

**LHJ**  
The Lincoln Humanities Journal

Fall 2013/ Volume 1

Representations  
of  
Passion  
in the  
Humanities

**Abbes Maazaoui, Editor**



*Follow Your Passion*

# **Follow Your Passion**

## **Representations of Passion in the Humanities**

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## ABSTRACTS

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### **On Writing “The Grubbing Hoe, An Ethno-Journalistic Memoir”: The Transformative Power of Personal History**

*Cheryl Renée Gooch*

Many journalism educators and scholars write reflectively as journalists, essayists and commentators, traversing prescribed academic writing styles that require us to suppress our true voices. This article presents excerpts from a book-in-progress that chronicles six generations of my family history from slavery to the present and explores how blending ethnography, journalism and genealogy help to capture a complex social story spanning about 150 years. A journalist and researcher, initially I approached this subject with detached scholar’s eye, honing into research articles and archival materials covering the socio-political contexts of the post-Civil War and turn of the century eras, trying to interpret how the Reconstruction and northward migrations shaped the experiences of my ancestors. The archival materials enkindled an interest in genealogy and soon I was immersed in Census records, voting registrations, birth and marriage records, chattel mortgages, estate papers, and even burial entries, excavating the personal stories behind official versions of history. Upon finding a slaveholder’s inventory listing my great-great-great grandfather, along with animals and farming tools, with a probate value of \$300, I realized another more intimate approach would be necessary to pursue, interpret, and tell this story. In that fateful moment, I became the writer of this ethno-journalistic memoir.

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### **Passion as Obsession in Cervantes’ *El Celoso Extremeño* (*The Jealous Extremaduran*)**

*Ezra S. Engling*

The Spanish honor theme was part of the social, literary and theatrical landscape of Cervantes’ time. In this code, the woman was the repository of family honor, and the discovery, or even suspicion, of any interaction with passion often meant death, social and physical. The male fear of cuckoldry was so archetypally ingrained that the men resorted to extraordinary precautions. Cervantes’ *El celoso extremeño* (1613) was probably the first Golden Age narrative to cast this psychological or metaphorical male fear of penetration into startlingly dramatic relief. Septuagenarian Carrizales, is one such male. He marries the beautiful teenager Leonora, and quickly imprisons her in a monstrous insult to Moorish architecture, complete with a Negro eunuch (the only other “male” thing in the

house) as sentinel. As this fortress morphs into a character in its own right, it reveals itself as a weapon of mass distraction from Carrizales' own sexual inadequacy and physical decrepitude. Far from deterring the profane gaze of outsiders, the unusual structure attracts the attention of Loaysa, the picture of youthful masculine vitality and sex appeal. This interloper soon discovers the treasure hidden within, and penetrates the structure. Carrizales worst fears are realized, and the shock nearly kills him. Notwithstanding the surprise ending, the moral of this exemplary tale is that attempting to regulate passion can incite desire, and create other problems, which defeats the original intention.

*Keywords: honor, jealousy, obsession, novella, passion*

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## **The Body and the Passion of Transsexual Discourse in *Arias de Don Giovanni***

*Myron Alberto Ávila*

While sex and gender research aims to explain aspects of an identity, the queer body challenges and destabilizes every notion of identity. What does it mean to inhabit the body perceived as inadequate for one's gender and/or sexual identity? What implications are there when the subject *desires* a body whose characteristics differ sexually, just so he/she can fully become queer, in terms of sexual practice? This is what the transsexual protagonist of *Arias de Don Giovanni* ("Don Giovanni's Arias," 2010), a novel by Guatemalan Arturo Arias, ponders during a mad love affair with a Lesbian womanizer.

In a saga that is both history-aware and gender-minded, Arias' novel explores many junctions of a queer bodily identity. It is also the very first of its kind published in Guatemala, a country where a "queer" literature does not exist *per se*. Moreover, in an exercise of joyfully passionate, liberating sex poetics, the queer body of the protagonist—a boy who grew up to become a woman, just so *she* could be the Lesbian *he* knew *she* always was— engages a process which studies the politics of a repressed queer body (indeed, its socially-anomalous *corps-état*) while also contemplating Guatemala's historically repressive body of politics.

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## **Aesthetic of Passion in the Nineteenth Century**

*Nadia Bongo*

Nineteenth century is regarded as the century of passion. This desire of possession thrives through dark themes and fatal outcomes. But these fictions don't necessarily reveal passion, for it is primarily an aesthetic for many

Romantic writers. I explore that aesthetic through Stendhal's *The Charterhouse of Parma* and Balzac's *Sarrasine*.

Romantic characters are archetypes chasing archetypes. Stereotypical behaviours such as extreme modesty, "la fuite attirante", real or symbolic virginity arouse the hero's desire. Women are caught between a split figure, the virginal and the sensual, due to a combination of the hero's delusion, society's Doxa and the writer's vision of femininity. It leads the eponymous hero of *Sarrasine* to transform a man into a woman.

Furthermore, the aesthetic of passion revolves around typical scenes and settings. Places such as a stage, a prison, or a tower, emphasize beauty and danger. Moreover, a very euphemistic language (Euphemism, ellipses, transposition) participates in the aesthetic of passion. Eroticism comes across through detours and ellipses. An artistic discourse veils erotic depictions. It conveys the strength of passion hence the glamorization of controversial behaviours.

In the end, the aesthetic of passion still influences modern pieces that exploit or subvert idealistic and dated visions of women and love.

*Keywords: Passion, 19<sup>th</sup> century, aesthetic, influence, language*

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## **The Heart of a Nun: Passion and Spirituality in Úrsula Suárez and Rose of Lima**

*Jimena Castro Godoy*

This paper discusses the work of two nuns of the colonial period in South America. Their names are Rose of Lima (Peru, 1586-1617) and Úrsula Suárez (Chile, 1666-1749). They both lived devoted to Christ, their Divine Husband, and dedicated their literary work to him. While Ursula wrote about how Jesus spoke to her and showed her his love, Rose wrote about her relationship with Jesus, but in terms of images, drawing her own heart attacked by God's love. The purpose of this paper is to give a description and contextualization of their work to demonstrate that these two nuns use images to outsource their spirituality that is exceeded by the greatness of the mystical experience. Due to this overwhelming experience, the vehicle for these images turns up being their own bodies, the place where the pathos really occurs. I will focus specifically on the figure of the heart that is represented in the work of these two nuns, and which summarizes all the elements that lead us to believe that Ursula and Rose lived a passionate and an extreme spirituality.

*Keywords: Mysticism, Rose of Lima, Úrsula Suárez, Colonial period, Latin American literature*

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## **Maintaining Native Heritage: Songs Based on the Poetry of Alex Posey**

*Kirsten C. Kunkle*

Alexander Posey is arguably the most famous of all Muscogee poets. During his lifetime, he worked as a journalist, editor, and poet, all while attempting to maintain his Native American heritage during the Dawes Commission. Posey was consistently divided between finding success in the European American world by writing in English about acceptable topics, such as nature, and maintaining his passion for the continuation of his Native ideals by writing in dialect about Native history and politics.

Being a descendent of Alexander Posey, I continue to work toward bridging the gap between modern society and maintaining the Muscogee culture in the field of music. I commissioned a series of new compositions by composers from a variety of inspirations and backgrounds with the goal of blending Posey's poetry with the standards of classical song to create western art music that maintains the cultural heritage of the Muscogee Nation. The end result was a world premiere of sixteen songs by one Native American and eight European American composers, all based on the works of Posey, a major Native American poet, culminating in a "melting pot" of western classical music styles.

Posey's influence on Native American writing bridges a gap between the Native American and European American world. The goal of the premiere was to do the same for Posey's poetry, once set to music. The focus of this article is on the songs themselves, as opposed to Posey's life and influence, which has already been well documented. The majority of the article is based upon my own assessment of each song, as well as interviews from the composers.

Keywords: *American, Composer, Native, Posey, Song*

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## **The Characters of Pauline in *Tracks* and *Beloved* as Means of Reminding Readers of America's History**

*Marie Nigro*

Sometimes it is easy for us to close our eyes and forget, or to pretend that something that happened in the past doesn't matter anymore. However, through their novels *Beloved* and *Tracks*, Toni Morrison and Louise Erdrich have made forgetting the past or ignoring it much more difficult. They have provided stinging rebuttals to the persistent American myths of the "Glory of winning the West" and "It's gone, so let's put slavery behind us." Through the characters of Pauline in *Tracks* and Beloved in *Beloved*, the authors place before the reader the awful reality of the colonization of Native Americans and the unforgettable horrors of slavery.

## **The Birdcage Effect in *Pride and Prejudice* and *The Awakening***

*Grace Chikwem*

This analysis of the birdcage effect in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* explores the effect of marriage on the lives of the characters Elizabeth and Edna. It sees the underlying problem for both women as the birdcage mentality, imposed on them by society, which pressures them into believing that marriage is their only option. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr. and Mrs. Bennet serve as examples of the negative effect of the birdcage mentality. Although they are incompatible, they married for the sake of security and social acceptability. They are passing this mentality on to their daughters; however, Elizabeth refuses to give in and insists on marrying only for love. In *The Awakening*, Edna gave in to the birdcage mentality, married Leonce Pontellier and had two children; however, she is awakened to the fact that she is desperately unhappy in her role as wife and mother, and after unsuccessfully attempting to liberate herself, suicide becomes her only means of escape from the birdcage.

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## Introduction: The World of Passions

ABBES MAAZAOU  
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In a world dominated by instant gratification and constant change, it may seem anachronistic to write about passion. If we can befriend and unfriend hundreds of (digital) people as fast as our Twitter and Facebook connection allows us to do, it seems more fitting to talk about the death of passion, for the concept of passion connotes both intensity and extended duration, two features that modern life has significantly curtailed. Yet it is easy to recognize that, nowadays, passion has become a ubiquitous concept: it is not uncommon to hear people talk freely about their own passion, whether it is for a sport, a type of music, or a particular kind of gadget. As daily life feels dull and too regimented, passion stands as a symbol of our zest for life and an expression of our enthusiasm and commitment<sup>1</sup>. It allows us to find meaning in, and give value to, our own lives.

So, what is passion? How do we experience and recognize passion, our own and those of others? How has passion been appreciated as an instrument of knowledge and an essential feature of life itself? Such questions have been an enduring subject of theory and debate since ancient times. Yet they continue to puzzle thinkers of all stripes. Because of its inherent complexity, the polyvalence of passion is better traced through a historical perspective than a typological approach. To undertake this overview, I will focus on examples from the French philosophical and literary tradition.

### Descartes

In addition to the Christian theology of passion in reference to the suffering of Jesus on the cross, the concept of passion until the 17<sup>th</sup> century was inherited mostly from the Greeks and the Arabs. Passion was defined as a violent and painful disease of the soul; as such it was believed to weaken the will and the ability to make sound judgments. In fact, passion was initially defined, in contrast to *logos*<sup>2</sup>, as a synonym of irrationality, disorder, darkness, madness, death and slavery. The most common passions included hate, fear, anger, hope, envy, greed, ambition, revenge, and sexual desire. Passions were considered dangerous. The classical metaphors of “fire,” “flame” and “*Coup de foudre*” (literally “lightning strike” for “love at first sight”)--used to refer plainly to passionate love--highlight the destructive character of passion, and by extension

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<sup>1</sup> Alina Tugend writes for *The New York Times*: “If there is one word I’m rapidly growing tired of, it’s passion. Not the sex and love type, but the workplace kind. Lately, it seems, I keep hearing career counselors advising the unemployed to identify and develop their passion. Then they need to turn that passion into paid work and presto! They’re now in a career they love. I know I’m being somewhat flippant, but I do wonder if passion is being oversold. Are we falling into a trap of believing that our work, and indeed, our lives, should always be fascinating and all-consuming? Are we somehow lacking if we’re bored at times or buried under routine tasks or failing to challenge ourselves at every turn?” (September 25, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> “Logos” in Greek refers to reason, order, harmony, clarity, universality, and life.

of all passions: they are all chaotic and excessive. The widely accepted attitude presupposed the need to eliminate, or at least dominate the passions. Etymologically speaking, a philosopher is a lover of wisdom, a sage who is free from passion, “someone without passion, and who could attain apathy” (Delon 994). Stoicism illustrates perfectly this ancient philosophical attempt at *a*-passionate life.

Descartes was among the first French philosophers to re-think the dynamics of passion. Adopting a mechanistic approach, he explained in his *Passions de l'âme* (Passions of the Soul) that passions are caused by the body and specifically by what he called the “animal spirits”, a kind of fluid particles that reside in the brain (17-18)<sup>1</sup>. As a physical phenomenon, passions can be observed, explained, controlled or cured and eventually enjoyed. However, even though Descartes changed the pathology of passion (the way we catch passions), he acknowledged, like the Greeks that reason must dominate and overpower passions. Only then can passions become useful to society:

I am not of the opinion [. . .] that we must be exempt from the passions; it is enough to have them surrender to reason, and once they are domesticated, they are sometimes most useful as they lean towards more excess." (*Correspondance* 287<sup>2</sup>; my translation)

Although passions are still considered an illness by Descartes, he granted them a place in the human pursuit of pleasure and happiness, provided that they are both strong (“more excess”) and treated (“controlled”). So, how to treat and prevent the affliction of passion? One way is to become a philosopher and use reason to control passions; another is going to a doctor: since passions are associated with bodily notions such as blockage, the treatment includes draining and cleaning of the arteries; another way is through art and theater.

Interestingly, in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, French classical theater provided a space where people could experience the impact of passions without suffering the consequences<sup>3</sup>. By observing the drama of incest, patricide, matricide, jealousy, murder, it was believed that the spectator could live vicariously and safely the traumatic consequences of passion. This risk-free experience of “phantoms of passions” is “the first foundation of society” for it allows cathartic purification to take place (Du Bos 39-40; 27; my translation). For instance, *Phèdre*, the famous tragedy by Racine, would function like a vaccine against incest or a vicarious psychotherapy session while providing entertainment, excitement, tension, admiration, and pity.

In short, according to Descartes, passions did not have to be suppressed; they only had to be rationalized and tamed.

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<sup>1</sup> Descartes talks about “les esprits animaux” In a sense, he was right: modern biochemical research indicates that the euphoria, optimism and happiness that we commonly experience when we first fall in love are caused by an increased level of specific chemical compounds “known for their mood lifting and energizing effect” (Jankowiak 3).

<sup>2</sup> Letter to Elisabeth, September 1, 1645.

<sup>3</sup> Classicism is a movement that seeks the expression of harmony and balance. Its challenge was how to express passion, a disruptive force, in a harmonious manner.

## Philosophers of Enlightenment

Like all other philosophers before them, philosophers of Enlightenment in the 18<sup>th</sup> century such as Diderot, Montesquieu and Voltaire, were interested in the passions. However, in general, they did not consider passion as a physical illness, but simply as an expression of subjectivity. In other words, passion was a normal expression of self, and of the emotions. Moreover, instead of designating all types of emotions, the word “passion” came to refer only to a lasting “dominant or great passion”, such as “the desire to command [power], to acquire [wealth], or to possess sexually” (Delon 995). Philosophers of Enlightenment believed that these passions (“private vices”) could be useful and generate “common good.” For instance, greed was recast as “love of gain”, and thus as essential to a prosperous civil society; gluttony was re-defined as the expression of a taste for luxury; and envy was refined as emulation and desire to compete, which are essential to progress. In short, various vicious passions have been morphed into virtues (Potkay 255).<sup>1</sup>

Hence, the concept of passion has undergone fundamental changes in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Passion did not need to be feared, suppressed, denied or rationalized. In fact, the ancient hierarchy between reason and passion changed somewhat: instead of being inferior to reason, passion was recognized as a valuable faculty as reason if not more. Furthermore, a new dichotomy appeared: calm passion versus violent passion. Fontenelle, who formulated many of the characteristic ideas of the Enlightenment, writes:

It is said that in the final analysis pilots fear calm waters through which navigation is impossible, and that they hope for wind, at the risk of storms. In human beings, the passions are the winds that are needed to put everything in motion, even though tempests often result. (Qtd. in Delon 995)

The ideal is “a calm and strong passion”. It was believed that such passions allow man “to act, create, and invent himself” (Delon 995). Diderot denounces in the opening passage of his *Pensées philosophiques* (1746; Philosophical Thoughts) the fact that “we endlessly denounce passions; we attribute all man's sufferings to them, and we forget that they are also the source of all pleasures” (1; my translation).

Be that as it may, philosophers of Enlightenment continued to believe that the physical expressions of passions should be monitored:

What characterizes mainly a civilized Nation is this useful discomfort that men develop toward the most sudden and reckless expressions of as much the soul as the body. These free and natural movements [if unchecked]

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<sup>1</sup> Another justification of passions is predicated on the belief that passions “assure a harmonious division of labor” in the sense that some people will aspire to political power, while others aspire to learning, while others to wealth. This division of labor allows for a proper functioning of society (Potkay 254).

would disturb indeed society and would result in blame. Therefore, care is taken to moderate them, and this care is such that men repress [only] the expressions of passions rather than the passions themselves. (Watelet 137-138; my translation)

This censorship of the manifestations of passion (not passion itself) has social and economic implications: the wealthier and the more educated a person is the more capable he is of reigning down on passions and more sophisticated or fake he can be. In a sense passions are found with the people, the common man who according to this theory, cannot control his emotion. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, another Philosopher of Enlightenment, could not agree more. In fact, he vehemently denounced the withering away of primordial passions, and the fact that modern cultures and civilizations have de-humanized society. In his view, by default Western culture in particular endorses and promotes artificiality and mimicry; thus, the proliferation of artificial emotions and feelings. To counter what he perceived as loss for/of humanity, Rousseau called for a return to nature, to primitive life, and to a natural (that is, innocent) expression of passion that is not spoiled by cultural refinement and civilization<sup>1</sup>. This new perspective has opened the door to a new understanding of passions and paved the way for 19<sup>th</sup> century French Romanticism.

## **Romanticism**

French Romantics quickly fell in love with the concept of passion as a positive force. For Chateaubriand, the savage nature allows to evoke human feelings, express and ignite desire, as well as mimic its force and violence. Following the examples of Rousseau and Chateaubriand, French Romantics glamorised emotion, imagination and passion. They became obsessed with passionate love in particular. The bliss to be in love and fantasize about the loved one (who preferably is absent or unattainable because of marriage, distance, death, or other circumstance such as in case of forbidden love) became the chief reason for Romantics to fall in love. In other words, passion itself became the object of passionate love. Such is the case of Delacroix according to Baudelaire:

Delacroix was passionately in love with passion, and unemotionally determined to find the means of expressing passion in the most visible manner. In this contradictory attitude . . . we find the two signs that characterize the most solid geniuses, extreme geniuses (My translation).

Embracing passion for the sake of passion! French Romantics did not stop at this form of tautology. Like Delacroix, they endeavored to demonstrate their “capacity to show evidence of burning, of being carried by [their] enthusiasms and frustrations” (Bomarito 208). They felt ecstatic about displaying their emotions and glorifying their own suffering. Mlle Lespinasse writes: “[I do not just love,] I

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<sup>1</sup> He spelled out his theory of “*l’homme sauvage*” in his *Discours sur l’origine et les fondements de l’inégalité parmi les hommes*.

do better, I know how to suffer”<sup>1</sup>. Suffering gained status; it was glorified not only as good, but also as beautiful, for it allows writing beautiful poetry. Musset writes famously in his *Nuit de Mai* <sup>2</sup>: “The most desperate songs are the most beautiful. / And I know immortal [songs] that are pure tears” (v.151-152; 304-309; my translation).

With French Romanticism, passion achieves at once an all-favorable metaphysical, ethical, and poetic recognition, leading to a total rehabilitation of the right to not only feel the passions but also express them.

### **Proust and the Modern Era**

This Romantic vision of passion has endured and has become the standard in the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>3</sup>. In his masterpiece, *A la recherche du temps perdu* (In Search of Lost Time), Marcel Proust reactivated and synthesized all the meanings of passion that I have mentioned so far: not only as a mental illness, a physical sickness (“*l’amour-maladie*”), and a source of pleasure and destruction<sup>4</sup>, but also as a kindle for the imagination, a source of powerful literary inspiration and an engine of creativity. This power of emotions structures all aspects of life and art. It suffices here to say that the intense intimate experiences Marcel had with words (*iris*, *nénufar*, *Madeleine*, etc.), names (such as Balbec and Venise), and people (for example La duchesse de Guermantes and Swann) as well as the revealing emotions he felt toward his parents and their friends (Swann and Legrandin) all conspired to make him the writer he was becoming, and provided the substance that subsequently constituted the novel. It is no surprise that with Proust, the world of passions opened up wide and the objects to which people become passionately attached become diversely infinite. Of particular notice the narrator’s focus on the passions for writing (Marcel), music (Vinteuil), painting (Elstir), dresses (Odette), social life (Mme Verdurin), snobbism (Legrandin), and works of art (*Arabian Nights* and Saint-Simon). Passion reveals its all-encompassing power.

Nowadays, the word passion has lost its destructive and dangerous connotations, and people are fine talking about their passion (as opposed to their addiction to gambling, sex or alcohol, which seem to be a variation on the old

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<sup>1</sup> My translation; quoted in *Encyclopaedia universalis*: “Je fais mieux qu’aimer, je sais souffrir” (622).

<sup>2</sup> The original famous verses are: “Les plus désespérés sont les chants les plus beaux. / Et j’en sais d’immortels qui sont de purs sanglots.”

<sup>3</sup> This has occurred more or less worldwide, with some cultural differences with regards specifically to public and private display of passions. For instance, in the United States, it is not unusual to see politicians declare their undying love for their wives in public to the entire world, but it would be unacceptable for a public figure for example to hint at any sexual desire: the public display of physical affection in general is not accepted. In France, by contrast, the verbal display of affection and love in public is a sign of bad taste, because the expression of love is considered a private matter; however, public physical display of passion is acceptable, and the example of couples passionately kissing each other everywhere in France is a familiar scene.

<sup>4</sup> The scene of mademoiselle Vinteuil desecrating and at the same time honoring her father represents a classical example (Volume I, 159-165). See also how Proust dissects the mechanics of jealousy and its irrational and painful logics in *Swann’s Way*, *The Prisoner*, and *the Fugitive* (the titles themselves are self-explanatory).

meaning of the word passion). So, thanks to the Romantics, passion is no longer evil. It is purged from all its negative connotations, to become almost a synonym of a hobby. Ironically, by the same token, it lost its importance for psychologists. We don't need doctors for hobbies! Contemporary psychology has practically abandoned the term, preferring words like "emotions", trend, "affect" or "drive"<sup>1</sup>. In short, what passion gained in popular acceptance, it lost in traditional scientific interest. However, the analysis of passions has gained importance in other fields such as cultural studies, discourse analyses, literature, gender studies and the arts. It has also brought forth issues of power, love, politics, knowledge, and voice for the voiceless<sup>2</sup>.

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A quick glance at the content of this inaugural special issue of *The Lincoln Humanities Journal* (LHJ) confirms some of the themes I briefly mentioned in this introduction such as power, madness, obsession, tyranny, anxiety, pathology, and alternative styles of writing. Our contributors have sought to expand and discuss the world of passions, as well as add to the understanding of human complexity in light of journalistic, literary, philosophical, religious and artistic works and experiences. Whatever their take on passion, they all recognize its unmistakable transformative power.

This issue contains Cheryl Renée Gooch's opening address to the Humanities Conference on Passion, held on April 6, 2013 at the Lincoln University, and the essays from the conference participants Ezra Engling, Myron Alberto Ávila, Nadia Bongo, Jimena Castro, Kirsten C. Kunkle, Marie Nigro, and Grace Chikwem. Other conference participants, whose papers were not submitted for publication, included Ordner W. Taylor, III, on "Passion and Madness in *Frankenstein*"; Brandon Harris on the "Pentecostal-Holiness Perspective of Passion"; Dana Flint on "Existential Emotions and Anxiety"; Samaa Gamie on "Tyrannical Femininity in *Woman at Point Zero*, *The Innocence of the Devil*, and *The Story of Zahra*"; and Cathy O'Shaughnessy on "Passion and Personal Cultivation."

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<sup>1</sup> *Encyclopaedia universalis* begins its article on "Passion" as follows: "On note avec étonnement la quasi-disparition du terme passion dans le vocabulaire de la psychologie contemporaine, qui utilise bien plus volontiers les concepts de tendance, d'affect ou de pulsion" ("We note with amazement the virtual disappearance of the word passion in the vocabulary of contemporary psychology, which more gladly uses the concepts of trend, affect or drive"; 621; my translation). Similarly, psychoanalysis has also avoided the term. For Freud, the word "passion" is not a scientific term; it is a "normal psychological state" such as mourning (Cf. Rallo Ditch 10-11).

<sup>2</sup> Recent books include *Passion de la guerre et guerre des passions* (2008) *Heroism and Passion in Literature* (2004), *Passions et argumentation* (2012), *La passion musicale* (2007), *Rhétorique des passions* (2000), and *Dictionnaire des passions littéraires* (2005).

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## On Writing “The Grubbing Hoe, An Ethno-Journalistic Memoir”: The Transformative Power of Personal History

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Both a journalist and scholar of literary journalism, I am writing a personal history covering nearly 200 years of my paternal ancestors’ and relatives’ experiences from slavery to the present. By definition and practice, literary journalism is a form of nonfiction that combines factual reporting with some of the narrative techniques and stylistic strategies traditionally associated with fiction (Sims and Kramer). In his ground-breaking anthology *The Literary Journalists* Norman Sims observed that literary journalism demands the author’s immersion in complex, difficult subjects. This subject is called “The Grubbing Hoe, An Ethno- Journalistic Memoir.” A book in progress, it reflects my passion for understanding how slavery, the Civil War, emancipation and northward migrations affected my ancestors and shaped the world into which I was born. Blending journalism, ethnography and genealogy, the book covers social aspects of my family’s journey in America over six generations. This article focuses on how these techniques are used specifically to document and interpret the experiences of Silas Gooch, my great-great-great-grandfather, whose life inspires this research. Born enslaved around 1814, Silas lived to be 113. The title is based on a common farming tool, the grubbing hoe, he and his descendants used to eke out a living as sharecroppers after emancipation and well into the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century as farmers of their own land in Oxford, North Carolina.

Yet the 1927 death certificate of the man who lived for more than a century lists him with no occupation and his parents as “not known.” Not known. This unnaturally succinct death record reeks of unanswered questions. Who were his parents? To where in Africa do their and my bloodlines flow? Silas came from somewhere, was born to people who have history, a homeland, a culture. In order to transcend the two simple, impersonal words that abruptly sever my ancestral chord, I had to dig deeper. Another more intimate approach has been necessary to pursue, uncover and interpret Silas’s story.

Research within journalism (Harrington; Sims and Kramer; Ellis; Cramer and McDevitt and social sciences (Coleman; Chang; Ngunjiri, Wambura, Hernandez and Chang) elucidates how integrating the personal into research provides opportunities to study subjects that have not been as intimately explored with traditional, detached methods. As I began to chronicle and interpret the social complexities that shaped Silas’s life from slavery through post-emancipation, inevitably I explored how those complexities relate to my life experience in contemporary America. My research methodology has evolved to include approaches that value personal experience in research: intimate journalism, autoethnography and ethnographic journalism, and oral history and memory.



## Intimate Journalism

Walt Harrington, a former *Washington Post* reporter and now journalism professor, combines journalism, memoir and essay in *The Everlasting Stream: A True Story of Rabbits, Guns, Friendship, and Family*, a story about his yearly hunting trips with his wife's African-American relatives. His fascination with these men and how this experience shaped his ideas about the morality of hunting, social class, masculinity and friendship inspired his use of intimacy to tell this story. He entered the story about which he wrote while experiencing it. He explained:

I knew the story was about the four men with whom I hunted, but I also knew it was my story. It wasn't a biography of these men; it was the tale of what I had learned from spending time with them and getting to know them. Realizing this was important to the writing because it shaped the story's emphasis. Several friends who read the manuscript commented that they didn't understand why the men so fascinated me. I realized then that to answer that question required that I enter the story fully (Scanlan).

While rooting most of *The Everlasting Stream* in traditional reporting, Harrington decided to develop his own sense of what the men meant in relation to his life. He said:

I needed to link the memoir about myself with my perceptions of the men. I drew upon background research but also my own experience and reading, telling stories from my life and quoting poems and writers whose words had touched me (Scanlan).

Harrington's transformative contribution to intimate journalism is reflected in the anthology of first-person journalism *The Beholder's Eye: A Collection of America's Finest Personal Journalism*. The collection shows how in spite of the third-person rule of traditional reporting, some of the most effective journalists have become characters in their own stories, shape what they see and are changed by the very experiences about which they write. Similarly, Harrington's edited volume *Intimate Journalism: The Art and Craft of Reporting Everyday Life* includes journalists' personal statements of how immersing themselves in the human stories they research and write about enriches this style of narrative reporting.

Another discovery while researching "The Grubbing Hoe" prodded me, like Harrington, to explore my ancestors in relation to our shared heritage. Following the Civil War, the former Confederate states rewrote and passed laws to comply with the Constitution of the United States. One such law legalized marriages between formerly enslaved people. On Friday, August 3rd in 1866, Silas Gooch and Lucinda Cooper, my great-great-great grandmother, walked into the Oxford, NC courthouse to formalize their marriage. Wrote the court clerk:

This day come before me Silas Gooch and Lucinda Cooper and say that they have been living together as man and wife for about fourteen years and agree to remain as such. A. Landis, Clerk of Granville County Court<sup>1</sup>

My great-great-great paternal grandparents were life partners. Their marriage, formed during slavery, survived it, a revelation that instantly shattered the misleading myth of the dysfunctional Black family that is, at best, a late 20th century phenomenon. In fact, census reports from 1870 through 1920 show that Silas and his immediate and extended family members lived in two-parent households in close proximity to each other while sharing resources. Church and family histories further reveal an enduring sense of community and mutual benefit among my ancestors.

Motivated by a reporter's sensibility, I gravitated to ethnographic and participant-observation techniques in which I was trained as an academic researcher. During this journey into my past as I encountered more intimate details about Silas's life, he ceased to be a research subject. Since finding the death certificate listing him as having no occupation, I increasingly wondered how he supported his family after slavery. Poring over dusty 100 year-old ledgers in the basement of the same courthouse where Silas registered his marriage, I uncovered intriguing details about him that lured me further into his world. There I found lien bonds (or chattel mortgages) that trapped Silas in sharecropping debt, an aspect of American history rarely explained in traditional history textbooks.

Several bonds dated between 1870 and 1898 show Silas borrowing money, as did many tenant farmers, to purchase supplies to farm the lands of different men. Most often Silas put up personal property such as an ox and cart, a mule, cows, or barn of tobacco as collateral. From these documents, intimate details of Silas's circumstances emerged. Of these intimate details I wrote in my field notes:

The paper trail of my ancestor's chattel mortgages is telling, at times disheartening. Within files stored in the basement of the Oxford courthouse I find Silas Gooch's lien bonds for farming supplies on which he scrawled his X. Here poring through those heavy books for hours, my heart is sullen at the designs to keep mostly Blacks and poor whites in economic servitude, perpetual debt. Annual crop liens require the sharecroppers to place the crops, usually to be planted and harvested during a 7-8 month period, as collateral. Crops were mortgaged first, then personal property. Chattel mortgages require the debtors to sign over personal property, often worth more than the amount they borrowed. These borrowers risk losing the very things they need to survive.

An 1870 entry shows Silas having a chattel mortgage with R.H. Frazier for an undisclosed amount. Three years later, he borrowed \$80.00 (equivalent to \$1,200 today) from J.C. Cooper, a large landowner (and possibly the former owner of his wife Lucinda's family), putting up a mule,

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<sup>1</sup>Granville County.

barn of tobacco, pair of young oxen, and two cows as collateral. In 1891, R.H. McGuire advanced Silas \$22.00 in supplies to use in cultivating crops on the lands of Cooper, J.A. Williams, Henry Bryant and others. Silas and his son Silas put up an ox and a cart (with wheels) as collateral. In 1896 J.C. Burroughs of Vance County had Silas in the hole for \$10.00 while he worked the lands of Williams and others. An 1898 record shows Parham Brothers Co. holding a \$17.50 note for supplies advanced to Silas who then worked land owned by Willie Landis. Similar personal property was used as collateral for this 1898 note. These and other data gathered by census takers and tax collectors showed how poor Gooches were in the years following slavery, where they lived, how much corn and tobacco they planted, how much they borrowed in order to survive. Later, payment receipts and property deeds show what and how long it took to acquire land. No free acres and mules were forthcoming from a benevolent government or former slaveholders. Like most recently freed people of color, my ancestors worked for everything they got. Nevertheless, Silas's children and their offspring prevailed because today I can walk on seemingly endless acres in Oxford's countryside which they sharecropped and later purchased, free and clear.

### **Autoethnography and Ethnographic Journalism**

These techniques are useful to explore the mindscapes of my ancestors and relatives, reconstruct their experiences, and reflect on my relationship to them. A record documenting Silas's early life is found in the estate papers of Zechariah Hester, a tobacco farmer whose family enslaved him. There, along with farming tools and animals, Silas is listed with a market value of three-hundred dollars. Holding this document I wondered: How does it feel to be enslaved and treated as chattel?

Carolyn Ellis is a leading proponent of personal autographical writing as a strategy for academic research. Addressing concerns about style and methodology that mirror my own (having also been trained in ethnographic and journalistic methods), Ellis thinks and gathers information like an ethnographer, but tries to write like a novelist or storyteller. She says:

Autoethnographic writing goes hand in hand with fictional techniques such as dialogue, scene writing and plot development. These strategies allow me to show rather than tell, present a feeling for how life flows. . . As an ethnographer, I was constrained by my loyalty to the "ethnographic eye and ear," to tell what I saw and heard. Most ethnographers will probably consider this constraint a plus; other readers, who are oriented more toward creative writing, humanities..may consider it a hindrance (335).

In *Revision: Autoethnographic Reflections on Life and Work*, Ellis demonstrates through a collection of stories the use of autographical writing that includes interpretation, reflection and vignettes as a strategy for academic research. Like autoethnography, ethnographic reporting blurs professional

boundaries (Pedelty), challenging journalists' understanding of objectivity, neutrality, and balance. Journalist and anthropologist Gillian Tett asserts journalists "can never really kid themselves that they are just telling people about other people; they are crucial actors in the drama themselves" (26). Janet Cramer and Michael McDevitt say journalists should revisit the principle of detachment in order to be able to embrace "this method as a way to know, in intimate detail, the perspectives of groups that are otherwise invisible or stereotypically portrayed and marginalized through mainstream journalism practices" (129). Certainly, this is the case in historical literature and traditional reporting as seen in newspaper clippings about my ancestors and people of their community, and the social-political climates they traversed during the Civil War, Reconstruction, post-Reconstruction and turn-of-the-century eras. To protect their objectivity, journalists are trained to keep some social and emotional distance between themselves and the people they write about. However, such detachment would impede me from capturing and telling my ancestors' authentic stories. Hence, my social location, identification with the lives of my ancestors under study, provides an insightful advantage.

During a 1998 family reunion, I met a griot named Gordon Throckmorton. In the West African tradition, the griot is a person whose primary role is reciting a family's or village's history. While the life-long Oxford resident, foot-washed Baptist would not likely assign himself such a title, Gordon was (having passed in 2012), in effect, a keeper-of-history connecting our family to our past. Gordon accompanied a family friend to the reunion with no idea he would meet previously unknown relatives. After my presentation of the family genealogy, Gordon introduced himself and calmly said "Silas Gooch was my great grandfather." He explained that his late mother, Cora Amis Throckmorton, was the daughter of Dolly Gooch Amis, a daughter of Silas and Lucinda. Dolly was the younger sister of William PapaBill Gooch, my great-great-grandfather, making Gordon a distant cousin, another branch of this ever-expanding tree. He also said Silas frequently visited his parents' home in Kinton Forks, a community on the northern outskirts of town near an old crossroads. My newfound cousin agreed to share his recollections of the family at his home later that evening. As with more than a dozen relatives (close and distant) whom I have interviewed throughout this research, my relation to the Gooch family afforded me intimate and often immediate access to Gordon's family stories. Of our meeting, I wrote in my field notes:

Around 7:30 I turn my car into the part gravel-part dirt, circular driveway leading up to Cousin Gordon's place, a white modernized farmhouse perched on land the Throckmortons have owned and occupied for nearly 100 years. Like most yards out here in the country, this spacious green oasis is meticulously maintained. An old barn and pack house to the rear enhance the charm of the home place. Huge oaks cast wide blankets of shade almost making Gordon, patiently sitting on a swinging porch bench, invisible. Within these moments his quiet, waiting figure resembles a relic of a lingering past waiting to be recognized before it disappears from memory. Before this afternoon I knew nothing of this man who embodies

multiple generations of known and yet to be discovered ancestors who occupied this expansive property I have driven past for years. There is memory here. About to step onto the same ground over which the OldMan once walked, I step hesitantly out of the car, a supplicant on a first-time pilgrimage to consult the oracle, and wave to Gordon. "Sorry I'm running late," I say mentally genuflecting, "had to find the place."

Had to find the place implies I was lost or disoriented in spite of his precise directions. It is also misleading. I had indeed arrived on time but chose to circle the area of Gordon's home-place trying to reorient my understanding of its location, both geographically and genealogically. I was momentarily lost. I needed time to sort through the shifting awareness of our oldest known ancestor walking and visiting here; and how our forebears had known how our families were related, connections forgotten by a few generations, including mine. And now two distantly related cousins, descendants of two of Silas's children, are reconnecting at this place near an old crossroads called Kinton Forks. Yes, I needed to find this place.

"Yeah, I was waiting for you," is his calm response. What delicious stories will this stoic elder bestow on me? What doors of memories will they open? Where will they lead me in this search? Do I resemble any relatives, living or deceased? Gordon, a caramel colored man, stands about five foot four. His clothes, short sleeved shirt and slacks, neatly fit a compact, lean frame. Partly bald, snow-white hair caps his round head. Fashionable bifocals complement his handsome, aristocratic face. No doubt, some fashion conscious lady friend has shown him the way to Pearle Vision or Lens Crafters. The white cap of hair and slightly forward bent angle of his shoulders are the only hints of his age, 73 by his own admission.

Except for his hearing, which is strained at times, Gordon is alert and engaging. His calm demeanor is now mildly animated as he recalls a fascinating story about Grandpa Silas eluding "patterrollers," agents hired to patrol areas surrounding plantations and farms to prevent slaves from escaping or moving about without permission. Often, dogs were used to hunt down fugitive or rebellious slaves. He heard it from his mother Cora, who heard it from her mother Dolly, who heard it from Silas himself:

Well, he was born in slavery but he refused to work slavery. So he raised a family. But the patterrollers tried to catch him. He'd be oversleeping in the morning. The patterrollers would put the bloodhounds on him..chase him to the river. He'd get to the river. He would swim over to the other side and the dogs followed. . . And when they would get over there to the other side where he was, they would hoop to the dogs, and he would tell them to be quiet. Every time they hooped them, they would bark. And he said: If you don't be quiet I'ma kill ya. And the dog would bark again and he would reach down and catch'em by the mouth and ripped the jawbone open. And he would get away. And when night came he'd go back to his family.

That Silas at times lived a maroon-type existence is plausible and documented in historical research. Runaways often did not run far. They stayed near their families or hid with supportive neighbors or other runaways. Gordon's paterollers story could capture incidents from the 1850s, a blacked out period as far as tracing Silas's whereabouts, until he resurfaces in the 1866 tax record after the Civil War. Still, this oral history supports my reporter's hunch that the family lived as a relative unit before freedom.

Gordon does not know where Silas hid or on which farm Lucinda and the children were held as slaves. He is sure though that after slavery ended Silas and his family lived "somewhere around here" near the Throckmorton homestead. And he is right. Census records show Silas living with his family in the Kinton Forks area between 1870 and 1880 and alone and widowed on Mountain Road in 1910, both areas within short walking distance of this home place.

In his later years, although bent over and limping with arthritis, Silas was an active gardener. Eyes glimmering with memories, Gordon recalled his parents' stories about Silas's determination to work:

Grandpa would always come here. He would come and talk to my mother and my father. He wasn't able to stand up. And if you had a garden he'd say 'I'ma work that garden for y'all.' My daddy and momma would say: 'You can't work the garden and stand up.' But Grandpa Silas would tell em: 'Bring me a chair.' And he would sit and work the whole garden with a hoe. He liked to come out here and stay round here with them. He was loved by people. And he was an amusement, you know, talking about how things were, how he lived, how he made a living, raising his family and everything.

Heewon Chang's *Autoethnography as Method* demonstrates the use of this method within the Education discipline. She invites researchers to include themselves as a research focus and to consider *autoethnography* as a tool to explore their own perspectives and to arrive at a deeper understanding of others and the complexity of human interaction. Seeing a 1925 front-page news story about my great-great-great grandfather's birthday celebration challenged me to revisit some assumptions about the social relations between Blacks and whites during segregation. Silas was well known and respected by the Oxford community, as illustrated in a March 13, 1925, *Oxford Public Ledger* article:

### **Silas Gooch is 109 Years of Age**

Five hundred people last Sunday gathered at New Light Church, near Oxford, to celebrate the 109th birthday. Uncle Silas Gooch was born in Granville county in 1816. He is in good health and is able to walk and do much work. Three years ago he made more corn with a hoe than a great many farmers did with three teams. Rev. L.E. Johnson, of Danville, who preached on this occasion, said that it was a great pleasure to address his remarks to so large a crowd that turned out to celebrate the birthday of the dear old father Silas Gooch: God will bless us just as He has blessed him if

we only trust him. An interesting program of music was rendered by the boys and girls. A feast of good things, prepared by the children, grandchildren and great grandchildren and friends of Uncle Silas was served and greatly enjoyed by the congregation.<sup>1</sup>

Even during 1920s segregated North Carolina, Silas was held in such high esteem that his birthday celebration drew 500 hundred well-wishers and the white-owned town newspaper sent a reporter to cover it. However, four days after the *Public Ledger* article about Silas's birthday celebration appeared, Benjamin Hester (the son of Zechariah Hester) stepped up to contest Silas's purported age. In doing so, he acknowledged that his family once owned Silas and that he and Silas grew up together. The March 17 article states:

**Silas Gooch's Age Is In Doubt  
It Is Claimed That He Is 100 Years Old. But He Is Not a  
Centenarian As Yet.**

Silas Gooch, colored, is probably the oldest man in Granville County, but he is not as old as he is reputed to be. Silas will tell you that he does not know how old he is, but he says his white friends tell him he is 109 years of age. He says he kept up with the number of his birthdays for a long time, but they come so fast now he cannot count them. Silas is a good old colored man and the congregation of New Light church, of which he is a member, recently celebrated what they believe to be his 109th birthday. At any rate they celebrated the birthday of the oldest man in the county, even if he is not 109 years old. The best information at hand as to Silas's age is obtained from Mr. B.F. Hester, who was 87 years old last February. Silas belonged to the Hester family, and Mr. Hester and Silas grew up together, Silas being about 5 years older than his young master. Mr. Hester states that Col. R.O. Gregory, who is now 92 years old, and Silas are about the same age. The statement of Mr. Benjamin Franklin Hester makes Silas 17 years younger than he believes he is. <sup>2</sup>

The former master's attempt to claim Silas's age and, by extension, his personal history, presents a case study of the value of oral history and memory to research.

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<sup>1</sup> Unnumbered *Oxford Public Ledger* clip from the Francis B. Hayes Collection, Richard H. Thornton Library, Oxford, North Carolina. A former Clerk of Granville Superior Court, Hays (1867-1959) compiled original scrapbooks of newspaper clippings and manuscripts of various topics, including Granville County history and development, churches, individual persons, obituaries and genealogies of prominent families.

<sup>2</sup> Francis B. Hayes clip file collection.

## Oral History and Memory

Renita Coleman's article, "Oral and Life Histories, Giving Voice to the Voiceless" published in *Qualitative Research in Journalism*, addresses how the method of oral or life history, most practiced by historians, sociologists, and anthropologists, is one research method that closely mirrors what journalists do. Oral history, she notes, is particularly interested in people's interpretations of events years after they took place, not just the facts of the events themselves. An advantage of the oral history approach is the ability to fill in gaps left by reporting norms of the time or history written from the perspective of the dominant social groups.

In 1981, local genealogist Eddie McCoy set out to interview Oxford's Black senior citizens. His aim was to document the largely overlooked social history of this aging community. One of those interviewed was Silas Gooch III who spent time with his grandfather and recalled names, places and conditions that affected the life of our shared ancestor. McCoy spoke with Silas III, then 81, who lived to be 91, another indication of Gooch family longevity. Excerpts of the interview reveal the value of personal history and reclaiming ownership of one's history as well as corroborating, often with valuable insight, public documented details about individuals and families.

Eddie: What was your daddy's father name?

Silas: I was named after my grandfather. He was 111 years old.

Eddie: Did he ever live with you?

Silas: No, he lived with Willie Jordan.

Eddie: Did he ever tell you how he came up in life?

Silas: Yea, he told me how rough it was.

Eddie: How rough was it?

Silas: Well you know how hard it was in slavery. Up here on Carter (probably College) Street, I can't think of the man's name but he was his first master. And you see he sold him to the Hesters and they sold him to the Gooches.

Eddie: So your grandfather was sold three times?

Silas: Sold three times.

Eddie: Who owned him the first time?

Silas: I'm trying to think of that man's name. I can't call that man's name, and they showed me that man's house. It was right up town.

Eddie: Mr. Gooch, your grandfather lived with the Hester's the second time?

Silas: Yes, that was his second master.

Eddie: Who was the third one?

Silas: The Gooches.

Eddie: Where did the Gooches live?

Silas: Down there at the Ice Plant they use to have right there where the Southern Depot use to be, and we worked there. I don't think t'aint



a man that didn't work at the Ice Plant. <sup>1</sup>

Cousin Silas (who I never met) says emphatically that his grandfather was sold three times; once to the Hesters, then to the Gooches, and that he had lived to be more than 100 years old, thereby reclaiming a crucial part of Silas's personal history from Benjamin Hester, the former owner. Further, 67 years after covering Silas's well attended birthday party, the *Oxford Public Ledger* in 1992 ran article featuring the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of Cora Lee Amis Throckmorton, Cousin Gordon's mother. Cora Less possessed her grandfather Silas's longevity, living to be 102. <sup>2</sup>

Capturing my ancestors' mindscapes, values and aspirations, especially through the thoughts and memories of their living descendants, I have in some ways been able to link my own thoughts and stories with theirs. An enduring work ethic and self-reliance are evident within several family branches covering multiple generations from the late 1800s to the present. Although Gordon had referred to the grubbing hoe, the symbolism of the grubbing hoe to the Gooch family story occurred to me while interviewing Willie Mae White, a granddaughter of Silas. Willie Mae was 93 and living in Richmond, Virginia, when I met her in 1998. She knew Silas through his visits to her parents' home and recalled how her "grandpa liked to work new ground" with a grubbing hoe and enjoyed singing. She told a story similar to Gordon's:

Gran-daddy had a grubbing hoe. He got to be over a hundred years old 'fore he died. Yeah, he was an active man. He used ta get up early in the morning, have some coffee, say 'put a little toddy in my coffee here.' And then he take up two big cans and that grubbing hoe and go out back to dig up something. We kids say, 'Where you going with them cans?' Ma say, 'Don't say nothing.' Gran-daddy say, 'I'm going out chere to work new ground. Dig up some new ground.' Ma say, 'You sure you wanna go out there and work?' Gran-daddy say, 'I'm sound as a dolla. Sound as a dolla.' And he go on out there just a singing 'Won't be long fore my Savior comes home.' Sure enough, he sing that same song every mornin.

The association of the grubbing hoe with Silas has endured for least six generations of collective family memory. Industrious and independent, he embodied the values of his direct male descendants, including my grandfather Henderson who I knew to be a successful farmer and large landowner. According to family stories, the patriarch Silas seemed to be imbued with an energy that surpassed the norm, embodying a well-known element of African American mythology: the magic hoe. The hoe is planted into the ground and with the proper incantations it stands upright and performs work on its own. And which words are recited? It depends on the power of the individual. For according to

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<sup>1</sup> Transcript of James E. McCoy interview with Silas John Gooch, September 19, 1981.

<sup>2</sup> 1992 *Oxford Public Ledger* clip provided by Gordon Throckmorton about his mother's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration.

lore, the hoe will perform awesome feats if one knows how to “work it right.”<sup>1</sup> The object lesson in this story: One’s spiritual strength transcends life’s most exhausting challenges. Either by simple words or actions, Silas Gooch, who continued to cultivate land well into old age, imparted a life philosophy to generations of his descendants: *Pick up your grubbing hoe. Create what you need. You’ll never go hungry.*

Toni Morrison uses memory (or what she often calls re-memory) to conjure up what was real for her ancestors. She says personal memory is crucial to her work “because it ignites some process of invention and because I cannot trust the literature and the sociology of other people to help me know the truth of my own cultural sources” (214). She writes:

Memory, the deliberate act of remembering, is a form of willed creation. It is not an effort to find out the way it really was--that is research. The point is to dwell on the way it appeared and why it appeared in that particular way (213).

The science of genetics supports the family’s oral history and memory by providing the source of Silas’s possibly inherited legendary skill. A DNA sample test of a paternal uncle revealed Guinea-Bissau as our male ancestors’ origin. Specifically, a printout of his DNA sequence showed a 99% match of my uncle’s paternal ancestors, including Silas, with the Balanta people of Guinea-Bissau. My paternal fathers descended from people who have a distinctive reputation as expert farmers. Guinea-Bissau’s 50-peso note shows two Balanta farmers each wielding a common agricultural tool called kebinde, a hoe-like tool used to prepare the soil for planting crops, usually rice.

## Conclusion

While most social scientists are trained to guard against subjectivity and to separate self from research subjects, it is an impossible task. Research is an extension of researcher’s lives (Ngunjiri, Hernandez & Chang).

Uncovering family history is an intimate journey on which I embarked while pondering the death of a man whose personal history seemed elusive. Fifteen years later, Silas’s once elusive life has become living history, transforming me into a time traveler allowed glimpses of that past that few formal history lessons cover: running with Silas through antebellum woods as barking dogs and pattyrollers shouts echo behind us; watching him register to vote for the first time after the Civil War, pondering the painful contradictions facing the formerly enslaved man who was disenfranchised by 1900 and whose future descendants would wait decades before the restoration of the voting right; and on to 1925 to witness 500 well-wishers at his 109<sup>th</sup> (or 111<sup>th</sup> depending which version one accepts) birthday celebration.

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Joyner. *Drums and Shadows: Survival Studies Among the Georgia Coastal Negroes*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1940. The texts of these rare stories collected by the Georgia Writer’s Project are available online at <<http://sacred-texts.com/afr/das/index.htm>>

Intimate journalism and ethnographic approaches have allowed me to explore the stories behind the scant details about Silas and his descendants found in census, tax, property, marriage and death records, without censoring myself. Church, school and voting records divulge details of their existence beyond the tobacco fields, as much as newspaper articles capture the social, and often political, climate of the day and how they were affected. And where gaps obscured aspects of Silas's social experiences, oral history interviews with direct descendants provided glimpses of his and their beliefs, values and personalities and how Oxford, North Carolina and U.S. history intersected to influence their lives-far more than a detached scholar's inquiries would yield.

Silas had lived a full life when he passed while sleeping sometime between Monday night and Tuesday morning when the *Public Ledger* article announced his death, describing him as "the oldest man in Granville county."

### **SILAS GOOCH DEAD Passed Away At the Age of 106**

Silas Gooch, colored, reputed to be the oldest man in Granville County, died at his home in the north section of Oxford this morning while he slept. There wasn't any record kept as to Silas's actual age, but from numerous references it does appear that he was 106 years old. He has a son that is 80 years old. It is not announced where or when Silas will be buried. *Oxford Public Ledger, December 13, 1927.*

Intimate and ethnographic methods are the most effective ways to research and interpret this family's personal history over nearly 200 years. I, who embody at least six known generations of paternal Gooches, not a detached scholar, am the most credible interpreter of their stories. Searching for my personal history is a journey of which I have yet to tire. It is my passion.

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## Passion as Obsession in Cervantes's *El Celoso Extremeño* (The Jealous Extremaduran)

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Passion is “the enthusiastic pursuit of an object, idea or person.”<sup>1</sup> This intense emotional force, clothed in the human condition, can be motivational and creative, or obsessive and destructive. On the positive side of the equation, 2013 marks the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of Miguel de Cervantes's *Novelas ejemplares* (*Exemplary Tales*),<sup>2</sup> where our passion for his humorous exposure of human insecurities and hypocrisies continues unabated. With each reading of the exemplary tales, we discover new facets of the “entertaining moral” that his 1613 Prologue to the collection promised.<sup>3</sup> Cervantes also provides the negative face of passion, via one particular tragicomic story: *El celoso extremeño* (*The Jealous Extremaduran*). The title invokes the familiar image of the jealous husband, but quickly becomes a complex tale of a morbidly jealous nobleman on the wrong side of sixty married to a fourteen-year-old girl. The *dulce e utile* feature of the *Novelas* mesmerizes readers, while referencing a misogynistic honor code, and other extreme human situations that inspire the hero's obsession.

The honor theme was part of the social, literary and theatrical landscape of Cervantes's time. In this convention, the woman is the repository of family honor, and “a hypersensitivity to conjugal infidelity frequently leads to unjustified homicide” (Wardropper iii). This fear of cuckoldry was so ingrained in the men of the time, that they resorted to extraordinary measures to avoid the dreaded “*el qué dirán*”, or social gossip. Although this theme is treated mostly in the Early Modern dramas of Lope de Vega, Tirso de Molina and Calderón de la Barca,<sup>4</sup> Cervantes's *novellas* were the first narratives in Spain to treat the pathology of jealousy, via the husband's metaphorical fear of male penetration, and the physical and emotional toll that it exacts.

The hero of *El celoso extremeño*, Felipe de Carrizales, having squandered his youth and wealth, is archly compared to the Biblical Prodigal Son. But this son of Extremadura does not return in search of forgiveness and readmission to the bosom of the family. Instead, he seems to be cast in the role of a self-

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<sup>1</sup> *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth Edition*. This source also refers to “passion” as “the sufferings of Jesus in the period following the Last Supper and including the Crucifixion, as related in the New Testament.” As will be discovered at the end of the story, this secondary definition informs the hero's release from the obsession.

<sup>2</sup> Miguel de Cervantes. *Novelas ejemplares*.

<sup>3</sup> “Heles dado el nombre de *Ejemplares*, y si bien lo miras no hay ninguna de quien no se pueda sacar un ejemplo provechoso . . .” Miguel de Cervantes. *Novelas ejemplares* I, ed. Harry Sieber, p.52. All references to the Spanish text follow this edition. “*I have called them exemplary, because if you rightly consider them, there is not one of them from which you may not draw some useful example . . .*” Walter Kelly, *The Exemplary Novels Of Miguel De Cervantes Saavedra*. All English translations are from this edition.

<sup>4</sup>This novella is, in fact, a precursor to Cervantes own *entremés*, *El viejo celoso*. An *entremés* is a comic one-act play, usually performed between the first and second Acts of the Spanish *comedia*.

indulgent “fatted calf” that has made his fortune on the backs of the indigenous peoples of Perú. He is very rich, but emotionally spent. To emphasize this, the verb *gastar* (“to spend; waste”) is mentioned five times in the first fifteen lines of the narrative. His placid retirement is overshadowed by solitude and a sudden desire for respectability and an heir. But there was an obstacle to this imagined happiness:

He was naturally the most jealous man in the world, even without being married, and the mere thought of taking a wife called up such horrible spectres before his imagination that he resolved by all means to remain a bachelor.<sup>1</sup>

His fear is justified when he recalls and anticipates the anxieties and disasters that older men had suffered at his own hands while a philandering youth. For a mature male adherent of the honor code, this would be a nightmare. Nevertheless, when a pubescent girl called Leonora leans out the window of her parental home, her beauty struck him like an arrow. She proved too vivid a reminder of the joys of his youth, and he finds it impossible to resist the muted, but still audible, call of the flesh.

Now in his twilight years, Carrizales craves attention, companionship, and beauty, and he is prepared to pay for it. This is a common and understandingly human response. But, our incipient sympathy dissipates when the tyranny and instability accompanying his obsession is revealed:

. . . and finally Leonora was betrothed to Carrizales, who settled upon her twenty thousand ducats, so hotly enamoured was the jealous old bridegroom. But no sooner had he pronounced the conjugal "yes," than he was all at once assailed by a host of rabid fancies; he began to tremble without cause and to find his cares and anxieties come thicker and faster upon him than ever.<sup>2</sup>

A dowry was usual in these cases, and as Leonora’s parents were impoverished nobles, they rationalized their misgivings and sacrificed their daughter for social and economic security. The dowry is very generous, but Carrizales, is more calculating than magnanimous. The extraordinary sum was to stun the parents into submission, while eliminating all competition. One would expect him to be happy in his victory, but he is miserable. He recovers from his panic attack long enough to concoct a pre-emptive scheme, and Cervantes carefully chronicles the now outward manifestations of his hero’s chronic malady:

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<sup>1</sup> “. . . de su natural condición era el más celoso hombre del mundo, aun sin estar casado, pues con sólo la imaginación de serlo le comenzaban a ofender los celos, a fatigar las sospechas y a sobresaltar las imaginaciones, que de todo en todo propuso de no casarse” (Sieber 102).

<sup>2</sup> “Leonora quedó por esposa de Carrizales, habiéndola dotado primero en veinte mil ducados: tal estaba de abrasado el pecho del celoso viejo. El cual, apenas dio el sí de esposo, cuando de golpe le embistió un tropel de rabiosos celos, y comenzó sin causa alguna a temblar y a tener mayores cuidados que jamás había tenido”(Sieber 103).

The first proof he gave of his jealous temper was, in resolving that no tailor should take measure of his betrothed for any of the many wedding garments he intended to present her. Accordingly, he went about looking for some other woman, who might be nearly of the same height and figure as Leonora. He found a poor woman, who seemed suitable for his purpose, and having had a gown made to her measure, and having had a gown made to her measure, he tried it on his betrothed, found that it fitted well, and gave orders that it should serve as a pattern for all the other dresses.<sup>1</sup>

He now has not only a live doll of a wife, but a daughter to inherit his fortune. The only smart thing that he does in this story is to not be more ridiculous by physically attempting to produce an heir.

Even after a year of marriage, his wife is still “untouched”. He will not touch her, but he makes sure that nobody else does. He had rationalized the decision to marry with the adage that pleasure lengthens life, but the passion that would enhance this pleasure is already allocated to his obsession. Cervantes limits his description of amorous involvement to the fact that the hero “began to enjoy, as well as he could, the fruits of matrimony, which, to Leonora’s inexperienced taste, were neither sweet-flavoured nor insipid.”<sup>2</sup> This husband, seems content to be a sort of indulgent and passive voyeur, enjoying himself while the ladies “consumed a great deal of honey and sugar.” One again, Cervantes reserves judgment, but we know that the marriage has not been consummated. Later, one of the many female attendants on Leonora mentions that the latter was the only virgin in the house. The absence of any explicit sexual contact between the couple is also necessary to avoid any suggestion of incest. Although technically Leonora is his wife, she is virtually also his daughter and heiress. In fact, were it not for his playing at the jealous lover, his extreme precautions would have been those of any overzealous father.

If the matter of Leonora’s clothing was extreme, the matrimonial home is even more so. It is not so much a home as a gilt prison, featuring a monstrous mish-mash of Moorish and Gothic architecture. The house is by surrounded lush gardens, an orange grove, and a fountain. Inside are the finest tapestries and accents from all over the world. There are many servants, including four branded white slaves, and several “negras bozales.”<sup>3</sup> It seems that Leonora’s every wish, except for freedom of will and movement, has been anticipated:

He put screens before all the windows that looked towards the street, leaving them no other prospect than the sky, and did much the same with

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<sup>1</sup> “Y la primera muestra que dio de su condición celosa fue no querer que sastre alguno tomase la medida a su esposa de los muchos vestidos que pensaba hacerle; y así, anduvo mirando cuál otra mujer tendría, poco más a menos, el talle y cuerpo de Leonora, y halló una pobre, a cuya medida hizo hacer una ropa, y, probándosela su esposa, halló que le venía bien; y por aquella medida hizo los demás vestidos” (Sieber 103).

<sup>2</sup> “. . . el buen estremeño en su casa, comenzó a gozar como pudo los frutos del matrimonio, los cuales a Leonora, como no tenía experiencia de otros, ni eran gustosos ni desabridos; y así, pasaba el tiempo con su dueña, doncellas y esclavas, y ellas, por pasarle mejor, dieron en ser golosas, y pocos días se pasaban sin hacer mil cosas a quien la miel y el azúcar hacen sabrosas” (Sieber 105).

<sup>3</sup> Sieber, citing Covarrubias’s dictionary, explains that *bozales* were newly arrived negroes to Spain, who knew no other language than their own (104).

all the others in the house. In the gateway next the street, he erected a stable for a mule, and over it a straw loft, and a room for an old black eunuch, who was to take care of the mule. He raised the parapets round the flat roof of the house so high, that nothing could be seen above them but the sky, and that only by turning one's face upwards.<sup>1</sup>

To secure Carrizales's fortress from penetration, the old negro eunuch is the only other male entity on the property. There was no dog, no tom-cat to chase the rats, and even the pictures and decorations favored the female sex. And yet, these extreme precautions brought no peace to the jealous husband: "He took thought by day, and by night he did not sleep; he was himself the patrol and sentinel of his house, and the Argus of what he held dear."<sup>2</sup>

The house gradually morphs into a physical and metaphorical extension of Carrizales's obsession, and a weapon of mass distraction from his sexual inadequacy and physical decrepitude. It is soon obvious that he has become prisoner, as well as jailer. Ryan Schmitz describes the ripple effect of Carrizales's insanity, thus:

Insofar as Carrizales's house represents the supreme human folly of attempting to subjugate another's will and hinder an individual's moral, intellectual and spiritual development, it stands among the most memorable images of humanist discourse ... (524).

However, far from deterring the profane gaze of outsiders, the effort that he invested in this gaudy prison/monastery attracts the attention of a younger Lothario from a neighboring town. Loaysa is noble and from a rich family, but also the picture of everything that Carrizales is not: handsome, youthful, virile, talented. He is the sum of his evil cunning, musical accomplishment, and a good knowledge of human weakness. This would-be interloper becomes curious about the denizens of the unusual structure after hearing about the beauty buried within, and decides to draw out the inhabitants with his music. The ruse is successful. Soon afterwards, the servants create an opening in the wall through which they enjoy this heavenly music from the unknown minstrel. He also befriends the eunuch sentinel, and by virtue of accommodation, and flattery, he soon breaches the impenetrable structure.

But Loaysa, who sometimes recalls a young Carrizales, is also a victim of passion. What began as mere curiosity develops into a hobby, then a challenge, then a game that culminates in a full-blown obsession. He further connives with the eunuch and the aforementioned housekeeper to possess, and thus liberate,

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<sup>1</sup> ". . . cerró todas las ventanas que miraban a la calle y dioles vista al cielo, y lo mismo hizo de todas las otras de casa. En el portal de la calle, que en Sevilla llaman *casapuerta*, hizo una caballeriza para una mula, y encima della un pajar y apartamiento donde estuviese el que había de curar della, que fue un negro viejo y eunuco; levantó las paredes de las azuteas de tal manera que el que entraba en la casa había de mirar al cielo por línea recta . . . . teniéndolo todo así aderezado y compuesto, se fue a casa de sus suegros y pidió a su mujer, que se la entregaron no con pocas lágrimas, porque les pareció que la llevaban a la sepultura (Sieber 103-04).

<sup>2</sup> "De día pensaba, de noche no dormía; él era la ronda y centinela de su casa y el Argos de lo que bien quería" (Sieber 106).



the imprisoned damsel. The unspoken reward of the female servants, who are also physically confined and sexually repressed, is the enjoyment of this virile presence. The same *dueña* who described her mistress as the only virgin in the house tries to seduce Loaysa on the way to the tryst that they have arranged in the girl's bedroom. Leonora is dismayed by the betrayal of her servants, and expresses her concerns regarding her status as the family's repository of honor. The housekeeper responds with ridicule:

"Honour," exclaimed the dueña; "the king has plenty. Your ladyship may shut yourself up with your Methusalem, if you have a mind, but leave us to amuse ourselves as well as we can."<sup>1</sup>

Although Leonora yields somewhat, she cannot bring herself to complete the cycle of seduction. And in this one act, she underscores the extended message of the work. A fine irony is achieved via a song that the *dueña* performs to Loaysa's accompaniment:

Close you watch me, mother mine,  
Watch me, and immure me:  
Don't you know without my help  
You cannot secure me?<sup>2</sup>

Once Leonora recovers from the shock of a real man in her bedchamber, she imagines the possible physical pleasures she can enjoy in the arms of a young, handsome lover. But she shrinks from an evil that she intuits rather than knows. In so doing, she has somehow triumphed over the experienced world of the Don Juan. Nevertheless, this is where the walls of Carrizales's fortress, and manhood, having been breached earlier, begin to crumble.

The house is the object that directs the action and controls the circumstances through a large part of the work. The storming of the bastion is seen in several stages, and what stands out is not so much Loaysa's ingenuity, as the apparent impregnability of the structure. It is humorous how he manages to outwit the mastermind Carrizales, as Cervantes shows the extremes to which passion may drive lovers, old and young. Carrizales not only lacks the qualities to defend his house, but his extreme precautions are ultimately useless and dangerous. Nor does Loaysa try to force the young innocent – an action, which earlier would have stimulated his ego. He seems to have been overwhelmed by Leonora's innate goodness and purity, and he soon abandons the seduction. Exhausted from their mental struggle, the would-be lovers fall asleep into each other's arms.

But was the bedroom penetrated? Is Leonora guilty of adultery? From the point of view of the Spanish honor code, where the mere suggestion of infidelity was evidence for condemnation, the answer would be a resounding yes. It

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<sup>1</sup> "¿Qué honra? -dijo la dueña-. ¡El Rey tiene harta! Estése vuesa merced encerrada con su Matusalén y déjenos a nosotras holgar como pudiéremos" (Sieber 119).

<sup>2</sup> "Madre, la mi madre, / guardas me ponéis; / que si yo no me guardo, / no me guardaréis" (Sieber 125).

probably would be an affirmative from the circumstantial point of view as well. For, while Leonora does not sexually succumb to Loaysa, she is discovered in a compromising position, and was the one who had administered the ointment that rendered her aged husband unconscious. Cervantes does not say, and Louise Detwiler Ilgenfritz, who studied space and barriers in the story, also leaves the matter up to the characters and the readers:

...if the bedroom/core is not penetrated, no adultery has taken place and the overcoming of physical barriers progresses in an ordered fashion. If, however, the bedroom/core is penetrated, then the act of sexual intercourse is most likely present and the overcoming of physical barriers occurs in a chaotic manner (213).

When Carrizales regains consciousness, that emotional powder keg of a house finally explodes, ironically liberating everybody. The old man sees the languid picture of the couple, and naturally believes that adultery has been committed, that his manhood has been compromised, and his honor, lost. In that moment, as he recognizes in Loaysa his younger self, his worst fears are realized. Despite his wife's attempts to convince him of her innocence, the enraged husband responds in the only way that the honor code provides for satisfaction: he reaches for his dagger to dispatch both his wife and her ostensible lover.

Here again Cervantes surprises his readers, via another in a series of unexpected narrative and thematic shifts. In the act of delivering the *coup de grace*, Carrizales suffers a temporary stroke, and falls unconscious. When he awakens, the scales of his obsession have miraculously fallen from his eyes. He admits having been an idiot, denying his wife's and servants' access to free will. He also confesses that he has not enjoyed conjugal bliss, and that time has passed slowly for him. He can recall exactly how long he has been married: one year, one month, five days, and nine hours. The numbers, transposed to a clock environment (11:59) clearly promises a new day for all:

The vengeance I intend to take for this outrage shall be no common one. As I have been singular in all my other actions, so will I be in this. My vengeance shall fall upon myself, as the person most culpable of all, for I ought to have considered how ill this girl's fifteen years could assort with my threescore and ten. I have been like the silkworm, which builds itself a house in which it must die. I do not reproach you, misguided girl! <sup>1</sup>

He then falls into another dead faint, but before he is relieved of all worldly care, he disposes of the possessions that he had jealously hoarded, willing his property

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<sup>1</sup> “-La venganza que pienso tomar desta afrenta no es, ni ha de ser, de las que ordinariamente suelen tomarse, pues quiero que, así como yo fui estremado en lo que hice, así sea la venganza que tomaré, tomándola de mí mismo como del más culpado en este delito; que debiera considerar que mal podían estar ni compadecerse en uno los quince años desta muchacha con los casi ochenta míos .Yo fui el que, como un gusano en la seda, fabriqué la casa donde muriese, y a ti no te culpo ioh niña mal aconsejada (Sieber 133)!”

to the young couple, providing for his servants, and even donating money to for the poor whom he had scrupulously avoided except where he stood to benefit.

Most Cervantes scholars agree that *El celoso extremeño* is about jealousy and its partners fear, control, and intimidation. Detwiler Ilgenfritz, for example, connects the story to its exemplary roots:

"El celoso extremeño" has a clear didactic purpose and serves to illustrate how unbridled jealousy brings about that which it most fears. In this case, Felipo de Carrizales essentially imprisons his young wife Leonora in their home because he is insanely jealous of any creature or being of the male sex (213).

Ruth Weber prefers a more holistic approach to the work. In her landmark study, "Tragic Reparation in Cervantes' *El celoso extremeño*," she goes beyond questions of egocentric passion. For her, it is "the story of an obsessive personality, of his perplexing motivation and overwhelming sense of guilt" (1). She explains further:

I have not, in fact, used the word "jealousy" in my title, because I do not believe that the story is primarily about Carrizales' characteristic neurosis, but rather about the costs of his defenses and the difficulty of his struggle to achieve a degree of freedom from them (36).

If this is true, then Carrizales should be regarded a helpless addict who has finally achieved the peace he had anticipated in his retirement. Even the most hard-boiled of readers cannot but recognize the emotional pull of his final moments, and at last identify with the tragedy that his life has been.

The third and final Cervantine twist is that Leonora rejects the inheritance out of hand. The experience has so distressed her, that in her second act of free-will in the story, she behaves as many dishonored women of her time did: renounce the world and enter a convent. Loaysa, for his part, is defeated and heartbroken, as he discovers that he is truly in love with Leonora. There is no happy ending, and the story closes with him on a ship to the Americas. Some of his behaviors have shadowed those of a young Carrizales, and we wonder if he too will return to Spain rich but spent. Weber seems to have captured Cervantes's intentions:

Like many of Cervantes' works, *El celoso extremeño* is hybrid in genre . . . this one does not end with the triumphant celebration of the natural sexual love between the young lover and the young woman. The serious and pathetic ending grafted onto the comic tale is a bold experiment which not only alters expectations in regard to plot and character, but also allows for the exploration of psychic conflict along unfamiliar lines (36-37).

Cervantes's evaluation of human behavior is as relevant now as it was in 1613. In the case of *El celoso extremeño*, the lesson is that, while a persevering passion can lead to positive rewards, an obsession can be a destructive force that

ultimately consumes the possessor. Everything about the exemplary tale of *El celoso extremeño* has been extreme and often unexpected. This is not accidental. The titular “extremeño” refers not only to the hero’s nationality but also to “extremo” (“extreme”) in reference to Carrizales’s fortune, his age and desires, his mansion, his adherence to the Spanish honor code, and the reparations that he attempts to make at work’s end. Cervantes is clearly urging moderation in all things. But he does so recognizing that, given the human condition, this too may be an extreme expectation.

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## The Body and the Passion of Transsexual Discourse in *Arias de Don Giovanni*

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While a sex and gender binary that is strictly enforced models desired identities, the queer body challenges and destabilizes every traditional notion of identity. What does it mean to inhabit a body perceived as inadequate for one's gender and/or sex? What implications are there when the subject *desires* to inhabit a body counter to sex and gender conventions, in order to fully become "queer" in praxis? What if this body is conceived in a state where a gender and sex binary allows no counter enactments with impunity? Pacha, the transgendering protagonist of *Arias de Don Giovanni* ("Don Giovanni's Arias," 2010), a novel by Guatemalan Arturo Arias, embodies textually, symbolically and physically this destabilizing possibility. Ambitiously engaging history, politics, and desire as junctions of a body-centered trauma, Arias' novel is the very first of its kind published in a country where a "queer" literature does not exist *per se*. Through an exercise of graphic, liberating sex poetics, the queer body of the protagonist — a boy who grew up to become a woman, just so *she* could be the lesbian *he* knew *she* always was— heals as it writes itself and the memory of Guatemala's historically repressive wounded body politics.

As part of a therapeutic evaluation, the peculiar, postmodern first-person narrating voice in this novel speaks through a diary that Pacha was asked to write and send by email<sup>1</sup> to her psychologist. The diary must address all the memories that she deems important, from the earliest *he* has as a child in Guatemala, to the most recent *she* has as an adult university professor in California. This intimate account comprises the body of the novel. In *Arias de Don Giovanni*, indeed, the body of the narrator is both subject and subject matter, where the matter is also textual subject; this, given the author's tradition of ludicrous, sybaritic linguistic indulgence, is a essential play on words that effectively queers the novel's subject. In my analysis by "queer,"<sup>2</sup> I mean that Pacha's body is transgressing in at least three ways: it is a conditionally transgendering<sup>3</sup>, geographically transnational, and

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<sup>1</sup> The postmodern discursive relevance of the text's electronic dimension is substantial in terms of defining an identity. In *The Postmodern Condition*, Lyotard stated that a person is always located at "nodal points" of specific communication circuits, however tiny these may be. Or better: one is always located at a post through which various kinds of messages pass. No one, not even the least privileged among us, is ever entirely powerless over the messages that traverse and position him at the post of sender, addressee, or referent (15). Thus, a text whose body is comprised of a series of electronic messages also comments and reflects upon a very postmodern subject process of self-identity creation.

<sup>2</sup> Of the term "queer," as multifaceted as it is transgressive, I am mainly interested in its dimension and possibilities as a way of being, which Judith Halberstam defines as a "way of life' [to] encompass subcultural practices, alternative methods of alliance, forms of transgender embodiment, and [...] representation dedicated to capturing these willfully eccentric modes of being" (7).

<sup>3</sup> The gerund form "transgendering" versus "transgender" as a noun/adjective reflects a notion that for Richard Ekins and Dave King emphasizes a behavioral and social *process* rather than

politically-de-centered body of transmutations. In the way it is narrated, this traumatized body recreates multiple transitions as substantial, effective migrations, each of which transgresses in its own way. It is a body that migrates between gendered, sexual, mental, affective, and geo-political borders. And the body of the text is similarly *transgressive*—with an emphasis on its “trans” qualities.

Preliminarily concurring with Susan Stryker that a notion of “trans” is more critically productive when it roams across diverse discursive registers, critical intersectionalities, spacialities, and temporalities (12-13), I point to this novel’s essential textual transgression: Through the subject’s email diary entries, the reader can share in a heuristic and ontological voyage across time, territories and mental processes involving both the intricacies of the protagonist’s intimate desires, and an outward metamorphosis, which the subject is writing in present tense. Her name is now Pacha, but she used to be a boy named Francisco.

At the heart of the textual body lies a dilemma:

Several times I confused the search for the infinite orgasm with that of love [of a similar duration.] [...] I ignored the disconcerting difference [between the two] and I lost [my notion] of any limits in the semantics of semen. The sphincter’s smile was another way to eschew the impregnated creativity of my feelings toward Juana, about whom I wish at long last to talk.<sup>1</sup> (10)

A sensuous, intrepid and insatiable lesbian womanizer and emulator of Don Giovanni, her notorious deeds of seduction and deceit filling page after page, Juana also embodies Pacha’s perfect object of desire. As a way to purge herself from many painful memories, Pacha understands that writing is essential: “My words erect themselves joyously against the pretention that human nature is sentenced to be fixed, unmoved, permanent”; instead, Pacha celebrates her dynamic life and her migration from Guatemala, her Motherland, to the places that will constitute the axis of her bodily transition —and her freedom:

In my email messages there will follow my text, textile with words woven, making dizzy the roads of my dance, the contours of my geography, my axis oscillating east-west, water and fire, day and night, Madrid-Laguna [Beach], seeing the sea from the west, gate of origin, of which migration I will leave you my footprints. Living and travelling signify the same thing (17).

Migration, oscillation, travel, life, love, orgasm, and transition are, indeed, words that recur constantly in the pages of Pacha’s account —and meaningfully so, because in addition to the transgendering voyage that Francisco the boy from

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*types* of people; and thus privileges “the idea of moving across (transferring) from one pre-existing gender category to another (either temporarily or permanently); to the idea of living in between genders; and to the idea of living ‘beyond gender’ altogether” (xiv).

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all translations into English are my own.

Guatemala engaged, the subject embodying her whole story is recovering from a painfully long journey of unrequited lesbian love.

Embodiment refers to what Seyla Benhabib defines as a “certain mode of being in one’s body and of living in that body” (Williams and Bendelow 3). Embodied subjectivity refers to the intersections between the body, the unconscious and identity, as constructed within a normative gender-sex system. The transsexual and transgendering embodiment within this novel contest a traditional sex and gender binary, this especially so since Pacha was born and raised in a country in which this binary is regarded as the rule. She ponders as such this bodily queerness: “How does one think of sexual differences, how do I explain [to myself] my own displacement in order to find my place, a place where I could be I? Nature could not be my being [and so] I could no longer continue imprisoned in that bag that was the contours of my skin” (103).

The pre-transgendering body is for Pacha *locus* of physical paradoxes. She is capable of great sensual pleasure while her penis is still intact but muses that “My identity is a prison, [and] my body a construction site” (73-74) to signal an imbalance between the two. Her identity can only be free when her body is constructed according to her transgendering vision of self. “Isolated as I felt within a body that wasn’t even the correct one [for me], incapable to connect,” (39) Pacha states that only with Juana has she ever felt complete during an orgasm. In the novel, this consummated lesbian womanizer is also the ultimate gender-bending temptress. The same Juana that tells Pacha, “You are the only woman for me [...] The others are only desire” (40) can also sodomize a gay male with a harnessed dildo. Indeed, Juana transcends Don Giovanni by being a pansexual seductress, capable of almost any sexual proclivity. Juana’s is thus the transgressive female body that Pacha idealizes in her physically-irresolute desires.

Pacha’s displacement across time, geography, physicality and emotions point to an intense trauma. Fulfillment, if achieved, does not come easily to her transgendering body; it is in fact a wounding, painful and scarring experience. In the novel, this healing process is strongly connected with Pacha’s childhood memories, which in turn connect her with a country where she once was everything she could not be: a boy, a sex-and-gender convention, and a Guatemalan. Thus, the Motherland is never remembered fondly; rather, it upsets Pacha every time it occurs. Quite early in the text, when comparing the nightlife in Marbella, Spain, to that of Guatemala, Pacha does not mince words: “When [a friend, Juana and I] finished the bottle of champagne, it was not yet late by Spanish standards, although back in *Guatemalady*,<sup>1</sup> only rapists would roam the desolate village-like streets, [veritable] oozing sores in the deep hours of night” (26, emphasis added).

Pacha believes that, just like her body, she is a cultural anomaly for not having a national identity –and yet this anomalous condition is liberating:

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<sup>1</sup> Pacha plays constantly (and from sarcastically to angrily) with ludic variations of the word *Guatemala*, whose last two syllables (“mala”) seminally allow for multiple, negatives notions and visions of that nation. My negative versions in English seek mainly to maintain that same gesture in this Arias’ novel.

I [once] realized with both horror and inadmissible pleasure, that no matter how Californian I assumed myself to be, I continued to feel meekly Guatemalan. At that moment I [also] thought about the obvious. Instead of having two cultures, I really had none. I neither had assimilated into the U.S. [culture] nor was I [anymore] a *Guatemalaise* (355, emphasis added).

Rather, Pacha has always felt at ease in certain communities, in several countries, though never in Guatemala: “I felt like a welcome guest in Rio, Madrid, Los Angeles [and I] felt at home in the *Farme de Amoedo*, Chueca, West Hollywood, and Castro” (Ibid).

A strong connection of the subject’s sexuality with the political tumult in her country of origin is quite graphic in a symbolically historic passage. It signals both the official end of democracy in Guatemala in 1954 —and by devastating extrapolation, the beginning of the repressive modern state—, which in the novel is also an episode that marks the first self-aware memory of sexual desire by the narrator. All of which is interconnected historically with and in the naked, humiliated body of the ousted President, Jacobo Árbenz Guzmán:

The naked man’s picture in the newspaper excited me tremendously. It was the first naked man [I saw] in my life. Handsome, well-shaped, impeccably shaved, holding his right wrist with his left hand against his belly. His hieratic face staring as if lost in the distance. His elegance and dignity were palpable despite the grayish [quality of the] picture. I was moved by the conviction [he] projected. Some soldiers surrounded him, all of them dwarfy, ugly, paunchy, mustachioed, [wearing] wrinkled, unbuttoned-neck shirts, crooked hats, [and] exhibiting malicious grins. My mom explained it [all] me. It was President [Jacobo] Árbenz. He had been stripped [down to his underwear] to ensure that he hid and took with him no state property. She then took the newspaper, threw it away, and wept violently. But the picture stayed imprinted in my memory forever (136-137).

The brief period of democracy established in Guatemala that ended in 1954, corresponds also to the same year when newspaper headlines in the U.K. posed “What is a man? Parliament may have to decide,” as part of the sensationalized coverage of Roberta (formerly Robert) Cowell’s transgendering case, this shortly after Christine Jorgensen had also caused a stir in the U.S. after undergoing surgery for the same reason in Denmark (Ekins and King, xiii). Textually, the birth of the modern transgendering subject thus correlates with the birth of the repressive nation that Pacha bitterly remembers: “Some are born lucky, and others are born in *Guatemalafide*” (225, emphasis added).

Juana is even more graphic when she talks about the country she was forced to leave behind, initially because she was a lesbian and her family, ashamed, decided to exile her to the U.S., but from which Juana eventually distanced herself ideologically, radically: “From that shit of a country nobody left walking tall. The [state] machinery sucked dry all those who dared to stand against it, men and women, rich and poor, Indians and mestizos” (226). This



image of a vampire state pouncing on the bodies of all civilians is very much in accord with Diane Nelson's use of a wounded body metaphor in *A Finger in the Wound: Body Politics in Quincentennial Guatemala*. According to Nelson, Guatemala's political body has been historically tortured, abused and killed by its state power. Currently, many Guatemalans refer the notion of "putting a finger in the wound" when any attempts are made to account for this historical violence; and thus Nelson argues that

Because there is a body in this [finger in the wound] metaphor, [one] that is deeply contradictory—scarred and wounded by violence—[...] the metaphor is useful for describing the body politic of the Guatemalan nation. Guatemala is emerging [in the 1990s] from a war that displaced one-eighth of the population and left some one hundred and twenty thousand people dead or disappeared: the wounded body is thus also terribly material (2).

This traumatized body is textualized in many ways in Arias' novel. Pacha's distaste for her male body finds a parallel in her distaste for her country of origin, its culture, its history and its politics. Throughout many passages in the text, Guatemalans, the "chapines" are uncivilized, willfully ignorant, cruel, fatalistic, petty, and even "atavistic" (92). The country and its capital city are systematically described as places devoid of aesthetic appeal, dirty, chaotic, unhealthy, and even grotesque. A once-upscale, privileged area in the city's center, according to Pacha is now full of trash and chalets "from the 30s or 40s, awkward imitation of the originals from Northern Europe —if not an offensive mixture of rococo styles foretelling a tropical postmodernity" (93).

Beyond her distastes, however, Pacha effectively *hates* two things: her birth country's political nightmare and her own begetter<sup>1</sup>. In reminiscing via email for her psychologist's sake, Pacha engages a tirade of a description about a man who would rather see his son break both his legs than play soccer like a pansy —and thus taint his manly honor:

My father was one of those angry ogres of old school who, when they were not at a pub with their throats irritated from chatting vociferously, they fell into the most hermetic silence, opening their big mouths only to chastise, while they twisted one's ear into a cabbage [shape] with that excess of passion of all those frustrated human beings that die blaspheming [...] his lower teeth protruding to bite his upper lip, in a bull dog gesture that underlined his assumed manliness. (110)

Masculinity, or better yet, patriarchal masculinity is contested abundantly in the novel. Juana views masculinity as a void, whereas the vagina —the center of femininity— is an active entity: "To me, the vagina is active. It harbors fluids, it expands to penetrate another, like a sort of inner penis, a convulsing, fiery valve.

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<sup>1</sup> In stark contrast, Juana adored her father, who "raised her like a boy until she became an adolescent and her breasts began to show" (122); but hated her mother, whom to her was "a beautiful statue as mysterious as the sphinx" (119).

Passive, never [...] Masculinity [on the other hand] is the cruelty of not wanting to ask oneself the most difficult questions” (101). In distancing itself from an implicitly Guatemalan, heterosexual and male-centered sex and gender binary, the novel thus becomes a transnational journey of carnal, passionate adventures, mostly the result of Juana’s insatiable sexual appetite. Mainly from Guatemala to Spain to the U.S., but making many stops at other international destinations, their migrations might have initially been forced by their native country’s violent instability and intolerance, but the world then becomes very much theirs, with no pleasure forgone and no indulgence abstained. Juana connects her sexual philosophy clearly and directly with her native civil war-torn country:

I am *chapina*. I lived through fucked-up times and I paid the price [...] That’s why I do things my way, free of prejudice, and only sex liberates me from life’s chaos [and] gives some sense to the hauling nonsense. We lost the [civil] war. What else can we do [now]? Wait with arms crossed for fundamentalists of all lineages to destroy the world, and us for [being] perverse? It’s better to fuck. But sex doesn’t last. (158)

And so the sexual escapades continue, because only sex can resist the frontal attack of censorship and condemnation; only with the body’s pleasure can one transgress the norms and prejudice that seek to eliminate its “perversion”—especially as practiced by queer bodies.

The ultimate revelation within the text is that all those email messages that Pacha has written, which comprise the body of the text, were written while she was convalescing, after her sex-change surgery. In this sense, the text becomes the full embodiment of Pacha’s physical as well as emotional trauma. While her physically wounded body heals, however, so do her wounded feelings for a woman who will never love her back. Not even now that Pacha has a transgenerating female body will she be able to keep Juana the womanizer by her side. Pacha’s emotional healing, moreover, recurringly and systematically alternates with her male childhood and adolescence memories, living in a country whose historical wounds are equally deep and traumatic—a country for which Pacha is thus the ultimate textual, symbolic body: a wounded body politic that corresponds chronologically and metaphorically with Pacha’s wounded body at the moment when the body of the text is produced.

Her transgenerating physical and emotional trauma points nonetheless to a direction of renewed outlook in life, once her body has finally healed and Pacha finishes telling her story to her psychologist via email: “I am quite sure that I will find a delicious young girl [...] I know that we will hit the bed with gusto. I won’t even leave a light on at home, because I am sure that tonight, this girl is sleeping elsewhere. She’s gonna fuck her brains out. I wish you, too, the very best” (367). Pacha feels physically and emotionally reborn, free to live; and she is ready to go out to party and indulge in the lesbian pleasures of her transgenerating female body.

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## Maintaining Native Heritage: Songs Based on the Poetry of Alex Posey

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Alexander Posey is the arguably the most famous of all Muscogee poets. During his lifetime, he worked as a journalist, editor, and poet, all while attempting to maintain his Native American heritage during the time of the Dawes Commission. Posey was consistently divided between finding success in the European American world by writing in English about acceptable topics, such as nature, and maintaining his passion for the continuation of his Native American ideals by writing in dialect about Native history and politics (Littlefield).

Being a descendent of Alexander Posey, I continue to work toward bridging the gap between modern society and the Muscogee culture in the field of classical music. During 2006-2007, I commissioned and premiered, as a classical vocalist, numerous songs based on the texts of Alex Posey. The pianist for the premiere was Patrick Harvey. The composers, excluding myself (a Native American/European American), are all volunteer European Americans, writing in the classical Western art music style. To my knowledge, there has not been a Native American poet whose works have been set as art songs until I commissioned these works. The goal of the commissions was to attempt to bridge a gap between Native American folk music and poetry and classical Western art song. Although much has been written about Posey and his conflict between the Native American and European American worlds, the focus of this article is to introduce the original songs that were written for the premiere. These songs exemplify the idea of blending numerous European musical styles and the writings of Posey, an established Native American poet divided between European American ideals and retention of Native American culture. The end result was a world premiere of sixteen songs, all based on the poetry of Posey, culminating in a "melting pot" of classical Western music styles.

Posey's writing provided a sense of cohesion between the Native American and European American worlds, and dramatically influenced future Native American literature. The goal of the premiere was to do the same for Posey's poetry, once set to music. The focus of this article is on the songs themselves, as opposed to Posey's life and influence, which has already been well-documented in Littlefield's study. The majority of this article is based upon my assessment of each song. Because of the unique nature of this project, the work is solely my own and my interpretation of the compositions, combined with interviews and program notes from the composers.

*Nature's Blessings* and *A Vision* were composed during the summer of 2006 by Nicole Elyse DiPaolo (Posey, *Poems* 104, 144). These compositions comprise a duo of songs in completely different styles, meant to be sung together. *Nature's Blessings* features an arpeggiated piano accompaniment combined with a fairly melismatic vocal line. Influenced by Schubert's compositional style in *Der Lindenbaum*, DiPaolo's *Nature's Blessings* composition is an up-tempo song

with a two-against-three rhythm. In contrast, *A Vision* is chordal and features a standard ABA form. Both works are composed with the focus on word-painting and expression. The sound of robins is suggested in the piano accompaniment in the first composition, as well as a definite “pensive mood” in the second. I premiered these songs with the composer at the University of Michigan Women Composers’ Concert in the autumn of 2006. They have been performed by pianist Aura Strohschein and me at the Toledo Monday Musicale Concert in December of 2006, and by pianist Helen Meacham and me at The Lincoln University in 2010.

*A Glimpse of Spring* was composed during the winter of 2006 and 2007 by Thom Otermat (Posey, *Poems* 185). Otermat’s composition lends itself to a contemporary, popular music style, as opposed to the standard art song. The melody focuses on the middle range of the soprano, with emphasis on creating a mood, as opposed to focusing on word painting of individual lines and phrases. The introduction and postlude are comprised of long chord clusters, which contradict the forward moving feeling of the piano/vocal collaboration during the composition. Rhythm is a challenge in this composition, as the vocal line changes slightly numerous times, and the piano is almost always in constant syncopation with the vocal line. The end result is a relaxed, aesthetically comfortable feeling of spring approaching.

*Mother’s Song* was composed during the summer and autumn of 2006, by Aaron Zimmerman (Posey, *Poems* 103). This composition opens with a thought interrupted by a long moment of a vocal echo within the phrase “I hear a distant melody.” This idea sets up the entire composition. This song seems best compared to an operatic aria, or even a mad scene. The scene is set within moments of the first notes and develops rapidly. The composition seems almost improvisatory in style. Although musical elements do repeat (octave leaps, rapidly ascending, then descending perfect fourths), there is an air of mystery to the composition that is created because the music tends not to go where expected harmonically. With varying degrees of dynamics and intensity, Zimmerman creates a unique composition in a loosely harmonic ABA form.

*Pity* was composed during the early autumn of 2006 by Dan Schellhas (Posey, *Poems* 148). The composition is divided into four distinct sections. The first section consists of a piano introduction followed by a vocal line displaying a fragmented melody. The second section involves the pianist as a vocalist, as both performers are asked to participate in the “forced whisper” spoken section. During this second section, the pianist plucks random notes, all the while adding glissandi inside the piano. The third section is a cadenza for voice without accompaniment, focusing on vocal flexibility and range. Schellhas has said that his written cadenza is a basis for the vocalist, and may be adapted. The fourth section occurs at the end of the cadenza, wherein the voice and piano are once again synchronized together. His intention was to write a composition that took the iambic tetrameter of the poem into account, but did not venture into monotony. The end result was to maintain “equilibrium, not balance...” where the “accents even out the unaccented syllables” (Schellhas).

*Brook Song* and *On the Capture and Imprisonment of Crazy Snake* were composed during the summer of 2006 and the autumn of 2007, respectively, by

Kimberly Sizer (Posey, *Poems* 75, 207). *Brook Song* is simple in its composition; it is a short song which focuses on the quiet nature of the “brook’s song.” As the poetry states, the brook is small, and must be listened to closely to hear its song. That is the emphasis of this composition. It is simple in style, stayed and calm.

*On the Capture and Imprisonment of Crazy Snake*, in contrast, provides a large, dramatic gesture. Encompassing a range from G3 to Bb5, as well as demanding different styles of singing and a large range of dynamics, the composition is more like an impassioned opera aria than the gentle art song quality of *Brook Song*. The composition is as drastic as the poetry, which never deviates from honoring the conservative Muscogee, “Crazy Snake.” “Crazy Snake” was Chitto Harjo, the leader of the Crazy Snake movement which lasted from 1900-1909. Harjo was an orator (or micco) for a small minority of mostly full-blooded Muscogees who opposed the US government-mandated tribal allotments of land. A political activist for the rights of the Native people, Harjo was dedicated to his cause, and was often charged and arrested for his beliefs. Because of Harjo’s association with some Freedmen who had come into trouble with local law officials because of accusations of theft, a violent shootout occurred; it is most likely that Harjo died as a result of injuries sustained therein. Harjo was known to be a brilliant orator and a man who stood by his beliefs, characteristics which Posey celebrates in this poem. The positive acknowledgement of the Native traits of “coarse black hair” and “eagle eye” gives praise to “Crazy Snake’s” challenging of European American ideology (Kosminder, 16-18).

I composed *Hotgun on the Death of Yadeka Harjo* during the summer of 2006 (Posey, *Poems* 202). It is based upon the only known poem by Alex Posey that is written in dialect, or “pidgin” English.<sup>1</sup> The characters that appear in the poem, such as Hotgun, Yadeka Harjo, Woxie Harjoche, and Hotulk Emathla, are taken from Posey’s opus, *The Fus Fixico Letters* (Posey, *Fus Fixico*). This chamber work is a modified dirge, set in A minor, for voice, double bass, and piano. It is intentionally sparse, so as to feature the rather unique poetry. Even though the composition is simple, there are melodic themes that are used throughout to purposely leave the listener with a haunting, unfulfilled feeling at the end of the composition, similar to the experience of mourning. The composition opens with a piano introduction, which features the melody in its entirety. The only other time that the whole melody is played is in the bass postlude. The voice and piano form a duet throughout the composition, with double bass and piano interludes which propel the textual ideas forward. The double bass is played utilizing slapping for two reasons; the first is to feature the skills of my brother, Zachary Kunkle; as a rock-a-billy double bass player; he specializes in the slap bass technique. Secondly, the style adds an earthy, more folk-like quality to the otherwise staunch and straight-forward dirge. When the idea of using slap bass was first suggested by Zachary Kunkle, I could immediately envision how the composition would become enhanced by the addition of the style and instrument.

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<sup>1</sup> The poem appears in *Poems by Alexander L. Posey, Creek Bard*, although *The Fus Fixico Letters* delves deeply into the different characters.

*Mount Shasta* was composed during the summer and autumn of 2006 by Jason Mlynek (Posey, *Poems* 125). A composition for classical guitar and voice, *Mount Shasta* has the distinction of being the only work from the premiere not to incorporate the piano, and thus not technically an art song. This song focuses on word painting with prime musical examples being the lower middle voice vocal line at “Shasta’s base” and the melismatic passage at the words “monarch light.” This composition is also based on the motive that is first heard in the guitar introduction. This theme varies throughout the composition, but the general aesthetic of creating an atmosphere of the great Mount Shasta (California) volcano during a nighttime scene remains the same throughout. The composition is intended to be played in Drop D, which creates a warmer, more melancholy sound. The voice and guitar often work together through trading of melody, which weaves from one section to another very seamlessly. Cliff Jay was the guitarist for the premiere of *Mount Shasta*.

*Ode to Sequoyah* was composed during the summer of 2006 by Daniel Thomas McDonough (Posey, *Poems* 195). McDonough chose to set this poem because it was of particular interest to me as a historically-based text. *Ode to Sequoyah* is the longest single composition from the premiere. The accompaniment is sparse and the vocal line is incredibly disjunct, alternating melodic motives with the piano. Although the composition is tonal, the aesthetic is similar to works by Webern or Schoenberg. While the vocal line features large intervallic leaps and the creation of tone clusters with the piano, the emphasis on text is still apparent because of the rather sparse accompaniment.

Sequoyah (1767-1843) is remembered for being the inventor of the Cherokee syllabary (differing from an alphabet because it is based upon syllables). Because of Sequoyah’s work, the “Five Civilized Tribes” were able to have a written language (Posey, *Poems* 46). As a Native poet, journalist, and linguist, it is apparent why Posey would find it important to honor such a man. “Watie” refers to General Stand Watie (1806-1871) of the Cherokee Confederate Army in the Indian Territory (Foreman 471). His brother Gallegina Watie (1800-1839), later known as Elias Boudinot, was a Cherokee who started and edited the Tribe’s first newspaper, *Cherokee Phoenix* (Foreman 374). The original “Cadmus” in Greek mythology was credited with the creation of the Phoenician alphabet; Sequoyah was compared to him and called the “Cherokee Cadmus” (Foreman 371).

*Songs of Life and Time* were composed during the summer of 2006 by Daniel J. Knaggs. After the premiere, these songs were also performed in their entirety by pianist Elena Ryepkina and me for the EgoPo Classic Theater Midsummer Gala in Philadelphia in June of 2013. These six songs comprise the only song cycle of the premiere, as the chosen texts tell a story of the various moments in a person’s life. Rather than fitting any particular Native American stereotypes with these compositions, Knaggs feels that the songs embody an “almost Scottish feel” throughout (Knaggs, *Songs*).

*To a Common Flower* opens the song cycle (Posey, *Poems* 195). This song features an exuberant joy at the new life of a flower. Comparing the flower to the human, Posey infers that the flower’s life is sweet – it will never know the pain or sorrow of a broken heart. Knaggs sets this text as a happy thought, opening in a

vibrant E major. The text is set in a short amount of time, with a long Schumann-like postlude leading to the second song.

*Eyes of Brown and Blue* tells the tale of a person in love with a blue-eyed (and thus foreign) person forsaken for the love of a brown-eyed person (and thus a Native) (Posey, *Poems* 141). This composition has an Americana folk-like quality, similar in style to that of John Jacob Niles. The simplicity of the vocal line is enhanced with an increasingly elaborate accompaniment as the composition progresses. The simplicity lingers until the text changes to “but when one day two eyes of brown” occurs, when the accompaniment becomes staccato, contrasting greatly with the lyric quality thus far.

*At the Siren's Call* depicts a stormy sea, where the singer feels overwhelmed at being surrounded by the voices of the sirens (Posey, *Poems* 127). This text is quintessential Posey, focusing on the basis of human nature and pondering life among the elements. The fast-moving piano accompaniment is complemented by the highly chromatic nature of the vocal line. Nearly strophic, the second verse becomes broader and more vibrant than the first, ending in a crashing wave of fortissimo going to a distinctly subito piano to finish the poet's thoughts.

*To My Wife* is an incredibly melancholy poem, which Knaggs sets as a through-composed composition based on various themes (Posey, *Poems* 119). A piano introduction sets up this song as a happy, sweet theme in F major, which opens up and becomes broader and sweeter as the song continues. Halfway through the composition, the song becomes more of a thought about a person, as opposed to the life that the singer has lived. Knaggs marks the second verse of the poem as “ashamed.” Here the tonality changes to F minor and the musical themes change; the true meaning of the composition becomes evident. This text is about the regret in life; the singer discusses hurting his loved one, but eventually appreciating the enduring faithfulness of his wife. Knaggs discussed his interpretation of the poem:

[Posey] acknowledges his wife's faithfulness, for she has always stood by his side. Yet he has still neglected her. One hopes his regret compels him to change, but one also knows that not every story has a happy ending. The poet's life is brought to an untimely end when he drowns at the age of 35. As such, he may never have had time to change his behavior toward his wife. And perhaps he wanted us to avoid the same mistake with those whom we love while we still have life and time (Knaggs, *Songs*).

*Midsummer* contrasts completely with *To My Wife* (Posey, *Poems* 190). This text focuses on enjoying nature, hunting, and the good life. The tone is excited and the tempo moves very quickly, with a quarter note at metronome marking 120 and later at 150. Providing a challenge for the accompanist, the composition is broad and expansive for the singer. Featuring triplets and quintuplets in the accompaniment contrasting the long lines of the voice, the composition has a genuine feeling of exhilaration throughout.

*What I Ask of Life* concludes the cycle, opening with a long introduction, setting a mood of reflection and pleasantness (Posey, *Poems* 110). The text enters



over a broken arpeggiation of triplets. The vocal line is fluid, long, and bright, focusing on the positive meaning in life. The composition broadens when singing is mentioned, and features a high subito piano to discuss old age. The interludes are thickly textured, but the harmonies remain relatively simple throughout. The text ends in the most optimistic and hopeful way, which is complemented and finished with repeated motives in a piano postlude. Knaggs stated that he chose to end the cycle with this poem because “it summarizes his [Posey] philosophical outlook on life well” (Knaggs, *Songs*).

To date, none of these songs have been published, but all of the compositions are available from the individual composers. The world premiere live recording and the sheet music for the sixteen premiered songs were acquired by the Merkel Area Museum in Merkel, Texas and by the National Museum of the American Indian at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC. Because of commissioning and premiering these compositions based on Posey’s poetry, I was added to the list of Classical Native American Artists and Musicians at the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of the American Indian.

In January of 2010, I also premiered a song cycle entitled “Reflections and Musings” based by Nicole Elyse DiPaolo. The Posey poems used for this song cycle were: *Flowers*, *To a Summer Cloud*, *A Reverie*, *An Outcast*, and *To a Snowflake* (Posey, *Poems* 95, 191, 182, 131, 184). These songs were composed with the intention of setting a mood of different seasons, along with an emphasis on retaining the original poetry. DiPaolo’s goal was to allow “Posey’s wonderfully musical, vivid poetry to shine through” (DiPaolo).

Additionally, from 2006 to 2007, Damian Stout composed six songs based on Posey’s poems, which were originally intended for the premiere. These compositions have yet to be premiered. The poems utilized for his compositions were: *What My Soul Would Be*, *The Haunted Valley*, *The Legend of the Rose*, *The Poet’s Song*, *Life’s Mystery*, and *Red Man’s Pledge of Peace* (Posey, *Poems* 78, 79, 94, 135, 136, 203).

It is my intention to continue to promote the work of Posey through song literature. Repeat performances, as well as videos of the original premiere are being made available on YouTube (Kunkle). Through this project of bringing Native American poetry to attention through Western classical music, it is hoped that new collaborations and ideas will be encouraged to be developed to unite the current Native American and European/modern American cultures, and beyond.

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## The Heart of a Nun: Passion and Spirituality in Úrsula Suárez and Rose of Lima

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This paper is focused on the work of two nuns of the Colonial period in South America: Rose of Lima and Úrsula Suárez. The reason I decided to write about them is because they used their overwhelming spiritual experiences to create attractive pictorial works. With their works, they evaded the male authority that reigned in the Colonial South America, particularly in Chile and Perú. To explain how they did it, I will show first the tradition they received, which comes from the Late Middle Ages and the doctrine of the Catholic Church in Spain. Then, I will describe their works as well as the ways in which these two nuns were very close to becoming independent authors. In other words, I will describe the path they traversed to follow their passions.

During the Middle Ages, from the 12<sup>th</sup> century onwards, medieval nuns felt the necessity to write. They wrote about things they saw, about the things that were revealed to them, and about themselves. These women wrote about their supernatural experiences, and those experiences took different shapes, depending on the person who received the visions. For example, nuns such as Hildegard von Bingen dictated to her scribe what she literally saw and heard and these are the results:



Hildegard von Bingen.

1. Liber divinorum operum: Simplicis hominis 2. Scivias: Sixth Vision of the First Part

During the 13<sup>th</sup> century this visionary literature became more autobiographical with authors such as Marguerite Porete or Angela de Foligno. However, these nuns were not able to write about their visions without the approval of a man. This man was their confessor, a priest or a monk who listened and absolved their sins. He also was in charge of the monastic path of nuns, guiding them on their spiritual issues. The nuns, then, needed to trust in these men everything that happened in their inner world.

How is this tradition of Visionary Literature connected to the Americas? From the 16<sup>th</sup> through the 19<sup>th</sup> century a considerable number of women in Europe were asked by their confessors to write about their spirituality, which included their dreams, visions, voices, and images. Visionary Literature was being developed in the Americas too. Why did this happen? It was, mainly because of the medieval mentality that the Spanish Conquerors brought to the new continent following its discovery in 1492. Groups of nuns called Dominicans, Ursulines and Carmelites traveled to the Americas in order to achieve the Church's goal: to convert natives to Catholicism. This was a goal that was pursued also by the political powers, because the Spanish Crown controlled religious affairs. The first convent in the Americas was founded in 1540 when ten women traveled from Spain to Mexico with Hernán Cortés. After this foundation, some convents began to settle in the new land: the Convent of Santa Ana in Santo Domingo (1551) and the Convent of the Incarnation in Lima, in 1558. By the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, there were 24 established convents between Panama and Chile.

Under this scenario, a new continent demanded new ways of showing the Catholic faith. In documentary terms, there are two written records that ruled the new pastoral work: those that issued from the Council of Trent (1545-1563) and its application to the American reality in the Third Council of Lima (1582-1583). Trent sought to combat the religious schism initiated by Martin Luther, in addition to unifying Christianity and claiming back the land of Palestine. But it is the first purpose, to combat schisms, which became more relevant to the daily life of the habitants of the Americas. What the Council of Trent intended to do was to give guidelines to reinforce the Catholic faith, re-emphasizing the idea that the Church was a mediator between God and the people. This is why the Council of Trent emphasized the importance of the sacraments, especially those of Confession and the Eucharist. It was also the period of the Eucharistic miracles, when some Christians saw the host transformed into human flesh, indicating the literal presence of Christ in the Sacrament.

These strategies were created in order to convert the natives, and control the huge number of nuns that had also the mission to evangelize and did not always follow their order's rule. This is why there were big efforts invested on controlling these women. The control was performed mainly through confession and the analysis of the writings of the nuns. Doing that, the confessors could determine whether the visions had divine or demoniac origins. If the writing showed a model of virtue, the work had permission to circulate. If it had some kind of heresy in it, the writing had to be delivered to the Inquisition. Thus, with the goal of achieving an effective evangelization, Lives (*Vidas*) and Hagiographies

circulated within the convents as life models. In the book *Neither Saints Nor Sinners*, Kathleen Ann Myers suggests that the texts written by American nuns were relevant too for the evangelization process. These texts, created in convents, were exported to Europe in order to demonstrate the splendor that the Church was winning in the Americas. It was a very creative atmosphere, but very controlled at the same time, and that certainly affected the creations of Rose of Lima and Úrsula Suárez.

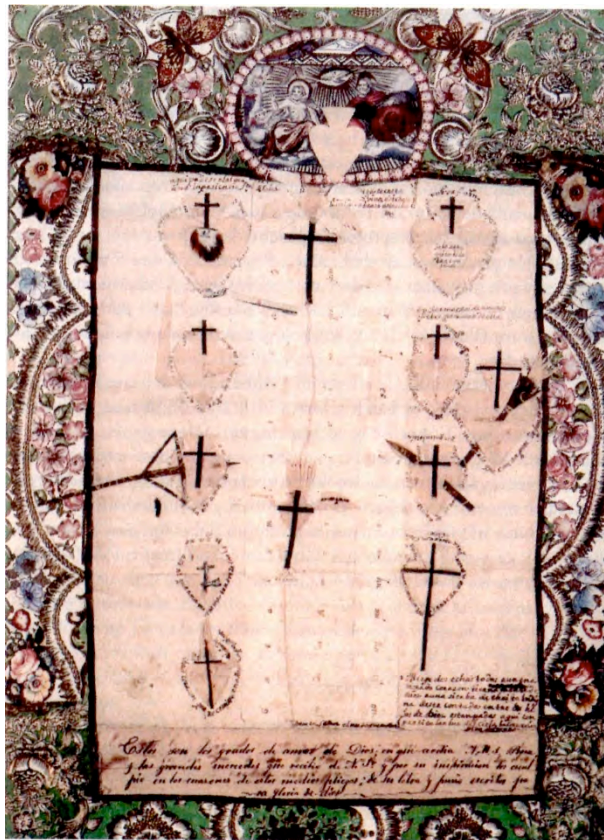
Rose of Lima was born in Perú in 1586 and died in 1617. Fifty-four years after her death, she was declared a saint, the first saint of the Americas. Úrsula was born in 1666 in Santiago de Chile, and even though after her death she was not canonized, she became the abbess of her convent and had a lot of power in it. Besides being nuns in the Colonial South America, these two women have this in common: they both wrote about themselves, and they did it in a very particular way: through images. With images, they exposed their souls and their intimate relationship with God. As we will see, this relationship is certainly focused in their passion. The ascetic life of Rose, expressed in her work, and the voices that Úrsula heard and the things she saw determined how the mystical experience passes through their own bodies. These women suffered and lived the passion of an intimate experience with the Divinity. They did it through images that were the vehicle to express the passion that these women fought for their right to follow.

The real name of Rose of Lima was Isabel Flores de Olivo. The reason why we know her as Rose is because of some biographical events. One of them is that when she was a newborn, her maid saw her transformed into a rose because of her beauty. Isabel, or Rose, wrote some poems, an autobiography that disappeared, several letters and, the most remarkable piece of her work, two collages with the figure of her heart as the main image. They are called “The Mercies” and “The Mystical Stairway”. The Mercies, or Mercedes, are three hearts that represent the stages of the traditional mystical path: the purgative, illuminative and union ways:



Mercedes o heridas del alma, Rose of Lima

The “Stairway” continues with this mystical path, but with thirteen hearts that have in them a motto that defines the spiritual journey:



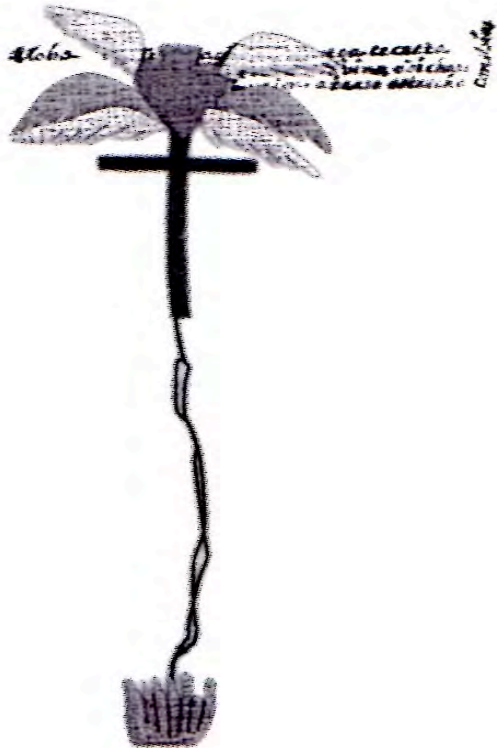
Escala espiritual, Rose of Lima

The original sheets are located in the Monastery of Santa Rosa de Santa Maria in Lima (Perú) and have been reproduced for use by scholars. The manuscripts were discovered in 1923 by Alonso Getino (1877-1946), and its date of composition is August 23, f 1616. The whole process of discovery is described in detail in Alonso Getino's book called *La Patrona de América ante los nuevos documentos*. Very little has been said about these images after Getino. Ramón Mujica Pinilla (2001), Linda Baez Ruby (2009) and Emilio Rivera Baez (2012) have written interesting analysis on Rose's work, but there are still many aspects to consider.

The way in which Rose explained her work is the following: “I confess in all truth in the presence of God that all the mercies which I have recorded in this way in notebooks as engraved and painted on these two pieces of paper I have neither seen nor read about in any book, they are only worked through this sinner by the powerful hand of the Lord in whose book I read what is Eternal Wisdom” (“Mercedes”). This was the typical attitude that nuns adopted when they created something: they pretended to be ignorant and obedient to their confessors, letting them know that the work created was a Divine revelation and not a personal one. This does not mean that Rose was really uneducated, quite the

opposite: there are evidences that show that Rose was highly informed of what religious people were reading in Spain. Her knowledge of Saint John of the Cross, Saint Therese of Ávila, and Luis of Granada is explicit in her work. Nevertheless, nuns like Rose had to use the rhetoric strategy of *diminutio* in order to gain the right to create: they were not authors but recipients of divine revelations.

Having this in mind, we can move back to the work of Rose and then appreciate the nature of her work. Clearly the figure of the heart is showing the strong intimacy that she wanted to expose. According to Juan Eduardo Cirlot, the figure of the heart represents the center of the human body and, of course, the capacity of love. What characterize this love and intimacy are the symbols related to pain and suffering that Rose selected. Crosses, spears and nails pierce the heart, imitating the Crown of Thorns of Christ. Drama and pain were always present in Rose's spirituality. With great suffering, seeking to eliminate carnal temptations, she wore a silver tape around her head that had thorns in the inside. She also wore a cloth of thorns that was locked with a key that Rose dropped into a well. In her painting, the phrases that surround the hearts are very explicit about her relationship with God. The figure of the last stage says: "Ecstasy. Intoxication in the wine cellar. Secrets of divine love. Oh happy union, in the close embrace of God!"



Escala espiritual, detail.

What the scholar Linda Báez Rubí proposes about the visual work of Rose of Lima is that she uses her body as a vehicle for her expression. The soul makes contact with God, and in this overwhelming experience, Rose uses the image of her body –her heart – to exteriorize what has happened to her. The image is a testimony of what she experiences in the deepest part of her body.

Formally and thematically, the work of Rose of Lima is without doubt influenced by the European tradition, more specifically, the Spanish tradition. The spiritual path with suffering stages was a typical speech of the Spanish Baroque period, crowned mainly by the poetry of Saint John of the Cross. The fusion of image and text that Rose used was widely used in the Late Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the Baroque. I believe that the uses of the image that Rose of Lima runs are related to the tradition of the emblems. The composition is made by way of a diagram, in which image and text coexist. As Santiago Sebastián remarks, it is a fact that the emblems came to the Americas, and that they were read with strong enthusiasm. They were used as a pedagogical tool, accessible to most citizens. According to Fernando de la Flor, what the emblems proposed was a view of the world through a mediated thought: the visual and symbolical analysis of texts replaced the literal. Then, the purpose of the emblems, as De la Flor explains, is to give transcendence to the immediate reality. I think that this is what Rosa is certainly doing: she is using elements of the material world to express transcendental truths. What is remarkable in this case is the importance of the material. As many colonial nuns, Rose installs her speech in an intermediate space between the sacred and the profane. In words, her speech is referring to spiritual affairs, but the tension with the profane, in words and images, remains.

The use of images characterizes the spirituality of Úrsula Suárez too, but with fundamental differences. The *Relación autobiográfica (Autobiographical relations)* has no images in it; she describes her visions, with the strategy of the description of images known as ekphrasis. The text has two moments that are very well distinguished: Úrsula's childhood and her recent time. In the first period, she writes about her relationship with her family and especially her bond with the material. Because of this, Úrsula had problems in her first years as a nun, showing difficulties on adapting to monastic austerity. Then, in a second stage of the narration, Úrsula Suárez writes references to the visions that she sees and that she calls "talks". These are voices that command Úrsula what to do, but they give her much pain, because she cannot determine either if they are demonic or divine voices. These voices are accompanied by very detailed visions manifested mainly in dreams.

Her autobiography is about the relationship that she established with God through her visions and auditions. The text exists because the nun's confessor forced her to write it with the purpose of examining her life. Úrsula constantly complains of this duty, arguing that a man should not be interested in a woman's matters. Her main problem is having to remember all the things she heard and saw, arguing that she does not understand what happens to her. Even though these complaints are a typical argument of humility in the monastic speech of the Colonial period, Úrsula adds some new topics to the pattern. The most remarkable of them is her sense of humor. In a revelation, she hears God saying: "I haven't yet had a comedienne saint, and as there are all manner of things in palaces, you are to be the comedienne" (230). She thought that her role in the convent was to entertain the other nuns. She usually told them stories that made them laugh, contradicting the traditional path to gain holiness. Her nontraditional path for sainthood is approved by God himself, to Whom Úrsula



responds: “You are to know that I am going to be a saint, and not just any saint, for the Church will have no other saint as madcap as I” (232). But this does not mean that Úrsula was free from suffering; plenty of times she expresses the pain that is produced by remembering and then writing her experiences. Here we can find one of the paradoxes on the work of Úrsula, because she says she cannot remember, but she is very detailed when she describes her visions. So detailed, that it seems that she is really painting a picture, responding to what Marry Carruthers called the “literary pictures”: “organizations of images that are designed to strike the eye of the mind forcefully” (122). Pictures are present in Úrsula’s text as much as they are in Rose’s work. Descriptions are enriched by stories and anecdotes that are marked by a rejection for men: “In conclusion I formulated the intention of never letting an opportunity go by in which I would not attempt to deceive as many men as my ability would allow” (231).

The way that Úrsula referred to the images that she saw matches the pattern that the visionary nun must meet: the visions are described in detail, but at the same time she shows confusion about the meaning of the images. When Úrsula Suárez tells her visions generally refers to their surface avoiding its meaning. This does not mean that she omits some of her visions, she just narrates what she sees and does not explain the content of the visions. In fact, there are occasions in which the body transcends the visual: “A thing came out of me like one thing flying: I did not see it, but I felt it out; it was in my chest like restlessness by force” (216). How can we explain that the world of a nun, of Úrsula Suárez, was so material? What are these things that came out from the inside? Caroline Walker Bynum argues that it is natural that a nun, exposed daily to rosaries, pictures, sculptures, books and representations, expressed her spiritual life in that way. Thus, for Walker Bynum, the power of the images is strongly represented in the written descriptions of images: they are formally textual, but very material in content. That is why in Úrsula’s narration, vision, and touch have the same relevance. From the inner world of Úrsula we can read images, but also we can read things. As Rose of Lima did, Úrsula also gave importance to the things of the world as mediators with the Divine.

The fact that Rose and Úrsula chose images as the vehicle for showing their inner worlds tells us that they lived an experience that was spiritual and aesthetic at the same time. But having the chance to express this was not easy. They both experienced in their lives many difficulties to follow their passion. When they were young, they both expressed their wish of becoming nuns. This decision was against the will of their mothers, because both mothers thought that marriage was the correct path to success for their daughters. Rose and Úrsula followed their passion despite every obstacle that the social institution meant in the Colonial period: family and The Church. As Kathleen Ann Myers remarks, “mystics and visionaries could both help and hurt the church” (14); they could help it because they proposed a renovated faith, but could hurt it for this same reason, because they personalized spirituality, resting relevance to the church and its mediation.

The question that I ask myself is: Did these women encounter in the image a way to avoid colonial control? Or was the image used for a clearer and better exposition of their inner world? I see a bit of both elements. When the soul meets

God in an intimate contact the subject feels the need to share what happened. Due to this overwhelming experience, words are never enough to describe that spiritual process. Some mystics chose poetry, others chose drama, and there is a group of mystics that found that the image was the best way to show that experience. The relationship between image and religion is even stronger. Used as a medium to express devotion, the Baroque period in the Americas witnessed how images were used to spread the beliefs of the Church, how they had a pedagogical function. What I suggest in the cases of Rose of Lima and Úrsula Suárez is that they, exposing their intimacy, were proposing a new model of being a woman in the Colonial period. Suffering, spirituality and even laughter are elements that can be seen in their works and that express the presence of an authenticity that makes them confront the prevailing male ruling. Then, we can establish that these two women, despite the authority of men, were close to becoming autonomous writers. This autonomy is cultural, and I think it has two levels: they were independent as women, and also as emerging Latin Americans. They added new elements to the mystical tradition that cannot be understood without the context in which these two women lived. Rose added the relevance of the sensuality and the body, and Úrsula added the sense of humor.

I conclude this work stating that Rose and Úrsula achieved a very personal spirituality. Even though they had to respond to the model proposed by the Catholic Church, they managed to include elements of their own personalities in their mystical path. This is the main achievement that makes their work so appealing: that they were able to mix their own feelings with the rhetorical, visual and mediated pattern of their times.

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## Aesthetic of Passion in the 19th Century

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Passion is the love that comes with an obsessive desire for spiritual and/or physical possession. Nineteenth Century Romanticism represents the epitome of passion in mixing themes such as the absolute, the star-crossed lovers, foreign lands (Italy, Spain), political upheaval and of course death. Passion grows, yet it is often accompanied by failure, mostly in regards to its physical realization. Is it because instead of giving a true account of passion, Romantic writers created an aesthetic?

This study will show the main characteristics of that aesthetic. I will mainly explore two Romantic works; Stendhal's *The Charterhouse of Parma* and Balzac's *Sarrasine*. They represent the quintessence of two veins: the classical and the sublime (extreme). I now present a summary of these fictions. *The Charterhouse of Parma* relays Fabrizio Del Dongo's adventures, a hotheaded young Italian enamored with Clelia Conti, a woman engaged to be married. While chasing Clelia, Fabrizio avoids engaging in an affair with his aunt, the fiery Duchess Gina of Sanseverina. In *Sarrasine*, in exchange for sex, the narrator discloses to Madame de Rochefide the story of Sarrasine, a young French sculptor infatuated with La Zambinella, a Prima donna who happens to be a castrato singer. Most of the characters in these works die tragically, linking passion to death.

### Archetypes of Passion

Passionate characters are archetypes: the naïve young man, the virgin and later the adventuress, a very sensual woman. The passionate young man is hotheaded, proud, artistic and prone to delusion. Sarrasine is a sculptor and Fabrizio, a rebel who spends quite some time in prison.

Archetypal characters hold a stereotypical image of themselves and others. The masculine character's point of view prevails and as a result, women are portrayed chiefly from an outside standpoint. The female characters' behavior is interpreted by the heroes that possess only a theoretical knowledge of the opposite sex. In *Sarrasine*, illustrative sentences display numerous clichés applied to both La Zambinella and Madame de Rochefide: "Elle porta la main sur le phénomène avec cette hardiesse que les femmes puisent dans la violence de leurs désirs ..." ("She placed her hand on the phenomenon, with the boldness which women derive from the violence of their desires ..."; Balzac; 39; Translation Clara Bell) Also "C'était la femme avec ses peurs soudaines, ses caprices sans raison, ses troubles instinctifs, ses audaces sans cause, ses bravades et sa délicieuse finesse de sentiment" ("She was a true woman with her sudden terrors, her unreasoning caprices, her instinctive worries, her causeless audacity, her bravado, and her fascinating delicacy of feeling"; Balzac; 68; Translation Clara Bell). Zambinella is the perfect woman because "she" is essentially weak,

seductive and whimsical; which is a reflection of the way Sarrasine sees “her”, rather than how “she” actually is. Due to his stereotypical vision, the sculptor is unable to acknowledge that the castrato singer is really a man no matter how many times La Zambinella uses the masculine to refer to himself. When the castrato singer appears dressed as a man, Sarrasine believes that the attire is the disguise and vice versa. Amossy and Hersberg Pierrot hypothesize:

Aux yeux de l’artiste, la femme fragile qui correspond à la doxa du XIXe siècle est celle qui réalise son idéal et éveille son désir. Or le récit de Balzac n’incite le lecteur à activer ce stéréotype que pour le mettre en question : en effet la Zambinella n’est pas une femme, mais un castrat. C’est toute une conception familière de la féminité qui se trouve dès lors remise en cause, entraînant ce que Jauss appelle un changement d’horizon (“In the eyes of the artist, the fragile woman who corresponds the nineteenth century Doxa<sup>1</sup> is the ideal that stirs up his desire. Yet, Balzac’s narrative impels the reader to reactivate the cliché only to question it: La Zambinella isn’t a woman, but a castrato singer. It is a whole familiar notion of femininity that is cast into doubt, causing what Jauss calls a change of horizon”; *Stéréotypes et Clichés*; 78; my translation).

Exposing the aesthetic of passion, the male character’s delusions rely on clichés of the stereotypically female. They arouse and strengthen the hero’s desire, particularly the cliché of modesty (reserve). Claude Habib asserts that: “...l’apparition de l’amour semble dépendre d’une disposition féminine, la pudeur” (“... the emergence of love seems to depend on a feminine attribute, modesty”; *La Pudeur*; 21; my translation). It is exacerbated and generalized in the passionate woman who rarely expresses her feelings and desires. According to Stendhal “...la pudeur...jette sans cesse dans le mensonge” (“... Modesty... compels one to lie constantly”; *De l’amour*; 91; my translation). In *La pudeur*, Habib explains how modesty applies to the body (its physicality) and also to feelings related to it:

Au-delà de la nudité du corps qui est le premier motif de la pudeur, et comme son centre de gravité, la dissimulation pudique va s’étendre à toute une série de désirs, de dégoûts, d’appétits, voire de sentiments que l’être pudique cachera spontanément, précisément parce qu’il y tient ou, pour employer une image, parce qu’il fait corps avec eux (“Beyond nudity, which is the first reason for modesty and its center of gravity, modest concealment will gradually concern a long row of desires, disgusts, appetites, even feelings that the modest being will hide spontaneously, precisely because he cares about them or, to use an image, because they are part of him”; 21; my translation).

These assertions reveal an aesthetic concept of the passionate woman rather than a realistic depiction of passion and femininity. Moreover, modesty is part of the

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<sup>1</sup> Public opinion

dynamics of the text. To some extent it is the main obstacle in the story. The hero's battle with woman's modesty is equivalent to the knight's journey to receive his Dame's affection in Courteous Love narratives.

Another stereotypical behavior called "La fuite attirante" refers to the woman's avoidance of physical love ("the tempting evasion"; *Le Consentement Amoureux*; my translation). It stimulates the hero's desire for possession. In *Sarrasine*, La Zambinella defends "her" imaginary chastity by running away from the sculptor with a knife: "If you come near me,' she said, 'I shall be compelled to plunge this blade into your heart" (Balzac 64). This never deters the young man who exclaims: "Ah! ah ! dit Sarrasine, c'est un moyen pour éteindre une passion que de l'exciter" ("Ah!' said Sarrasine, 'to stimulate a passion is a poor way to extinguish it"; Balzac; 64; Translation Clara Bell)! As for Clelia in *The Charterhouse of Parma*, she conveniently made a vow to the Madonna to never set eyes on Fabrizio. Thus when the rebel sings his love to her from his prison window facing hers, she flees:

These words seemed to reawaken, all of Clelia's virtue. She quickly got to her feet, hid her eyes and, quickly gesturing, tried to express to him that she must never see him again. She has made a vow to the Madonna and had just looked at him out of forgetfulness. As Fabrizio ventured to express his love once more, Clelia fled indignantly, swearing to herself that she would never set eyes on him again, for those were the exact words of her vow to the Madonna: I will never set eyes on him again." (Stendhal 445)

Furthermore, Romantic passion glamorizes real or symbolic virginity. The passionate Romantic woman must remain perfect and unspoiled. When she happens to falter (i.e. Have sex), it is never willingly or for mere satisfaction; she is a victim of passion, the supreme virtue. Still, to remain an angelic being, she must atone and die. Claude Habib asserts that "Dans la vulgate romantique, la femme n'a rien de masculin. Elle est toute pudeur, ne comprenant en elle rien de bas, elle ignore le désir ; elle est ange puis mère" ("In Romantic ideology, woman holds nothing that can be deemed masculine. She is wholly modest, not carrying anything dirty, she ignores desire; she is an angel then a mother"; *Le Consentement amoureux*; 32; my translation). Consequently, passion involves the avoidance of its realization (essentially physical) and ways to preserve the heroin's "innocence". The nineteenth century bourgeoisie deems female sexuality problematic:

A partir de la révolution romantique, lorsque la notion d'altérité sexuelle s'est généralisée, cette suppression est devenue concevable. La jouissance féminine a cessé d'aller de soi, et l'on a pu sérieusement penser à l'effacer du tableau comme une grossièreté des âges obscurs ("From the Romantic revolution, when the concept of sexual otherness spread out, this suppression became imaginable. Female pleasure was not self-evident anymore, and one could seriously consider erasing it as a vulgarity from the dark ages"; Claude Habib; *Le Consentement amoureux*; 29; my translation).

Therefore the taboo concerns mostly female pleasure and her expression of desires and feelings. The passionate woman cannot express herself strongly because this boldness is associated with masculinity. Eric Bordas argues:

...l'objet de l'interdit pris en charge par l'énonciation virilisée du narrateur balzacien n'est autre que le plaisir féminin, ou du moins la pratique féminine du plaisir tel que celui-ci est proposé par un imaginaire masculin ("... The forbidden object included in the masculinized utterance of Balzac's narrator is the feminine pleasure or at least the experience of feminine pleasure as it is depicted by a masculine imagination"; 23; my translation).

The aesthetic of passion idealises and negates women. It (re) creates them in and out of the *diegesis*; for the narrator tries to transform Madame de Rochefide (out) the same way Sarrasine transformed a man into a woman (in). This reality is pointed out by the young lady who interrupts the narrator's eulogistic rambling discourse: "Oh! vous me faites à votre goût. Singulière tyrannie ! Vous voulez que je ne sois pas moi" ("Oh! You describe me to suit your own taste. A strange kind of tyranny! You wish me not to be *myself*" Balzac; 42; Translation Clara Bell)! This leads to the division of the female character into the virginal figure versus the sensual.

### **The Passionate Woman: A Divided Figure**

In his critical essay *Amours romantiques*, Pierre Moreau states that the typical Romantic woman can be split into two separate archetypes, as literature underwent two distinct phases. The first figure derives from Byron's ideal: the blonde, virginal, thin, innocent, suffering and dying woman. The woman of the second phase exudes sensuality and acts according to her desires.

The fictions studied here oppose those two feminine archetypes: the virginal woman, often married, and the sensualist, sometimes a courtesan. Romantic pieces display a real duality. In *The Charterhouse of Parma*, the character of Clelia is contrasted with the duchess of Sanseverina.<sup>1</sup> The former strives to remain faithful despite her love for Fabrizio whilst, the latter sometimes uses her sexuality to gain favors and security. Most importantly, Clelia perfectly corresponds the Byronic ideal; the narrator highlights her "ash-blond hair" (172), "innocent grace" (271) and "heavenly beauty" (268).

In *Sarrasine*, a more reflective piece, the split resides within the same character owing to temporality and the character's viewpoint. The sculptor is unable to see the real Zambinella, a pleasure-seeker. He then transforms a bacchanalia into a romantic rendezvous to preserve La Zambinella's imaginary innocence. To please the young man, the castrato ends up conforming to his vision:

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<sup>1</sup> In *The Charterhouse of Parma*, the women are often compared physically by both the court of Parma and Fabrizio. The latter exclaims: "... They're right to compare her to the duchess"(268).

... he was amazed at La Zambinella's continued reserve toward him. She had begun, it is true, by touching his foot with hers and stimulating his passion with the mischievous pleasure of a woman who is free and in love; but she had suddenly enveloped herself in maidenly modesty ... (Balzac; 63; Translation Clara Bell)

The *Prima donna* acts the part of the virginal, passionate woman, all the more confusing since “she” is actually a man.

To conclude this first part, I can assert that the passionate woman is as much constructed by the author as by the male character and the reader. But the aesthetic of passion doesn't rely solely on its characters; various settings, scenes and a characteristic language also play an important part in it.

### **Typical Settings and Scenes of Passion**

The aesthetic of passion thrives through various emblematic settings and scenes. The passionate characters often share their love in hidden or uncomfortable places like a prison cell in *The Charterhouse of Parma*. In *Sarrasine*, the absence of a dangerous setting disappoints the hero: “Sarrasine restrained a feeling of displeasure and put a good face on the matter. He had hoped for a dimly lighted chamber, his mistress leaning over a brazier, a jealous rival within two steps, death and love ...” (Balzac; 60; Translation Clara Bell) Balzac deflates both Sarrasine and the reader's expectations.<sup>1</sup>

The scene of the “love at first sight” generally takes place in idyllic settings and follows a typical progression. In *Sarrasine*, Zambinella appears more beautiful than ever onstage. Stendhal's scene is original since it leaves Fabrizio's viewpoint to focus on Clelia's. Surrounded by policemen and beheld by his aunt, Fabrizio stirs the heroin's passionate feelings due to this association of danger and love in the scene. The long stare they exchange speaks volume: “They stayed looking at each other for a moment after ...” (84)

Romantic passion flourishes in the face of obstacles. In *Sarrasine*, Zambinella cannot reciprocate the sculptor's feelings because he isn't who he claims to be. Clelia is engaged then married in *The Charterhouse of Parma*. However these obstacles often seem artificial. It is one of the main differences between Courtly Love and Romantic passion. In *L'Amour et L'Occident*, Denis de Rougemont asserts that the first obstacle against the realization of love is the lover himself:

Etapes françaises de la dissociation psychologique, de la dégradation de « l'obstacle » extérieur et de la reconnaissance lucide -par là même antiromanesque - de sa nature purement intime et subjective (“The French stage of the psychological disassociation, of the deterioration of the external

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<sup>1</sup> By referring to Romantic artists such as Byron, Shelley, and Goethe and their universe, Balzac plays with Romantic clichés to create his own atmosphere.

“obstacle” and the lucid acknowledgment –thereby anti romantic- of its purely intimate and subjective nature”; 254; my translation).

The lover being the main obstacle; is it why they are few passionate and erotic discourses in these works? The aesthetic of passion relies on a language molded around avoiding a clear depiction of sexuality. This language is a construct that comes from both external (authorship) and internal causes (the pleasure of the text, promotion of passion and art).

### **A Euphemistic Language: Elation of Passion**

Passion possesses the characters, yet the passionate language is very euphemistic. This fact is partly due to the censorship of the era<sup>1</sup>. Butor evokes the effects of censorship on Balzac’s writing: “Il faut donc que ces textes aient une moralité extérieure telle qu’ils ne soient pas interdits” (“These texts must display an external morality in such a way that they will not be banned”; *Scènes de la vie féminine*; 24; my translation). Eroticism comes across through detours and ellipses.

Ellipses blatantly veil the depiction of sexuality between the Romantic lovers in Stendhal’s novel. Afraid that Fabrizio might have been poisoned, Clelia breaks into his cell, which results in sexual intercourse explained as an “involuntary movement”: “She was so lovely, half dressed and in this state of extreme passion, that Fabrizio could not resist an almost involuntary movement. It did not meet with any resistance” (Stendhal 448). The euphemism “movement” followed by the litote are very telling. Thereafter, Stendhal leaves out the three years Fabrizio and Clelia lived together “Here, we ask for permission to pass, without saying a single word about them, over a gap of three years” (Stendhal 503). During this time, Stendhal uses another strategy to preserve symbolically Clelia’s innocence; the vow to the Madonna that forbid her to look at Fabrizio. It appears that Romantic passion doesn’t sit well with sex and domesticity, even those of a clandestine nature.

Multiple techniques veil an overtly sensual discourse. In *The Charterhouse of Parma*, Stendhal uses the words “friendship”, “amicizia” and “happiness” to refer to Clelia and Fabrizio’s liaison; the latter often alluding to actual intercourse. After their first sexual relation in prison, Fabrizio speaks of their “first moment of happiness” the repetition will show what the word implies: “extreme happiness”, “moment of our happiness”, and finally “Farewell, my Clelia, I bless my death because it has been the moment of my happiness” (448). Michel Crouzet insists on the importance of these euphemistic words: “l’euphémisme de l’amitié, auquel les personnages tiennent encore bien après qu’ils se sont avoué leur amour ...” (“The euphemism of friendship the characters refer to, long after they admitted their love to each other ...”; *Stendhal et le Langage*; 335; my translation). In *Sarrasine*, “heart” and the periphrasis “the secret depths of his being” alludes to the sculptor’s genitalia: “He was cold;

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<sup>1</sup> Civil censorship is reinstated by Napoléon in 1810. Bologne informs that according to the Napoleonic code one year imprisonment is required for whom created any kind of works that breach good moral standards (*Histoire de la pudeur* 274).



then suddenly he felt a fire burning in the secret depths of his being, in what, for lack of a better word, we call the heart" (*Sarrasine*; 50; Translation Clara Bell)!

The fragmentation of the female's body prevents it from being overtly erotic. In *Sarrasine*, the sculptor daydreams about feminine attributes he cannot properly see: the "breast", "the neck", "the white shoulders", the "leg", "this face". The critic Eric Bordas demonstrates how these techniques are part of Balzac's erotic aesthetic:

Par euphémismes, par métaphores, par réseaux isotopiques sémiotisés jusqu'à la surcharge, par programmes narratifs codés s'appuyant aussi bien sur les connotations culturelles que sur les suggestions onomastiques, Balzac a proposé une érotique de l'énonciation romanesque d'une rare subtilité. ("Through euphemisms, through metaphors, through isotopic network semiotized until overload, through codified narratives programs relying as much on cultural connotations as on onomastic suggestions, Balzac offers a rare subtle erotic fictional utterance"; *L'érotique Balzacienne*; 23; my translation)

The aesthetic of passion leads to the "erotization" of nonsexual elements such as nature or art. These transpositions allow the artists to create a subtly passionate erotic discourse. The expression of the hero's feelings and emotions is filled with double entendre. Particularly, art and physical love are intertwined at every level of the narrative in *Sarrasine*. Sensuality is explored through an artistic discourse and aesthetic motifs. The love at first sight scene epitomizes Balzac's technique. The mixing of art and synesthesia (mixing of sensations) both hardly veil *Sarrasine*'s erotic pleasure (50 Translation Clara Bell). The narrator evokes *Sarrasine*'s delight: "Sarrasine cried aloud with pleasure" (53 Translation Clara Bell); "... that voice attacked his heart so fiercely that he more than once uttered an involuntary exclamation, extorted by the convulsive ecstasy too rarely evoked by human passions"(53 Translation Clara Bell). (We now know what the "heart" stands for) In the end, the sculptor is literally climaxing: "He had had such exquisite pleasure, or perhaps had suffered so, that his life had flowed away like water from an overturned vessel" (53 Translation Clara Bell). The antitheses, combining pleasure and pain, and the metaphor of water symbolize the masculine release. Yet, it is supposedly an artistic satisfaction.

Nonetheless, this euphemistic language actually enhances "the pleasure of the text" (Barthes). The mixture of preservation and transgressions adds to the sensual themes of the works and exhibits the strength of passion. Rather taboo subjects such as homosexuality and incest reveal the powerful and blind nature of passion. Indeed, *Sarrasine* might simply be attracted to another man. How strange it is that the sculptor's delusion never fades despite the countless tangible proofs that La Zambinella cannot be a woman. For example women aren't allowed on stage in the theatre. The androgynous figure<sup>1</sup> raises some important

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<sup>1</sup> The androgynous real or symbolic is also a common figure in romantic pieces (e.g. Balzac's *Seraphita*, Stendhal's *Vanina Vanini*).

issues concerning gender and sexuality that the hero's refuses to face. In *The Charterhouse of Parma*, Fabrizio and the duchess are related: "I'm quite sure she'll never speak out, to say anything too meaningful would be like committing incest, she'd be horrified" (147). Again, aesthetic prevails over a truthful representation of the feeling. The reality of the taboo is veiled while its artistic power prevails.

## Conclusion

To conclude, Romantic passion is an aesthetic. The writers create poetical archetypes (the young man, the virgin, the sensualist even the androgynous figure). The female character represents two extremes of male fantasies. The aesthetic relies on exacerbated behavioral clichés, such as modesty. Aside from serving the dynamic of the text, they speak volume as regards to the way society views femininity and how it is shaped by the Arts. Plus, the writers create an aesthetic that relies on a euphemistic language: Ellipsis, euphemism, and fragmentation of the female body. Transposition links art to sexuality.

This aesthetic of passion surprisingly doesn't seem irrelevant in societies ruled by countless sexual discourse (Michel Foucault *Histoire de la sexualité I*). Nineteenth century Romanticism popularized myths still found in pop culture today: the love at first sight, the forbidden love and the idealization and negation of women. In Bollywood film *Devdas* (director Sanjay Leela Bhansali); the female character is clearly split between the virginal bride (Paro) and the prostitute. Paro exhibits the same extreme modesty, "the tempting evasion" and embodiment of virginity found in Romantic passionate woman. Music sequences are the perfect vehicle for eroticism. In more critical pieces such as Kundera's *Life is elsewhere*, the archetypes, the myths and the euphemistic romantic language are parodied. The hero's "redheaded girlfriend" plays the virginal Romantic conquest to him, whilst being the sensual lover to another character (the painter) for whom she organizes debauched orgies. Moreover, she isn't beautiful, nor virginal, shy, prude or blonde-haired. Poetry is the vehicle for eroticism. It veils the concrete reality of the body. The poet's Romantic aspirations (poetry, revolution) are often contrasted with his unromantic activities ("masturbation").

It is interesting to realize that dated schemes and archetypes still resonate with the audience. Yet even in the nineteenth century reflective works always manage to subvert this aesthetic to create complex characters that challenge our representations of others and passion.

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## The Characters of Pauline in *Tracks* and Beloved in *Beloved* as Means of Reminding Readers of America's History<sup>1</sup>

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Sometimes it is easy for us to close our eyes and forget, or to pretend that something that happened in the past does not matter anymore. However, through their novels *Beloved* and *Tracks*, Toni Morrison and Louise Erdrich have made forgetting the past or ignoring it much more difficult. Morrison and Erdrich have provided stinging rebuttals to the persistent American myths of the "Glory of winning the West," and "It's gone, so let's put slavery behind us." In *Tracks* and *Beloved*, the authors place before the reader the awful reality of the "colonization" of Native Americans and the unforgettable horrors of slavery.

Morrison and Erdrich tell their stories with voices from the past that will not die. They re-tell history through the lives of ordinary people, mostly women characters who struggle in a world created for the convenience of others. The case can be made that male as well as female characters can re-vision history. I have chosen female characters because I believe that women's stories are told less often.

Erdrich's American Indian characters inhabit a world irrevocably changed, a world in which they have been robbed of their land and resources, their culture, and way of life. Morrison's characters struggle to forget the horrors of their bondage so that they can begin a new life of freedom. For the ex-slave, the transition is not that simple. Morrison and Erdrich introduce the reader to the lives of two women, and through these characters and the lives of those around them, the reader learns a history that cannot be found in textbooks. The demented and destructive women, Pauline and Beloved, both reflect the consequences of subjugation and displacement inflicted on them by a culture that is not their own.

While both stories are written for contemporary readers, Henry Louis Gates warns that we must not read to understand Africa (and by extension, Native America) through the cultural eyes of Europe and the West. By telling their stories through the lives of ordinary people, Erdrich and Morrison have succeeded in "revising" or "re-visioning" American history to tell the plight of the displaced Native American and the African ex-slave. To those who would prefer to forget the past and live in the present, Morrison points out that remembering is painful, but those who suffered must not forget. She believes that they must remember and pass on their stories so "a kind of purging, cathartic recovery can occur. . . It is then that these characters can feel truly free. . . and reclaim their lives" (qtd in Carmean 86). The stories passed on by Morrison and Erdrich do

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<sup>1</sup> A version of this article was previously published in *Willa* (The Women in Literature and Life Assembly) under the title "Revisioning History through Literary Characters: Louise Erdrich's Pauline and Toni Morrison's *Beloved*." Volume 9, Fall 2000. Web (<http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/old-WILLA/fal00/nigro.html>)

more than allow their characters to achieve a “cathartic recovery;” they provide the reader with a version of history that may be less palatable, but one that must be told.

The article “Who is Margaret Garner?” relates “The story of a fugitive mother who killed to protect her child.” Posted on “Ohio Memory,” the article tells the story of Margaret Garner who became Sethe in Morrison’s *Beloved*<sup>1</sup>.

Both novels present social problems without solution or comment. In *Beloved*, Morrison allows the reader to share the legacy of slavery as Sethe, Paul D, and Denver attempt to make a new life in freedom. However, they cannot put the past behind them; they must reveal it to themselves, to each other, and to the reader in “digestible pieces.”

For the Pillager and Kashpaw families in *Tracks*, the present and future become unbearable as they watch the traditional ways of Indian life disappear along with the community that once held the Chippawas together. In the end, characters have no choice but to live in a world they did not create. As they struggle to recover from the hurt inflicted by the characters of *Beloved* and *Pauline*, the families in these novels turn to what is left of their small communities. Sethe is purged of the demons of her past and of the ghost which nearly destroys her as the community of black women comes together to rid the house at 124 Bluestone of the ghost of the woman-child, *Beloved*. The ravaged Pillager and Kashpaw clans are not so lucky as their communities have disappeared into a land now dotted with “government schools, depots, stores, and plotted squares of farms.” (224)

Pauline and *Beloved* are destructive fictional characters whom it would be easy to simply revile and move on. But while they live in different times and different cultures, both lives are shaped by the imposition of an alien culture, and the conflict it brings. Their unforgettable lives offer the thoughtful reader insight into a history that has been waiting to be told, a history which many do not want to know.

Who are these fictional characters who are “revisioning” history, and how can fictional characters change the traditional view of the history Americans have grown up with? *Beloved*, of Toni Morrison’s novel *Beloved* is the grown up baby ghost of the infant who was murdered by her mother. Sethe has just begun a free life when the slave catchers find her and are about to take her and her children back to Sweet Home, the plantation from which she escaped. Rather than allow her children to experience the horrors of slavery, she murders her as yet unnamed baby, slitting her throat. She would have killed her other children and then herself had she not been stopped by a former slave named Stamp Paid. Considering Sethe insane, and not fit for work, the slave catchers leave without her or her children. The murdered child is remembered on her gravestone simply as “*Beloved*.” Sethe serves time in prison and is released. The murdered infant, however, cannot be forgotten as the baby’s ghost playfully roams the house, knocking over objects, generally making its presence known. Although always present, the spirit of the baby seems content to remain a ghost until Paul D, also a refugee of Sweet Home, threatens to become the focus of Sethe’s life. Just as Paul

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<sup>1</sup> Ohio Historical Society and State Library of Ohio.

D. appears in Sethe's life, Beloved emerges from the water as the young woman she would have become. She makes her way into Sethe's home and her life, driving out Paul D as she demands more and more love and attention from her mother.

Pauline, the half-breed daughter of Chippewa and French Canadian ancestry, despises her Indianness, disowns her family and desperately wants to be white. Yet she continues to involve herself in the lives of the extended Indian families of the Kashpaw and Pillager clans. Her primary focus is on Fleur Pillager, her daughter Lulu, and Nanapush, the patriarch and "uncle" of Fleur, along with Fleur's husband and mother-in-law. Pauline intrudes into their lives uninvited, but the families tolerate her even though they know her intentions are evil. Jealous of Fleur's beauty, cleverness, and her skill with tribal herbs and magic, Pauline sets out to thwart her as Fleur lives the traditional Chippewa life.

As readers work their way through the lives of Pauline and Beloved, they become absorbed in the characters whose lives are touched by these women, and they gain a new insight into the plight of Native Americans and African slaves. In *Tracks*, the reader is introduced to a Chippewa family in North Dakota, struggling to survive when their means of livelihood and tribal identity have been replaced with the government school, territorial and "reservation" boundaries, taxes on land which had been theirs for centuries, and armies of loggers pushing farther and farther into tribal lands. The game that had always been their sustenance is becoming extinct, and they survive on rations supplied by the government. We meet the Pillager clan when most have died of disease, and those Chippewa who have not died are weak, cold, and hungry.

In the novel *Beloved*, the reader listens to the fragmented horror stories told by Sethe and Paul D as they recall pieces of their lives on the plantation ironically called "Sweet Home." The "rememories" (as Sethe calls them) are so painful that they can barely be told. Paul D keeps his emotions and memories locked in what he calls his "tin box" that is rusted shut. So as readers encounter the destructive and seeming irrational behavior of the grown-up ghost of Beloved and the confused and dangerous Pauline, they are immersed in two worlds that are seldom discussed, and which are not comforting to learn about.

Beloved, whose spirit had been content to roam the house as a ghost, returns to her mother as the grown young woman she would have become. She emerges from the water with smooth skin and hands, new shoes, and wearing a black dress. She is weary from her journey, and sleeps for days before gathering strength to assume her mission, that of endlessly extracting love and attention, from the mother she can never forgive.

As her sister Denver attempts to learn of Beloved's past life, she asks where she lived before coming to Bluestone Road. She asks, "What was it like over there, where you were before?" (75) Beloved replies, "Dark. . . Hot. Nothing to breathe down there and no room to move it." (75) Denver prods on, "Did you see anybody?" Beloved responds, "Heaps. Lots of people down there. Some is dead." (77)

The living ghost represents not only the spirit of Sethe's murdered infant, but of the African mother Sethe never knew as well as the spirits of those who came to these shores, enduring the infamous middle passage. Beloved speaks of

the ordeal of the crossing. She speaks for the restless souls who were crammed into the holds of ships:

. . . I am always crouching the man on my face is dead his face is not mine his mouth smells sweet but his eyes are locked some who eat nasty themselves I do not eat the men without skin bring us their morning water to drink we have none at night I cannot see the dead man on my face daylight comes through the cracks and I can see his locked eyes I am not big small rats do not wait for us to sleep someone is thrashing but there is no room to do it in . . . we are all trying to leave our bodies behind the man on my face has done it it is hard to make yourself die forever (210).

Beloved speaks in fragments as the novel is told in fragments. The pieces of the story must be carefully put together by the reader as the story is too painful to be revealed or to be told in its entirety.

Beloved has returned to claim the love of the mother that she was denied, and to inflict additional guilt on the woman who deprived her of life and love so many years ago. As the returned spirit, she will not share her mother with anyone, and Paul D stands in her way.

Through the introduction of the character of Paul D, the reader learns of his attempted escapes, the iron around his ankles and wrists, the iron bit in his mouth, the lock boxes in which he slept, indignities too perverse to ponder. Beloved, however, sees Paul D as being in the way of her obsessive need to love and be loved by Sethe. Through conjuring and supernatural means, she forces him out, finally seducing him, causing him to leave Sethe's house disgusted with himself. Now Beloved has Sethe for herself. Even as she dominates Sethe's every action and thought, she is never satisfied. Her obsession grows until Sethe barely has strength to move. As the mother gives all that she has to the increasingly demanding ghost/child, her physical and mental health are close to the breaking point. At the same time, Beloved, fed by Sethe's guilt and love, is gaining strength and growing physically.

Sethe's guilt at having murdered her own dear child is magnified as the demands made by Beloved increase. She reiterates that she had planned to kill herself after murdering her children, but was stopped after the death of her infant daughter. But now that deceased child has returned, she will not give her up. Deborah Horvitz argues that Beloved progresses to possess Sethe. Beloved left the other side because she was lonely, "devoid of love and memory." Horvitz argues that Beloved returns to pass judgement on Sethe. She says Sethe assumes Beloved would forgive her. She did not.

The novel ends when the tiny community of black women who are finally aware of the situation. They accept that Beloved is the ghost of the murdered child and realize that they alone can turn her away. The women of the community gather outside the house at 124 and begin singing. As the voices grow louder Sethe and Beloved come out on the porch, Beloved naked and great with child. Amidst a shuffle, Beloved disappears, leaving an exhausted Sethe. When

Paul D returns, she tells him in a small, weary voice, “She left me. . . She was my best thing.”

Pauline of *Tracks* is a very real person, but she too is a victim of a culture and way of life over which she has no control. Early in the novel, Pauline Puyat reveals her disdain for her Indian ancestry and her desire to establish herself as Canadian rather than Chippewa. As she prepares to leave home to learn the trade of lace-making from the nuns, her father tells her, “You’ll fade out there . . . You won’t be an Indian once you return.” That suits Pauline who tells him she wants to be “like my grandfather, pure Canadian” (14).

It is in the town of Argus where Pauline, working in the butcher shop of her aunt and uncle, meets Fleur whom she remembers from the reservation. She describes Fleur with a mixture of envy and bitterness, comparing Fleur’s beauty and self-assurance to her own lack of beauty. Pauline describes herself as “so poor looking I was invisible to most customers and to the men in the shop” (15). She sees herself as “blend[ing] into the stained brown walls, a skinny big-nosed girl with staring eyes” (16).

While Pauline projects her self-hatred on Fleur, who seems to be everything she is not, she manages to damage or destroy others as well. Her ability to deflect her destructive acts from herself continues throughout the story. She watches as Fleur is raped; then she punishes the men by locking them in the frozen meat locker where they perish. Her affair with Napoleon Morrissey, which results in the birth of an unwanted child, leads her to later murder Napoleon as she mistakes him for the monster in Lake Matchimanito. Later in the story, when Fleur gives birth to a premature infant, Pauline is unable or unwilling to find the medicinal herbs that Fleur had stored in the lean-to, and the infant dies.

After the death of the infant, Pauline and Fleur skate on bark shoes along an “iced pathway along with other Indians” (159) to the heaven of the Chippewa. It is here that the reader meets the dead souls who “starved, drank and froze, those who died of the cough” (159-60).

In the heaven of the Chippewa there is gambling and jars of potent whiskey. “They play for drunkenness, or sorrow, or loss of mind. They play for ease, they play for penitence, and sometimes for living souls” (160). In this sorrowful place, Pauline meets the souls of those she has betrayed or destroyed. She hides to avoid the gaze of her parents and looks away from the men she abandoned in the meat locker in Argus. However, she must finally admit what the reader has known all along. “I was visible. They [the men] saw me, and it was clear from their eyes they knew my arms had fixed the beam in the cradle back in Argus. I had sent them to this place”(162). Pauline’s admission of guilt is short lived, for as she and Fleur return to the living, she resumes her quest for “whiteness.”

Once Pauline returns to the living, she remains unwilling to accept the reality and the consequences of her actions. After she murders Napoleon Morrissey, her last link to the past, she can finally repudiate her Chippewa heritage and be “white.” She exits the novel believing she is “sanctified and recovered” as she becomes the bride of Christ. She leaves Pauline behind and becomes Sister Leopolda. Her choice of “Leopolda” is symbolic of the stealthy, predatory role she assumed as Pauline.



*Tracks* ends with Fleur pushing a “small cart, a wagon that one person could pull, constructed of the green wood of Matchimanito oaks” (224). The cart contains only “weed wrapped stones from the lake-bottom, bundles of roots, a coil of rags, and the umbrella that had shaded her baby” (224). She is last seen throwing her weight against the yoke, heading into the unknown. As Pauline has turned away from her heritage, Fleur holds fast to hers in the only way she knows.

In Morrison’s novel, the ghost of Beloved, as a returned spirit, speaks for all those lost souls who suffered and died during terrible Middle Passage. She speaks as one and as the voice of many as she describes the slave ships and their journey:

We are not crouching now we are standing but my legs are like my dead man’s eyes I cannot fall because there is no room to the men with no skin are making loud noises I am not dead the bread is sea-colored I am too hungry to eat it the sun closes my eyes those able to die are in piles . . . the woman is there with the face I want the face that is mine (211).

It is through Beloved’s child-like and fragmented remembrance that the reader must face the terrible horrors in the holds of slave ships and of the indignities inflicted by those who saw African slaves as less than human. In her essay “Rootedness,” Toni Morrison says that she sees the life of a solitary person as representative of a culture, of his or her “tribe.” She says, “My sense of the novel is that it has always functioned for the class or the group that wrote it” (340). She believes the novel should be “beautiful and powerful, but it should also work. It should have something in it that enlightens” (341). However, she adds that the best art is political, “unquestionably political and irrevocably beautiful at the same time” (345).

Karen Carmean believes that “the primary intent of *Beloved*, had to do with Morrison’s deep sense of responsibility with regard to telling the story of her people’s slavery as fully and honestly as possible” (85). Thus, she adds, *Beloved* is also meant to be taken as a character reflecting the real experience of native Africans who lived through the middle passage and those who endured slavery.

John Hope Franklin, distinguished historian writing in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, advises white Americans to accept the impact of slavery on our society today. He says White Americans can’t say, “Well, it was my great granddaddy [who owned slaves.] They are the direct beneficiaries, even in 1998, of the opportunities and greed that existed in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. They need to see the connection between slavery and their privilege today (26).

Franklin’s argument can be applied to the treatment of Native Americans as well, causing the thoughtful reader to wonder if Erdrich is saying that Fleur’s flight into the unknown implies that Pauline has won the culture wars. Catherine Catt does not think so, noting that, “Erdrich’s words imply a profound belief in the possibility of survival for native people, a survival of body and spirit” (72). Certainly the Indian tradition lives on in Fleur, but has been extinguished in Pauline.

Outspoken critic and author Paula Gunn Allen points out that “American Indian novelists use cultural conflict as a major theme, but their work shows an increasing tendency to bind that theme to its analogues in whatever tribal oral tradition they write from”(79). In an interview discussing *Tracks*, Erdrich was asked if the novel represented a particular point of view or a political statement. She responded:

I think each of the books is political in its own way. . . There’s no way to speak about Indian history without it being a political statement. . . you really can’t write a book about Native Americans without being political (Schumacher 29).

The late Michael Dorris, husband of Louise Erdrich, American Indian author and professor at Dartmouth College, takes issue with American history as taught in public schools today. He says:

[S]tudents are given the erroneous impression that the few people who did live here in the Americas before European contact were quickly dispatched to the Happy Hunting Ground by conflict with stalwart pioneers and calvarymen. Such a view of the past, clearly at odds with well documented facts, not only serves to reinforce the myth of Indian aggressiveness and bellicosity but it further suggests that Indians got what they deserved. In addition, by picturing Indians as warlike and dangerous, Euro-American ancestors reap honor by having vanquished them (126).

Through these two novels and the characters they depict, Morrison and Erdrich offer the reader a fresh look at American history and the issues of cultural conflict, the outcome of cultural domination, and the horrors and terrible repercussions of slavery without apology, without comment, and without resolution. Perhaps because there is no resolution. The reader must decide, but now the reader has seen history through new and fresh eyes.

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## The Birdcage Effect in *Pride and Prejudice* and *The Awakening*

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Society plants the seeds of the birdcage with religion and patriarchal values and lets it grow and bloom in the minds of parents. These parents spread their own seeds of the birdcage onto their children for them to pass on from generation to generation. What one can see by reading *Pride and Prejudice* is the growth and development of the birdcage as it is implanted in the minds of the Bennet girls. Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, who have both reaped the negative effects of the birdcage, blindly feed their own daughters the same seeds that have made the husband a sarcastic recluse and the wife a mindless wreck of emotions. The effects of the birdcage are quite clear in *Pride and Prejudice*, but they are vividly clear in *The Awakening*. Edna is the ultimate illustration of the severe psychological effects of the birdcage. *Pride and Prejudice* and *The Awakening* both deal with the same issue: marriage and how it affects an individual's life. Both novels have positive and negative examples of marriage, but the underlying problem is the reason why these characters marry in the first place. The birdcage mentality puts pressure on all of them to think marriage is the only option, and it can take negative turns for both men and women.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr. and Mrs. Bennet fail as parents because as a couple, they are incompatible. "But she [their daughter, Elizabeth] had never felt so strongly as now the disadvantages which must attend the children of so unsuitable a marriage, nor ever been so fully aware of the evils arising from so ill-judged a direction of talents" (231). While Jane Austen keeps all the women within the realm of the birdcage, she does show the repercussions of what happens when couples marry not for love, but because marriage is an expected source of security for both parties. Women are raised to have inferiority complexes, so they feel vulnerable to the outside world and need to depend on the men in their lives to keep them safe and comfortable. Since it is the social norm that the mother is supposed to take care of the children, Mr. Bennet hands over the education of his daughters to a woman who is described as having a "mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper" (7). Abiding by the rules of the birdcage, Mr. Bennet sits alone in his library while his wife passes her own traits, which have been sculpted by the birdcage mentality, onto their daughters. The three most affected by the birdcage are Jane, Lydia, and Kitty. Elizabeth and Mary are the only ones who pick up their father's sense of intellect. Jane and Lydia are Mrs. Bennet's two favorite daughters because they are known for their beauty and popularity with men. She encourages their preoccupation with marriage, while she discourages Mary and Elizabeth's independence.

After Lydia runs off with Mr. Wickham, Mr. Collins writes to Mr. Bennet and advises him, "to throw off your unworthy child from your affection for ever, and leave her to reap the fruits of her own heinous offence" (287). He even says that it would have been better if Lydia had died rather than disobey the rules of society. By unknowingly flying out of the birdcage to shatter her "virtue," she

loses the respect of all her family members and friends. Lydia's action works to keep Kitty and Mary locked in their cage at Longbourn under the watchful eye of their father.

Elizabeth is the daughter who most takes after her father. She is really the only one other than Mary who is reluctant to marry because she can see and understand that her marriage could end up like her parents' marriage. It is apparent to the other girls that their parents' marriage is not the best example of a successful marriage, but they are still occupied with thoughts of proposals because they weren't raised to question whether or not they would be happy in their future relationships; they were raised by their mother to take the first proposal they could get because there might not be another one. Mr. Bennet refers to his daughters as the silliest creatures he has ever beheld. Instead of contributing his own talents to their education and upbringing, he belittles them, making them feel inferior and driving them further into the realm of dependence.

The men in this story have clearly been raised to believe that since women are inferior to men and need them for survival, their proposals are, without a doubt, going to be accepted. Mr. Collins and Mr. Darcy are both stunned when Elizabeth denies them of what they feel is rightfully theirs: her hand in marriage. Elizabeth, much to her mother's disappointment, will only marry for love. This is clearly a radical and ridiculous notion according to the responses of Mrs. Bennet and the two men. This radical need to marry someone she loves keeps her from falling into the same psychological upheaval that Edna Pontellier falls into in *The Awakening*.

In chapter 59 of *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr. Bennet, in response to Mr. Darcy asking for Elizabeth's hand in marriage, tells his daughter:

I know your disposition, Lizzy. I know that you could be neither happy nor respectable, unless you truly esteemed your husband; unless you looked up to him as a superior. Your lively talents would place you in the greatest danger in an unequal marriage. (364)

Just like Edna, Elizabeth is the kind of woman who cannot suffer to be in a marriage with a man whom she does not love. Mr. Bennet knows this because they are of the same temper and taste and so he warns her to reconsider her feelings. He cannot bear to have her in the same type of marriage he is in with her mother, where the two are complete opposites. This warning shows his understanding and love for his daughter, but it also puts her in the place of inferiority in respect to her future husband. His understanding of an equal marriage is a bit skewed. He does not want her to marry a man like Mr. Collins because he is clearly her inferior, but his fear regarding her choice of Mr. Darcy is that he is not her superior. In order for them to have a truly equal marriage, however, there cannot be a superior. Superior implies that she would be his inferior. Mr. Bennet does not want Elizabeth to experience his own misery in marriage, but he does want her to take the rightful place as the inferior wife because of his understanding of marriage in general. One would think that Mr. Bennet would have learned through his relationship with a woman so greatly affected by the side effects of the birdcage mentality, that his daughter would only

be happy as an equal in her marriage. His unchangeable way of thinking is not his fault though. The birdcage mentality is not the individual's fault, but rather society's fault.

While Mrs. Bennet is more than willing to perform her motherly duties, Edna in *The Awakening* does not succeed in performing her birdcage duties as a mother or a wife. According to her husband Leonce, Edna "failed in her duty toward her children" (10). It is the law of society that a woman should naturally feel inclined to devote herself solely to the care of her children. A man doesn't have to treat the children when they are in bed with a fever; he just has to notice it in order to pass the obligation onto his wife, even if she is fast asleep.

Of course there are women in *The Awakening*, oppressed as they are, who are content and even happy with their caged lives: "They idolized their children, worshipped their husbands, and esteemed it a holy privilege to efface themselves as individuals and grow wings as ministering angels" (10). All women in consequence feel that they have to live up to this standard in spite of what they really want to be. When women are constantly worried about being pure, staying virgins till marriage, and then having baby boys for their husbands, it doesn't leave much time for them to contribute valuable things to society. The men, not wanting them to have these thoughts, keep them busy in the house with child-raising, sewing, and entertaining guests. If the woman does happen to find time during the day to have this thought, she will come to the conclusion that she lacks a valuable purpose in the world. In an effort to find a purpose, she rebels like Edna, but society would rather have her drown herself than escape the birdcage.

Edna's relationship with her two sons resembles that of a close aunt. She sometimes feels the strong need to embrace them and then other times she feels an overwhelming need to be free of them. Unlike an aunt though, she has to bear the responsibility of being their mother. Motherhood was never in the cards for Edna. Her rejection of her children is not so much a stain on her character as much as it is on the birdcage that dropped the heavy load of motherhood on her lap: "Their absence was a sort of relief, though she did not admit this, even to herself. It seemed to free her of a responsibility which she had blindly assumed and for which Fate had not fitted her" (25). Edna was not meant to be a mother, the same way she was not meant to be a wife, but because of the birdcage that was instilled in her mind at an early age, she took on the role of wife and mother without realizing that it wasn't supposed to be her fate. Chopin clearly states that the Pontelliers' union is just one of the many marriages that happen not because the two are compatible or meant to be, but because it is the social norm: "Her marriage to Leonce Pontellier was purely an accident, in this respect resembling many other marriages which masquerade as the decrees of Fate" (24). He fell in love with her, but she never fell in love with him. She married him for several reasons, none of them being love. Edna, like a lot of women, chose dignity over romance and dreams. For a woman who is to her core passionate and impulsive, marriage is a bond that unbearably oppresses her. She wants to live a life free of bondage; she just doesn't understand this until she has her awakening.

The awakening begins when she discovers that she can swim. "How easy it is!" she thought. 'It is nothing,' she said aloud; 'why did I not discover before that it was nothing. Think of the time I have lost splashing about like a baby!' She

would not join the groups in their sports and bouts, but intoxicated with her newly conquered power, she swam out alone” (37). Edna’s awakening the night she swims on her own is a key to understanding all of her actions in the novel; it explains why she isn’t the mother for whom her children’s health in the middle of the night brings her to tears, but most importantly it explains why she drowns herself at the end. For years she has lived a life dictated by the desires of others. Her husband tells her to go check on the boys and she does it, but after her independent swim she realizes that she doesn’t have to live by anyone’s rules but her own. She defines her fate, even if it’s as simple as refusing to go inside to sleep next to her husband. Because she defines her own fate, she becomes her own God. She is her own religion, and she is the one who decides when and how she is going to die.

The situation that causes a scandal in *Pride and Prejudice* when Lydia runs off with Wickham is the same type of situation that Robert wants to keep Edna safe from in the end. His conformity to the laws of society is what drives Edna over the edge. All she wants is to be with the man she loves without the bondage of marriage. Her rejection of the world through her suicide is both anomic and egoistic. Her anomie is a result of the collapse of her values from her unexpected awakening. This leads her to commit anomic suicide because she feels that she can no longer go on when society does not allow her to live the life she wants. Edna needs a life of passion and love with Robert, but without marriage. Marriage signifies ownership of her. Robert cannot be with her even though he loves her, because he cannot break away from tradition. He wants to keep her within the realm of the birdcage when all she wants is to fly away with him. Her suicide can also be considered egoistic, because after all the serious limits society puts on her, her death is the only thing she has to take from the world. She asserts her control over her own body and becomes her own god.

The assumption in both books is that everyone wants to be married, but what happens when a woman is not suited for that type of commitment? She rebels like Edna Pontellier in *The Awakening* only to realize that full happiness in her rebellion is not possible because of the conformity of everyone else. Edna’s position and purpose in society is the same as the Bennet girls. No matter how much she tries to break away from traditional gender roles and expectations, she will always be in the communal birdcage that is society. All of the female characters in both novels have been raised to be just educated enough to be accomplished young women. They can paint, read novels, write letters, and play the piano, but they can never be properly valuable to society because of the simple fact that they are women. Men commit suicide because their dreams are trampled on by society. Women commit suicide because their dreams are their truth. Good things happen, and women choose to remember them; bad things happen, and they lock the memory up in one of their kitchen cupboards. But when a woman’s world is turned upside down and she cannot escape the bad truth because it is deeply embedded into society, she realizes that the only escape is to die. As seen in *Pride and Prejudice*, the psychological effects of the birdcage start at daughterhood, weakening women’s wings, and are fully formed in motherhood and wifhood as seen in *The Awakening*.

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## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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**Kirsten C. Kunkle** currently serves as Assistant Professor of Voice and Opera Workshop and Director of Lincoln Community Players at The Lincoln University. Dr. Kunkle has previously served on faculties at Shorter College, Youngstown State University, Wright State University, and Terra State Community College. Her degrees are in vocal performance from University of Michigan and Bowling Green State University. She is an active classical singer and promoter of new music. Dr. Kunkle is the great-great-great niece of Alex Posey. The songs in her paper are collected at the Merkel Area Museum in Merkel, Texas, as well as at the National Museum of the American Indian at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., where she is also on their list of Classical Native American Artists and Musicians.

**Marie Nigro**. Ph.D. teaches at Lincoln University. Her areas of interest are composition and rhetoric, linguistics, and Native American Literature. She has presented and published articles discussing the works of Louise Erdrich, W.S. Penn, Toni Morrison, and Paula Gunn Allen. She has also published a study of the evolution of nicknames in an American immigrant community. She lives in Downingtown, PA.

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