no person more powerful and/or more oppressive than any other individual. Marcus Mordecai writes that “The wall in Bartleby symbolizes the human condition in the society within which Bartleby feels trapped, and by extension the burden of his own identity within the limitations of such a society” (368).

The Relation between the Walls and Other Structures, and the Scriveners

In the work, there is a connection between the lawyer and his scriveners. The narrator states this most directly in the beginning portions of the story.

Ere introducing the scrivener, as he first appeared to me, it is fit I make some mention of myself, my employees, my business, my chambers, and general surroundings; because some such description is indispensable to an adequate understanding of the chief character about to be presented. (Melville 3)

The narrator is an amalgam of his scribes. Here, the scribes, including Turkey, Nippers, Ginger Nut, and Bartleby are all facets and aspects of the lawyer's being. The scribes are all given personalities that compose the lawyer's essence. Melville, through the narrator, juxtaposes the physical description of the law office with the personalities of the scribes. The overriding paradigm is demonstrated by Leo Marx when he writes, once more, that "What ultimately killed this writer was not the walls themselves but that he confused the walls made by man with the wall of human mortality" (253). This is the frame we should employ when we consider the significance of the walls, screens, and doors in the story.

The first set of walls constitute the white and black walls of the exterior of the law office:

My chambers were up stairs, at No. — Wall Street. At one end, they looked upon the white wall of the interior of a spacious sky-light, penetrating the building from top to bottom. This view might have been considered rather tame than otherwise, deficient in what landscape painters call "life." [...] But, if so, the view from the other end of my chambers offered, at least a contrast, if nothing more. In that direction, my windows commanded an unobstructed view of a lofty brick wall, black by age and everlasting shade which wall required no spy-glass to bring out its lurking beauties, but, for the benefit of all near-sighted spectators was pushed up to within ten feet of my windowpanes. Owing to the great height of the surrounding buildings, and my chambers being on the second floor, the interval between this wall and mine not a little resembled a huge square cistern. (Melville 4)

The lawyer-narrator tells us that the exterior of the law office contains the white and black walls of human perception. This is the first type of walls in the narrative. Here, we see the white and black walls of human perception after the fall of man. We see through a glass darkly. We see, here, too, the wall of human mortality, not the walls made by man. However, these walls are deficient in life. This is a barrier man cannot cross, cannot transcend. The black walls indicate the impossibility of transcending life and death and from transcending total meaning. In the end, our thoughts and beings are discrete, not complete. The black walls are an entity of art and of man's imagination.

The second type of structure is not a wall but the ground glass folding doors of the interior of the law office. The doors are meant to establish a connection between and among

the scriveners and the physical structure of the law office. These walls connote the walls made by man.

I should have stated before that ground glass folding doors divided my premises into two parts; one of which was occupied by my scriveners, the other by myself. According to my humor, I threw open these doors, or closed them. I resolved to assign Bartleby a corner by the folding-doors, but on my side of them, so as to have this quiet man within easy-call, in any trifling thing was to be done. (Melville 11-12)

These glass doors are the walls made by man. They are walls that men can cross, unlike the exterior of the law office that is indicative of human mortality, of life and death, conceptions that man cannot change. Leo Marx writes the following:

When Bartleby arrives we discover that there is also a kind of wall inside the office. It consists of the ground-glass folding doors which separate the lawyer's desk, and now Bartleby's from the desks of the other employees, the copyists and the office boy. Unlike the walls outside the windows, however, there is a social barrier men can cross, and the lawyer makes a point in telling us that he opens and shuts these doors according to his humors. Even when they are shut, it should be noted, the ground-glass provides at least an illusion of penetrability quite different from the opaqueness of the walls outside. (242)

Man has an illusion that he can transcend the glass folding doors. However, man cannot penetrate or transcend the opaqueness, the darkness of the walls that separate man from death. Man cannot arrive at total meaning and absolute conceptions and thoughts of God. However, man has art and the imagination but these fall short of absolute truth.

The ground glass folding doors constitute a structure man can manipulate. This is good. This is as it should be perhaps. The glass doors establish a mirroring effect between and among the scriveners. Light diffuses through a prism, and the lawyer scatters into the scribes. The lawyer seats Bartleby on his side of the doors so as to protect Bartleby and to protect his soul.

Next, we see not necessarily a wall, but a green screen. This green screen is filled with life, unlike the white and black walls, but like the glass folding doors.

Leo Marx writes about Bartleby and the screen in the following manner:

After he is hired he seems content to remain in the quasi-isolation provided by the “protective” green screen and to work silently and industriously. This screen, too, is a kind of wall, and its colors, as will become apparent, means a great deal. Although Bartleby seems pleased with it and places great reliance upon it, the screen is an extremely ineffectual wall. It is the flimsiest of all the walls in and out of the office; it has most in common with the ground glass door – both are ‘folding,’ that is, susceptible to human manipulation. (243)

When people interact in society, life is manipulable and malleable. People use language and arrive at meaning in degrees and not in totalities, not in absolutes. Walls, doors, and mirrors help individuals do so. These structures can protect, both physically and metaphorically.

Next, we see a connection between man and God. Light scatters into the interstices of two lofty buildings as from a dome. Here, we are meant to forge a connection in understanding man and God and their relationship.

I placed his desk close up to a small side window in that part of the room, a window which originally had afforded a lateral view of certain grimy backyards and bricks, which, owing to subsequent erections, commanded at present no view at all, though it gave some light. Within three feet of the panes was a wall, and the light came down from far above, between two lofty buildings, as from a very small opening in a dome. (Melville 11-12)

Here, we have a window facing the “grimy backyards and bricks” that give no view but which convey some light. We see a window, a wall, two lofty buildings, and light between two these buildings as from a small opening in a dome. We see both the exterior and interior walls of both human and God. We see the lawyer-narrator trying to find Bartleby’s soul and his own soul for that matter. There is a relation to man and God and between human beings and something divine. Bartleby is God-like here. There is a transparency between God and Bartleby. Man knows of God through art, through the human imagination, and through human creation. Consider the World Trade Center here and the Twin Towers. Melville might be prophetic here in circumscribing the physical, existential, and corporeal nature of man’s

creation and the fate of the Twin Towers during 9/11. Here, we see walls and their destruction and re-construction. Here, we see life, death, and re-construction and rebirth.

The next type of wall is the dead wall, for this is what Bartleby sees; this is what Bartleby is. In another conception, Bartleby sees is not just a dead wall but no wall at all. Bartleby is beyond language, beyond meaning. He is a “nothingness.” Unlike the lawyer-narrator, he is exempt from life and from meaning. Leo Marx writes that “The wall, with its deathlike character, completely engages Bartleby. Whether “free” or imprisoned he has no concern for anything but the omnipresent and impenetrable wall” (249). The white and black walls of human perception are misinterpreted by Bartleby. Rather than see these walls, he sees a blank wall, even a dead wall: “For the nearly lifeless Bartleby, attracted neither by the skyward tending white wall, nor the cistern-like black wall had fixed his eyes on the ‘dead’ wall” (254).

Leo Marx writes the following:

For Bartleby has come to regard the walls as permanent, immovable parts of the structure of things, comparable to man’s inability to surmount the limitations of his sense perceptions, of comparable to life and death itself. He has forgotten to take account of the fact that these particular walls which surround the office are, after all man-made. They are products of society, but he has imputed externality to them. In his disturbed mind metaphysical problems which seem to be timeless concomitants of the condition of man and problems created by social order as inextricably joined, joined in the symbol of the wall. (98)

Here, the walls define social relations but Bartleby is not a social person; he considers not social relations and what is inside but conjures up metaphysical, philosophical, and existential questions that are the exterior of the walls and are akin to God.

The narrator is an amalgam of the personalities of his scribes. The narrator says that “These may seem names the like of which are not usually found in the Directory. In truth, they were nicknames, mutually conferred upon each other by my three clerks, and were deemed expressive of their respective persons or characters” (Melville 5). Here, the scribes lose their identities. Their sole expression of their identity is through the persona of the narrator-lawyer. The horror of the work, as well, is that the scribes are made to make themselves subservient to the lawyer-narrator. It is not the narrator who bestows these nicknames but the scribes who do this by themselves. In short, the law office oppresses; the

narrator-lawyer oppresses as well. Even the scribes contribute to their dehumanized, degraded conditions in the law office and in Wall Street. They are cogs in the economic machine.

The scribes in the story are given nicknames that dehumanize. Michael Murphy writes that “Between them all they do not have a complete name because, not only are they not several people, but together they do not amount to a complete man who can, without qualification, be called by both his surname and his Christian name (which we so generally call ‘first name’)” (144). We see the scriveners as being an extension of the lawyer-narrator’s being.

The narrator is an amalgam of his scriveners’ personalities. We will take each in turn. The first scribe, “Turkey was a short, pousy Englishman of about my own age –that is, somewhere not far from sixty” (Melville 5). The lawyer equates his own age with that of Turkey. The narrator projects his own persona and personality on to Turkey. His actions were “very sad to behold in an elderly man like him” (6). The narrator finds economic value and utility to Turkey, and, therefore, keeps his being employed: “ ‘But the blots, Turkey,’ I intimated. ‘True; but with submission, sir, behold these hairs! I am getting old. Surely, sir, a blot or two of a warm afternoon is not to be severely urged against gray hairs. Old age—even if it blot the page—is honorable. With submission, sir, we both are getting old’ ” (7). Here, the narrator-lawyer is an elderly man; so, too, is the scribe, Turkey. The narrator is a composite of his scriveners.

The second copyist referred to in the narrative is Nippers.

Nippers, the second on my list, was a whiskered, sallow, and, upon the whole, a rather piratical-looking man, of about five and twenty. I always deemed him the victim of two evil powers – ambition and indigestion. The ambition was evinced by a certain impatience of the duties of a mere copyist an unwarrantable usurpation of strictly professional affairs, such as the original drawing up of legal documents. (Melville 7)

The scribes, once again, are much like how Bartleby, at the story’s end, will be relegated to the Tombs. Concerning Nippers, the narrator says that “Indeed I was aware that not only was he, at times, considerable as a ward-politician, but he occasionally did a little business at the Justice’s courts, and was not unknown on the steps of the Tombs” (8). Once again, the characters mirror one another. Nippers, like Turkey is “a very useful man to me” (8). The lawyer writes that Nippers is a commodity serving his boss and contributing to the workings

of the capitalist system. "But, with all his failings, and the annoyances he caused me, Nippers, like his compatriot Turkey, was a very useful man to me; wrote a neat, swift, hand; and, when he chose, was not deficient in a gentlemanly sort of deportment" (8). "Added to this, he always dressed in a gentlemanly sort of way; and so, incidentally, reflected credit upon my chambers" (8). Notice the word "reflected." The characters are a mirror to one another, and they also take part in the capitalist system. Mirrors are physical entities and money is made up of mirrors. Mirrors constitute the walls made by man not the walls of human mortality. Bartleby refuses to see the utility of the walls made by man and adopts the persona of one who tries to seek more meaning when trying to transcend the walls.

Nippers does not like the table at which he works.

When I consider how amid the stillness of my chambers, Nippers would sometimes impatiently rise from his seat, and stooping over his table, spread his arms wide apart, seize the whole desk, and move it, and jerk it, with a grim, grinding motion on the floor, as if the table were a perverse voluntary agent, intent on thwarting and vexing him. (Melville 9-10)

Nippers despises his station as a copyist. The work is mundane and repetitive and carries little spiritual meaning. It is not an instrument one uses to tap the imagination.

The personalities of the scribes mirror one another. They are a compilation of the lawyer's being. The narrator "... never had to do with their eccentricities at one time. Their fits relieved each other, like guards. When Nippers was on, Turkey's was off, and vice versa. This was a good natural arrangement, under the circumstances" (Melville 10). The copyists do not amount to individual beings in the work: they are parts of the lawyer's being.

The third scribe is Ginger Nut.

Ginger Nut, the third on my list, was a lad, some twelve years old. His father was a car-man, ambitious of seeing his son on the bench instead of a cart, before he died. So he sent him to my office, as student of law, errand-boy, cleaner and sweeper, at the rate of one dollar a week. He had a little desk to himself, but he did not use it much. (Melville 10)

Even a young child is indoctrinated into the capitalist system. The lawyer-narrator is contemplating Ginger Nut as a remembrance of his own self and development as a child.

Each of the scribes occupies a time in the life of the narrator. This is the central meaning of the text I am writing. Michael Murphy writes that “It is not generally acknowledged that *Bartleby* is a story with only one character—the lawyer who tells it. *Bartleby* is simply an aspect of the lawyer’s character, long suppressed. Ginger Nut, Nippers, and Turkey are other facets of his personalities or stages in his career. Even personages with “walk-on” parts are not separate characters, but parts of the lawyer” (143). Dennis R. Perry writes that “Their unconventional fits are a release from Wall Street’s oppressive atmosphere, becoming vehicles for self-expression beyond copying others’ words” (412). The characters in the work are abstractions and not real beings. “Their greatest value, their existential purpose, is their service as distinct instrumentalities and not as individual human beings” (Fisher 64).

The lawyer-narrator is a safe man. He tells us this at the beginning of the narrative. One is safe when one has money, when we value the corporeal and material nature of existence. “Imprimis: I am a man who, from his youth upwards, has been filled with a profound conviction that the easiest way of life is the best” (Melville 3-4). We must remember that the narrator is a rather elderly man and that, through telling of this story, he is coming to terms with his life. He is taking stock of his life and he is contemplating whether he should “go gentle into that good night.” This one incident with *Bartleby* is perhaps his one attempt to take a chance, and it is questionable whether he succeeds. Through this story, the narrator is coming to terms with his own existence. The narrator also says that “Hence, though I belong to a profession proverbially energetic and nervous, even to turbulence at times, nothing of that sort have I ever suffered to invade my space” (4). Here, the narrator is a collection of his scribes. The scribes protect his being; the turbulence of the office and the scribes protect him. The narrator refers to this safe, unambitious life on several occasions throughout the narrative. “I am one of those unambitious lawyers who never addresses a jury, or in any way draws down public applause; but, in the cool tranquility of a snug retreat, do a snug business among rich men’s bonds and mortgages, and title deeds” (4). Once again, the narrator refers to this sentiment: “All who know me, consider me an eminently safe man” (4). The word, “safe,” can have various meanings here, physical and mental safety and/or the safety from what happens when a person or people have enough money by which to live. This the ethos of capitalism and materialism.

We must explore answers to the question: Why is the lawyer-narrator telling this tale? He is telling this tale because he is branching out. He has, throughout his lifetime, been a safe man. He is trying to come to terms with his life and trying to understand it as well. Carl

Schaffer writes that “This is the reason, of course, that Bartleby is introduced into the story—to jar the narrator out of complacency, to bring him to see the other half of life. This he does by revealing the narrator the limitations of a life without commitment” (94). The lawyer-narrator, too, according to Harold Schechter, is a “respectable citizen” and an “honest dealer” who takes pride in his professional reputation” (359-360). In another conception, however, we see a “distinct element of self-interest in all of the narrator’s charitable acts” (360). In the end, however, “The lawyer’s tendency to take himself into consideration does not make him a monster; on the contrary, it simply marks him as a human being” (360). He wants to save himself from a meaningless life, one that has taken advantage of humanity.

When we contemplate Herman Melville’s “Bartleby, the Scrivener,” the most oft-quoted and most profound critiques are somewhat outdated. This is true of Leo Marx’s “Parable of the Walls,” as discussed earlier; Elizabeth Hardwick’s “Bartleby in Manhattan”; and John Gardner’s “ ‘Bartleby’: Art and Social Commitment.”

In her essay, “Bartleby in Manhattan,” Elizabeth Hardwick does not just discuss Wall Street and its literal and metaphorical representations, but, in a prophetic manner, refers to the World Trade Center. We must remember that Hardwick’s essay was written and published in 1981, many years before the 9/11 attack. The World Trade Center, much like Wall Street, is one of the most important aspects of the United States’ capitalist democracy. It is, or at least was, a symbol of the entrepreneurial spirit of the United States as well. In effect, this structure and its symbolic and metaphorical significance, was an attempt to touch the heavens and even God perhaps. For whatever reasons, the perpetrators of this heinous attack destroyed this structure but not its significance to us as a people. As we all know, on September 11, 2001, the world changed along with our individual and collective worldviews.

Elizabeth Hardwick ends her essay with the following words:

Looking down, or looking up, today at the sulky towers of the World Trade Center, ‘all shaft,’ the architects say, thinking of those towers as great sightless Brahmin brooding upon the absolute and the all-embracing spirit, it seemed to me that down below there is something of Manhattan in Bartleby and especially in his resistance to amelioration. (265)

This resistance to amelioration may have been true about the World Trade Center in 1981, and it might have been true of Manhattan and Bartleby in previous conceptions. However, it is not true today. Because of the attack of 9/11, we were forced and are still

forced today, to ameliorate our society and our world. The world was no longer perfect and was, and perhaps still is, imperfect. It has often been said that “The search for the perfect is the enemy of the good.” We are not in search of the perfect, but, perhaps, simply or not so simply, a better, saner world. In effect, we do need to improve our society and our world. And with respect to the story and narrative of *Bartleby*, we do need to ameliorate our conceptions and interpretations of him as well. For *Bartleby*, the lawyer, and the story should have lasting meaning for us.

When we consider John Gardner’s essay “‘*Bartleby*’: Art and Social Commentary,” it is apparent that we must reconsider our notions and conceptions of art. In our society, art must have a didactic purpose. Art cannot just entertain. It must instruct and be applied and must be used to make our individual and collective lives better. Art, much like the soul of man, must be applied in order to realize our individual and collective ideals. John Gardner writes that “If justice is to be introduced into the ordinary world, it must come either as a Christian afterlife or as a transmutation of purely conceptual experience—that is, as art” (12). In essence, we must apply and use art to make our society better. “The betrayed *Bartleby* gets justice and mercy, at last, though, for *Bartleby*, whose freedom was limited in life by the inescapability of death, is now transmogrified to eternal life in art. The artist rolls the stone away—that is the narrator’s creative act—and man escapes from the Tombs” (12).

Reason versus Imagination versus Art

At various points, the narrator equates *Bartleby* with a work of art, the bust of Cicero. And this work of art serves to humanize the narrator-lawyer.

Not a wrinkle of agitation rippled him. Had there been the least uneasiness, anger, impatience, or impertinence in this manner; in other words, had there been any thing ordinarily human about him, doubtless I should have violently dismissed him from the premises. But as it was I should have as soon thought of turning my plaster-of-Paris bust of Cicero out of doors. (Melville 13)

The lawyer feels empathy toward *Bartleby*. He considers *Bartleby* a work of art that he can interpret and learn from. “One day, having things arranged, I called Turkey, Nippers, and Ginger Nut, from the next room, meaning to place the four copies in the hands of my four clerks, while I should read from the original” (Melville 14). The lawyer is an original; he thinks freely and is a thinking being. The lawyer is once again a composite of his scribes. Yet

Bartleby refuses to do any copying. He wants to be an original, too, but he is left to copy documents, a procedure that degrades him and deprives him of social value. Bartleby wants to be an artist yet the best he can do is to be a work of art. "With another man I should have flown outright into a dreadful passion, scorned all further words, and thrust him ignominiously from my presence. But there was something about Bartleby that not only strangely disarmed me, but, in a wonderful manner, touched and disconcerted me. I began to reason with him" (Melville 14-15).

The lawyer tries to reason with Bartleby, yet, in the end, reason is insufficient. Bartleby is the lawyer's soul, and he is a mystic, perceiving past, present, and future. Here, the mystic contains within one entity all the people and conceptions around him or her. The mystic is the soul of man. He or she sees past, present, and future as compartmentalized into one being. The scribes are part of the walls that constitute man. They act as mirrors to each other. They are labeled, and they are only physical in nature and not metaphysical or spiritual or soulful. In " 'Bartleby': A Critique of Reason," R.K. Gupta writes that "Thus, in "Bartleby," Melville brings out the limits of reason as a guide to human conduct and as a controlling factor in human behavior and stresses the need for understanding and imagination" (70). The narrator is an amalgam of his scribes once again. He tells the scribes that "These are your own copies we are about to examine. It is labor saving to you, because one examination will answer for your four papers" (Melville 15).

The narrator uses reason to find out why Bartleby is the way Bartleby is. He next tries to use his imagination to understand Bartleby, to interpret Bartleby as one would interpret a work of art.

Nothing so aggravates an earnest person as a passive resistance. If the individual so resisted be of a not in-humane temper, and the resisting one perfectly harmless in his passivity, then, in the better moods of the former, he will endeavor charitably to construe to his imagination what proves to be impossible to be solved by his judgment. (Melville 17)

The narrator's humanity is driven by economic value and economic utility, not on a love for his fellow man. "To befriend Bartleby; to humor him in his strange willfulness, will cost me little or nothing, while I lay up in my soul what will eventually prove a sweet morsel for my conscience" (Melville 17). The narrator uses the metaphor of food to describe human goodness. He conjoins body and soul, food and how to deposit food into the soul. Conscience

is contrasted with monied interests; the soul is replaced with something of the body. Spirit is sacrificed for the significance of that which is external and corporeal. The screen protects Bartleby and when it would be taken away, so, too, will Bartleby perish. The body protects; the soul is fragile.

The lawyer tries to find his soul when thinking about Bartleby. The narrator says the following: "And when at last it is perceived that such pity cannot lead to effectual succor, common sense bids the soul be rid of it. What I saw that morning persuaded me that the scrivener was the victim of innate and incurable disorder. I might give alms to his body; but his body did not pain him; it was his soul that suffered, and his soul I could not reach" (Melville 24-25). The narrator is searching for his soul. He is soul-searching. Bartleby is an extension of himself. Here, "soul-searching" can be defined as "a deep examination of one's motives and desires" ("Soul"). This is what the narrator does throughout the work.

The Lawyer-Narrator and Bartleby as Works of Art

The lawyer says "He did not look at me while I spoke, but kept his glance fixed upon my bust of Cicero, which, as I then sat, was directly behind me, some six inches above my head" (Melville 25-26). Bartleby has tried to humanize the lawyer and sees the bust above and beyond the lawyer's head. Bartleby tries to transcend the body of the lawyer and see life as a work of art. The lawyer refers to Bartleby as "like the last column of some ruined temple [...] "standing mute and solitary in the middle of the otherwise deserted room" (30). Bartleby is a ruined temple, Bartleby being made into a work of art that consecrates and memorializes this encounter with history, this incident with the soul, into art. The lawyer asks Bartleby to leave; he wants the release of his soul to the universe. "'Will you, or will you not, quit me?' I now demanded in a sudden passion, advancing close to him. 'I would prefer not to quit you,' he replied, gently emphasizing the not" (33). The narrator is a mystic once again: "These troubles of mine, touching the scrivener, had been predestined from eternity, and Bartleby was billeted upon me for some mysterious purpose of an all-wise Providence, which it was not for a mere mortal like me to fathom" (35).

This incident with Bartleby has been meaningful to the lawyer. It has been a trip into his unconscious and the unconscious of the world. It has established him as a mystic, one who can conceive of past, present, and future. The narrator, once again, refers to Bartleby as being a part of himself: "Yes, Bartleby, stay there behind your screen, thought I; I shall persecute you no more; you are harmless and noiseless as any of these old chairs; in short,

I never feel so private as when I know you are here” (Melville 35). Bartleby is the narrator’s soul. He occupies the narrator’s private being. He feels most comfortable when Bartleby, his soul, is with him. The narrator says he might “mason up his remains in the wall” (37) The lawyer conceives of memorializing Bartleby, once again, as a part of the walls of the law office, the artfulness of Bartleby being commemorated into and taking concrete form in the walls of the law office.

The narrator-lawyer sees Bartleby “standing behind the screen, which I directed to be removed the last thing” (Melville 38). Bartleby’s protection is his screen, and when it is taken away, so is Bartleby’s being. And Bartleby, once again, is considered to be a work of art. The screen is withdrawn and “being folded up like a huge folio, left him the motionless occupant of a naked room” (38). Within the lawyer’s being, is his soul; Bartleby has become a part of the lawyer-narrator. Something from within is significant for the lawyer; something from within he considers to be meaningful and poignant. Something from within has affected the lawyer in a profound way and has changed him.

The narrator ultimately fails to help Bartleby. He states to the “perturbed-looking stranger” that he does not know Bartleby that well and that he is not responsible for him. The narrator says, “I certainly cannot inform you. I know nothing about him. Formerly I was employed with him as a copyist; but he has done nothing for me now for some time past” (Melville 33-39). The narrator states he was a copyist just like Bartleby. But we know this not to be true. The narrator was Bartleby’s employer and was not on the same level as Bartleby in the law office.

Bartleby has an impact on Wall Street, at least temporarily. The landlord tells the lawyer to take Bartleby away, that the tenants “cannot stand it any longer,” that Bartleby “persists in haunting the building,” that “everybody is concerned” and that “some fears are entertained of a mob” (Melville 38). The lawyer turns his back on Bartleby at this time in the narrative: “in vain, I persisted that Bartleby was nothing to me—no more than to any one else. In vain—I was the last person known to have anything to do with him, and they held me to the terrible account” (39).

This is the lasting horror of the work. When given the ultimatum, the narrator turns his back on Bartleby. He tells something that is not true, that he did not know Bartleby that well, that he was merely a copyist, an acquaintance of Bartleby and not his employer. He regards Bartleby as separate from himself and not an important part of his being. Here, the lawyer

has no soul or perhaps has lost his soul. Perhaps he has lost his soul in the form and persona of Bartleby. As Bartleby dies, so does a part of the lawyer as well.

When the lawyer confronts Bartleby, Bartleby says "I like to be stationary" (Melville 41). He does not like to move and likes to be a letter. He likes to be something written on and not movable, except on the words on a page of writing paper. He likes to be an-acted-upon object rather than an active subject. Writing fails the writer. Writing is an expression of the soul of a human being. However, without movement, without the body, human beings cannot be human beings. The lawyer considers suicide: so powerful has this incident with Bartleby affected and influenced him: " 'Stationary you shall be then,' I cried, now losing all patience, and, for the first time in all my exasperating connection with him, fairly flying into a passion. 'If you do not go away from these premises before night, I shall feel bound --- indeed, I am bound to quit the premises myself!' " (41). Once again, Bartleby denies this and says "No: at present I would prefer not to make any change at all" (41). Bartleby has turned his back on all existence. He says "I prefer not to" but is not demanding of any change or alteration of the world around him. He is completely passive.

The lawyer receives a note that Bartleby has been sent to the Tombs. Bartleby is stationary; he does not move: "As I afterwards learned, the poor scrivener, when told that he must be conducted to the Tombs, offered not the slightest obstacle, but, in his pale, unmoving way, silently acquiesced" (Melville 42). Lack of movement means death, the same as letters not getting to their destinations. The narrator then goes "to the Tombs, or, to speak more properly, the Halls of Justice" (42). The lawyer sees Bartleby in the Tombs, what is to be his final resting place. "And so I found him there standing all alone in the quietest of yards, his face towards a high wall, while all around, from the narrow slits of the jail windows, I thought I saw peering out upon him the eyes of murderers and thieves" (43). There is irony here; though the high wall reaches physically up to the heavens, Bartleby sees and is seen by people who have transgressed the law, not to something greater such as redemption, hope, and charity toward one's fellow man. Bartleby sees people who have committed crimes and defied human goodness, law, and human rectitude, people who have failed in life perhaps. What we see, here, is the lawyer's soul failing to provide solace and comfort to Bartleby, and, by extension, to all of mankind. People who transgress the law also live a kind of death. They have failed to reach the meaningfulness of existence and have failed to live a virtuous and just life.

The Tombs constitute the tombs. The prison is an expression of the law, an entity that is an important and necessary component and metaphor for humanity, the basis for our social, economic, and political system. Yet, the province of the law has failed to protect Bartleby. This high wall in the jail is the last type of wall in the narrative. “ ‘It was not that I brought you here, Bartleby’ said I, keenly pained in his implied suspicion. ‘And to you, this should not be so vile a place. Nothing reproachful attaches to you by being here. And see, it is not so sad a place as one might think. Look, there in the sky and here is the grass’ ” (Melville 43). The greenness of the grass can refer to the greenness of nature and the greenness of money. Yet Bartleby denies these conceptions of meaning. He says no to life. He says no to the natural world and to the world of money and the ethos of capitalism and materialism.

What more can the narrator do for Bartleby? That is the central question of the text. Perhaps nothing more. The narrator once again refers to economic utility: “ ‘Bartleby, this is a friend; you will find him very useful to you’ ” (Melville 44). The Grub-man refers to himself as “‘Your sarvant, sir, your sarvant’” (44). “So saying, he slowly moved to the other side of the inclosure [sic], and took up a position fronting the dead wall” (44).

The lawyer-narrator is unable to help Bartleby; in the end, however, the lawyer-narrator has helped himself at least in a measured way. In the end, he has been soul-searching and he has found out something about himself, something that has questioned his own humanity. Yet in the end, Wall Street has not enhanced its soul, and this, too, is the ultimate horror and lasting meaning of the work. Has the capitalist system failed the individual? Has it failed all of humanity? This, too, is the lasting, enduring consideration of this story and its affect on individual and collective humanity.

The story ends with the rumor of the Dead Letter Office which the lawyer learned of after Bartleby’s death. This rumor does have some import for the narrator, but he is uncertain as to its veracity. The rumor was that Bartleby had been a “subordinate clerk in the Dead Letter Office in Washington but had lost his job due to a change in the administration” (Melville 46). The lawyer establishes a connection between letters and men: “Dead letters! Does it not sound like dead men?” (46). Without the power to express oneself through the act of writing, the dead letters represent dead men. Here, writing is a necessary instrument of the soul, and man perishes when he cannot write and create and achieve something new and meaningful.

The dead letter office signifies that Bartleby dealt with letters that did not reach their destinations. There is a sender of information, but this information is never received by a

receiver. Here meaning is intended for a reader, but either the meaning never gets to its destination or the receiver never makes meaning out of the letter. Bartleby, too, is this dead letter unless the lawyer, the other characters, the landlord, and all of Wall Street attempt to find meaning in the story.

Bartleby in the eyes of his peers and superiors is himself a dead letter, passing through the hands of various employers who do not know how to read him or how handle him. He is therefore put out of circulation. He is indecipherable. If he is not by nature a dead letter himself, perhaps he is caught in a deadening hermeneutics; no one can make sense of him and so he means nothing. (Lorenz 75)

The last words of the narrative are “Ah, Bartleby! Ah, Humanity!” In the end, Bartleby is inscrutable and defies the attempts of the lawyer and the attempts of the reader to understand that which has happened. Humanity will be doomed just like Bartleby if we do not have a reconsideration of walls and their literal as well as metaphorical import. In the end, “To the narrator his poor clerk has been an everlasting sign; there is evil in the world, and irremediable suffering, which good will not touch, nor good judgment avoid. ‘There are some evils that are cureless’ ” (Fogle 17).

Though there can be no final analysis to the work, it is hoped that it will last throughout the ages to the last syllable of recorded time; in the end, Bartleby is who Bartleby is because he has a deep hatred of what society and the world of Wall Street, have become. They are creatures whose means and ends are money and not for better, more just and more meaningful means of relationship. Bartleby hates Wall Street because it is a mob, and we do know that the future belongs to crowds. Bartleby hates Wall Street because it has tainted relations between and among men. Society and the world repress and oppress man, and man debases language and enduring meaning.

William Faulkner, in his Nobel Prize-winning acceptance speech for literature, stated that “man will not merely endure: he will prevail. He is immortal, not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance.” He states that “the young man or woman writing today has forgotten the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself which alone can make good writing because only that is worth writing about, worth the agony and the sweat.” Faulkner states “that when the last dingdong of doom has clanged and faded from the last

worthless rock hanging tideless in the last red and dying evening, that even then there will still be one more sound: that of his puny, inexhaustible voice, still talking.”

Yet Bartleby, society, and the world have proven otherwise, that man would and will destroy man and the bonds that meld them together, that man will stop talking and stop writing. Auden wrote that “Man must love one another or die.” In his poem, “September 1, 1939,” Auden is prescient when he writes that “Waves of anger and fear / Circulate over the bright / And the darkened lands of earth / Obsessing our private lives: / The unmentionable odour of death / Offends the September night.” Here, we remember the tragedy of 9/11. Even man’s creative and constructive forces, as expressed in the creation of the World Trade Center, could not forestall man’s destructive forces, yet perhaps we can re-build our structures and our souls. The question remains and resounds whether the lawyer-narrator is saved and whether his soul is activated. This is the central heart of the work and the central question we must ask of the story and what we must ask of mankind.

In our day, we must transcend our traditional mirrors of human conception, cognition, and corporeality. We must forge newer forms of human relations and relationships, the way we interact with one another. This can be done through activating the soul of man. In the words of W. B. Yeats, “soul must become its own betrayer, its own deliverer, the one activity, the mirror turn lamp” (xxxiii). Rather than conceiving human relations and relationships through reflections, through mirrors, prisms, prisons, and other structures, we can illuminate our world through the conceptions of the artist and of the soul. In short, we can become like a god or gods through the power of the soul and through the power of art. In so doing, we can transcend barriers and find better means of human relations to realize a better, more meaningful reality for ourselves and for the people who occupy the world after us.

Something whether nature or nurture, genetics or environment, has broken Bartleby’s heart so much so that he utters those chilling thirty-seven words mostly of the form “I prefer not to.” In the end, he despises man for what he has become, and turns his back on man and man’s forms of relationship. In the end, Bartleby is death in life and, at the story’s end, Bartleby is dead in both the Tombs and walls of men and the tomb separating men and God.

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Review. *Teaching Literature in the Real World: A Practical Guide*, Patrick Collier, Bloomsbury, 2021.

Hardback: 75.00, Paperback: 24.95, Ebook: 17.95

Patrick Collier, professor at Ball State University, opens up *Teaching Literature in the Real World: A Practical Guide* with these observations:

Teaching literature in college is difficult, and doing it successfully over the long term requires an ability to walk away from unsuccessful classes, student conferences, even entire semesters, without giving in to self-doubt, cynicism, or burnout. Successful literature teachers accept the messy, inconsistent results that can follow even the best planning and intentions. Then with care and deliberation, successful literature teachers reflect on what went wrong in the classroom [...] and discern where the problem lay and what they could have done differently. (x)

There are three important statements being made here: (1) Teaching literature is difficult and we will not always do a good job. (2) Teaching literature is inconsistent—what works brilliantly in one class or semester, may never work again. (3) Teaching literature requires removing ego from the equation, reviewing the problem, and fixing it. What Collier provides is more than sage musings, but a blueprint for how to troubleshoot and problem-solve. Not something I remember learning in graduate school.

Later, Collier explains the text's purpose:

This book is designed to help people who teach literature in college succeed—to experience and enjoy the absorption, commitment, and passion of a professional life spent engaging with imaginative texts and helping students to develop the capacities and dispositions to do the same. It does so by offering an unvarnished description of what teaching literature is really like for me and, I believe, for many

professors like me, teaching in ordinary, nonelite colleges and universities with substantial teaching and service loads. (xi)

Most of us, from fully-tenured professors to adjunct instructors fresh out of graduate school, have not had a single course in how to teach literature. I suspect that it never occurred to universities that any of us would ever need practical ideas for how to convey what we love and what comes to us fairly easily to students who have absolutely no desire to be in our classes. How do we keep students (and ourselves) motivated? And what exactly is it we are trying to teach anyway? Those of us in the trenches of literature survey courses in particular, struggle with underprepared and overstressed students who are just marking time slogging through their gen ed courses until they get to the “practical” courses they came to universities for in the first place. No one told us what to do with these students.

However, what is most appreciated in this second quote is that Collier acknowledges that many of us, particularly at community colleges, and even more relevant if we are adjuncts at more than one institution of any level, carry a crushing teaching load. Even gifted lecturers can wilt under such conditions.

Collier, fully aware that one book cannot replace years of trial and error in the classroom, has created a book that does acknowledge how hard teaching literature can be and how demoralizing it is when we cannot reach our students and pass on our passion to them. But he goes beyond sympathy and provides some realistic areas of teaching in a literature classroom that many instructors have probably never considered. For example, chapter one is titled “Teaching Advanced Reading Comprehension.” Most of us were excellent readers throughout school and had little trouble working with different types and complexity of texts. Collier makes it clear that students in our classes will very often be poor readers. It is almost impossible for students to enjoy a poem when their reading skills do not include scanning lines, or a vocabulary of poetic terms. Then he explains some tips he has learned in teaching poor readers.

The politics of teaching is a subject that we may understand, but may not know how to approach. How do we pick texts that will speak to our students, balancing canonical and noncanonical authors? How do we teach controversial topics? How do we lead discussions about texts that inevitably provoke shock or anger? How can we encourage understanding of a text without “overdirected, overdetermined ‘group’ interpretation” of a work (14)? In chapter one, “Why Teach Literature,” Collier addresses these questions and provides some suggestions.

In chapter three, “Teaching Advanced Literacy,” we are reminded of (or maybe introduced to) false expectations of professors that make teaching literature even more fraught than it already is. Expectations of cultural literacy, prior knowledge, and contextual knowledge can put up roadblocks to student comprehension and enjoyment of literature if we don’t think about how we are going to alleviate them ahead of time.

The topics of chapters four and five are surprising, yet when one thinks about them, it is really all common sense. “Articulating Goals and Designing Integrated Classes” reviews ideas that K-12 educators are familiar with, but which most college professors are not. We are not tasked with creating lesson plans that articulate what the goal of a class meeting is, what objectives are being addressed, and where in the overall course goals this lesson fits. Collier explains how to use this skill to really understand what we really are trying to do in the classroom and to be able to assess if we met our goals or not. Chapter five, “Managing Relationships,” is more general and serves as a reminder of what the instructor’s role in the teacher-student relationship is, a topic that rarely comes up in college environments.

There are plenty of examples and strategies throughout *Teaching Literature in the Real World* that make the book so useful. What is an instructor to do when the class has not read the assignment? Plan the class so that it will be successful whether the class has read or not. How can an instructor keep on top of grading? Specify what kinds of grading are being done in different kinds of assignments, providing different kinds/depth of grading at different stages of the semester. What can an instructor do in a class beyond

lecturing? Group work, short writing prompts that lead to discussion, take-home assessments, combination of low-stakes and high-stakes writing. Collier also provides so many mini-tutorials for specific texts that can be extrapolated to other readings. The two appendices, “Engaging Students in Criticism and Theory” and “Grading and Feedback in Literature Classes,” continues Collier’s emphasis on practical strategies that literature professors can implement almost immediately. Not every reader will agree with every suggestion in the *Teaching Literature in the Real World*. For example, Collier’s views on grading standard English in a literature course may not set well with many teachers; however, the racial politics behind his ideas on standardized grammar are fascinating and certainly worth hearing.

And finally, in Appendix One, “Engaging Students in Criticism and Theory,” Collier provides some techniques for helping students understand the value of literary criticism. He also provides strategies for teaching students various theoretical perspectives that can open up their texts even further.

Review. *How to Teach a Play: Essential Exercises for Popular Plays*, Edited by Miriam M. Chirico and Kelly Younger, Methuen Drama/Bloomsbury, 2020. Hardback: 90.00, Paperback: 31.45, Ebook: 25.16

Miriam M. Chirico is a professor and scholar of dramatic literature at Eastern Connecticut State University. Kelly Younger is a screenwriter and award-winning playwright who teaches at Loyola Marymount University. Chirico and Younger have put together an anthology of exercises to accompany over eighty plays from around the world. The exercises are

The introduction to the book opens with the question “How often do you go to see others teach?” (1). Rarely is the probable answer for most instructors for many reasons. They go on to ask “Who wouldn’t love to be a fly on the wall in someone else’s classroom?” In essence, *How to Teach a Play: Essential Exercises for Popular Plays*, is the teacher of drama’s opportunity to be the fly. Whether we teach drama courses, or drama in survey or literature courses, the activities and exercises in this book will open our eyes to new ways of approaching old materials and simple strategies for tackling complicated plays.

Each exercise is based on a specific play and is contributed by a specific professor from institutions from around the world. The plays/exercises are arranged chronologically from classical Greece to the 21st -century, Aeschylus’s *Agamemnon* to Qui Nguyen’s *Vietgone*. Most plays are popular favorites, but there are some that may not be as familiar and may encourage teachers to seek them out to add to their syllabus.

The organization of the book follows a consistent template, which is always helpful. Let’s look at the exercise for Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible*, contributed by Deric McNish at Michigan State University as an example. Each play entry has the following sections:

In Brief: A summary of the exercise, in this case, the class will play “Witches and Villagers” to examine the power of hysteria.

Purpose: What the students will get out of the exercise. The performative nature of this activity adapts the game *Werewolf* to demonstrate the “contagious quality of [McCarthyism] fearmongering” (180).

Preparation: This section provides any background preparation the instructor needs to consider. McNish explains how to set up the game, the supplies needed, and what background material needs to be provided to the students beforehand.

Materials: What does the professor need to source for the activity, in this case only index cards.

Nuts and Bolts: Understandably, this is the longest section of each entry, where the exercise is explained in detail. The instructions have been well-edited for clarity and concision. Discussion prompts are included so the professor can make connections between the activity and the play. McCarthyism, the Red Scare, public opinion, and other contextual topics are reviewed in the activity.

Finally, there is a **Reflection** section: In the reflection section, instructors are told what to expect from the activity, what may go wrong, how to ensure success, etc. For example, McNish notes that the outcome of the game is rigged so that students can examine certain themes in *The Crucible*, and he explains how to deal with that.

The exercises are all interesting, but certainly won't be to everyone's taste, particularly as a number of them are performative in nature or rely on students being willing to play parts and act. Students in a literature survey course, for example, may not have the same desire to get out of their seats to take on the roles of Hamlet or Ophelia, or to read parts of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, which include profanity. Yet the sheer number of ideas provide so many ways into teaching plays that a professor may not have ever considered, that even if performance is out in a course, there are ways to reflect on the exercises.

The advice the editors provide in the introduction is priceless. (1) Trust yourself. (2) Trust your students. (3) Be transparent. Long-time professors can get set in our ways. We don't always want to try something new. Newer instructors may love trying new strategies in the classroom, but wonder if what we are doing is considered academic. Or we worry that our students will think what we are asking them to do is stupid. Trusting ourselves and our students to try different approaches and being transparent when things don't work is the best guide. (4) Embracing the process and (5) making the exercises our own will help us (6) develop our own exercises and (7) enjoy ourselves. As the Chirico and Younger say "You became a teacher for a reason. You became a teacher of plays

for a reason. Remember what those reasons are. You're reading this book because you want to be better at both. And now, its showtime" (12).