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Introduction

This issue marks the sixth annual issue of *EAPSU Online*, a peer-reviewed journal that publishes work that is critical, creative, or that concerns pedagogy—all subjects that professors and students of Pennsylvania’s fourteen state-owned institutions value. PASSHE (the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education) provides a quality education to more than 100,000 students across the Commonwealth and beyond. EAPSU (the English Association of Pennsylvania State Universities) is the organization that brings English people together across the state in an annual conference and in publishing this journal.

From the beginning of this journal, we have received quality material from people all over the world, and we have published in many specialties within English studies. We have published quality graduate student papers that made it through the peer-review process, faculty members from all ranks, and independent scholars. We have prided ourselves on inclusiveness, fitting the mission of PASSHE.

I have served as the editor of this journal during its infant years, but I now hand over the reins to Jeffrey Hotz of East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania. I will consider myself the “founding editor,” but I must pass the work on to those in the English departments across the System. Now working as an academic administrator, I do not have the time it takes to give this enterprise the attention it deserves. I feel a bit like Anne Bradstreet or Emily Dickinson, sending her work out into the world. Still, I am happy to have had this wonderful opportunity to meet so many people who have submitted manuscripts over the years.

I want to thank Shippensburg University for its moral support and the department of English for reading many, many essays, stories, and poems. I want to thank my editorial board for making some tough calls and for being on the other side of an email when I needed you.

Jeff has great plans for the journal’s future, including registering with EBSCO Host to give the journal more visibility. Thanks, Jeff and the ESU folks for stepping up.

All, enjoy this issue. I trust that bigger and better things await *EAPSU Online*. Better name, anyone?

Writing Origins, Writing History: Personal Voice and Nation in *David Cusick's Sketches of the Ancient History of the Six Nations* (1827)

Jeffrey Hotz, East Stroudsburg University

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In his preface to *David Cusick's Sketches of the Ancient History of the Six Nations* (1827), Tuscaroran author David Cusick acknowledges the difficulty of recording ancient Iroquois history and admits his own limitations as an author engaged in translation. Cusick, a member of the Tuscacora nation, is fully aware of the daunting nature of his enterprise: the linguistic and cultural translation of Iroquois oral tradition into written American English. Cusick, in fact, confesses upfront his desire that someone else had assumed this task: “I have long been waiting in hopes that some of my people, who have received an English education, would have undertaken the work as to give a sketch of the Ancient History of the Six Nations” (1). Noting that at one point he had even “abandoned the idea” of the project, he comments, “I, however, took up a resolution to continue the work, which I have taken much pains procuring the materials, and translating it into English language” (1). Cusick’s manuscript is the end result of a complicated personal and cultural production, a process that critic Arnold Krupat describes as a “bicultural composite composition,” where cultures collide in the individual’s own act of authoring the work (15). In its very creation, Cusick’s forty-five page historical sketch possesses the complicated layers of an encounter narrative, where Tuscacoran / Iroquois and Euro-American cultures meet. In Cusick’s text one finds the intersection of personal voice and competing national histories.

In her excellent 2002 article “Finding a Place for David Cusick in Native American Literary History,” Susan Kalter notes that Cusick was “one of the first Iroquois to record the oral literature of his nation in the alphabetic writing of Western civilization” (9). Cusick’s work, no doubt, underscores the many challenges of being the first. He is the first member of the Iroquois Confederacy—and likely the first Native American (Royster 47)—to transcribe in written English

within the form of the mass produced book his people's oral stories of national origin and history. As a consequence, his account by virtue of its exclusivity has the potential become the public portrayal to which all future accounts will be compared. To manage the material, Cusick divides Iroquois history into three parts: Part One, "A Tale of the Foundation of the Great Island, now North America"; Part Two, "A Real Account of the Settlement of North America and their Dissensions"; and Part Three, "Origin of the Kingdom of the Five Nations, which was Called a Long House." Within these divisions, Cusick attempts to unify Iroquois culture or, as he puts it, "throw some light on the history of the original population of the country, which I believe never have been recorded" (1).

Cusick's overall narrative goal affirms what in American society today, according to the 2000 Census classification, might be described as "original peoples status" ("State and County Quick Facts"). By sketching his people's origins, Cusick establishes original claims and rights—an aim that propels Cusick to undertake the history in the first place. Engaging anxiously in the creation of a written history of the Iroquois people in the English language, Cusick re-asserts the claims of an ancient culture and recounts as a means of instruction, both for Six Nations members and Americans, time-honored traditions of interacting with other peoples. Susan Kalter rightly advises twenty-first century readers, however, to view David Cusick primarily as a single author, one Tuscacora, telling the history of the Six Nations and the Tuscacora, as he understands it, and not as a work that defines an entire culture. Cusick's reluctance to tell his story in the first place reflects his fear that readers will be inclined to read this first written text as definitive, as *the* expression of his culture, as the last word, as opposed to merely one version, one written account that emerges from a tradition of generations of storytellers over numerous centuries. The personal tone of the preface instructs readers not to succumb to the fallacy of a definitive, complete history. Cusick's preface makes the point that the account represents one single voice about a nation that is

not a representative, “national” voice; the title of the work on the frontispiece, emphasizing David Cusick’s own role as historian—*David Cusick’s Sketches of the Ancient History of the Six Nations*—further affirms this idea.

Cusick’s own status among both the Tuscorora and the Six Nations was complex. In the nineteenth century, the Cusick family line was both prominent in its military service to the U.S. government and its leadership among the Tuscorora as well as controversial for its political stances. Cusick’s family was Christian, dating from his Christian father Nicholas’s conversion. Nicholas Cusick also served as an armed guard for General Lafayette during the Revolutionary War, attaining the post of lieutenant (“The Iroquois Creation Story” 18; Hauptman 40). Born sometime in the early 1780s, his son David Cusick grew up on the Oneida reservation in Madison County, New York, and later on a Tuscarora Reservation, in Niagara County, New York, where he received a Christian missionary education by Samuel Kirkland (“The Iroquois Creation Story” 18). Following the path of his father’s military service, David Cusick also served as a border guard for the Americans on American-Canadian border during the War of 1812 (Kalter 11). According to another descendant Cornelius Cusick, who served as a Union Lieutenant during the Civil War, two other men with the last name Cusick, Joseph and John, had served among the Iroquois rolls in the War of 1812 (Hauptman 40, 41). The military involvement of the Cusick family on the side of the Americans in both Revolutionary War and the War of 1812 was controversial. During the Revolutionary War the Iroquois, as a whole, had become split, with portions of individual nations supporting the English and the Americans. American incursions and attacks against the Iroquois, despite many Iroquois Confederacy leaders’ publicly stated desire for neutrality, prompted most Iroquois eventually to throw their support to the British, leaving them unprotected in the treaty negotiations in 1783 (Snow 151). The War of 1812 posed further internal complications as

members of the Six Nations lived on both sides of the British - American frontier, with tense relations with whites on both sides of the border (Snow 164).

After the War of 1812, David Cusick, by this time a well-known doctor and leader in the community, met with the American Secretary of War Thomas McKenney in 1826, before or right around the time that he had begun his history, signaling Cusick's cooperation with the American government ("The Iroquois Creation Story" 18). About 1825, the aging Nicholas Cusick and his son James had also developed an English transliteration of Tuscarora vocabulary for Thomas McKenney in the U.S. War Department (Hauptman 161). In the latter half of nineteenth century controversy would envelop the Cusick family for their apparent capitulation and acceptance of U.S. removal plans for the Tuscarora, a position that would diminish the Cusick name among the Tuscarora into the twentieth century (Hauptman 161). However, in the twentieth century Cusick descendants like Clinton Rickard and William Rickard would advocate strongly for Tuscarora and Native American rights both for unencumbered travel rights across the American – Canadian and against an effort by New York State to expropriate Tuscarora Reservation lands (Hauptman 40). Albert Cusick, at the turn of the century, worked on a manuscript version of the Six Nations' Constitution, another effort to assert Six Nations' autonomy (Snow 188).

Although the Cusick family was noteworthy among the Tuscarora, their status in the greater Iroquois Confederation remained more marginal, due, largely, to the secondary status of the Tuscarora nation itself as the Confederacy's most junior member. Although the Tuscarora had become full members of the Six Nations after their formal admission into the Iroquois Confederacy around 1722 or 1723, the Tuscarora never attained complete equal status (Wilson 135). In particular, the relationship between the Tuscarora and the Seneca, who had sponsored Tuscarora admission and gave them land as the Tuscarora migrated from North Carolina, contained linguistic markers of the Tuscarora's secondary status, with Tuscaroras calling Senecas

“my father” (Wilson 135). For instance, the Tuscarora were not permitted to send leaders to be among the fifty members of the Grand Council (Snow 139), and while the Tuscarora accepted their conditions of their incorporation into the Six Nations, essayist Edmund Wilson commented in the mid-twentieth century that “they have sometimes been treated with a certain hauteur” (Wilson 135). Susan Kalter refers to Cusick’s status, both within the Tuscarora nation and the larger Six Nations community, as “ambiguous and perhaps liminal” (9). Cusick’s stated reluctance then to speak on behalf of the entirety Six Nations’ history corresponds to the need for nuance in addressing the cultural context both of the Tuscarora’s status among the Six Nations and the trans-cultural context of Six Nations - American relations.

Yet Cusick must also establish cultural authenticity for the Six Nations: the culture and history of the Six Nations are true—real—and worthy of consideration and respect. Phillip H. Round notes that the “book’s title page and preface underscore the text’s hybridity” (274); a product of both “personal intellectual effort (it is copyrighted, and its title affirms that this is ‘David Cusick’s History’) and community tradition” (274). The text, as a community document, operated as a bulwark during a time of urgency when the Iroquois faced U.S. removals and internal debates within the Six Nations caused division with different views on the best way to address white incursions, either through resistance or acceptance of removals. Historian Reginald Horsman describes Indian Removal, the policy of the expropriation of Indian lands and forcible removal of nations to designated territories further and further west, as based in an anti-Indian ideology that refused to recognize individual tribal identities and specific land claims (192). Horsman writes, “Indian Removal as it developed between 1815 and 1830 was a rejection of all Indians as Indians, not simply a rejection of unassimilated Indians who would not accept the American life-style” (Horsman 192). In a U.S. climate adverse to claims of Native American independence or sovereignty—the 1823 Supreme Court ruling in *Johnson v. M’Intosh* had declared

that Native Americans did not possess title to their land since these lands were owned by the U.S. on the basis of the Discovery Doctrine—Cusick’s history provides an alternative narrative of a legitimate sovereign nation. The written history, then, is both a public statement of rights and, as Vine Deloria would put it, “the critical constructive material upon which a community rebuilds itself” (qtd. in Warrior 95).

David Cusick’s rendering of national history for the Six Nations precedes by seven years George Bancroft’s *History of the United States of America, From the Discovery of the Continent* (1834), which is considered the first substantive national American history. In this context, Cusick’s narrative should be read as an intervention in the prevailing American discourse about Native Americans and an effort to shape the historical record. Bancroft’s history operates within a construct of theological determinism promoting a divinely sanctioned white American destiny, which was a hallmark of the burgeoning ideology of Manifest Destiny and which provided the basis for constructions of American white identity in the nineteenth century. Meanwhile, the early nineteenth century had witnessed a rise in histories, ethnologies, and artistic renderings of Native Americans created by whites like Thomas McKenney, George Catlin, Henry Schoolcraft, James Adair, Mrs. Anna Bronwell Jameson, and Washington Irving. Historian Robert F. Berkhofer described this burgeoning, problematic literature about Native Americans as an expression of European consciousness: “the idea and image of the Indian must be a White conception” (3). Cusick’s narrative importantly strives to counteract errors and misunderstandings in narratives penned by white authors, while also contradicting notions of the inevitable disappearance of Native peoples, a theory widely popularized in the 1820s in James Fenimore Cooper’s *Leatherstocking Tales*, in which Native American characters are represented dying off and disappearing in elegiac elimination.

Critic and historian Lucy Maddox has characterized the prevailing white ideology even among the most sympathetic white American writers and thinkers in the first-half of the nineteenth century as being premised on a pernicious false dichotomy: the literal extinction of Native peoples through genocidal removal or their full assimilation into white civilization with the concomitant loss of tribal identity (*Removals*, 1 – 10). Cusick’s history responds to this limited, tragic U.S. discourse, and as a consequence, undertakes the beginning of the revision of Native American historical representation within the consciousness of white America. Cusick’s history engages profoundly with the cultural moment and is influenced by that moment in its overall construction. Homi K. Bhabha notes that “the social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation” (2). Cusick’s first act of signification—his expression of anxiety and admission of uncertainty about his own expertise—eloquently describes the stress of asserting cultural difference and attempting to explain this difference during a moment of historical transformation that threatened Iroquoian survival.

The three-part structure of Cusick’s work argues first and foremost for what Susan Kalter calls “an Iroquois identity over an Indian identity and a human identity over [...] animate beings” (22). Cusick moves his readers from the creation story, to the original North American settlement in primordial time, and finally to the development of the Iroquois people within the Longhouse, the international structure of the Iroquois people. In sum, Cusick sketches Iroquois history from its origins to the moment of Columbian contact in 1492. In Part I, Cusick covers primordial history, including the creation of Turtle Island and the Universe through the foundational story of the twins, Enigorio and Enigonhahetgea, while in Part II, he outlines Iroquois pre-history, noting the first settlement of Turtle Island and the destruction of the early settlement. These two histories, encompassing primordial time and pre-history, begin with the creation of the world and stop

roughly at the first calendar date mentioned in the text, roughly 1300 B.C.E., approximately two thousand two hundred years before Columbus's arrival in the West Indies (15). In Part III, Cusick moves to the "modern" history of the Six Nations, when the six nations left the northern mountains at approximately 0 C.E and proceeded to organize the Iroquois civilization within the Longhouse over a two hundred year period. Cusick calculates this historical moment again in terms of the European calendar, "Perhaps 1250 years before Columbus discovered the America, about two hundred and fifty winters since the people left the mountain" (20). Throughout his history, Cusick backdates calendar dates by noting how the hundreds of years important events had taken place prior to the year 1492. Cusick's narrative, culminating in modern Iroquoian history up until the Columbian contact, achieves, in a sketch-form, what appears to be a unitary history, from primordial time to marked calendar time, which runs parallel to European history. The history of the Six Nations is, therefore, vast in terms of calendar time and apparently Iroquois-centric, originating in a New World creation story. Yet this history by stopping at 1492 invites participation from readers is but a partial rendering of an ongoing story, one that Cusick leaves for others to tell with the implication that the Iroquois history remains a living, unfolding event. The 1492 stop date highlights the text's pedagogic function, particularly for white Euro-American readers who would have seen the "New World" as almost entirely a post-1492 history. Cusick emphatically argues against this position.

In Part I, Cusick outlines the creation story, describing the descent of the pregnant mother from the heavens; the monsters' preparations to save the mother from falling into the vast ocean and causing universal chaos; the dutiful action of the turtle who breaks her descent; and the birth of the two the twins, Enigorio, or the "good mind," and Enigonhahetgea, "the bad mind" (6). Enigorio then creates the universe from the body of the deceased mother: the mother's head becomes the sun, and other parts of the body become the moon. Although the matriarchal values

of the Iroquois are not described in Cusick's text—likely, deliberately deemphasized for white readers—these elements are implicit in his rendering of the creation: the universe is the living body of the mother. In a striking parallel to the Genesis creation story, Enigorio, the “good mind,” creates the EA-GWE-HOWE, the “real people,” by forming “two images of the dust in the ground in his own likeness, male and female, and by his breathing into their nostrils he gave them life” (7). Just as the biblical creation stories affirm values that underline Western societies, the Iroquois creation story affirms the specific Six Nations' values of cooperation, the need for a balance of power in an orderly universe, and the appropriate use of trickery as a means to accomplish good. Illustrating the constructive use of deceit, the epic battle between Enigorio and Enigonhahetgea depends not on Enigorio's physical or moral superiority but on his ability to trick his brother Enigonhahetgea reveal his weakness: “the use of deer horns” (8). Enigorio confesses a weakness that he does not have, “whipping with flags” (20), and then proceeds to use deer horns to kill his brother. Enigonhahetgea's defeat in battle results in his continuing presence in the underworld, and here, Cusick provides a version of Iroquois theodicy: the bad mind becomes “the Evil Spirit” (8), whose influence remains a part of the living world and, therefore, provides some explanation for human suffering.

Anthropologist Dean Snow points out that more than forty variations of the Iroquois creation story exist in written accounts that transcribed the oral tradition, the first written account dating back to 1632 (4). Cusick, conversant in the oral tradition, which he would have learned directly through tribal transmission in the Tuscarora language, Skarure, also had knowledge of the Christian creation story of Adam and Eve, through his religious training at Samuel Kirkland's missionary school. In Cusick's version of the Iroquois creation story, the good twin Enigorio's creation of “a real people,” the Ea-gwe-howe, (6), contains multicultural thematic and plot elements, blending the Six Nations oral history with elements of the Christian creation tradition.

On the linguistic level, too, Cusick uses a mix of terminology, for instance, translating the Tuscarora word for “good-minded” into the Mohawk language to arrive at the name Enigorio. Likewise, he translates the Tuscarora word for “bad-minded” into the Seneca language to arrive at the name Enigonhahatgea (“The Iroquois Creation Story” 19). Embedded, then, in his rendering of the names of the two twins in his phonetic English-based transliteration are a series of translations of Tuscarora words for words from the Mohawk and Seneca language systems. In contrast, the term “Ea-gwe-howe” is found in the Tuscarora language system and in the languages of all of the Six Nations, so this translation can be described as a one-step translation (“The Iroquois Creation Story” 20).

At the outset of his history, Cusick moves through the different Six Nations’ language systems, rendering them into English. He emphasizes this mix of languages and cultures at the very end of the text with a list of Mohawk words and their translated equivalents in Tuscarora before ending with the traditional two words that conclude works written in English, “The End” (46). In what is likely a deferential gesture of respect for a root language that is not Tuscarora but upon which his own history depends, Cusick comments, “The Mohawk was considered the oldest language of the confederacy” (46). By concluding with lists of Mohawk words with their Tuscarora translations, Cusick asserts both the general linguistic challenges in rendering any oral tradition into a written history and the particular difficulties associated with translations of the Iroquoian language tradition across the six nations. The Six Nations’ history, internally, is multi-cultural, multi-lingual, and multi-national.

As noted, echoes of Christian theology appear in Cusick’s version of the Iroquois creation story with its direct and indirect parallels to the two biblical creation stories, including the world emerging out of chaos and waters (Gen. 1.2; Gen 1.6), the creation of man out of dust (Gen. 2.7), the existence of evil in the world (Gen. 3.1), and the killing of brothers (Gen. 4.8). Daniel K.

Richter assesses the many permutations within the broad oral tradition of the Iroquois as being consistent with any social structure that endures over a period of time: “Like any living history, Iroquois interpretations of their past changed over time to meet current needs” (278). Richter’s observation is especially true when it comes to the complex, many centuries-long American Indian-European cultural encounters and negotiations, with French, English, Spanish, and Americans. Cusick’s incorporation of Christian elements within the Iroquois myth of origins is evidence of dynamic cultural negotiations and interactions that Cusick himself and the Tuscarora, more generally, had experienced, as well as Cusick’s own sophisticated sense of an American audience of English speakers.

The recognition of the fluidity of all cultural representations—a theme David Cusick stresses in his own personal rendering of Iroquois traditions—and the reality of changes in societies counteracts a tendency within colonial discourse to concretize “otherness” as a fixed, unchanging entity. In his study of colonial and post-colonial literatures, Homi Bhabha notes that “an important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of ‘fixity’ in the ideological construction of otherness” (66). Cusick’s incorporation of Christian elements in his creation mythology both resists artificial fixedness while articulating both directly and indirectly values of duality and co-existence, even of opposites within the Iroquoian tradition.

Cusick’s formulation of origins, like all creation myths, centers the world within a scope of one primary culture emerging out of the chaos of the world and then inaugurating a specific cultural identity. At its root, however, Cusick presents a number of blendings in the world, beginning with the cooperation of the animal world in the human world to protect the falling woman who bears the twins: “the monsters of the great water were alarmed at her appearance of descending to the lower world; in consequence all the species of creatures were immediately collected into where it was expected she would fall” (5). A large turtle volunteers his services,

because “none were able to comply” (5), and with the addition of a “small quantity of earth” (5), the world comes into existence. The process of creation, once it is located in a specific place, becomes re-centered again through the efforts of the good-twin, Enigorio, who orders the world and creates all of the elements of the world—the sun, the moon, the clouds, the stars out of the mother’s body—because the good mind is “not contented to remain in a dark situation” (6). Cusick’s creation story places one creation story within another, as the original beings create again a new world. Meanwhile, the good mind and bad mind duality, contained in the persons of the twin brothers, permits a wide spectrum of human and cultural activity, available from the very moment of creation. Christopher Vecsey observes that in the Iroquois creation myth “we see the more complex nature of Iroquois dualism, even between good and evil” (93). Such a model of creation is itself predicated upon recognitions of cultural complexity, not on reified notions of a specific cultural authenticity.

Like Homi Bhabha, Gareth Griffiths sees Westerners’ tendency to search for what is “authentic” in native cultures and native identity to recover an “authentic” Indian voice as both leveling and limiting, expressive of “the dominant culture’s simplified perception of the ‘othered’ world as that of the mythologized and idealized ‘authentic’ native” (82). Cusick’s emphasis on, and recognition of, duality, both on a thematic level in his rendition of the creation story and production of a written text out of diverse oral traditions possessing their own linguistic complexities, debunks this binary structure. Notwithstanding this re-centering in duality that exists within the texture of the Cusick’s rendition of the Iroquois creation story, the Iroquois story does, in the end, order the world on Iroquois terms, with an Iroquois-centric perspective, as creation stories do.

From the center of the world, Cusick recounts in Part II the spreading out of the Ea-gwehowe, their diasporic settlements, and their eventual dissolution and apparent destruction. Part II,

entitled “The Real Account of the Settlement of North America and their Dissentions,” describes a prehistory that ends in calendar time “about two thousand two hundred years before Columbus” (15). Perhaps foreshadowing future European contact but with a different outcome, this section notably begins with an invasion of “a number of foreign people [who] sailed from a port unknown” (9). While originally posing a threat to the “real people,” the Ea-gwe-howe, due to the foreign settlers’ rapid growth in population, monsters eventually destroy the foreign population. The endogamous Ea-gwe-howe survives this initial threat, through fortuitous circumstances. Later, another nation, the Ronnongwetowanea, a tribe of giants, also rises up to challenge the Ea-gwe-how but eventually is defeated and, Cusick reports, “has ever since ceased to exist” (13). In Part II, Cusick adumbrates another of Six Nations stories, including the rise of Donhtonha, the final heroism of Yakatonwatea against a Ronnongwetowanea giant, the machinations of Shotyerongwea, the formation of the people in a confederacy that predates the Six Nations Confederacy on the banks of the St. Lawrence River, and the successful battle against the vast empire in the south and its Golden City. All of these early stories of unified resistance and survival argue for a foundational structure of Iroquois’ organization within a narrative oral history that remains relevant in the 1820s, which members of Six Nations could draw upon to deal with U.S. Removals policy.

The key stories in Part II concern the organization of the “real people” in North America and their confrontations with giants, rival nations, and tyrants. Through the use of trickery, for example, Donhtonha arises as a hero in the Six Nations’ prehistory after rescuing his sister, the princess, who has been kidnapped by a rogue giant. After the oldest brother has disappeared after a similar quest and unbeknownst to the family has been killed by the giant, Donhtonha, the youngest son in the family, seeks the safe-return of his sister. While staying in the giant’s home as his guest, Donhtonha concocts a device—“he procured some piece of wood which produced a faint light in

the night and put it above his eyelids” (12)—that makes it appear that he is awake when in fact he is asleep; he gets much needed rest while the giant, who planned to kill Donhtonha while he slept, does not attack in the evening. The next morning Donhtonha slays the giant. Much like Enigorio, Donhtonha embodies the values of guile in warfare, demonstrating the importance of wiles to survive in a world where evil and threats exist as part of creation. Because Donhtonha survives through trickery, Cusick reiterates a thematic element of the Iroquois creation story, making this story of heroism and societal survival consistent with the cosmological model of the earliest social relationship, at the beginnings of Turtle Island.

Yakatonwatea’s heroism against another renegade Ronnongwetowanea giant who attacks the village when all the hunters have left, except for Yakatonwatea and an old chief, portrays a more complex form of heroism in which pure virtue is not concomitant. Yakatonwatea, who at the first sign of attack “went out the back door and deserted the aged chief to the fate” (12) in order to escape from the giant, later redeems himself in conquering the giant when he meets “two warriors and he was instantly supported and made vigorous resistance” (13). Yakatonwatea, having then sent out an “alarm whoop” (13), leads a successful war party against the Ronnongwetowanea. His desertion of the old chief, rather than being dwelled upon as a failure of leadership, is simply mentioned as one characteristic of a complex personality: a man who self-interestedly protects his own life in one moment can later be the one responsible for protecting the community as a whole. Despite his weakness, Yakatonwatea’s acts as warrior reinforce Cusick’s larger representation of the Iroquois’ general reluctance to engage in warfare as aggressors, but also their ability to fight tenaciously when attacked or to protect the community as a whole. Arguably, the assistance that Yakatonwatea receives here from the two other warriors corresponds to what Richter sees as the larger theme of reciprocity found in Iroquois culture. Reciprocity is predicated in both the physical structure of the longhouse, whose closed confines necessitated, “an ethic of sharing and

reciprocity between kin groups” (Richter 19), and within the cosmogonic stories of Iroquois origins, in which the turtle’s assistance founds the world (Richter 29). Meanwhile, Yakatonwatea’s behavior remains profoundly human, flawed but with the capacity for redemption. Interpreting the Iroquois oral tradition as ritualized acts of re-telling with spiritual-religious function, Christopher Vecsey points out that, “one of the effective uses of ritual in the story is its ability to transform individuals and societies. Implied in this view is the Iroquois notion that every being is double-faceted, and even in the worst of creatures there exists a worthiness that can reveal itself” (92). For David Cusick, Yakatonwatea’s double-faceted character requires no further explanation because this identity conforms to larger cultural notions of human behavior, in its complexity and duality.

Cusick ends Part II with yet another inscription of the creation myth, with the rise of Shotyeronagwea, whom Cusick calls “the greatest mischievous person that ever existed on the continent” (14). Simultaneous to Shotyeronagwea’s rise, internal and external threats to the Six Nations coalesce in cultural destruction. Cusick notes that the people viewed Shotyeronagwea, who worked within the community as a leader and yet, at the same time, did everything in his power to destroy the society through machinations, as “an agent from bad spirit” (14). Cusick again harkens back to the character of Enigonhahetgea, and by ending the period of pre-history in a return to chaos, Cusick recurs to the living presence of both the “good mind” and the “bad mind,” who, despite having retired from the world, continue to exist in the universe’s organization. Although the nations exile Shotyeronagwea—he is “compelled to leave the town and went some other place to do mischief” (14)—the dissensions that he has initiated eventually reappear. Despite having subdued invaders from the south after “long bloody wars ensued which perhaps lasted one hundred years” (15) and having overcome a mythical “great horned serpent” (15), internal disputes beset the Ea-gwe-howe. Nonetheless, Cusick maintains continuity between Part II and the

beginning of Part III, between pre-history and “modern” history, so that the narrative remains intact despite the threats the community has endured. The stories of Part II offer the dynamics of what Gerald Vizenor has called “survivance,” which is defined by “an active sense of presence, the continuance of native stories” and “the right of succession or reversion of an estate” (vii).

Part III, “the Origin of the Kingdom of the Five Nations, which was Called a Long House; —the Wars, Fierce Animals, & c,” is the longest section of the work, and it begins with a survivance narrative as “a body of people [that] was concealed in the mountain at the falls named Kuskehsawkich (now Oswego)” (16) finally emerge and re-inhabit the world. These people include the six nations of the Iroquois confederation: the Mohawk, the Seneca, the Oneida, the Onondaga, the Cayuga, and the Tuscarora. Cusick includes the Tuscarora among the six original peoples, and the Tuscarora interact as a brother people affiliated with the Five Nations, which foregrounds their eventual admission as the sixth nation in the early eighteenth century. Cusick presents the Five Nations as at first unified, when the people emerge from the mountain hide-away, before quickly becoming fractured, facing annihilation again, about 1400 years before Columbus. In their wars with monsters, including the “Flying Heads” and the “Stonish Giants,” luck and divine intervention help preserve the Five Nations. By chance, an Onondaga woman appears to the Flying Heads in the sky to be eating fire coals when she is, in fact, just eating acorns, and the Flying Heads retreat fearing the powerful fire of the Onondaga and their ability to digest flames. Divine intervention occurs later when the “Holder of the Heavens” descends to the earth disguised as a Stonish Giant, and then deliberately leads the enemy Stonish Giants to their own ruin (21 – 22). Cusick presents the Five Nations, in this final iteration, as a chosen people, who persist due to fortuitous and providential circumstances.

Picking up the theme that ends the prehistory narrative of the Iroquois in Part II, Cusick underscores the point that the main societal danger is internal dissension, and reiterating these

theme, Cusick notes that 1000 years before Columbus, about 400 C.E., Atotarho, a fierce Onondaga chief, had adopted the government structure of the Five Nations, including kingly succession through matrilineal lines, an elected senate with members from the Five Nations, and the development of laws in order to ensure unity. In Cusick's account, the alliance system originates when Atotarho asks that the living snakes that make up his hair be driven away and that his clothing be replaced with wampum that symbolizes cultural unity. Cusick's depiction of Atotarho, whom he calls "the most hostile chief" (22), and his description of the internal wars that existed around the time of Atotarho's rule—"unfortunately a war broke out among the Five Nations" (22)—elides almost entirely the specific details of the Hiawatha and Deganawida story. Instead, Cusick treats the story in a short-hand sketch-form, perhaps in keeping with the title of his work as a whole *David Cusick's Sketches*, rapidly moving from Atotarho's tyranny to his leadership as a champion and guide for the governance of the Five Nations. Dean R. Snow points out that "The Deganawida legend has basic elements that appear in all oral versions, although sometimes in different orders" (60). While focusing on the dangers of disunity among the Five Nations, Cusick's written account mentions neither Deganawida nor Hiawatha, whose actions are implied in Atotarho's transformation.

Thus, Cusick's text departs radically from the outlines of the oral tradition, which usually includes the appearance of the prophet of peace, Deganawida, to an Onandagan man, who has committed cannibalistic acts, as this man prepares to feast on human flesh (Vecsey 84). As the Onandagan man, who has been influenced by the chief Atotarho's cruelty, peers into his steaming cauldron, he sees the reflection of Deganawida's face in the kettle; Deganawida, usually depicted as an outsider who brings new knowledge to the Iroquois, stares down upon the scene atop the man's habitat through the smoke hole, and the man believes that Deganawida's face is his own (Vecsey 84; Wallace). The man hears Deganawida's message, becomes his disciple, and adopts the

new name, Hiawatha (Vecsey 84; Wallace). Ultimately, Hiawatha and Deganawida successfully spread the message of peace and governance to the Mohawks, Oneidas, Cayugas, and Senecas, before returning to enlighten and reform the Onandagas and chief Atotarho, who becomes transformed as the modern-leader of the Iroquois confederation (Vecsey 88; Wallace).

In her review of the Iroquois oral traditions chronicling the formation of the Confederacy, Elisabeth Tooker comments that despite differences in specific details among the traditions passed on by the Six Nations, “all of these traditions relate the efforts of Deganawida and Hiawatha or both to establish the confederacy and recount how these founders, and on occasion their embassies, went among the various tribes, finally gaining from them acceptance of the idea of the Great Peace” (317). Susan Kalter thoughtfully interprets Cusick’s omission as a deliberate effort to suppress accounts of Iroquois cannibalism, a topic that led to accusations of savagery by the French and English, and which white American readers in the early nineteenth century would have associated with any allusion to cannibalism. She comments, “Cusick’s banishment of cannibalism from the Iroquois community is unique” (18). By excising the Deganawida and Hiawatha accounts, which anthropologist Dean Snow views as “history with only a patina of myth” (58), Cusick blunts European and Euro-American assertions of Iroquoian, and more broadly speaking, Native American “savagery” that defined the nineteenth-century white American discourse on Native peoples.

In the nineteenth century, American and European opinions on indigenous cannibalism were characterized by vehement disgust and abhorrence. C. Richard King argues that the depiction of anthropophagy by Westerners has “always promoted the elaborations of differences” (108) and “observations and assessments of cannibalism have prompted and legitimated Occidental intervention” (109). Claims about cannibalism served as ideological basis for the cultural destruction of indigenous peoples and the justification for imperialistic actions. At the

same time, these same representations forwarded a view of Euro-American civilization as both normative and ironically non-violent (King 110).

To minimize difference then, Cusick takes control of the narrative in his own manner, for the greater purpose of affirming Iroquoian unity and civilization vis-à-vis Euro-American society, in much the same way that the Cherokee Indians, from the 1770s through the 1830s, engaged in Western-style nation building in order to establish social and political structures that could counteract, both politically and rhetorically, white expansion. The United States and the Cherokee nation had engaged in their own respective acts of nation-building over a sixty year-period, including the creation of constitutional governance, the establishment of a two-house elected legislative body, and the founding of a press (Norgren 43; Hotz 29). Unlike the Cherokee, however, the League of the Iroquois Long House governance structure predated by centuries, what John R. Swanton called, “those new conditions brought about by European intrusion” (xiii), which had necessitated new governmental organizations among Native American nations, to create internal unity and to serve as a bulwark against further incursions. Cusick’s historical revision should be viewed as a similar act of resistance, with Cusick adapting narrative elements to suit the unique demands of an immediate historical imperative.

Lucy Maddox has argued that Indian representations of identity vis-à-vis white society in the nineteenth and twentieth century should be understood as performances, “forms of address to white Americans who were ill-equipped to recognize Indianness as anything but a performative role” (*Citizen Indians*, 4). Maddox notes that “these proliferating performances allowed Indian people to embody roles that before had been largely discursively constructed, and in embodying them to alter them” (*Citizen Indians*, 4). By eschewing any allusion to anthropogahy within his written historical narrative, Cusick both adopts a white performative genre, the history, and shapes it to his own purposes for a predominately white readership.

Throughout Part III, but particularly at the beginning and end of the section, Cusick emphasizes the abiding national and international structures of the Long House, which is comprised of “free and independent nations and have been acknowledged in such treaties with them by the neighboring nations” (43). He notes that “every independent nation have [sic] a government of their own” (43) with their own internal governing structures, laws, and militaries, and their own Chief Rulers, the “Aukoyaner,” who are “invested with authority to administer the government” (43). Cusick explains the political structure of the individual nations, “In each Nation contain set of generations or tribes, viz. *Otter, Bear, Wolf Beaver, Turtle*” (37). He adds a lengthy passage about the judicial system—a mixed system of retributive justice and reparations—which begins with this observation, “Each tribe has two chiefs to settle disputes” (37). About judicial proceedings themselves, he comments that “Each nation have a right to punish individuals of their own nation for offenses, committed with their own jurisdiction” (43). Cusick mentions the Five Nations’ establishment of democratic government by “the senate, chosen by the people annually” (23).

The majority of Part III outlines specific policies that have been adopted over the course of history for the mobilization and defense of the Five Nations against human and non-human invaders (24, 27, 28, 29, 30, 34, 40, 42), for the expansion of tribal boundaries (25), and in international relations with other nations (38 – 40). The alliance system provides the umbrella framework for international defense: “each nation are bound [sic] to oppose any hostile invasions of the enemy” (43). Cusick depicts the Five Nations, then, as a confederacy of democratic nations with coherent internal governance and unified foreign affairs. By structuring the section with an adumbrated listing of the Confederacy’s internal and external organization at the beginning and end of the piece, and with numerous examples of its specific functions, Cusick emphasizes likenesses with American governance, particularly the system of split federal and state

government. To reinforce the Iroquois achievement before European contact, Cusick marks time from this moment until the Columbian contact with the succession of Atotarhos, from I – XIII, for over one thousand years.

Cusick's version of the origins of the Iroquois both retains and emphasizes details of the actual overall structure of the Iroquois Confederacy. The omission of cannibalism, which many Western scholars accept as having existed, on a limited basis, in the Iroquois past based on archaeological-evidence (Abler 309), Iroquois oral tradition, and first-person European accounts after contact, however, necessitates that Cusick tell a different story, without Deganawida and Hiawatha. Anthropologist Thomas S. Abler asserts that "the practice of cannibalism among the Iroquois was not the gleeful activity of a nation of sadists, but rather a religious observance meant to ensure success in war" (314). Whether Cusick, as a Christian, was privy to the full-range of its religious significations, understood its cultural role, and could explain this coherently, relates back to Cusick's anxiety and his contention that this version of Iroquois history is unabashedly his own: "Cusick's Sketch." Whether contemporary white-readers could have grasped the religious signification is highly doubtful. Cannibalism, as Caleb Crain notes, was considered an "the unspeakable" in nineteenth-century United States discourse (28). That said, the Deganawida and Hiawatha stories reiterate many of the themes broached in Parts I and II concerning duality, redemption, and the proper use of intellect and diplomacy to survive. From one point of view, we could claim that Cusick retains the message of Hiawatha and Deganawida through these earlier stories, without having to tell this history or introduce these characters.

Likewise, we can read, in a similar fashion, the absence of another version of the Deganawida story, one that Thomas Vecsey calls, "The Mother of Nations Accepts Deganawida's Message" (84), as another means of situating this history within the patriarchal contexts of American history and of the European-contact. The story found in "The Mother of Nations

Accepts Deganawida's Message" mythology explains the matrilineal elements of Iroquois society as deriving from Dijgonsasa, the Mother of Nations, being the first to accept Deganawida's message. In spite of this omission, at the beginning of Part III, Cusick does deliberately mark out a woman's role in the survival of the Five Nations through the story of the woman "parching some acorns" (19), whose action makes the Flying Serpents believe that humans "eat the coals of fire" (19). Cusick perhaps recuperates the strength of woman in Iroquois traditions found in the story of Dijgonsasa through this earlier story about thwarting the Flying Serpents' attack, and later in his inclusion in the 1828 edition of the history of an engraving to illustrate the event and give it greater prominence.

Lucy Maddox's discussion of the challenges that Indian writers and intellectuals face, whether they should construct narratives with elements that appeal to white intellectuals or, rather, recount tribal stories in ways that speak first to American Indian readers, is pertinent here. Maddox contrasts, "The embrace of tribal traditions, the confidence in their ultimate accessibility," found among late twentieth-century Native American writers, with "predecessors, whose consciousness of the need to be taken seriously by a skeptical white America often led to suppression or censoring of their relationship to tribe and tradition" (*Indian-Citizens*, 173 – 174). Cusick negotiates these same conflicting demands of both authorship and curatorship of Iroquois traditions in his assertion of both cultural integrity and difference. On some level, Cusick's effort to stress likeness is, in fact, for the period of the 1820s, a way of stressing difference to prevailing white discourse. In other words, Cusick's emphasis on Iroquois' cultural likeness should be read as difference from prevailing white discourse, and Cusick develops and extends points of cultural likeness to counter-narrate versions of white history that have negated Iroquois culture entirely, argued for its innate savagery, or understood it solely in terms of European prerogatives.

Part III represents the Five Nations as a model civilized state, 1000 years before Columbus's arrival. Because Cusick's narrative works within the European calendar, dating time up to the Columbian contact, he imposes an order that is on the one-hand artificial—since it prioritizes a European conception of history in which Cusick situates the evidence of the Iroquois. One the other hand, however, he uses this device to offer a counter-story to the European historical narrative that he references and draws comparisons with. Since the Five Nations maintain unity, through the centuries back to the beginning of time, in Part I, the Iroquois are able to repel enemies, both human and non-human, through stratagems that recall the examples of Enigorio and Donhtonha. As a counter-narrative to European representations of Indians as “savage,” Cusick repeatedly points out that the Five Nations only engage in war reluctantly, not out of aggression, but to meet the requirements of a smart self-defense. International relations with other nations begin with respect for autonomy and recognition of cultural separation, where the Five Nations remain an inviolable, cohesive league. This is Cusick's vision of the Six Nations in the 1820s (Kalter 25) in the face of removals.

To further advance the strategy of cultural difference through likeness, in Part III, Cusick includes a story of organized exploration in the West that parallels later events in U.S. history and a narrative of a Christ-like figure that repeats the tenets of the Western Christianity. Roughly six hundred years before Columbus's arrival, around 800 A.D., Atotarho VII sends out an exploration party that bears almost a perfect resemblance to the 1804 Lewis and Clark expedition, the exploration party which both established American claims to the Northwest and staked the new nation's legitimacy, akin to European nations, on its expansionist ambitions. Much like President Thomas Jefferson, who promoted the Lewis and Clark Expedition, King Ototarho VII organizes the venture after being “authorized by the Senate to send an expedition to explore the countries toward the setting” (30) and makes diplomatic overtures to the neighboring nations to ensure the

success of the mission: “he sends messengers to acquaint the Ottawahs of his intention, and wished them to form such arrangement and to favor their passage” (30). Similar to the Lewis and Clark Expedition, Cusick notes, “the king appointed two captains to command the expedition,” and to give a sense of exploration as a culturally unifying activity, he mentions that “about fifteen men were selected from the five nations” (30). Predating Lewis and Clark’s itinerary by approximately a millennium, Cusick notes that this earlier exploration party “crossed the Mississippi and continued their course towards the setting sun” (31).

Occurring at least three-hundred fifty-years before the Columbian contact, Cusick describes the story of a Christ-like prophet who appears among the Tuscaroras, foretelling the arrival of whites—“he warns them that the whites beyond the great waters would in some future day take possession of the Big Island” (38)—and rising from the dead: “the aged man died among them, and they buried him; but soon after some person went to the grave and found he had risen, and never heard of him again” (38). In a hybrid religious instruction, stressing the prominence of ancestors in the Iroquois religious tradition and the message of love in Christianity, the Christ-like figure teaches the Tuscarora how “to respect their deceased friends and love their relations” (38). Near the end of Part III, the story of the old man recapitulates the admixture of Christian and Five Nations religious themes found in the Iroquois creation story presented in Part I.

These stories of cultural likeness and parallel, in which the Iroquois have already undertaken the very tasks that the American nation has only recently begun, argue against the predominant white American notions of Indian savagery. These narratives also countermand the basic principle behind the 1823 Supreme Court ruling in *Johnson v. M'Intosh* and the subsequent Supreme Court rulings concerning the Cherokee nation: Chief Justice John Marshall’s opinion maintained that indigenous cultures were inferior and thus in a subordinate, secondary relationship to the United States. While Robert Dale Parker rightly cautions that all of these parallels and the

use of Christian materials can also suggest that “early Indian print culture often registered a submission to conquest” (294), the larger aim here appears to be resistance and difference through, what may first appear as, a complicated stance of acceptance on the basis of commonalities shared with the American Republic.

Cusick’s task in writing origins and writing history remained an undertaking defined by multiple hybridities that exist within the diversity of Six Nations’ traditions themselves, in the complicated relationship between the Six Nations and the United States, and in the act of translating oral traditions into the form of the history in written English. The design of Cusick’s history, as well as its content, addresses both the realities of cultural complexity and the fact that historical consciousness must always emerge, in part, out of subjective interpretation, from the personal. Cusick would have known this only too well, having seen the objective impacts that written accounts about Native Americans, penned by white authors and often with the impersonal air of certainty, had already wrought on Native American peoples.

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“The Pictorial Land”: Ekphrasis, Art, and Perception in Hawthorne’s *The Marble Faun*

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The earliest—and arguably most famous—example of ekphrasis appears in the eighteenth book of the *Iliad*, in which Homer describes Achilles’ shield at length. Initially intended as an elaborate, digressive description that vividly illustrates people, objects, or places for an audience, just like the depiction of Achilles’ shield, ekphrasis became limited to verbal descriptions of visual artworks. Emilie Bergmann places this shift in the fourth century, attributing it to the growing endorsement of the tradition of *ut pictura poesis*, the aesthetic alliance between literature and the spatial arts (1). Mirroring this circumscribed definition, Jean Hagstrum defines ekphrasis as “literary descriptions of works of graphic art” in his seminal work, *The Sister Arts: The Tradition of Literary Pictorialism and English Poetry from Dryden to Gray* (18n).

This definition engenders critical studies, particularly of poetry, that locate within the poetic language “a form or shape that transcends the flow of time,” such as Keats’ urn in his famous ode (Smith 27). In his landmark essay, “The Ekphrastic Principle and the Still Movement of Poetry; or Laokoön Revisited,” Murray Krieger concludes that “the spatial work freezes the temporal work even as the latter seeks to free it from space” (107). Accordingly, ekphrasis creates a paradox: despite being arrested in time, the described art object is always in motion because of the linguistic medium.

Building on this inherent tension, scholars have redefined ekphrasis by recasting the possible connections between the verbal and the visual and, consequently, expanding not only the nature, but also the process of representation. James Heffernan’s work *Museum of Words: The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery* and W. J. T. Mitchell’s *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* argue that ekphrasis betrays an ambivalence toward visual art. In

his historical consideration of the trope, Heffernan observes that ekphrasis embodies a “struggle for dominance between the image and the word” (*Museum* 1), which invests it with the capacity to represent other struggles for power. Likewise, Mitchell demonstrates how ekphrasis signifies experiences lying outside of the text, particularly those dialectically opposed to the events that the ekphrastic moment interrupts. Using Achilles’ shield as an archetype, Mitchell posits that it “shows us the whole world that is ‘other’ to the epic action of the *Iliad*, the world of everyday life outside history that Achilles will never know” (180). Instead of the connection suggested by the *ut pictura poesis* tradition, illustrated by the scholarship of Hagstrum, Krieger, and their critical heirs, Heffernan’s and Mitchell’s alternative ekphrastic system aligns it more closely with the tradition of the *paragone*, or contest between art forms. More specifically, the ekphrastic *paragone* echoes Lessing’s influential distinction between painting and poetry, or the visual arts and verbal arts, in *Laocoön* (50).

Much of the recent scholarship on ekphrasis has applied one or the other of these two theories to a wider range of texts, migrating from classical texts and Romantic poetry to novels, shorter prose, and contemporary poetry containing references to the spatial arts. Despite the increased critical interest, Heffernan observes that, while scholars are “writing about the literary representation of visual art [,] scarcely anyone is using the word *ekphrasis* to do so—even in the discussion of such paradigmatically ekphrastic poems as Keats’ ‘Ode on a Grecian Urn’” (“Ekphrasis” 297). While Heffernan’s observation dates from 1991, it still describes a substantial portion of the scholarship of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s final novel, *The Marble Faun*, which is full of painting, sculpture, and architecture, creating what Millicent Bell calls a “dense aesthetic spectacle” (356). In fact, Bell’s study, which purports to redress the lack of critical interest in the novel’s “picturesque wadding” (357), examines the simultaneous decay and permanence that Rome’s historical landscape offers. She does not, however, examine or even mention ekphrasis.

Similarly, Jonathan Auerbach links Hawthorne's definitions of romance with the artistic processes portrayed in the novel; his interpretation relies on an interaction between literary and visual arts, a "fluid interplay between past and present," and movement between reality and imagination (104), yet never mentions ekphrasis nor draws on ekphrastic theory or criticism.

Both Bell's and Auerbach's works illuminate the interaction between word and image in *The Marble Faun* and, in doing so, invite the same question that Heffernan asks in 1991: "Why do we need [ekphrasis] at all? Why not leave it with the ancient Greek rhetoricians who first gave it to us?" ("Ekphrasis" 298). Heffernan's definition and comprehensive theory of ekphrasis is predicated on his answer: it is a literary mode, and agreeing on a name abets its definition and use (298). By contextualizing my study within ekphrastic theory and criticism, I hope to extend and link previous work on both ekphrasis and *The Marble Faun* to enrich an understanding of Hawthorne's complicated manipulation of the trope.

For the same reason, my essay departs from previous criticism that applies a single ekphrastic system. While those arguments have contributed a great deal to my own, I argue, instead, that *The Marble Faun* is poised between these two ekphrastic systems. Hawthorne fills his novel with ekphrasis partly to recreate a Rome filled with art and architecture and capitalize on its connections with history and time, reflecting the ekphrastic impulse to arrest time and movement. Yet, by illustrating the competition between rival modes of representation, Hawthorne's ekphrasis investigates the purpose, nature, and value of art, and in doing so, complicates the idea of providing clearer communication. Indeed, Hawthorne exploits the trope's potential for suggestiveness and ambiguity, as well as its emphasis on and manipulation of perception. By simultaneously representing visual objects and undercutting that representation, *The Marble Faun's* ekphrasis engages interconnected concerns about literary and plastic arts' ability to convey truth, human limits of perception, and the threefold relationship among artist, artifact, and

observer. Ekphrasis, in conjunction with its inverse process and an emphasis on vision, works toward a resolution of the conflict between moral Puritanism and artistic endeavors through this questioning of artistic representation.

I. Ekphrasis and the nature, purpose, and value of art

Hawthorne opens *The Marble Faun* in the Capitoline sculpture gallery and, in the subsequent discussions of the resemblance between Donatello and Praxiteles' *Faun* and the relative qualities and merits of painting and sculpture, poses key questions about the nature, value, and purpose of art, particularly in conjunction with morality. In his interrogation of the possibilities and limitations of art, Hawthorne capitalizes on ekphrasis' ambiguity.

Joining a traditional argument about the nature of art, Hawthorne considers whether art is primarily mimesis or creation. One current critical argument is that Hawthorne privileges mimesis over creation, at least for women, in his comparison of Miriam and Hilda (Mancall 94). Despite Hawthorne's acclaim that her work contains a "feeling and sympathy [that is] deep and true" (37), Miriam's generative art is considered a skilled amateur's, rather than a trained master's (18). Moreover, her creativity is gothic and sinister, betrayed in both her subject choice and her environment. Miriam's studio is a "shadowy room" (33), filled with portraits of women in violent situations and "ugly phantoms that stole out of [her] mind" (37). Even her happiest work, "the sketches of common life, and the affections that spiritualize it," are disturbed by an isolated, profoundly sad figure who observes from the margins (38). By the end of the romance, Miriam's destruction can be read as stemming in part from the audacity of her creative force.

In contrast to Miriam's dark and haunted studio, Hawthorne places Hilda's tower atelier at the city's only elevated shrine of the Virgin, "above all the evil scents of Rome" (43). Hawthorne similarly elevates Hilda's mimetic painting over Miriam's creative efforts. While Hilda initially

dreamed “of sending forms and hues of beauty into the visible world out of her own mind; of compelling scenes of poetry and history to live before men’s eyes, through conceptions and by methods individual to herself,” she transformed into a copyist of Old Masters (45-46). Rather than disparaging her unoriginality, Hawthorne praises Hilda for “sacrificing herself to the devout recognition of the highest excellence in art” (48). In fact, he casts Hilda’s derivative art as a deliberate choice of the “better, and loftier, and more unselfish part,” and concludes that “therefore the world was the richer for this feeble girl” (49).

However, Hawthorne’s description of Hilda’s art problematizes this hierarchical distinction between mimesis and creation and, thus, this traditional definition of art. Hilda’s copies include a creative aspect. She discerns the original spirit of the painting, as she “seemed to possess the faculty of seeing it in its pristine glory” (47-48). Accordingly, her copies “had that evanescent and ethereal life—that flitting fragrance, as it were, of the originals—which it is as difficult to catch and retain as it would be for a sculptor to get the very movement and varying color of a living man into his marble bust” (47). With this description, Hawthorne proposes that mimesis can be a creative act that glimpses the truth in nature, which is “observed by the painter’s insight and interpreted for us by his skill” (103). Moreover, Hawthorne defines the value of art—that “evanescent and ethereal life”—as ekphrasis: the capture of the “very movement and varying color of a living” being in an inanimate medium (47).

This paradoxical relationship between stasis and movement provides another venue for evaluating the nature of art. As “an action through a still moment that implies it,” ekphrasis animates an object that has captured, statically, some moment in time (Steiner, *Colors of Rhetoric* 41). Time becomes a crucial component of the ekphrasis, and temporal variables apply to the physical artifact, the perception of the artifact, and the meaning that the artifact represents (41). Heffernan observes that “the idea that visual art could make such a moment transcend time became

an article of romantic faith” (*Museum* 93). This belief arises alongside the birth of the public museum, which attempts to preserve history, captured in art, and preserve art from history (*Museum* 93).

The Marble Faun challenges the possibility of the “idea of timeless perfection in visual arts” (133) through ekphrasis and the emphasis on art. Rome’s art, architecture, and history are inescapable. The ruins of classic Rome dominate the landscape: “It was a great, solid fact of the Past, making old Rome actually sensible to the touch and eye” (Hawthorne 116). Stones, monuments, and architecture physically express the weight of history: “all the ponderous gloom of the Roman past will pile itself upon that spot, and crush you down as with the heaped-up marble and granite, the earth-mounds and multitudinous bricks, of its material decay” (318). Rome becomes “the dead corpse of a giant, decaying for centuries, with no survivor mighty enough even to bury it” (86-87). Rome is the Eternal City, yet tenuously overlying self-consumption and dissolution (Bell 362).

Responding to Rome’s “material decay,” Hawthorne’s ekphrasis illustrates the moral nature of monuments; specifically, their ability—and thus responsibility—to accurately capture and preserve the most appropriate qualities. Hilda refers to the monuments of Rome as “sermons in stone,” while Kenyon moralizes that monuments may capture accomplishments that dead heroes may not wish to preserve, such as Trajan’s column, which immortalizes his “bloody warfare” that “must be laid before the judgment-seat, as a piece of the evidence of what he did in the flesh” (Hawthorne 117).

This confrontation with history and judgment in the guise of monuments and historical art also defines the relationship between the art object and the perceiver. While art encapsulates history, history influences the perception of art, most importantly, in its recreation by the observer. Based on her first perception of the Cenci portrait, Hilda concludes that Beatrice “knows that her

sorrow is so strange and so immense” that it opens a chasm between the figure in the painting and the beholder (52-53). When Miriam reminds the New Englander of the presumed history of the sitter, Hilda’s perceptions change. Hilda states that she “really had quite forgotten Beatrice’s history, and was thinking of her only as the picture seems to reveal her character” (53). Hilda’s new perception, colored by history, now includes guilt as the motive for the distance, and she concludes that the chasm is justifiable.

Hawthorne’s conception of the value of art hinges on its utility in discovering and bettering the moral self. Indeed, determining its value fuels Hawthorne’s struggle with art. The narrator presents the initial reason for this romance as a consideration of what in art is valuable: “It was the contemplation of this imperfect portrait of Donatello that originally interested us in his history, and impelled us to elicit from Kenyon what he knew of his friend’s adventures” (296). The bust’s unfinished and suggestive nature may explain its attractiveness; however, Hilda theorizes that the extraordinary success of the bust is its capture of the “process of the moral growth” of the original (295). Hawthorne describes this moral growth ekphrastically: “it has an effect as if I could see this countenance gradually brightening while I look at it. It gives the impression of a growing intellectual power and moral sense...But, here, a soul is being breathed into him; it is the Faun, but advancing towards a state of higher development” (295). Ekphrasis conveys this necessary advancement toward transcendence; similarly, visual art must provide space for movement, particularly moral improvement.

Accordingly, the most valuable part of the artistic process must be the middle and unfinished steps rather than the final polished version. Preliminary sketches of the Old Masters contain “an effluence of divinity...the pure light of inspiration, which the subsequent toil of the artist serves to bring out in stronger lustre, indeed, but likewise adulterates it with what belongs to an inferior mood” (107). The attractiveness of these sketches for paintings “lay partly in their

imperfection; for this is suggestive, and sets the imagination at work; whereas the finished picture, if a good one, leaves the spectator with nothing to do” (107). This romantic preference for the unfinished and suggestive aligns with Hawthorne’s goal for *The Marble Faun* of a text in which “actualities would not be so terribly insisted upon” (4).

Similar to painting, sketches are considered the “sculptor’s earliest glimpse of ideas that may hereafter be solidified into imperishable stone” (90). The artist’s next step, the creation of rough clay or plaster models, exhibits “the second stage of the Idea as it advances towards a marble immortality” (90). This step is the highest in Hawthorne’s esteem: “the exquisitely designed shape of clay, more interesting than even the final marble, as being the intimate production of the sculptor himself, moulded throughout with his loving hands, and nearest to his imagination and heart” (90). Hawthorne values this intermediary step not only for artistic agency and emotional investment, but also because of its unfinished nature. His narrator expresses the disadvantage of the permanence of the final polished form, which can no longer improve or be transformed: “But it is an awful thing, indeed, this endless endurance, this almost indestructibility, of a marble bust!” (93). Hawthorne’s teleological view of the artistic process permits parallels between art and moral and intellectual growth, seen in the ekphrastic nature of one of Kenyon’s half-finished busts, “the features of which seemed to be struggling out of the stone, and, as it were, scattering and dissolving its hard substance by the glow of feeling and intelligence” (91).

Both painting and sculpture are displayed as capable of transformation. Similarly, all three artists achieve increased self-awareness by the end of the romance. By emphasizing both the different approaches and the same end, Hawthorne reveals the true goal of the artist: regardless of style or medium, the artist must always strive to represent the truth that is only fleetingly experienced. While affirming the hopefulness and power of art, Hawthorne also undercuts its

potential. Hilda, whose clarity of vision is emphasized, cautions Kenyon that he must reconcile himself to always being disappointed in his achievements, as this

despair and sense of short-coming, must always be the reward and punishment of those who try to grapple with a great and beautiful idea. It only proves that you have been able to imagine things too high for mortal faculties to execute. The Idea leaves you an imperfect image of itself, which you at first mistake for the ethereal reality, but soon find that the latter has escaped out of your closest embrace. (294)

Using ekphrasis, Hawthorne animates his description of inspiration. He blends a static form—the “imperfect image” that the Idea leaves behind—with the transitory nature of imagination, capable of eluding the artist’s efforts to grapple and embrace it.

Hawthorne also locates dynamism in spectators’ active recreation of the artworks they perceive. Wendy Steiner argues, “Hawthorne demonstrates that the conditions of representation lie...in the perception and concretization of the work” (*Pictures of Romance* 92). Hawthorne states, through Hilda, that “there is a class of spectators whose sympathy will help them to see the Perfect, through a mist of imperfection. Nobody, I think, ought to read poetry, or look at pictures or statures, who cannot find a great deal more in them than the poet or artist has actually expressed” (294). As the “highest merit” of art is “suggestiveness” (294), the ideal observer is one who is willing to wrestle with ambiguity and call upon inner resources and faculties:

A picture, however admirable the painter’s art, and wonderful his power, requires of the spectator a surrender of himself, in due proportion with the miracle which has been wrought. Let the canvas glow as it may, you must look with the eye of faith, or its highest excellence escapes. There is always the necessity of helping out the painter’s art with your own resources of sensibility and imagination. (261)

Three active agents work in concert to secure the “highest excellence” of the work: the painter, whose power is heralded; the artwork, which “glow[s]” and yet may let “its highest excellence escape”; and, the spectator, who is urged to “surrender,” help,” and most importantly, “look with the eye of faith.” Hawthorne places the ultimate responsibility for the success of the artwork on the spectator, and the spectator’s spirituality.

Throughout *The Marble Faun*, Hawthorne struggles with the purpose of art, particularly in view of his primary concern for moral growth. Hawthorne’s resolution proposes that whatever art is, art is *not* for art’s sake. Artists considered masters were not necessarily masters in Hawthorne’s view, if they “substituted a keen intellectual perception, and a marvelous knack of external arrangement, instead of the live sympathy and sentiment which should have been their inspiration” (264). This lack results in a “deficiency of earnestness and absolute truth,” which Hawthorne offers as the definitive goal and value of art (264). Artists, art objects, and spectators alike share agency in creating or conveying the truth, but ultimately, the spectator’s role is paramount in the moral apprehension of the artistic message.

II. Hawthorne’s manipulation of ekphrasis

At the same time that Hawthorne insists upon the spectator’s role in the moral value of pictorial art, he also undercuts human perception through his manipulation of ekphrasis, including elements that seem to reverse the very technique of ekphrasis. If ekphrasis verbally describes a visual object or artwork, its inverse portrays the capture of a moment or vitality in a visual art form, such as when Miriam and Donatello’s dance in the grounds of the Villa Borghese contains “a grace which might have been worth putting in marble” (Hawthorne 67). While Hawthorne does use ekphrasis alone, such as the descriptions of decaying Rome, more often he combines it with its inverse and pictorialism, or what Heffernan defines as “the generation in language effects similar

to those created by pictures” (*Museum* 3). These transformations of ekphrasis alter and manipulate perception, and Hawthorne exploits these changes in his reconciliation of his moral concerns with the production of art. In particular, he examines the artistic process and highlights the events central to the moral crises and growth.

Hawthorne often depicts the artistic process by inverting ekphrasis, as in Miriam’s statement to Donatello: “If I can catch you on my canvas, it will be a glorious picture; only I am afraid you will dance out of it, by the very truth of the representation, just when I shall have given it the last touch” (39). The combination of ekphrasis and its inverse blurs the real and the unreal, as observers in the narrative have difficulty distinguishing between reality and art. Moreover, the reciprocal movement suggested in Miriam’s concern points to the power of visual art: the act of presenting “the very truth” animates the truth, making it capable of a wider range of communication—as it will literally “dance out of” the frame.

Despite his investiture of art with the responsibility of presenting the truth, he undermines both the art object’s ability to convey truth and the observers’ ability to detect it. Early in the romance, the three artists compare Donatello to Praxiteles’ *Faun* as Donatello “threw himself into the position in which the statue has been standing for two or three thousand years. In truth, allowing for the difference of costume...Donatello might have figured perfectly as the marble Faun, miraculously softened into flesh and blood” (9). The metamorphosis between living flesh and polished marble mimics the artistic process from human model to finished product, but also invites questions about the limits of human perception of truth. Moreover, after the characters remark on the resemblance between Donatello and the *Faun*, the narrator is compelled to describe the marble statue: “But we must do more than merely refer to this exquisite work of art; it must be described, however, inadequate may be the effort to express its magic peculiarity in words” (9). Here, Hawthorne’s *adynaton* suggests that the art form of literature—typically privileged in the

longstanding contest between poetry and painting—is itself inadequate in conveying an essential idea. The narrator’s attempt to “express its magic peculiarity” relies upon the observer’s response to the statue, which uses ekphrasis in its portrayal of the ongoing confusion between art and reality: “It is impossible to gaze long at this stone image without conceiving a kindly sentiment towards it, as if its substance were warm to the touch, and imbued with actual life” (10).

Hawthorne foregrounds the necessity of clear interpretation with his description of a bacchanal dance in the grounds of the Villa Borghese, in which the dancers become a bas-relief on an artifact:

As they followed one another, in a wild ring of mirth, it seemed the realization of one of those bas-reliefs, where a dance of nymphs, satyrs, or bacchanals, is twined around the circle of an antique vase. Or it was like the sculptured scene on the front and sides of a sarcophagus, where, as often as any other device, a festive procession mocks the ashes and white bones that are treasured up, within. (69)

The narrator’s *correctio*, shifting from a bacchanal scene to one on a sarcophagus, suggests a revision stemming from a clearer understanding, underscored by the use of “seemed” in the first interpretation and the absence of any qualification in the second. Hawthorne’s “analogy between the sculptured scene on the sarcophagus and the wild dance which we have been describing” foreshadows the death of Miriam’s model—the crucial moral crisis of the romance (70).

In addition to combining ekphrasis with elements suggesting its reverse, Hawthorne also blends ekphrasis with pictorial techniques. Ekphrasis employs “one medium of representation to represent another,” while pictorialism aims to represent natural objects and artifacts rather than works of representational art (Heffernan, *Museum* 3-4). However, pictorialism is reminiscent of visual representation because it “generates in language effects similar to those created by pictures,” such as focusing, framing, and scanning (3). Hawthorne’s ekphrasis sometimes incorporates

pictorial techniques that diminish the borders between art and reality, and thus increase suggestiveness and ambiguity. The blurring between ekphrasis and pictorialism appears in the consistent references to Kenyon as a “man of marble,” which Kenyon even uses to describe himself (Hawthorne 81). This ambiguous reference could refer to Kenyon’s character or to his occupation as a sculptor. This semblance between art and person simultaneously clarifies the character’s identity while it questions our ability to fully understand or even recognize another.

Events and glances are framed and become ekphrastic paintings. Hilda opens the door to the courtyard, and sees, framed in the door, “the whole quick passage of a deed”: the murder of Miriam’s model (Hawthorne 133). An ekphrastic inverse heightens the pictorial nature of the episode, as the horrible nature of the event “took but that little time to grave itself in the eternal adamant” (133). Hilda’s memory becomes engraved in stone, consistent with statuary’s function of recording momentous events. The framing of the event focuses Hilda’s attention—and therefore, ours—while its transformation into an ekphrastic painting preserves the event in time and space. As an art object, framed for observation, the murder demands attention and interpretation.

Similarly, the encounters with the model’s corpse, dressed as a monk, combine ekphrasis, the inverse of ekphrasis, and pictorial techniques to heighten a disquieting ambiguity and unreality that urges careful interpretation. Miriam describes the fallen body as “Stone dead” as it lies at the bottom of the Tarpeian Rock, suggestive of a shift in medium from human to sculpture, and of the importance and permanence of this act of violence (135). The next morning, when Miriam, Donatello, and Kenyon discover a figure of a monk on a bier in the Church of the Capuchins, again, there is initial confusion about the composition of the figure:

It was either the actual body—or, as might rather have been supposed, at first glance, the cunningly wrought waxen face, and suitably draped figure—of a dead monk. This image of wax—or clay-cold reality, whichever it may be—lay on a

slightly elevated bier, with three tall candles burning on each side, another tall candle at the head, and another at the foot. From beneath the pavement of the church came the deep, lugubrious strain of a “De Profundis,” which sounded like an utterance of the tomb itself; so dismally did it rumble through the burial-vaults, and ooze up among the flat grave-stones and sad epitaphs, filling the church as with a gloomy mist. (142)

The movement between the reality of a human corpse and a sculptured wax figure, occurring twice in the first two sentences, illustrates limits or difficulties in perception. These reciprocal shifts paradoxically betray an important truth about human nature, expressed here by Miriam’s statement that “[o]ne clay image is readily copied from another” (142), and elsewhere in Kenyon’s recognition that the landscape seen from the tower of Monte Beni, “presented the process of the Creator, when He held the new, imperfect Earth in His hand, and modeled it” (206-07). To underscore this text’s importance and demands for interpretation, Hawthorne creates a tableau with the bier, including an elevated stage set with lighting, costume, and sound, in the tomb’s chanting of the “De Profundis,” which “oozes,” “rumbles,” and “fills” the church. The “De Profundis,” or the cry of misery that opens Psalm 130, is often used in Roman Catholic burial services. The suggestion that the “tomb itself” mourns the dead monk invests Miriam’s and Donatello’s collective guilt with the weight of the religious tradition.

The fluidity between medium and person, or between art and reality, illustrates the power of visual art to affect the spectator and the requirement for critical interpretation. At the same time, however, this fluidity points to innate limitations in the beholder’s interpretative capacities. Hawthorne capitalizes upon this duality to explore the problems in finding an acceptable resolution between moral purpose and pictorial art. His conviction that this resolution is necessary appears in

his use of ekphrasis and its variants to highlight key events in the characters' moral conflicts and development, and to invite a careful reading of both visual and verbal texts.

III. Ekphrasis and vision

With the attention to both the power and problems with perception, and the reciprocal relationships among artist, art, and audience, eyes, vision, and visual descriptive terms inundate *The Marble Faun*. Hawthorne combines ekphrasis with this focus on vision to equate perceptual acuity and moral purpose. He imbues eyes and vision with considerable agency in *The Marble Faun*: eyes and vision are central to the pivotal event, the murder of Miriam's model. Donatello claims that he "did what your [Miriam's] eyes bade me do, when I asked them with mine, as I held the wretch over the precipice!" (134). Miriam questions herself as to whether her "eyes provoked, or assented" to the murder (134).

Eyes are not only capable of inciting murder, but can purify, as Hilda's do "by the mere act of turning such spotless eyes upon them" (264), or transform, as Kenyon predicts that following his "recent profound experience, [Donatello] will re-create the world by the new eyes with which he will regard it" (223). In particular, this transformative, purifying vision is seen in the Pantheon, with the dome aperture described as "that great Eye, gazing heavenward" (354), with an incoming beam of light as a "sloping cataract of sunlight" (355). Kenyon notes the Pantheon's heathen nature, yet both he and Hilda find the spot under the central aperture, "that great Eye," an appropriate spot for prayer (355).

The Pantheon's eye provides two illuminations for Hilda and Kenyon. First, Hilda spots a female penitent at the very spot that Kenyon identifies as ideal for disinterested petitions, and identifies her as Miriam, despite knowing that it cannot be her (356). The penitent's face is "invisible, behind a veil or mask" (356). The veil or mask, the inability to know for certain, and the

cataract of light all point to a human failing in perception, even in ideal situations. In fact, the gulf between perception and understanding appears when the pair discover that “when the kneeling figure, beneath the open Eye of the Pantheon, arose, she looked towards the pair, and extended her hands with a gesture of benediction. Then they knew that it was Miriam” (357). Miriam’s benediction, while blessing their upcoming nuptials and safe return to America, also transforms their friendship, as “those extended hands, even while they blessed, seemed to repel, as if Miriam stood on the other side of a fathomless abyss, and warned them from its verge” (357). The great Eye of the Pantheon—possibly “the Eye of God” (221)—has judged the three artists, and Miriam’s complicity in murder bars her from the state in which Kenyon and Hilda find themselves at the end of the romance.

More importantly, the Pantheon’s “great Eye” prompts Kenyon to consider *felix culpa*:

Sin has educated Donatello, and elevated him. Is Sin, then—which we deem such a dreadful blackness in the Universe—is it, like Sorrow, merely an element of human education, through which we struggle to a higher and purer state than we could otherwise have attained. Did Adam fall, that we might ultimately rise to a far loftier Paradise than his? (356-57)

Because Donatello’s remorse for his “great crime” has “awakened” his soul, “developing a thousand high capabilities, moral and intellectual, which we never should have dreamed of asking for, within the scanty compass of the Donatello whom we knew,” Kenyon wonders whether sin can contribute positively to moral development (356). In doing so, he posits a new definition of what sin could be. Moreover, Kenyon’s claim that Donatello’s original “scanty compass,” which is described throughout the romance as natural and classical in origin (with comparison to Praxiteles’ *Faun*), can be improved mirrors the necessary development from classical to Christian for both Rome and art.

To further link morality with acuity of perception, Hawthorne distinguishes between two types of vision, gaze and glance. Norman Bryson identifies “gaze” and “glance” as attributes of a painting (94). Gaze originates in the observer, while glance emanates from qualities in a painting that provoke a glance from the viewer (120-21). Therefore, the gaze is timeless and rational, while the glance is time bound, fragmentary, “ungovernable,” and mobile (121). In *The Marble Faun*, gaze and glance follow the distinction that Bryson outlines; moreover, this difference is heightened by casting the gaze as frontal and the glance as oblique. Hawthorne juxtaposes gaze and glance to capture both the acuity and ambiguity inherent in perception: the “indeterminacy of what can neither be put into words nor comprehended by the orderly and ordering gaze but can only be expressed by and caught with a glance” (Heffernan, *Museum* 145).

The frontal, ordering gaze confers an advantage of looking directly at evil. Through Miriam, Hawthorne claims that a direct confrontation of evil shows strength. When Hilda’s description of the Reni sketch of *St. Michael Trampling the Devil* provokes a discussion of gaze, Miriam comments that Reni’s Michael is too dainty to “have looked the Demon in the face!” (Hawthorne 108). Despite the gaze’s display of courage, Miriam’s later comment about confronting something feared, as she urges Donatello to confront the dead monk in the Church of the Capuchins, demonstrates how gazes limits perception: “The only way, in such cases, is to stare the ugly horror right in the face; never a sidelong glance, nor a half-look, for those are what show a frightful thing in its frightfullest aspect” (144). Miriam’s advice to confront evil with a gaze, not a glance, highlights Hawthorne’s belief that sidelong glances are the most perspicacious. This belief is consistent with visual perception, since the receptors responsible for the sharpest acuity are most densely located in the periphery of the eyes.

Hawthorne’s encounter with this event may stem from personal experience. His notebooks record his personal reaction to the unfathomable Beatrice Cenci portrait, stating that her “peculiar

expression eludes a straight-forward glance, and it can only be caught by side-glimpse” (xxi). This phenomenon echoes in the narrative description of the portrait, in which a motive is provided by ekphrasis: “as if the painted face had a life and consciousness of its own, and resolving not to betray its secret of grief or guilt, permitted the true tokens to come forth only when it imagined itself unseen” (160). Only a sideways glance would permit “true tokens” of hidden grief or guilt.

As displayed in the reactions to the Cenci portrait, ekphrastic glances and gazes express the role or power of guilt. Hilda states that while she was painting the copy of the Beatrice Cenci portrait, she constantly felt that Beatrice Cenci was “trying to escape from my gaze” (52), and that it is “infinitely heartbreaking to meet her glance” (53). Even after Miriam reminds Hilda of the purported history of the subject, her re-vision of the copy still interprets Beatrice as wishing “to elude our eyes” (53). Guilt also motivates Donatello’s dislike of a prolonged gaze (177).

Donatello’s struggle with his guilt for the murder of the monk, and his subsequent intellectual and moral growth includes many references to vision. Donatello is “staggering blindfold” under the weight of his thoughts (204). Kenyon supposes that his friend had had “glimpses of strange and subtle matters in those dark caverns” in his return from his (fortunate) fall (204). The return to daylight following the necessary travel through the depths is also couched in visual terms: “though dazzled and blinded by the first glare of daylight, they take truer and sadder views of life, forever afterwards” (204).

As Claudia Johnson observes, Hawthorne explores the “intensely private, enigmatic nature of inner experience, or reality” in *The Marble Faun* (113). His concern for difference in perception stems from his belief that the soul is beyond rational expression and human reason, and can only be experienced individually. To make this point, Hawthorne emphasizes both interpersonal and intrapersonal differences in perception, and the ambiguity possible in ekphrasis illustrates difference, problems, and ongoing changes in perception.

Interpersonal differences in perception result in each of the characters having a “different vision of reality from the others, but no one of these visions is complete or certain” (Abel 5). Hilda’s perception is nearly always labeled as acute, and is referred to as extraordinary by the narrator and the other two artists. Hilda’s gift is “to see the Perfect, through a mist of imperfection” (Hawthorne 294). Therefore, Hilda perceives things unobservable to others, such as the faint and nearly obliterated sketch by Guido Reni for *St. Michael Trampling the Devil*. In Hilda’s verbal, ekphrastic description of what she sees, the Demon “scowls vindictively at the Archangel, who turns away his eyes in painful disgust” (108). Hilda, Kenyon, and Donatello all remark on the resemblance of the face of the Demon to Miriam’s model (108-09). However, Miriam does not “acknowledge the resemblance at all,” and accounts herself the better judge due to drawing her model more often (109). The difference in perception leads to the four making arrangements to visit the Church of the Cappuccini to examine the original. The movement and emotional content that the ekphrastic description provides enhances the parallel to the living model, emphasizes the difficulty in gaining knowledge, and moves the narrative forward to the central crime.

Moral growth and time also create intrapersonal differences in perception, which Hawthorne captures with ekphrasis, alone or in combination with portraiture or emphasis on vision. Initially, the narrator rejects a narrative description of Miriam, relying instead on her self-portrait to “bring it more forcibly before the reader” (Hawthorne 40). Donatello initially exclaims at the close resemblance, and then when he reexamines the portrait, finds that the gaze has changed: “the pictures gazes sadly forth at me, as if some evil had befallen it in the little time since I looked last” (40). These intrapersonal differences illustrate Hawthorne’s concern about the difficulty of obtaining true knowledge.

Throughout *The Marble Faun*, Hawthorne registers an awareness of the paradoxical situation of the human condition: we are encouraged to read the world and its objects as a text, and

in doing so, develop our understanding and move toward redemption; yet, our identification and interpretation of truth depends upon human perception, which is faulty. Moreover, the very nature of the works of narrative art that Hawthorne places in front of us—both characters and objects—invite us to interpret them as their ambiguity thwarts understanding. Hawthorne's ekphrasis becomes a vehicle for expressing this contradiction, particularly as it relates to the moral point that provides the artwork's meaning and value.

IV. Hawthorne's resolution of the problems posed by visual art

Wendy Steiner observes that *The Marble Faun* is utterly pervaded by art: "Every character is both an artist and a work of art" (*Pictures* 97). This preponderance allows Hawthorne to use ekphrasis, alone or in concert with other devices, to explore questions about artistic value and purpose. Hawthorne considers art's highest purpose a religious one, as seen in the narrator's premise about Sodoma's fresco, at Siena, of Christ bound to a pillar:

This hallowed work of genius shows what pictorial art, devoutly exercised, might effect in behalf of religious truth; involving, as it does, deeper mysteries of Revelation, and bringing them closer to man's heart, and making him tenderer to be impressed by them, than the most ineloquent words of preacher or prophet.

(265)

Pictorial art illuminates these "deeper mysteries" of "religious truth" and inspires an emotional and intellectual reception to them; accordingly, Hawthorne locates the significance and value of art in its suggestive and narrative abilities, including the fictional inspiration for the romance itself:

Kenyon leaves Donatello's bust in an unfinished state, and this bust prompts the narrator to record *The Marble Faun* (296). The narrator notes that

Most spectators mistake it for an unsuccessful attempt towards copying the features of the Faun of Praxiteles. One observer in a thousand is conscious of something

more, and lingers long over this mysterious face, departing from it, reluctantly, and with many a glance thrown backward. What perplexes him is the riddle that he sees propounded there; the riddle of the Soul's growth, taking its first impulse amid remorse and pain, and struggling through the incrustations of the senses. (296)

Here, the “riddle of the Soul's growth” is Kenyon's proposition about *felix culpa*—whether sin can serve a redemptive purpose—that his sculpture illustrates for the perceptive and receptive beholder. Pictorial art invites growth and development in both the artist and the perceiver, although Hawthorne acknowledges that this development will always fall short.

While classical ekphrasis clarifies and illustrates through vivid descriptions, Hawthorne's ekphrasis in *The Marble Faun* creates ambiguity, blurring artistic representation and reality, and underscoring the active and essential role of the observer, whether artist, viewer, or reader, in the recreation of art. Ultimately, Hawthorne proposes that the observer's active recreation obtains knowledge, particularly a clearer moral vision. Using the alliance between the verbal and the visual in mimetic representation, as well as the *paragone* of word and image that exposes the contest between different representational modes, Hawthorne's ekphrasis creates a space within both the art object and the romance's narrative for the movement necessary for moral growth.

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Zapatista Movement in Chiapas: The Local or the Global? Identity and Global Cultural Literacy

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The Zapatista movement is often described as a local communal uprising that has its locus in Chiapas of Southern Mexico. The Zapatistas claim to struggle for the emancipation of the indigenous peoples of Chiapas, who have been oppressed and marginalized for centuries, reclaiming their cultural identity through native culture, history, and politics. However, their movement, launched on January 1, 1994 when the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) came into effect, has gained momentum as an anti-globalization movement over the past decade. The Zapatistas view their identity not only as a part of native culture, history, economy, and politics but also as a part of the contemporary global system that has radically transformed, especially since the early 1970s, because of the so-called “globalization.” The local struggle for identity, originating in the local geography and culture of Chiapas, has thus turned to a global dissent representing the subaltern voice that seeks for planetary justice.

Originally named after legendary revolutionary figures Votán and Emiliano Zapata, who devoted their lives to fighting for the liberation of indigenous peoples and their cultures, the Zapatista rebellion, in its modern form, was initiated by a small, self-conscious group of armed insurgents called the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN). But when the EZLN, led by spokesperson Subcomandante Marcos, first came into being, the Mexican government denied its political identity and viewed the EZLN dismissively as an insular group of belligerent insurgents. The Mexican government also used the military force to crush their local rebellion. Hence the Zapatista movement is largely an outcome of the repressive policies of the various Mexican governments meted out to the indigenous peoples and their cultures. As Marcos’s peasant group felt alienated and excluded from the major public domains of Mexican life, the Zapatista rebellion erupted as an identity war against Mexican bourgeois domination. The Zapatista rebellion,

therefore, is mainly directed against the Mexican establishment's apathy toward a local history of struggles against the systemic social exclusion. Further, I would also think that the Zapatistas' struggle is equally directed against the modernization and development process in Mexico, instituted by neoliberal global capitalism, as a legitimate way of justifying Western domination and exploitation.

My aim, in this essay, is to examine the Zapatista movement within the discursive framework of "Critical Vanguard Studies," a term coined by Professor Mike Sell to denote critical tendencies within the field of avant-garde studies that respond to critiques from feminism, critical race theory, performance studies, and subaltern studies, among others. In the discourse of Critical Vanguard Studies, the issues of identity, politics, culture, history, and economics complexly intermix and overlap with each other. Rising above the Eurocentric, belletristic, and aesthetic premises of conventional avant-garde studies, I shall discuss the Zapatista movement in the broader historical, political, cultural, and economic contexts of radical avant-garde studies.

Here I am interested in examining unequal relations of power, politics of representation, and political economy of global capitalism in general, as well as in exploring the Zapatistas' identity performance through their native culture, history, politics, and economy in particular. It is quite interesting, for example, to note the Zapatistas' use of "the internet as a mobilizing tool to promote international campaigns on labor rights, human rights, women's rights, environmental justice, and the like," to use David Harvey's words (73). They make use of modern media, especially the Internet, to oppose the neoliberal agendas of development, modernity, and modernization in Mexico. On the contrary, they also use new media to build the global networks of the marginalized peoples around the world and also to spread "global cultural literacy."¹ Their use

¹ In his book *Ethnicities and Global Multiculture: Pants for an Octopus*, Jan Nederveen Pieterse uses the term "global cultural literacy" to describe critical public awareness brought out by new global political economy that promotes cross-cultural flows and cultural interpenetrations (198). He says, "Global political economy promotes crossborder

of new media, therefore, has some performative value representing the native identities and cultures within the context of neoliberal globalization where media's usage is apparently dominated by the global capitalists. In order to articulate their cultural identity, the Zapatistas draw the world's attention to the general issues of human rights, women's rights, autonomy, freedom, and dignity while, at the same time, they also show their particular concerns with the volatile issues of marginality and difference.

In this respect, the prominent questions that intrigue me most are the following: Is the EZLN a vanguard party? Consequently, if so, in what respects can we define the Zapatista movement a vanguard movement? Through this essay, I shall argue that the EZLN, as spearheaded by rebel socialist leader Marcos and his hard-core armed soldiers and as represented by the subaltern peoples of Chiapas, is a historical and a political vanguard party conscious of its identity, history, culture, politics, and current positionality in its armed rebellion against the repressive Mexican governments and the usurping global neo-liberalism. Further, I shall also contend that the Zapatista uprising is more an ideological or a cultural war than a mere physical war with a deeper sense of systemic social exclusion, exploitation, temporality, spatiality, and politics of neocolonial development destruction.²

flows and fosters and requires global cultural literacy. Cyber-space is global, too. Social movements and NGOs straddle boundaries" (198). Slightly different from Pieterse's notion of "global cultural literacy," I have used the term here to describe the Zapatistas' counter-cultures and oppositional strategies--necessitated by the devastating impacts of neoliberal globalization--through which globalization could be resisted and transformed. The political and cultural activism of the Zapatistas via new media subverts the conventional notion of modern media.

² To discuss the crucial issues of development and modernization in Chiapas, of which the EZLN is very critical, I have interchangeably used the term neocolonial development destruction with the term neoliberal globalization. Although the development discourse--"theories of the Third World, neocolonialism, or underdevelopment were dominant in the 1960s"--is now considered outdated, I think it is still relevant to understand the causes and consequences of new global economic and political restructuring since the early 1970s (Gikandi 98). Here, by 'neocolonial development destruction,' I mean to suggest the destructive development efforts of modernization that are viewed from unequal power relations between the First World and the Third World but not as a *telos* of progress as claimed by the Western developmentalist narratives. My intention here obviously is not to create the binaries but to put emphasis on the rising gaps between the rich and poor and on the uneven development, or underdevelopment, in the Third World countries. As Arturo Escobar, in his essay "The Making and Unmaking of the Third World through Development," puts it: "Development was--and continues to be for the most part--a top-down, ethnocentric and

For further discussion of above issues such as the subalternity of Chiapans and the EZLN's ideological positioning, it is pertinent to use world-system theory and theory of "new political economy development"³ (Hoogvelt xiv). These theories, in my opinion, not only help unravel the hegemonic formations of the contemporary global capitalist system but also enable us to see how the Zapatistas contest and resist those capitalist formations. For me, it is very important to analyze the role of new political economy, which is mostly ignored in the recent culturalist modes of postmodern and postcolonial critiques, in order to understand the formations of radical subjectivities, new socio-economic, political, and cultural practices in the present age of neoliberal globalization. To describe the subaltern position of Chiapans, I prefer to use the term "neocolonial

technocratic approach, which treated people and cultures as abstract concepts, statistical figures to be moved up and down in the charts of 'progress'" (91). In the absence of participatory and decentralized approaches, the post-Cold War developmental aspirations of a developing country like Mexico, which has embraced neo-liberalization as main mantra for its progress, have become dysfunctional. Likewise, as Escobar maintains in his essay, development has also become a destructive force to the Third World cultures because local culture is either sidelined as a residual variable or displaced. In this context, it is crucial to understand unequal power relations in these development narratives, where indigenous peoples are to be modernized or reformed through the Western ideals. Importantly, when we discuss the issues of development and socio-economic modernization in Mexico, it is imperative to think about "postdevelopment" (Hoogvelt 254). For, "imagining postdevelopment," to use Ankie Hoogvelt's words, might link to the Zapatistas' utopian vision of social democracy and sustainable development as alternative paradigms to neoliberal globalization (254). For "postdevelopment" in Latin American contexts, see Ankie Hoogvelt's chapter on "Democracy, Civil Society and Postdevelopment in Latin America," *Globalization and the Postcolonial World*. See also James Ferguson's "Decomposing Modernity: History and Hierarchy after Development," as well as Timothy Brennan's "From development to globalization: postcolonial studies and globalization theory," *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*, ed. Neil Lazarus.

³ In the preface to her book *Globalization and the Postcolonial World: The New Political Economy of Development*, Ankie Hoogvelt provides a critical overview of "the *qualitative* change, in the historical development of capitalism" (xiii), especially instigated by the "world economic crisis that began in the 1970s" (xiii). Since then, the concept of "a political economy" has drastically changed given the paradigmatic shift in the production and distribution patterns and the new international division of labor (xiii). She defines the term "*new political economy of development*" in two different contexts: (i) "that there is an understood and generally accepted meaning of the term 'political economy'"; and (ii) "that there is an old version of it, now distinct from and discarded by different interpretations" (xiv). The contemporary globalization, according to her, "signals a 'higher' level of intensifying economic, financial, cultural and social cross-border networks than before" (xv). Nonetheless, the majority of the world populations, especially from the Third World countries, are disconnected from "the emerging 'thickening' network of human social and economic interaction" (xv). For Hoogvelt, the process of globalization is not simply "a process of *expansion*" but also "a *shrinking* one" (xv). I am, in fact, intrigued by this double-edged characterization of globalization, and the widening social, cultural, and economic global disparities between the global North and the global South.

postcolonial condition,”⁴ thereby highlighting the unequal power relations between the dominant bourgeois class and the working class, as well as between the First World and the Third World countries. I think that the world-system, rather than the nation-state, as Immanuel Wallerstein views, should be a unit of analysis while analyzing the dialectics of the contemporary capitalist system. In this world system, the core areas always try to dominate and appropriate the peripheral or semi-peripheral areas through their political, cultural, and economic agendas. Another important issue germane to the world system is the notion of “modernity.”⁵ As modernity becomes both central and problematic to avant-garde studies, this relational awareness helps us situate Mexico’s cultural/political modernity and technological/economic modernity, to use Matei Calinescu’s distinction of “the two modernities”(5), along with the capitalist modernity embodied by national and international bourgeoisie. This critical awareness, as Enrique Dussel would remark, provides us the possibilities for a transmodern critique and practice of modernity, which I will discuss in the latter part of my essay.

Similarly, the issue of “institution” becomes equally crucial in avant-garde studies (Burger li). While studying social, economic, and cultural dimensions of globalization, I shall demonstrate the relationship among the institutions of the transnational capitalism, the Mexican government’s

⁴ It is appropriate to describe Mexico’s political condition as neocolonial postcolonial condition. Latin America, on the whole, was like a “semi-colony” before the World War II though it briefly arose as a model of development in the aftermath of the war. As Hoogvelt, in her book *Globalization and the Postcolonial World*, notes, “Before the Second World War, Latin America occupied a position in the world economy much the same as the other colonial areas (hence Lenin’s designation of Latin America as a ‘semi-colony’)” (242). And, “in the aftermath of the Second World War it grew into a fully-fledged model of development” (244). But “by the mid-to late 1960s the economies began to falter and dependency theory came into its own, injecting class into the analysis of underdevelopment” (244).

⁵ There is a conventional understanding of modernity and a more critical one. See Matei Calinescu’s “Introduction,” “The Idea of Modernity,” and “The Idea of the Avant-Garde,” *Faces of Modernity* for both notions of modernity. Also see Jürgen Habermas’s essay “From Modernity: An Incomplete Project,” *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*. His concepts of “cultural modernity” (7) and “the negation of culture” (10) are important to understand modernity. For non-Eurocentric concepts of modernity and performance emphasizing the moments of intercultural exchanges, see J. M. Harding and John Rouse’s “Introduction” and Harding’s “From Cutting Edge to Rough Edges: On the Transnational Foundations of Avant-Garde Performance,” *Not the Other Avant-Garde: The Transnational Foundations of Avant-Garde Performance*, as well as see Paul Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*.

liberalization efforts, and the marginalized Chiapas community. Take, for instance, how the multilateral financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB), among others, exploit the underprivileged and marginalized in the name of institutionalizing democracy and civil society, and implementing economic reforms in Mexico. As a matter of fact, these institutions only function as new guises of colonialism in order to accumulate capital from the Third World countries like Mexico. The Zapatistas, therefore, resist the colonizing forces of global capitalism, and they demand fair and just treatment of their indigenous community having access to Mexico's public spaces, public institutions, and media. In order to have access to dominant social locations and to reclaim their cultural identity, the Zapatistas actively engage in political and cultural activism, besides intervening in global space of cyberspace. In this sense, they are contradictorily interested both in the materialistic aspects of indigenous people's lives and their culture impacted by global capitalism, and also in the "de-materialized 'cyberspace'" of new global technology (Harvey 62).

History from below, memory, and identity

"Histories from below," as Gayatri Spivak and the Subaltern Studies group would call it, are what represent the voices of the marginalized and oppressed, and interestingly, "histories, or [history] from below" are also what represent the collective identity of subaltern Chiapas (qtd. in Lazarus 8). Considering itself a "historical vanguard,"⁶ the EZLN breaks away with the oppressive Mexican history and attempts to (re)-construct a history from below.

⁶ Marcos himself declares the EZLN as "historical vanguard" (*Shadows of Tender Fury* 93). This is understandable given the EZLN's left or proto-socialist leanings. Although most Communist parties in Latin America in the revolutionary days of 1950s and 1960s were anti-Soviet, as Hoogvelt rightly points out, "this had not prevented them from adopting the Marxist-Leninist conceptions of a 'vanguard' party, with the overriding aim of capturing the state apparatus" (250). Interestingly, however, the EZLN is not interested in capturing the state power. Rather, the Zapatistas are more interested in social and political activism, which critics have viewed as 'romancing' with the marginality.

Woken up from a nightmarish dream of injustice and oppression on the New Year Day of 1994, a militant group of political vanguards called the EZLN, declared the making of a new history while marching in the mountains and jungles of Chiapas. The new army of insurgents was enormously haunted by the “traumatic memories”⁷ of the past history of European and North American dispossession and the recent Mexican history of discrimination and depopulation by the authoritarian Mexican governments. Although the Zapatista rebellion basically stems from the socio-cultural and historical developments over the last few decades, especially after the 1960s, it has the history of local communal struggles over five hundred years. Deeply aware of the discontinuous or subjugated histories of the Zapatista struggles for identity, Marcos clearly expresses the historical *raison d’être* of their movement: “. . . the governments built tall strong walls to hide themselves from our death and our misery. Our strength had to break down those walls in order to enter our history again, the history they had snatched away from us, along with the dignity and reason of our peoples” (138). The Zapatistas deeply feel that their history has been “snatched away,” and they are relegated to the present position of being “people without history,” to borrow Eric Wolf’s words (qtd. in Lazarus 9).

Both the past and the present Mexican governments have tried to wipe out “collective memory” (LeGoff 54) of their native history and culture. Referring to Jacques Le LeGoff’s term “collective memory,” as described in his book *Memory and History*, I mean to suggest a

⁷ For traumatic memories, read some of the Nazi holocaust theories on deep memory. See, for example, Dominick LaCapra’s essay “History and Memory: In the Shadow of the Holocaust,” *History and Memory after Auschwitz*; Lawrence L. Langer’s *The Age of Atrocity: Death in Modern Literature and Holocaust and Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory*. LaCapra and Langer both discuss the psychological aspects of traumatic memory caused by the atrocities that create a rupture in survivor’s memory. Further, such rupture breaks the continuity with the past experience. That said, I am not just referring to holocaust memory but my emphasis is on the psychological aspects of traumatic memories caused by the atrocities. Here, traumatic memories, therefore, imply the repressive Mexican government’s atrocities against the Zapatistas. My basic interest is in traumatic cultural memories caused by cultural displacement, in this case compounded by neocolonial development destruction, as described by famous postcolonial critics such as Homi K. Bhabha, in his book *The Location of Culture*; and social theorists Jan Nederveen Pieterse’s *Globalization and Culture, Global Futures: Shaping Globalization*, and *Ethnicities and Global Multiculture*; David Harvey’s *Spaces of Hope*, among others. Yet, ‘memory’ theory of holocaust literature gives us some insights not only to view memory as a manipulative space but also a raw material for history.

communal memory of Chiapans that is somehow linked to their past history of oppression and dispossession. Most critics consider both memory and history two sides of the same coin. For me, as Dominick LaCapra remarks, though in a different context, memory is a raw material of history. The colonialists and authoritarians, unfortunately even most avant-gardists, often make a claim that remembering is forgetting. The act of “re-membering” is blotting out.⁸ But, I would think that this psychosomatic or clinical view of memory as amnesia, in a Freudian sense, is an essentialist view. LeGoff writes back to this essentialist view of memory, stating that the ruling class frequently dominates and manipulates collective memory to fulfill its self-interests. For, collective memory is what constitutes our history, culture, and identity. As LeGoff states, “To make themselves the master of memory, forgetfulness is one of the great preoccupations of the classes, groups, and individuals who have dominated and continue to dominate historical societies. The things forgotten or not mentioned by history reveal these mechanisms for the manipulation of collective memory” (54). So forgetfulness is a manipulative space created by the dominant group for their own benefits.

Marcos well acknowledges the various Mexican governments’ attempts to erase his community’s identity. Marcos and his clan, haunted by the traumatic memory of “historic transcendence,” remind the Mexican government of the Zapatistas’ age-old struggles in Mexico (Marcos 170). It is their history “fertilized with mud and blood” that gives impetus to the Zapatistas’ revolutionary movement (Marcos 138). Marcos thus goes on emphasizing their history: “We are gathered by our common misery, by the collective oblivion in which we were relocated 501 years ago, by the useless death we suffer, by not having face [. . .] gathered before this flag by

⁸ I have taken the word “re-membering” from Maurice Blanchot’s book *The Writing of the Disaster* (21) to describe the psychological act of re-membering the devastating historical past. Bernard Donalds, in his essay “Beyond the Question of Authenticity: *Witness and Testimony in the Fragments Controversy*,” though in a different context, asserts that re-membering is “a blotting out” (Donalds 198). This notion of dismembering the act of remembering troubles me as many postmodernist critics like Donalds, in a celebratory tone, claim that remembering is “a blotting out,” to which I completely disagree.

a collective longing: to change once and for all the skies and the soils that oppress us” (195). Not only does Marcos here evoke the Zapatistas’ compelling history of centuries-old indignation and displacement, considering themselves as peoples “. . . who have been cast out of history, without country and without a tomorrow,” but he also hopes for the (re)-construction of a new history from below (198). For him, the reinvention of “history from below” will only represent the voices of the indigenous peoples.

However, in this vanguardist Zapatista movement, various regional and transnational social movements also played a significant role. The first two significant events that impacted the Zapatista rebellion are “the 1968 Mexican Student Movement” and “the Mayan original communism,” as outlined by Monty Neill et al. in their essay “Toward the New Commons: Working Class Strategies and the Zapatistas (n. p.). The 1968 Mexican Student Movement, according to Donald J. Mabry, was a long protest by the Mexican students against the PRI government’s “authoritarian, sometimes brutal, and primarily interested in making the rich richer” despite its “official propaganda” of “emerging democracy” (1). Similarly, the Mayan communism referred to the communist polity practiced by the Mayan states before the Spanish conquest. But, in the late 1960s, such political practices were replicated in “peasant socialism” of two regional peasant movements by the communist Central Union and Agrarian Union parties within the Laguna region of North Mexico (Neill et al. n.p.).

In the same way, the Zapatistas were also influenced by the transnational cultural and political developments. In the wake of the post World War II and the students’ movements of the 1960s, there were “many kinds of very diverse continental developments” (Ahmad 2), including the non-conformism of “youth cult flowering in the 1960s” and “the emergence of the iconoclastic New Left” (Mabry 1). In his book *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literature*, Aijaz Ahmad vividly describes the rise of New Left and the decolonizing process of Third World countries, especially in

the aftermath of the World War II. He traces the historical genealogy of these countries' struggles for socialism such as the victory of the Chinese Revolution in 1949, the French defeat in Indochina in 1954, the escalation of the Cuban Revolution from 1959 onwards, the expansion of Communist Party under Sukarno and similar radical politics in Latin America. Interestingly, Ahmad observes that the "US-sponsored bloodbath," that dissolved the elected "Unidad Popular government" in Chile, had serious repercussions in the socialist movement in Latin America (Ahmad 19). In spite of Latin America's crumbling socialist movement, I, nonetheless, believe that these various developments in the Left politics have had a significant impact on the Zapatistas' drive towards creating a counter-history in opposition to the meta-history of Western imperialist dominance.

Critically acknowledging the past history of the Zapatista struggles and transnational influences, Marcos is more conscious of the present-ness and the futurity of their struggles. He thinks that the (re)-construction of "history from below" will alone establish the Zapatistas' identity in modern Mexico. History, for them, is not a transcendent concept but a discourse of power and alterity that can be both constructed and reconstructed maintaining an ideological necessity. More significantly, history also provides a space for the EZLN to reflect on its own positionality as a political force in Mexico. Thus, the Zapatistas recognize Chiapas's native history and culture as part of their identity. I would call this a minority activism for cultural identity that had been erased for centuries.

Politics from below and identity

Now, I contend that the Zapatista uprising is a political vanguard movement with an ultimate aim of establishing democratic socialism through participatory system of "self-management" (Egbert 364). To attain the goal of social utopia, the EZLN formulated radical political strategies to reconfigure power relations in a Mexican society. Historian Donald Drew

Egbert, in his classical avant-garde essay, “The Idea of Avant-Garde in Art and Politics,” uses the word “workers’ self-management” (364) to illustrate some of the interesting developments made in the workers’ movement front in Yugoslavia in the 1960s. In this system of self-management, the workers themselves participate in a decision-making process. The employees in the workplace decide on the issues of customer care, general production methods, scheduling, division of labor, among other things, instead of having the traditional authoritative supervisor dictating their duties to them. The workers’ self-management system is interesting due to radical shift in the centrality of power or authority from the employers to the workers themselves.

This kind of power devolution is what the Zapatistas, too, believe. Rather than having a pyramidal structure of power, the Zapatistas stress the political concept of autonomy and politics from below. No wonder then, the EZLN leadership mainly consists of indigenous people: “Currently, the political leadership of our struggle is completely indigenous” (Marcos 57). Declaring the autonomy of local bodies, the EZLN leaders seek the cooperation of fellow peasants in the decision-making process and charting out future strategies for their community. The EZLN leaders are self-conscious of their social roles in initiating the various community activities such as awareness campaigns on education, health, political rights, and women’s rights. Through such political and cultural activism, the Zapatistas try to empower the rural poor allowing them to exercise their power in the decision-making process. They, for example, work for the women’s empowerment, thereby educating them on their political rights, which I would call cultural literacy. David Harvey also notes the Zapatistas’ ability “to transform what is in effect a local struggle with particular issues [. . .] onto a completely different scale of analytics and politics that has made the uprising so visible and so politically interesting” (80). That is to say, the Zapatistas’ political activism becomes publicly visible though not all of their political and social activities are appreciable.

Female autonomy via cultural literacy

In a more radically participatory approach, the outlawed ELZN also places women in the forefront. Women are the political vanguards involved in the decision-making process and in the advocacy of women's rights. Even before the ELZN started their armed rebellion, in March 1993, the *compañeros* or the rebel leaders were already debating on the "Revolutionary Laws" (Marcos 96). Susana, a woman insurgent leader, interacts with dozens of other communities in order to receive their feedback on various social and cultural issues related to women encoded in "Laws of Women" (Marcos 96). Susana is very much concerned with women's political rights and their visible presence in public spaces. This is why she vehemently criticizes the male chauvinism and women's traditional reproductive roles. Defying the traditional female roles, Susana advocates for women's autonomy and female leadership in a community: "We don't want to be obligated to marry anyone we don't want to marry. We only want to have those children we can take care of and love. We want the right to be leaders in the community" (Marcos 97). Susana is critical of the female entrapment in the bourgeois domesticity of masculinity. While representing the subaltern female voice of Chiapas, she strongly voices for political leadership and freedom to express, study, and pursue diverse activities like driving cars.

As the capitalistic society highlights the birth of children and the sexist division of labor, she fully rejects those capitalistic notions of women. Susana is highly conscious of the disembodiment of women's bodies in the reproduction of children. Seeking the reversal of women's biological role, Susana thus voices for woman's political leadership, which, in a way, suggests the necessity of power restructuring.

To understand Susana's radical subjectivities on Chiapan woman's disembodiment as a sex object and a value exchange of her body for reproduction, it would be relevant to probe Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's views on the socio-historical, political, and material conditions of Third

World women. Spivak, in an essay “French Feminism in an International Frame” from her book *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*, criticizes the First World feminist tendency to suppress or efface “the clitoris” while defining woman “as sex object, or as means or agent of reproduction . . .” (151). Such suppression or effacement of the clitoris is “the suppression of woman-in-excess,” restricting female’s agency and freedom, thereby creating male/female binaries (152). She, in another essay “Feminism and Critical Theory” from the same book, *In Other Worlds*, stresses that the clitoris is “women’s excess in all areas of production and practice,” and, therefore, female sexual pleasure has nothing to do with reproduction (82). While women biologically “produce” children, Spivak insightfully maintains that “the legal possession of the child is an inalienable fact of the property right of the man who ‘produces’ the child” (79). Socially and legally speaking, it is the man who retains legal property rights over the product of a woman’s body. Spivak explains that this system of product and ownership relation leaves no room for sexual pleasure. Instead, such system views a woman’s body as a passive object of exchange value needed for the reproduction of children. This is why Susana rejects the biological role of woman based on capitalist notions of birth and gendered division of labor. She asks women of Chiapas to be critically aware of their rights. I view Susana’s dissension as a quest for female autonomy. Susana, hence, is not merely a political activist but also a cultural activist championing the subaltern women’s cause for equality, freedom, justice, and economic co-optation, which, in my view, is a part of cultural literacy.

Local vs. global political identities

Here I develop my earlier argument on the Zapatistas’ utopian politics from below. The Zapatistas advocate for politics from below known as social democracy. But their politics is more ideologically-driven, rather than having pragmatic political purposes of capturing state power

through politics. Marcos clearly says that their “war is not a matter of weapons or of large numbers of armed men, but of politics” (72). They believe in the principles of radical participatory democracy such as equity, freedom, autonomy, and social justice. In Marcos’s view, such politics from below can only liberate the oppressed and dispossessed peoples of Chiapas. In this regard, the EZLN has certain political, economic, and social agendas such as an end of immiseration of Chiapans, racism, marginalization, indignation, inner exile, and cultural intrusion, to mention only a few. So, Marcos voices up against the Mexican government’s eviction of Chiapas people from the *ejidos*, their native lands, through the constitutional amendment of Article 27. Breaking away with the arbitrary socio-political norms, Marcos affirms that the EZLN, as a political vanguard party, adheres to “democratic and participatory” principles (113).

Marcos appeals peoples of all sects and schisms from Mexico and around the world to unite for the just cause of human dignity, freedom, and social justice. As a result, the non-indigenous Mexicans also express their solidarity with the Chiapans in their fight against historic injustice and exploitation. Marcos states that a real democratic space in Mexico can be achieved through multiple political activities on several fronts. So, Marcos’s local rebellion soon expands into globalized dissent. He calls upon the working-class people of the world to unite for real emancipation and social justice. Marcos’s vision of social utopia is evident when he appeals all the world subalterns to join their struggle: “All who walk in truth should walk together on a single path: the one that leads to freedom, democracy and justice” (93).

Despite the Zapatistas’ stance on democratic socialism, it is still difficult to trace their political ideology, as Neill et al. have underscored in their essay “Toward the New Commons: Working Class Strategies and the Zapatistas,” “There is no purity in the Zapatista’s methods, and thus methodological purists are appalled. It is, indeed, a mix of social democracy, Leninism, anarchism, central American and Mexican revolutionary traditions . . .” (n.p.). Their political

philosophy is not clearly defined but is a mixture of different political thoughts and methods like social democracy, Marxism, Leninism, anarchism, and so forth. Neill et al. further maintain that the EZLN's method of evolving political mixture is to unite the class together in its fight against capitalism. While acknowledging the positive aspects of the Zapatista movement, committed to fighting against global neoliberalism, David Harvey also points to similar ideological ambiguities. He states that "the reception of the Zapatista movement has unquestioningly been characterized by a certain 'romance' of marginality, of a supposedly 'authentic otherness' outside the all-encompassing forms of globalization . . ." (74).

Notwithstanding all the ambiguities and contradictions in their political ideology, what fascinates me most is the Zapatistas' heterogeneity of political avant-gardism. I would call this heterogeneity of political ideology more of cultural in nature than political one. Given the palimpsest nature of culture, their cultural politics effectively negotiates between the global and the local, or the universal and the specific. Even though the Zapatistas' struggles are spatially located in the mountains of Southern Mexico, their "cultural interpenetration" and "cultural interventions" have made them global (Harvey 67). This is how they express their cultural identity and expand their mission of global cultural literacy.

Culture and identity performance

After this brief discussion of historical and political vanguardism, let me now focus on the most significant aspect of the Zapatista rebellion, which I have described earlier as a cultural war against the systemic social exclusion and the neocolonial development destruction. Before I elaborate upon this statement, I briefly define the word *culture* and its nature of transition and heterogeneity. But, defining *culture* itself is one of the most difficult tasks because *culture* is "one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language," as Raymond Williams has

rightly pointed out (87). Generally speaking, culture is “identity” (Eagleton 2), “cultivation” (6), “humanity” (7), “civility” (9), and is often synonymously used with a broader term like “civilization” (9). Explaining “the idea of culture” or “Bildung” as an all-encompassing binary opposite to exotic and primitive nature, Marxist critic Terry Eagleton in *The Idea of Culture* posits: “If there is a history and a politics concealed in the word ‘culture’, there is also a theology” (6). Culture, in this sense, signifies history, politics, religion, and aesthetics. At the same time, culture also implies a distinctive way of life or self-identity, agency, “self-reflexivity” (6), and “difference” (6).

Culture is both universal or ideal, and specific or local. It can be pre-existed or essential, as well as created or constructed. Also, culture can be an effective tool for both suppression and liberation. Friedrich Schiller notes that culture can be the very mechanism of maintaining “hegemony” (qtd. in Eagleton 8). Eagleton extends Schiller’s statement that this hegemonic paradigm of culture “mould[s] human subjects to the needs of a new kind of polity, remodel[s] them from the ground up into the docile, moderate [. . .] disinterested agents of that political order. But to do this, culture must also act as a kind of immanent critique or deconstruction [. . .]” (8). Culture’s immanent quality both affirms and negates the existing socio-political order, and, therefore, culture is inherently deconstructive signifying “a double refusal” of natural and cultural both (Eagleton 4). Here, my interest lies in Eagleton’s explication of plurality of culture “crossed with self-identity” (15) to show the Zapatistas’ marginality and difference in their “simultaneous processes of unification and differentiation” with the neoliberal globalization (Young 4). Needless to say, culture becomes a site of multiple identifications as the Zapatistas express their cultural identity in relation to their own native culture and global culture of transnational capitalism.

At issue here is an examination of the heterogeneity of a supposedly pure Chiapan culture. The ethnic culture of Chiapas is not a pure cultural category but rather a multiple site of conversations and contestations. Their culture interacts with socio-political spheres of Mexico and gets entangled with the politics of liberation movements and global political economy of neoliberalism. Using Jürgen Habermas' notion of "sphere," especially "public sphere,"⁹ I mean to suggest the different realms of social systems, economic systems, political systems, and modern technologies, as well as their communicative cross-over in the formation of "public sphere." Such separation and interaction among these different spheres mark the contours of the avant-garde. In this regard, a variety of social, economic, cultural, and political activities mix and overlap with each other as a part of Chiapans' struggle for cultural identity. For example, on January 30, 1996, the EZLN called for "A World Gathering against Neoliberalism and for Humanity," proposing a series of intercontinental meetings debating on the various issues related to neoliberalism. In the past, besides working as activist leaders in their local community, the EZLN members also worked as global activists launching a variety of international campaigns on laborers' rights, women's rights, and ecological justice, among others. Consider their anti-globalization movements, such as movements against NAFTA and the multinational corporations such as Nike, to mention only a few. In its anti-Nike campaigns, the EZLN expressed its solidarity with the low-paid Nike workers working in Indonesia and in Vietnam.

⁹ For further explanation of the term "public sphere" (1), see Jürgen Habermas. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Tracing the Greek origin of the term, he explains its changed meaning in the evolutionary contexts of different societies in different time periods such as "public opinion," represented by court or other public institutions in modern times(2), "informed public" (2) or "civil society" (3), "publicity" or "mass media" (2), politics, economy, "public autonomy" (5), among other things, and also contrasts the relation of "public sphere" with "private" sphere (1). As he defines "public sphere": "The bourgeois sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people come together as a public; they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor. . ." (27).

To counter the atrocities perpetrated by the Mexican army, the Zapatistas' only alternative is cultural activism. The Zapatistas openly take part in various social and political activities, including their political support for Mexican student strikes and their participation in political demonstration in Mexico City. I consider their public participation in a variety of communal activities as part of their identity performance. Such identity performance is meant for the recognition of their voices that lay emphasis on issues of marginality and difference. Given this, most of the Zapatistas' political and communal activities have a cultural dimension of cultural literacy. They think that their liberation from internal colonialism, for example, lies in the aporia of culture.

In his essay "National Literature and Culture," Amilcar Cabral, states that the liberation movement must be "the bearer and creator" of the culture, "which could never be the privilege of one or of some sectors of society" (56). Even though the liberation struggle is "dictated by its economic interests," it is "influenced profoundly by its culture" (Cabral 57). Since culture is the ideological manifestation, it contains the power to resist foreign domination. However, Cabral says that culture represents socio-historical reality of society "that is dominated or to be dominated" (54). The cultural dynamic here is political, implying inner contradictions within culture itself. Culture shows the conflicting relationships between the universal and the specific, as well as between the colonizer and the colonized. It is a vehicle for altering the nature of power struggles. Therefore, I affirm that Marcos' ideas of historical and political vanguardism are related to Chiapan cultural identity and their class struggle in the neocolonial space of Mexico. In the formation of identity, the locality and diversity of Chiapan culture conflicts with the homogeneity of capitalist culture. Likewise, the homogeneity of labor wage and the fair redistribution of wealth, as demanded by the peasants of Chiapas, reversely clash with economic hierarchies, racism, and

gender divisions of capitalism. Monty Neill et al., in their above-mentioned essay, show the areas of conflicts between native Chiapas' culture and global capitalist culture:

On the cultural terrain, then, capital demands homogeneity (of a marketable and controlled variety), while economically it asserts vast difference and hierarchy, and socially, it perpetuates race and gender divisions. From the proletarian side come the demands for cultural variety, "authenticity, while rejecting race and gender hierarchy and calling for leveling of wages and wealth (homogeneity)."

(n.p.)

This conflicting relationship between the global capitalist culture and the indigenous Zapatista culture, with the converging vectors of similarity and difference, form the cultural identity of Chiapans. Hence, the Zapatistas' cultural identity is a discursive construct of history, politics, economics, and culture because all of these domains interact, interpenetrate, and extend influences over each other in complex ways. The local sphere of Chiapas mixes with the global sphere when local people imagine new social, political and cultural spaces with hopes and possibilities, and when they act to alter their present condition for a better future. They locate, relate, and position their identities to the larger world, and make their otherwise invisible identities visible through cultural activism in the contingency of Critical Vanguard Studies.

Restructuring unequal power relations

While defining the clash between capitalist and proletarian cultures, I tend to think of Gramsci's concept of culture as "hegemony" (qtd. in Eagleton 8). The relations between these two cultures are determined by power relations that involve various political, cultural, economic, and ethical issues. From an economic point of view, Chiapas is one of the most impoverished states in Mexico in spite of its vast natural resources. Most of the natural resources have been appropriated

by the neocolonial capitalists. Marcos laments such plundering of local natural resources: “Chiapas is bled through thousands of veins: through oil ducts and gas ducts, over electric wires, by railroad cars, through bank accounts, by trucks and vans, by ships and planes, over clandestine paths. . .”

(32). The capitalists have continually appropriated Chiapas’s oil, electricity, cattle, money, coffee, bananas, honey, corn, cocoa, to mention only a few.

Here, it is insightful to quote Immanuel Wallerstein’s world-system theory to understand this neocolonial appropriation of resources from the periphery. The growth within the capitalist world-economy of the industrial sector of production is considered “a process of organic development and of progress” or “industrial revolution,” as described by as many diverse thinkers as Saint-Simon, Comte, Hegel, Weber, Durkheim (Wallerstein 71). Emphasizing the historical capitalism and its three different stages of development, Wallerstein shows the “unequal exchange” between the core and the periphery: “The three structural positions in a world-economy-core, periphery, and semi-periphery [. . .] Once we get a difference in the strength of state-machineries, we get the operation of ‘unequal exchange’ which is enforced by strong states on weak ones, by core states on peripheral areas” (86). In this context, the core always tries to appropriate the periphery as a raw material production area.

Chiapas is the periphery in the world capitalist system that feeds the core: “Billions of tons of natural resources go through Mexican ports, railway stations, airports, and road systems to various destinations: the United States, Canada, Holland, Germany, Italy, Japan-but all with the same destiny: to feed the empire” (Marcos 33). Electricity that has been harnessed from the dams of Chiapas is sold to the US while most Chiapans live in utter darkness. The foreign powers and the Mexican government have full control over Chiapas’s oil and other resources in order to accumulate capital from the local resources. The global capitalism in Chiapas has only left traces of expropriations such as “ecological destruction, agricultural waste, hyper-inflation, alcoholism,

prostitution, and poverty” (Marcos 33). As a consequence, the peoples of Chiapas “are the wretched of the earth” despite Chiapas’s high productivity and natural abundance (Fanon qtd. in Lazarus 9).

It is equally important here to view Chiapas’ immiseration in terms of “dependence” theory (Wallerstein 77). Wallerstein says that the independence in the Latin American countries did nothing to change their peripheral status. Thus, dependency refers to the backwardness of Mexico. As a Third World Latin American country, Mexico, has a “subordination of its economy to the structure of advanced capitalist countries” (Hoogvelt 38). This dependency of Mexico “involved a reorganization of the economy in such a way that it only produced primary goods for the industrial West, and the prevention (under colonialism) of local industrialization” (Hoogvelt 38). This helps us understand the impoverished status of the indigenous peoples in Chiapas. The condition of Chiapans was further worsened after Mexico signed NAFTA in 1994. The liberalization of the national economy “accelerated the immiseration of the Mexican working class” because this agreement “was expected to further decrease the price of imported corn, the main staple crop grown in Chiapas, and further promote enclosures and the control of land by large ranchers and increasingly international agribusiness, urbanization, and low-wage proletarianization” (Neill et al. n.p.). I would call this “a class alliance between foreign capital and comprador” based on “unequal terms of exchange” (Hoogvelt 39-40). The alliance between the foreign capital and comprador also perpetuates the exploitation of the poor native peoples. Neither the workers in Chiapas get good wages nor do they get a good price for their local produce because of the NAFTA agreement. So the “appropriation of the concrete, embodied, labours of individuals by capital” transform the local peoples “into abstract, mediated, forms of commodities, money, and capital” (Mooers 1). The neoliberal exploitation of local labor of Chiapans disembodies them into abstract beings.

In the liberalization front, Mexico adopted the policies of liberal economy in the late 1980s. To introduce economic reforms, Mexico opened its door for foreign capital and started structural adjustments in coordination with the WB through the National Program of Solidarity (PRONASOL). Such an alliance with a multinational donor was aimed at enhancing the national economy; however, it pushed Mexico onto the brink of economic collapse. Marcos calls the alliance another form of neoliberal colonization that created “new enclosures” for the peasants of Mexico (qtd. in Neill et al. n.p.). The main objective of PRONASOL was to build modern infrastructures to modernize backward places like Chiapas, but the Mexican government instead spent money in building the new jails. The funds were misappropriated, to use Frantz Fanon’s words, “national bourgeoisie lapsed into extreme political lethargy, motivated only by private greed and vanity” (qtd. in Hoogvelt 32).

In the name of modernizing Chiapas, the government ironically evicted native peoples from their lands. The ineffective economic reforms and uneven modernizing projects in Chiapas rather fuelled the internal conflicts. At this point, the solidarity of all the poor Mexicans is the only option for the Zapatistas to fight against the neoliberal Mexican government. The guerrilla fighters in the mountains become the agents of social change, for they launch different social and political activities and involve local peoples in those communal activities so as to raise their critical public awareness. Their civic educational activities, for instance, enable the indigenous peoples to claim their social agency. They also spread the critical public awareness through their books, e-manifestoes, communiqués, stories, poems, experimental art, and list-servs circulated through the Internet. In addition to communal cultural literacy, the Zapatistas have spread global cultural literacy, educating peoples on the devastating impacts of neoliberal globalization around the world.

As the multilateral donors make efforts to incorporate poor Chiapans into the development culture of modernity, the Western stereotype of the Chiapas people as uncivilized native ‘Other’

comes into play. The West's civilizing and modernizing efforts, nonetheless, can be viewed from Enrique Dussel's concept of modernity (4). Dussel argues that modernity is not a European phenomenon as an independent system, but of Europe as a center. His concept of modernity has changed the very notion of modernity, its origin and development. Modernity is the fruit of colonial domination and integration of "political, economic, technological, and cultural relations of the interregional system [that] will now be hegemonized by Europe" (5). Dussel further contends that Europe had never been the "center," and which, during its best times became only "a periphery" (5). This establishes the notion of deterritorialized and transcultural modernity. So, the neocolonial modernizing efforts to mainstream Chiapas based on European modernity fails. Instead, the neo-liberalization efforts made Mexico "the victim[s] of an indirect and subtle form of domination by political, economic, social, military or technical forces . . ." (Hoogvelt 30). Having many political manifestations, neocolonialism is only a perpetuation of "resource bondage" (Hoogvelt 30).

In his essay "Planet of Slums: Urban Involution and the Informal Proletariat," Mike Davis also holds a similar view on neoliberalism that has only aggravated the poverty:

The brutal tectonics of neoliberal since 1978 are analogous to the catastrophic processes that shaped a 'third world' in the first place, during the era of late Victorian imperialism (1870-1900) [. . .] The end result, in Latin America as well, was rural 'semi-proletarianization': the creation of a huge global class of immiserated semi-peasants and farm labourers lacking existential security of subsistence. (23)

In spite of the development efforts of neoliberalism, the problem of "semi-proletarianization," or poor peasants, was stark in Latin America. It is evident from Marcos's manifesto that the rural areas of Mexico suffered most because of the development destructions caused by the various

neoliberalized projects to mitigate poverty and social exclusion. This account of failure of neoliberal capitalism, for that matter neoliberal globalization, to solve the local problems of Chiapas allows us to critique the viability of multi-lateral institutions and modernizing projects of the West. This neoliberal failure, in turn, enables us to see the Zapatistas' identity performance and the relation of their native culture to new media and transnational capitalism.

Counter-informatics and global cultural literacy

The Zapatista rebellion is also a cybernetic war against the national and international bourgeois domination. Their circulation is an exemplary use of cybernetics to mobilize the grassroots social movements in Mexico and around the world. They use the Internet in a very sophisticated way to create "critical publics" and to bring new public awareness (Featherstone 203). To this end, they launch social campaigns, as well as organize series of international meetings and public debates on the neoliberal agendas of globalization. The case in point is the Zapatistas' call for a series of continental and intercontinental Encounters that led to a historic gathering of more than 3,000 grassroots activists and intellectuals from over 40 countries in July 1996. They gathered together in Chiapas to express their solidarity against neoliberalism. The intercontinental meeting in Chiapas drew world-wide attention and led to a similar anti-globalization meeting in Spain in 1997. Most importantly, the effects of the Zapatista social movements were starkly visible when more than 30,000 protestors from all over the world hit the streets in Seattle to protest the Third WTO Ministerial Conference of 1999. Many NGOs, labor unions, student groups, media activists, and religious groups participated in this anti-globalization protest. Since the 1999 WTO protest, the grassroots networks have unbelievably multiplied globally, resisting the capitalistic social and economic policies. My point here is that the effects of the Zapatista movement, in recent times, can be seen in numerous other dissident movements with

similar objectives of opposing and resisting neo-liberalism. The Zapatistas' cultural databases that include newsgroups, archives, films, books, photographs, paintings, literature, and so forth, have not only challenged the hegemonic capitalist policies but also impelled us to reflect on the alternative paradigms to neoliberal global capitalism.

Marcos's use of the cybernetics is a new technological paradigm dismantling time/space binaries. In this "timeless time," which is a salient feature of global capitalism, the ethereal global networks or matrix of social interactions are established through the Internet networks (Giddens qtd. in Hoogvelt 127). The technological modernity "has compressed the time-space equation enormously" (Giddens qtd. in Hoogvelt 125). Giddens further says that the recent technological modernities, including telecommunications and cyberspace, "allow most 'disembodied services' - for example, technological designs, managerial instructions and operational controls, as well as media images of wars [. . .] This shrinking of the world to a 'global village' amounts to a virtual annihilation of space through time" (Hoogvelt 125). In today's globalized world, time has annihilated space through various technologically disembodied services. Using cyberspace, the Zapatista movement has crossed the geographical and cultural boundaries, and it has become a dissident social movement of planetary scope.

As their movement both affects and is affected by new global social and cultural dynamics, the Zapatistas mingle, interpenetrate, and intervene in the multidimensional flows of globalization. For, as Jan Nederveen Pieterse writes, "Economic, political, cultural, and social dynamics are not simply different facets of single globalization; rather they are prisms through which globalization takes shape and is experienced and mapped differently, yet they all mingle and interpenetrate as well" (*Globalization and Culture* 14). Like Pieterse remarks, cyber-space has become global, and it is a new technological paradigm of neoliberal global capitalism. In a similar vein, Manuel Castells says that the logic of a new technological paradigm of informatics has penetrated all spheres of our

lives today. Not only has new communication technology become a dominant ideology intensifying the competition among the capitalists but it has also created a new communicative praxis. As Castells puts it:

This dominant logic is the logic of communications of informationalism, a new technological paradigm based on information technologies. Informationalism not only intensifies the competition between capitalists in economic life, but also shapes the overall social structure of society, for it creates perpetually changing networks of social interaction (including cross-border networks) producing new social relationships and social norms in contrast to previous times, when the structure of society was more or less fixed in space and time as social 'order.' (qtd. in Hoogvelt 126)

The networks of social interaction bring changes in social, economic, cultural, and political spheres. For Castells, "the point of departure is time/space compression" (127). He further describes that "a formal structure of an emerging network society based on the space of flows and on timeless time" (Castells qtd. in Hoogvelt 127). The e-networks have thus dismantled time and space. Now, space is also articulated by the dissemination of electronic impulses.

Fully aware of this technical modernity, Marcos turns the same e-tool used by the global capitalists to counter-attack them in establishing new global communicative networks. I have called this counter-informatics of transcultural communicative praxis. I maintain that such a strategy is not only effective to initiate global resistance against neoliberal global capitalism but also to change the existing power relations. The Zapatistas' surge of e-manifestoes, communiqués, stories, poems, art and list-servs are the "counterpublic spheres," where "counter-strategies can be planned" (Mooers 12). The "plurality of counterpublics" are used to "challenge the official public sphere" (Habermas qtd. in Mooers 12). These spaces are meant for both communication and

resistance to global capitalism. The Zapatistas' subversive use of the decentralized power of cybernetics challenges the power of late capitalism and helps spread the global cultural literacy. As such, their use of new media has enabled the cultural diffusion, both increasing the possibilities of intercultural exchanges as well as the interventions in the hegemonic capitalistic space. In this way, the Zapatistas' emancipatory cultural politics has redefined the meaning of public sphere. As they continue their struggles for minority rights, community empowerment, and social equity, their political and cultural activism affirms their public visibilities in "global public sphere" (*Global Futures 2*).

Because of greater flexibility of cyberspace, there is a possibility of creating a new public sphere, which Mike Featherstone like Pieterse calls "a global public sphere" (203). He opines that cyberspace is very useful to "mobilize critical publics" and also to dismantle the existing "power structures" (Featherstone 203). Despite the fact that this new technology is mainly used for control and manipulation of global management, production, and distribution, this "technosphere" (206) also offers numerous "possibilities [. . .] of democratization and participation. . ." (211). This is why the Zapatistas have used the Internet as the means of communication, participation, interaction, and network at the grassroots. Likewise, the Internet has "important implications for education, empowerment, democratization and citizenship participation" (Featherstone 217). Through the usage of various educative cultural databases such as e-books, e-art, photographs, paintings, movies, and cartoons, the Zapatistas have also developed "new alliances" of critical publics in the global public sphere, dismantling the hierarchal power relations.

In conclusion, the EZLN not only champions the cause of the oppressed peasants and subaltern women but also resists the neocolonial hegemony of globalization and global capitalism. The Zapatista revolution is a historico-political vanguardism with an ultimate aim of establishing democratic socialism through a participatory system of "self-management" and class struggle.

Evoking the Zapatistas' compelling history of indignation and displacement, Marcos (re)-constructs a new history of vanguardism from below. So, the EZLN leadership gives full autonomy to the local bodies in the decision-making process. Most importantly, their movement is also a cultural vanguardism against the systemic social exclusion and the neocolonial development destruction, where culture is a multiple site of conversations and contestations. Given the nature of simultaneous involution and expansion like that of global capitalism, the Zapatista movement is both local as well as global. In this regard, Marcos' cybernetic war is a new technological paradigm, dismantling time/space binaries to initiate the global resistance against neoliberalism. The Zapatistas' subversive use of cyberspace generates the critical global public awareness and global engagement through local/global cultural literacy, thereby challenging the existing power relations. In the discursiveness of Critical Vanguard Studies that crosses social, political, cultural, and national borders, the Zapatistas' cultural identities are constantly constructed and (re)-constructed, negotiated and renegotiated.

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“A Smile of Recognition”: Facing the Other in the Poetry of Frances Ellen Watkins Harper

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Born free in a slave-holding state of Maryland, Frances Harper was a prominent woman writer, political thinker, and public lecturer of her age. Her contributions to the social life of pre- and post- Civil War era ranged from leadership in abolitionist, temperance, and civil rights movements to spearheading the voices of black women asserting themselves in the public arena. Besides her self-denying teaching career, Harper is considered to be “the first African American woman to become a professional lecturer” addressing audiences across racial boundaries (Foster 137). Harper’s political activism and her preoccupation with the questions of equality, justice, humanity, freedom, and racial dignity naturally shaped the major themes of her poetic works. Following numerous publications in abolitionist newspapers, her *Poems on Miscellaneous Subjects* (1854) was for Harper a sweeping success. Although, as the title suggests, the collection displays a broad thematic coverage, from Biblical scenes and pedagogical advice to inhumanity of slavery and the baseness of drunkenness, the poems collectively express the multifaceted politics of Harper’s poetics. As Elizabeth Petrino points out, Harper’s “commitment to politics became evident with *Poems on Miscellaneous Subjects*” (par. 4). In this paper I will suggest that Harper’s wide-ranging poetry is in fact an exploration of a specific moment that initiates social relations between individuals. This moment is the moment of recognition of the Other, which for her bears not only a social, but deeply ethical significance. Examining Harper’s poetics of recognition can shed new light on the major trajectory of her poetry—envisioning a society of freedom and equality.

William Lloyd Garrison, Harper’s prominent contemporary in the journalistic circles, wrote a “Preface” for *Poems on Miscellaneous Subjects*, in which he underscored the abolitionist

politics of this collection as well as suggests Harper's appeal to universal human values in exposing the inhuman injustices of slavery. Garrison provides his rationale for "the liberation and enfranchisement of the entire colored race" (3) and expresses his optimism as to the growing numbers of talented and brilliant individuals who manage to rise in spite of the chokehold of slavery. He affirms the ethical value of universal equality in order to excoriate the present state of affairs when the slaves "are not admitted to equal rights and privileges with the whites" (3). While Garrison's "Preface" and the collection itself justly point to Harper's investment in the discourse of universality and human ethics, the accounts and reports of her public lectures and meetings provide a no less telling evidence of this. For example, T.R. Davis, in a summary of a lecture by Miss Watkins published in *The Liberator* in 1860, six years after *Poems* came out, observes how the political is always intertwined with the ethical in her public address: "The effect of these lectures upon this part of the country [Ohio] cannot but be most favorable, not only politically, but in dispelling this unreasoning and unreasonable prejudice against the colored people of the country" (31). This moral undercurrent takes shape of universal ethics and opens up a vision of cosmopolitan society: "Resolved, That these laws are coeval with mankind, and being dictated by God himself, are, of course, superior in obligation to any others. They are binding over all the globe, in all countries, and at all times; and those human enactments which conflict with these divine enactments, we affirm are not our rules of action" (31). Even though the universalist appeal to human ethics has a strong implicit presence in Harper's *Poems*, her lyric goes beyond humanist abstractions and penetrates to the very elemental level of intersubjectivity—an individual encounter with the Face of the Other.

Unfolding against the background of a call for temperance, the moment of encounter with the Other's Face is dramatized as an authentic moment of epiphany in "The Drunkard's Child."

The poem peeks both into the precondition and the subsequent effect of this transformative moment. In other words, Harper seems to wonder: Why and how does recognition of the Other take place? Harper's inquiry foreshadows the twentieth century philosophical preoccupation with the same question of sociality, its ethical foundation, and the Face of the Other as an origin of the social, first of all, in the works of Emmanuel Levinas. His ideas become remarkably illuminating of Harper's lyrical route to intuit the beginnings of human-to-human relationship in the moment of encountering the Other through his/her face and through his/her voice. However, an exploration of these questions in the lyrical genre is not Harper's pioneering step. A. C. Goodson locates an analogous "poetics of recognition" in Wordsworth and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads*. What he terms as the poet's "hospitality to the voices of others" constitutes the same poetics of the inter-subjective relationship as Harper herself deploys. Nevertheless, Harper's originality of poetic exploration should not be underestimated because her poetry is not an imitation of or a response to the legacy of British Romantics.

In the beginning, "The Drunkard's Child" portrays the drunkard father's inability to reach out to his son in a humanly meaningful way, which is reflected through his physical inability to perceive the son:

He came with a slow and staggering tread,
A vague, unmeaning stare. . . (13).

Indeed, the father's "dim and bloodshot eye" inhibits a possibility of a meaningful contact. An unthinking thing, he is wrapped up in his own totality . . . until the poem reaches its climax:

In a dark and gloomy chamber,
Life ebbing fast away,
On a course and wretched pallet,
The dying sufferer lay:
A smile of recognition
Lit up the glazing eye;

“I’m very glad,” it seemed to say,
“You’ve come to see me die.”

This stanza describes a moment of recognition: the son recognizes his father’s face, and momentarily the son’s face is transformed with a smile. From an expressionless plastic mask, the face becomes the “locus of the meaningful,” as Levinas puts it (*Entre Nous* 145). Now the face contains the meaning for the other and thus enters the realm of the social. The son’s face signifies openness for the Other, but this openness is more complex than it seems at first glance. It is not just the face with a smile that manifests openness; the discourse emanating from the face points to the next level of openness. The face and the voice of the Other become two phases of opening up—a paradoxical model of “surplus” openness that manifests authenticity on each level even if it resembles peeling an onion.

While Harper’s treatment of the face and its discourse is coated in the language of sentimentality, Levinas allows us to see this phenomenon of speech and face outside of the conventions that Harper was invested in. Harper’s stanza is in a productive dialogue with Levinas’ reflection on a paradoxical openness of the face. The son’s face, openness in itself, offers a possibility for discourse, another kind of openness, in turn. For Levinas, as much as for Harper, manifestation of the face entails a complex concept of openness of one’s self to the Other:

The other who manifests himself in a face as it were breaks through his own plastic essence, like a being who opens the window on which its own visage was already taking form. His presence consists in *divesting* himself of the form which does already manifest him. His manifestation is a surplus over the inevitable paralysis of manifestation. This is what the formula “the face speaks” expresses. The manifestation of the face is the first discourse. Speaking is before anything else this way of coming from behind one’s appearance, behind one’s form, an openness in the openness. (*Collected Papers* 96)

In this way, the son's face is juxtaposed to the father's: the father's "unmeaning stare" forecloses a possibility of manifestation, and the face degrades to the state of a "plastic" case. The son's face, however, explores the potentialities of the face in all their complexity. Before he initiates an actual dialogue with his father, his face already "speaks," and by doing so gives us a microscopic glance at *where* and *how* sociality derives its origins.

The father's face, on the contrary, as well as the voice that fails him, subvert the status of the face as an openness for the Other. The next stanza of the poem unfolds a scene of a failed dialogue, yet promises an imminent transformation of the face:

That smile reached to his callous heart,
Its sealed fountains stirred;
He tried to speak, but on his lips
Faltered and died each word.
And burning tears like rain
Poured down his bloated face,
Where guilt, remorse and shame
Had scathed and left their trace.

The callousness of the heart and the bloatedness of the face continue Harper's logic about the face as a plastic barrier to the Other in opposition to a more ethical possibility—the face's openness and "nudity," as Levinas describes it (*Collected Papers* 102). Like the son's "smile of recognition," the anticipated transformation of the father's face promises a development of social contact. Nevertheless, Harper's inquiry into the social is not limited to the face. Indeed, the death theme seems to organize "The Drunkard's Child" in two instances—the approaching death of the child and the death of the words on the father's lips.

Death acquires a profoundly ethical and social meaning, and becomes another point of intersection between Harper's poetics and Levinas' thought. In death, Levinas finds a source of responsibility for the Other. Death, as the ultimate solitude, evokes a responsibility not to

abandon the Other to this extreme condition, and in this lies the social relation between the subjects. Levinas explains it as follows: “Death signifies in the correctness of what for me is the impossibility of abandoning the other to his aloneness. [. . .] Its meaning begins in the inter-personal. Death signifies primordially in the very proximity of the other man or in sociality” (*Entre Nous* 146). Similarly, Harper’s choice of the scene with the dying child implies the same kind of context for inter-personal sociality. It is precisely the fear of death as solitude and a denial of sociality that dominates the dialogue between the father and the son in two concluding stanzas:

“My father !” said the dying child,
(His voice was faint and low,)
“Oh! clasp me closely to your heart,
And kiss me ere I go.
Bright angels beckon me away,
To the holy city fair—
Oh! tell me, father, ere I go,
Say, will you meet me there?”

He clasped him to his throbbing heart,
“I will! I will!” he said;
His pleading ceased—the father held
His first-born and his dead!
The marble brow with golden curls,
Lay lifeless on his breast;
Like sunbeams on the distant clouds
Which line the gorgeous west. (14)

A promise of meeting—the encounter of the Other—lends itself to defiance of death. The dialogue between the father and the son, their face-to-face discursive encounter, embody the

poetics of recognition that Harper seems to extrapolate from the poem to her overall *politics* of recognition.

If the death of the child, as I have shown, becomes an occasion for Harper to inquire into the essence of sociality, how does the death of words on the father's lips operate in the poem? The lines describing that "on his lips/Faltered and died each word" suggest a failed attempt of "coming from behind one's appearance," in Levinas' terms. The voice cannot come out of the face and respond to the face of the Other. Yet, this social stalemate is situated in the poem right before a dialogue between the two starts off. Again, whether it is death of the child or death of the words, the concept bears the same connotation of the ultimate isolation of the Other. However, this time, the threat of isolation targets not the child, but the father as the latter is unable to present himself to the Other through a voice or a face. Indeed, the dead words on his lips and the "unmeaning stare" on his face render little as a social asset. Therefore, we witness two death-moments in the poem, each interrogating the horizons and the limitations of the social.

The position of witnessing something as a third person is just how the poem locates us the readers. The implications of such positioning lead us to intuit an inherent relation between the third person and Harper's vision of sociality. Why is the third person necessary when two individuals enter into a relationship? How does the third person make this relationship *social*? Oriented out to the world rather than closed in on the two subjects? The introduction of the third party is a capstone in Levinas' conception of society. In his view, the presence of the third party strikes a middle ground to produce a *social* synthesis out of *asocial* concupiscent relationship of a couple (where "the ego reaches the other in pure respect. . .but is detached from the third party") and again *asocial* individualism of egos ("a singularization of the concept man"). He proposes "a third way to understand the totality as a totality of egos which are without conceptual unity but in relationship with each other" (Collected Papers 37). Then we as strangers are "spying on"

(Collected Papers 42) the relationship between the two and, by doing so, enact Harper's design of sociality that she enacts in the poem.

While "The Drunkard's Child" conceives of the presence of the Other in two modes—in the face and in the voice,—the poem does not touch on racial and gender implications that Harper takes on, for example, in "Eliza Harris," which is also a part of the collection. Describing Eliza from Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and her flight from slavery, the poem reflects on the status of the human face against the blind logic of oppression:

How say that the lawless may torture and chase
A woman whose crime is the hue of her face? (10)

Interestingly, the face here functions as the stone of contention. The blackness of the female body is condensed to the "hue of her face" as if to emphasize the distinctive role of the encounter with the *face* of the Other. It is the presence of the face that attains corporeality of the Other, as opposed to the voice that perhaps offers a more ephemeral, transient, intangible position of the Other and his/her claims for the public sphere. Harper's career as an abolitionist and feminist public speaker gives proof to an idea that materiality of the face in itself offered a more powerful political argument than the immateriality of the voice.

Exploring the tension between the face and the voice of a black female persona in this historical moment, Shirley Logan formulates Harper's paradoxical status saying that "the oxymoronic articulate Black body presented a unique challenge" (32). Although the speaker's face and the voice are both essential to the rhetorical effect upon the audience, Logan points out that Harper's articulateness—the voice—was treated differently from her corporeal presence—the face. In fact, the voice was interpreted in such a way as to negate the presence of the body. It has been argued that commonplace descriptions of Harper's voice as "pleasant" ironically served "to eliminate the public presence of the Black female body perceived as sexualized or grotesque,

and to promote the voice as pure melody, insubstantial sound, a negation of presence” (Peterson 124 qtd. in Logan 27). To be sure, Harper demanded recognition of her persona from the audience not by means of her eloquence and articulateness (that simply naturalized her among the company of white speakers) but “the hue of her face” that in spite of its “nudity” conveyed not just an openness to the Other, but raised the question of African American body in the predominantly white public sphere. Thus, her preoccupation with the face in “Eliza Harris” and her public speaking experience carry on the same quest to represent the Other in the public sphere.

From *Poems*, Harper’s interest in the Others’ faces and what they “say” becomes a part of her poetic repertoire. Three years after *Poems*’ publication, there appeared a poem titled “Lessons of the Streets” on the pages of *The Liberator*. It is a study of strangers’ faces that “we” may encounter on “life’s dusty highways,” following Harper’s metaphor. For her, the faces signify through a range of meanings, which constitutes “lessons of the streets.” The poem becomes a kaleidoscope of random encounters and strange faces:

Here’s a brow that seems to tell you,
‘I am prematurely old;
I have spent my youthful vigor
In an eager search for gold.’

On the cheek of yon pale student
Is a divorcement most unkind—
’Tis the cruel separation
Of his body from his mind. [. . .]

And here’s a face , so calm and mild,
Mid the restless din and strife;
It seems to say, in every line,

‘I’m aiming for a higher life.’

Just then I caught a mournful glance,
As on the human river rushed,
A harrowing look, which plainly said,
‘The music of my life is hushed.’

Look in that face, so deathly pale,
Its bloom and flush forever fled:
I started, for it seemed to bear
A message to the silent dead.

The poem seems to constantly switch “us” and the narrating “I” from the position of an actor to that of an observer and vice versa. It starts out with “us” in the active role since “We may gather much instruction/ From the ‘lessons of the street.’” Yet, in the midstream, Harper changes the roles, and “I” becomes the acting party: “I started, for it seemed to bear/A message to the silent dead.” At this moment, “we” becomes a third party observing the encounter with the Other’s face. This interchange of roles intuitively necessitates the presence of the third person in order for the encounter with the Other to acquire a social dimension. Like *Poems*, “Lessons of the Street” offers a lyrical exploration of the model of sociality that Levinas undertakes on philosophical terms.

Mirroring the opening stanza, the last stanza concludes the poem with a metaphorical image of human existence. Harper suggests not only that our death puts and end to our ability to continue encounters with the Others’ faces, but more importantly, that our life in fact *is* encounters with the Others, and as soon as they are no longer possible, our life is over:

Thus hurries on the stream of life,
To empty where Death’s waters meet;
We pass along, we pass away—

Thus end the lessons of the street.

Death—the ultimate isolation—is the end of “the lessons of the street.” An encounter with the Other is defiance of death. Similarly, the drunkard’s child’s envisioning an encounter with the father after his death is a defiance of death as isolation. Even though death puts limits on our ability to encounter the Other, it also becomes the necessary axis along which to define our existence and relationship with the Other.

Frances Ellen Watkins Harper’s affinities through her poetry can be extended far beyond the abolitionist and feminist movements of ante- and post-bellum United States. Her poems echo the same philosophical concerns that Wordsworth turned to already in the beginning of the nineteenth century and that Levinas pondered in his works more than a century later. Harper’s concern with what it means to recognize the Other and how this epiphany takes place underlies her social activism and public speaking. While the problem of recognition, respect, and responsibility for the Other certainly bears serious political messages, it is Harper’s lyrical works, in my opinion, that penetrate to the core of the problem and supply us with answers at the very elemental close-up level. As her poems suggest, recognition of the Other, whether the Other presents oneself in the face and/or in the voice, is an inherently ethical act of inter-personal, i.e. social, nature. The moment of recognition initiates a social relationship anchored in ideas that are so much reminiscent of abolitionist ideals—equality, justice, freedom, respect, and responsibility for the Other. Harper not only has left us with questions of dealing with millions of Others in today’s cosmopolitan world, but pointed to possible modes of action. Perhaps a pocket volume of *Poems* by Frances Ellen Watkins Harper could offer some suggestions to a cosmopolitan carried away by “the stream of life” to the teeming streets of Hong Kong or London. Perhaps a “smile of recognition” itself begs for recognition as global etiquette in the twenty-first century.

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Terministic Screens and the Sacrifice of Children: Christianity and Empiricism in the Chimney Sweepers of *Songs of Innocence and Experience*

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In his book *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature and Method*, Kenneth Burke uses the phrase “terministic screens” to describe the way in which our approach to language, or the type of language we use, can limit the ways in which we see. In his essay on terministic screens, Burke offers a new term to describe a phenomenon he had been talking about for years, the fact that we use language to describe reality, but that we inevitably describe only a portion of reality. No particular vocabulary, be it the vocabulary of religion; science; economics; politics; or any other vocabulary, can explain everything real in complete terms.

Burke explains in *The Grammar of Motives*:

Men seek for vocabularies that will be faithful *reflections* of reality. To this end, they must develop vocabularies that are *selections* of reality. And any selection of reality must, in certain circumstances, function as a *deflection* of reality. Insofar as the vocabulary meets the needs of reflection, we can say that it has the necessary scope. In its selectivity, it is a reduction. Its scope and reduction become a deflection when the given terminology, or calculus, is not suited to the subject matter which it is designed to calculate. (59)

These limited perspectives are unavoidable and they define what Burke comes to call “terministic screens.” We necessarily see by them and through them, but they also determine to some extent what we are capable of seeing, just as a colored filter placed over a lens alters the appearance of an object. He describes having seen such photographs: “Here something so ‘factual’ as a photograph revealed notable distinctions in texture, and even in form, depending upon which color filter was used for the documentary description of the event recorded” (Burke, “Terministic” 45). Since even factual data is different depending on what we are able to see, our

descriptions necessarily have a persuasive quality. The terministic screens we buy into and use influence our own and others' behavior because we can only respond to what we are able to recognize.

To enhance the possibilities of vision and action, Burke explores the dialectical, or transformational, possibilities in language, trying to understand how vocabularies and systems of language, including terministic screens, work to create human attitudes, and, further, how these vocabularies can change to allow for new understandings and behavior. Burke is especially interested in how our use of language contributes to oppressive systems, scapegoating, and violence. He offers various strategies which allow us to transcend the limitations of opposing perspectives, finding the ways in which opposed symbolic systems build upon and depend upon one another, or locating perspectives which utilize perspectives valued within both systems.¹⁰

The concept of terministic screens is particularly helpful in looking at the work of William Blake, because Blake was also deeply concerned about the relationship between language, perception, and human behavior. Blake's "mind-forg'd manacles" ("London" 1.8) could be understood as particularly narrow terministic screens. In the late 1780's and early 1790's, William Blake found himself in a culture that was in the process of shifting terministic screens. Religion had been the primary symbolic order, but now empiricism, both scientific and philosophical, were moving onto center stage. Of course, there was overlap between these two symbolic orders, just as there is today, and probably even more so. Like Joseph Priestley, scientists were often clergymen as well. Furthermore, Empirical philosophers like John Locke

¹⁰ Burke's exploration of language's capacity to influence human attitudes and actions was the work of a lifetime. His work discusses how symbolic order produces scapegoating, how symbolic order is always persuasive, how a dialectical approach to language can be transformative, and much of that work is relevant here. Burke's *A Grammar of Motives*, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, and *The Rhetoric of Religion* contain the heart of his work with language. For a fuller study of the relationship between Burke's views of language, perception and scapegoating, see my own *Hindrance, Act and the Scapegoat: William Blake, Kenneth Burke, and the Rhetoric of Order* and "The Romantic in the Attic: William Blake's Place in Kenneth Burke's Intellectual Circle."

regarded themselves as Christians. There was, nevertheless, a break between traditional Christianity, with its faith in revelation, and the rational methodologies of science and empirical philosophy that were central to most intellectuals, and certainly to most of those interested in radical political change. The religion of dissenter Joseph Priestly was not the same as the dissenters of the previous century, for which religion was, first and foremost, revelation. In the late eighteenth century, many, like Thomas Paine, for example, believed that rational Deism and empirical philosophy provided liberation from what they saw as religion's mystifying doctrines and practices—doctrines and practices that perpetuated longstanding social injustices.

Blake certainly accepted aspects of both Christianity and Enlightenment rationalism. In his annotations to Bishop Watson's *An Apology for the Bible*, Blake defends Paine ardently, arguing that "Paine has not extinguished & cannot Extinguish Moral rectitude. he (sic) has Extinguishd (sic) Superstition which took the Place of Moral Rectitude..." (Blake 612). Even more ardently, and throughout his life, Blake attacks the abuses of organized religion, in the *Songs*, the prophecies, and even in his annotations other writings. Yet Blake's abhorrence for Bacon, Newton, and Locke is well-known, and he never renounces his essentially Christian, if unorthodox, vision. He is interested in perpetuating a form of spiritual perception beyond the terministic screens of science or empirical philosophy. He is horrified by what he calls "single vision," the capacity to see only one thing in one way, especially when that single vision cripples the capacity for spiritual vision. For Blake, it was important to demystify religious practices insofar as they perpetuate oppression, while retaining the imaginative spiritual vision that allows one to look at the sun and see, as he did, not "a round Disk of fire something like a Guinea" but, rather, "an Innumerable company of the Heavenly host crying Holy Holy Holy is the Lord God

Almighty... (Blake 565-66).¹¹

In the two “Chimney Sweeper” poems from *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, Blake sets up a contrast between Christianity and empiricism as terministic screens that frame the perceptions of oppressed children. Furthermore, he explores relationships between these two modes of perceiving the world and the means by which the children are sacrificed for financial gain or forced to sacrifice themselves. The religious perspective enables innocent, exploited children to find hope and relationship to one another at the expense of a realistic appraisal of their physical experience. On the other hand, empirical observation, and reflection on it, gives the experienced chimney sweeper a realistic perception of his physical existence, but this awareness is bought at the cost of spiritual vision, hope and a sense of relationship. In both cases, the chimney sweepers’ terministic screens limit their ability to respond adequately to their own oppression, and thus they perpetuate both the exploitative system and the human sacrifice involved in maintaining it.

Since each of these terministic screens offers a form of awareness that would be necessary if the individual’s situation, or the society, were to be genuinely transformed, Blake sets the two side by side, asking his audience to link them and create a new vision that will unify the soul and the body, the spiritual and the empirical. He refuses to confirm or renounce either of the philosophical and religious positions that the two boys exemplify. Instead, he establishes a new implied perspective, a position from which he can examine both the symbolic order of Christianity and that of empirical philosophy.

In the “Chimney Sweeper” of *Innocence*, the children view their lives through the

¹¹ For a fuller understanding of Blake’s uneasy relationship with Deism and the rationalism of so many of his fellow radicals, see Marilyn Butler, *Romantics, Rebels, and Reactionaries*, p. 49 and Robert Essick’s “William Blake, Thomas Paine, and Biblical Revolution.”

terministic screen of orthodox religion, and there are clear hints of ritual sacrifice in the poem's language. The narrator is a chimney sweeper who is just a little bit older than the newcomer, "little Tom Dacre" (l.5), whose story he tells. Tom's innocence is highlighted by his blonde hair, that "curl'd like a lamb's back" (l.6). This image carries with it all the implications of pastoral innocence, but it also links Tom to Christ, a sacrificial victim who is not guilty of any wrongdoing. In the course of the poem, Tom becomes a model of pious submission. When, in stanzas 3-5, he dreams of a heaven that will receive him after his work in the chimneys kills him, he accepts this vision completely, surrenders to it, and trusts that if he is a "good boy,/[He'll] have God for his father & never want joy" (ll.19-20).

But even though he is innocent like Christ, and referred to as a lamb prime for the slaughter, the poem does not conform to any of the usual Biblical descriptions of the scapegoat, one who either dies willingly for the sins of others, like Christ, or one who is sacrificed to atone for others' sins, as are the animals slaughtered in the temple. This child is the victim of economic forces enforced by religious and social power; there is no person visible whose guilt is alleviated by the child's suffering. Yet some person or persons are guilty of the suffering of these children, for their neglect, their sleeping "in soot" (l.4), and the premature deaths that they will almost inevitably suffer, either from suffocation in a chimney or through constant exposure to carcinogens in the soot.

The absence of an obvious scapegoating motif in the poem, despite the references to sacrifice, is partly the result of the naivete of the child speaker. But it is also a rhetorical move on Blake's part, one that is designed to highlight the extent to which the terministic screen of religion prevents the children from seeing their own oppression in a clear light. Scapegoating is there, hiding in the background, and it becomes starkly clear when we compare the poem to other writings from approximately the same period. For example, Heather Glen offers a provocative

discussion of the ways in which chimney sweepers are typically described in eighteenth-century texts; these children are seen as lazy, as beggars, as thieves, and as bad seeds, the offspring of persons just as disreputable as they are themselves. At times, chimney sweepers are depicted as symbols of political subversion (100). Such attitudes do scapegoat the children, making them guilty of their poverty and degradation, as if their exploitative and dangerous apprenticeships were punishments for their poor character. Such images make it easier to exploit these children, since they are seen as the kind of people who would come to no good, no matter how well they are treated. Painting these two children, the speaker and especially Tom, as models of submission, Blake undercuts a kind of scapegoating rhetoric that was typical in writing about sweeps, making it almost impossible for the reader to feel anything but tenderness and sympathy for these boys, and making it more uncomfortable for the reader to consent to their continued victimization.

Furthermore, Blake's rhetoric undercuts scapegoating practices that were common in discussions of poverty and religion. He does not employ scapegoating rhetoric to unite the social classes by bonding them against a common enemy, or by offering an evil victim who can die in the course of the poem and give his readers a cathartic release.¹² Such rhetorical moves are common enough in the late eighteenth century (as indeed they are now), making appearances in the works of a number of writers, among them, Edmund Burke and Hannah More. Although

¹² Kenneth Burke and Rene Girard are perhaps the primary theorists of scapegoating in the latter part of the twentieth century. Burke focuses on the relationship between scapegoating and rhetoric, while Girard focuses on mimetic desire, as the source of scapegoating, but both of them agree that scapegoating often functions to unite a community but focusing their hostilities on a common enemy. This central idea is sufficient for the purposes of this analysis, although these thinkers offer significantly more thorough analyses of scapegoating than this brief statement. Burke discusses scapegoating throughout his opus, but his basic understanding of the issue can be found in the three books cited earlier, *A Grammar of Motives*, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, and *The Rhetoric of Religion*. Two of Girard's books, *Violence and the Sacred* and *The Scapegoat* offer an excellent picture of Girard's argument about the nature of scapegoating in human society. Burke is the source of the idea that works of art may symbolically sacrifice and thus provide a cathartic outlet that reunites society by releasing tensions that exist between social classes. For a full discussion of how Burke develops this idea as an extension of Aristotelian notions of catharsis, see *Language as Symbolic Action*, pp. 186-200 and *Dramatism and Development*, pp. 14-15.

Burke's "A Treatise on Scarcity" and Hannah More's "Patient Joe; or the Newcastle Collier" first appear in the 1790's, well after the engraving of *Songs of Innocence* in 1789, they express attitudes that are present in the 1780's, although a less volatile political situation prevented their being discussed quite so often or openly as they were later. If we put Blake's work in conversation with these scapegoating texts, we can better see how Blake goes about exposing what normally remains hidden behind the terministic screen of religious orthodoxy.

For example, Edmund Burke in "A Treatise on Poverty" asserts that physical prosperity is not possible for the vast number of the poor, and that "cant" about "the labouring poor" is thus "base and wicked" (196). The working poor should not be encouraged to reflect upon their poverty and long for impossible prosperity. Rather, they should be encouraged in "[p]atience, labour, sobriety, frugality, and religion All the rest is *fraud*" (196). Burke makes this assertion within a broader claim that the interests of rich and poor are, in fact identical.

Therefore, he admonishes:

The consideration of this [the fact that there is no famine] ought to bind us all, rich and poor together, against those wicked writers of the newspapers, who would inflame the poor against their friends, guardians, patrons, and protectors. (210)

This argument sets up a scapegoat, the newspapermen, who acts as a common enemy against whom rich and poor can unite. Further, it encourages the farm laborer to focus on religious and philosophical happiness rather than material prosperity, since "Philosophical happiness is to want little" (196). The notion that things are as good as they can be, and that those who say otherwise are "the enemy," distracts from the examination of changes that might be possible and encourages both the rich and the poor to ignore the fact that their interests are, in many ways, different. The theological belief in heaven and submission to religious authority provides a terministic screen which renders other solutions pointless and absurd. Good Christians, rich and

poor, can unite against the agents of “cant.”

Hannah More, on the other hand, presents a scapegoat who offers both a cathartic release and a unifying enemy around whom the rich and poor can bond. Her “Patient Joe, or the Newcastle Collier,” released with the *Cheap Repository Tracts* of 1795, makes a somewhat different argument, one that is even more dependent on religion. More’s “Patient Joe” sees God’s will and submits to it, however negative his situation. More has those who taunt Joe’s beliefs in Providence oppose it to “chance” or “luck” (217). The possibility that neither Providence, nor luck, nor chance, but rather changeable social and economic conditions might be the cause of want or illness is never suggested. This omission becomes particularly marked when one of Joe’s taunters, Tim Jenkins, is killed in a mine collapse, while Joe escapes. The implication is that Joe is spared because he is good and faithful, while Tim’s death is a result of God’s judgment. The notion that the mine need not have collapsed at all, that perhaps human carelessness or stinginess had created unsafe working conditions, is not even considered. The terministic screen of More’s religious vision, which splits the world into the taunting godless and the virtuous faithful, prevents the poem’s narrator, and, presumably, More’s audience from even considering physical causation when looking at events.

Furthermore, More’s scapegoating of the taunting collier unites the rich and poor by allowing each group to purge any anxiety or discomfort they may feel about the coalminers’ situation. The rich (specifically those with ties to the mining industry) can ignore their complicity in creating unsafe working conditions while condemning the disgruntled worker, who dies, not because the mine is unsafe, but because God has punished his blasphemous mockery of patient Joe. Likewise, the poor can purge their own resentments, heaping the guilt for their inner rebellions and doubts onto Tim Jenkins, and identifying with patient Joe, God, and the ruling classes, all in one sweeping gesture.

In the “Chimney Sweeper” from *Innocence*, however, Blake resists the scapegoating patterns just described. He presents innocent, even virtuous, little chimney sweepers, for whom his audience is sure to feel compassion. Furthermore, he does not spare the reader an awareness of his or her complicity in their unjust suffering, having the poem’s narrator say, innocently, not accusingly, “So **your** chimneys I sweep and in soot I sleep” (Emphasis mine), thereby creating the possibility that those who benefit from these children’s dangerous labor may develop an uncomfortable awareness of guilt (l.4).¹³

Furthermore, he indicates the process of sacrificial self-mortification these young children must go through to become the models of patient endurance they are asked to be, models who will, presumably, be as faithful as patient Joe through hunger, hardship, and finally death. Through this process, the terministic screen of religion may, if it is finally successful, inure the boys to a realistic awareness of their empirical situation.

To explain this process fully, we will again turn to Kenneth Burke, this time to his theories about the relationship between scapegoating, sacrifice, and language. Much of the time, Burke describes sacrifice and scapegoating in terms like the ones mentioned earlier: the scapegoating of another to appease our own feelings of guilt; rhetoric that unites us against a common enemy; and the cathartic purging of undesirable feelings through the sacrifice of a symbolic victim. In *The Rhetoric of Religion*, Burke describes another form of sacrifice, mortification, the ritual process by which one submits oneself to a symbolic order, “a systematic way of saying no to Disorder, or obediently saying yes to Order” (190). Such a system involves, to a greater or lesser degree, a victimage of part of the self, as the individual kills “any motive that for ‘doctrinal’ reasons, one thinks of as unruly” (196). Since no individual system can

¹³This particular point has been made many times, but, for a particularly rich discussion, see Glen, p. 96.

perfectly fulfill all the potentials within any human being, something must *always* be sacrificed simply for the preservation of the system. Such sacrifices may be conscious, and may even be beneficial to the individual who chooses to embrace them. But they may involve unconsciously scapegoating the self to preserve unworthy systems or relationships. They always involve a ritual sacrifice in exchange for a sense of unity with others in the system. A part of the self is cast off as negative, so that one's own identity can become identified with the symbolic order and submit to it.

In little Tom Dacre's case, the initial mortification occurs when his curly blonde hair is shaved. On the master's part, this action is simply practical, designed to prevent the child's hair from catching fire if soot is smoldering in the chimney where he works (Leader 45). For Tom, something more is at stake; he cries at the loss of his hair, demonstrating that the loss is significant to his identity. As Nurmi points out, the act of shaving is common to many initiatory rituals, those required upon entrance to prison, or the army, or, one might add, to a religious order (17). The poem's speaker comforts Tom with the words, "Hush Tom never mind it, for when your head's bare/ You know that the soot cannot spoil your white hair" (ll.6-7). The older child's words are an attempt at consolation, and they work, but the consolation requires of Tom an attitude of sacrifice and mortification. These consoling words also harbor a remarkable paradox. The older child suggests that Tom can preserve his lost hair, keeping it "unspoiled," by sacrificing it, a term reminiscent of the Biblical claim that one saves one's life by losing it (Pagliario 23). Tom's acquiescence to this argument eliminates his tears and makes him happier, but it also requires him to mortify that part of himself that recognizes his loss and questions whether or not it had purpose. The process of submitting to the narrator's consolations prepares him for yet another act of submission, this one more encompassing than the first.

As Kenneth Burke says, mortification, as a submission to a symbolic order, is always

associated with ideas about death, as the sacrifices made in the realm of the socio-political order connect to our ideas about the natural order. In this case, however, the slippage is literally true, since for Tom and his friends, submission to the socio-political order, (i.e., the apprenticeship laws) will in all likelihood lead to premature physical death. At some level, Tom knows this, which is why “the coffins of black” (l.12) from which the Angels free the sweeps in Tom’s dream look are, in fact, chimneys in Blake’s illumination of this poem. But, like his tears, this awareness is sacrificed in his submission to a divinity who will be his father only “if [he’ll] be a good boy” (l.1), which for Tom means doing what his masters tell him. In the final stanza of the poem, Tom arises happily to do his work, acquiescing to an economic system through the persuasive power of theological language. Since the Christian vision is socially approved, it allows him to soften the awareness of suffering and death, and unites him with his social world at the same time. Through the power of symbolic action, embodied in the terministic screen of Christian rhetoric, a shaven, abandoned, and cold child has unspoiled hair, is happy, and is warm. He has mortified his physical awareness almost out of existence, just as he will soon sacrifice the body itself to the harsh labor to which he has been consigned.

Nevertheless, it is also true that these two children find in the Christian system and its vision of heaven a powerful strategy for psychic survival. In fact, they find even more, a means of building genuine community. The chimney sweepers in Tom’s dream of heaven are all called by name, and the speaker calls Tom by name. Further, there is no evidence that the older boy encourages Tom to stop crying for his hair out of any motive under than benevolence. The spiritual vision of heaven gives Tom, not only hope, but a sense of being able to create his own destiny. The boys are engaging in real relationships with each other while using their imaginative vision to maintain a sense of safety and worth in an extremely harsh situation; imagination, for Blake, is almost always a positive force.

Indeed, there is no evidence that Blake faults the child even for his submission. The tone of the fourth stanza is celebratory. When the chimney sweepers are released from their coffins and run down the plain and “shine in the Sun,” they are doing precisely what they should be doing, what they are meant to do (l.16). The pleasures here are active and profoundly corporeal, but the problem is that they are deferred. Blake’s judgment is reserved for those who use the boys’ innocence and religious vision to withhold these pleasures in the present world.

In the last line of the poem, the speaker says, “So if all do their duty, they need fear no harm” (l.24), a claim which may be true at the spiritual level, depending on what one means by duty, but which, for these children, is profoundly untrue on the empirical level. As Glen puts it, “In parroting the precept he has learned, this child [the poem’s speaker] is not merely laying the pretensions of his instructors open to question, but also their whole way of conceiving and ordering experience” (102). The poem reveals a symbolic order that worships a god who loves conditionally, and who asks that small children suffer, even annihilate themselves, in order to attain happiness later. This symbolic order provides a terministic screen which allows the children a measure of imaginative vision, but blocks out a full understanding of empirical reality in the process. It is as if the symbolic vision of heaven replaces Tom’s ability to use his five senses in order to evaluate and respond to his situation. Thus, the energies of the body (See Blake 71), located in Tom’s tears, his grief at his own impending death, his experience of the cold, are denied. Tom submits himself to a process of mortification to such an extent that he makes a scapegoat of the part of himself that could have remembered how to protest. In so doing, he makes a premature peace with those who would willingly sacrifice him in order to maintain the status quo.

This poem has a powerful potential to unmask the sacrificial dynamics hidden by the terministic screen of late eighteenth-century English orthodoxy. Yet, standing alone, the “Chimney

Sweeper” of *Songs of Innocence* can all too easily reinforce the terministic screen it seeks to critique. This sometimes happens with critics who value the innocent, religious language of the innocent children and thus strip the poem of its ironies. For example, Joseph Wicksteed argues that Tom’s willing surrender of his hair leads to his dream of liberation. Wicksteed goes on to say that it is precisely this kind of dreaming to which Blake calls the reader (109-10). This purely spiritual reading joins Tom’s oppressors in overlooking the needs of the chimney sweepers’ bodies, and, thus, innocently, supports the perpetuation of Tom’s exploitation.¹⁴ That is why the chimney sweep of *Songs of Experience* provides such an important counterpart for this poem. By linking these innocent chimney sweepers with the chimney sweeper of *Experience*, Blake makes sure that we will not fall into the trap of believing that the little boys are just sweetly and beautifully seeing things as they really are, deep down. In *Experience*, we must hear from a chimney sweep who is very much in touch with his own suffering and who understands precisely how religious authority and secular authority combine to oppress him.

In fact, the chimney sweeper in *Experience* embodies the kind of critique recommended by Thomas Paine and others, a rationalistic critique that uses the code “God and Priest and King” to link an exploitative, oppressive government with a state church that invokes God’s name to support the economic and social system. Since he understands, empirically, what is going on, we might think that he should be the hero, the one to be praised because he has demystified religious culture and embraced a rational, empirical perspective on his situation. Yet, as Glen observes, this child’s stance is equally problematic. He can imagine no way out of the social situation that he so accurately perceives.

¹⁴ How one understands the primary dialectic of the *Songs*, Innocence vs. Experience, plays an important role in how one interprets any of the poems in these books. This analysis of the “Chimney Sweeper” poems rests on a view of Innocence and Experience compatible with Northrop Frye’s. Frye resists equating either attitude with Blake’s own views, claiming that each of these views is limited unless it can be transcended by a fuller, more mature perspective, one which Frye calls “organiz’d innocence.” Wicksteed, on the other hand, seems to value Innocence.

Nevertheless, his terministic screen allows the “Chimney Sweeper” of *Experience* to see with an accurately empirical, real-world, demystified perspective. While *Innocence* shows Tom Dacre minimizing the physical and social facts of his situation, these elements are continually highlighted in *Experience*. As Andrew Lincoln’s commentary suggests, even the illumination accents the physical realities of the situation—the child’s black clothing, his pack, the blackness of his world, the dirty snow (182). The initial speaker in the poem, an adult who questions the little boy, notices the child’s color and his woeful cry, but he also refers to the child as a thing, “A little black thing in the snow/Crying weep, weep, weep, in notes of woe!” (ll.1-2). The word “thing” heightens our sense of the child’s materiality, but it also diminishes the child. This speaker, aware of the child’s material condition, does not demonstrate equal awareness of his personhood. No one calls him by name.

The child is also intensely aware of his physical “misery” (l.12) and of the parental betrayal that produced this misery. He knows that he wears “clothes of death,” a phrase that refers not merely to their funereal color, but to the actual physical death that awaits him as a result of his labor (l.7). He knows that the “notes of woe” (l.8) were taught to him by his parents (l.8), and he suspects that these lessons were taught to him “[b]ecause [he] was happy upon the heath” (l.5), as if too much happiness were somehow problematic for his religious parents, who attend church while he wanders the streets, working in the cold and snow.

Furthermore, the chimney sweeper of *Experience* is conscious that his parents’ actions have their basis in a symbolic order and a network of social relationships extending far beyond his family:

And because I am happy, & dance & sing,
They think they have done me no injury:
And are gone to praise God & his Priest & King
Who make up a heaven of our misery. (ll.12-13)

.His parents do what they do in homage to a system far greater than themselves, a system like the one to which little Tom Dacre submits himself in the earlier poem, as the idea of God becomes the symbolic justification for the social order. The priest and King, and along with them, all of the privileged, “make up” a heaven out of the misery of this child and others like him, and the term “make up” is significant here. The child is aware that the system accepted by his religious parents is a kind of construct. Heaven is “made” in several senses. Since the child is brave and accepts his suffering with cheerfulness, his parents imagine that he lives in a heaven for him that does not really exist. They, along with the religious and state authorities, also “make” a heaven for themselves at their son’s expense.

Unlike Tom Dacre who unconsciously sacrifices himself, this child is aware that he is a victim sacrificed for the comforts of others. Like little Tom Dacre, he has times of happiness, but, unlike Tom, he is aware that he has been injured, and that his happiness should not be an excuse for those who cause him to suffer, anymore than the promise of heaven should be an excuse to oppress people on earth. The chimney sweeper sees his parents as blinded by a terministic screen of religious piety that leads them to believe that “there is no injury” in inflicting suffering in this world, as long as the next world is safely in everyone’s grasp. But this experienced chimney sweeper knows better. Even though he could not use these words, at some level he knows that for the poor, religion has become is a terministic screen, one that hides facts about economic and social injustice and causes people like his parents to unite themselves to their child’s oppressors, praising them as if they were saviors or protectors.

Yet, as Glen argues, this awareness in and of itself is not enough. The child sees his empirical situation accurately, but there is no vision, no hope, no sense of connection to which he can turn, no vision of deliverance. So, this chimney sweeper’s empirically accurate vision offers a clear perspective on his material situation and on the social forces that produce it, but without a

community or a vision to give him hope. He has no more power to change his situation than Tom Dacre does, and he has less community to share with him in the process of trying to change it. Empirical, rational insight demystifies the terministic screen of religion, but offers no solution. It provides insight into one's condition, but simple insight into the present state of things does not necessarily create the ability to change it. The terministic screen of both speakers in the second "Chimney Sweeper" poem cuts off the Utopian vision that Christianity provides in the first poem.¹⁵ It also leaves the abandoned child with no one to trust, The God who becomes a father to little Tom Dacre is allied with the priest and the king in oppressing the child. Everyone around him is complicit in his exploitation, even the sympathetic questioner, who recognizes the child's suffering, but nevertheless reifies him by calling him a "thing." Unlike Tom Dacre and the older sweep who tells his story, this sweep recognizes that he is being sacrificed to a system. But he is sacrificed nevertheless, because, along with his faith in the system, he has lost the imaginative force that could free him. For Blake, who saw in the sun a vision of the archangels praising God, a child's knowing God only as oppressor and heaven only as "made up" is no better than the mystification that prevents Tom from seeing his exploitation.

Thus, these chimney sweepers present a living model of the limitations that Blake discerned in the terministic screens of eighteenth-century Christianity and empirical philosophy. Each boy sees through a terministic screen that allows him to notice some things, while blinding him to others. In both cases, the child becomes unable to act. Blake reveals that both Christian and empiricist screens hinder positive action and produce passive submission. They both attempt, as Burke put it, to "reflect" reality, yet each one selects only a portion, and finally, each one "deflects" attention from something that the children need. Yet, if one could transcend these two

¹⁵ For the use of the term "Utopian" here, I am indebted to Nicholas M. Williams, who describes the way in which Christian rhetoric works to offer Blake a Utopian alternative to the cultural practices that surround him.

perspectives, seeing with “Double Vision” one would come a step closer to seeing clearly(Blake 721, ll.28-29).¹⁶ Putting the two poems side by side allows Blake to create a new perspective that transcends the limitations of both systems while retaining their liberatory elements. Rather than defining the chimney sweepers as spirit or body, rather than demanding an exclusively spiritual or an exclusively empirical perspective, Blake seeks to reveal that both perspectives are necessary to action, and that both are dangerous when appropriated apart from the other. Transformation and liberation will not depend on the limited terministic screens imposed by the particular thought-forms popular in his age, but on both an imaginative vision of faith combined with an accurate, demystified, appraisal of oppression and the processes and symbolic structures that sustain it.

¹⁶ One major difference between Kenneth Burke and William Blake might be this. Blake, as a visionary, would have more confidence in his ability to see “the truth” that he most needed to see. Burke, on the other hand, would rejoice in the ability to transcend perspectives and describe things just a little better. But he would be very conscious of his inability to see things as they are, and very leery of anyone who thought he or she had. Rather than asking us to see the truth, he would encourage us to delight in the comic spectacle of “symbol-using animals” (Burke, *Language* 3) aspiring to attain perfect, rather than simply better, visions or descriptions of truth.

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New Throne for the Thunder God

Jilted again, she gives the evil eye
to the other woman but says nothing,
just awkwardly crosses her arms, as though
holding something back; tries to figure
out what about this latest one appealed:
Was it the soft, round seat? The subtle
Curvature of the back? The smooth, firm legs?

Abandoned by a lover who swore he'd stay,
left to the devices of his spiteful
wife, the young mistress quietly endures,
yet wonders if her punishment really fits
the crime; thinks it somehow unfair Juno has
turned her into a plush, purple chair.

Beauty Queen of the Susquehanna

For years I did not know you
Grew up called river rat;
I thought the nickname rich,

But raised on the Charles,
Remained unimpressed
By your tales

Of lovers plunging
Toward eternal bliss
From high atop Chickies Rock.

I only later got the lay
Of the land,
When I asked if you knew

Anyone who considered
A jump for love—
And you paused, then sighed,

Missed another
Beat, before you sighed
Once more, *Never*.

Appointed, Anointed, Assigned and Ordained: Grant Wiggins' Pilgrimage to the Center of Himself in Ernest J. Gaines' *A Lesson Before Dying*

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For unto whomever much is given,
Of him shall much be required.
---Luke 12:48

As a reluctant son of the South who returns to the plantation to teach, Grant Wiggins, the narrator in Ernest J. Gaines' novel *A Lesson Before Dying* (1993), he has a seriously tall order to fill. As the "chosen one" to teach Jefferson, the twenty-one year old semi-illiterate field worker condemned to die for a crime he did not commit, how to die with dignity, he must navigate the racial terrain of the segregated community while also maintaining a sense of manhood, dignity and self-respect. In the midst of this stratagem he must also be careful to adhere to the social codes of racial conduct dictated by law and practiced by the established powers of the majority class in the community.

Referenced throughout the narrative as "the teacher," there are certain duties and obligations expected of Grant by the plantation elders and the school children who look up to him, members of the ruling class who look down on him, and especially by three women in his life who constantly try to manage, control, dictate, and direct his public and private affairs. The plantation elders want his undivided attention, the schoolchildren need his direction, wisdom and intellectualism, and the women in his immediate circle expect his unbridled devotion to their individual causes. Though each woman has a separate agenda, they all desire love, attention and dedication to their personal agendas. Before he is able to consider the magnitude of obligations and responsibilities, however, he must invest in his own psychological, emotional and sexual bearings as he grapples with his own sense of identity and feelings of insecurity.

According to critic Mary Helen Washington, the “chosen ones” were always the “bright and talented ones in the family. They were the ones selected to go to college if the family could afford to send only one; they were meant to have the better life, the chance at success” (“Everyday Use” Alice Walker, 94). As the community’s representative member of life’s possibilities Grant is expected to show his appreciation of the “gift” of his education and return the favor to the community which undoubtedly sees him as more than a teacher who has returned to serve the community. As the recipient of the sweat equity of the laboring class, he now “belongs” to the community more than he belongs to himself, and there is little place for negotiating the terms of the designation: The favorite son is expected to perform on command. To the plantation laborers who witness his return his presence is the sole and abiding purpose of his existence.

In African American literature there is a sustained tradition of designating a “chosen one” as principal character. Dee/Wangero, the central figure in Alice Walker’s biographical short story “Everyday Use” (1977), for example, is the designated member in the family to attend college. As one of the best and brightest in the rural, southern community, Dee/Wangero recognizes – as does the community in which she lives – her intellectualism and readily accepts the coveted title and reaps the sweat equity of those in the community who bestow the crown upon her. She feels, however, disconnected from the community of surrogates once she returns on a visit. She embraces her academic standing but disparages her immediate family for their inability to understand her new sense of culture and heritage. As Walker recounts in the autobiographical poem “For My Sister Molly Who in the Fifties” (1972) her sister, Molly, was the “chosen one” in their large family. Like Grant Wiggins, she feels remote, distant and disconnected from her roots when she returns to the family home for a short visit. As a cosmopolitan world traveler Molly, whose visits to Prague, Amsterdam and Liberia set her apart

from the rural folks, is exacting and critical of members of the community, condescending to those upon whose labor she has benefited, and is more than anxious to make a hasty exit from the land of her birth. According to Walker, Molly:

Found much
Unbearable
Who walked where few had
Understood And sense our
Groping after light
And saw some extinguished
And no doubt mourned. . . . (*Everyday Use*, 54)

Much like Walker's sister, Grant, whose pursuit of an education removes him temporarily from the land, he finds much "unbearable" upon his return. His disillusionment with the lack of "progress" among the residents of the community as well as his inability to emotionally escape the indigenous bond of the region conspire to psychologically bind him to the land. While he recognizes that his time away affords him an opportunity to see the residents and the region in a different light, he, like Molly, mourns nonetheless for their loss of the opportunities that he has embraced.

Not all of the "chosen ones," however, feel disconnected from their culture and heritage. As a young boy on the Point Coupeé plantation in Oscar, Louisiana, Ernest J. Gaines, for example, was in many respects, the "chosen one." When other children were often engaged in child-play in the "quarters," the close-knit community where he lived with his elderly aunt, Augusteen Jefferson, until age 15, he was charged with writing letters for the plantation's elders. He recounts his early "appointment" as the community's unofficial scribe:

“My aunt raised me . . . she never did walk . . . and because she couldn’t visit others, the people use to visit our house. . . . [N]one of these people had ever gone to any school. No education at all. It was my aunt who told me that I should write their letters for them and read their letters for them when they received mail, which I did. . . . [T]hey would come over there, and I’d sit on the floor by their chair.” (Interview, 2006)

He continues:

Sometime, if it was a man that I was writing a letter for, he’d sit on the floor or on the porch, or I’d be sitting on the steps, and I’d have my little yellow pencil and write on a tablet . . . and I’d write their letters. . . . [T]hey would know how to *begin* the letter, but they wouldn’t know how to *proceed*. . . . So you just try and put it [their thoughts] down, and then you read th em back. . . . [B]ut they would always call on me. . . . I was the ‘chosen one’ to do those kinds of things.”

As Jefferson’s fate has been declared by a twelve-man jury of white men, Grant’s order – to teach Jefferson how to defy the label of “hog,” the term used by his defense attorney to define him, by standing as a man, is also gender driven. In order for Grant to maintain the semblance of a life in the quarters and negotiate his personal and professional space in the process, he must also acquiesce to the dictates of the women who dominate that life: Tante Lou, his deeply religious, church-going, great aunt with whom he shares a home but has a volatile relationship, Miss Emma, Jefferson’s godmother who declares in the beginning of the novel and throughout Jefferson’s imprisonment that she doesn’t “want them [the white power structure] to kill no hog (A Lesson Before Dying, 13), and Vivian Baptiste, his soon-to-be-divorced girlfriend who encourages him to have an association with Jefferson while trying to maintain the strength and validity of their own relationship. Amid intense pressure from the three women for Grant to

impart an understanding of manhood to Jefferson before Jefferson's execution, Grant examines his own grasp of what manhood is. In trying to please Vivian he must also try and make sense of the purpose of his visit to Jefferson during Jefferson's incarceration. As he grapples with the definition of manhood, he also questions its relationship to living as opposed to simply existing.

“Do I know what a man is? Do I know how a man is supposed to die? I'm still trying to find out how a man should live. Am I supposed to tell someone how to die who has never lived? . . . [S]uppose I was allowed to visit him, and suppose I reached him and make him realize that he was as much a man as any other man; then what? . . . what will I have accomplished? What will I have done?” (31)

Even though Grant is seen as a role model in the community, he is emotionally exhausted from being held to a higher standard than other residents. A great portion of his physical and emotional exhaustion results from the tumultuous relationship he shares with his aunt who constantly upbraids him, not only because of his reluctance to forge an association with Jefferson but also because of his defiance of the mandate to teach the young, imprisoned man how to maintain dignity and integrity while acknowledging his ultimate fate. In defying his aunt Grant also vehemently refuses to attend church. Attending church, he privately reasons, is an act of submission, and the sheer requests are psychologically exhaustive. His aunt, on the other hand, argues that church attendance is not only an act of nobility, it is an action which confers goodness, signifies decency, and keeps one grounded. It also, in his aunt's perspective, keeps a person connected to the people, the land and surroundings and prevents one from becoming “uppity” (100), a term she consistently uses to define, what she imagines to be, Grant's “better-than-thou” disposition.

Not only is Grant's and Tante Lou's relationship volatile because of his anti-church rebelliousness, the emotional distance between the two are heightened because of generational

issues that exist between them. While each recognizes the value of obtaining an education, Grant's perspective differs greatly from Tanta Lou's. He recognizes the attainment of an education as a vehicle for moving forward with dignity and perseverance, while his aunt's vision reflects the notion that one must maintain a sense of community by remaining a part of the culture from which one evolves. An exasperated Grant explains to Tante Lou the sense of emasculation he feels during a one-time visit to the home of the powerful but racist sheriff whose permission he must seek in order to visit Jefferson in jail:

“Everything you sent me to school for, you're stripping me of it. . . . [T]he humiliation I had to go through, going into that man's kitchen. The hours I had to wait while they ate and drank and socialized before they would even see me. Now going up to that jail. To watch them put their dirty hands on that food. To search my body each time as if I'm some kind of common criminal.

He continues a sarcastic but woeful rant which falls on deaf ears:

Maybe today they'll want to look into my mouth [a reference to the white superintendent's inspection of the black school-children's teeth during his annual visit to the plantation school], or my nostrils, or make me strip. Anything to humiliate me. All the things you wanted me to escape by going to school. Years ago, Professor Antoine told me that if I stayed here [in the quarters], they were going to break me down to the nigger I was born to be. But he didn't tell me that my aunt would help them do it.” (79)

In commenting on Grant's objection to entering the back door of the sheriff's home as he accompanies Miss Emma on her personal quest in support of Grant's appeal, Tante Lou caustically replies, “I'm sorry, Mr. Grant, if I'm helping them white people to humiliate you. I'm so sorry. And I wished they had somebody else we could turn to. But they ain't nobody else”

(79). While Tante Lou has been instrumental in Grant's acquisition of a college degree, she also feels a sense of inferiority because of it. The paradox emanates from the opportunity Grant has at ascertaining a "better life" versus her inability to find such an opportunity: "I didn't ask for none of your uppity, mister" (100). Had she not been doing for *him*, she reasons, she could have been doing for *herself*. Grant Wiggins *is*, she concludes, because she is *not*. The verbal lashing she inflicts upon Grant is not lost on him as he continues to maintain his frigid and defiant demeanor. His refusal to compromise stems not only from his view of himself as a black man simply trying to understand himself, but also because he understands that he will ultimately yield to the power and dominance of a woman with whom he not only shares a blood relationship but a familial and private space as well. Tante Lou's voice is stronger than Grant's willful disobedience.

Vivian Baptiste's power and emotional authority over Grant are just as prominent. Her church-going habits and devotion to her faith, however, signal to Tante Lou as well as to Aunt Emma that she can indeed be a great influence in Grant's life in terms of his actions and perspectives on faith, religion, and all things related to the deity. Vivian is, according to Grant's aunt, a woman of strength, character and integrity. She is a "lady of quality" (116) not only because she attends church services on a regular basis, but also because she carries herself with grace, poise and dignity. Her articulation – as well as her position in the community as a schoolteacher – adds to her character as a woman of great significance. As a light-skinned woman in a region known for antagonisms between Creole and dark-skinned people, she appears to Tante Lou and Emma as honest and sincere, a woman unconcerned with the darkness of Grant's skin. Vivian's romantic involvement with Grant contradicts some of the generational stereotypes of Creole women being solely attracted to men of the same cultural background and skin tone. As Tante Lou encourages Vivian to remain true to her religious faith and to never "give up God . . . no matter what" (16), she sarcastically references Grant's deliberate disconnect

from the church: “This one,” she remarks derisively to Vivian after Grant introduces them to each other, “he don’t have a church” (114).

Where Vivian might have been previously viewed as an interloper as well as a distraction in Grant’s duties in the home and community, as those duties related to teaching Jefferson how to die with dignity, the “pretty young lady” (16) with the “good manners” (116) now secures her place in Grant’s family. In Tante Lou’s perspective, Grant might be “educated” and able to maintain a respectable presence in the community, he is not – even though he is her nephew – a man of “quality” because he does not have God in his life. Teaching, no matter how noble a profession, does not, according to Tante Lou, supersede the need to be of religious convictions. The combination of Vivian’s church attendance and “quality” status, however, are significant trademarks, signaling to Tante Lou that Grant might indeed be on a path to redemption.

As Tante Lou continues to thrust herself into Grant’s life he continues his efforts to maintain as much personal and professional momentum as he can in the psychological tug-of-war against her. His bitterness and open defiance are the weapons he manages to retain, and he uses them like a torch whenever he feels the wrath of her words upon him. As Tante Lou finds strength in the church and with persons of similar ideals, Grant strives to maintain a measure of peace within himself in the midst of his personal turmoil. As much as he feels himself slowly relinquishing power to the women, he still, however, difficult, manages to retain a thread of emotion and psychological power within himself.

His aunt’s controlling nature is, historically, a stereotype of the willful, domineering black woman in African American fiction. Not only does Tante Lou’s narrative discourse fit the dialogue of the well-meaning, church-going woman, her physical appearance and demeanor fit the literary construct as well. In the opening passage of the novel Tante Lou and Miss Emma are described as “large” (3). Tante Lou’s sturdy physique – similar to Miss Emma’s two-hundred

pounds – fits the stereotypical statue of the black churchwoman in literature and maximizes her dominant role in the narrative. Churchwomen, argues critic Trudier Harris, “are the standard-bearers for religion and religious behavior in African American fictional communities. By being solidly grounded in the church, religion and God, they determine who else should be, under what circumstances, and when” (*Oxford Companion to African American Literature*, 147). Tante Lou believes that Grant is a sinner, and her strong beliefs cloud any other aspect of the goodness and civility that he might bring to her life as well as to the lives of the community’s residents. While churchwomen “may have good intentions,” Harris further maintains, “they can just as easily stunt the growth of people around them” (147). Grant compares the mental strength of Miss Emma and Tanta Lou to “boulders, their bodies, their minds immovable” (*A Lesson Before Dying*, 14).

As the single, most prominent black man in the community selected to do the community’s bidding in teaching Jefferson to stand, face his fears and walk to his death with strength and dignity, Grant is given no opportunity to refuse the mandate, and his options for non-compliance are few. Tante Lou constantly belittles him as he balks at the order: “You going with us up the quarter. . . . [Y]ou going up there with us [to Henri Pichot’s] home, Grant, or you don’t sleep in this house tonight” (14). As he steadily battles for his psychological freedom, Grant, claims Harris:

. . . enables us to see the impact of Tante Lou’s raising practices upon him, for he is an exemplary manifestation of the offspring affected by the strong black woman character. . . . To the strong, black female character who has reared a manchild under especially difficult circumstances, that offspring has one option: to do as he is told. Thus, Tante Lou can exert as much biological tyranny in Grant as his literary ancestors do.” (*Saints, Sinners, Saviors*, 162)

Grant not only has the dubious responsibility of adhering to his aunt's wishes, he must also submit to the muffled pleas of Jefferson's godmother. While repeatedly declaring that Grant "don't have to do it" [visit Jefferson in jail] (*A Lesson Before Dying*, 14), she privately hopes that he is emotionally compassionate enough to do so despite his aunt's edict that he *will* visit Jefferson in jail. Miss Emma's subtle articulation and peaceful demeanor are in direct contrast to the concentrated efforts of Tante Lou. His aunt's threats leave Grant feeling weak, powerless and incapable of denying her demands or Miss Emma's appeal without suffering the consequences of their verbal and emotional wrath. While Miss Emma's voice and actions are placid, Tante Lou's abrasiveness serves as a substitute for Miss Emma's tranquil nature. The juxtaposition of the women's actions and demeanor reflect Grant's dilemma reflects an adherence to both or neither. As he puts forth great effort in learning who he is and what he stands for, not only as a man but as a human, he must also straddle the personalities of the women.

As strong women in the community, each has learned to negotiate the economic, racial, and social boundaries of their impoverished lives – while raising two men, Grant and Jefferson – under the most austere circumstances. As the former house servant of the Pichot family, the community's most powerful and influential white family, Aunt Emma feels that her former relationship with the family gives her leverage to summon a favor of visitation with Jefferson. As the racial and political dictates of the time demand, securing permission for the visitation rights by members of the minority class is governed by the highest community official of the majority class. In this regard, all racial pretentiousness, pride and willfulness must be aborted for the timely opportunity of accommodation.

Jefferson's godmother has also served the generational needs of the Pichot family with dignity and responsibility, and she, too, believes she is worthy of consideration in her emotional appeal for a favor at the most critical juncture in her life. Tante Lou's stake in the appeal not only

stems from a similar and dutiful association but also from her years-long association of friendship with Miss Emma. Each woman's strength feeds the other's willpower. Each other's resolute manner, however, results from years of service in the capacity of maternal caretaker for generations of plantation men, women and children. Grant sums up Miss Emma's and Tante Lou's roles as domestic servants in the Pichot home:

Miss Emma was the cook up here then. She wore the white dress and white shoes and the kerchief around her head. She had been here long before I was born, probably when my mother and father were children. She had cooked for Henri and his brother and sister, as well as for his nieces and nephews; he did not have any children of his own. She cooked, she ran the house; my aunt washed and ironed. (18)

Miss Emma, like Amalia, the house servant in Gaines' short story, "Bloodline," who served the Laurent dynasty for generations, uses her decades-long position as generational caretaker to articulate the claim that she is, on the most basic, human level, due a return on her "investment" in the Pichot family. At the first opportunity Miss Emma pleads her case of consideration to Henri Pichot, re-emphasizing the indignity she feels at hearing the defense attorney's reference to her godson as a hog:

"They called my boy a hog, Mr. Henri. I didn't raise no hog, and I don't want no hog to set in that chair. I want a man to go set in that chair, Mr. Henri. . . . I'm old, Mr. Henri. Jefferson go'n need me, but I'm too old to be going up there. My heart won't take it. I want you talk to the sheriff for me. I want somebody else take my place. . . . I done done a lot for this family and this place, Mr. Henri. All I'm asking you talk to the sheriff for me." (*LBD*, 20-21).

Unafraid to speak her mind, she presents herself “accordingly,” emphasizing not only her physical investment in the family but her emotional and psychological investment as well. Aware of her social “place” in the appeal to Mr. Pichot’s authority, she is careful not to overstep her bounds. Although she speaks of “being on her knees” in her plea to his sense of fairness, she is careful to avoid the appearance of begging. She asserts herself with clarity, power and authority as she defends her appeal:

“I done done a lot for this family over the years. . . . [T]ell him what I done for this family, Mr. Henri. Tell him to ask his wife all I done done for this family over the years. . . . I done done a lot for this family over the years. . . . [I]’ll be on my knees next time you see me, Mr. Henri.” (22-23)

As Miss Emma has given of herself to the Pichot family, the community’s investment in Grant is just as significant. The friendship between Miss Emma and Tante Lou is as strong as the love Miss Emma has for her godson, and even though Grant, according to Gaines, “wanted to avoid the entire South,” and, by extension, the forced association with Jefferson, Grant must acknowledge, however grudgingly, that he, too, is invested in the community. His investment is not only with the children whom he teaches and shares a historical legacy, his aunt with whom he shares a home, and the woman with whom he wants to share a life, his investment is tied to the memories of strife and poverty that have subconsciously brought him back to the plantation.

Miss Emma and Tante Lou are independent women, born of the same economic class and cultural heritage, and their morals, values, and work ethics command Grant’s respect and consideration. As he succumbs to the wishes of the women and visits Jefferson he is still unsure of his role within the broader scope of communal responsibilities. Tante Lou’s and Miss Emma’s lives are mirror images of each other’s, but it is Grant’s aunt who has made the most essential sacrifices on his behalf.

Reverend Ambrose, the “uneducated” plantation preacher, the one who “heard the voice and started preaching” (101), informs Grant of the emotional, physical and psychological sacrifices that his aunt has made on his behalf. In declaring his support for Tante Lou’s efforts in transforming Grant, Reverend Ambrose, the community preacher who “christened babies, baptized youth, visited those who were ill, counseled those who had trouble, preached, and buried the dead” (101) and had known Grant “since his birth,” (101) strikes an emotional chord with Grant in asserting Tante Lou’s devotion to her nephew.

“She been lying every day of her life, your aunt in there. That’s how you got through that university – cheating herself here, cheating herself there, but always telling you she’s all right. I’ve seen her hands bleed from picking cotton. I’ve seen the blisters from the hoe and the cane knife. At that church, crying on her knees. You ever looked at the scabs on her knees, boy? Course you never. ‘Cause she never wanted you to see it.” (218)

Just as Miss Emma and Tante Lou have made sacrifices to their families and in the community, so, too, has Vivian Baptiste. As Grant slowly internalizes the depth of his assigned role, he must also try and heal the emotional divide that threatens his relationship with Vivian. Early in the narrative she offers Grant support to help him understand that because they are role models in the community, their commitment extends beyond the children they teach in the quarters. Their larger-than-life presence represents hope and the possibility of change for future generations. They cannot, as he suggests, “just pack up and leave” (29). A physical move from the plantation will not, Vivian explains, resolve the communal and familial obligations that Grant seeks to run away from. His resentment at having to return to the quarters partially accounts for his anger, and his declaration of needing to “go someplace where I can feel I’m living” (29) has merit.

Grant's pleas to Vivian is acknowledgment that her support is key to his emotional and psychological survival: "I don't want to spend the rest of my life teaching school in a plantation church. I want to be with you someplace where we could have a choice of things to do. I don't feel alive here. I'm not living here. I know we can do better someplace else" (29). Not only do his comments suggest that his daily life is a living-death experience, slowly suffocating his spirit and will to live, they also allude to the psychological weight of Jefferson's approaching execution. Although Grant's burdens – his intense relationship with his aunt, the mandate to visit Jefferson in jail and impart knowledge about manhood, the "unofficial" sermons from Reverend Ambrose, and the silent pleas from Jefferson's godmother – constrain his relationship with Vivian and stifle his ability to effectively teach the children, he does not refute her claim when she says "you love them [Tante Lou, Miss Emma, and the students] more than you hate this place" (94). Vivian's truth not only disengages any notions that Grant may have of abandoning his obligations to the community and Jefferson, it reinforces the bond that he and Vivian share and strengthens his alignment to her.

Vivian's deportment as a caring and nurturing woman sharply contrasts Tante Lou's abrasive demeanor and Miss Emma's gentle strength. Her calm nature and steady influence provide Grant the fortitude to maintain a fraction of inner peace as he slowly acquiesces to the demands from his aunt and Jefferson's godmother. He explains to Jefferson, who, in anger of his situation, has made derogatory, sexual remarks about Vivian, the emotional and personal toll he suffers on a daily basis as he constantly tries to communicate with him against his (Jefferson's) will. His visits to the jail, he claims, only continue because of Vivian's persistence and his willingness to please her.

Grant's consistent use of the word "boy" in his address of Jefferson stems from his own anger at being forced to serve as his mentor rather than its use as a term of belittlement and

disrespect. As Grant declares the impact of Vivian's influence in his life, he affirms the emotional power she has over him as he proudly defends her honor as a "lady." The comment is reminiscent of the honor bestowed upon Vivian by his aunt.

"That lady you spoke of, boy, cares a lot about you. . . . he's waiting at that school right now for me to bring her news about you. That's a lady you spoke of, boy. That's a lady. Because it's she who keeps me coming here. Not your nannan, not my aunt. Vivian. If we didn't have Vivian, I wouldn't be in this damn hole. Because I know damn well I'm not doing any good, for you or for any of the others." (130)

One of the thematic traits central to Gaines' fiction is a theoretical summation of a central motif by a major character in the work. In the short story "Three Men [*Bloodline*, 1968]" Munford Bazille, the sage criminal who often serves as a surrogate father to younger criminals in jail, offers his cellmates, Proctor Lewis, the narrative's nineteen-year-old protagonist, and Hattie, a homosexual incarcerated for committing a sexual act in a public place, a lesson on the nature of black masculinity in a society scarred by racism. Copper Laurent's theory in "Bloodline," the title story, addresses the "absent" female and the effects of the splintered family upon black men: In Copper Laurent's perspective women serve an important role in the emotional and psychological development of young black men. In *A Lesson Before Dying*, Grant delivers an impassioned discourse on the legacy of slavery and its effect upon black men in particular. In a system that fails to meet their cultural and psychological needs, they are left not only spiritually, economically and morally bankrupt, they are left emotionally bereft as well. Grant offers a summation of the legacy that his aunt and, by extension, Tante Lou, Vivian, and other women on the plantation bring to the lives of their respective families:

We black men have failed to protect our women since the time of slavery. We stay here in the South and are broken, or we run away and leave them alone to look after the children and themselves. So each time a male child is born, they hope he will be the one to change this vicious circle – which he never does. Because even though he wants to change it, and maybe even tries to change it, it is too heavy a burden because of all the others who have run away and left their burdens behind. So he, too must run away if he is to hold on to his sanity and have a life of his own.” (167)

He continues his argument on the legacy of generational flight:

Who does my aunt have? She has never been married. She raised my mother because my mother’s mother, who was her sister, gave my mother to her when she was only a baby, to follow a man who the South had run away. Just as my own mother and my own father left me with her. . . . [T]he children in the quarters look at their fathers, their grandfathers, their uncles, their brothers – all broken. They see me – and I, who grew up on that plantation, can teach reading, writing, and arithmetic.

He concludes by offering his most powerful argument on the legacy and power of relational abandonment:

I can give them something that neither a husband, a father, nor a grandfather ever did, so they want to hold on as long as they can. Not realizing that their holding on will break me, too. That in order for me to be what they think I am, what they want me to be, I must run as the others have done in the past. (167)

As Grant explains the theory of flight to Vivian, he begins to understand the magnitude of his appointment as the “chosen one.” It is indeed the first time he recognizes and publicly

acknowledges that he, too, shares in the legacy that precedes him. His relationship with Vivian, he comes to realize, gives him the confidence to acknowledge his own weaknesses as those debilitations relate to the true meaning of being not only a teacher but also a man with human frailties. What Jefferson's godmother wants, he argues, is for *someone* – preferably Grant and Jefferson – to “change everything that has been going on for three-hundred years . . . so in case she ever gets out of her bed again, she can go to that little church in the quarter and say proudly, ‘You see, I told you – I told you he was a man’ . . . [A]nd if she dies after that, all right” (67). What Miss Emma needs to know most of all, he adds, is that Jefferson “did not crawl to that white man, that he stood at that last moment and walked. Because if he does not, she knows that she will never get another chance to see a black man stand for her” (167). Jefferson's ultimate action will serve a dual purpose: It will acknowledge his godmother's position as his caretaker, but more importantly it will speak to her unacknowledged presence and influence in the community. Jefferson's visibility in the community will then assume a more prominent place partially because of Grant's, Tante Lou's, Miss Emma's and Vivian's position.

When Vivian asks if the cycle of generation flight “will ever be broken” (167) she asks on behalf of the legions of black men who are part – or might become part – of the legacy of men who are not only physically trapped in their surrounding but also psychologically, emotionally and spiritually trapped within themselves. Although Jefferson is behind bars, Grant is in prison. His mental imprisonment, concedes Gaines, stems partially from hatred of his environment. More specifically, however, it results from an imposed self-hatred. Grant, argues Gaines, “hates teaching. He hates the South. He hates everything around him” (*Mozart and Leadbelly*, 57). In the 1940's, Gaines explains, professions for blacks in the South were extremely limited.

You could be a teacher and teach black children. You could be an undertaker, a barber, an insurance collector from other blacks. You could own a small grocery

story or a nightclub. But you could *not* be an attorney or a doctor. You could not be a banker or a politician and certainly you could not run for political office. Not in a small place like this [Point Coupeé, Louisiana] in the South at that time. (58)

Even though Grant is a victim of the environment as much as Jefferson, it is up to Jefferson, Grant has come to believe, to halt the cycle of victimization. Jefferson can do this, Grant concludes, if he frees himself from the psychological shackles of oppression.

Just as he has a mandate to rescue Jefferson from the depths of sorrow and despair, Grant must now rely on his own wiles to secure a venue for that rescue to occur. It is not enough that he simply *believes* that such a transformation will occur. He is acutely aware that Jefferson will not gain a sense of himself simply by conversing periodically about topics in which he has no vested interest or subjects that offer no relief from his position as a jailed man. As Grant clearly recognizes, insignificant conversations have not resulted in Jefferson's uplift and psychological movement to manhood. Jefferson, Grant feels, needs help in arriving at a place of peace and healing. He needs to know within himself that he is capable of not only executing the wishes for his aunt, but also that the mental transition must occur for him as well. Jefferson, surmises Grant, must accentuate his own presence, validity and authority. Twice-weekly conversations and visits to the jail by outsiders do not adequately convey Jefferson's true emotions, nor are they testimonials of his progression of understanding himself.

As Jefferson's emotional needs are debated, so, too, are Grant's. "Irene [Grant's student] and my aunt," Grant tells Vivian, "want from me what Miss Emma wants from Jefferson. . . . [T]he state of Louisiana is about to take his life, but before that happens she wants something to remember him by. . . . [M]iss Emma needs a memory . . . memories of him standing like a man . . . if only for a day, an hour, here on earth" (*LBD*, 166). As Grant confides in Vivian, he recognizes that Tante Lou's and Miss Emma's presence in his life is – and has been –, as

influential as hers. Where he initially was content with the idea of fleeing the region as so many others had done, he is now more understanding of his purpose and role in the community. Not only is he there for the purpose of teaching the plantation's children, he recognizes a larger purpose: He realizes that he must acknowledge the voices and actions of the women in his life if he is to reach a place of healing. It is up to him – as the “chosen one” – to carry the torch forward: It is as much his duty to impart knowledge outside of the classroom as it is to teach inside the classroom. It is significant that he understand the magnanimousness of his presence on the plantation: The plantation of his youth is now the blackboard of his future. There are lessons to be taught and lessons to be learned.

Tante Lou's composition, born out of her determination and will to survive the harsh realities of plantation life, is now part of Grant's legacy, and Miss Emma's quiet strength and fortitude are part of Jefferson's. Each woman's presence, Grant now believes and comes to accept, is part of his emotional, psychological and historical transport. As the theme of generational surrogacy is represented by Munford Bazille, Hattie and Proctor Lewis in “Three Men,” so, too, is it represented in *A Lesson Before Dying* by the women in Grant's life. As he continues to move toward a deeper understanding of his role in the community and his obligations to Tante Lou, Miss Emma and Vivian, he comes to appreciate and respect the honor, decency and integrity each woman brings to everyone in the community. He understands their presence in his own life and how it helps shape his beliefs and mold him into the man he strives to become.

As he accepts Vivian's help in understanding his role in the community and his importance in the lives of others, he capitalizes on his position as a teacher by asking Jefferson, his former student, to self-investigate and reveal “what he's thinking deep in him” (100). As a result, “Jefferson's Diary,” the personal notebook that Jefferson keeps as a result of Grant's

appeal for him to write as a means of understanding himself, becomes the “memory” and voice that Miss Emma so desperately needs to help alleviate the grief of losing her godson. The diary also becomes the physical record that Gaines hopes will help convert the lives of its readers and make them more cognizant of their inner selves. More importantly, however, the diary becomes the document that stands as a testimony that Grant’s impending change results from his acceptance of the wisdom of the women with whom he not only forges a psychological bond but an emotional one as well.

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Are We Shor We're Empowering Our Students?:

Questioning the Effects of De-centering Authority with Underprivileged Students

Penelope Quade, Ohio State University

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Introduction: Moving to the Head of the Class

Democracy is a way of personal life controlled not merely by faith in human nature in general but by faith in the capacity of human beings for intelligent judgment and action if proper conditions are furnished.

-- John Dewey

When I walked into my Composition classroom on the first day of the semester, I didn't have classroom policies or a reading list. During my practicum, which met the week before I started my graduate studies, I'd been introduced to Ira Shor's book *Empowering Education: Critical Teaching for Social Change*, which focuses on de-centering teacher authority to get students more empowered by their education. My professor suggested we give our students a chance to help design the course, as Shor does with his students, as a way of making our classrooms student-centered from the very beginning. Since I liked the idea of breaking away from the "banking method" Paulo Friere condemns (Shor 31-32), I decided the students would have a democratic hand in creating a course specific to their needs and interests.

I began by asking the students what kind of attendance policy they thought was fair for this type of course. Hands shot up with lightning speed. Not too surprisingly, most suggested that we have no attendance policy at all, but I didn't feel comfortable giving them *that* much freedom. Besides, the university had its own policy that a student would automatically fail after twenty absences. When my students decided to adopt the university's lax attendance standard as our own, I cringed a little, but my students were talking and actively engaging in their education. I didn't want to stifle this by riding in on my broomstick and demanding they recognize this as a

college course that would require adult responsibility. I felt a little better, though, once we moved on to deciding how we should handle making up missed work. The students felt they should only be allowed to make up work if, prior to their absence, they provided extenuating circumstances for missing class, such as a doctor's appointment or court appearance. This seemed stricter than anything I'd been subjected to as undergraduate, but with their lenient attendance policy, this evened things out a bit. At the end of class, I felt pretty pleased with the seemingly well-balanced set of policies we'd come up with. I was happy the students had taken an active role in setting their own rules, and they appeared to be excited about the class in general. I was looking forward to the enthralling conversations I knew we'd have based on the way my students handled determining their classroom policies.

Despite my enthusiasm, however, as the semester progressed, I couldn't help but notice things weren't playing out the way Shor had described the student-centered classrooms in his book. Even though I'd begun the semester by saying this was not a lecture-based course but one that would be focused on student participation and input, I found the same five students regularly volunteering to contribute to our daily discussions. And while I was encouraged by the insightful conversations we were having, I longed to hear from the other fourteen students who resisted my direct inquiries by shrugging and mumbling that they didn't have anything else to add that hadn't already been said. I was frustrated even more by the uninspired, poorly written assignments I kept collecting from my silent students, which paled in comparison to those of the more outspoken and accomplished students.

Attendance got to be quite a problem as well. In the sixth week with already forty-seven absences, I decided, as Shor did in his own classroom, to revisit the issue with my students for renegotiation (161). The day I planned to discuss amending our attendance policy, we had ten of nineteen present. Despite my argument that it was unfair that those who regularly attended class

were doing a lot more work than those who were frequently absent, my students maintained that there should be no policy. They felt the in-class work that couldn't be made up served as an equalizer, and they were right in that respect. However, I was still uncomfortable having an attendance policy that seemed to encourage skipping class. Consequently, we came up with a compromise that allowed me to arbitrarily assign extra credit for attendance on whatever days I choose. As the semester progressed, I had a sinking suspicion that my attendance policy was doing a disservice to those not accustomed to having such lenient rules.

One student, in particular, ended up failing my course after missing twenty-eight sessions. The last time I saw Michael¹⁷, in mid-October, he handed in an assignment that was directly copied from the Internet. He was in class on the first day but wasn't active in deciding our policies; he was absent on the day I renegotiated attendance as well. As a non-traditional, minority student with weak writing skills, he was probably my most underprivileged student. A week into the semester, he disappeared and finally resurfaced, two weeks later, the day our first essay was due. After class, he explained that he had been incarcerated for contempt of court and wanted to know if he could turn in his essay late, but the class had decided, while determining classroom policies, that late work would not be accepted. I felt powerless. We talked that day about considering whether this was the best time for him to take my course, but since he couldn't withdraw without dropping below full-time status and losing financial aid, he said he'd do the best he could from that point forward. Michael's attendance became a running joke among the other students until he stopped coming altogether.

I've often wondered if the optional attendance policy my students democratically fashioned gave my underprivileged students, who barely made it into college in the first place, the impression that coming to class everyday wasn't that important. I don't think de-centering

¹⁷ Student's name has been changed to provide anonymity.

my authority was empowering my underprivileged students, who were not as good at “playing school” as my better students were. As a matter of fact, I felt it was reinforcing the power structures that already existed between the “good” students, who knew how to properly function in a classroom, and the “bad” students, who were coming closer everyday to maintaining the atrocious drop-out rate.

While others have questioned the use of critical pedagogy—like the one Shor suggests in *Empowering Education*—based on the politically biased and often hostile environment it seems to produce (Maxine Hairston, Russel Durst, and Ellen Cushman to name a few), my criticism is focused on how such a pedagogy may actually exacerbate the marginalization of underprivileged students instead of elevating them to a position of power. By de-centering teacher authority and handing it over to our students, as Shor suggests, it seems more likely that those who have come to understand the hierarchal structure of “playing school” and are already able to maneuver within those unspoken boundaries will continue to be empowered as the elite, while those barely able to function within the confines of the traditional classroom, let alone the democratic one, will struggle to find a place to stand and will consequently maintain their disempowered role at the bottom of society.

De-centering in Shor’s Terms

In order to have a large number of values in common, all the members of the group must have an equal opportunity to receive and to take from others. There must be a large variety of shared undertakings and experiences. Otherwise, the influences which educate some into masters, educate others into slaves.

-- John Dewey

As a graduate student and newly initiated member of the field, Ira Shor’s *Empowering Education* became the core of my educational training during my first semester as a Composition instructor. Most of our practicum centered on Shor’s book, and our professor encouraged us to

integrate Shor's theory into our own classrooms. Up to that point, my only teaching experience stemmed from volunteer work as a PSR teacher at a local Catholic church, where I taught students who, despite my efforts to make things fun, detested coming to class each week. I could relate when Shor complained about students who "came to class wary and uninspired, expecting the teacher to tell them what to do and to lecture them on what things mean" (1), and I wanted things to be different for my freshman. Like Shor, I questioned how I could "convince them to use their brains in school" (1).

Shor claims that the traditional classrooms our students have matriculated from indoctrinate them with the belief that "unilateral authority is the normal way things are done in society. They are introduced in school to the reality of management holding dominant, unelected power" (19). Like the expendable masses working in our economy who have a limited say in employee benefits and compensation, Shor says "[s]tudents don't expect to negotiate such things as their grades, their homework, their rules for speaking in a classroom, the length of their papers. Teacher-centered schooling has given them few choices and little experience in democracy" (157). To counter this passive experience our students bring to the classroom, Shor suggests a student-centered environment in which the teacher leads the class "but does so democratically with the participation of the students, balancing the need for structure with the need for openness. The teacher brings the lesson plans, learning methods, personal experience, and academic knowledge to class but negotiates the curriculum with the students and begins with their language, themes, and understandings" (16).

Shor demonstrates de-centering authority in his own classroom by showing students in one of his literature classes debating their attendance policy, an example I'm grateful for given my own experiences with this very issue. Shor's students, like my own, argued that attendance should not be required; they felt they could do the same quality of work on their own outside of

class and that attending in such circumstances was a waste of time (27). Shor responded, “Is there nothing special to be gained by students and teachers meeting in class to talk over ideas? How often in life do you set aside time just for intellectual growth?” (27). I made a similar comment, though not as eloquently stated, to my own students when they suggested the same policy, and like Shor’s students, they were not persuaded by my argument. However, Shor didn’t stop with his initial argument and accept his students’ proposal, like I had, but went on to make a case for required attendance:

I argued for a required attendance because I was, as I told them, committed to a mutual learning community, a concept I briefly explained, but I offered them the right at any moment to complain, object, protest, and announce that they were bored, impatient, angry, or unhappy with the process. I said that when they felt bad about the class, they should speak up, explain why, and suggest a change in the day’s work or syllabus, which we would then discuss. (27)

Not too surprisingly, the students accepted this proposal, though Shor mentioned they did modify it slightly by adding in allowable absences and lateness.

It’s interesting that Shor’s students were more apt to acquiesce to his suggestion while mine so easily ignored my pleadings for required attendance. I can’t help but question whether this is because Shor’s presence, as a male, tenured professor, commands more power than my own as an inexperienced, female graduate student. In “Rend(er)ing Women’s Authority in the Writing Classroom,” Michelle Payne claims that she experienced similar problems as a female graduate teaching assistant who

already commands from most students less authority and power than a man, yet who has embraced pedagogies and post-structuralist theories that decenter authority, and who also sees the value of ‘apprenticing’ students into the

academy, asking students to question my authority was overwhelming at best, debilitating at worst. (103)

Like Payne, I saw the benefit of centering the classroom on the students' interests and giving them power to help create a course that would meet their needs as writers, but because I had given them so much power in the beginning of the semester, I felt powerless to make changes that I knew needed to be made later on. Unfortunately, Shor does not discuss situations in which he needed to reassert his authority in the classroom, and perhaps this is because it was never questioned in the first place.

I also find it worth noting that Shor walked into his classroom with a desired goal in mind—the students agreeing to required attendance—rather than approaching them with a blank slate, as I had done in a sincere effort to create the curriculum *with* my students. Because his students eventually adopted the policy he proposed, I'm also forced to question whether he was really de-centering his authority. Shor does say “[e]mpowerment does not mean students can do whatever they like in the classroom” (16), but I have a hard time finding the *student* authority in the attendance policy adopted by Shor's class.

Though my attention is directed toward Ira Shor's de-centering philosophy, he is not the first to suggest we should transfer some of our power over to the students in order to create a more democratic classroom. For instance, Stephen Fishman and Lucille McCarthy claim that “John Dewey envisioned the classroom as a vehicle for social change, emphasizing ways in which classrooms could foster the cooperative and community-building skills he believed necessary for inclusive and participatory democracy” (223). In his 1916 article “The Democratic Conception in Education,” Dewey writes

A society which makes provision for participation in its good of all its members on equal terms and which secures flexible readjustment of its institutions through

interaction of the different forms of associated life is in so far democratic. Such a society must have a type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and the habits of mind which secure social changes without introducing disorder. (99)

Shor also calls on some of Dewey's writings when he points out that "[d]emocracy, as [Dewey] insisted, is a process of open communication and mutual governance in a community of shared power, where all members have a chance to express ideas, to frame purposes, and to act on intentions" (136).

The similarities between Dewey's pedagogical philosophy and those expressed by Shor in *Empowering Education* are easy to see. However, Shor deviates from Dewey's techniques by structuring his classes around political viewpoints, like his claim that "general elections have become an alienating process that discourages people from voting" (19), and advocating focusing students' writing on topical themes, which are "not generated directly from the students' conversation" but are "raised in class by the teacher" (55). According to Fishman and McCarthy, Dewey's goals, on the other hand, "focus on the development of certain habits and dispositions rather than on the acquisition of a fixed body of knowledge or belief," and he "would oppose teachers who have static pedagogical ends, for example, particular political positions they want students to adopt before leaving their classrooms" (228). Since the world is always changing, Dewey sees politicizing in the classroom as too focused on the *product* of education rather than the *process*:

[Education] is a process of development, of growth. And it is the *process* and not merely the result that is important. A truly healthy person is not something fixed and completed. He is a person whose processes and activities go on in such a way that he will continue to be healthy. Similarly an educated person is the person

who has the power to go on and get more education. (qtd in “Teaching for Student Change” 229)

In *Writing Without Teachers*, Peter Elbow describes yet another version of a de-centered classroom, one that Susan Jarratt claims is “revolutionary . . . in its feminization of the male writing teacher” (110). However, Jarratt questions Elbow’s theory in relation to how a female student or teacher will be affected by the “believing game” he endorses in order to create an environment where everybody’s voice is heard:

A gender-sensitive reading of Elbow’s rhetoric of belief shows it to be the feminization of a masculinist discourse of logic. That is, if taken to heart by a man, it would really help a male listener experience a female discourse. But for a female listener, the effect is much different. In Lacanian terms, Elbow is taking the position of castration, but because woman is already castrated in patriarchal discourse, placing a female reader in the position of castration . . . is doubly disempowering. (117)

From a feminist viewpoint, Jarratt claims that Elbow’s pedagogy reinforces the powerless role women have in both the classroom and society. She argues that “[r]emoving the teacher from the center of the classroom—away from the authoritative position as the source of knowledge—is a postmodern move . . . [b]ut the transformative potential of expressive pedagogy has to be evaluated in the light of the broader political implications of the theory” (109). Her main concern is for women who find themselves forced back into the submissive role society has carved out for them.

Though Jarratt’s argument is directed primarily at expressivists who try to avoid the banking method Freire condemns, her logic can be just as easily applied to critical pedagogues who are trying to empower their students by relinquishing teacher authority. Shor’s attempt to

empower students through de-centering his authority could silence and disempower some underprivileged students, especially those who may not feel comfortable participating in curriculum negotiations—and therefore end up performing poorly in a course that has been designed by the more successful students. Where Jarratt worries that female students will be “doubly disempowered” by Elbow’s castrating “believing game,” my concern is for the less-privileged students who find themselves in a classroom that indirectly reinforces the power structures they see at play everywhere else in the world—society being sculpted around the voices of those most comfortable participating while the voiceless are left no choice but to follow or rebel. It’s almost as if they’re being set up to fail.

Problems with De-centering Authority for Underprivileged Students

A society which is mobile. . . must see to it that its members are educated to personal initiative and adaptability. Otherwise, they will be overwhelmed by the changes in which they are caught and whose significance or connections they do not perceive. The result will be a confusion in which a few will appropriate to themselves the results of the blind and externally directed activities of others.

-- John Dewey

Though she was leveling an attack against the process movement, Lisa Delpit’s article “The Silenced Dialogue: Power and Pedagogy in Educating Other People’s Children” offers insightful commentary on a working-class student’s approach to education and how that might complicate the belief of “many liberal educators¹⁸ . . . that the primary goal for education is for children to become autonomous, to develop fully who they are in the classroom setting without having arbitrary, outside standards forced upon them” (88). Delpit found that the parents of underprivileged students wanted more than what liberal educators aimed to offer; they wanted

¹⁸ Delpit uses the term “liberal” not in regards to one’s political alignment but to refer to “those whose beliefs include striving for a society based upon maximum individual freedom and autonomy” (87).

“to ensure that the school provides their children with discourse patterns, interactional styles, and spoken and written language codes that will allow them success in the larger society” (88). In other words, they wanted their children to learn how to successfully function within not only the academy but the outside world as well by learning the discourse of those in power. In order to do this, Delpit suggests “that schools must provide these children the content that other families from a different cultural orientation provide at home. This does not mean separating children according to family background, but instead, ensuring that each classroom incorporate strategies appropriate for all the children in its confines” (89).

As it related to the process movement, which sought to liberate students from the oppressive, dull, and uninspired discourse of the academy, Delpit’s pragmatic argument called educators to recognize the needs and limitations of the cultural subjectivities each student brought to the classroom and educate them accordingly. Worried that the expressivists did not provide enough direction to students who were “not already [participants] in the culture of power,” Delpit argued that teachers needed to explicitly educate these students about the rules of the privileged culture to make acquiring a position of power easier for these students (85).

We can take Delpit’s argument and just as easily apply it to the de-centered classroom Shor suggests we adopt. Delpit claims that “[s]ome children come to school with more accoutrements of the culture of power already in place—‘cultural capital,’ as some critical theorists refer to it . . .—some with less” (88). Delpit calls us to educate our underprivileged students on how to function within academic discourse, the discourse of power, something she claims expressive pedagogies fail to do.

Shor acknowledges the deficit underprivileged students possess but claims academic discourse cannot be made explicit or “drilled into the *bulk* of students to make them academic achievers and job-market successes” (108). I agree with Shor that certain codes, such as those

that govern our language and how we maneuver within the cultural power structures, cannot be made into bricks that we can pass on to our students, a solution Delpit seems to imply. However, I think it is naïve to believe that by de-centering our authority underprivileged students will naturally come to understand and function within these *still* unspoken codes, that they will somehow find a voice that will enable them to become “academic achievers and job-market successes” because we’ve attempted to give them an equal voice in an isolated, fifteen week course. Delpit conveys a similar concern among African American teachers during the process movement who commented that “as much as they’d like to believe otherwise, they cannot help but conclude that many of the ‘progressive’ educational strategies imposed by liberals upon Black and poor children could only be based on a desire to ensure that the liberals’ children get sole access to the dwindling pool of American jobs” (88). While I’m certain this is not Shor’s intent, even on a subconscious level, I worry that he has failed to recognize some of the hazards of de-centering teacher authority when it comes to underprivileged students.

While Shor points out that the traditional classroom allows “[u]pwardly mobile individuals [to] make headway partly because of their tolerance for teacher-talk and their patience in awaiting future payoffs, and partly because the huge numbers of peers left behind *do not rise with them*, and thus do not overtax the limited rewards in the job market” (109), he fails to see how his own de-centered classroom may do the same. Just as we cannot have a *true* democracy until all members of a society freely participate, students in a de-centered classroom will not be *fully* empowered until they are *all* comfortable taking part in designing the structure and determining the direction of the course. Underprivileged students may need more explicit direction than Shor is willing to offer in his student-centered curriculum.

Though he does mention that very few of his minority students were inclined to speak in class despite his efforts to get them involved (6), he seems to dismiss these quiet students as

passive by saying:

I think some prefer to be lectured at in a way that avoids adjusting to new social relations in the classroom. Lecture classes require less student participation. They are less challenging than problem-posing dialogue. It is easier for students to miss a lecture than a workshop discussion because a friend can take lecture notes for them to catch up on. Lecture classes are also easier to sleep through or to do homework in because the teacher is not looking at the students as closely or expecting as much participation as in a discussion. (158-159)

Shor makes a rather one-sided assumption about the students who don't participate in his class by implying that the only reason they choose to remain silent is because they want to recede into the background. Delpit offers an alternative view in regards to how an underprivileged, working-class student might perceive a teacher so willing to relinquish his power to the students: "The Black child may perceive the middle-class teacher as weak, ineffectual, and incapable of taking on the role of being the teacher; therefore, there is no need to follow her directives" (93). In such a situation, Delpit claims "the teacher may not view the problem as residing in herself but in the student, and the child may once again become the behavior-disordered Black boy in special education" (93). Shor ought to consider more carefully whether his quiet students are responding to what they may perceive as his lack as an educator. He may have inadvertently put his resistant students into the *bad-student* box when in actuality they may feel "cheated" and "completely turned off to the educational system" of an instructor who has "denied them access to [himself] as the source of knowledge necessary to learn from forms they need to succeed" (Delpit 90-91).

I offer yet another alternative view to the silent, underprivileged student that neither Shor nor Delpit adequately addresses. If we consider our students' previous experience with their education as spending their whole lives being indoctrinated with the power structures of both

their school and society, we have to consider whether the underprivileged student will suddenly be able to flourish in an environment that strives to give everybody an equal voice. It seems more likely that the students who already excel will dominate classroom discussion, as my best five students did, while the less-than-perfect students will be silenced by an intimidating fear of looking stupid because they don't know what to say or how to manipulate the discourse of power to adequately convey their meaning.

A Pragmatic Approach to De-centering Authority

Education means the creation of a discriminating mind, a mind that prefers not to dupe itself or to be the dupe of others. . . . [It means] the habit of suspending judgment, of skepticism, of desire for evidence, of appeal to observation rather than sentiment, discussion rather than bias, inquiry rather than conventionalized idealizations.

-- John Dewey

Just as Michelle Payne hesitates to offer direct suggestions for responding to student essays about abuse in *Bodily Discourses* (120), I am hesitant to suggest a clear-cut solution to the problem of classroom authority. In *John Dewey and the Challenge of Classroom Practice*, Fishman and McCarthy write that “although many of us agree that a more inclusive society, one which encourages individual growth in accord with the betterment of the least advantaged, is desirable, deciding which classroom structures best help us to achieve this goal is not easy” (63).

By de-centering our authority, Shor claims we're sharing our power with the students, giving them an equal say in curriculum development and classroom discussion. However, I would argue that until we develop a pedagogy that will enable *all* voices to speak, not only those already accustomed to speaking, we are simply reinforcing the power structures students possess when they walk into our classrooms by blindly distributing our power and blaming the students who don't succeed for being too passive and resistant to change.

I cannot help but feel largely responsible for Michael's failure in my own class. If I had taken a more direct approach with him, demanding he miss no more classes and meet with me weekly to bring his skills up to the scholastic level of his peers, he might have come much closer to accessing the power I was trying to share with him. By dogmatically adhering to Shor's theories of empowerment—or admittedly, my limited understanding of them—I failed to see my working-class students' real needs. I foolishly believed that I had to *either* surrender my classroom authority to my students *or* risk reinforcing the oppressive power structures already present in our society. A turn to John Dewey's educational philosophy, however, reveals a plethora of alternatives that he believes are central to creating a truly democratic classroom.

Fishman and McCarthy claim that Dewey's "distrust of either-or choices, and [his] attempt to integrate apparently contradictory positions, is both a continuing theme and an organizing structure of his work" (15). Dewey worked to "nest the dualisms" at play in the world looking for the underlying connections between either-or situations:

He offers us, not a series of truths about reality . . . but a method, a set of categories or questions with which to probe any perplexing situation. Faced with a problem . . . Dewey's approach leads us to ask: What are the dichotomous activities at work in our situation? How might they be better integrated and balanced? In other words, Dewey's approach helps us attend to the conflicting activities within our dilemma and to approach our problem with the goal of reconciling its underlying forces. (17)

Looking back at my experiences trying to integrate Shor's de-centered philosophy into my own classroom, I can see where I failed to critically question how Shor's theory would function in my classroom—a particular setting that can never be replicated. I did not consider how de-centering my authority as an inexperienced, female graduate student would be vastly different from Shor's

experience as a male, tenured, and highly-respected professor. Nor did I consider how my students' experiences would differ from those Shor discusses in *Empowering Education*.

In their article "On Becoming a Reflective Teacher," Carl Grant and Kenneth Zeichner claim that "over a hundred years of educational research has yet to discover the most effective instructional methods and school and classroom organization structures for all students" (90). I would respond that we have not found that coveted utopian method because there is no *one* right way to teach *all* students. The search for such a method is not only futile but leads to a dogmatic approach to teaching that will inevitably limit some students while privileging others. Lisa Delpit claims that teachers "who are most skillful at educating Black and poor children do not allow themselves to be placed in "skills" or "process" boxes. They understand the need for both approaches, the need to help students to establish their own voices, but to coach those voices to produce notes that will be heard clearly in the larger society" (100). In other words, they employ Dewey's pragmatic methods for constantly questioning the effects their methods have on their particular students. They "nest the dualisms." Similarly, I would argue our working-class and underprivileged students need more than the *chance* to have an equal voice in our classrooms. They need us, as their educators, to take an individual look at the subjected particulars of our classrooms, our students, and ourselves to determine how much power and responsibility should be surrendered in each specific case. If we don't approach our classrooms in this fashion, we risk becoming slaves to theory and failing our students when they need our direction most.

Perhaps the most frustrating conclusion that can be drawn from my experience is that there is no clear-cut method to handling classroom authority that is guaranteed to empower *every* student. If we assume Shor's theory works and that I simply implemented it incorrectly, we hazard accepting Shor's philosophy "blindly, on the basis of authority, tradition, fancy, or superstition"—a blunder Fishman and McCarthy claim Dewey cautions us to avoid (*Challenge*

of Classroom Practice 25). For Dewey, we should *never* stop questioning our methods or the theories we adhere to: “The process of growth, of improvement and progress, rather than the static outcome and result become the significant thing. . . . Not perfection as a final goal, but the ever-enduring process of perfecting, maturing, refining is the aim in living” (qtd in *Challenge of Classroom Practice* 27). In so doing, we not only empower ourselves by owning our pedagogical methods and tailoring them to *our* experiences but, by questioning the applicability of theories in our classrooms, we also move closer to providing an educational environment that empowers our students by matching their *individual* needs with our teaching methods.

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