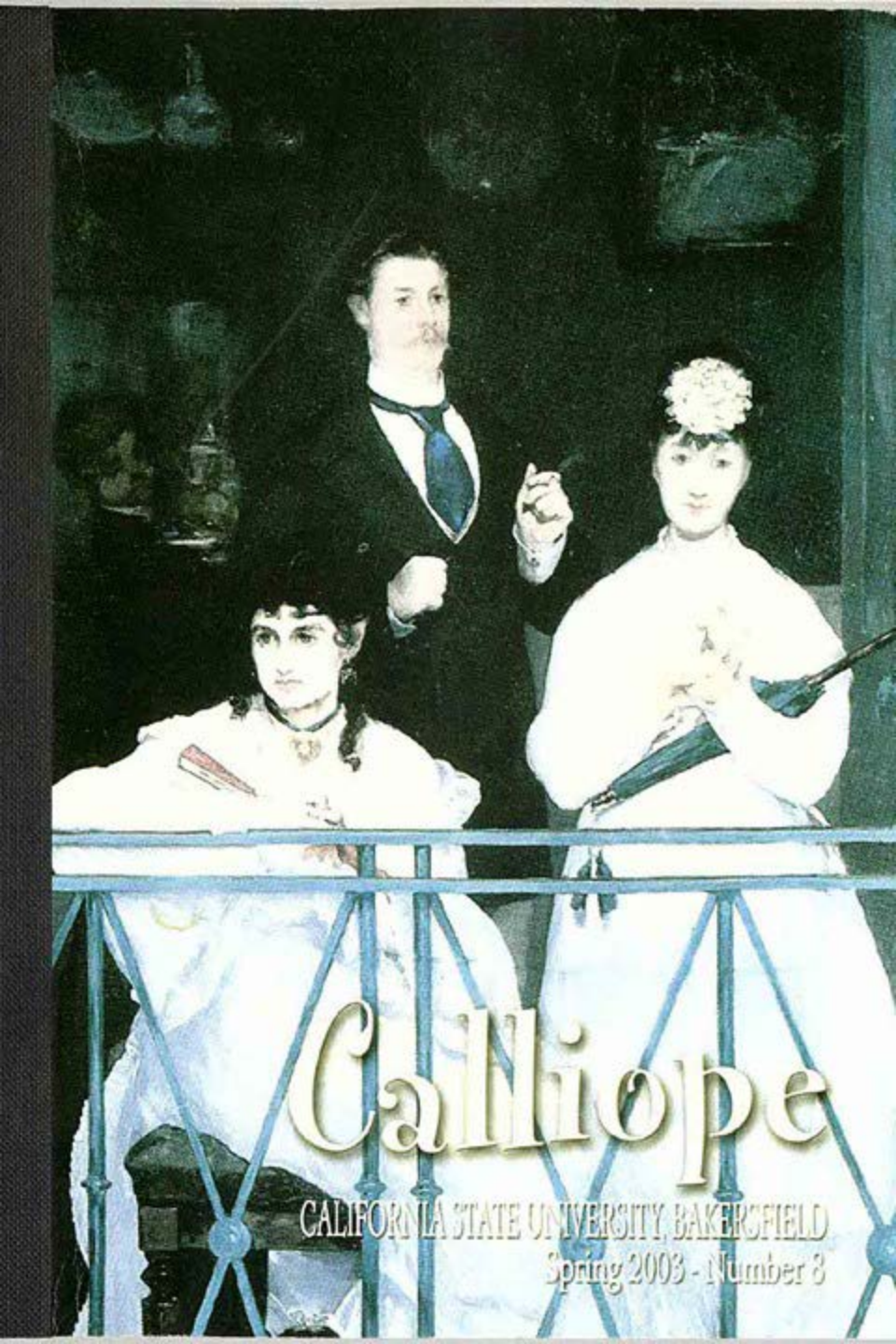


A painting of three people in late 19th-century attire. A man in a dark suit and blue tie stands in the center, holding a small object. To his left, a woman in a white dress with a high collar and a dark choker looks forward. To his right, a woman in a white dress with a large white flower in her hair holds a dark parasol. They are standing behind a blue metal railing. The background is dark and indistinct.

Calliope

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, BAKERSFIELD
Spring 2003 - Number 3

California State University, Bakersfield
Department of English

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Calliope

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Calliope is an annual journal located at
California State University, Bakersfield, California 93311

Printed by CSUB Reprographics

Number Eight

Spring 2003

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Number 8 • Spring 2003

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Writer's Guidelines and Submissions

Calliope is published annually. Contributions in all areas of literary history and criticism are welcomed, but manuscripts will only be considered if they have been recommended by a professor.

Submissions must be typed or printed on standard weight paper and should not exceed 25 double-spaced pages. The first page of the manuscript should contain the author's name and essay title. All subsequent pages should be numbered. Submission of a paper to this journal will be taken to imply that it represents original work. Essays should conform to the current MLA citation system. Authors should use notes and appendices sparingly. The editor reserves the right to edit manuscripts as needed for publication.

Submissions should be sent to:

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Introduction

This volume is the eighth number of an annual publication entitled *Calliope*. It highlights some of the best work in literary history and criticism by undergraduates and graduates at CSUB.

This publication contains nine outstanding essays covering a wide range of literature from Jane Austen to Toni Morrison. The essays deal with poetry, drama, and fiction, and represent a diversity of critical approaches. David Decker's essay on Oscar Wilde received an award for being the CSUB Outstanding Graduate Paper in Humanities and Social Sciences.

The cover design incorporates a painting by nineteenth-century artist Edouard Manet. The work is entitled "Le Balcon."

Glenda Hudson, Editor

**Excursions into Neverland:
The Importance of the Edenic World in
Peter and Wendy and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer***

The experience of the Edenic world is an important part of the character development of the children in *Peter and Wendy* and in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. In these satirical texts, children experience their imaginations unfettered by repressive aspects of society such as government, money, education, or religion. Free of parental control, they make their own rules in a world where harmony, innocence, and a sense of escape prevail—seemingly forever. Eventually reality intrudes upon utopia, presenting itself in the form of a storm, threatening adults, or simply as guilt or longing. The intrusion of reality reveals the physical characteristics of these Edenic worlds as both attractive and repelling, and the shelter and food in these worlds as equally satisfying and problematic. The result is that the children gain an understanding of the significance of home and experience a desire to return to society.

The physical characteristics of Neverland and Jackson's Island are initially attractive. Neverland is 'snug and most compact' and 'not in the least alarming' (Barrie 74). On Jackson's Island there is 'a delicious sense of repose and peace...a deep pervading calm and silence' (Twain 88). Tom and his friends enjoy 'snug nooks carpeted with grass and jeweled with flowers' (90). The equivalent for Wendy and her brothers is the mermaids' lagoon, a pool of 'vivid colours' where 'mermaids come up...to play with their bubbles' (Barrie 140-1). In both texts the natural world appears idyllic and benign. On Neverland 'turtles [bury] their eggs in the sand,' and a 'flamingo' and a 'wolf with her whelps' coexist peacefully (Barrie 105). On Jackson's Island nature reposes in a great 'meditation' (Twain 88). The presence of creatures is described in a paragraph of parataxis: a 'green worm' incorporates Tom into his morning routine and the worm's procession is followed by a string of ants, ladybugs, catbirds, a squirrel, a

fox, and a butterfly (88). Twain's compounding of the abundance of nature before Tom's eyes—"Life manifested itself"—indicates an oneness between the boy and the natural world (88). A sense of creation and harmony prevails.

However, just as imagination has a dark side, these islands have their repelling characteristics. At night Neverland's 'unexplored patches' are full of 'black shadows' and 'the roar of beasts' (Barrie 106). In Peter's absence 'things are usually quiet on the island' but with Peter present 'the whole island [is] seething with life' (112). The choice of the word 'seething' lends an ominous undercurrent to the 'life' of the island—a foreshadowing of dangers to come. At the 'turn of the moon' the pleasant lagoon becomes 'dangerous for mortals' and the mermaids 'utter strange wailing cries' (140). The presence of the mysterious is felt as 'shivers' and 'shadows [which steal] across the water, turning it cold' (142). The lagoon becomes a 'formidable and unfriendly place' for the children, the 'unknown...[is] stalking toward them' (142). The symbolism of shadow and night as harbingers of evil is as prevalent in the fantasy world as it is in the world of reality. The Edenic world cannot hold fear at bay.

Similarly, Jackson's Island turns foreboding as a storm approaches. There is a 'brooding oppressiveness in the air' and a 'solemn hush' falls upon the boys (Twain 104). As in *Peter and Wendy*, the sense is that something is coming to get them. When the storm hits the island the terrified boys '[stumble] over roots and among vines in the dark' trying to escape the torrent (Twain 104). The storm 'seemed likely to tear the island to pieces, burn it up, drown it to the treetops, blow it away' (105). An overriding sense of pending annihilation pervades these scenes. While the storm leaves the boys on Jackson's Island feeling 'awed' and 'thankful' (105) to have avoided catastrophe, Peter Pan faces possible annihilation 'with a smile on his face' thinking that, 'To die will be an awfully big adventure' (Barrie 152). Peter's cavalier attitude can be

attributed to his immortality, but Tom, Joe, and Huck are not protected by a similar fantasy and must eventually reconcile themselves to the possibility of death.

The shelters of Neverland and Jackson's Island hold equally compelling pleasures and challenges. On Neverland the children's house resembles an animal burrow; it is underground and accessible only through 'hollow trees.' The cave-like home is 'one large room . . . with a floor in which you could dig' and an 'enormous fire-place' (Barrie 133-4). On Jackson's Island the boys make their camp 'twenty or thirty steps within the somber depths of the forest' (Twain 85). They 'stretch themselves out on the grass' and sleep together in the open air (85). The simplicity and closeness to the earth of these shelters reflects the desire for connection to the earth, freedom from the constraints of domestic order, and the importance of relationship over comfort or appearances.

Unfortunately, these forms of shelter become insufficient for the children when the violence of nature or the threat of enemies intrudes. When the storm hits Jackson's Island the boys run for their only man-made source of protection—the 'tent' of sail-cloth—yet they are stripped of even this simple connection to the outside world (140). Similarly, the sanctity of the underground shelter on Neverland is violated when Hook is able to drop poison into a medicine cup that is 'standing on a ledge within easy reach of the pirate' (Barrie 182). Regardless of isolation or seclusion, these Edenic worlds remain susceptible to dark storms and the evil influences of the adult world.

Ultimately, existence on these Edenic islands depends upon the availability of food. Tom Sawyer and his friends initially provide food for themselves by stealing it from home. They arrive on the island with 'boiled ham,' a 'side of bacon' and a chunk of stolen fire (Twain 83). Although the island easily provides them with a 'feast' of turtle eggs and a fine catch of fish, they are bothered by the idea that 'taking bacon and hams

... was plain simple stealing—and there was a command against that in the Bible' (87-9). The joy of eating freshly caught fish is tempered by the guilt of eating food 'sullied with the crime of stealing' (87). Reality, in the form of guilt, encroaches upon the utopia.

The abundance of food on Neverland vacillates according to Peter's whim and imagination. Sometimes the children have 'to make-believe that they [have] had their dinners' while at other times food is plentiful, although its source is unknown (Barrie 128). The children occasionally eat 'roasted bread-fruit, yams . . . and bananas,' but they never know 'whether there [will] be a real meal or just a make-believe' (135). On both of these islands, obtaining food is shadowed by uncertainty. The longing and guilt associated with food is part of the scenario of dystopia occurring on the islands that culminates in the children's desire to return home.

Intrusions of reality in the form of storms, dangerous adults, guilty feelings, and the need for shelter and food merge into 'homesickness' and 'melancholy' (Twain 100) for Tom and his friends and a 'dread' of being barred from return for Wendy and her brothers (Barrie 167). The significance of their excursions lies in the fact that they have experienced freedom, innocence, fear, and growth on their own terms, outside the bonds of society, but are willing to return. Society has something to offer them. Children who previously delighted in escape and 'soared out . . . into the night' return to the solidity of home (Peter 212). Having twice crossed the liminal threshold, they are ready to incorporate the adult world into their child world—in their return is the implied acceptance to grow up.

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The Paradox of Society in Alcott and Salinger

Alcott's *Little Women* and Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* each contain a character who is on a journey to discover himself and his place in society. Holden and Jo begin this journey with an initial loss of innocence, an experience that opens their eyes to the reality of the world surrounding them. Holden deals with the death of a brother, while Jo uncovers a truth about her inner being. From these experiences the characters then recognize that they are alienated from society and that they must face and overcome this sense of not belonging in order to continue on the journey. In dealing with this alienation, Holden and Jo begin to discover more about themselves and how they fit into the society around them. Both understand that to exist in society, one must relate to it in some fashion, and understand that one is always a part of society whether one desires this or not. The experiences of these two characters are revealed symbolically throughout the novel as they move at various times from innocence to experience. At times, this gained experience or knowledge is focused on the world around them; at others the experience reveals something of their character. Each character struggles to maintain a sense of control in the changing world in which they live. Neither wants to let go of the innocence of youth, but neither is able to prevent the inevitable change of time. The symbolic journeys of Holden and Jo, as they fight against the growth and change they encounter and inevitably surrender to the effects of time, buttress the broader theme of living in societal structures while not assimilating to those structures.

The societal assimilation in the *Catcher in the Rye* begins with Holden's first movement from innocence to knowledge when his brother Allie dies. Holden does not know how to react and struggles with this acceptance throughout the novel. He describes this experience of unrecognizable pain frustration:

Devon Grim

He's dead now. He got Leukemia and died when we were in Maine, on July 18, 1946. You'd have like him...I slept in the garage the night he died, and I broke all the goddam windows with my fist, just for the hell of it. I even tried to break all the windows on the station wagon we had that summer, but my hand was already broken by that time and I couldn't do it . . . I hardly didn't even know what I was doing, and you didn't know Allie. (Salinger 38-39)

Holden cannot understand or comprehend the dynamic impact of Allie's death. Though Allie physically died in this sequence of events, a greater death occurred for Holden. Allie's death is symbolic of the death of Holden's innocence, the death of his belief in goodness and virtue. Holden is no longer capable of believing in the childhood illusions he once held, yet he struggles to maintain these dreams. Holden must learn how to relate in a world that is encompassed by false realities and painful truths.

This world of false realities is also encountered by Jo in *Little Women* upon the loss of her childhood illusions. Her first encounter with this reality occurs when Amy burns her manuscript of fairytales she has written. Jo's fairytales are the source of her childhood dreams, and when Amy burns them she is in essence destroying the final link to childhood remaining for Jo. For Jo, this is beyond repair for "Jo's book was the pride of her heart" and she "had worked on [the fairytales] patiently, putting her whole heart into her work to her family this seemed a small loss. . . but to Jo it was a dreadful calamity" (Alcott 76). Jo mourns the loss of her childhood dreams and then discovers a truth about herself. When Amy falls into the lake due to Jo's spiteful neglect, Jo realizes she has the ability for evil. Jo realizes this as she "dropped down beside the bed in a passion of penitent tears, telling all that had happened, bitterly condemning her hardness of heart, and sobbing out of gratitude for being spared the heavy punishment which might have come upon her" (Alcott 79). The destruction

of the book did not just express Jo's loss of childhood ideals, but also the loss of her idealistic and innocent child self. Though she is different to Holden, Jo has lost the innocence of childhood while struggling to maintain it. As the characters adjust to this new perception of the world, they begin to search for their respective places in it.

Once the initial introduction to experience has occurred, Jo and Holden begin to feel an isolation from society. Holden's first experience with the feeling of alienation is less profound than his second. Holden finds himself 'standing way up on Thomsen Hill' instead of attending the game with the rest of his school because he has lost the fencing equipment and 'the whole team [has] ostracized' him (Salinger 3). He is not a part of this group with whom he lives. He is ostracized from his peers not because of losing the equipment but because they are still living in the world of naivety that Holden is estranged from. He leaves the hill to visit Mr. Spencer and is told, 'Life is a game, boy. Life is a game that one plays according to the rules' (Salinger 8). To which Holden replies, 'Game, my ass. Some game. If you get on the side where all the hot-shots are, then it's a game, all right . . . but if you get on the other side, where there aren't any hot-shots, then what's a game about it?' (Salinger 8). Through this conversation with Spencer, Holden has a realization that he has estranged himself by rejecting societal confines. But more than that it symbolizes his struggle to hold on to the childhood innocence and perfection that is rapidly dwindling and to control something in a world that is changing all around him.

Jo also discovers her alienation from society, when her sister Amy attempts to initiate her into the confines of societal visitations. Amy convinces Jo to go with her as she calls on the neighbors. Reluctantly Jo agrees for 'she hated calls of the formal sort, and never made any until Amy cornered her with a bargain, bribe, or promise' (Alcott 279-280). Jo's antagonism to such superfluous actions is the first sign that she is

Devon Grim

estranged from the rest of society. Jo recognizes the falseness that exists in the adult world and has no desire to be a part of it. She commits 'fearful blunders' and is given 'a timely lesson in the art of holding her tongue' when she falls out of favor with Aunt March (Alcott 283, 289). Jo's actions are a manifestation of her desires to avoid the gender roles which she struggles against. Like Holden, she wishes to be free from societal constraints. However, her sense of alienation is not overcome by these encounters. Jo begins writing for a paper in New York and realizes that her attempt to assimilate with this society only pushes her further from her true self: 'She thought she was prospering finely...unconsciously she was beginning to desecrate some of the womanliest attributes of a woman's character . . . and was fast brushing the innocent bloom from her nature by premature acquaintance with the darker side of life' (Alcott 338). Her character fades as she tries to become that which she is not by writing to please others. Jo's writings symbolize her desire to rebel against the societal roles with which she is familiar. However, the rebellion is not so fitting either. Another approach must be taken for Jo and Holden to discover how they fit into a distanced world.

Holden is faced with the realization that to find his place in society he must face his alienation and overcome it. As existentialist Søren Kierkegaard asserts, Holden must recognize himself as a product of society and in doing so choose himself as such. Holden has this realization when he encounters 'Fuck You' signs at his sister's school and even more so as he watches his sister on the carousel. He desires to protect his sister and the other students from these signs but understands that he cannot do this. This concept is reinforced when he encounters the same signs in the Museum:

I was all alone in the tomb. It was so nice and peaceful. Than all of a sudden, you'd never guess what I saw on the wall . . . It was written with a red crayon or something right under the glass part of the wall . . . You can never

find a place that's nice and peaceful because there isn't any . . . I think even if I ever die, and they stick me in a cemetery, and I have a tombstone and all, it'll say, 'Holden Caulfield' on it, and then the year I was born, and what year I died, and then right under that it'll say 'Fuck you.' (Salinger 204)

Holden has resolved that he is not in control, and that society continues around him no matter if he fights against it. He must give up his dream of being the catcher in the rye because inevitably the children will fall off the cliff. By admitting that he cannot control these signs, Holden gives up his idealistic dream of saving society from itself.

Jo discovers her surrender to society through the death of Beth. Jo's role until this point has been to care for Beth. When Beth dies Jo finds that she is lost as to her role in society and, as such, she falls into a state of gloom:

These were dark days to her, for something like despair came over her when she thought of spending all her life in that quiet house, devoted to hum-drum cares, a few poor little pleasures, and the duty that never seemed to grow any easier. 'I can't do it. I wasn't meant for life like this, and I know I shall break away and do something desperate if somebody don't come and help me,' she said to herself, when her first efforts failed, and she fell into the moody miserable state of mind which often comes when strong wills have to yield to the inevitable. (Alcott 418-419)

Whereas Jo once had a place in society taking care of Beth, she no longer has that role. Beth is gone, and Jo has no specific role to fulfill. Unlike her sisters she is not married, does not have a place outside of her childhood home, and feels quite desolate about the possibility of either occurring. Jo's contemplations symbolize her inevitable acceptance and

Devon Grim

entrance into the adult world. Jo can no longer be satisfied with the childhood world of her fairytales.

Holden and Jo reveal much about their true characters by their actions. Many of their actions reveal a deeper sense of who they are and how they fit into society. Both characters must learn to exist in a world of adult relationships while realizing the falsehood of this world. They must overcome the paradox of living in the society they reject while not succumbing to that very same society. They must choose to be themselves a part of society while remaining free from the societal constraints that would assimilate them. Holden and Jo lose their innocence of childhood while holding onto the ideals of this childhood. These ideals are what prevent them from slipping into complete assimilation. The two must find the balance between ideals and reality to overcome the prison of society in which they live. By accepting their places in social structures they are able to participate in society without becoming what they loathe.

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**Analysis of Morrison's *Beloved*:
"Slavery's Subversion of Motherhood"**

Among the various themes explored by Morrison in *Beloved*, motherhood is the most pervasive. Morrison explores how the experience of motherhood is subverted by the institution of slavery. Specifically, slavery perverts the family unit and removes any sense of autonomy held by slaves. Even after the emancipation proclamation, the effects of slavery on the family unit and the general loss-of-self felt among African-Americans still manifests itself in their lives; even Denver, who grew up "free," experiences these effects.

It is important to note that Morrison does not define motherhood. In fact, motherhood is something indefinable. Put simply, Motherhood is, in essence, Love—not the "California love" of today's culture but, rather, the Form of Love described by Plato—something words cannot define. The idea of being indefinable is also espoused in the spiritual teachings of the Tao Te Ching: "The name that can be named is not the eternal Name. "The unnamable is the eternally real" (1). Motherhood and the Love it is composed of are eternally real. They are ideas too vast to be expressed with the words of this world. It is as if defining them with words would lessen them in some way.

Motherhood is organic. It is natural. Motherhood is not only a human characteristic; it is a characteristic of something greater. It is like an innate function of the Earth. The Africans who revered their children, loved their families, honored their ancestors, and called the female goddess Earth understood this. Thus, by interfering with Africans' connection to their motherland, slavery subverts motherhood on two levels.

Macrocosmically, Africa-as-mother was destroyed by having her children removed and subjected to the horrors of slavery. Morrison illustrates this using stream-of-consciousness when describing *Beloved*'s thoughts:

Jack M. Beckham II

In the beginning I could see her I could not help her
because the clouds were in the
way in the beginning I could see her the shining in
her ears she does not like the
circle around her neck . . . she wants her earrings she
wants her round basket I want
her face a hot thing.' (201)

The 'her' Beloved is referring to is Africa. The 'clouds' (later referred to as 'noisy clouds') could be identified as gun smoke from the white slave-traders. The 'shining in her ears' is a reference to the diamonds that attracted white people to Africa in the beginning, before they discovered that slavery was a much more profitable endeavor. Africa does not like the 'circle around her neck' which is the exploitation of the entire continent: white law, the loss of identity Christianity imposed, diamond mining, poverty, slavery, etc. The 'round basket' is representative of the womb; Morrison also uses the image of Beloved's 'basket-fat stomach' when describing her pregnancy (230). By desecrating her flesh with diamond mines and forcefully removing her children, the white men actually removed the womb of Mother-Africa. This imagery is tragic and melancholy. Furthermore, the desire to 'want her face' is symbolic of the melancholic longing to return home, felt by Africans who had been—or were being—transported to America. Indeed, a child removed from its mother longs to see her face.

Microcosmically, motherhood (this innate attribute of love) was distorted by the horrors slavery heaped on individuals. Many of these horrors are seen by examining slavery's perversion of the family unit. In the African society, children are revered, and solidarity is a vital aspect of the community. Yet, slavery made living these ideals impossible. Sethe's mother was 'taken up many times by the crew. She threw [her children] all away but [Sethe] . . . Without names, she threw them' (Morrison 59). How can a mother revere children whose faces resemble those who rape

and enslave her? How can solidarity exist in a world where people are moved around like checkers? This perversion is expressed by what Baby Suggs called the 'nastiness of life.' This nastiness was the discovery that, 'nobody stopped playing checkers just because the pieces included her children' (Morrison 22).

By subverting solidarity, perverting family, and denying autonomy, slavery invokes a loss of self within both slaves and free-blacks. Consequently, this loss of self destroyed the experience of motherhood as an innate and organic expression of love. One cannot love their children when they cannot love their self, and, one cannot love their self when they cannot know their self. Baby Suggs, Sethe, and Denver expressed this loss-of-self resulting in motherhood-corrupted.

Baby Suggs mentioned that by the time Halle was born, she hardly glanced at him because, 'it wasn't worth the trouble to try to learn features you would never see change into adulthood anyway' (Morrison 131). She further stated that regardless of how little she knew about her children, she knew even less about her self. There was sadness in her center, 'the desolated center where the self that was no self made its home' (Morrison 133). Because she could not experience motherhood, Baby Suggs lost her identity—her womanhood. Once she lost her womanhood, defeated, she lost the desire to regain her motherhood.

Sethe stated, 'I had milk' (Morrison 15). Symbolic of motherhood, Sethe's statement reveals her awareness of motherhood on a rudimentary level. Furthermore, Sethe recognized that motherhood and self are interlaced; she said: 'Milk was all I ever had' (Morrison 151). However, Sethe also said 'they took my milk!' (Morrison 16). Slavery and its atrocities debauch Sethe's notion of motherhood and rob her of her womanhood. Thus, she became the woman who would not look away, who 'did not squint in the wind' (Morrison 121).

Moreover, Sethe's loss of self fosters Denver's inability to acquire autonomy. Denver cries when Beloved disappears in the cold house.

Jack M. Beckham II

However, Denver is not necessarily crying because Beloved disappeared. Denver states, 'she is crying because she has no self' (116). Denver realizes the sickness behind her desperate need for someone else. Denver has not been able to experience womanhood or motherhood because she was gripped with the fear that something outside the yard would cause her mother to kill again. Again, this illustrates the diabolical nature of slavery and its perversion of motherhood. Due to Sethe's experiences with slavery, Denver too is enslaved—by fear of her own mother.

Sethe lived a life of distorted motherhood, devoid of womanhood. Because the foundation of slavery is based on ownership or possession of other human beings, Sethe viewed her children as possessions. She allows herself to be defined by her children whom she called her 'best thing' (Morrison 258). Additionally, because she has no concept of self, she fails to view her children as autonomous beings. Sethe refuses to allow her children to go through the horrors of slavery. She said: 'Not you, not none of mine, and when I tell you you mine, I also mean I'm yours. I wouldn't draw a breath without my children' (Morrison 193). Thus, due to this distorted concept of motherhood, Sethe kills her baby and attempts to kill her other children. Yet, we cannot blame Sethe for her murderous act; slavery is to blame. Slavery, the institution that caused Sethe to be who she was: the one her mother did not throw away, the one who got what milk was left once white babies nursed, the one with the chokecherry tree, the one held down and milked like a goat. Sethe did not understand. Her love was 'too thick.' Morrison wrote, 'Freeing yourself was one thing; claiming ownership of that freed self was another' (88).

Ella says, 'If anybody was to ask me I'd say, 'don't love nothing'' (Morrison 86). Alternately, Paul D suggests people should protect themselves by loving small (Morrison 154). However, despite these ideas about love, Baby Suggs' sermon in the Clearing shows the way to claim ownership of one's self and amend slavery's perversion of motherhood.

She says one must love their self: 'flesh that weeps, laughs; flesh that dances on bare feet in grass. Love it. Love it hard. . . . Love your hands! Love them. . . . You got to love it, you! . . . You got to love it . . . and the beat and beating heart, love that too' (Morrison 82). One must love their self to find their self (or, perhaps one must love their self enough to begin the journey). Sethe discovers this lesson at the close of the novel. Her children are not her best thing; she is her best thing—as we all are. By coming to grips with this idea, Sethe has the ability to finally claim ownership of herself and, by doing so, begin the journey to heal the mental, emotional, and spiritual wounds inflicted upon her by her experiences with slavery.

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**Marriage as a Mirror of Society in
A Doll's House and *Hedda Gabler***

In *A Doll's House* and *Hedda Gabler*, two of the most performed and analyzed dramas, Henrik Ibsen cast women in the roles of rebels against the conventions of society, causing many to believe that his goal was to espouse women's rights or to denounce marriage itself. Indeed, Ibsen does explore gender relations in detail, but these relations are epitomized in marriages that are power struggles rather than alliances. And very much evident in these marriages are social mores which emphasize competition, dominance, submission, and simplistic determinations of good and evil. It is their arbitrary assignment to positions of inferiority and their exclusion from the world of economic and political power against which these women revolt, and by which manipulations even the men themselves are diminished. Even today, in an age when women's roles are rapidly changing, some critics argue that Nora was wrong to leave her family and may be incapable of handling her freedom (Quigley), or that Hedda's end was solely the result of her rejection of a moral code of conduct (Olsen). But on closer examination, Nora exhibits traits of conscience and moral discrimination that her husband utterly lacks, and Hedda's moral defects are more than matched by those of her husband, family, and friends. An inquiry into who these women really are, whom they married and why, what kind of couples they formed, as well as how and why they ended their marriages, will reveal a universal theme of human beings struggling against oppression.

Hedda and Nora are both beautiful young women. Hedda is a general's daughter and thus an aristocrat, while Nora appears to belong to the same middle class as her husband. Nora also appears at first glance to buy into the conventional morality that Torvald embodies, but it is not long before her intense interest in money and her reputation as a spendthrift are revealed to be the result of her taking chances with her

Ann Jones

reputation to save her husband's life. Hedda, on the other hand, displays contempt for conventional bourgeois morality through her open scorn of Tesman and his family, who personify the politeness and status consciousness of the middle classes. But despite her contempt, Hedda herself is trapped, by her need for social rank and approval, in a marriage to a man she despises.

Though Nora chirps 'it is delightful to be really well dressed, isn't it?' (13), it is only a short time before her satisfaction with the material rewards of her situation begins to dwindle in the face of what she sees as gross immorality. When told by Krogstad that she has broken a law and could be prosecuted for an act which she sees as both protecting both her father and her husband, she exclaims, 'No, it's impossible! I did it for love's sake' (24). Nora's naive sense of romance, heroism, and justice is offended by the cold realities of the law. Hedda, however, is only too aware that love carries no social or economic protection in this society, and gives up her risky but passionate relationship with Lovborg for what she sees as the safety of marriage to Tesman. Lovborg confirms the easily recognizable incongruity of the match between Hedda and Tesman: 'Oh Hedda, Hedda, how could you throw yourself away like that?' (314). That safety is her chief goal becomes clear when Hedda confesses to Lovborg, 'there was imminent danger of our relationship becoming serious' (317), and that not daring to shoot Lovborg that night 'wasn't my worst piece of cowardice' (318). Though he is obviously distasteful to her, Tesman seems able to offer Hedda the respectability and protection from scandal that she craves. The fact of life about which Hedda is naive is that those who protect also have the power to victimize.

As the characters of Nora and Hedda illustrate contrasting coping strategies of the women, so the characters of the husbands, Torvald and Tesman, present diverse views of the nature and effects of conventional morality. As card-carrying members of the group whom the social, legal, and moral rules were made to benefit, Torvald Helmer and Jorgen Tesman

have no reasons to become disillusioned with the legal system or the constructs of marriage. That is not to say, however, that they don't need to monitor their territories for intruders or make certain that their wives are engaging in right thinking. Torvald is a patronizing man to Nora's childlike self who has 'an unconquerable disgust at everything that is ugly' (38), and who lectures Nora that 'the atmosphere of lies' in the home of a hypocrite 'is full of the germs of evil' (27). As such, he personifies the superficiality and hypocrisy of the middle class of which he is a staunch part.

Jorgen Tesman, too, is in a strategic position to exercise control over his aristocratic wife. Though he outwardly appears mild, even weak, and ridiculous in the company of Hedda, Tesman wields the power of which she is most afraid. Though Olsen tries to argue that 'Ibsen establishes a moral order defined on stage through the loyalties, moral attitudes, and commitments of Tesman and Aunt Julie', which constitute a 'tesmanesque ethos' central to which 'are values like consideration, sympathy, and love' (593), Nicholson's argument that Tesman uses and destroys Hedda as a function of his middle class values rings far more true to the emotional tone of the play. Aunt Julie's pride in Tesman's carrying off 'General Gabler's daughter,' even going so far as to risk her financial security to insure the match, as well as her mock-sympathetic gloating over 'the people who stood in your way,' ('... you have them at your feet. They have gone down before you, Jorgen' [271]), are all representative of the falsity which Ibsen habitually reviles. As Hedda has admitted to Lovborg, she is 'terrified of scandal' (317), and as long as Tesman provides a haven of respectability for her, he is useful to her. Tesman desires the gleam of Hedda's aristocracy to reflect onto his career. But key to this relationship is that, as a man, it is Tesman who is holding all of the cards. It is of little consequence to Tesman to give in to Hedda's demands where necessary. If scandal rears its ugly head, it is Hedda who will suffer. Tesman needs only to replace her, while reaping whatever benefits her behavior may engender. As Nicholson

points out, Hedda can easily destroy Lovborg and reduces Brack to blackmail, but Tesman's position is only enhanced by the paths Hedda chooses. He 'shows instinctive skill in turning events to his advantage' (373). The 'consideration, sympathy, and love' of the 'tesmanesque ethos' seem to have a shadow side, as do, according to Ibsen, middle class values far and wide. In contrast to Tesman's manipulative opportunism, Torvald's uncomprehending self-absorption seems to at least hold hope for a cure as he is dragged face-to-face with truths about his marriage.

The forces which drive these individuals also inform their relationships as couples. The marriage of Nora and Torvald is based on mutual self-deception where she is the childlike doll, he the heroic prince. Torvald's fastidious rejection of all things unattractive, and Nora's reliance on being selflessly rescued are symbolic of what Johnston refers to as their 'attempting to exclude conflict, guilt, and sorrow from their lives' (143). Furthermore, Johnston points out how Ibsen frames the Helmer's insistence on an attractive, tastefully decorated home as the 'main goal of middle-class endeavor' and at the same time 'as a selling of the soul' (140). Ibsen's love of the triangular relationship is apparent in both of these plays, and Dr. Rank is one of the characters who serves the function in *A Doll's House*. If Nora and Torvald have sacrificed their souls at the altar of the middle class superficiality, then it is Rank who fills in as the soul of their marriage. Nora describes him as 'my truest and best friend' (40), and he seems entirely capable of making the chivalrous sacrifice Nora longs for from Torvald. In addition, Rank is Torvald's daily confidant whom Nora says Torvald 'can't do without' (41). It is clear that Rank is the surrogate partner for each of them. It is equally characteristic of Torvald that he should see Rank as only 'a cloudy background to our sunlit happiness' (61), and that, due to his disgust with the ugly, he would be unable to attend Rank in his illness. Finally, it is necessary that when Rank, the bearer of the necessary qualities of a good marriage, dies, that the Helmer's marriage should end as well.

The marriage of Hedda and Jorgen Tesman, though more consciously pragmatic for each of them, is not without subversive elements. Hedda and Tesman are obviously using each other, she with open contempt for him, he with deceptive conciliation towards her. Hedda surely holds herself in contempt also, as she characterizes herself as 'an awful coward' (317) and sets about to destroy those who either have what she desires or personify who she longs to be. Coincidentally, Hedda's destruction of Lovborg fits in beautifully with Tesman's career aspirations, in addition to reuniting him with his old lover. Brack, who extols the virtues of 'a triangular relationship' (301), gets to serve in one as the third leg in the Tesman's destructively utilitarian marriage. Like Rank before him, Brack reflects the flavor of the marriage and foreshadows its doom. Very much unlike Rank, Brack is crafty enough to have something to hold over everyone's head and coldblooded enough to use it to his benefit. Rather than leaving the arrangement as Rank did, Brack is insinuated deeper and deeper into the marriage, until Hedda's entrapment becomes unbearable to her. Though Hedda would flout conventional morality in her soul, her inability to escape its demand for pretense leaves her unable to save herself. So Ibsen paints increasingly darker pictures of the roles of middle class values in marriage and in the community. Johnston notes that 'marriage in Ibsen, is always a metaphor for the alliance of forces and powers in our culture whose joining is necessary for human wholeness' (162). This is borne out in these two plays, where marriages based not on alliance, but on illusion and exploitation, cannot survive.

The dissolution of the Helmer marriage occurs when Torvald reveals the full extent of his shallow self-absorption to Nora. Nora leaves him to ponder the true meaning of wedlock as she enters upon a life that will not be easy, but could save her soul from the morass of middle class sensibilities. Both partners have paid a price in this transaction, and there is hope. Hedda Gabler's marriage ends, for all intents and purposes, when her husband begins his work with Mrs. Elvsted and assigns his rights to

Hedda over to the despised Brack. As passionate a soul as Hedda has shown herself to be, self-discovery is beyond her. Una Ellis-Fermor aptly describes Hedda's process as going 'round and round the cage she has built for herself, looking for a way of escape' (14). That escape entails using her father's pistol on herself, a tragic result, according to Ellis-Fermor, of Hedda's 'refusal to embark' (14) on the spiritual explorations Ibsen views as essential to freedom. From what has been revealed of Tesman's character, it is unlikely that Hedda's death will spark much soul-searching in him. As long as Tesman can be held free of blame and censure in his wife's death, he will be just as happy to reconstruct Lovborg's view of the future with his old flame, Mrs. Elvsted. Furthermore, a consideration of 'the factors that will control civilization in the future,' and 'the probable direction civilization will take' (310) in the hands of a man like Jorgen Tesman is exactly the type of fearsome eventuality that Ibsen would like his audiences to confront. According to Tesman's most ardent spokesperson, Aunt Julle, 'Arranging and collecting—that's what [Tesman's] so good at' (272). After watching him collect Hedda from amongst her admirers, compete with Lovborg for a coveted job, accidentally come upon Lovborg's cherished manuscript, which he turns over to Hedda, then smoothly get rid of Hedda herself, Aunt Julle's comment could just as easily be read 'Manipulating and disposing of—that's what you're good at.' So good, in fact, that Tesman appears to triumph in his world and thrive, without apparent penalty, on the tragedies of others.

It may appear at first that *A Doll's House* offers hope for growth and enlightenment that is absent from *Hedda Gabler*; that Ibsen's ideals endured where his optimism did not. However, the author's insistence on both the necessity of and ability to change in the face of even the most entrenched dogma reflects his view that stagnation must necessarily lead to death, whether of relationships, the self, or, eventually, society itself. Even the Tesmans of the world cannot go unchanged forever. But the glory of Ibsen's work is that his unanswered questions are as intriguing

as those he addresses. In these plays where marriage mirrors the values of the society in which it exists, it is made clear that the individual must look after his or her own well-being since the institutions will not care for them. It seems to be too much to hope, in this context, that both the relationships and the individuals may thrive. The rules seem to require, in the halls of Judaeo-Christian capitalism, as in the living rooms of the Helmers and the Tesmans, that one must always succumb to the success of the other.

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Utopia in J.M. Barrie's *Peter and Wendy*
and Beatrix Potter's *The Tales of Peter Rabbit*
and *His Friends*

According to *A Contemporary Guide to Literary Terms*, the word utopia refers to an ideal world with justice and harmony (Barton/Hudson 199-200). Both J.M. Barrie and Beatrix Potter explore the possibility of an escapist, utopian world through imagery and characterization. Barrie and Potter create different utopian worlds in *Peter and Wendy* (1911) and *Tales of Peter Rabbit and His Friends* (1890) in which danger still appears, ultimately suggesting that a perfect utopian world is not possible.

Both Barrie and Potter use imagery to explore the idea of a utopian world in their stories. Though the theme of a utopian world of escape is present in the imagery of both Barrie's *Peter and Wendy* and Potter's 'The Tale of Peter Rabbit,' both texts temper those utopian images with imagery that suggests fear. At first, the imagery Barrie uses in describing different places and scenes in Neverland appears to be idyllic and wonderful. When Barrie describes the Mermaid's Lagoon it seems to be a beautiful, peaceful place for fun and leisure: '[Wendy] was often at the lagoon however, on sunny days after rain, when mermaids come up in extraordinary numbers to play with their bubbles. The bubbles of many colours made in rainbow water they treat as balls, hitting them gaily from one to another with their tails trying to keep them in the rainbow till they burst' (Barrie 141). Barrie uses images of the rainbow, mermaids, bubbles, and games to create a picture that gives the reader a sense of peace and joy. Barrie's use of the rainbow image creates a sense of tranquility and safety while the images of mermaids add to the fantastical feeling of the scene. The image of the multicolored bubbles the mermaids play with also adds a sense of fun and general lightheartedness. Nothing in the passage describing the mermaid games suggests the island of Neverland is anything but a utopian world; however, Barrie also brings a touch of fear into his utopian world

through imagery. Wherever Barrie describes a utopian scene, he tempers it with images that create fear. Soon after Barrie describes the Mermaid's Lagoon and the fun and peace the children experience there, he accentuates fear and foreboding while Wendy is watching over the sleeping boys: "While she stitched a change came to the lagoon. Little shivers ran over it, and the sun went away and shadows stole across the water, turning it cold . . . the lagoon that had always hitherto been such a laughing place seemed formidable and unfriendly" (Barrie 141-142). Barrie disturbs the tranquility of the Mermaid's Lagoon with images of absent suns, shivers, shadows, and cold water. Barrie literally takes away the sun and its sunshine and replaces it with shadows that steal across chilling water, all of which convey a sense of fear. The images in this passage bring a sense of fear into utopia. The replacement of peaceful images with frightening images suggests Barrie doesn't want the reader to feel Neverland is a perfect utopia. Had Barrie wanted the reader to think Neverland was a purely utopian place he would not have replaced comforting, fun images with images that imply fear and discordance.

Continuing the idea of a discordant utopia, Potter also uses peaceful imagery to depict a utopian world only to turn around and bring imagery that interjects fear into her tales. Unlike Barrie, Potter uses actual images to convey and emphasize the idea of a utopian world in "The Tale of Peter Rabbit." In Peter Rabbit's tale, Potter uses pastoral, peaceful images of anthropomorphized animals and their natural environments to give a first impression of a utopian world. The first images of the story where old Mrs. Rabbit takes care of her children and gets ready for a trip to the baker's are highly domestic and pastoral, unlike Barrie's fantastical imagery, and convey a sense of utopian peace and tranquility: "Then old Mrs. Rabbit took a basket and her umbrella, and went through the wood to the baker's" ("Peter Rabbit" 3). The imagery in this passage evokes feelings of peaceful simplicity. The pastoral images of the basket, the umbrella, and a walk through the woods are emphasized in the illustration which shows a life-

like rabbit in her dress, apron, coat and bonnet walking carefully through the woods holding her apron up along with the umbrella and basket. Mrs. Rabbit's dress and the careful way she holds her apron convey the impression of simplicity and peace. However, though Potter does not use fantastical, fanciful imagery, she does bring elements of fear to her utopian world like Barrie. In "The Tale of Peter Rabbit," like most of her tales, Potter brings the element of fear into Peter's world by introducing Mr. McGregor and the threat of capture and death. There are several scenes where Mr. McGregor hunts Peter and tries to capture or injure Peter: "Mr. McGregor was quite sure that Peter was somewhere in the tool-shed, perhaps hidden underneath a flower-pot. He began to turn them over carefully, looking under each" ("Peter Rabbit" 7). Here, Potter uses imagery that creates suspense and fear in the reader. The image of the man searching carefully under each flowerpot gives the impression of a hunter searching for his prey. The illustration accompanying this passage emphasizes the sense of suspense and fear showing Peter's ears sticking out of the watering can in a straight, tense position as if he is frightened and ready to bolt. Unlike the earlier images in the story of a quaint old rabbit carrying her umbrella and basket, these images change utopia by giving the impression of fear. Like Barrie's *Peter Pan*, Potter's utopian story is invaded by images of mortal peril and fear even though it is more pastoral and simple.

Another way in which both Barrie and Potter explore the idea of utopia and the existence of fear is characterization. In both *Peter and Wendy* and "The Roly-Poly Pudding," the authors create antagonists who both bring fear into utopia and who run from their own fears. In *Peter and Wendy*, the first impression of the antagonists is almost stereotypical and fun: "A more villainous-looking lot never hung in a row on Execution dock. Here, a little in advance, ever and again with his head to the ground listening, his great bare arms bare, pieces of eight in his ears as ornaments is the handsome Italian Cecco. . . . And the Irish bo'sun Smee. . . who stabbed,

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so to speak, without offence' (Barrie 114). The pirates are caricatures. Cecco wears pieces of eight in his ears, and Smee is a man who stabs 'without offence.' The existence of such stereotypical villains in the utopian-like world of Neverland is almost expected since there are supposed to be adventures in Barrie's fantastic utopia. However, in a utopian-like world the antagonists might reform or just leave and not really cause any real threat or fear. In *Peter and Wendy*, these antagonists do pose a mortal threat, along with their sinister captain, James Hook, who seems slightly comical in the way he obsesses over good form but who is also characterized as cruel (Barrie 115). The characterization of Hook is disturbing enough with his red eyes and nonchalant murdering but what makes him most disturbing is that he also has a fear of being hunted as well; 'It was the terrible tick-tick of the crocodile. . . Very frightful was it to see the change that came over him. It was as if he had been clipped at every joint. He fell in a little heap. . . He crawled on his knees along the deck as far from the sound as he could go' (Barrie 194). Here Barrie uses characterization to disturb the reader. Hook not only becomes afraid for his life in this passage, but he is terrified to the point where he collapses and has to crawl away. In a utopian world the villain might be afraid of the main protagonist or maybe even act in a rough, caricature-like manner but he or she is not so afraid that he or she loses all thought of anything but abject fear.

In the same way that Barrie first offers a utopian characterization of an antagonist then brings in a new and disturbing characterization, Potter first offers a caricature depiction of the antagonistic rats in "The Roly-Poly Pudding" then gives them a more sinister and realistic characterization. At first the rats are depicted in a stereotypical and humorous way as when Moppet and Mittens describe them: "Oh! Mother, Mother there was an old man rat in the dairy—a dreadful 'normous big rat, Mother; and he's stolen a pat of butter and the rolling pin" ('Roly' 125). Here the characterization seems almost comical the way Mittens describes

Samuel Whiskers as 'dreadful 'normous big' and adds that he has stolen butter and a rolling pin. The characterization of Samuel in the illustration is also comical because of the way he is dressed in a suit and leans forward as he is scurrying away. This characterization makes the rats seem mischievous and simple. This caricature description of the antagonist fits in with the utopian antagonist since it is comical. Mittens clearly wasn't hurt or in any mortal danger even though he was scared. And yet, in spite of this initial, humorous characterization, Potter turns the rats into more sinister characters later. Potter changes the characterization of the two rats to a more sinister depiction once they steal things so they can make Tom into a pudding: "What do you mean by tumbling into my bed all covered with smuts?" said the rat, chattering his teeth. . . . 'Anna Maria, make me a kitten dumpling roly-poly pudding for my dinner' ('Roly' 129-130). In this passage Samuel is depicted in a more sinister way when he chatters his teeth at Tom and wishes to eat him for dinner. Like Barrie's pirates, the rats are somewhat humorous caricatures in a utopian world until Potter makes them more sinister. Both Barrie and Potter distort utopian characterizations of their antagonists, though Barrie's pirates are more fantastic in their characterization and intentions, such as when they intend to make the boys walk the plank or engage in bloody battles.

Both J.M. Barrie and Beatrix Potter create utopian worlds that differ in appearance, but in which danger still appears. Both ultimately suggesting that a perfect utopian world is not possible. Neither Barrie nor Potter are able to let their utopian worlds stay in undisturbed peace; both constantly introduce danger or fear into their stories and end them on slightly discordant notes in a way that suggests a perfect utopia isn't possible. Throughout *Peter and Wendy*, Barrie disturbs the utopian images of caricature heroes and villains by adding discordant images of the island, the antagonists, and even the main protagonist. After the villains have been defeated and Peter has taken over the pirate ship Barrie suggests that Peter might become the villain: "The general feeling was . . . that there

might be a change when the new suit was ready, which . . . she was making for him out of some of Hook's wickedest garments' (Barrie 207). Even near the end, Peter's nature is ambiguous and slightly dangerous. By making the hero dangerous and ambiguous along with his world, Barrie is suggesting that a perfect world of fantasy and escape is not possible and that there will always be some form of danger and ambiguity to mar things. Potter's stories also seem to suggest that there will always be fear and danger, even in a pastoral, escapist world. Potter includes fear of being eaten throughout her stories and even ends 'The Roly-Poly Pudding' showing Tom's permanent fear after his ordeal: 'But Tom Kitten has always been afraid of a rat' ('Roly' 137). Potter seems to be arguing, like Barrie, that a real utopian world without fear and danger, while pleasant to dream about, is not possible.

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**Stripping Away the Layers of the Martha Stereotype
in Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?***

In *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962), Edward Albee equips the character of Martha with the verbal weapons necessary to defend herself, at least initially, against her husband, George, in the arena of the play's marital battleground. Like George, Martha uses language not only as weapon, but also as a mask to hide behind. From a feminist perspective, Martha at first fascinates with her verbal combativeness and defiance of conventional behavior, openly flaunting her sexuality and alcoholic excesses. However, as the play's verbal warfare escalates, the revelation that she and George, who are unable to conceive, have fabricated an imaginary son, robs Martha of her bold strength. Stripped of her facade, Martha emerges as an amalgam of stereotypes—Daddy's little girl, castrating wife, sexually frustrated female, childless unfulfilled woman—to expose Albee's misogynistic tendencies. Literary critics who extol the play's conclusion as a triumph of reality over illusion and the resurrection of George and Martha's marriage, ignore the fact that Martha is reduced to docilely accepting the role of submissive wife as punishment 'for overstepping the bounds of what . . . is considered appropriate behavior for women' (Kundert-Gibbs 230).

The dynamics which animate George and Martha's interactions and permeate the air in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* 'arise from the repressive social climate of an ingrown academic institution,' and the play, first performed in 1962, reflects 'a society at the height of Cold War fanaticism and regress' (Kundert-Gibbs 231). The claustrophobic set mirrors the confined society of the play's inhabitants. Viewed in this context, Martha's verbal sparring with George, her sexual aggression, and her ability to outdrink him, show her behavior falls outrageously outside the 'proper' female role. According to critic John Kundert-Gibbs, in a society where strict adherence to assigned gender behavior is expected, Martha's

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decidedly masculine attitude and female strength are seen not as positive but as destructive forces (230-31). Indeed, Albee quickly transforms Martha's strengths into neurotic symptoms as she morphs into a composite female stereotype who defines herself in relation to the men in her life.

The first man who shapes Martha's self-image is her father, the president of the University, who represents the controlling patriarchal system undergirding the play. Though he is never seen or heard, Martha's father makes his dominating presence felt in the background like an ominous shadow. For example, George and Martha must entertain Nick and Honey at two in the morning because 'Daddy said we should be nice to them' (26). In psychoanalytic terms, Martha suffers from an oedipal attachment and wants to remain Daddy's little girl forever, even as she experiences the conflicting desire of wanting to free herself from his influence. Her mother and stepmother's deaths arrested Martha's development and reinforced her attachment to Daddy. Additionally, her first marriage to the boy who 'mowed the lawn at Miss Muff's . . . all naked' (78) was a ploy 'to get Daddy's attention—and intervention. It thus served its purpose: to bring her back to the home as the scene where her frustration and her desire are fixated' (Davis 230). Finally, Martha frequently lapses into baby talk, reinforcing the idea that she is afraid to grow up.

Conversely, much of Martha's anger spawns from her bitter disappointment that George has failed to stand up to her father and prove himself a worthy 'heir apparent' (Davis 230). Furthermore, 'Martha's only chance to free herself from Daddy is to use the other man to triumph over Daddy, but on Daddy's turf and in the terms Daddy dictates. The husband must become the rival of the Father for the daughter's love, and he can triumph . . . only by besting the Father at his own game' (Davis 230). Thus, George's failure to become Chair of the History Department makes him a 'bog' (50) to Martha. George is further diminished in her eyes when he refuses to literally box her father. However, Martha loses

all respect for George when she puts on the gloves herself and knocks him 'right in the jaw' and he lands 'flat . . . in a huckleberry bush' (56). She metaphorically begins to wear the pants in the family.

A more telling example of the subtle misogyny permeating the play is the use of ambiguous language to suggest George's symbolic castration at the hand of Martha's aggressive sexuality. For example:

There are frequent references to George's emasculation. When Martha angrily says to him at one point, 'I'll fix you,' it is unlikely that the double entendre is accidental; and when she tells him that some men would give their right arm for an opportunity of being married to the daughter of the president of a university where they teach, he reminds her, 'Alas, Martha, in reality it works out that the sacrifice is usually of a somewhat more private portion of the anatomy.' (Dukore 97)

Critic Bernard Dukore also describes the scene at the end of the first act when Martha ridicules George, as a 'castration ceremony' (Dukore 97). Just when Martha calls George '... a FLOP! A great ... big ... fat ... FLOP!' (84), he breaks a bottle against the bar and tells her to stop. But Martha continues to berate him, saying: 'I hope that was an empty bottle, George. You don't want to waste good liquor ... not on your salary' (84). Albee has George drop the bottle and stand motionless, symbolically castrated.

Further proof that sexual aggressiveness is not considered 'proper' female behavior is the way Martha's sexual advances are constantly thwarted. Her aggressiveness becomes a turnoff for George and later for Nick. In the first act, Martha asks George to 'give your Mommy a big sloppy kiss' (15). Her use of baby talk heightens the sexual tension and underscores how much she desires sex. When George refuses to kiss her, Martha is hurt, angry, and frustrated. She masks her hurt with a barrage of insults directed at George. Their exchange of words becomes

a kind of verbal sexual abuse, which builds to a crescendo, until Martha blurts out, "SCREW YOU" (19). In a sense, she relieves her sexual frustration by verbally assaulting George.

Moreover, when Martha finally seduces Nick, he cannot perform. She says: "I disgust me. I pass my life in crummy, totally pointless infidelities . . . would-be infidelities. Hump the Hostess? That's a laugh. A bunch of boozed-up . . . impotent lunk-heads" (189). Her sexual frustration becomes disgust turned inward. Her diatribe against 'lunk-heads' who cannot perform ends with her admitting to Nick that George is the only man who has ever made her happy. Yet she confesses that she cannot forgive George "for having come to rest; for having seen me and having said: yes, this will do; who has made the hideous, the hurting, the insulting mistake of loving me and must be punished for it. George and Martha: sad, sad, sad" (191). Martha, whose sexual aggressiveness has "transgressed the bounds of proper female behavior" (Kundert-Gibbs 230), convicts herself of not being worthy to love.

Similarly, self-loathing and the ultimate female stereotype coalesce in the idea that a woman cannot be fulfilled or a 'real' woman unless she bears children: "The one area in this world where women were encouraged—even expected—to create a life of 'their own' was through motherhood" (Kundert-Gibbs 231). The climactic revelation that Martha and George have created an imaginary son to avoid confronting the reality of their barren union is magnificently ironic since the idea that a child is necessary for happiness is itself a lie. While George has been a co-conspirator in the birth of their grand deception, his decision to kill their son suggests that the illusion was always for Martha's benefit. In this regard, critic Kundert-Gibbs quotes Albee:

Well, George's involvement with the son has never been as emotional as Martha's has. Neither of them literally believes it, but Martha slips into believing it probably

because she's a woman. Women and their relation to children, their wombs, and the whole thing . . . (230)

The reason George and Martha are unable to have children is never revealed because it is immaterial. Martha is ultimately to blame because she is the one who fails 'society's gender expectations' (Kundert-Gibbs 232). Albee's words suggest that women are tied to 'their wombs' just as they are chained to the female sex roles society insists they play. Honey's tearful decision towards the end of the play to have a child corroborates this idea.

Furthermore, Kundert-Gibbs quotes Bonnie Finkelstein's description of Martha: 'By having no professional aspirations for herself, by never asking what she herself could accomplish in the world, she accepts the limiting sex role stereotypes that her culture defines for her, and then she fails at them, since she has no children either' (232). Martha is the creation of Albee's male imagination, and he gifts her with a psychosis fashioned from his own misogynistic notions of what comprises the innermost yearnings of a woman's psyche. However, in an example of how art imitates life, Albee relies on Martha to accept his gift, just as society relies on women to accept the gender restrictions it imposes.

Finally, in his book, *Understanding Edward Albee*, Matthew Roudane indicates that 'many scholars fail to recognize the unmistakably affirmative nature of the play' (67). Roudane believes the play demonstrates George and Martha's resiliency and ability to abandon their illusions in favor of truth and thereby reinvent reality. Roudane addresses the religious overtones of the exorcism:

George guides Martha through the ritual, providing the objective corrective when needed, the loving assurance when necessary . . . George evolves from metaphysical surgeon to high priest exorcist. When Martha becomes transfixed on her child, and hurts the most, spreading

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her hands in a crucifixion pose, George recites the Mass of the Dead. Through these hypnotic scenes Albee places the viewer or reader within 'the marrow' of the play. Her illusion shattered by her son's car accident . . . Martha cleanses her soul . . . her purging cry signifying the death of the illusion and the rebirth of some semblance of sanity. (81-82).

The problem with Roudane's analysis is George is thrust in the role of Martha's savior. It is George who 'guides' her, who provides 'corrective when needed.' Not only is Martha's 'illusion shattered,' but she is shattered. The fire that enflamed Martha's personality, however, overtly sexual, crude, vulgar, or acerbically cruel, has been extinguished. The economy and cadence of George and Martha's final words speak volumes:

- M: Just . . . us?
G: Yes.
M: I don't suppose, maybe, we could . . .
G: No Martha.
M: Yes. No.
G: Are you all right?
M: Yes. No. (241)

Martha effectively 'cleanses her soul' of the various female stereotypes she has borne over the course of the play, in order to accept as her penance the role of docile, grateful, and subservient wife.

Any suggestion that the death of the son signals a resurrection for Martha is to ignore her answer to George's final question:

- G: Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf
M: I . . . am . . . George . . . I . . . am (242).

Although it is never stated who thought to substitute a creative, non-conventional woman's name for the 'big bad wolf' of male dominance, earlier on Martha takes proprietary glee in singing the altered nursery

rhyme. Only now, at the play's conclusion, does she answer the title question in the affirmative. Martha now docilely accepts society's gender-restricted definition of who she is, afraid to recreate and redefine herself according to her own terms. A character generated by Albee in order to be destroyed, Martha has assumed a life of her own, only to relinquish authorship in the end.

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**The Rewards and Punishments of Choices Made in
Persuasion and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles***

Juxtaposing Jane Austen's *Persuasion* with Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* reveals the hard-won rewards and the bittersweet punishments of love and marital happiness in nineteenth-century England. Anne Elliot and Tess Durbeyfield share the qualities of youth, beauty, and intelligence. In addition, they share the characteristic of being easily persuaded, respectively, by their godmother and mother. In each novel, the heroine takes the well-intended advice of her mother figure; however, the individual choices they make based upon that advice result in distinctly different endings. In *Persuasion* and *Tess*, both women actively choose their own path to personal happiness despite the persuasions of close family relations and the social conventions of nineteenth century England.

Austen's *Persuasion* tells the story of Anne, who is 'extremely pretty . . . with gentleness, modesty, taste, and feeling' and the middle daughter of Sir Walter Elliot of Kellynch-Hall, the eldest heir of an 'ancient and respectable family' (Austen 24, 5). Her godmother, Lady Russell, persuades nineteen-year-old Anne that her budding relationship with Captain Frederick Wentworth is without merit for two reasons: he is without a fortune and a title. Out of respect, but with great sadness, Anne ends her relationship with Captain Wentworth, causing them both years of emotional suffering. In Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Tess is a 'fine and picturesque country girl' and the oldest daughter of Jack Durbeyfield, a descendent of the 'ancient and knightly family of the D'Urbervilles' (Hardy 16, 8). Joan, Tess's mother, persuades sixteen-year-old Tess to pursue a relationship with Alec Stokes-D'Urberville, who she erroneously believes to be a wealthy distant relation. With deep misgivings, Tess accepts an invitation to work for the Stokes-D'Urbervilles, launching her into years of emotional suffering.

The current social conventions and her own personal expectations influence Lady Russell to persuade Anne that Captain Wentworth is socially and economically unworthy of her. Lady Russell reflects a nineteenth-century ideology that wealth and title are more valuable than romantic love in a marriage. She believes that an arranged marriage to a man with landed property and general importance is a more prosperous position for Anne than a marriage to a man with little fortune and mere luck. Austen reveals her disapproval of arranged marriages when Anne, much to Lady Russell's annoyance, rejects the wealthy Charles Musgrove's marriage proposal. The union between Charles and Anne would ensure Anne's financial and social comfort for the remainder of her life. As far as Anne's emotional happiness is concerned, Lady Russell is aware that arranged marriages often fail to contain such happiness and does not lament the lack of it. H. R. Dhatwalia, a social and psychological critic on Austen's portrayal of family relationships, states that though Austen allows Anne to reject Charles due to a lack of love, she "does not advocate" romantic love if it is going to cause strife within the family unit (Dhatwalia 78). Although this time Lady Russell cannot persuade Anne to change her mind and "borders on hopelessness" for her future marriage opportunities, and Anne does not "blame" Lady Russell for guiding her away from one suitor and toward another, a small degree of strife appears between the two confidantes (Austen 26). Austen strikes a compromise between prudence and individual happiness by allowing Lady Russell to see Captain Wentworth's true values when he returns to Somersetshire.

Likewise, the current social conventions and her personal expectations are what motivate Joan Durbeyfield to relentlessly persuade Tess to accept Alec D'Urberville's hospitality. Similar to Lady Russell's wishes for Anne, Joan has great aspirations for Tess. Joan shares Lady Russell's view that financial security is paramount, but she easily accepts notoriety in place of honor. The wealth and social status that Alec D'Urberville represents will provide Tess, and especially her family, with the financial security

and the coveted respect due an ancient, albeit infamous, family. Hardy displays a negative attitude towards arranged marriages comparable to Austen's when he allows Tess to tell Alec: "Tis quite true. If I had gone for love o' you, if I had ever really loved 'ee, if I loved you still, I should not so loathe and hate myself for my weakness as I do now" (Hardy 77). While in Alec's intimate company, Tess discovers she cares little for fine clothing and a life of leisure if it lacks love. Thus, Tess rejects Alec's proposal of financial independence, believing that if she accepts it she will be his property for the rest of her life. Joan reveals her personal disappointment in Tess's decision by lamenting the family's loss of wealth rather than the unhappiness Tess experiences while in Alec's company. This division in thinking between Joan and Tess rends their relationship. Joan endeavors to make the "best of it," but Tess never again takes her mother's advice (Hardy 82). Tess's refusal to wed for financial security without romantic interest exemplifies Hardy's rebellion against Victorian principles and support of individual happiness.

Over the next seven years, Anne's gentle and unobtrusive nature allows her to be exploited and used by her sisters, Elizabeth and Mary, and ignored by her father, Sir Walter. Glenda Hudson, an authority on sibling relationships in Austen's novels, identifies Anne as a Cinderella figure who is in a state of "suspended animation" (Hudson 116). With her circle of acquaintances small and her opportunities for travel few, Anne has little hope of escaping from her patronizing and controlling family and remains emotionally suspended in time. Hudson suggests that the only solution for Anne's predicament is complete removal from her family by her prince, Captain Wentworth. Representing change, adventure, and independence, Captain Wentworth rescues Anne from her emotional and physical oppression, and at the same time, rescues himself from a state of loneliness and purposelessness. Anne Elliot's refusal to marry Charles Musgrove and her constancy for Captain Wentworth is rewarded at the end of the novel when she marries Captain Wentworth. Anne Crippen

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Ruderman, critic of political thought in Austen's novels, argues that Austen realizes that 'a good husband is not the inevitable reward of virtue,' but in *Persuasion* her message clearly underlines the social convention that a good woman deserves the reward of a good man (Ruderman 141).

For the next several years, Tess Durbeyfield experiences mounting pressures and responsibilities due to her family's psychological and financial inadequacies. In contrast to Anne's Cinderella role, H. M. Daleski, a literary critic of Hardy's work involving love, describes Tess as a 'tragic agent' who chooses her own way and creates her own tragic stature (Daleski 155). With her father ill, her mother tending the children and money scarce, Tess chooses to leave Marlott for Talbothays dairy where she finds financial stability as well as personal misfortune. Representing intelligence, unconventionality, and honor, Angel Clare should be Tess's prince; however, something underneath his surface, 'something nebulous, preoccupied, vague' prevents him from rescuing her from her psychological and social subjugation (Hardy 113). When Angel learns of Tess's affair with Alec, he scorns her and refuses to live with her as husband and wife. Angel reinforces the Victorian double standard that allows sexually active men to dismiss their dalliance while sexually active women remain remiss. Consequently, his admission to committing the same social violation exposes Angel as being ignorant of women's sexuality, judgmental of unconventionality, and dishonorable of Tess. Thus, Angel cannot rescue Tess from the social stigmatization that he himself subscribes to, and he cannot rescue her from the psychological damage his judgment inflicts upon her. Daleski argues that Tess is ultimately responsible for her punishment, and her decision to confess her past to Angel is testimony to his view.

In the concluding chapters of *Persuasion*, after 'many, many years of division and estrangement,' Anne and Captain Wentworth confess their love to each other with openness and honesty (Austen 211). As they each confess their individual folly—Anne claiming a 'strong sense of duty'

caused her to allow Lady Russell to persuade her to abandon him, Captain Wentworth claiming he was 'proud, too proud' to ask for her affections again—they experience the rewards of romantic love. Ruderman explains that Austen's motive behind these misunderstandings is to imply that 'women, like men, are 'rational creatures,'" but their natures are different (Ruderman 144). Anne is gentle and modest: Captain Wentworth is spirited and brilliant. However, they both possess intelligence, and that characteristic enables each of them not only to survive their estrangement, but also to appreciate each other more in the process. Ruderman agrees with Austen's formula for successful romantic love, arguing that personal responsibility in both men and women 'evenly matched in intelligence' signifies that though they can 'survive without marriage, it does not mean that they are not inclined toward it and dependent on each other within it' (Ruderman 144). Although Anne depends on Captain Wentworth to be strong yet supportive, adventurous yet constant, assertive yet patient, she is capable of independent happiness. Likewise, Captain Wentworth depends on Anne to be sensible, trustworthy, proud, but he admires her more for possessing these qualities.

Unfortunately, Hardy's final chapters do not reflect such rewarding results. Tess's confession of folly does not come at the end of the novel, but at the end of what should be the happiest day of her life: her wedding day. Angel's shock at receiving her story throws Tess into a state of psychological confusion. She easily forgives Angel for his past discretion because she believes him to be liberal. However, when Angel tells Tess 'Forgiveness does not apply to the case. You were one person; now you are another,' she realizes he is expressing the beliefs of conventionality (Hardy 228). Rosemary Sumner argues that Hardy shows Angel 'fluctuating between the extremes of rigid puritanism and relaxed unconventionality' in order to expose his 'idealistic conception' of Tess as a pure woman (Sumner 133). Although Angel idealistically distances himself from his family's strict Victorian beliefs, he realistically enforces

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those beliefs in his relationship with Tess. Throughout their estrangement, Tess and Angel each suffer deeply but rather than grow fonder of each other; thus, they continue to idealize one another, which leads to more confusion and eventual tragedy. Sumner argues that Hardy's view of romantic love is realistic because it 'highlights the injustice of society's attitude to women' (Sumner 137). Furthermore, he argues that though Tess and Angel love each other, their love cannot survive in a society that disapproves of a sensual woman; consequently, Tess's destruction is inevitable.

In conclusion, the individual choices that Anne and Tess make reflect the family values and social conventions prevalent during the nineteenth century. For Anne, Lady Russell's well-intended advice prolongs her emotional suffering, but her patience is rewarded with Captain Wentworth's unwavering affection. Tragically, Joan's advice propels Tess into unendurable emotional suffering, and her independence is punished by Angel's undulating affection. Each heroine actively chooses her own path to personal happiness during a time of confusing and conflicting social standards. Anne Elliot falls in love with a man who possesses the wrong qualities by nineteenth-century standards; however, Captain Wentworth's qualities complement Anne's, and their romantic love survives despite family and social opinion. Conversely, Tess Durbeyfield falls in love with a man who possesses the correct qualities by her unconventional standards; unfortunately, Angel Clare's qualities reflect the conflicting standards of Victorian England, and their romantic love perishes under the influences of family and social opinion. Although they are both persuaded by their mother figure to conform to the current social standards, Anne and Tess refuse to sacrifice their personal happiness to do so. Anne's choice, based on realistic expectations, results in her happy marriage to Captain Wentworth; Tess's choice, based on idealistic expectations, results in her tragic death.

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**Love and Marriage in Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*
and Hardy's *Jude the Obscure***

The Victorian Period was characterized by many conflicting ideas that were both affected by and that helped to create the social customs and laws of the nineteenth-century. With a growing awareness of nature and science, the Victorians struggled to reconcile the long established ideas of human existence and faith in God with the newly discovered "truths" of science. This conflict existed not only in the realm of faith and doubt in God, but also in the social laws concerning love and marriage. The nineteenth-century ideal of love is presented beautifully in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*, in which the sibling, egalitarian relationship of Fanny and Edmund is a means of restoring the vitality of the home during a period of unrest and instability. Bronte and Hardy also present versions of this ideal love and marriage of "cousins," but they question the practicality of this type of love within the constraints of the Victorian society. This cultural conflict between the 'letter of the law' and the idea of alter ego love is presented by both authors in the various love/marriage relationships in the novels. Each author presents an alter ego love, a love of convenience, and a cruel, manipulative love.

Bronte and Hardy present the alter ego love outside the bonds of matrimony, and in both cases the love is eternal and thwarted by the Victorian marriage laws. The love between Heathcliff and Cathy in Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* is passionate and, in the end, consuming. Cathy describes her love for Heathcliff to Nelly:

My great miseries in this world have been Heathcliff's miseries . . . If all else perished, and *he* remained, I should still continue to be; and, if all else remained, and he were annihilated, the Universe would turn to a mighty stranger . . . my love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath—a source of little visible delight, but necessary.

Roxanna Goin

Nelly, I *am* Heathcliff—he's always, always in my mind—not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself—but as my own being. (Bronte 81-82)

This love is as eternal as the rocks, incapable of being destroyed. The two are integrally connected. If one dies, the other dies as well. If one lives, the other lives as well. This love is not necessarily a "delight," but is essential to living. Heathcliff echoes this statement briefly as Cathy is dying: "—oh God! Would you like to live with our soul in the grave?" (161). The love between them is consuming and leads to continual frustration while on the earth because it is not consummated in marriage. Because of Cathy's desire for status and wealth, a particularly Victorian concern, she chooses to marry Edgar, and in doing so creates pain and havoc in the lives of the people surrounding her.

This same idea of an eternal, all-consuming alter ego love is presented by Hardy in *Jude the Obscure*. The relationship between cousins Sue and Jude is described by Phillotson:

... to the best of my understanding it is not an ignoble, merely animal, feeling between the two ... it makes me think their affection will be enduring ... I found from their manner that an extraordinary affinity, or sympathy, entered into their attachment, which somehow took away all flavour of grossness. Their supreme desire is to be together—to share each other's emotions, and fancies, and dreams. (Hardy 231)

At this point in their relationship, the love had not been consummated physically, nor had their marriages to Phillotson and Arabella been dissolved. They simply wanted "to share each other's emotions, and fancies, and dreams." This "extraordinary affinity" is shown to be possible outside the bonds of matrimony. For the Victorian, love between a man and a woman outside of marriage is definitely considered "ignoble." Hardy

is therefore presenting the idea that marriage may not be the ultimate finale to this love, and may, indeed lead to its destruction. Hence, "the Letter Killeth."

In contrast to this alter ego love both authors present a love and marriage of status and convenience. For Bronte, this is the marriage of Cathy and Edgar. Cathy, herself, describes this love as being "like the foliage in the woods. Time will change it, I'm well aware, as winter changes the trees" (Bronte 82). She declares that "Every Linton on the face of the earth might melt into nothing, before I could consent to forsake Heathcliff" (81). Because Edgar does not understand the power of alter ego love, he and his family suffer. When Edgar forces Cathy to choose, as he feels justified in doing as her husband, she loses her sanity, falls deathly ill, and eventually dies.

Hardy also presents a love and marriage of status and convenience in the relationship between Sue and Phillotson. Sue agrees to marry him in order to profit both financially and in status. When Sue finished her teaching certificate, she was to work alongside Phillotson in the classroom. Afterward, when she realizes that she abhorred living with him as a husband, she questions the morality of this kind of relationship:

If a marriage ceremony is a religious thing, it is possibly wrong; but if it is only a sordid contract, based on material convenience in householding, rating, and taxing, and the inheritance of land and money by children . . . it hurts and grieves. (Hardy 209)

As a Victorian convention, this kind of marriage was acceptable, even though there was unhappiness. The conflict and confusion is seen in the opposing Victorian interests of an ideal "other self" love and the constraints of the marriage customs, which more often than not prevent the consummation of the ideal type of love. The love of "material convenience" only "hurts and grieves."

Roxanna Goin

In like manner, the third type of love presented also "hurts and grieves"—the marriage formed by selfish manipulation and cruelty. Bronte presents this love in the marriage of Heathcliff and Isabella., Heathcliff deceives Isabella into marrying him, and then both abuses her and uses her to torture her brother, Cathy's husband. Isabella writes in a letter to Nelly: "he is ingenious and unresting in seeking to gain my abhorrence . . . I assure you, a tiger, or a venomous serpent could not rouse terror in me equal to that which he wakens . . . He . . . [promises] that I should be Edgar's proxy in suffering . . ." (143).

Similarly, Hardy presents the marriage of Jude and Arabella. Arabella first seduces and then deceives Jude into believing that she is pregnant. Jude, acting upon the social convention of marriage, marries her. However, the marriage, as Jude says to Arabella, "galls both of us devilishly" (Hardy 67). The "reason of his marriage had proved to be non-existent. But the marriage remained" (62). According to social laws, Jude and Arabella are married for life. Hardy juxtaposes this relationship against the ideal alter ego relationship and questions the right of a legal contract to ruin the peace and happiness of the lives of individuals. The ideal love of alter egos, with body, soul, and spirit in unity, is thwarted by the laws and institution of marriage. Jude reflects after the discovery of Arabella's first deception:

Their lives were ruined, he thought; ruined by the fundamental error of their matrimonial union: that of having based a permanent contract on a temporary feeling which had no necessary connection with affinities that alone render a life-long comradeship tolerable. (Hardy 69)

After Jude and Sue part forever in the natural, they both begin to die. The same happens to Heathcliff and Cathy. The alter egos cannot live without each other, and when forced to be physically apart by the Victorian customs

of marriage, the epitaph to *Jude the Obscure* is proven true: "The letter killeth" (1).

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**The Critical History of Oscar Wilde's
*The Picture of Dorian Gray***

The reception and criticism of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* has changed from the time of its initial publication to present time. Initial reviews and early criticism viewed the work as unartful, derivative, and immoral at worst or simply a relic of late-Victorian, pre-Modern Aestheticism, and Decadence at best. Currently, the work is investigated as something much more complex and meaningful. The change that has occurred in the reception and criticism of this work can be traced to two distinct causes: the publication of a sympathetic, fair, and accurate biography by Richard Ellman, and the changes and developments in criticism during the twentieth century that questioned "literariness" as elitist, expanded the notion of 'text', and produced scholarship by Feminists and Queer Theorists.

The spirit of the early reception of the novel's first printing in Lippcott's magazine in 1890 (Mikolyzk xii) can be seen in 'A Study in Puppydom' in the *St. James Gazette*:

Not being curious in ordure, and not wishing to offend the nostrils of decent persons, we do not propose to analyze 'The Picture of Dorian Gray': that would advertise the developments of an esoteric prurience. Whether the Treasury or the Vigilance society will think it worth while to prosecute Mr. Oscar Wilde or Messrs Ward, Lock & Co., we do not know; but on the whole, we hope they will not. (Lawler 333)

In this passage, the reviewer attacks Wilde unmercifully by asserting that the novel is indecent (by indicating that it should be kept from decent people) and promotional of a morbid curiosity toward Wilde's 'esoteric' or private practices (assumed to be the same as those of the characters in the novel) by indicating a fear of this happening by actually reviewing the

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book. Furthermore, the review indicates that Wilde by writing this book reveals himself as criminally obscene (by suggesting that the Treasury or the Vigilance Society might investigate him).

Other newspaper reviews follow in the same vein as the *St. James Gazette*, tying Wilde's private life—or what they imagine to be Wilde's private life—to the 'sins' committed by Dorian in the novel: 'The story—which deals in matters only fitted for the Criminal Investigation Department [...]—is discreditable alike to author and editor (Lawler 346) This passage from the Scots observer like its contemporaries illustrates the point. The insinuation is made that Wilde through this novel is airing criminal sympathies.

A few positive reviews do exist from 1890-1891, mostly written by those of literary sensibilities similar to Walter Pater's: 'His genial, laughter-loving sense of life and its enjoyable intercourse goes far to obviate any crudity there may be in the paradox, with which, as with the bright and shining truth which often underlies it, Mr. Wilde, startling his 'countrymen,' carries on, more perhaps than any other writer, the brilliant critical work of Matthew Arnold' (Lawler 352). The review is essentially positive because Pater shares Wilde's Aesthetic sensibilities, but his criticism of the novel, positive though it may be, is still focused on Wilde's personality and intentions; consequentially, value judgments are made on the novel based on these two factors. The work in essence therefore is never divorced from Wilde's life or suspected life and his perceived intentions in writing the book.

After *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was republished in expanded novel form in 1891 (Mikolyzk xiii) and was posthumously published in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde* edited by Wilde's long time friend Robert Ross in the early twentieth century (Mikolyzk xiv), critical reception of the work still treated the work as derivative, unoriginal and a mere extension of Oscar Wilde's personality. 'That Dorian Gray is a Pastiche, 'a mosaic hurriedly made by a man who reached out in all directions and

took and used in his book whatever scraps of jasper or porphyry or broken flint were put into his hand' has been pretty well established" (Maurer 84). In this passage from an article published in 1947, Oscar Maurer echoes the dominant critical view of the novel which is evident in his quoting from Arthur Ransom's *Oscar Wilde, a Critical Study* published in 1912—the same year the final volume of the Ross *Complete Works of Oscar Wilde* was published (Mikolyzk xiv). Maurer investigates sources for Wilde's novel on the premise that this is the only valuable way to approach a work that could not possibly be original. Further, even though Maurer indicates that Wilde did put his personality into the novel, he continues to question the originality (Maurer 85). Therefore in light of this established approach to Wilde's novel, criticism of the work before the late 1960s is still relegated to personal attacks against Wilde as a writer even though Wilde's 'immorality' is not referred to as frequently.

Even though the prevailing criticism of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* during the early twentieth-century was a negative form of historical-biographical criticism, longer works did attempt to explore the work and Wilde himself:

The theme of Dorian Gray, that is, the central motif of the struggle between good and evil in man, had a venerable ancestry. Not so long ago Poe had treated it in William Wilson. It was also adumbrated in Balzac's *Peau de Chagrin* which with others of the Frenchman's works Wilde had studied in his Hotel Voltaire days when, with Balzac's monkish gown, he would have assumed something of his literary manner. (Winwar 164)

This passage from *Oscar Wilde and the Yellow Nineties*, published in 1941, shows much of the same sort of criticism Maurer espouses. Wilde's novel is explored in terms of its sources, and Wilde is questioned as unoriginal (wearing a gown like Balzac's in order to become more literary like Balzac). Yet Winwar in this book still considers Wilde, sensational and unoriginal

as he was considered to be, a worthy topic of biographical and literary inquiry.

While most critics of the early twentieth-century seemed to have no problem in painting Wilde and his works with a rather broad historical-biographical brush, even this 'accepted' form of criticism of Wilde was critically questioned because of the questionable accuracy of biographical material available on Wilde:

It will not be disputed that this book of Miss Francis Winwar's (though I entirely acquit her of malice and deliberate unfairness) is of such a character, so libelous in fact, that it could never have been published in England. I could have prevented its publication in Great Britain as easily and effectively as I prevented the sale of Frank Harris' *Oscar Wilde, His Life and Confessions*. (Douglas vii).

Here is the forward to *Oscar Wilde and the Yellow Nineties* written by Alfred Lord Douglas—Wilde's long standing companion whose father instigated the charges of indecency against Wilde in 1895 (Ellman 453). Here Douglas not only condemns the work for which he'd written the forward as 'libelous' but he also condemns other scholarly biographical works on Wilde (*Oscar Wilde, His Life and Confessions* in this passage). This heated scandal over accuracy made Wilde scholarship at this time a dubious business at best.

As the twentieth century progressed, critics tried to place Wilde and his works within a movement or school of thought:

There is something static, narcissistic, satanic, and horrible in the decadent scheme of values, and the romantic castle of *Dorian Gray* in particular gives expression to this. 'The spirit which inhabits Wilde's romantic castle is the spirit of Decadence. Romantics still recognize the values of moral and ethical ideas but to the Decadents art and intellect are the supreme realities.' (Goldfarb 372)

In this article published in 1962, in order to clarify what is meant by 'Decadence,' Russell Goldfarb explains the critical controversy over whether Decadence should be considered a literary movement, how this controversy has obscured the meaning of the term, and explores how the word 'Decadence' has been applied to late Victorian literature. In this passage, Goldfarb's quote from Aatos Ojala reveals a prevailing attitude of the late 1950s and early 1960s as to how Wilde and his work should be seen. Wilde's 'immorality' is defined solely in terms of 'Decadence.' Wilde's personal values and his work are still held as morally suspect, but this form of criticism seeks to attribute this solely to a movement or school of thought, much as Pater attributed Wilde's brilliance to the school of Aestheticism. Such an interest in placing Wilde within a movement shows a critical trend of defining categories for literature and then analyzing literature (including Wilde's) by these categories.

This categorization of Wilde and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* into a movement or school, however, did not go uncontested: 'He defends the dominance of art over morals only half-heartedly and even shamefacedly [. . .] *The Picture of Dorian Gray* presents rather an allegory of moral corruption and its punishment than a defense of the Aesthetic life' (Wellek 411). Here in his *A History of Modern Criticism* published in 1965, Wellek calls into question Wilde's putative commitment to valuing art over morals that Ojala claims places him in the Decadent movement. This questioning creates a very different reading of the novel if Wilde is held to be not entirely morally bankrupt.

Despite the scholarly debates at this time over schools and movements, biographical criticism continued to interpret Wilde's work strictly in terms of accounts of his personal life: 'It was among homosexuals that he was most at home and like many of them he was obsessed with homosexuality not only in his life, but in his writing. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* has the peculiar stench of what was called 'unhealthy' in Victorian times' (Croft-Cooke 47). In his biography of Alfred Lord Douglass called *Bosie*, Croft-

Cooke overtly attributes Wilde's writing directly to his sexuality. Though Queer studies later in the century would take a similar position, this all but unsupported assertion in the mid-sixties functions as one of the continual but conflicting Biographical accounts that tended to brand Wilde studies as disreputable (because of the questionable accuracy of the Biographical information).

All of these critical trends in the mid-sixties, along with the 1962 publication of Wilde's letters (Rupert-Hart-Davis iv), provided other critics, however, with tools to do more credible and objective studies of Wilde and his novel. In *Dark Passages: The Decadent Consciousness in Victorian Literature* published in 1965, Barbara Charlesworth continues the trend of defining the 'Decadent' era and places Wilde and his work within the era. Unlike the other critics listed and explored above, Charlesworth examines Wilde's personality objectively with only a few incidents of literary bias or moral judgments made on Wilde's life and career. In addition, Charlesworth examines how Wilde's personality interacted with his times and how this interaction was expressed in Wilde's works. This critical study also uses some psychoanalytic criticism to study the creation of self evident in Wilde and other Decadent writers.

The introduction of *Dark Passages* indicates Charlesworth's participation in the debate over the definition of 'Decadence':

Perhaps the term 'Decadence' is useful only to mark off boundaries: to delineate a period in English literary history between approximately 1890 and 1900. For if it is used to describe the characteristics of literature or of writers of that period the word obscures thought. (Charlesworth xiii)

Therefore, unlike Ojala in the late 1950s and Goldfarb in 1962, Charlesworth defines 'Decadence' as merely a historical period in literary history, and not as the sum total of the characteristics of the writers of that time. This position was crucial for getting beyond the moral judgments

of the 'characteristics' attached to 'Decadent' writers that 'made' them part of this category of writers. By eliminating the pejorative label of 'immorality' that defined Decadent writers, a more objective and less biased study of Wilde and his works was possible.

In *Dark Passages*, Charlesworth examines Wilde in terms of the characters in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and draws on Wilde's letter in which Wilde describes himself in these terms—"Basil Hallward is what I think I am: Lord Henry what the world thinks of me: Dorian what I would like to be—in other ages perhaps" (Rupert-Hart-Davis 352). Each facet or 'self' of Wilde is examined and seen to be expressed in his works: "This letter suggests the way in which it might best be possible to understand Oscar Wilde: by separating him, as he separated himself, into several selves [...] remembering always that the man and his work are inextricable, though the work too is a mask" (Charlesworth 54). This single passage indicates both a Historical-Biographical approach and a slightly psychoanalytic one. Wilde's works are seen as expressions of his different 'selves.' Biographical and social contexts are considered as well as a psychoanalytic concept of the creation and expression of the self.

Later criticism of Wilde and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in the 1960s continues along similar but more specifically focused lines concerning personal identity:

The nineteenth-century dislike of Realism is the rage of Caliban seeing his own face in a glass.

The nineteenth-century dislike of Romanticism is the rage of Caliban not seeing his own face in a glass.' Preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

The Philistine in Wilde's aphorism is confronted by a simplified form of the Victorian problem of personal identity. It was the rage of Caliban, a rage that led to the preoccupation with doubles and psychological dualism which *Dorian Gray* illustrates. (Korg 75)

Here Jacob Korg continues the criticism of Wilde, his novel, and Victorian society in terms of personal identity or the 'self.' Like Charlesworth, Korg attempts an objective view of Wilde and his works. While Korg examines a few of the hostile Victorian attitudes toward Wilde, Korg himself makes little in the way of value judgments on Wilde and his works.

In "Parody as Initiation: The sad education of 'Dorian Gray'" published in 1967, Jan Gordon continues the trend of the exploration of the development of the self but connects it with Historical/Biographical concerns:

The life of Dorian Gray seems to be at least tangentially related to these curious developments that characterized the termination of the nineteenth-century. Yet in the very light of renewed attention to the *fin de siècle* as the harbinger of modern literary idiom, the reader becomes aware of the way in which Wilde's novel recalls those other nineteenth-century novels that, in one way or another, treat of the education of youth. This education is related in strains of imagery that become symbolic of the stages along the path of pilgrimage, and the agents of this initiation are often parodies of nineteenth-century ideas about the relation of art to life. (Gordon 355)

In this essay, Gordon explores the idea of development of the self in terms of the education of Dorian in the ideals of Victorian society. Gordon indicates that this development is criticized by Wilde by creating the agents of this education as parodies of nineteenth-century ideals. Therefore, the author implies that Wilde is criticizing the development (or education) of the self by Victorian standards.

Though this more expanded strain of readings continues and provides bases for later scholarship of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, source studies similar to those written in the late 1940s continue, albeit without overt pejorative reference to Wilde's 'literariness':

The materials for the making of *Dorian Gray* its literary sources and influences, have been quite thoroughly searched and researched. As to its Gothicism, Wilde got the notion of the doppelganger portrait from Melmoth the Wanderer [. . .] Dorian's house, with its hidden closet and isolated 'schoolroom,' is a type of haunted castle [. . .] The book's Satanism is a borrowing from the Byronic villain-hero tradition. Lord Henry is the classic devil figure, Dorian's prayer [. . .] a rudimentary devil-compact, and throughout the story his greed for life is unmistakably Faustian [. . .] Le Gallienne calls Wilde an 'astonishing, impudent microcosm,' a mirror he implies, of the macrocosm of England at that time. (Miyoshi 312-313)

Here, in *The Divided Self: a Perspective on the Literature of the Victorians*, Masco Miyoshi traces many of the features in the novel to previous literary sources, as did the criticism of the 1940s. Miyoshi, however, does not view Wilde as derivative and unoriginal. In fact, he quotes Le Gallienne to emphasize Wilde as a critical mirror to Victorian society reflecting back the culture, not an unartful barrower.

Huston Baker continues this form of source studies that are less indicative of Wilde as an inept borrower:

The simplest way to approach *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is by way of Goethe's *Faust*; that is to say, the protagonist of Wilde's novel can be seen as a prototype of St. Bernard's man of *Curiositas* who has sold his soul to a Mephistophelian Lord Henry Wotton. To accept such an interpretation without qualifications, however, is to ignore the complexity of the novel (Baker 349-350)

In 'A Tragedy of the Artist: *The Picture of Dorian Gray*,' Baker acknowledges the traditional source studies that have been done on the novel, but indicates that the novel is much more than a conglomeration of influences. Therefore Wilde's novel is treated as something complex rather than

derivative and unworthy of serious study. Like the other mid to late sixties criticism on the novel, this essay prefigures the diverse and sympathetic critical investigation of the novel that comes about later in the century as a result of the expansion of critical approaches and more accurate biography.

At the beginning of the 1970s, the assumptions of earlier criticism began to be challenged. Robert Keefe, in his 1973 article 'Artist and Model in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*' calls into question Baker's 1969 article and its 'moralistic reading' while praising it for focusing on the character of Basil Hallward: 'One critic, Professor Huston A. Baker, has recognized Hallward's central position in the novel. But even he insists on reading the work moralistically.' (Keefe 63) Thus, Keefe indicates a scholarly interest in removing the investigation of the 'morals' of a text. In addition, a declared interest in a character considered minor previously reflects a critical desire to look at the work much more closely.

Keefe explores *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in terms of sources and influences in classical Greece by tracing the allusion of Narcissus in the novel as well as in Wilde's philosophies of art (Keefe 63,64) This sort of analysis is not new, but Keefe's stance of challenging previous criticism marks it as an opening through which other newer forms of criticism can be heard in addition to and opposed to the traditional criticism of the work.

Though not directly involved in the disagreement between Keefe and Baker, Lewis Poteet prefigures Keefe and also challenges traditional readings of *Dorian Gray* in his 1971 article 'Dorian Gray and the Gothic Novel': 'In fact, Graham Hough is typical in treating the novel as a bad imitation of K. J. Huysmans' *A Rebours*. [...] These attributions of influence have been made again and again despite Wilde's caustic depreciation of Huysmans in a letter to Robert Ross. [...] And *Melmoth the Wanderer* does provide many of the larger patterns with which Wilde shapes his novel' (Poteet 239-240) Here, despite the fact that Poteet takes the traditional

approach of studying Wilde's influences in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Poteet questions the traditional attribution of *A Rebus* as the primary influence on Wilde's novel and suggests the more structurally similar *Melmoth the Wanderer* as the primary influence. Yet, like Keefe, Poteet opens the door to challenging the interpretations of earlier Wilde studies.

In Donald Dickson's 1983 essay 'In a Mirror That Mirrors the Soul,' many of the newer features put forth in the mid sixties and seventies have become a standard part of the criticism of *Dorian Gray*:

In recent decades scholars have generally agreed that *The Picture of Dorian Gray* retains its position in the literary canon because of the 'pre-modern' critical and aesthetic theories upon which the novel is based. The failure of Dorian, it has been noted, to achieve the aesthetic ideals of Wilde's generation clearly sounds the death knell of the Aesthetic movement even as it heralds the ennui of the fin de siècle. [...] The tragedy of the artist depicted in *Dorian Gray*, however, is more artfully contrived than many critics are willing to grant. (Dickson 5)

Here in Dickson's article are echoes of the issues of placing Wilde and his novel in genre and period that surfaced in the sixties, and the acknowledgement that Wilde did not conform completely to any preset ideology. Dickson remarks that Wilde sounds the death knell of Aestheticism instead of simply being a reflection of it. Also Dickson reiterates the more positive reception of Wilde as a literary author when he calls the 'tragedy' in Wilde's novel artfully contrived. With this normalizing of the idea that Wilde and his novel are more complex and less easily categorized than previously thought, early eighties critics begin to lend a solid respectability to Wilde studies.

With an open challenge to early interpretations of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in the seventies and the consolidation of and normalizing of Wilde's novel as something more openly complex than originally thought in the

early eighties, critics of less traditional orientations began to become attracted to the novel in the mid eighties. One example would be Ellie Ragland-Sullivan's 'The Phenomenon of Aging in Oscar Wilde's *Picture of Dorian Gray*: a Lacanian View.' Although Psychoanalytic interpretations of Oscar Wilde were not entirely new, this essay is significant in that it is a predominantly psychoanalytic reading written on a work that has predominantly been the province of Historical/Biographical critics at a time when newer critical interpretations of the work had become the norm.

In Ragland-Sullivan's essay published in the book *Memory and Desire: Aging Literature Psychoanalysis*, she asserts that 'The Picture of Dorian Gray is a metaphorical rendering of the power of the gaze in its relationship to the superego. The picture's gaze distorts time, making it an effect of unconscious 'truth' rather than a fact of aging.' (Ragland-Sullivan 118) Essentially, Ragland-Sullivan suggests that the picture is a superego-like representation of Lacan's 'Name of the Father' which is associated with law and rules learned after an individual's separation from the mother. Therefore the aging of the painting is not real aging but is a punishment for breaking social rules meted out by the 'Name of the Father' present in Dorian's unconscious. This reading stands in sharp contrast to many that came before and attests both to the growth of critical theory since the work's publication and to the growing respectability of Wilde studies in the eighties that attracted critics of newer schools.

In addition to Ragland-Sullivan's work, Regina Gagnier in *Idylls of the Marketplace* also takes advantage of Wilde's mid eighties scholarly attractiveness and offers a type of Cultural Studies approach to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*:

Although the controversy surrounding *Dorian Gray* couched itself in terms of art and morality, it was a product of social tensions that had been brewing for decades. These concerned the much-advertised images of dandies and gentlemen, and to a lesser extent, they also concerned

the much-advertised images of women. [. . .] Therefore we must shift our analysis from the artwork alone to encompass a number of interrelated phenomena of the time: the art of advertising in the 1890s that reflected the crisis of images, for the dandies in *Dorian Gray* could not have arisen except as rejections of [. . .] the normative image of the gentleman (Gagnier 51-51).

This passage indicates Gagnier's interest in the production of *Dorian Gray* or rather in the novel's existence as part of a complex cultural interplay of tensions. These tensions between the traditional image of the gentleman and the image of the dandy are seen to be continuous with the production and subject matter of the novel. Gagnier's interest in the 'phenomena of the time' as an interrelated system and her de-centering of the text belie tendencies toward cultural criticism and a newer more socially conscious approach to the text.

Late then in the 1980s amid the beginnings of a more diverse scholarly reception of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Richard Ellman published the biography of Wilde that *The Times Literary Supplement* called a watershed moment in Wilde studies (*Times Literary Supplement* 3-5). This biography was largely received as the definitive biography of Oscar Wilde and achieved Ellman's intent of the literary rehabilitation of Wilde. With this work in place, which alleviated much of the biographical inaccuracies surrounding Wilde and the rise of newer forms of criticism interested in Wilde and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, criticism of the work expanded greatly in amount and scope.

Although its beginnings predated Ellman's biography, Queer Theory became another driving force behind increased scholarly interest in Wilde and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Beginning with scholars like Eve Sedgwick who commented that 'the triangular relationship of Basil, Dorian, and Lord Henry makes sense only in homosexual terms' (Sedgwick 176), and continuing with Ed Cohen and Richard Dellamora (both of whom rely

heavily on Ellman's work and particularly in Dellamora's case, on the biography) scholarly conversation over the book widened.

In 1987, drawing heavily on Sedgwick, Ed Cohen writes "Yet this critical reflection has never directly addressed the question of how Wilde's 'obviously' homoerotic text signifies its 'deviant' concerns while never explicitly violating the dominant norms of heterosexuality. [...] we must examine the ways that Wilde's novel move both with and athwart the late Victorian ideological practices that naturalized male heterosexuality" (Cohen 805). Moving beyond simple biographical parallels, Cohen examines how the text nonverbally expresses a homoerotic relationship between the characters without explicitly mentioning homosexuality.

Dellamora writes in 1988 "one might more accurately say that homosexuality exists here within a heterosexual framework which demands that desire between men be negated. The demand is doubly ironic since the portrait in which Basil reveals his secret is prominent both at the beginning and the end of the novel" (Dellamora 28). Like Cohen, Dellamora takes up the question of investigating how homoeroticism exists and functions in a heterosexual framework. This revolutionary approach explored by Dellamora, Cohen, Sedgwick and others incited and invited commentary from other critical schools.

Perhaps not directly responding to Dellamora and Cohen, but definitely to studies of *Dorian Gray*, Rita Felski in 1991 asserts "Yet one can debate the assumption—shared by a number of present day critics—that this early modernist appropriation of metaphors of femininity was aligned with the feminist project." (Felski 1094) Here Felski questions the feminized gender roles of the characters of Wilde's novel (and others) as reinforcing of negative labels that keep women oppressed. This assertion marks a definite difference between Feminist and Queer studies of the novel and asserts differences between interpretations of nineteenth-century feminized male characters.

In more direct response to Queer Theory readings of the novel and Cohen in particular, post-structuralist Michael Gillespie argues that 'Ed Cohen, for example, explores the power of extra-textuality through an examination of the tension arising when the homoeroticism inherent in *Dorian Gray* confronts the societal prohibitions [. . .] Cohen's essay raises a number of interesting points, but its impact remains problematic' (Gillespie 8) Though Gillespie initially seems to be trying to discredit various readings of the text as this passage seems to indicate, he makes his objections clearer later:

A reading of *Dorian Gray* grows out of our individual experiences commingled with the artistic traditions from Wilde's period to the present. The pluralism of the consequent discourse must inevitably resist the prescriptiveness that one associates with a single, dominant perspective. (Gillespie 14)

In line then with the post-structuralist concept of no single meaning in a work being authoritative, Gillespie is merely responding to a reading of the text that does not take into account plurality of meaning. His essay, though, does mark a definite response to the increased number of various readings the text has garnered since the mid 1980s including Queer Theory.

Within the last hundred years Wilde's critical reception has changed dramatically. Changing social attitudes, and the development of various literary schools does explain much of the change. Without the definitive publication of Wilde's letters and the publication of a definitive biography, however, the invitation to investigate Wilde and his works as a credible scholarly pursuit would not have had the great impact that it did. As later criticism shows, much can be done with *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and few scholarly approaches would fail to find material to explore (although post-colonial theory may have a difficult time because of the absence of the colonized/colonizer relationship). Much remains to be said about

this work, and the history of the criticism of this work seems sure to continue to grow and change as criticism itself grows and changes.

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