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# Literature of the Father

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Rachel Barnett	5
Challenging Plato: The Critique of Fatherly Ideals in John Barth's <i>Lost in the Funhouse</i>	
Kristin Cookston	18
Ripping Off the Bandage: Eudora Welty and the Failed Southern Father	
Hannah Holland	29
Surrogate Paternity and the "Un-father" in Bram Stocker's <i>Dracula</i>	
Leeanne Hoovestol	38
Like Father, Like Son: Attempted Revisions of English Masculinity in <i>Emma</i>	
Sunday L. Jones	50
<i>Huckleberry Finn</i> : On the Lookout for a Father	
Marshall Nolan	58
"Tell Nobody but God": Troubled Fatherhood in <i>The Color Purple</i>	
Chris Punkosdy	67
"If You Really Want To Hear About It": Questioning Fatherhood in <i>The Catcher in the Rye</i>	
Hannah Ross	76
Neglect, Hatred, Abuse: Damaging Paternity in Mary Shelley's <i>Frankenstein</i>	
Jessica Wesley	87
Men of God: Dysfunctional and Hyperreligious Fatherhood in <i>Light in August</i>	

Aubrey Wynne

The Man of the House?: Fathers *In Absentia* in William  
Golding's *Lord of the Flies*

97

# Challenging Plato: The Critique of Fatherly Ideals in John Barth's *Lost in the Funhouse*

by Rachel Barnett

At the close of the second book of Plato's *The Republic*, Socrates and Adeimantus discuss the relationship between literature, education, and "mimesis"—the practice of mimicking and emulating the actions of another. Socrates refers to literary works as "models" for children to emulate and learn from through mimesis (60). According to Socrates, literature presents children with an image of adulthood, an example that a child follows on the road to maturity. Literary texts function as tools by which young children learn the proper (or improper) way to behave as adults. Therefore, Socrates cautions against the exposure of children to texts that he believes to be unfit models, those that cause children "to receive into their minds ideas for the most part the very opposite of those which we should wish them to have when they are grown up" (59). He declares a need for literary censorship, required to protect the minds of children from acquiring the bad habits exemplified in "casual tales [. . .] devised by casual persons," in which "an erroneous representation is made of gods and heroes" (59). In short, Socrates believes this sort of model to be guilty of "a bad lie" (59).

The definition of mimesis that Plato puts forth in *The Republic* is not the only version that appears in his writings. In *Timaeus*, he adds to his definition through the words of Timaeus in a lengthy tale detailing the creation of the universe. In this text, mimesis operates as a way in which human beings grow close to the father of the universe. This creator, who longed for "everything to be good, [and] marred by as little imperfection as possible," crafted the world after an eternal model (18). Despite the fact that, according to Robin Waterfield, the exact nature of this eternal model remain unclear, Timaeus is perfectly clear in his insistence that the "father-creator" forged our universe and the creatures within it through an act of mimesis in which he fashioned them after this model (25). Thus, mimesis is the crucial link that connects the universe and its inhabitants with the eternal model and the creator. As Gebauer and Wulf claim, Plato believes that through this mimesis of the "heavenly world," the "earthly

world [. . .] might come to approximate it as nearly as possible" (32). Mimesis is the connection between the earthly and the divine, the only way by which a human being may become similar to a god.

Centuries after Plato explored the subject of mimesis, postmodern author John Barth constructed a collection of short stories titled *Lost in the Funhouse*. Despite the vast separation of time and physical space between the two writers, the short stories of Barth's collections contain echoes of Plato's teachings of mimesis from both *The Republic* and *Timaeus*. In two stories from the collection, "Water-Message" and "Lost in the Funhouse," Barth tells the story of Ambrose, a young boy who engages in both of the forms of mimesis that appear in Plato's writings, as he emulates the lives of his father figures, the modern versions of Plato's "father-creator," in an attempt to find a proper model for his life. In each mimetic episode, the father figure that Ambrose chooses is a representation of an ideal, just as Plato's "father-creator" is a representation of the divine. However, as he constructs the tale of Ambrose's various mimetic adventures, Barth does not agree with Plato's beliefs, instead arguing against mimesis as an effective learning tool by which the young achieve maturity and adults connect to divinity. As Barth shows that Ambrose continues to distance himself from his own caring father and ultimately orphans himself along the way of his mimetic journey, he insists that mimesis is merely a desperate attempt to achieve the ideals of our modern "father-creators," separating human beings from their humanity and leading them on a hunt for an impossible fantasy as they ignore the imperfect, and yet sincere and well-meaning, people in their lives.

During the era of World War II, the image of the ideal father that dominated the American culture was that of the courageous soldier who risked his life on foreign soil to protect the family that awaited him back home. This concept of fatherhood was more aggressive than that which dominated the years leading up to the war, with a specific kind of masculinity characterizing the image, which, according to Ralph LaRossa, "emphasized strength, forbearance instrumentality, and 'nerves of steel'" (108). Following the image that American culture created, fathers of this era played the role of "protectors of democracy," the warriors that fought to sustain the American way of life (Dowd 35). Ultimately, as a result of American culture placing increasing value on those men protecting the country by serving overseas, a system of stratification developed within the world of fatherhood. Those who supported the war from home, such as by working in a factory that produced war supplies, received less favor than those men who were active in the

military. Those fighting in foreign countries composed the upper class of fatherhood, while those who remained at home occupied the system's lower levels. As LaRossa claims, "fathers who saw combat were revered (especially if they had been wounded in battle)," while those men "who were rewarded medals for bravery were highly regarded" (51). Further still up the ladder of fatherhood were those who never returned home, the men who "were the most respected of all" (51). Instead of praising fathers who were connected to their families, the American culture of the World War II era praised those men who were both physically and emotionally distant, men who were more concerned with war tactics and politics than the daily lives of their wife and children. As LaRossa states, participation in the fight against the Axis Powers meant reaching the "pinnacle of fatherhood," a near-divine status that mirrors the prestige of Plato's "father-creator." The warrior-fathers of World War II were the ultimate models for fatherhood of the time, providing young men with an example to follow and young women with the image of the type of man they should seek as a future husband.

In his story "Water-Message," set during World War II, Barth replicates this image of the ideal warrior-father in the character of Ambrose's biological father. As a war veteran who has returned home with a severe limp "thanks to the Kaiser," Ambrose's father is the man that the culture of America during World War II worshipped, seemingly ideal for providing a model for young Ambrose (43). However, Barth's portrayal of Ambrose's mimesis of his father does not show Ambrose growing close to the ideal, as Plato believes to be the function of mimesis. Instead of aiding Ambrose in his struggle with school bullies by imbuing him with the masculinity of the ideal father, Ambrose's imitation of his father leads only to ridicule. After Ambrose performs mimesis by imitating his father's limp, the bullies do leave him alone, but only because Ambrose's mimicry of his father is a humorous rather than fearsome image. As Ambrose states, he "was obliged to play the clown in order to escape" (43). In Barth's presentation of Ambrose's mimesis of his father, who is supposed to be the "pinnacle of fatherhood" that LaRossa describes, Ambrose is unable to achieve the ideal that his father represents. As a contrast to Plato's claims that mimesis works to transform a child, no transformation occurs to Ambrose in Barth's version of mimesis. Rather, the image of the ideal father is the subject of metamorphosis.

Even though Ambrose's father is a clear representation of the upper class of fatherhood of the story's time period, the superhuman quality that the era's culture gave to this image does not exist in Barth's fiction.

As Nancy Dowd claims, the ideal father of the time fit perfectly into the “historical perspective” of fatherhood, wherein “cultural and historical images of fatherhood are of authority figures,” and yet, Barth’s portrayal of the ideal father in “Water-Message” possesses very little of this authority (33). Instead of a symbol of American dominance, Ambrose’s father is simply a school principal who cannot control his students no matter how hard he tries. He cannot even protect his son from the bullies that torment him. The limp that should signify the brave sacrifice of Ambrose’s father is only a handicap for children to ridicule. Thus, instead of glorifying the image of the warrior-father, Barth humanizes the image, pointing out that Ambrose’s father is an everyday man. The ideals that he represents are constructs that do not exist in reality. This fact upsets Ambrose, who mourns his father’s lack of masculinity as he looks to his mother and states, “you’ve raised your son for a sissy!” (42)

According to LaRossa, the term “sissy” was linked to a fear that, without their fathers in their lives, the young sons of America lacked sufficient contact with sources of masculinity, and instead had become too close to their mothers, who “smothered their children with love” (108). However, Ambrose’s father is very much present and active in Ambrose’s life. With Ambrose’s statement that he is a sissy, Barth creates the image of an angry young boy who is so disgusted with his father’s lack of masculinity and his failure to adhere to the era’s ideal fatherhood. Just as the sound of the bullies laughing at Ambrose’s imitation of his father cuts “into Ambrose like a blade,” so too does the knowledge that his father is not the heroic father that he desires (44). This anger and disappointment becomes the fuels that Barth uses to drive Ambrose’s mimetic journey, pushing Ambrose to seek other models of fatherhood and masculinity. However, as Barth will show, Ambrose’s encounters with models in the future will unfortunately end no differently than the failed mimesis involving his own father.

The next father figure that Ambrose encounters on his mimetic journey is the epic hero Odysseus, a character who possesses all of the masculinity that Ambrose’s own father lacks. With the addition of Odysseus into the narrative of “Water-Message,” Barth inserts a father figure who is everything that Ambrose wants his own father to be. Odysseus is a hyper-masculine war hero, an ancient image of the ideal father of America during World War II. However, unlike Ambrose’s father, Odysseus actually adheres to this ideal, not only conquering in a foreign land, but returning home to vanquish the suitors from his home, suitors who plague his son Telemachus just as school bullies plague Ambrose. Odys-

seus accomplishes that which Ambrose wishes his own father would, representing the masculine ideal that Ambrose attempts to achieve by mimicking his father. However, by referencing *The Odyssey*, Barth is not only using Odysseus as a representative of the father figure that Ambrose desires. The epic poem plays a larger purpose within “Water-Message.” Although Ambrose seems primarily concerned with Odysseus, he shares an interesting connection with Telemachus. Throughout *The Odyssey*, Telemachus anxiously seeks his father, a man whom he has only met through the glorious stories that he has heard of him. In book two of the epic, Telemachus sets off from Ithaca to search for Odysseus, longing to discover whether his father is alive or dead. Just as Ambrose is searching for a father figure to offer him guidance, Telemachus, too, searches for his father in hopes that he will save him and his mother from the mob of suitors in their home. In “Water-Message,” Ambrose plays the same role as Telemachus in *The Odyssey*. Thus, Barth uses Odysseus and his story as the next ideal that Ambrose mimics, because the epic offers to Ambrose more than the father figure that Barth implies that Ambrose is searching for. The story also offers Ambrose a character much like himself, a son searching for a father. Even though Odysseus represents a separate set of ideals that Ambrose attempts to achieve, by using the epic hero, Barth adds depth to Ambrose’s character. Barth implies that, even though Ambrose mimics the world of Odysseus in a struggle to attain an ideal, the young boy turns to the story as the narrative that he himself wishes to act out—that of a son who searches for his father, and ultimately finds him.

Aside from representing Ambrose’s intense desire for a father figure, Odysseus also symbolizes a set of ideals that dominates the world of epic literature, and it is these that Ambrose mimics. The first of these ideals is present in the structure of the epic poem itself. According to David Adams Leeming, the story of Odysseus is what scholars such as Joseph Campbell refer to as a “monomyth,” or “an expression of the journey of the hero figure” (6). The narrative of this form of myth follows a specific structure, the series of occurrences that forms the “supreme mythic events in the life of the hero” (Leeming 6-7). Quoting Joseph Campbell, Sheila Schwartz states that “Campbell identifies the typical path of the hero as ‘separation, initiation, and return,’” a pattern in which “the hero springs from his society, transcends that society and has a vision of the future, and ultimately returns to bring that message to his people” (83). This pattern, in its various forms, governs the realm of epic poetry, serving as the structure which all works of this genre ultimately follow. The com-

posers of these epics constructed a general series of events that modern readers have come to expect and understand, often enabling readers to foresee the narrative's final outcome. The world of epic poetry is thus an idealized world of order rather than chaos in which life follows a set pattern. Originating in this idealized version of reality, Odysseus symbolizes structure. He exists within the fictional world's system of order as the hero that will always be in the right place at the right time, unable to wander off of the path of the monomyth and become lost in life.

Connected to this structure of the epic poem is the ideal of its subject, the poem's hero. Schwartz refers to this character as "the standard bearer of the 'best,'" claiming that the hero is one "who incorporates into the context of his existence the ethos of an age and thereby becomes its symbolic embodiment" (82). Odysseus is one such epic hero, championing the narrative of *The Odyssey* as he endures torturous hardships and ultimately returns home to reclaim his household and his rights as husband and father. As a hero, he is "resourceful, balanced, ever-curious, ever-planning and scheming, patient, wise, [and] enduring" (Raleigh 584). Conquering his fictional world in the face of any and all challenges, Odysseus thus represents the ideal of the enduring hero, and it is this figure that the narrative of epic poetry often centers on. He is at the epicenter of the myth's ordered universe and the focus of each event of the narrative. With his central status in addition to his grandiose qualities, the epic hero is above the average human being, an idea that his commonly mystical parentage upholds. As Douglas Porpora claims, the epic hero rises above normal life "to enter a sphere of transcendental conflict" (213). As a result, this figure resides close to the sphere of the divine, and since the "hero's journey is one we are all, in one way or another, supposed to take," the hero represents the ideal that any human being can achieve this elevated status (213).

Paraphrasing Ralph Waldo Emerson's thoughts on the topic, Porpora states that "the heroism of great individuals affirms the potential for heroism in us all" (213). Odysseus and other epic heroes of ancient myth symbolize the hope of the average person for a higher calling, an opportunity to step beyond the trenches of ordinary life. Located within his structured universe, Odysseus ultimately exemplifies an existence that resides beyond the commonality of daily life. His world and his character combine to create the image of an ideal existence, an ordered universe that highlights the lives of heroic human beings capable of achieving greatness. It is this world that Plato desires the youth to emulate, the honorable world of gods and heroes that he believes will teach children

to be as honorable as figures such as Odysseus. Yet, as Barth will claim, this achievement is not as possible as Plato implies.

As stated above, Barth incorporates Odysseus into “Water-Message” as a figure whom Ambrose idolizes as possessing the masculinity that his father lacks, and Ambrose emulates this figure in an effort to gain that masculinity, and by relation, control and dominance within his life. In one scene, Ambrose imagines himself as Odysseus “steering under anvil clouds” as he races to save the life of Wimpy James, one of the bullies that picks on him (45). Barth uses this episode of mimesis to demonstrate Ambrose’s desire to dominate the bullies that torment him, exposing that Ambrose’s imagined power over the boys is not as vengeful as one would expect. Rather, as the scene underscores, Ambrose struggles to become exactly like Odysseus, a hero who saves helpless victims, not a wrathful tyrant. However, this scene and the others in which Ambrose emulates Odysseus and his fictional world are no more than imagined adventures that only exist in Ambrose’s mind—such as when Ambrose comforts Peggy Robbins in the Den—and yet these scenes blend with the narrative, and are ultimately difficult to interpret as actually happening or not. As Barth argues, Ambrose’s imitation of a character of the fictional world has caused his life to be so steeped in fantasy that it is hard to tell the imaginings from the reality of the narrative. Barth shows that Ambrose is losing his hold on reality because of his determination to become like his epic hero, a transformation that he can only achieve in the world of his mind.

The emulations of Odysseus never occur in Ambrose’s reality. They are figments of his imagination. His dominance and control is not real, and the transcendence that he claims carries him “aloft to the stars” is only a personal fantasy in which he leaves his normal life behind like the heroes of Homer and Virgil (46). The heroic ideal that Odysseus symbolizes does not exist in reality, and, as Barth is arguing, by engaging in mimesis with literature as Plato suggests, Ambrose is not acquiring the skills he needs to reach maturity. Rather, he becomes lost in an illusory funhouse of his own making. Barth instills in Ambrose such a longing to achieve the prestige of Odysseus that the young boy leaves reality behind—a theme and critique that continues in the story “Lost in the Funhouse.” Barth writes, “at this point our hero,” and then, appearing to correct himself, “at this rate our protagonist,” as if to divorce the term “hero” from Ambrose’s character (78). Even the common occurrence of referring to a story’s leading character as a “hero” does not sit well with Barth, who resists any indication that Ambrose can (or should) achieve

such an ideal. Instead, Ambrose is merely a protagonist, a title that is disconnected from idealism. No matter Ambrose's determination and longing to become Odysseus and conquer his enemies, Barth argues that this ideal is impossible and undesirable, and only exists in the realm of fiction.

Barth also uses Ambrose's mimesis of Odysseus to critique the idealism of the structure of epic poetry and the impossibility of the existence of this structure in real life. In each of the mimetic episodes, Ambrose sees himself achieving the expected conclusion of whatever event he is imagining, as if the formula of epic poetry actually governs the real world. In his fabricated rescue of Wimpy, Ambrose succeeds in saving the day, and in the scene that Ambrose imagines involving himself and Peggy, he ultimately wins her heart with his tender affections. However, at the end of the story, using the mysterious message in the glass bottle, Barth argues that these victories are merely another part of the illusion that Ambrose has created as a result of his misguided emulation of Odysseus. The message that appears on the sheet of paper from the bottle is what Barth views to be the correct image of life, an image that lacks the order and structure of the monomyth. Upon the paper is only a greeting and a closing farewell, with no indication as to who the message is from or to whom it is intended. This opening and closing represent what Barth views as the only certainties in life, birth and death, with no knowledge regarding where human beings come from, or where we go when we die. As Ambrose notes, "the lines between [the opening and closing] were blank," and it is these blank lines that represent the whole of life, lacking any structure or known formula (56). Unlike Campbell's monomyth, Barth's version of life is less grandiose, and more human. Barth argues that life is not a grand narrative and that the ideal represented by the formula of literature exists only in the realm of storytelling. Real life is more mysterious, characterized by the unknown. Thus, as Ambrose finds only "new and subtle burdens" in his most recent failed mimetic episode and realizes that Odysseus has nothing to offer, Barth leads him to seek out the next father figure to emulate (56).

The figure that Ambrose next seeks to mimic is his own author, or rather the narrator that Barth creates to be the story's author. As Ambrose's author, this narrator is the controlling force behind his entire world, the architect of all of its events and characters, including Ambrose himself, of course. For a fictional character, the author is the image of God, the father who has created and dictates the world that the character inhabits. For Ambrose, his author is the ultimate father

figure that exists outside of the realm of his own story—a story that has so far shown nothing but failed ideals. As author and character, they share a connection similar to that of father and son, a connection that Max F. Schultz refers to as “the filiation of father-son/author-character” (8). It is this author that Ambrose looks to as his creator more than his own biological father, since it is him that has created not only Ambrose but everything that he believes to be his world. The story’s author thus represents the ideal of Plato’s “father-creator,” the father figure that has fashioned the whole of Ambrose’s universe. However, this connection between authorship and divinity is not new. The author has always seemed to hold this sort of divine status that the readers of his work have longed to understand. As Sigmund Freud notes in “Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming”:

We laymen have always been intensely curious to know [. . .] from what sources that strange being, the creative writer, draws his material, and how he manages to make such an impression on us with it and to arouse in us emotions of which, perhaps, we had not even thought ourselves capable. (54)

It is the author who creates the worlds in which scholars and readers immerse themselves as they struggle to derive meaning from each and every word. As Roland Barthes points out, “the *explanation* of the work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it, as if it were always in the end [. . .] the voice of a single person, the *author* ‘confiding’ in us” (126, original italics). As a figure of creation, the author possesses such an understanding of humanity that he can replicate it on paper, while in the process bringing to life the innermost dreams and desires of his reader, enabling us, as Freud states, “to enjoy our own day-dreams without self-reproach or shame” (62). According to Freud, the author bridges the gap between maturity and childhood, a skill lacked by those who are not creative writers. He claims, “the creative writer does the same thing as the child at play. He creates a world of phantasy which he takes very seriously—that is, which he invests with large amounts of emotion—while separating it sharply from reality” (55). When those adults who do not engage in creative writing “cease to play,” they lose the connection between the act of playing and the pleasure that this act yields. However, the author maintains this connection, never giving up his time of play, and creating literary works that enable adults to experience the pleasure they once felt as children at play.

In “Lost in the Funhouse,” Barth creates Ambrose’s mimesis of his author-as-narrator by bringing the protagonist out of the world of his own narrative. Instead of existing strictly within the structure of the story, Ambrose steps outside of this structure and looks onto his story as if he were its author, critiquing and editing the narrative and style of the writing in several of the story’s metafictional passages. By showing Ambrose trying to control the world as if he is its author, Barth continues the theme that has characterized each of Ambrose’s mimetic episodes—Ambrose’s futile desire for dominance and control. As he views the overall structure of his story, commenting on occurrences within the text and even suggesting editing choices, he struggles to gain control of his own world by becoming its author. During the scene in which the family swims in a public pool, he adopts the language of the writer when he states, “the diving would make a suitable literary symbol,” attempting to alter the meaning of the scene by suggesting that the diving be used as some sort of metaphor. However, Ambrose’s mimesis of the author figure does not take him to a sphere outside of the story in which he is the only being present. Barth brings Ambrose into contact with the true author of the story, the author-narrator whom Barth has created and Ambrose is attempting to usurp.

This is the figure that Barth uses to expose the fallacy in the ideal of the author, arguing that the author is not the divine being that the ideal suggests. Instead of a supreme being who possesses control and authority over Ambrose’s world, the author that Barth creates seems to lack this control, frequently making errors in his writing and rushing to correct himself, such as with one sentence that reads, “the space between their legs, between her right and his left leg [. . .]” (75). The portion of the sentence following the comma states the same idea as the words before the comma, as if the author rewrote the sentence but forgot to erase the portion that he did not like. In addition to sentences such as this, there are numerous grammatical errors throughout the stories, such as forgotten punctuation, comma splices, or incomplete sentences. As John O. Stark states, these errors cause the story to appear incomplete, in progress, as if it “were being created right before the reader.” (148). However, this human struggle of the writer to create does not align with the ideal, an image of the writer that seems to forget that the process of writing is a challenge. A writer is, after all, a human being who faces human problems, but the ideal does not acknowledge the existence of these problems. In the ideal, the author is a master of his craft, a supreme world-maker, not a human being who simply scribbles onto a sheet of paper. Barth’s version of the

author is thus not the ideal. Just as with Ambrose's biological father and Odysseus, the ideal that the author-narrator represents simply does not exist in reality. Barth's representation of Plato's "father-creator" thus loses his divinity, and, as Ambrose struggles to mimic him, he grows no closer to the ideal that he longs to achieve.

Yet, even as Ambrose faces the failure of another ideal, he does not yet give up his search. Barth's young adventurer instead attempts to force the ideal onto the story's narrator by teaching him the rules of which he seems to possess no knowledge, such as when he critiques the author-narrator's usage of blanks instead of last names of characters or names of places as "an *illusion* that is being enhanced, by purely artificial means" (73, original italics). However, Ambrose cannot force the author to fit his expectations, and he realizes that he will never achieve the ideal as he desires, stating, "I'll never be an author," a statement in which "author" refers not to the career, but rather the ideal associated with the career (86). The third father figure that Barth has created for Ambrose's mimetic journey has thus fallen short like the others. At the end of the story, Barth's adolescent character is no closer to the ideal than he was at the beginning of "Water-Message." As Barth has argued all along, the teachings of Plato have failed, mimesis offering nothing to Ambrose but disappointment.

At the end of "Lost in the Funhouse," through the journey of Ambrose, Barth has ultimately revealed that the ideals that Ambrose has sought in his father figures are merely illusions. However, rather than writing a conclusion to Ambrose's tale in which the boy moves on from his desire for the ideal, Barth instead creates a final paragraph that exposes the depth of the human obsession with achieving an ideal existence. In this closing paragraph, Ambrose does not end his hunt but rather continues it as he creates a new ideal, that of the funhouse operator. He "envisions a truly astonishing funhouse," and claims "he would be its operator: panel lights would show what was up in every cranny of its cunning" (97). For Ambrose, this ideal is yet another opportunity to achieve control as someone who possesses knowledge of an intricate maze that no one but himself understands. As those who enter his funhouse stumble through its dark corridors, he will sit above it all, deciding whether to aid their journey or cause them more confusion. However, as Barth has shown throughout "Lost in the Funhouse," the funhouse is a realm of confusing illusions, filled with mirror-mazes and "labyrinthine corridors" (95). As the operator of the funhouse, Ambrose will thus preside over a world of falsities, which represents the realm of the ideal

in which the perfect life appears achievable and yet is not. Rather than escaping his desire for the ideal, Ambrose has merely immersed himself more fully within it. Furthermore, by suggesting that Ambrose will be the creator of the funhouse which represents the confusing world of the ideal, Barth exposes that Ambrose will continue to perpetuate the concept of the ideal existence, luring others into its maze of dark corridors which they may never escape. Mimesis has taught Ambrose nothing. It has instead locked him within a world of lies that he will continue to create for himself and others.

Tragically, with the continuation of Ambrose's journey, Barth does more than create a character who merely continues to lie to himself with his belief that ideals are attainable. Ambrose is also a character who represents the loss of humanity that one suffers in the search for perfection. As Ambrose has traveled from one father figure to the next, he has placed increasing distance between himself and the biological father who—despite failing to attain the status of the warrior-father—is a good man and a good father. He is involved in his children's lives, struggling to protect them from bullies at school, and taking them on family vacations to the coast. Yet, Ambrose cannot see past what he perceives to be his father's failings, revealing that "he despised his father [. . .] for not being what he was supposed to be." As Schultz claims, Ambrose's mimesis of the author is an attempt to become his own creator and father, finally escaping the biological father "whose paternity/authorship he wishes to deny" (13). In the end, Ambrose continues to move away from his well-meaning father, essentially orphaning himself from the figure who truly cares about him. With the creation of such a narrative, Barth laments Ambrose's loss of humanity, as well as the lost humanity of all of those who obsess with obtaining the ideal. Through each of Barth's portrayals of mimesis, Ambrose has struggled to become like someone else, and has thus lost himself and his connection to his family. It is this loss that Barth believes to be the result of mimesis, not the enrichment or transcendence that Plato describes. Rather than spending our lives reaching for something we cannot touch, Barth believes that we should be satisfied with our flawed and human world, a world that only appears ugly when we spend our lives comparing it to imaginings of perfection. Instead of seeking the divine, we should instead choose to remain right where we are, nestled firmly in reality, where we gain our happiness not from the mimicry of some outside model, but rather from our relationships with our family and friends, those who provide for us in ways that our false ideals never can.

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## Ripping Off the Bandage: Eudora Welty and the Failed Southern Father

Kristin Cookston

Scholars have described the role of the father in Western culture as one of discord—simultaneously venerated by their children as beloved creators and guardians, but also regarded as sources of oppression (Schwartz 1). When Eudora Welty wrote *The Golden Apples* in 1945, Western culture had recently attempted to overcorrect the nineteenth- to early-twentieth-century idea that fatherhood was, first and foremost, a mode of absentee parenting that established the father solely as a “good economic provider” (LaRossa 27). This overcorrection led to the understanding that children could not grow up to be well-rounded adults without a “decent” male role model in their lives. In order to institute what Western culture now regarded as a familial necessity, so-called “family experts” began “to support and promote the notion of middle-class fatherhood as therapeutic, a source of self-fulfillment and self-expression” (Lupton and Barclay 40). By advocating this notion of fatherhood, there was a sincere hope that not only would both parents more equally share in parenting their children, but that men would actively seek out fatherhood as a method of validation for themselves.

This was especially true in the American South, where fathers had come to be the dominant implementers of the strict Southern traditional values of morality and family. The notion of a strong Southern patriarchy was heavily supported by Agrarians such as Allen Tate, who viewed the absence of a father or a father figure as a means to the societal collapse of Southern culture and civility (King 110). In the minds of men like Tate, the very functionality of the South depended on the father to lead his family and, moreover, his entire community on the well-oiled path of traditional values and societal mores. If the father were to become less involved or even completely removed from his family and their society, there would be only women left to see to the continuation of tradition of male dominance and female submission; this, in turn, would lead to the utter decay of the South and leave in its wake a world filled with debauchery and deviance. Due to this sudden and extreme pressure

placed upon the Southern man as the biological father, the protector, and the implementer of tradition, those men attempted to overcompensate for the assumed problems the society had already tried to correct. Thus, with this overcorrection came the father who provided for, through both genealogy as well as finances, and protected his children while simultaneously transforming into the suffocating burden of strict expectation in response to the pressures placed upon him.

Paternal authority in the early twentieth century had the potential to reduce the father's importance in the role of a simple biological state of being, which was the implied necessary role of a man in order to maintain his masculinity (LaRossa 14). The more potent the man, the more children he had and, thus, the more powerful he was as both a man and a father, regardless of his actual involvement in the lives of his children. However, the "connection between fatherhood and masculinity" that meant "fathers are men first and parents second" is what led to the drive behind an overly corrected system of parentage (LaRossa 14). No longer did men see themselves as simple breadwinners for their families; they now had two potential and viable options of functionality, one the dual role of the provider and the teacher, and the other as the biological who could choose to be as involved or absent as they desired. Beyond the simplicity of the two potential roles of fatherhood lies the interpretation of the father through the lens of the South. Due to the overbearing necessity for a strict Southern patriarchy, those two roles remained almost dormant. Fathers then, in this sense, became more than just a provider of genealogy and, thus, stretched out into the roles of the surrogate, the heavenly, and the absentee or nonexistent. While the role of enforcer played a large part in the definition of the good Southern man, the responsibility of a consistent display and management of a strong male dominance became all the more important, especially with the role of enforcer becoming the responsibility of everybody within the confines of the South. This, in turn, worked to keep both men and women under a strict scope of judgmental and watchful eyes so that nobody would falter from Southern tradition; with the significantly lessened pressure placed on the individual, there was a certain amount of leeway with which a man could invent his own definition of his personal type of fatherhood. It is under this depraved system that the discord among men and women began and eventually grew into what is now known as modern Southern American literature.

The context in which modern Southern American literature was written relied heavily upon the patriarchal ideal of a male-dominated

society as the only way for “good” literature to properly function. It was especially imperative to rely so heavily on the socially acceptable given that, during this period, the “South experience[d] a literary renaissance between the two world wars” which was greatly impacted by Southern male writers (Perry and Weaks-Baxter 242). However, it is of the utmost importance to note that, during this time of literary renaissance for male writers, female writers had instigated their own rebirth as they began questioning the morals and values of the Southern patriarchy. Given that the constructs of the South were so restrictive, especially when considering the ideal Southern woman, a sense of societal tension fell upon these male and female writers as they both attempted to claim the rights to the development of modern Southern literature. This tension led to men and women writing to contradict one another in their endeavor to rewrite a newly established Southern literary canon; these contradictory writings thus resulted in the development of the modern Southern literature, with the canon being claimed by both men and women alike. The South, then, inadvertently achieved Nina Schwartz’s conjecture that modern writing, in an effort to validate itself, relied upon “its capacity to ensure its own coherence, to convince its members of its logic and comprehensiveness by normalizing or co-opting any challenge to it” by arguing through the culture system of writing to achieve its goal (18). This was incredibly important, especially for Southern women who, through the writing of modern literature, tried not only to rewrite the literary canon, but to also rewrite the very constructs of their restrictive world.

Writers like Eudora Welty worked “with places and characters assumed to be lost to History” in order to function as a viable writer while simultaneously achieving her goal of reclaiming those places as a means of rewriting the Southern literary and cultural normative (Ladd 53). This method of writing, thus, provided the Southern woman with a way to work directly through the structure of the patriarchy. Moreover, Welty “re-writes southern literature” by attacking its canon directly as she employed her roundabout approach to writing as a way to validate her then radical claims (Polk 19). The town of Morgana, Mississippi, the setting for her novel *The Golden Apples*, follows strict Southern tradition and, as a result, “Morgana constantly turns inward, using its rituals [...] not only to regenerate but to replicate itself” in a “deadening circularity of cycles” (Polk 19). In this way, then, Welty has recycled the monotonous ritualistic worship of the same constant cycle repeating itself generation after generation, which helped her ground

her argument against the tradition of male dominance by showing the detriments of the continuation of such a society.

In *The Golden Apples*, Welty dramatizes the violence, abuse, and trauma induced by the male-dominated society and culture of the American South. Not only do these unfortunate side effects burden the women, but they also burden the men; this acknowledgement of the detriment to all members of the South is what lends Welty additional strength in her argument against a traditional patriarchy. In his article “The Fierce Humanity of Morgana: Welty’s *The Golden Apples*,” Jeffery J. Folks further notes, “A sense of terror underlies the seemingly uneventful daily life of Morgana” and, moreover, “Welty’s central concern in the novel is the difficulty of comprehending its causes and dealing with its effects” (16). By choosing to display a world that dominates both men and women, however different that domination may be for either gender, Welty works to explain that the confines of the traditional South are so great a burden that their entire ideology of social mores and values must be rewritten in order to benefit men as well as women. Through her employment of the character King MacLain, a man shrouded in myth and mystery, Welty works to demystify the immorality of violence, abuse, and trauma in the South. In her depictions of King and the potential outcomes of the next generation of Southerners, which are manifested in three of King’s children—Ran, Eugene, and Virgie—Welty deliberately dodges and mirrors this mystification of King by not specifically or directly commenting on how his actions affect his children and, perhaps more importantly, the entire South. By dodging and mirroring the mystery surrounding King, Welty shows the indirection of the Southern culture, including the avoidance mechanisms, which were put in place as a way to avoid acknowledging the horrible actions of men as immoral in order to remain in societal “harmony.” By showing the indirection of the South, Welty brings to light the social reality of the traditional patriarchy and, in turn, demands of her audience answers as to why people were so willing to participate in the avoidance of horror, especially when considering the consequences of such avoidance for the family and the community at large.

From the very first page of the book, the mystery and myth of King MacLain looms over the entire novel as a source of confusion over his choice to redefine fatherhood for himself as solely the biological. This mystery is also a source of tacit acceptance that, in spite of the confusion that almost overwhelms the people of Morgana, gives license and sanction to King as the ultimate harbinger and implementer of Southern

tradition through methods of violence and abuse that result in trauma to the individual. Specifically, the myth that engulfs the image of King is of Zeus. This allusion is made through the title of the first chapter of the book, "The Shower of Gold," which also happens to be a story of Greek mythology. By employing this legend on conjunction with her novel, Welty immediately establishes King as "a composite of myth, legend, and folklore," thus signaling how very complex the idea of the traditional Southern man truly is (Owen 38). This connection between King and Zeus immediately establishes King as not only a man, but also a godlike figure that has the ability to influence and control his people, in this case the entire town of Morgana, however he desires. King's desire becomes apparent through the narration of Katie Rainey, who explains to Welty's audience that King married an albino woman named Snowdie and, now that he has her, he comes and goes as he pleases, often leaving years in between when he sees his wife. Snowdie has accepted this behavior as inevitable and eagerly waits for her husband to come back for another visit in the woods. The allusion to the Greek myth positions King as Zeus and Snowdie as Danae, especially when they meet in secret to avoid being seen by others. Snowdie, like Danae, is aware of the consequences of her husband's actions and, rather than get upset with him for constantly leaving her, she continually accepts that, as a man in the male-dominated South, King is completely within his right to come and go as she pleases and, as his wife, she has no other option but to stay, as he wishes, and wait for him. By taking advantage of the knowledge that he has utter control over his wife, King lowers Snowdie's defenses by only meeting her in the woods after long periods of time and, through his own "shower of gold," or the means by which he lowers her defenses, he impregnates her and leaves again. This clear relation to the mythological story allows Welty to explain in full, in just a few pages, the very nature of the mysteriousness that surrounds King MacLain. He is not a man to be forced into doing what others want of him, and, even though people like Katie Rainey frown upon his actions, they never attempt to make him stay out of the understanding that King is the epitome of the Southern man. He does exactly what is expected of him as a man and, further, as a legend that compares to the king of the Greek gods: to do as he pleases to women and to overlook the consequences that do not befall him.

Beyond the myths that surround him, Welty puts the Southern man's tendency towards violence and abuse on display when King rapes Mattie Will, a young married woman. This rape, like the rest of King, is

veiled in ambiguity and confusion, particularly for the audience. The violent act of rape is certainly implied as Mattie Will “staggered [...] and then she was caught by the hair and brought down suddenly to earth as if whacked by an unseen shillelagh,” and again when she reconciles the act with herself that “disappointments are not to be borne by Mr. MacLain, or he’ll go away again” (Welty 108). The implication of rape, as well as Mattie Will’s understanding that if she does not let King have what he wants, he will leave, shows the ease of the social acceptance of a man being allowed whatever he wants; further, it shows a woman who is truly in her place as the giver of what the man wants, and she gives without question, solely because he is the head of the culture. By dodging the rape through vague descriptions and Mattie Will’s reconciliation with it, Welty highlights the avoidance mechanism expected of a traditional Southern woman. Regardless of the fact that King has violated her, as well as the sanctity of her marriage, Mattie Will can do nothing but accept King’s actions as though violence is expected of him. Although it is never verbally or even consciously acknowledged in the culture, violence, more or less, is precisely what is expected of the Southern man, just as submission and acceptance is expected of the Southern woman. Moreover, this dodging of violence operates as yet another question posed by Welty as to why avoidance mechanisms were an unspoken understanding of the Southern community and to what purpose, beyond perpetuating violence towards women, did avoiding harsh realities serve. Welty especially questions the South by positing the act of rape on Mattie Will, who was out in the woods with her husband. The implication of this knowledge serves as a display to the Southern people: if the man that possesses the ultimate power chooses to attack a married woman after rendering her husband unconscious, what protection does a woman have against such an abuse of power? This entire chapter, then, becomes one huge demonstration of the typical Southern town and, as such, is not an attack of King MacLain himself, but an attack of the blindness of the people—the unconscious husbands and bystanders—in the culture that Welty represents in her employment of Morgana, Mississippi.

Through the acceptance of King’s actions by the Morgana community, Welty shows the consequences of sanctioning such behaviors in the form of his children by illuminating specificities from the lives of his legitimate twin sons, Ran and Eugene, and his unacknowledged but implied illegitimate daughter, Virgie. Ran, the exact mirror of King, is the son who physically stays in Morgana while continuing to perpetu-

ate traditional ideals. The single chapter that exclusively involves his personal story, "The Whole World Knows," is the tale of his madness as he deals with the social implications of an unfaithful wife, Jinny Love. Ran is ridiculed by his community because, in their eyes, he could not keep his wife satisfied, or even scared, enough to remain faithful to him; the implicit truth, however, is that he first cheated on Jinny. When he attempts to pacify his wife, who kicked him out of their house, his mother-in-law "tells Ran that he started the trouble between himself and his wife, and that his wife's [...] affair with Woody Spights—is just her response to his originary transgression" (Mortimer 37). However, given that a Southern woman is supposed to do nothing more than allow her husband's transgressions, whether it is to cheat on her or abuse her in some other fashion, Ran cannot understand how his wife's affair is related to his in anyway and, as a result, he is unable to simply forgive her.

It is in accordance with his confusion and inability to consent to the idea that his infidelity is just as hurtful as Jinny's that Ran's mind quickly delves into "murderous hallucinations that blur borders between his raving mind, close to madness, and the actual surrounding of the events he is telling" (Pitavy-Souques 108). He prays and pleads to his "Father," though it is unclear as to whether he means King, God, or thinks of the two as one in the same, while simultaneously entertaining his violent, murderous thoughts about killing his wife and her lover (Welty 157). Ran's sanity continues to deteriorate until it is suddenly clear to him what he must do in order to reestablish his potency as a man in the South: the only way to reclaim his strength and control is to thoroughly ruin a woman that means nothing to him, simply for the sake of doing so. His best option for doing so is a young woman named Maideen, the epitome of Southern womanhood, who he later discovers is his half-sister when he realizes that her mother's maiden name is Sojourner. This realization is what truly demonstrates that Ran is an exact replica of his father; much like King, who raped Mattie Will, Ran, the son, will rape Maideen, the daughter. Ran also reconciles the rape, much as Mattie Will did, when he attempts to convince himself by arguing, "How was I to know she would go and hurt herself? She cheated, she cheated too" (Welty 181). Again, in Ran's mind, the woman is at fault, first for her rape, and then for committing suicide. She allowed him to take her away from Morgana, she drank with him, and then she betrayed her womanhood when he raped her. It is with this understanding, then, that Ran is able to absolve himself of guilt; Maideen did her duty as

a woman by allowing Ran to have her way with her but, at the same time, she allowed herself to lose her virginity outside of marriage and, as such, the purity that should surround her has dissolved. By having him knowingly rape not only his half-sister, but the daughter of King's own victim as well, Welty presents Ran as an example of the result of perpetuating the Southern patriarchy. Ran as an example, then, is merely one of the byproducts of the sanctioning of a man's actions in confines of the South. By perpetuating a system that causes even his own madness, Welty acknowledges Ran as a victim as much as he is a predator and, as such, takes a step towards convincing upholders of tradition to rethink the traditions they so blindly uphold.

Unlike his twin brother, Eugene is distinctly different from King. He removes himself completely from Morgana and the Southern culture, or at least attempts to, when he moves to San Francisco and marries a woman from there. However, Eugene finds that he is still discontented with life, especially when things grow strained between him and his wife "with the heart taken out of them by sorrow" (Welty 185). With their young daughter dead, dissatisfaction settles in Eugene once again. While he had left the South to escape the constraints that dwelled over the entire community, the part of him that valued himself as a father was so great that the loss of his child, and the ensuing grief, lead him to take yet another journey, this time away from the world and woman he had run away to get to. As Barbara H. Carson notes in "Eudora Welty's Tangled Bank," "Eugene MacLain's psychological defenses have been weakened by the recent death of his daughter and by his growing frustration with the tedium" of his life, which, after the loss of his child, loses its routine (12). Again, Eugene's differences are put on display as he moves through the journey that culminates in a place called "Land's End," where he goes with a Spaniard he has just met. It is in this place that Eugene attempts to fully transform and alleviate himself of the confines of his Southern heritage. He engages in a single act of homosexuality while with the Spaniard and, for those few brief moments, as the "fog flowed into his throat," the unexplored territory outside of Morgana provides Eugene with a means to finding fulfillment and validation for himself as a man outside of the South (Welty 223). His own fog is then lifted and, as a result, he is able to reconcile himself with his life.

Although Eugene is able to find some form of personal satisfaction outside of Southern tradition, the pleasant effects do not last long for him. At some point during his life, he returns to Morgana without his wife, unable to become "reconciled to his father" and loving only "Miss

Snowdie and flowers” (Welty 273). Through his inability to reconcile with King, the personification of Southern masculinity, leaving Morgana, and acting upon homosexual desires—all of which place him distinctly outside of his traditional culture—Eugene is punished with death and the occupation of a lonely grave as the first of his family to die. It is through his death, then, that Welty displays the punishing effects of the patriarchy, which punishes specifically if an individual differs too greatly from certain social constructs. Due to his differences, Eugene is as much a victim as his brother and, by employing two very different twins, Welty calls to attention the idea that severe punishment cannot be something that the society as a whole should look to as a “fix” for deviancy.

Unlike both Ran and Eugene, Virgie’s function as the illegitimate child is what allows her to fully remove herself from the South. Although it is indeterminate how long she was gone, she returns to Morgana only when her mother, Katie Rainey, takes ill and remains until she dies. Almost immediately, the suffocating effects of the South fall back upon her. She is expected to stay, first for her mother and then as a single woman with no parents to care for her, and she is expected to grieve in the same fashion as her community. While the town bombards her home as they all prepare for Katie’s funeral, Virgie wants nothing to do with their tradition and actively fights against it. The struggle becomes physical and, as yet another attempt to pull Virgie back into the patriarchal constructs, the women all try to force her to go see her mother’s body as they “pulled pre-emptorily at Virgie’s arms” (Welty 241). Virgie continues to resist and, although the women succeed in forcing her to see her mother, she establishes for herself a certain amount of resilience that, in the end, is exceedingly beneficial to her as a person independent of the Southern patriarchy.

Virgie experiences her own rebirth when she removes her clothing and goes swimming in a river near Morgana. By going into the water in as natural a state as a person can be, Virgie symbolically washes away her final ties to the South. With her mother dead, there is nothing else that can keep her in Morgana, through obligation or otherwise, and, although losing her mother was tragic, the sensation of the relief she feels now that she can finally escape the stifling confines of her hometown elevates her to a state of bliss. Virgie’s ability to escape is advanced once more when a stranger gives her a cereus, a flower that blooms only at night. The stranger explains, “tomorrow it’ll look like a wrung chicken’s neck. Look at it enduring the night” (Welty 267). The flower acts as a symbol of Virgie herself who, much like it, has found it difficult to

flourish in the daylight of Morgana, where judgmental eyes constantly watch your every move in an effort to correct deviancy and abnormality. However, in her night, the world outside of Morgana that is covered from the view of the South in a dark, comforting shadow, Virgie will finally be able to flourish and establish herself as a woman with her own definition of social morality and cultural norms.

It is with Virgie's strength and ability that Welty brings her argument to a peak. Virgie, unlike Ran, Eugene, or even King, is neither a victim nor a byproduct of her community because she refuses to allow herself to be either. She is able to leave and, therefore, offers the South an alternative to their strict confines. She is happy and she is not weighted down with tradition, which makes her path the ultimate antidote for the constricting constructs of the Southern patriarchy. Thus, Virgie, Welty's final demonstration of the consequences of the South, displays the restorative effects of what can happen when one either leaves the South or if the South is "fixed." Through her carefully structured novel, beginning with King and leading into Ran, Eugene, and Virgie, respectively, Welty breaks down Southern ideology and acknowledges that the social structure has made victims of both men and women alike, culminating her attempt to rewrite Southern tradition by offering a very real, viable outcome to changing the South. Her refusal to attack a specific person or people, along with her acknowledgement and demonstration of the various types of victims affected by the confines of such a strict culture, is what allows her to function as a potential author for not only a new literary canon, but also the reformer of an entire culture.

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## Surrogate Paternity and the “Un-father” in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*

by Hannah Holland

In his 2007 study *A Man’s Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, John Tosh reevaluates the meaning of “the father.” He examines fatherhood in the Victorian era from a multitude of perspectives such as the relationship between the father and the child, fathers and sons, and domesticity in the middle-class home. Using firsthand accounts, such as diary entries and letters, Tosh explores the lives of average Victorian men, and how they expressed themselves as fathers and husbands. In one such account, written in 1878, an Englishman named Mr. Benson declared that, “My heart ached with actual physical, as well as mental pain, and I felt too truly that happiness would no more be mine, but that I shd go sorrowing all my days” (Tosh 101). This anguished statement came in response to the sudden death of Mr. Benson’s second daughter, May. The love he felt for his child possessed such strength that it left him professing that he would never experience happiness again due to her loss. In addition to Mr. Benson’s account, Joshua Pritchard, an excise man working at a posting in Nottingham, wrote to his family in Manchester that, “He sent ‘lots of kisses’ to the children and ‘scores for [his wife]’; ‘I have a pin-cushion for Emma, a watch for Thomas, & lots of Baa Lambs for John” (Tosh 83). This excerpt exemplifies a man who misses and dotes on his family, based on the individual gifts for the children, and the expressions of physical affection he conveys in the form of kisses. In these experiences by average Victorian men, a common element of love and affection appear. Within these entries, both of these men epitomize a new perspective of “the father” that challenged traditional views.

In the later years of the Victorian era, England experienced many changes to the social construction of the family unit. Historically perceived as the sole provider and head of the household, the function of men as fathers and husbands changed little until the middle and end of the nineteenth century. In addition to these roles, many perceptions of “the father” developed as well, both in society and literature. These views

ranged from the “tyrannical father” who “appeared almost pathologically unable to see familial relations in anything but terms of authority” to the “absent father” who remained “absent either physically or emotionally distant” (Tosh 97). From tyranny to absence, the interpretations of “the father” span a large spectrum; however, all include the fact that patriarchs, while responsible for wives and children, stand divided from the rest of the household. In fact, in regards to the children, Dinah Mulock Craik asserts that, “men are [. . .] in general quite incapable of the demands of child rearing” (Nelson 54). However, as the nineteenth century progressed, the idea of the “loving” or “inclusive” father began to take hold.

In 1897, when these changes in patriarchal functions reached their peak, Bram Stoker published *Dracula*, and in it, explored various forms of fatherhood. Usually, studies of *Dracula* focus on the elements of blood, fangs, and sex. However, this idea of a hyper-sexualized tale of vampires is contradicted by the fact that Stoker created a story completely lacking in sex or traditional procreation. Dracula possesses the ability to create creatures of his own kind; however, he does this not through sexual reproduction but by “re-fathering” individuals. In addition to Dracula’s form of fatherhood, Stoker also explores the concept of the “absent father” by making his characters either noted orphans, or by portraying some patriarchal figures as physically and emotionally distant. For example, Mina speaks about her husband’s boss, Mr. Hawkins, having died suddenly. She states that, “Some may not think it so sad for us, but we [Mina and Jonathan Harker] had both come to so love him that it seems as though we had lost a father. I never knew either father or mother so that the dear old man’s death is a real blow to me” (138). After this passage she continues on to say that, “Jonathan is greatly distressed [. . .] he feels sorrow [. . .] for the dear, old man who has befriended him all his life, and now at the end has treated him like his own son and left him a fortune” (138). As she has stated, both Mina and Jonathan function as two of Stokers orphans; however, he allows them the benefit of finding a man kind enough to take them into his home and become a replacement father to them. In fact, the most active and inclusive characters in fatherly roles in this novel have no biological ties to their “children,” but are in fact surrogates.

Stoker creates a unique twist in the concept of fatherhood in *Dracula* by introducing this perception of the “good” fathers as surrogates. Historically, while fatherly roles were shifting in Victorian England, the idea of parental substitutes remained a kind of unspoken necessity. In fact,

types of surrogacy, such as “wet nursing [. . .] and the widespread use of lower-class surrogate caregivers were common” practice during the 19<sup>th</sup> century in middle and upper class households (Popenoe 150). However, women took the place of these surrogate practices, as they consisted of wet nurses, nannies, governesses, and maids. Men did not have much of a function in substitutional childrearing. In fact, Popenoe states in his book *Life Without Father: Compelling New Evidence that Fatherhood and Marriage are Indispensable for the Good of Children and Society* that “As desirable as this [men in surrogate roles] may be in certain cases, the evidence suggests that surrogate fathers are generally poor substitutes for natural fathers, and there are sound biological reasons why this is so” (190). Based on this information, the biological father remains the ideal paternal figure, and yet, Stoker completely contradicts this idea in *Dracula*. He purposefully creates ideal fathers and mentors out of the characters of Mr. Hawkins and Dr. Van Helsing, who act as essential guiding and supportive influences in the lives of the younger characters. In so doing, Stoker appears to disregard biological factors as having any bearing on who can take on the role of the “loving” father.

As stated previously, alterations in patriarchal functions began during the middle of the nineteenth century, but the reasons for these deviations stemmed from a purely feminist perspective. Laws, such as the Married Women’s Property Act of 1882 and the Infant Custody Act of 1886, as they passed, began allowing women to have rights more closely equal to men (Shanley 144). Before the development of these laws, husbands possessed complete control over all of the wife’s property that she brought into the marriage, and he also retained complete custody of any children that may have resulted during the marriage in the event that the couple separated. After these laws came into effect, though, women obtained rights to keep their property when entering marriage. They also gained the ability to have full custody of their children due to the fact that, “women’s ‘natural’ functions of childbearing, lactation, and the care of infants gave [them] *superior* claims to custody” (Shanley 145). Due to the fact that these laws allowed for more control of their finances and children, women gained higher standing within the familial sphere, and as a result, men no longer had sole responsibility of the family.

In addition to these laws, feminist movements arguing for equal prospects for women in terms of better employment opportunities and freedoms. As a result of increases in eligible professions, mothers attained the ability to help provide for their families, and thus, the men no longer functioned as the exclusive provider for his household.

As women progressed towards more equal standing as their husbands, the father had improved chances of interacting within the domestic space, and developed a more active role in regards to the children. In fact, Tosh states that while, “One still finds references to the ‘blustering certainty of the late Victorian paterfamilias’ this stereotype is not borne out by the didactic texts of the time, which signal a shift towards more interactive and less authoritarian patterns of fatherhood” (52). It is due to these legal and social alterations that the concept of the “interactive” and “loving” father became a more common phenomenon, and, as a result, gave Stoker, as the author one of these “texts of the time,” the basis for which to frame his fatherly characters and surrogates (52).

Though Stoker’s substitute father figures drive the novel, the traditional and biological patriarchs possess the important task of expressing how blood ties hold no bearing on fatherhood. For example, as previously stated, Mina and her husband Jonathan do not possess parents through the course of the novel, and, as a result, function as the children of a kind of “physically absent” father figure. Instead of having typical family ties, they depend on their friendships and connections to rise to their current positions in the novel. Both find themselves relatively successful and in a situation where they can continue rising is social status. In fact, Stoker inserts some historical relevance into Mina’s character as he has her refer multiple times to the growing concept of the “New Woman” who possesses equal standing with men (78). He also has Mina considering new avenues of employment for after she gets married so she can assist and support Jonathan in his own endeavors. When thinking of this task, she states that, “I have been working very hard lately, because I want to keep up with Johnathan’s studies [ . . . ] I have been practicing short hand very assiduously [ . . . ] When we are married I shall be able to be useful to Jonathan” (46). However, Mina is not the only one working to improve herself. Jonathan too stands to gain a great deal due to his perseverance and hard work. His boss, the previously mentioned Mr. Hawkins, has always seen potential in Johnathan and promises that once Johnathan returns from his work in Transylvania, he would promote him to a partner in his law firm. As is made obvious by their many accomplishments, both Mina and Johnathan never suffered from their lack of parents, or familial ties. Due to this fact, they function as Stoker’s first break from the ideals of the time period that state blood relations are superior.

Stoker goes on to introduce Mr. Hawkins as the initial surrogate father figure in regards to his interactions with Jonathan. Though Mr. Hawkins

rarely appears, his small interaction possesses great significance in relation to Jonathan and Mina. Through Mr. Hawkins’ law firm, Jonathan initially goes to Transylvania to meet with Count Dracula and to gain his business, and in doing so, Jonathan stands to gain greater employment within the firm. However, while this interaction may seem like a typical relationship between employer and employee, the affection Mr. Hawkins has for Jonathan and Mina extends beyond this association. Mina states multiple times while Jonathan is held captive in Dracula’s castle that she has not heard from her fiancé, but repeats that “Mr. Hawkins sent me on the letter, and wrote himself, oh so kindly” (86). The fact that Mr. Hawkins takes the time to ensure Mina’s comfort shows that he feels more towards Jonathan and Mina. Though Mr. Hawkins’ official connection with Johnathan remains that of a working relationship at this point in the novel, he surpasses this role by personally ensuring that the correspondence between the two lovers makes it to their intended audience, and even goes so far as to check on Mina’s well-being during this trying time. While this interaction is minute, it greatly endears him to Jonathan and Mina, and sets the grounds for his more involved role that Stoker develops for him.

When Jonathan and Mina return from Budapest, where he had to recover from his encounter with Dracula and his three brides, Mr. Hawkins brings them both into his home to stay. Mina recounts that, “He took us into his house, where there were rooms for us all” (135). Essentially, by bringing them into his household, Mr. Hawkins has accepted the newlyweds into his family, and he cements this fact by saying, “My dears, I want to drink to your health and prosperity, and may every blessing attend you both. I know you both from children, and have, with love and pride, seen you grow up. Now I want you to make your home here with me. I have left to me neither chick nor child. All are gone, and in my will I have left you everything” (135). With this passage, Mr. Hawkins officially claims Jonathan and Mina, revealing that he not only considers them his family, but that he has relished the opportunity to watch over and support them from childhood. Thus, Stoker reveals the deeper purpose of Mr. Hawkins as a surrogate father, who functions as a historical representation of the loving and actively contributing patriarchal figure that gained precedence during the Victorian era based on his loving speech and financial pledge he makes to the newly married couple. Yet Mina, Jonathan, and Mr. Hawkins’ relationship only counts as a small part of Stoker’s overall fatherly theme.

Mr. Westenra—the wealthy father of Mina’s best friend, Lucy—also plays an important part in Stoker’s apparent attempt at displaying biological fathers as lacking superiority. While he obviously feels affection for his daughter, due to his constant spoiling, Lord Westenra is, in fact, an emotionally removed and physically absent father. His lack of appearance becomes heavily apparent because, while all the other characters interact with one another, either in person or through letters, Lord Westenra’s actions are only conveyed through secondhand accounts. For example, his wife, Mrs. Westenra tells Mina that “her husband, Lucy’s father, had the same habit [of sleepwalking as his daughter], that he would get up in the night and dress himself and go out, if he were not stopped” (63). While she claims that he possesses the same issue as Lucy, there remains only Mrs. Westenra’s word that he does so, because Stoker never offers any further evidence of these occurrences. The fact that he remains so completely removed that no actual firsthand evidence of him existing connotes an ultimate kind of absence. However, Stoker goes even further by making Lord Westenra as emotionally as he is physically unavailable, by showing that he fails to perform in his paternal responsibilities to Lucy.

One of the most important functions a father has in the life of his daughter, during the nineteenth century, comes in the form of courtship. According to Stephen Kern in *The Culture of Love: Victorians to Moderns*, “In the Victorian era, requests for permission [to court or marry] generally went as follows. The suitor met privately with the father, respectfully presented his qualifications, demonstrated his ability to care for the daughter, affirmed his undying love for her, and then, if permission was granted, met with her and proposed” (298). However, with regard to Lucy and her father, this series of events never takes place. Instead of her many suitors meeting with her father, Dr. John Seward, Arthur Holmwood, and Quincy Morris never interact with Mr. Westenra, but are instead always found within Lucy’s company. Also when it comes time for Lucy to become engaged, she tells Mina that, “Here I am, who shall be twenty in September, and yet I never had a proposal till today, not a real proposal, and today I had three. Just fancy! Three proposals in one day! Isn’t it awful! I feel sorry, really and truly sorry, for two of the poor fellows” (48). Based on this statement, Lucy’s father leaves the choice of husband completely to her, instead of interviewing all of the men and choosing the one he feels will make the best husband for her. Nowhere in the novel does Stoker show that Lucy’s father met with her potential husbands, and as a result, he completely fails to take part in

one of the most important events in his daughter’s life. However, while all these inactions on the part of Mr. Westenra easily prove his absence in Lucy’s life, Stoker pushes on with the fact that, when Lucy begins to become mysteriously ill, he fails to come to her side, and rather opts to stay with her sickly mother. Instead, Stoker introduces Dr. Abraham Van Helsing as the kindly substitute figure who comes to aid and support her where her biological father won’t.

Originally the teacher of Dr. Seward, Dr. Helsing functions as the main surrogate in the novel. Unable to help Lucy after she falls ill, Dr. Seward contacts his old mentor in an attempt to give her the best care he can provide. When Dr. Van Helsing arrives, he immediately identifies the issue, and due to his studies in the occult, realizes that Lucy’s sickness stems from Dracula’s attacks on her. However, he not only aids Lucy, but also guides and instructs all the male characters in how to help and later stop Lucy after she dies and becomes one of Dracula’s creations. However, Van Helsing’s actions do not stop there, as he later commits to defeating Dracula and rescuing Mina after the vampire forces her to consume his blood. While, based on all these actions, Van Helsing seems like (and is often studied as) the hero of *Dracula*, Stoker applies many cues to Van Helsing that evidence his role as surrogate father to nearly all the main characters in the novel. For instance, he often refers to younger characters as “child” (106), and like a father advises them on possible courses of action and protects them when they find themselves in danger. He performs these actions even when he puts himself in harmful situations, such as when he attempts to protect Mina from Dracula’s three brides, and nearly succumbs to them. During this encounter he says, “I was desolate and afraid, and full of woe and terror. But when that beautiful sun began to climb the horizon life was to me again. At the first coming of the dawn the horrid figures melted in the whirling mist and snow. The wreaths of transparent gloom moved away towards the castle and, and were lost” (324). He manages to withstand the advances and attacks of Dracula’s brides, and keeps Mina safe from their custody. As a result of his actions, though he has no blood ties to any of the characters, he protects them with all the love and strength of a father.

However, while Van Helsing’s actions firmly cement him in the role of surrogate father, Stoker further solidifies this fact with a scene from the final chapter. Set years after their final encounter with Dracula, where they defeat the vampire and save Mina, Van Helsing visits with Mina and Jonathan to reminisce about their time together. Stoker creates a display full of affection and family bonding. In the scene, Jonathan notes that

Van Helsing sits “with our son on his knee” as they speak about how Mina retained such strength during her time as Dracula’s victim (333). This action of his son sitting on Van Helsing’s knee conveys a sense of closeness typical of the household of the new Victorian father. Jonathan and Mina have accepted Van Helsing into their lives and Stoker gives him a grandfatherly role when interacting with their son. He possesses all the characteristics of the kind of “loving” father that Victorian patriarchy shifted towards, yet he does so without having to possess blood ties with his adopted family.

Finally, while Dracula may also seem like the ultimate surrogate father, due to his ability to re-father characters, such as he did with Lucy and attempted with Mina, he actually functions as the main argument Stoker uses the paternal figures in this novel to make: that biological fatherhood does not hold a position of superiority over that of surrogates, who can serve as viable alternatives to traditional fathers. Recalling when Dracula attacks Mina, Van Helsing says, “Kneeling on the near edge of the bed facing outwards was the white-clad figure of [Jonathan’s] wife. By her side stood a tall, thin man, clad in black [. . .] we all recognized the Count [. . .] With his left hand he held both Mrs. Harker’s hands [. . .] His right hand gripped her by the back of the neck, forcing her face to his bosom. Her white nightdress was smeared with blood, and a thin stream trickled down the man’s bare chest which was shown by his torn-open dress” (249). This passage details the process in which Dracula claims his victims and changes them in his own image. The fact that he uses blood as the binding agent to transform them, in addition to Dracula’s role in the novel as villain, directly links blood ties to negative relations. The blood changes his targets and creates a biological tie between them and Dracula; thus, though he originally held no connection with his victims before, after he changes them, they now exist as his blood-bound children. This link is precisely what the novel seeks to underscore. Due to the fact that his surrogate characters all retain the characteristics, such as expressing open affection and providing support, of the “inclusive” father, and all the biological patriarchal figures possesses the features of the historically distant father who only acts as provider and head of the household, Stoker shows that blood relations does not create a superior father, but that surrogates can function just as effectively.

When he wrote *Dracula*, Stoker created a world exploring the alternatives for the father. These changes coincide with alterations going on during the Victorian era. Fatherhood in this time period was changing in a way that allowed for the father to take a more direct approach in the

lives of his family. He was evolving from the classic model of the head of the household and not an active participant within his own family. In the novel, Stoker creates different examples of the father. He uses traditional models of the “physically” and “emotionally” absent fathers when creating his biological fathers, and when applying the changes to fatherhood that took place in later years of the nineteenth century, he uses surrogate fathers as his models. The novel therefore suggests that biology has no bearing on being a father, and that anyone exhibiting the ideal traits can act as a viable surrogate. This idea is also supported by the fact that any biological patriarchal figures fail to support their children, either due to death, in Mina and Jonathan’s cases, or because they separated themselves emotionally from their child, such as Lucy’s father. The text further solidifies the concept that biology often carries negative consequences by depicting a villain who uses his blood to “re-father” his victims. Ultimately, Stoker shows his open support for surrogate fatherhood by creating substitutes that exemplify all the virtues of the new Victorian father, and by showing that surrogates are often preferable to the traditional biological father.

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# Like Father, Like Son: Attempted Revisions of English Masculinity in *Emma*

by Leeanne Hoovestol

Published in 1815, Jane Austen's *Emma* is generally considered another example of the traditional marriage novel. However, each of the titular protagonist's potential suitors presents the heroine not just with different types of potential husbands, but also with potential revisions of the ideal English man. In "Nationalism and Empire," critic Warren Roberts notes that Britain and France were essentially at war with one another in a struggle for empire from 1793 until 1815, with only brief bouts of "peace" (330). Written and published at the end of this politically charged time, *Emma* explores the social effect of this political destabilization, specifically as it pertains to the English definition and expectation of masculinity. Roberts focuses primarily on a comparison between Frank Churchill and George Knightley, and his analysis culminates in the idea that the two figures represent the dichotomy between England and France (335). He explains an association of certain qualities—such as seriousness, brilliance, plainness—as English, and other "more fashionable" qualities as French in order to concretize this idea (334). Such a comparison expectedly renders the "tru[ly] English" Knightley the "better" of the two (Austen 99; Roberts 335).

Claudia Johnson likewise consents to the popular interpretation that Mr. George Knightley and Frank Churchill represent nationalistic figures of England and France, respectively. In "'Not at All What a Man Should Be!': Remaking English Manhood in *Emma*," Johnson aligns George Knightley with the political context: he serves "to recover a narrative tradition of gentry liberty, which valued its manly independence from tyrannical rule." In this manner, Knightley opposes such courtly rule that prevailed during the 1790s through the French Revolution (201). The "French-ness" that Knightley counteracts manifests in the character of Frank Churchill, whom Mr. Knightley declares "can only be amiable in French, not in English." Knightley explains his criticism by saying that while Frank "may be very 'amiable,' have very good manners, and be very agreeable [. . .] he [has] no English delicacy towards the feelings of other

people [and therefore, there is] nothing really amiable about him" (149). Even without Knightley's accusations of Frank's questionable national alliance, Emma notes his forceful desire to "prove [himself] to belong to the place." On a walk through town, Frank states that he wants to go into Ford's, a local shop, so that he may "be a true citizen of Highbury." He furthermore insists that he "must buy something at Ford's. It will be taking out [his] freedom" (203). Frank's behavior suggests performance—"there was an air of foppery and nonsense about [him]," both of which are traits that fall into the category of "French-ness."

Unlike the performative character of Frank Churchill, Mr. Woodhouse authentically typifies the ideal sentimental man, despite his reputation as "a silly old woman." Johnson argues that the examination of Mr. Woodhouse in his appropriate historical context reveals that he "represents the ideal of sentimental masculinity," and that he even "typi[fies] the venerated paternal figures" of earlier texts, rather than deviating from them. Mr. Woodhouse's "typified" qualities include: "sensitivity, tenderness, 'benevolent nerves,' allegiance to the good old ways, courtesies to the fair sex, endearing irrationality, and even slowness, frailty, and ineptitude." Elaborating on the idea of "benevolent nerves," Johnson explains that "during the 1790s, a man's 'benevolent nerves' carried a national agenda," meaning that this particular disposition reflected the spirit of the nation—its hospitality and goodness, which constituted the "age of chivalry." In opposition to the coldness of the new regime, a sentimental man's authority was legitimized by his sensitivity, which enabled him "to rule by weakness rather than force." Additionally, his "attachment to the old ways preserved continuity and order, while qualities such as energy, penetration, forcefulness, brusqueness, bluntness, and decision were deemed dangerous, volatile, and cold." The crucial difference Johnson highlights is that a sentimental man earned his virtue by "the love he inspired in others, not by [. . .] the power he wielded over them." Johnson encapsulates the sentimental qualities of this "old kind of gentleman" by using the term "a Woodhousian man" to both characterize and reference this specific type of masculinity occurring in the late eighteenth century. Mr. Woodhouse represents an older type of masculinity, one that was fading out at the time of *Emma's* publication, which partially explains why he appears a comedic figure in the novel. However, any perverseness of his character is due to the novel's attempt to redefine a type of masculinity that Johnson explains was already "under reconstruction" at the time that the novel was written (198).

Critic Laurie Kaplan affirms the assertion of the novel's nationalistic critique, and states that "depictions of fatherhood in the novel create unresolved problems and ambiguities" (237). These depictions crucially function alongside other cultural factors "to create a complex subtext critiquing the state of the nation" (238). During what is described as the Georgian period, there was a series of social reforms, including the grant of a Royal Charter to Captain Thomas Coram in 1739 for the foundation of the Foundling Hospital. This hospital was established in 1742 "for the fare of London's unwanted, illegitimate, or orphaned babies" (239). While the hospital was charitable in nature, it evolved into "England's' first public gallery for contemporary art" as well as a "fashionable place to worship" due to the efforts of artistic benefactors such as William Hogarth and George Handel (240). The exhibits these and other benefactors held and hosted popularized the hospital, but such popularity led to a tightening of security, and "In 1801, the Foundling Hospital revised its admission standards" (241). Such "revisions" stipulated that in order to be accepted, a child must "be illegitimate or the offspring of a father killed in military service, and under one year." Preference was given to "the children of mothers who had been the victims of male deception, such as a false promise of marriage." Additionally, mothers were required "to provide two character references" (242). These new stipulations made it difficult for an orphaned child to be accepted, resulting in the abandonment of "thousands of unwanted children each year in London." Given this context, Kaplan concludes that "the Highbury orphans [. . .] are the lucky ones" (240).

Her catalog of the "Highbury orphans" includes Emma, Frank Churchill, Jane Fairfax, Harriet, Mr. Elton, Mrs. Elton, "and even Miss Taylor" (237). In this orphan-filled novel, Mr. Woodhouse functions as surrogate father to many of these characters, particularly the men: he is father-in-law to both Mr. Knightleys, and potential father-in-law to both Mr. Elton and Mr. Frank Churchill. In effect, Mr. Woodhouse fulfills, or nearly fulfills, the role of surrogate father for all major male figures in the text; he serves as the central masculine figure, representative of the sentimental tradition, and all other male characters show possible revisions of that tradition, with George Knightley succeeding as the new ideal man. Thus, Mr. Woodhouse is the father of the novel's original masculinity, and the other men function as his "sons," attempting to adapt their father's tradition to the changed social atmosphere. Much criticism of *Emma* concerns the national crisis of an undefined masculine identity. These criticisms unanimously name George Knightley as the

most ideal of the available *Emma* successors to the proper Englishman archetype, and highlight the falseness of his competitors. I argue that each of the “sons” possesses “Woodhousian” traits and that it is the manner in which they apply these traits that determines their ultimate success as Mr. Woodhouse’s successor; it is not George Knightley’s acquisition of Woodhousian traits that renders him the preferred son, but rather his unrivaled understanding and sincere application of those traits. In other words, while all of the “sons” share the legacy of a Woodhousian man, it is their inadequate interaction with and adaptation of the model that determines their ultimate marital fates; only George Knightley successfully incorporates the Woodhousian model with the changing social atmosphere and emerges as the new model Englishman.

Critic Michael Kramp also studies the curious relationship between masculinity and political events in *Disciplining Love: Austen and the Modern Man*. He claims that “Austen repeatedly represents men who monitor their sexualities as part of their larger civic duties” (2). The late 1700s were a time of great uncertainty, and so to “politiciz[e] gender” helped to secure more solid and unwavering definitions of gender, which was “integral to larger reform projects” (18). These reforms constituted a revision of England’s nationalistic attitude: public policies began requiring censuses in order to count the number of able-bodied men in the country. Men became able to gain status through identification as a nationalist—their patriotism won them recognition previously ignored in the middle and lower classes. The newfound ability to gain masculine authority publicly led men to revise their private masculinity as well, because the two—public and private—began to rely more upon one another. The previous model for male masculinity was discarded without a definite replacement, which caused several different attempts to construct one (18-19). This link of public and private masculinity proved problematic, because if a man failed to maintain his masculinity privately, then his public influence and reputation also suffered. While the bourgeois men had previously maintained public influence without a necessary correlation to their private lives, they were now expected to maintain that same stature at home; this became a new challenge for some men, and made difficult the continuation of a Woodhousian man. Kramp explains that “the men of Austen’s corpus negotiate these models of masculinity in order to stabilize their social/sexual subjectivities and gain access to the national community” (21). Ultimately, Kramp engages in a similar discussion as Johnson, and states that George Knightley represents “an archetype of modern masculinity” because he is both chivalric, yet also a man of reason (110). In

other words, Knightley is a fusion of the past and the newly emerging ideal of masculinity, and it is his negotiation of these models that allow him to balance his masculine qualities properly and effectively.

In one key episode, Emma witnesses an encounter between Mr. Woodhouse and George Knightley. Mr. Woodhouse, compelled by the dictates of his particular brand of civility, must play host to his visitor: “Mr. Knightley, who had nothing of ceremony about him, was offering his short, decided answers, an amusing contrast to the protracted apologies and civil hesitations of the other.” Despite familial ties and a close friendship with Knightley, Mr. Woodhouse adheres to the social dictates instilled in his generation. Mr. Knightley realizes this, but feels such behavior is unnecessary, asking, “My dear sir, do not make a stranger of me,” suggesting that the close acquaintance renders such social dictates antiquated (Austen 55). This scene hints at a departure from the overt Woodhousian model, yet George Knightley always respects and generally seeks to uphold his predecessor’s honor. Upon the cancellation of the excursion to Box Hill—a trip in which Mr. Woodhouse would not be taking part—George Knightley alternately proposes a visit to his home, Donwell Abbey. Though the majority of the guests partake in outdoor activities—picking strawberries and exploring the grounds—Knightley makes special arrangements for Mr. Woodhouse: “[he] had done all in his power for Mr. Woodhouse’s entertainment. Books of engravings, drawers of medals, cameos, corals, shells, and every other family collection within his cabinets, had been prepared for his old friend, to while away the morning” (371). Woodhouse responds approvingly, thinking “it very well done [. . .] very kind and sensible” and admits to “ha[ving] been exceedingly well amused” (365, 371). Interestingly, George Knightley is the only “son” of Woodhouse who receives the recognition of “friend”—hinting at the former’s impending succession. Additionally, Knightley physically appears a younger version of Mr. Woodhouse at the ball, where he stands “among the bulky forms of the elderly men.” Despite his association with the older men, his youth and features set him apart: “there was not one among the whole row of [. . .] men who could be compared with him.—He moved a few steps nearer, and those few steps were enough to provide in how gentlemanlike a manner, with what natural grace, he must have danced, would he but take the trouble” (334). Such description highlights George’s mediation of the older model and the younger qualities. George does not continually dance and express gaiety like Frank Churchill does, yet he has that capacity. It is his selective decisions of how to act that set him apart—distinctly—from both groups of gentlemen.

George Knightley, it would seem, unknowingly prepares to assume Mr. Woodhouse's familial position. As uncle to John and Isabella's children, Knightley already maintains a dominant position in the family that he shares with Mr. Woodhouse. George attends family visits and presides as master of the Donwell estate. His position as an authoritative male in the family already stands to threaten Mr. Woodhouse's somewhat marginal standing. Despite their friendship, "Mr. Woodhouse could never allow for Mr. Knightley's claims on his brother [John Knightley], or any body's claims on Isabella, except his [Mr. Woodhouse's] own" (79). Mr. Woodhouse's hesitation in allowing George Knightley to attend dinner during Isabella and John's visit signals a failing patriarch—he is unable to stop the encroachment of the younger man. However, Mr. Woodhouse's consideration and attempt to dissuade Emma from inviting George hint at his uneasiness and foreshadow his later resistance to their marriage. While George may show signs of encroachment, he remains a subversive patriarch, unwilling and unable to fully transcend the position, at least while Mr. Woodhouse lives.

George takes a modern approach to lecture Emma—his advice is not the mumbled cautions of Mr. Woodhouse, but rather an insistent lecture: "This is not pleasant to you, Emma—and it is very far from pleasant to me; but I must, I will,—I will tell you truths while I can; satisfied with proving myself your friend by very faithful counsel, and trusting that you will some time or other do me greater justice than you can do now" (384). Emma later reflects on this criticism with regard to her father: "As a daughter, she hoped she was not without a heart. She hoped no one could have said to her, 'How could you be so unfeeling to your father?—I must, I will tell you truths while I can.'" (386). Her application of his advice to her father suggests a shift in the dominant male influence on her—from Mr. Woodhouse to George. The somewhat harsh way in which George addresses Emma signals another slight departure from his predecessor, as well as Emma's positive reception to that change. Whereas Mr. Woodhouse offers only minimal advice to Emma, George Knightley does not hesitate in providing constructive criticism. Woodhouse's advice usually regards Emma's preoccupation with match-making and, being resistant to change, he attempts to dissuade her. Mr. Knightley's criticisms usually form in response to behavior of which he disapproves. He advises to instigate change.

Perhaps the most divergent topic concerning George Knightley and Mr. Woodhouse's friendship involves George's desire to marry Emma. Mr. Woodhouse admits, "I never encourage[e] any body to marry" (284).

Despite developing and acknowledging feelings for George Knightley, Emma resolutely decides, “Marriage [. . .] would not do for her. It would be incompatible with what she owed to her father, and with what she felt for him. Nothing should separate her from her father. She would not marry, even if she were asked by Mr. Knightley” (425). George’s primary struggle in his pursuit of Emma is “how to [. . .] ask her to marry him, without attacking the happiness of her father” (459). His consideration of the union necessarily involves Mr. Woodhouse’s sentiments and importance. While Emma retreats to the safety of continuation and resistance to change, claiming that she only needs “him [George] but to continue [to be] the same Mr. Knightley to her and her father,” George persists in creating a most palatable solution for all involved parties. He merges Mr. Woodhouse’s propensity for continuation with his and Emma’s desire to progress their relationship; this proposed plan involves renouncing his home for Hartfield, which Emma recognizes as a sacrifice of Knightley’s independence (460). Despite George’s willingness to compromise, Mr. Woodhouse cannot agree to the idea. It is only when outside threats—pilfering—compromise his personal safety that he consents to the marriage.

Frank Churchill likewise struggles with an unapproved marriage. Like George, the death of a parent-figure—Mrs. Churchill and Mr. Woodhouse—seems necessary to proceed with their respective marriages. Mr. Knightley continues to honor Mr. Woodhouse while pursuing the marriage, whereas Frank waits for the passing of his aunt before proceeding in his union. In this case, Knightley demonstrates his reverence for his surrogate father, while Frank shows very little respect for Jane’s relations and how the marriage will affect them; though it will benefit them financially, it seems to hurt them sentimentally with regard to Jane’s reputation. Mr. Knightley’s primary concern is for both himself and Emma’s relations, who are in fact, already his own. George’s polite accordance within the patriarchy renders him a hero-figure while Frank’s apathy for anyone besides himself makes him a conclusively negative figure, despite his later apologies. George subsequently compares Frank’s relationship to his own: “My Emma, does not every thing serve to prove more and more the beauty of truth and sincerity in all our dealings with one another?” (456). Frank and George’s respective relationships and marriages parallel one another, with the kinder George prevailing.

Mr. Knightley’s “perfect” character at times appears questionable. His opinion of Frank Churchill changes throughout the novel—and it is his opinion that guides readers:

When he had found her agitated and low.—Frank Churchill was a villain.—He heard her declare that she had never loved him. Frank Churchill's character was not desperate.—She was his own Emma, by hand and word, when they returned into the house; and if he could have thought of Frank Churchill then, he might have deemed him a very good sort of fellow (443).

George Knightley later admits, "I was not quite impartial in my judgment, Emma:—but yet, I think—had *you* not been in the case—I should still have distrusted him [F. Churchill]" (456). His ability to acknowledge the objective reestablishes his credibility while his brief affectation of judgment reveals aspects of his sentimentality.

Despite his desire to marry Emma, George maintains sufficient self-control and shows continued support for Mr. Woodhouse. Knightley's support of Emma and Mr. Woodhouse's relationship is crucial to the novel's ending. Frank Churchill's lack of filial respect and flailing relationships with his father(s) provide an ideal context for George Knightley to express his superior ideals. George comments at the beginning of the novel that he feels that Frank is ultimately to blame for his lack of visits with Mr. Weston because it is his duty as a son. George explains, "There is one thing, Emma, which a man can always do, if he chuses, and that is his duty [. . .] It is Frank Churchill's duty to pay this attention to his father. He knows it to be so, by his promises and messages; but if he wished to do it, it might be done" (146). Whereas Frank fails in his duty, George Knightley not only recognizes the failure in others, but he eventually succeeds in performing such duty for his father-in-law—proving himself a good moral guide. Furthermore, in response to Knightley's assessment of Frank, Emma responds, "I can imagine that if you, as you are, Mr. Knightley, were to be transported and placed all at once in Mr. Frank Churchill's situation, you would be able to say and do just what you have been recommending for him; and it might have very good effect." Whereas Frank is "a very weak young man," Knightley is capable of doing the proper manly thing—continually respecting the feelings of Mr. Woodhouse (147).

While Mr. Knightley is labeled as a gentleman, the kind that "you might not see one in a hundred with *gentleman* so plainly written," Mr. Elton serves "as a model" for "a young man" to follow (29, 31). Elton possess a "gentleness" which is much easier to copy than "Mr. Knightley's downright, decided, commanding sort of manner" (31). Whereas George possesses a distinct type of "gentleman-ness," Elton constitutes a brand of

masculinity similar to that of Frank Churchill—one that seeks to mimic the “genteel” quality of earlier sentimental men and, in consequence, reads as fake. George Knightley, though ultimately the ideal man, possesses individual characteristics that cannot be mimicked—he is an unattainable archetype that should inspire rather than cast a mold. “Mr. Knightley was a sort of general friend and adviser, and she [Emma] knew Mr. Elton looked up to him” (57). The omniscient narrator intrudes to describe Elton as a “lively good sort of man,” but Knightley reads the falsehood of behavior, explaining to Emma that “Elton may talk sentimentally, but he will act rationally” (64). Such commentary evidences George’s ability to successfully read the actions and characters of other men. George uses his skills of perception to detect Elton’s charade; Elton likewise uses his own skills of perception to manipulate others rather than simply observe.

Narrative intrusion depicts Elton as “gallant,” a quality that he frequently exhibits—“his gallantry was always on alert” (39, 46). John Knightley comments on Elton’s behavior, “It is downright labour to him where ladies are concerned. With men he can be rational and unaffected, but when he has ladies to please, every feature works” (111). John Knightley highlights the false manners of Elton—he changes his behavior depending on his audience; he acts rather than is. Emma also perceives this act: “Mr. Elton was proving himself, in many respects, the very reverse of what she had meant and believed him; proud, assuming, conceited; very full of his own claims, and little concerned about the feelings of others” (135). Emma knows that he “pretended to be in love” out of his want to “marry well” and elevate his social standing; she knows that there was “no real affection” on his side (135). After this recognition of falseness, Mr. Elton’s subsequently appears only marginally throughout the remainder of the novel, and his only significance is to create humor or forward the plot. Upon Emma’s post-wedding visit to him and Miss Hawkins—now Mrs. Elton—she initially begins to reflect upon him, and quickly decides that he is not worth consideration: “As for Mr. Elton, his manners did not appear—but no, she [Emma] would not permit a hasty or a witty word from herself about his manners” (274). Unlike Frank Churchill who receives “the advantage of inheriting a disposition” from Mr. Weston and thereby thought inherently “good,” Emma and the citizens of Highbury are not predisposed to accept and readily believe Mr. Elton. When Mr. Elton’s sincerity is questioned, there is no immediate reassurance or overwhelmingly “amiable” quality to pardon him (447).

John Knightley, another “son” of Mr. Woodhouse (and his actual son-in-law), occupies a peculiar status as another double-son figure

alongside his elder brother, George Knightley. Their dynamic relationship presents a curious comparison. George's "temper was by much the most communicative, and [he] was always the greater talker," while John has much "cooler manners" (99). Additionally, whereas George provides constant attention to Mr. Woodhouse's needs, John's "greatest fault of all [was] the want of respectful forbearance towards [Mr. Woodhouse] he had not always the patience that could have been wished," despite his having "really a great regard for his father-in-law, and generally a strong sense of what was due to him" (93). John Knightley differs greatly from Mr. Woodhouse's sentimental qualities, with particular regard to his own fatherhood. Mr. Woodhouse believes that John is "too rough" with his children, which Emma explains: "He appears rough to you [. . .] because you are so very gentle yourself; but if you could compare him with other papas, you would not think him rough [. . .] but he is an affectionate father—certainly." Additionally, Mr. Woodhouse comments on the interesting occurrence of his eldest grandson sharing his name, Henry, whereas the younger grandson shares his father's name, John: "Some people are surprised [. . .] that the eldest was not" named after the father, but Isabella insisted on calling him Henry. Mr. Woodhouse is flattered by this, especially since he feels that the younger Henry takes after his characteristics and is "very clever" (80). The continuation of the Woodhousian legacy suggests a perpetuation of its sentimental traits which will persist alongside the newer and more common "roughness" evidenced by John Knightley.

Like George, John Knightley offers his sister-in-law fatherly advice concerning Elton: "you will do well [. . .] to regulate your behavior [. . .] I think your manners to him encouraging. I speak as a friend, Emma. You had better look about you, and ascertain what you do, and what you mean to do." Emma is "not very well pleased with her brother for imagining her blind and ignorant, and in want of counsel" (112). While John's intentions were likely honorable, characteristic of his rough masculinity, his advice is harsher than that of George, leaving Emma to feel insulted. According to George, "John loves Emma with a reasonable and therefore not a blind affection" (37). This description contrasts the love George has for Emma, which he attempts to explain: "If I loved you less, I might be able to talk about it more" (440). Mr. Knightley admits that his devotion to Emma essentially "blinds" him—to George, she is "faultless in spite of all her faults" (443). George transforms from a fraternal figure to that of amorous husband. Ironically, Emma complains of John Knightley, that his manners towards Isabella "were only those of a calmly kind brother

and friend, without praise and without blindness"; John and Isabella united as lovers, not makeshift siblings whose love developed from fraternal to sexual, as did that between George and Emma (93). Yet, both Knightley brothers appear to function as somewhat fraternal figures in their unions—both seek to provide a revised masculinity in the lives of the Woodhouse sisters, whose father's sentimentality fails to suffice.

Ultimately, George Knightley cannot emerge as the replacement of English masculinity until Mr. Woodhouse gives his consent. Woodhouse's sentimental disposition delays the inevitable change in his household structure. However, external forces combine to necessitate the change:

Mr. Woodhouse was very uneasy [over stories of pilfering in Highbury]; and but for the sense of his son-in-law's [John's] protection, would have been under the wretched alarm every night of his life. The strength, resolution, and presence of mind of the Mr. Knightleys, commanded his fullest dependence. While either of them protected him and his, Hartfield was safe.—But Mr. John Knightley must be in London again by the end of the first week in November. The result of this distress was, that, with a much more voluntary, cheerful consent than his daughter had ever presumed to hope for at that moment, she was able to fix her wedding-day (495).

The changed atmosphere of Highbury, now made to feel unsafe, reflects England's political turmoil at this time. While the idea of a sentimental and chivalric man may harken back to previously safer times, even the most rigid Woodhousian man must consent to reality and relinquish his authority. During and after England's warring period with France, it becomes no longer practical or possible to rule by kindness, yet the opposite disposition seems likewise improper. Such context paves the way for George Knightley's new Englishman-hood to emerge; he is kind, but firm; genteel, yet humble; wise, but human. While his unique composition of characteristics is irreproducible, they should nevertheless inspire others to attain such a mediated and moderate type of masculinity.

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# ***Huckleberry Finn: On the Lookout for a Father***

by Sunday L. Jones

*I felt so lonesome I most wished I was dead. The stars was shining, and the leaves rustled in the woods ever so mournful; and I heard an owl, away off, who-whooping about somebody that was dead . . . I got so down-hearted and scared, I did wish I had some company.*

In nineteenth-century American literature, authors often use children or childlike characters to portray a reflective view of nationality or social responsibility. In *Twain, Alcott, and the Birth of the Adolescent Reform Novel*, which studies adolescent characters in the context of Civil War social tensions, Roberta S. Tritte proposes that “By portraying the child’s subjection to parental authority, writers [including Mark Twain] gave meaning to the opposing ideals of political consent, agency, and autonomy” (454). Like Tritte, critic Michael J. Kiskis trains his attention on Twain’s representations of children. For Kiskis, many critics have misread Twain and his motives, especially in analyzing *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Kiskis sees Twain’s alleged “rage against oppression in *Huck*” to be “too facile and simplistic” a critical position, because it ascribes to Twain “an unreasonable and unrealistic capacity for tolerance” (*The Mark Twain Annual* 65). Instead, Kiskis suggests, “Racial awareness was not the muse for Clemens’ quest for justice. Racial justice was not Clemens’ primary topic. It was part of his broader concern with the world his children would inherit. Family was Samuel Clemens’ most profound interest. His mature investigations of the human potential for social justice (or injustice) grow from that seed [and his writings explore] what it means to be humane and compassionate, [and what it means to come from] close-knit or shattered home relationships” (67-68).

As Twain changed careers from journalist to author, he transformed himself. He became a parent, and being a father caused his writing and focus to change. He began in earnest to examine the needs of children, their future, and their roles in the nation’s future. Twain’s purposes in *Huck Finn* are multi-faceted and multi-functional, calling complex attention to the socio-economical and patriarchal ruling systems—or

“civilized ways”—of late nineteenth-century American culture. In the narrative, Twain gives voice and humanity to the orphaned Huck and enslaved Jim, both of whom live in the margins of respected society. As D. Leverenz observes, “In nineteenth century American literature, patriarchal power seems to exert its influence over both daughters and sons. In Mark Twain’s *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885), for example, Huck’s tyrannical father is portrayed as a dangerous criminal and violent drunkard who hates and mistreats his son because he proves better than him at learning[.] [Pap Finn] seems to embody patriarchal authority itself. Pap’s rage represents the [senselessness] of an outmoded patriarchal era” (Leverenz 24). The American literary hero has often been depicted as a willful orphan who breaks with his heritage and tries to create a new life by himself, unencumbered by the responsibilities of family life. Through Twain’s portrayal of Huck Finn’s rebellious nature and desire to escape being “civilised” and abused, Twain addresses hypocrisies, prejudices, and injustice so blatant that even children can see them. Novelist Sir Walter Besant described Huck’s “American traits” by observing that “the boy is more ready to question, to doubt, to examine, and to understand. He is far more ready to exercise freedom of thought; far less ready to accept authority” (Besant 659). Through Huck’s abusive and strained relationships with his Pap, Twain juxtaposes Huck’s family troubles and empathy, on the one hand, with Jim’s sorrows and kindness, on the other. Twain illustrates through Huck’s deliberate rebellions and emergent progressiveness that children are molded by the guidance (or lack of guidance) fatherly and authoritative figures provide.

Huck’s insecurities and loneliness are born from Pap’s neglect. In their article, “Fatherless America: Confronting Our Most Urgent Social Problem,” psychologists David Blankenhorn and Ronald Levant observe, “One of the major benefits that fathers can provide to their children by being actively involved is a sense of security (physical and emotional). By being actively involved in a child’s life, a father promotes a trusting relationship. The child does not have to worry about being abandoned” (328). Of the many literary examples of the poor white and the absent father, none is more characteristic than Pap Finn. Pap’s character is clear when he forcibly seizes control of Huck. Pap claims official guardianship in order to command Huck to work and make money for him (1290), and he twice refers to himself not as Huck’s father but as his “boss” (1290-91) before he kidnaps Huck and takes him into a home life that resembles slavery. When exposed to others in society, Huck is pitied and Pap is scrutinized. Through depictions of Huck’s interactions with father

figures, Twain exposes the sometimes ignorant and backward beliefs of southern romanticism that shaped the south of the nineteenth century, and in many ways, continues to haunt its descendants.

Just as a black man like Jim is enslaved to Widow Douglas, so too is Huck is “enslaved” to Pap Finn. Under Pap’s rule, Huck is overpowered and vulnerable. Huck is enslaved to his father by the authority of the law much in the same way that Jim is enslaved to his Mistress. The differences between Huck’s enslavement and Jim’s enslavement are insurmountable in regards to societal acceptance. To an extent, Huck and Jim exist in very different positions within a system of institutionalized race slavery. All the same, Twain resolves these differences by having Huck in a position within that system that is, for all intents and purposes within the novel, very similar to Jim’s position. Huck’s pseudo-enslavement puts him in a position to develop empathy for Jim and serves as a foundation for their relationship. The one difference is that if Huck survives life with Pap he can break his ties. Jim can’t unless the law releases his bonds.

The joint peril of their powerlessness and loneliness pushes these two isolated characters into an unspoken safeguarding agreement. When Jim shows up on Jackson’s Island, Huck is thrilled to have company, and Jim is overjoyed to find Huck alive. Huck will give him protections from a charge of murder, and Huck’s whiteness can be used to help him escape. Each needs the other regardless of their deprived and vulnerable positions. That Huck’s mind has been influenced by abuse and hypocrisy, and that Jim’s world is steeped in ignorance, makes it almost impossible for either one to comprehend freedom. Jim’s concept of freedom is based on tangible things and being reunited with his family. Huck’s understanding of freedom involves escaping rules and pain. But together, Huck and Jim enjoy a temporary freedom, a brief time of peace.

Early in the narrative, Huck tells how the community at large assumed Pap to be a dead corpse found floating in the river. He says of Pap, “Well, about this time he was found in the river drowned [. . .] They judged it was him anyway; said this drowned man was just his size, and was ragged, and had uncommon long hair—which was like Pap” (1284). Huck tells of this drowned man (assumed to be his father) with no apparent sadness or pity. While he does seem anxious, he does not appear to care that his estranged father may have died a gruesome death. Later, when Huck describes his domineering father (whom he had believed dead and now realizes to be alive), he says, “There warn’t no color in [my father’s] face,” and then goes on to specify that “[his skin] was white; not like another man’s white, but a white to make a body sick, a white to make a body’s

flesh crawl—a tree-toad white, a fish-belly white” (1288). Pap lingers on the verge of death with his drinking and dubious lifestyle. During one of his alcohol-induced deliriums, Pap moans: “the dead [. . .] they’re coming after me; but I won’t go” and Huck says, “He chased me round and round [. . .] with a clasp knife, calling me the Angel of Death and saying he would kill me” (1294). Pap’s lack of consistency as a present or absent father mirrors the liminality of his near-death existence. This constant bewilderment and psychotic abuse deepens Huck’s anxiety and trepidation over Pap’s return.

When the novel begins, the Widow has just adopted Huck. Previously he has lived life on his own, since his father was an alcoholic and not able to care for him. Hardly a life of white privilege, Huck’s experience was one of “old rags and [. . .] sugar-hogshead” but also “free and satisfied” (1278). Even after Huck becomes more used to so-called “civilized” life, he still likes to “slide out and sleep in the woods, sometimes” (1278). The first chapters are filled with several examples of how the Widow and Miss Watson try to acculturate Huck. For example, they teach him to be on time for meals, to stop smoking, and to behave correctly. Included in the “sivilizing” process are central Christian notions such as heaven and hell. Huck also learns to wear shoes (1278-83). In Twain’s description of this process, it becomes evident that Huck meets a completely new culture. His attitudes and ways of thinking—learned from his father—differ severely from those of the “sivilized.” Blankenhorn and Levant note in their study of fatherless children that “Children need a moral compass to guide them when they face difficult moral choices. Fathers, like mothers, help children to develop a sense of right and wrong that serves as a foundation for establishing moral character” (328). The Widow attempts to educate Huck about the difference between right and wrong, but the boy’s previous freedoms, granted by Pap’s drunken disregard, cause Huck to rebel against “sivilized” ways. In addition, Huck observes the hypocrisies of the Widow’s world, and he wants no part in it. As Huck struggles for freedom from oppressive ‘sivilization’ on the one hand, and Pap’s abuse on the other, he seeks guidance through fatherly relationships that help him find his own identity, belief system, and moral codes.

When Pap breaks into the Widow Douglas’s house to see his son, he pokes fun at Huck’s new life. He taunts, “Aint you a sweet-scented dandy though? A bed; and bed-clothes [. . .] and your own father got to sleep with the hogs” (1289). Earlier, when Tom lets his Gang know that Pap is alive, he tells them, “Yes, he’s got a father [. . .] He used to lay with

the hogs in the tanyard” (1282). Pap even jokes about his association with hogs during his short sobriety. He offers a handshake to the Judge and his family and says, “There’s a hand that was the hand of a hog; but it ain’t so no more” (1290). In his essay “You Can’t Go Home Again,” Kenneth Lynn argues that Twain associates Pap with swine in order to portray a “self-pitying identification” and to underscore troubled blood relations after Huck slaughters a pig in his “symbolic suicide” (400). Huck has inherited Pap’s self-pity and abhorrence for the frills of “civilization.” The difference with Huck is that he wants something better.

Initially, Huck thinks his Pap’s way of living is the ideal freedom from the Widow Douglas. Lynn also points out that Huck thinks he has been set free when his Pap takes him back to the cabin, but he soon discovers otherwise. He realizes he is now “a captive audience for his Pap’s tirades about ‘free niggers’; and that for all the delights of shoelessness and pipesmoking, he has in fact exchanged the discomforts and restrictions of respectability for a disreputable prison” (399). After Pap’s beatings and neglect, Huck longs for true freedom. After Huck has had enough and Pap has threatened to kill him in his drunken stupor, Huck devises a plan to escape. He stages his own murder, and frames Pap in the process (1297). Huck has escaped the Widow’s restrictions and rules and Pap’s abuse and rants, but he carries basic characteristics, moral codes, and teachings from both of them.

A new relationship begins as Huck and Jim set off up the Mississippi River in their “found” canoe. Huck says, “Jim, this is nice,” and “I wouldn’t want to be nowhere else but here. Pass me along another hunk of fish and some hot cornbread” (1307). In the next paragraph, Jim is allowed to voice his opinion. Huck does not interject or correct Jim’s reprimand. “Well, you wouldn’t a ben here, ’f it hadn’t a ben for Jim. You’d a ben down dah in de woods widout any dinner, en gittin’ mos’ drowneded, too, dat you would, honey” (1307). In a father-like way, Jim lets Huck know he is responsible for this moment of happiness that Huck is experiencing. He reminds Huck how dismal his predicament would be without his help. Thus, through the lens of a child and paternal surrogate, Twain establishes a movement toward equality and kinship.

As Huck and Jim journey further down the river, they become a twosome, often referred to in the first-person plural “we” by Huck. The developing bond between them means that they are now a team, a pair. Their relationship is becoming more like a father and son. A relationship of guidance and protection has developed. After this change their outlook and vision has become one viewpoint. This is evident when

Huck and Jim return to shore and Huck says, “We all got home safe” (1308). Huck indicates he was concerned for Jim’s safety as well as his own. He adds that they “hadn’t no accidents, and didn’t see nobody” (1308). Huck and Jim are working together with one another’s interests involved. Their perspectives have changed in accord to each other’s needs. Not having any accidents is Huck’s own standard for safety, but not seeing anybody, and not being seen in turn, is Jim’s standard. Jim’s principle dread, at this point, is being seen by others who would force him back to slavery, with no hope of reuniting with his family. In addition, when Huck declares, “We all got home safe,” he acknowledges the duality of their predicament. As a pair, if either one is in danger, both of them are.

Nonetheless, the teachings and moral codes that Huck has retained from his father and other authoritative figures in white society keep him in continuous battle with his sense of morals. When Jim reveals to Huck that being so “close to freedom” made him feel “trembly and feverish,” Huck’s conscience starts making him question his actions. He says to himself, “I begun to get through my head that *he* was most free—Who was to blame for it? Why *me*” (1338). Huck turns back to thinking of Jim and himself as two separate people with two separate responsibilities and situations. As Huck beats himself up over Miss Watson being good to him and “learn[ing] him the book,” he descends to a low point when he thinks, “I got to feeling so mean an so miserable I most wished I was dead” (1338). Huck has reverted to the depressing and self-pitying ways of his father. As Huck gets up the nerve to take the canoe and reveal Jim’s whereabouts, he hears Jim proclaiming, “Pooty soon I’ll be a-shout’n for joy, en I’ll say, it’s all on accounts o’Huck; I’s a free man [. . .] Huck; you’s de bes’ fren’ Jim’s ever had [. . .] de only fren’ ole Jim’s got now” (1339). Jim’s words are heartfelt but also manipulating. He can see Huck struggling with the dilemma in his mind. Huck’s silences the night before, as Jim was rejoicing, were evidence enough of Huck’s change of heart in the matter of helping Jim escape. Jim continues his talk of praises for “Ole Huck” as Huck comes upon a “skiff with two men in it.” He convinces them his family is on the raft sick with small pox. The men left without investigating (1341). Huck lies to protect Jim. He decides that doing “right ain’t always the thing to do,” and when he and Jim came back on the raft (Jim was hiding under it), Jim said, “I, speck it save ole Jim—ole Jim ain gwyne forgit you for dat, honey” (1341).

Jim and Huck are a team again, their bond repaired. But their care-free days come to an abrupt stop when they meet up with the Duke

and the King. Huck says, “It didn’t take me long to make up my mind that these liars warn’t no kings nor dukes [. . .] but low-down humbugs and frauds” (1361). Huck decides to go along with their lies and not expose them to Jim. Huck reasons, “If I never learnt nothing else out of Pap, I learnt that the best way to get along with his kind of people is to let them have their own way” (1362). Even though Huck has a closer relationship with Jim than he ever did with Pap, he decides to deceive Jim once again. Huck is trying to protect Jim because he does not think Jim will understand going along with such foolery and dishonesty. Huck sees Jim as naturally good: he sees Jim as opposite of Pap Finn’s immoral and sinful nature. After running scams with the Duke and King for a while, Huck decides to steal away with Jim and the raft. But the plan backfires, and the Duke and King sell Jim to Phelps farm (1413, 1417). Huck is so upset that he prays to “Quit being the kind of boy I was, and be better,” and he admits, “I was trying to make my mouth say I would do the right thing . . . but deep down, I knowed it was a lie . . . You can’t pray a lie—I found that out” (1415). Huck’s search heavenward for a father proves short-lived. He realizes that he needs to live by his own convictions and intuitions.

At this point, writes a letter to Miss Watson in an attempt to set things right. After finishing, he says, “I felt good and all washed and clean of sin [. . .] I knowed I could pray now,” believing he has come close “to being lost and going to hell” (1415). Yet as Huck tries to “harden” himself against Jim, he finds, “I couldn’t seem to strike up no places to harden [. . .] but only the other kind” (1415). Huck is reminded once again of Jim’s goodness as he remembers their adventure down the river. He remembers Jim’s good deeds, kind words, and often fatherly support. Huck tears up the letter and says, “All right, then, I’ll go to hell” (1415). His mind is made up once and for all. He will help Jim, no matter the cost. Ultimately, Huck accepts the fatherly love and affection of Jim and transforms into a young man. He comes to realize that the “sivilized” ways are not for him.

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# “Tell Nobody but God”: Troubled Fatherhood in *The Color Purple*

by Marshall Nolan

*Don't let them run over you, Nettie say. You got to fight. You got to let them know you have the upper hand. They got it, I say. But she keep on, you got to fight. You got to fight. But I don't know how to fight. All I know how to do is stay alive.*

In 1964, citing growing concerns over continuing economic hardships experienced by African Americans, President Lyndon B. Johnson commissioned Daniel Patrick Moynihan to construct a sociological report on the black populace. The report aimed to explain why the African American population was experiencing more adverse living conditions. “The Moynihan Report,” also known as “The Negro Family: The Case for National Action” begins with an excerpt from President Johnson’s State of the Union Address in March of 1965. President Johnson gives a brief history lesson citing how the United States of America began with “nine assembled colonies first joined together to demand freedom from arbitrary power.” He then follows this statement by detailing how events such as the Civil War solidified the Union forever, but not without bloodshed and pain. Following Johnson’s description of the brief violent history of America, the report reads: “The United States is approaching a new crisis in race relations” (Moynihan 1). The “new crisis” to which Moynihan alludes is a growing lack of male leadership in the household. Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple* (1982) is a novel where the traditional male-centered household is juxtaposed with a matriarchal family structure. Walker uses the novel to highlight the effects of patriarchal oppression and violence against women, and ultimately suggests that some families are more suited to be led by the mother and not the father. I will draw attention to the depictions of several men throughout the novel, specifically the protagonist’s father and husband in order to highlight Walker’s opposition to the ideological family presented in Moynihan’s report, as well as her descriptions of fatherhood and the results of inadequate fathering on children.

After its opening movement, the Moynihan Report goes on to describe how no matter how vehemently some may protest, integration is going to happen. With the new opportunities that integration presents to African Americans, the report relates that there will be new responsibilities that they will undertake. However, Moynihan says that African Americans will not yield equal results from these opportunities for generations “unless a new and special effort is made” (1). Moynihan concludes in his report that the plight of African American society arises from the failings in the structure of the family—pathologically passed from generation to generation since slavery. A proper family, according to Moynihan, includes children who are being raised by their biological mother and father within the same household. He states that the father has been alienated from the black family, and as a result, African American society has suffered as a whole because of the lack of masculine leadership within the home.

The problem Moynihan is citing for the “special effort” that needs to be made is the result of mistreatment for centuries at the hands of an oppressive patriarchal systematic racism (5). This mistreatment according to Moynihan has led to the breakdown of the black family. Moynihan then goes on to state the thesis of his report, which is to urge those in power to help alleviate what has built up over generations, putting African Americans from poor urban environments at an unimaginable disadvantage. Moynihan reasons that unless strides are made to help these individuals, it can damage not only race relations in America, but perception of the nation abroad.

*The Color Purple* is set in rural Georgia, where its author spent her childhood. Taking place just one generation after emancipation, the novel presents southerners, especially African Americans, attempting to forge new identities while confronting the horrors that were once considered the norm for a society based in the depravity of slavery. The South’s dependency on slavery and the land worked by slaves led to a severe lack of industrial development which led to extreme poverty especially in rural areas, and by extension, the former slaves were especially victimized economically and the overall economic unrest led to increased bitterness and racism towards African Americans (Dunaway). With this lack of development there remains an idea that the only way to assure any gratification is in the ownership of another human being in order to relieve oneself of hardship, or to at least have someone to take out the frustration upon. In the reconstructionist south, humiliation and fear tactics against African Americans were prevalent, and as critic

W. Fitzhugh Brundage notes, “Even in a region notorious for chronic violence, the fury of southern lynch mobs was shocking” (28).

The victims of abuse tend to have difficulty adapting to socially acceptable behavior and will use those same tactics in order to control and oppress those around them to achieve desired results, especially in regards to sexual interaction. In certain instances, however, the anger and bitterness experienced by those who were victimized during this time leads them to seek others to inflict similar damage upon, and in order to accomplish this, these individuals abuse their role as protector and provider. This often leaves women feeling ostracized, vulnerable and even more oppressed than the men they depend on as partners and protectors. The humiliation suffered by the men in reconstructionist Georgia led them to use these same tactics in their interaction with women, and causes a phenomenon where the women bear the brunt of the helplessness the men feel in a society that still views them as sub-human. Kimberle Crenshaw argues that this phenomenon is being expressed in Walker’s novel, where a disenfranchised oppressed group projects negative attitudes and abuse within, specifically to the women, in an attempt to cope with the domination endured from those who oppress them. Crenshaw pays specific attention to how violence and humiliation is used towards African American women and is kept secret much in the same ways that brutality during slavery was covered under veils of secrecy. “Acts of violence, specifically battery and rape, which were once seen as private family matters or aberrational acts, are now largely recognized as part of a broad scale system of domination that affects women as a class” (Crenshaw 1241). Applying Crenshaw’s theory leads to the conclusion that those within the novel who are victims are brutally abused mentally and physically by people who at one point suffered themselves.

In chapter 2 of his report, Moynihan begins with the following statement: “At the heart of the deterioration of the fabric of Negro society is the deterioration of the Negro family” (8). Moynihan cites this as “the fundamental source of the weakness of the Negro community at the present time” and that “There is probably no single fact of Negro American life so little understood by whites” (8). He goes on to state how an unstable family life, which occurs more often than not in poor urban environments, is extremely detrimental to a child. In the following chapters, Moynihan then states how a quarter of black marriages are dissolved, a forth of births are illegitimate, and because of these factors a forth of black families are headed by females and there is an increase in

welfare dependency by these families. The opening of the novel immediately establishes the conditions in which Celie, the protagonist, must endure at the age of 14. She addresses a letter to God explaining that after her little brother was born, she notices her father pulling on the arm of her mother, and her mother resisting. Celie tells God that this man “never had a kine word to say,” that that he makes her “do what her mammy wouldn’t” (7). The brutality of this incestuous moment, as well as the father’s instructions that she “better get used to it” and “better tell no one but God” illustrates an immediate establishment in the abuse of power this man holds as a father. Eric Miller cites how a “father wound” is left and does more to damage a child than any other factors leading into adulthood (Miller 194). Walker uses this extremely damaging moment to add a layer to the intersectional abuse of Celie—not only is she a black woman in the south; she is now the victim of sexual abuse who is pregnant with her father’s child. The wounds deepen as not only does he force himself upon Celie, but now is projecting his own character flaws upon her by always referring to her as “evil and always up to no good” (Walker 12). The passage also details how Celie “sees him looking at (her) little sister” and “hoping he find somebody to marry” in a wish to protect herself from her father by desiring someone else to endure him. What is absent in that moment is the hope of being able to leave the household where these atrocities are occurring. This establishes that the goal of oppression has firmly been placed upon Celie, where she doesn’t even desire to escape, just that it happens to someone else. The “father wound” left in Celie will come to manifest itself in her marriage to Albert, a man she only refers to as “Mister.”

Chapter 3 of “The Moynihan Report” details how the effects of slavery have taken a toll on the modern black family. The report focuses on the difference between American slavery as opposed to slavery in Brazil, which lasted twenty years longer. Moynihan cites American slavery as being more brutal and detrimental to the family structure. He then follows this section citing reconstruction and Jim Crow have usurped the position of authority for the black man within the family and in society. He then cites how black families who live in urban environments are more often headed by women than those in rural areas. When considering the family structure that Celie is being forced into with her marriage, factors that affect the perception of her new husband and his abilities to lead the household. To examine Albert’s role as a father in the text, his role as a husband to Celie must be deconstructed. Albert’s role as a husband leads directly to his ability as a parent because of his

similarity in the way he dominates his wife and instructs her in how to parent his children from a previous marriage. Joseph Allen Boone states that “the marriage rite in almost all cultures plays a central role in sustaining a structured social order” (Boone 36). Boone is arguing that marriage is the institution that keeps the society together. In the case of Walker’s text, a racist, male-dominated sexist society exists where women are sexual property. So Boone is correct in stating that marriage is the fabric that binds society. However, the men who dominate the society do more to undermine this premise of social cohesiveness within the text by exhibiting destructive behaviors toward not only their wives, but toward their children, who are products of the institution formed between a man and wife. Albert himself is a representation of the impact the overpowering presence of a patriarchy can have upon the family. This is another example of Walker using Albert as a device to undermine the premise of Moynihan and establish the leadership of men of the text as detrimental to the development of those they are in charge of.

The text progresses establishing black men as central points of conflict, especially with regard to their roles as fathers and husbands. According to Richard Wesley in his article “*The Color Purple* Debate: Reading Between the Lines” black men within the film as well as the novel are seen as “fools and brutes” (Wesley 1). Given what is shown by the men in their family life, it is hard to argue with that interpretation. An important aspect of the story the novel tries to establish is an attempted divide between Celie and her sister orchestrated by men. The way in which Celie’s father proceeds over the courting of Celie is an example of not only the disdain he holds for her as his victim, but is Walker layering the transfer of inept leadership from her father to Albert in the guise of the dialogue they share. Albert does not court Celie into married life. She is sold by the father to a man who really desires her sister Nettie as a wife. This short scene is what is supposed to serve as the courtship of Celie into married life, and it is little more than a transaction over used property. Celie is not considered used in regards to being married before, but is used in the fact she has been penetrated by a man, can no longer produce offspring, and therefore not worthy of being a partner in the marriage contract, only a victim of it. When Albert comes to ask for Nettie’s hand in marriage and is refused, the novel places front and center the idea of property and how Walker uses that moment to cement the lack of ability in the father to parent his daughters without his own desires being at the forefront and adding another layer to the

intersectionality the female characters suffer. The father refuses because he desires Nettie sexually, and she still has potential to be his sexual property. However, Celie is offered as a consolation to Albert as a wife. The way in which she is presented to Albert is as being used, stripped of her virtue and therefore less desirable as a wife, but has been “fixed” so he can “do everything just like you want to and she ain’t Gonna make you feed it or clothe it” (Walker 14). Celie’s lack of desirability as a wife makes her more desirable to be used for simply selfish purposes, the way she was used by her father. Without her virtue, she has nothing. Therefore her treatment is not something that a man should be concerned with. She is not deserving of love, or even agency as a person. Celie lacks the individual and personal value that a father is normally supposed to bestow upon a daughter before offering her to another man in the form of marriage. Walker is creating a dynamic in which every situation that men have control over a woman offers chances for abuses to occur.

Examining Albert as the primary figure in a household requires investigation into his own upbringing. While Walker does not give specifics of Albert’s childhood, she introduces his father into the text and his treatment of Albert makes direct connection into the treatment that others experience. His father is shown to always have negative things to say about him as a person, which has a castrating effect on Albert within the text. Celie notices that during his father’s berating of him, Albert is “real sad” and has nothing to say in response to the abusive language, allowing the assumption that this has been an ongoing occurrence (Walker 58). Celie says during Albert’s talk with his father that “This is the closest us ever felt” (59). Celie has grasped a moment where Albert has felt vulnerable and feels a sense of othering derived from the treatment of a parent. This moment offers Celie understanding of the man who oppresses her by glimpsing into his childhood, but the lessons seem to be lost on Albert, who has instead rationalized his mistreatment by his father as a proper practice of child rearing. Albert subsequently passes this oppression on to Celie and his own children. The dominator, the oppressor, the husband and father is shown to create an ongoing cycle that perpetuates hate and squashes potential for growth. The result of oppression in a domestic setting extends towards Albert’s son Harpo, his wife, and his ability to parent effectively. However, in the case of Harpo, there is a break in the continuing cycle that has spawned generations of inept, abusive fathers. Walker shows Harpo to have a sensitivity that is not present in the other men, and she develops this in Harpo’s attempt at learning to be a better husband.

The correlation between being an inept husband and father is displayed in a moment where Celie recounts the advice Albert gives his son Harpo concerning how to establish himself as leader of the household. Harpo gives a detailed account of the dynamic that exists in his relationship with his wife, telling his father she “Never do what I say. Always backtalk” (Walker 40). To which his father asks if he has ever beaten his wife. When Harpo denies that he has ever raised his hands in anger towards his wife, Albert scolds his son: “Well how you spect to make her mind? Wives is like children. You have to let ’em know who got the upper hand. Nothing can do that better than a good sound beating” (40). What Walker displays here is Albert’s tyrannical husbandry has a direct effect on fatherhood. He is instructing his son that the women to whom a man is married is similar in societal stature to his child. Rather than stress the ideals of guidance or protection, he vehemently stresses to his son the need for control and dominance—a practice he has employed over Celie to achieve the desired effect of total submission. Albert considers himself to have ownership of Celie, and is instructing his son that violence is how a man obtains and maintains that control of a woman. Walker then uses this example in contrast to the relationship Celie experiences with another woman. Walker establishes Shug Avery as the person who spiritually awakens Celie to uncover her feelings of self-worth, affection, and who gives guidance to free Celie of the oppression she suffers under the men in her life.

Rose Gladney describes the spiritual transformation where Celie no longer sees God as a father (23-24). The demasculization of God seems to be Celie’s path to freedom and self-actualization and her establishing a feeling of family with another female. Walker also displays this in the letters Celie has discovered from her sister, after they were locked away for years by Albert. Gladney describes Nettie’s words as confirmation for what Celie has gained in her theological conversations with Shug. Nettie states that “God is different to us now, after all these years in Africa. More spirit than ever before, and more internal. Most people think he has to look like something or someone—a roof leaf or Christ—but we don’t. And not being tied to what God looks like frees us.” Walker is describing the freedom from an interpretation of God’s gender, from God’s role as father, in order to establish a spirituality that allows for freedom from the oppressive society they reside in. She cites how society has functioned in a system derived from the perception of a divine right that has bestowed men to dominate women, stating that “Under patriarchy men have feared women’s creative power and have sought

to suppress it. In doing so, they have denied much that is creative in themselves as well. When women have managed to resist patriarchal definitions of themselves, the fruits of their love and support for each other have transformed the lives of both sexes” (24). Thus, breaking free of the constraints of fatherhood, of the definitions that a male centered ideology has placed upon them, the children of society can thrive in a way that is beneficial for all involved. This would include the removal of God as the father, the subsequent removal of definitions of manhood and fatherhood derived from interpretations of religious protocol.

The focus of Moynihan’s report was to highlight a need for the stability and leadership that men in African American households would offer to their families. While Walker does make a compelling argument that a father in the household is not ideal if that individual is not capable of the ethical responsibilities fatherhood requires, she falls short of completely establishing a suitable replacement for the guidance of a father. Perhaps there is no ideal replacement, and the constructs of a family are whatever those individuals decide. What Walker is arguing through her depictions of the various male characters throughout the novel—as well as with her advocacy of lesbian relationships, female-only perspectives of child rearing, and complete lack of positive examples of any male characters in the role of husband or father—is that a sort of utopian society for black women is achieved in the absence of men. What Walker states through her unflattering takes on manhood in the extension of fatherhood is that black women suffer from intersectionality, which is remedied by the removal of men in the role of father and head of the household.

The position of power these men hold as fathers, and therefore leaders and the persons who shape the reality around them, leads to the question as to why they would choose to inflict so much damage on the people who depend on them for protection and guidance. While the impact of “The Moynihan Report” cannot be denied, there is still a condescending tone that prevails throughout the text. The statement of the matriarchal nature of a fourth of black families is solely responsible for the destruction of the black race is a very shortsighted and does not take into account how individual racism and discrimination effects the economic situation facing African Americans. The thesis of a family needing to have males at the forefront in order to be a successful and stable environment does not take into account that the same abuse suffered by these males may be passed from generation to generation, leading to an instability far worse than the father being absent from the home. Alice Walker showcases in *The Color Purple* that males can

be harmful to a stable home environment but it does so in a way that can come off as villainous in its depiction of black males. Walker cites instances where freedom from the father and his oppression is the only way for the individuals they are responsible for to reach their maximum potential, which Moynihan also cites as the primary goal for the inclusion of the father. What both do is establish the need for leadership of a family to maximize its potential individually and for its full participation in society.

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# “If You Really Want To Hear About It”: Questioning Fatherhood in *The Catcher in the Rye*

by Chris Punkosdy

Eight years after J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* first appeared on bookshelves in 1951, the United States, deeply embroiled in the Cold War, prepared for an historic international conference known as the American National Exhibition. A key spokesman of the event, Vice President Richard Nixon claimed that “the fair was representative of the American way of life and called for peaceful competition, spiritual as well as material, between the United States and the Soviet Union” (Salisbury). Occurring in Moscow, the fatherland of the ideological enemy, U.S. officials identified an opportunity to highlight their own country's postwar financial prosperity and brand it as evidence of an acclaimed philosophical supremacy. As Nixon argues, this superiority stems from a capitalist economic regimen—namely, America's official prescription following the extensive consequences of World War II. By showcasing the rewards available to steadfast and patriotic citizens, the event's ultimate goals, then, sought to bolster public approval for the era's defining capitalist principles and solidify the nation's glamorous image. With this intention, builders constructed a furnished, life-size model home designed to represent a typical new American house. While escorting Russia's premier statesman, “Nixon explained that the model house could be built for \$14,000 and that most United States veterans of World War II had bought houses in the bracket of \$10,000 to \$15,000 (Salisbury). For millions of returning veterans who either already were or would soon become fathers ushering in the impending baby boom, the idea of raising a family in the most modern home the world had to offer seemed a safe and comfortable alternative to the savagery experienced abroad. Nixon's statement encapsulates the driving ideology that structured millions of American families throughout the mid-twentieth century, and the message he sought to communicate became clear: riding the economic wave of prosperity brought on by the war's end, veteran fathers could leave the horrors of battle behind and begin anew in

a pristine home. In exchange for their sacrifice, the capitalistic zeitgeist permeating America's postwar cultural consciousness promised fathers a tangible fulfillment of the mythic "American dream." Accordingly, and just as important, adherence to this mindset emphatically confirmed fathers as the breadwinner, theoretically engendering validation and a sense of purpose for their role within the familial unit, undoubtedly lucrative recompenses for war-ravaged veterans. However, the rhetoric utilized by Nixon in what is now nicknamed "The Kitchen Debate" suggests not only that fathers could provide, but also that they could provide the very best and latest luxuries available, achieving affluence by simply becoming a player in America's thriving consumer economy.

Experiencing what history describes as some of the most brutal aspects of the war, as well as fathering two children (his daughter Margaret four years after the release of *Catcher* and son Matthew less than a year after the televised "Kitchen Debate"), J.D. Salinger represents the quintessential veteran that America's leading postwar ideology pledges to benefit most. Nevertheless, Salinger's life off the battlefield marks a continuation of the literary endeavor he worked on throughout the war—work ultimately manifesting in the form of *The Catcher in the Rye*. Through the voice of Holden Caulfield, the novel questions the validity of capitalist doctrines and their hold on life in mid-twentieth century America. Although Holden's own father never formally appears, remaining a curiously aloof and absent figure throughout, his marginalization ironically intensifies his significance. Rather than depicting him as an involved father, Salinger substitutes Mr. Caulfield's money as an ultimately inadequate stand-in. For Holden, his father's "dough" serves as the hinge that facilitates escape from Pencey Prep and his ensuing quest around New York City; in other words, it merely provides Holden with the resources necessary to undergo the "madman stuff" that is Salinger's war-inspired literary response to what he famously dubs "phony."

In my reading of *Catcher*, Salinger suggests that in reducing the manifold concept of fatherhood to the role of breadwinner, capitalism ironically bankrupts the validity of fathers, forcing children like Holden into a state of orphanhood. More specifically, while *Catcher* foregrounds the point of view and narrative voice of Holden, the plot structure revolves around the notion that he must avoid returning home. While describing a picturesque postwar family, historian Robert Griswold refers to popularized opinions of the 1950s: "A fine home signified not only the personal success of the provider but also [...] A prosperous family meant the father had done his part in promoting good personality formation [...] while

simultaneously warding off juvenile delinquency” and “authoritarian intolerance, [...] The private home, and fatherhood with it, would help to contain the anxieties of the age” (8). However, by presenting father figures that unreservedly conform to the structure offered by capitalist ideology, Salinger effectively undercuts their authority. On the contrary, in creating a character highly critical of the “phony” fathers he encounters, he suggests that capitalist ideals ironically threaten to jeopardize America’s cultural patrimony. The only children this system fathers are those unprepared for the future, subject to a “catch,” a hidden problem or disadvantage in an apparently ideal situation. With this consideration, Salinger renders fatherhood an ineffectual, unprofitable enterprise, proposing that fathers who uphold the status quo, and by extension Nixon’s ideological prescription of materialism, metaphorically castrate themselves. Holden’s would-be fathers are utterly unable to offer significant solutions or present examples of genuineness to follow, the opposite of what is “phony.” Existing in a liminal space between innocence and experience and allegorically “standing on the edge of some crazy cliff,” Holden seeks an alternative to the fixed “model” of fatherhood offered to him, echoing Salinger’s private life and his refusal to pursue the “model home” attitude championed by Nixon (Salinger 224, Salisbury).

Given his eventual impeachment for fraud following the revelations of the Watergate scandal, the credibility of Nixon’s defense of capitalism during the “Kitchen Debate” becomes infused with irony. Interestingly, as a successful graduate of the Duke University School of Law, Nixon represents a group of people Holden deems “Ivy League bastards;” in fact, he admits, “My father wants me to go to Yale, or maybe Princeton, but I swear, I wouldn’t go to one of those Ivy League colleges, if I was dying, for God’s sake” (112). An academic framework designed to accelerate individuals into lucrative careers “holds” no authentic future, reflected by his displayed lack of interest and disassociation in scholastic settings. Herein lies one of the novel’s central concerns: the discrepancy between what Mr. Caulfield expects from his son and Holden’s own wishes. For example, because the latter understands that “money [...] always ends up making you blue as hell,” the affluent wealth that defines his father represents a bland and insufficient replacement for the benefits of close personal relationships (147). Of course, Holden’s difficulty in relating to a culture with views so different from his own marks him as an eccentric, fated to wander around feeling “so lonesome and depressed” despite living in densely populated New York City as part of the upper class (106). Reflected by the significant depictions of

falling and cliff imagery, Holden's "catch" stems from a fear of failing to nurture close personal relationships and ultimately perpetuating the legacy of his father. After being told to "name something [he'd] like to be [...] a lawyer—like Daddy," Holden solidifies the ideological gap separating the two by stressing his distaste for such an occupation (223). Becoming a lawyer would threaten to undercut the novel's rhetorical strategy of complicating the advice offered by father figures.

Furthermore, the occupation simply "doesn't appeal" to Holden: "I mean they're all right if they go around saving innocent guys' lives all the time [...] but you don't *do* that kind of stuff," you just "make a lot of dough [...] Even if you *did* [...] how would you know if you did it because you really *wanted* to [...] How would you know you weren't being a phony? The trouble is, you *wouldn't*" (223-224). Realizing that lawyers don't necessarily argue for the side of the innocent and are often paid to defend corruption, Holden hesitates to carry on the mantle of his father, his famed *modus operandi* of anti-phoniness prohibiting a future subject to the corruption brought on by breadwinning and materialism. In fact, his ideal occupation and the namesake of the novel confirm this central patrilineal tension: "You know what I'd like to be? I mean if I had by goddam choice? [...] I keep picturing [...] kids playing some game in this big field of rye [...] I'm standing on the edge of some crazy cliff. [...] if they start to go over [...] I have to come out from somewhere and *catch* them. That's all I'd do [...] just be the catcher in the rye [...] I know it's crazy (224-225). By juxtaposing the depictions of Mr. Caulfield's career with Holden's visionary image, Salinger establishes a dialogue between two opposing forces. To this end, he inserts Holden within a pastoral setting functioning as an ultimate father figure able to guard children from impending adulthood while they participate in the "game" of life. Far from the apathetic and rebellious teenager most adults in the novel label him as, Holden simply seeks to avoid the system of capitalism structuring his father's life, evidenced by the latter's failure to provide even the most basic need for human connection. Unfortunately for Holden, his benevolent role can exist only in the imagination. He can no more become the savior of childhood than halt the inevitability of the aging process, and his reluctance to accept these facts further perpetuate his anxiety. The only hint of a resolution arrives at the end of the novel when Holden finally suggests that growing up does not automatically condemn people to phoniness.

Though the distinction between fact and fiction in literature is often difficult to tease out, the parallels between Salinger and Holden are

numerous. This overlap becomes central in understanding the author’s approach to writing, and consequently, his relationship to *Catcher* and its protagonist. Born to a wealthy family in New York City shortly before the onset of the “Roaring Twenties,” Salinger became exposed to widespread opulence firsthand at an early age. As a response to the bleakness of the First World War, the cultural climate during the 1920s foreshadows a strikingly similar response some twenty years later, setting up an interesting dialectic when examining Salinger’s history and novel: the clash between a generation of fatherhood hostile to successors that replace the pursuit of modish lifestyles with youthful literary aspirations. For example, “Holden’s admiration for *The Great Gatsby*” exemplifies Salinger’s reverence for F. Scott Fitzgerald and their shared “concern with the destructive impact of the American Dream” (Graham 29). While the realization of a national ideal promising comfort and stability remains ever elusive, Salinger’s own breadwinning father, Sol, provided the family with continued financial prosperity even during the turmoil of the 1930s, (a decade plagued by an economic downturn that America would not fully recover from until after WWII). In fact, after the Great Depression, “In 1932 [...] Sol moved his family into a plush apartment in the Carnegie Hill district [...] In a city of contrasting neighborhoods, where location was a defining factor of self-worth, the Salingers’ new home was the epitome of success” (Slawenski 11). Reaching far beyond the middle-class, the Salinger household precedes and eclipses the standard of living embodied by the touchstone home featured at the American National Exhibition years later. For example, even before moving to prestigious Park Avenue, the family enjoyed a home “complete with servants’ quarters, and Sol [...] quickly hired a live-in maid” (9).

However, despite his lavish upbringing, Salinger’s relationship with his father represents a clear source of tension. Compared to the latter’s diligence in the business world and the social status it afforded, his son’s poor academic performance and seemingly futile intention of becoming a writer presented aberrations that needed to be subdued. The divide between obstinate father figures defined by commercialism and their offspring’s ensuing spiritual collapse points to a fundamental, overarching principle of Salinger’s life: his eventual dive into asceticism and fierce commitment to living humbly. While Sol remained skeptical of his son’s goals, Salinger eventually found a fitting literary mentor in the form of Whit Burnett, an unconventional instructor of short stories. As Salinger admits, his enrollment in the course produced an “instructive and profitable year [...] on all counts [...] Mr. Burnett [...] plainly

had no intentions of using fiction, short or long, as a leg up for himself in the academic or quarterly-magazine hierarchies [...] By and large, he left you on your own to know how the characters were saying what they were saying" ("A Salute to Whit Burnett"). After being reluctantly drawn into the spotlight due to the unexpected and rapid success of *Catcher*, Salinger mysteriously began to retreat from public view, publishing less and less before finally withdrawing from the printing world altogether in 1965. While once representing a pure form of expression, the media attention he began to receive threatened to compromise and permanently alter his intimate relationship with writing. However, he continued to write despite this inward retreat, and "Although [he] was no longer publishing, his life continued to be driven by an unchanging routine. He awoke early and, after meditation and a light breakfast, retreated to his study to write" (Slawenski 379).

Dovetailed with an intense desire to protect his personal information, Salinger's distinguishing persona as a literary recluse reflects the intense connection and sense of ownership he feels for Holden. For example, following its release, Salinger continually received offers to further monetize his novel, but rejecting every approach to further brand the book, especially those seeking the legal rights to a film adaptation. As a writer disinterested in further exposing his work to the public, he signals the pivotal role spirituality began serving in his life. In this view, the written work functions as a sacrament that facilitates a therapeutic, restorative process for the author. Independent of formalities and public dissemination, Salinger began to write simply for the purpose of writing. His disenchantment with the rewards of money and fame demonstrate a humbleness further solidified by his Cornish, New Hampshire home. Far from the grandiosity and affluence of the Upper East Side, it represents the antithesis of the elite high-rises that characterize his childhood. Concealed within a remote area of wooded hills, this modest home granted Salinger the solitude he sought to cultivate his writing, incorporating it into a larger, specifically more ethereal process.

The necessity to seek out alternative ways of thinking, including the desire to authentically represent perspectives regardless of how they differ from conventional attitudes, marks an important phenomenon that characterizes not only *Catcher*, but also Salinger's personal life. Interestingly, in the October 1945 issue of *Esquire* magazine, Salinger declares, "So far the novels of this war have had too much of the strength, maturity and craftsmanship critics are looking for, and too little of the glorious imperfections which teeter and fall off the best minds. The men who have

been in this war deserve some sort of trembling melody rendered without embarrassment or regret. I’ll watch for that book” (*Esquire*). Whether or not he ever found such a book remains unclear; however, six years after admitting, “it is probable that I will never write a novel,” he does just that, finalizing his war-inspired prose that certainly channels a unique perspective through Holden (*Esquire*). In fact, the concern over the relationship between the written work and the attitude of the author serves a significant role in the lives of all the Caulfield children, especially in terms of how it informs the novel’s reading of fatherhood. In the wake of an absent, ineffective father, the siblings must look to the lessons inscribed within the pages of literature as potential sources of knowledge, as well as communicate their own insights through writing. Echoing Salinger’s sentiments, Holden introduces this predicament early in the novel, conceding, “I read a lot of war books [...] but they don’t knock me out too much. What really knocks me out is a book that, when you’re all done reading it, you wish the author that wrote it was a terrific friend of yours and you could call him up on the phone whenever you felt like it” (25).

Holden describes his ideal author as a (male) consultant easily reachable, only a phone call away. Interestingly, Salinger utilizes phones as a sign throughout the novel that point to the dominant theme concerning Holden’s difficulty in relating to many of those around him. He repeatedly considers calling various people; yet due to his own actions or outside forces (the novel constantly details whether or not characters are listening and suggests that “People never give your message to anybody”) seemingly simple acts of communication can prove difficult for Holden. His “favorite author is [his] brother D.B.,” who “wrote this terrific book of short stories” before moving to “Hollywood” to produce screenplays, or as Holden describes, “being a prostitute” (3). In contrast to his portrayal of D.B. trading principles for profit, he speaks of his deceased, saintly brother Allie writing with much more innocent motives: “He had this [...] fielder’s mitt” with “poems written all over the fingers and the pocket and everywhere [...] He wrote them on it so that he’d have something to read when he was in the field and nobody was up at bat” (49). Salinger’s diction here aptly utilizes allegorical imagery to depict Allie’s response to curiously absentee hitters in a baseball game, mirroring the Caulfield siblings’ interactions with literature in their father’s absence. Furthermore, the image of standing in a field in the role of a catcher calls to mind the novel’s namesake, and by extension, Holden’s goal of becoming the ultimate “catcher” or protector of innocence, something his own father is incapable of doing. While in

one moment Holden paradoxically says, "I'm quite illiterate, but I read a lot," in another he writes a note to his history teacher Mr. Spencer (who repeatedly calls Holden "boy" and asserts, "Life *is* a game that one plays according to the rules") offering him the chance to feel guiltless for failing Holden: "It is all right with me if you flunk me though as I am flunking everything else except English anyway. Respectfully yours, Holden Caulfield" (24, 17, 12). Despite a history of poor academic performance and his impending expulsion from Pencey Prep, Holden is importuned (Ch.4 - 5) to complete the homework of his literary foil and materialistic roommate Stradlater, and acknowledges the irony of the situation: "I'm the one that's flunking out of the goddam place, and you're asking me to write you a goddam composition" (37).

Given Stradlater's intriguing directions for Holden to write about "Anything descriptive. A room. Or a house. Or something [he] once lived in or something - *you* know," Salinger frames a profound historical connection that critiques Nixon-esque applications of domestic imagery and simultaneously nods to his contextual stratagem of portraying Holden as an orphaned figure in search of a new home. Furthermore, due to his inability to "think of a room or a house or anything to describe the way Stradlater said he had to have," and the fact that he's "not too crazy about describing rooms and houses anyway," Holden underscores his implicit homelessness and ensuing alienation (49). In place of Stradlater's prescribed narrative, he writes a description of Allie's baseball mitt. As a result, Holden's composition signals a paradigm shift away from the accumulation of material goods bought with the dividends of capitalism's breadwinning fathers for the childlike innocence embodied in Allie's exaltation. To complete the Caulfield ensemble, Salinger presents the words inscribed in the notebook of ten-year-old Phoebe. For example, upon reading "Phoebe Weatherfield Caulfield," Holden informs the reader; "Her middle name is Josephine, for God's sake, not Weatherfield. She doesn't like it though. Every time I see her she's got a new middle name for herself" (208). As the primary method of identification, names not only heavily influence selfhood, but by their very form, essentially prescribe labels onto people. Phoebe's delicately complex, yet revealing habit of re-naming herself, signals discontentment and a desire to transmute a component of her identity she inherited at birth. Furthermore, considering her father's namelessness, and that her middle-name corresponds with the male version, Joseph, Salinger inserts the only potential clue to decipher a more specific title for the Caulfield patriarch. In addition to scribbling new names within her notebook,

she also “writes books all the time [...] all about some kid named Hazel Weatherfield [...] a girl detective. She’s supposed to be an orphan, but her old man keeps showing up” (89). Opposed to Mr. Caulfield who will “fly to California” and miss his daughter’s school play, Phoebe constructs a series of narratives in which the father appears so often that he represents no mystery for her detective alter-ego to solve. In fact, she makes his presence abundant and pervasive to the point that it refuses to let Hazel become orphaned, what “she’s supposed to be.”

For Salinger, fatherhood presented a questionable source of authority, certainly when entangled with American ideals of breadwinning. After experiencing the rise of two intense periods of widespread consumerism following both world wars, he opted to relinquish his own familial ties to wealth, culminating his denouncement of a spiritually corrupt society in his only published novel, *The Catcher in The Rye*. Salinger’s gift and the quality of Holden’s voice stems from the ability to encapsulate the cyclical interplay of economic prosperity and hardships. The author intimately understood both ends of the material and emotional spectrum: moving from a lavish childhood, to a war-exposed youth, to his final withdrawal back into domestic life, only reinvented and rewritten to live as “unphony” as possible.

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# Neglect, Hatred, Abuse: Damaging Paternity in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

by Hannah Ross

*Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay  
To mould me man? Did I solicit thee  
From darkness to promote me?*

—*Paradise Lost*

Fatherhood in the early 1800s was meant to be a time when a man teaches, protects and guides his children into adulthood. To be a father was an honor, and with this came many rewarding experiences. According to John Tosh, “playfulness was never more than one facet of fatherhood. Authority, guidance and discipline continued to be viewed as central to the father’s role” (89). With a father’s role, a man is able to rule his home with more influence, while also retaining that key factor of masculinity. Men “without children suffered a loss of masculine status, and this taint is perceptible in the public reaction to prominent men in this condition” (80). When a man was unable to conceive a child, there was a social perception that it made him less of a man. If a man of middle-class status or higher did not become a father, it basically illustrated to his society that his name and business would not continue, for “[c]hildless businessmen were known to falter in their ambitions later in life, from a growing sense that their present power and reputation meant little without someone to hand them down to” (80). Without an heir, a businessman would be unable to keep his company within his family legacy, and thus, it would mean the end of an era for his family.

Since having children was deemed so important by early nineteenth-century society, men became more involved in the home, especially in regards to rearing the children. Mainly they focused on education, and “[t]raditionally children were subject to their father because he provided for them, and because they had not yet attained the age of reason” (89). Once the child had reached that “age of reason” the father would allow his child, if a son, to attend school. This is largely an important part of life for the father because here he allows his child whom he instructed and

provided for to be taught by another individual, most likely away from the home. Tosh elaborates further on the new position of fatherhood:

In the minds of [. . .] children, though, the father's role as provider was symbolized less by his unseen labours than by his newly enhanced role as giver of gifts. Among the aristocracy and gentry, fatherhood was traditionally associated with largesse; expensive treats, foreign excursions and the settling of son's debts all bore witness to the sovereignty and benevolence of the paterfamilias (82).

Outside of the realm of education and provider, children viewed their father as the gift giver. He was the one that brought home new treats and toys, or would take the family on vacations to other countries. Part of this can be seen as the father doting upon his children, other times it became his way of teaching his children about the world. Since it is the father's duty to teach, protect and provide for his children, his actions of remaining the dominant figure in their life gives the child a sense of security. They know who they can turn to if they need help, or if they simply want to play. A figure that represents a contradiction to the nineteenth-century view of fatherhood is that of the anti-father.

In Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Victor becomes the anti-father, the complete opposite of the ideal for fatherhood. Victor Frankenstein views his creation, or child, as inhuman and therefore begins to treat the monster as an abomination. In doing so he instills a fear within the monster that ultimately causes him to lash out against his father, as well as the other characters who become his victims. This in turn is what causes the ensuing turmoil within the novel. For Victor, a vital "[p]art of his motivation in fashioning his creature, after all, is his desire to receive the homage and thanks of beings dependent on him for their generation" (Hill-Miller 60). This means that even though Victor took diligent time in fashioning his creation, he only did it in order to make his name renowned. It also suggests that he wanted to create something that would be completely dependent on him, in other words, a child. Shelley creates her anti-father during the first part of the nineteenth century, and the pressure for a man to produce an heir is evident in his actions. He seeks a way to create a child without the use of a woman and the outcome is not what Victor had planned.

Victor begins assembling his creation with anticipation and greedy excitement. He takes great care in picking and assembling the dismem-

bered body parts. He states that, “[he] had worked hard for nearly two years, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body” (Shelley 43). Tirelessly he worked, picking the perfect parts of the body in which to fuse to his creation. That sort of dedication leads one to wonder why all of a sudden Victor decides to recant his creation. Once he finishes his project and brings a corpse to life, he realizes in horror what he regards as a mistake. Victor is repulsed by what he has brought to life, and instead of nurturing and teaching his new creation how to act in the world, Victor instead flees from the monster’s sight and keeps himself hidden from view. In doing so, he has begun instilling a sense of fear and untrustworthiness within the monster. Victor goes on to explain that “[he] had desired it with an ardor that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled [his] heart [he] rushed out of the room, and continued a long time traversing [his] bedchamber, unable to compose [his] mind to sleep” (44). Now that he has finished with his project, he comes to realize that he is not ready for the job of being a father even though he took on a position of fatherhood early in life towards his family:

The characterization of Victor Frankenstein as a paternal figure carries over into other relationships in the novel as well. He sees himself as the protector and guide of Elizabeth Lavenza [. . .] And, once his mother dies, Victor holds himself responsible for the well-being of his younger siblings, though his father, Alphonse, is still alive (Hill-Miller 61).

Even though he witnessed the caring nature and dedication of his father upon himself and his younger siblings, Victor cannot bring himself to be the father that he is meant to be for his creation. Instead of being there the way his father had been, Victor decides to hide himself away and hope that the monster does not find him. Victor decides that his creation is an atrocity upon the world, so he goes about neglecting and verbally abusing his creation in an attempt to take the blame and responsibility off of himself.

Due to Victor’s neglect of his creation he has truly created a “monster.” The psychological damage from Victor’s actions becomes the ultimate price in the creation of his monster and how his creation behaves in his new surroundings. It is with these actions that confusion is created within the monster and leads him to become the villain in Victor’s eyes,

when in reality, the real monster of this novel is the neglect and abuse the monster faces from his own creator. With the neglect, verbal abuse, and threats against his creation, Victor has destroyed the innocence of his child. Through all of this the monster wishes to become a part of a family, mainly Victor's family, but when Victor turns his back on the monster his creation decides to act out against Victor in order to express his own anguish of being alone.

Through all of this, Victor continues to abuse his child; he does not wish to connect with it by any means. He is repulsed by the monster's face and body, which is the very appearance that Victor has bestowed up on him. Victor describes his creation as being ugly before he was alive, but once "those muscles and joints were rendered capable of motion, it became a thing such as even Dante could not have conceived" (45). For the hideousness of his creation, he blames the monster. Victor refuses to take responsibility for his newborn creation, even when the monster seeks him out:

I beheld the wretch—the miserable monster whom I had created. He held up the curtain of the bed; and his eyes, if eyes they may be called, were fixed on me. His jaws opened, and he muttered some inarticulate sounds, while a grin wrinkled his cheeks [. . .] One hand stretched out, seemingly to detain me, but I escaped and rushed downstairs (44).

The monster attempts to beseech Victor in an attempt to know his creator, to form a bond with his father. He smiles, attempts to speak and reaches out his hand in order to stop Victor from running away again. This imagery is similar to that of a child chasing after a parent. It is playful, while also being desperate. Victor's child does not understand what is happening and only wishes to comprehend his father's reaction.

Due to Victor's lack of interest in working with his creation, he resorts to running away, and while doing that he believes the creature is the spawn of evil. According to Katherine Hill-Miller, "Frankenstein continues to associate his creature's appearance with moral corruption as the novel unfolds, repeatedly making assertions such as '[H]is countenance expressed the utmost extent of malice and treachery' (164)" (76). By Victor continuing to see his creation as a nothing more than a vile construction and representation of all things sinful, he is instilling those feelings within his child. These feelings are forced upon his creation by Victor's constant running and also from his expressions. From the beginning

Victor has set his creation up to be a failure within nineteenth-century society, because he has not followed the proper role of a father.

After the murder of one of Victor's younger brother's, the monster appears before his father in an attempt to persuade him to make him part of the Frankenstein family. Victor on the other hand begins to verbally berate his child by calling him a "devil" and "vile insect," and he goes on to threaten death upon his creation for his crimes (93). The monster, not understanding why his creator is so angry, entreats him to listen to what he has to say:

I am thy creature, and I will be even mild and docile to my natural lord and king, if thou wilt also perform thy part, the which thou owest me. Oh, Frankenstein, be not equitable to every other, and trample upon me alone, to whom thy justice, and even thy clemency and affection, is most due [. . .] I ought to be thy Adam; but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed. Everywhere I see bliss, from which I alone am irrevocably excluded. I was benevolent and good; misery has made me a fiend. Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous (94).

With this entreaty the monster understands what he has done wrong, but he uses the murder to retaliate against Victor, to show him what he is capable of doing if he is not properly taught and cared for. The monster makes the allusions of Victor being God and he as Adam, but since his God has forsaken him to the cold realities of the world he has become the fallen angel. If Victor had stayed by his side and guided him as a father should have done then the monster would have continued to be innocent and well behaved. But since Victor abandoned his creation the monster soon learned how to be a fiend amongst humans. The creature asks Victor to become the father he so desires with the promise that he will "again be virtuous."

Victor's child believes that in order to become human, or to be seen as human, he must form a relationship with his father. So, in order "[t]o achieve a human identity the monster must become part of a network of relationships, but it is precisely this affiliation which is impossible, for every person who sees him immediately feels overwhelming aversion" (Hall 182). The monster notes several times how the people in the villages mistreat him based on his appearance alone, and this causes the monster to feel even more secluded. His own father is revolted by

the sight of him, and now the people of the outside world shun him as well. He describes a particularly disturbing scene where his curiosity got the better of him, "I had hardly placed my foot within the door before the children shrieked, and one of the women fainted. The whole village was roused; some fled, some attacked me, until, grievously bruised by stones and many other kinds of missile weapons, I escaped into the open country" (106). He witnesses numerous accounts of abuse which only causes him to fear people even more. By continually being hurt physically and mentally by the villagers the monster soon comes to discover that he is better off alone, but he does not wish that, he longs to have a companion, and so he continues to interact amongst the people until he must flee for safety. Being in the country, woods, or mountains leaves him to rest and contemplate what he should do, many times this brings him back to a village, while others lead him deeper into solitude.

Victor's creature continues his treatise with a threat to insure that Victor would do the right thing. He states, "[o]n you it rests whether I quit forever the neighborhood of man and lead a harmless life, or become the scourge of your fellow-creatures, and the author of your own speedy ruin" (96). He lets Victor know that if his demands are not met he will return to being the monstrosity Victor believes him to be. Though the monster is attempting to persuade his father, in the end, he falls back on threatening the lives of those Victor loves. His plea becomes much like that of a jealous child. If Victor does not love him, then he cannot love anyone else. The monster only wants to have what every other person he has seen has, a family. Jean Hall states that the monster is a representation of a child-like yearning:

But if at some times the monster is the image of the alien in *Frankenstein*, at others he becomes the central image of the human. For his hideous body is inhabited by an innocent and unformed soul, and this creation-as-child longs to acquire an identity, to grow up to become a rightful member of the human family (181).

The need to be a part of a family has become an important aspect of the monster's reality. He realizes that Victor is not doing his job of being a teacher and protector. In order for Victor's creation to fully develop an identity he must become a member of the Frankenstein household and a member of society. This means that Victor must become the ideal father figure for his creation.

Since Victor ultimately refuses his creation's plea, the monster then decides to ask for another like him, only a female so that he and his mate could go live far away from human society. He requests Victor to create her because he says that, "I am alone, and miserable; man will not associate with me; but one as deformed and horrible as myself would not deny herself to me. My companion must be if the same species, and have the same defects. This being you must create" (146). The monster hopes that with a female companion he can feel that he is a part of a family, that the two could rely on each other and be companions. At first Victor agrees, but as he begins thinking he realizes that his creation would more than likely procreate with his female. This to Victor is a catastrophe: he already feels guilty for creating one life, but what would happen if he ended up allowing for there to be more than one in the world? This question causes Victor to destroy the female he began working on. He believes keeping the monster alone is the safest path, when according to his society; a marriage is the best path for men, and of course fatherhood. So, as punishment for Victor, the monster decides to take away Victor's loved ones until Victor recants his misdeeds to him.

His first victim is Victor's younger brother, William. He finds William alone in the woods and believes that the boy was "unprejudiced, and had lived too short a time to have imbibed a horror of deformity" (144). From here he planned to take the boy as a companion and educate him. So with this urge of a possible friendship he grabbed the boy who began to scream. He entreated him to stop, that he would not harm him, but the boy began to scream at him: "monster," "ugly wretch," "hideous monster," and "ogre" (144). Upon hearing these words the monster is reminded of the all the mistreatment he has experienced at the hands of villagers, and now a young child, that he believed would be incapable such abuse. Upon learning that the boy is a Frankenstein the monster cries out, "Frankenstein! You belong, then, to my enemy—to him toward whom I have sworn eternal revenge; you shall be my first victim" (145). With these words the boy began to struggle more and yell continuous insults at him. In an attempt to silence the child the monster grabbed his throat, but within moments the child lay dead at his feet. With the murder of William, the monster begins to realize that "[b]y killing the family rather than loving them, the monster finds the profoundest way to destroy Frankenstein himself" (Hall 180). Now understanding that he too can destroy a life the monster becomes elated and he comes to realize that he can take away everything Victor holds dear. For the monster

revenge has become his primary focus. He resents his father and wishes to punish him for being neglectful.

Upon Victor and his creations meeting Victor threatens to kill his child claiming him to be an abomination and a murderer. Though the monster believes this as well he states, "Listen to me, Frankenstein. You accuse me of murder; and yet you would, with satisfied conscience, destroy your own creature" (95). He accuses Victor for having murderous thoughts, but he also points out how, Victor being a father, would readily destroy the creation that he toiled two years over. Through the conversation the two share the monster slowly comes to realize that Victor will never relent his hatred for him. The monster's anger towards Victor and other humans is described by Jean Hall as being a "brutal, hyper masculine presence" (181). Hall continues:

The nightmare of aggression assumes an exaggerated male form which becomes the suppressed manifestation of desire and the image of the totally alien, and this suggests that Mary Shelley's vision of aggression indeed is a nightmare distortion. Irritation, anger, and forcefulness cannot appear in merely human forms or with moderated intensity. Instead, love must be reserved as the property of the human, whereas destructive passion erupts as an alienation" (181).

Due to Victor's creation being abnormally large and having incredible strength, it makes sense that his emotional strength would be the same. He is after all very much like a child because he continually attempts to contact humans to make a friend even though he knows what the results will be. He still has a very innocent way of thinking. Since his body is exaggerated so will his mind. The monster's alienation causes him to develop a stronger hatred for his father and mankind. He understands that there is no where he can go where he would be accepted, so he instead retaliates before the humans have a chance to harm him.

Realizing that he can never be a part of a family, the creation begins acting out all the abuse he has received from his father and the villagers. When dealing with Victor, "[t]he creature quickly internalizes Frankenstein's rejection and sees himself in Frankenstein's terms as loathsome, filthy, and repulsive" (Hill-Miller 79). For the monster having to deal with such exclusion so early on in his life it creates a sense of dejection. This causes the monster to reach out to others in an attempt to grasp the unattainable, a family. But his appearance causes people to run from

him or attack him. In the beginning, “he is initially puzzled when local inhabitants run away from him in terror, but he grasps the horrible truth of his predicament when...the creature sees his reflection in a pool and starts back in horror” (79). Seeing now why people hated him he begins to feel dread and anger. He is confused as to why he looks so different from everyone else, and why that him looking different causes such raised reactions. When he seeks out Victor he confronts him on his appearance; “Cursed creator! Why did you form a monster so hideous that even you turned from me in disgust? God in pity made man beautiful and alluring, after his own image; but my form is a filthy type of yours, more horrid from its very resemblance” (126). The monster notices the loveliness of man and envies that beauty. He sees that God took pity on humankind and made them attractive, but his own creator would not even attempt to make his appearance similar. Victor’s child views himself as hideous and as a lesser, more debauched resemblance to humans. Not only does his appearance cause him great pain, but so does all of the verbal and physical abuse the monster faces. It is with these experiences that cause him to become secluded, fearful, and violent.

Victor’s inability to be a socially acceptable father is what creates the monster. The neglect, hatred, and abuse enacted upon his creation causes the monster to act out in an attempt to protect himself from the world. He at first wants nothing more than a family and companionship, but knowing that humans, especially his father, would never accept him causes him to lash out against them. His anger towards those who abuse him is not uncommon, in fact, it is considered perfectly normal for a child to react in this manner. According to Abdulaziz Odhayani:

Children who experience parental abuse or neglect are more likely to show negative outcomes that carry forward into adult life, with ongoing problems with emotional regulation, self-concept, social skills, and academic motivation, as well as serious learning and adjustment problems, including academic failure, severe depression, aggressive behavior, peer difficulties, substance abuse, and delinquency (832).

By neglecting his child, Victor causes the monster to lack in everyday social skills, because the bond that the two were meant to form is made void. His creation does not learn how to properly treat others; he instead emulates the treatment enacted upon him. It is apparent early on that the creation does not see himself as attractive; he is told how

ugly he is, as well as how he sees people react to him. These actions are instilled within him, and once he finally sees his reflection, he is appalled because he was expecting to be hideous. Victor's maltreatment of him allows for a sense of worthlessness, especially since Victor continually runs from him.

On the other hand, if Victor had accepted him in the beginning instead of shunning him away his child would have been able to develop a proper personality. With this new personality, the creature would learn how to form bonds and behave in society. By not doing this, Victor has taken away his child's chance at building a healthy life. Odhayani notes that:

A strong and secure attachment bond with a primary caregiver is the core of developing resilience and a healthy personality. It strengthens a child's ability to cope with stress, regulates emotions, provides social support, and forms nurturing relationships. The world is experienced as a safe place in which to explore and develop independence. The child finds comfort and support from his or her caregiver when under stress (832).

If Victor had indeed followed through on his intention to become a good father he would have been able to instill a healthy bond between himself and his creation. This bond would have inevitably allowed his child to learn, develop, and create friendships. The monster would not have been seen as a "monster" by Victor or his family. Victor's creation would have been able to live a happy life filled with love, support and comfort. Since this is not what has occurred, Victor has essentially ruined his creation's life by not being a good father. His instilling fear and hatred into his child effectively causes all the destruction and death. The monster's reaction to his abuse is natural—he only acts out what he had been taught, and also what he himself felt. His anger and resentment towards his father helps him to become what he is, but it is Victor's neglect that causes all of these problems in the first place.

During the nineteenth century, a father was supposed to teach, support, and protect his children, with the added bonus of play. It has been noted that children who gain this bond with their parent are more adept to develop friendships, grow mentally, and are better suited for independence. The world for this type of child is a place to explore, not a place to be feared. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* illustrates the opposite ideal of fatherhood through Victor and the interaction with his creation. Victor goes through years of planning and building his child, but once he

brings him to life, he is revolted by his creation and in turn cannot be the father that he desired. So, instead of being the father he is supposed to be, he runs away and hides from his newly born child. By hiding and declaring his creation an abomination, Victor instills fear and mistrust within the monster. The monster does not know how to act nor does he understand why Victor reacts the way he does. So he takes his anguish and anger out on Victor and other victims. This is normal for a child who has been abused. In the end, it is Victor's neglect that causes the ensuing turmoil, because he allows his child to live with abuse, and this is how the monster learns how to protect himself from a world that means to harm him. The real monster of *Frankenstein* is Victor.

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# Men of God: Dysfunctional and Hyperreligious Fatherhood in *Light in August*

by Jessica Wesley

William Faulkner trained his literary eye on a disturbed and down-trodden South, a conquered South that was forcefully grappling for a new identity and loathing the obligatory chore. With changes swirling around this reluctant and bitter Post-Reconstruction region, many Southerners clung fast to the one solace that new legislation could not prohibit or that changing tides could not sweep away: their Christian faith. As William Faulkner noted, their faith “came from times of hardship in the South where there was little or no food for the human spirit [. . .] and was the only escape they had” (Gywnn 190). This source of comfort, as Faulkner referenced in his lectures, eventually “got warped and twisted” (190). By the time Faulkner published *Light in August* in 1932, he was acutely familiar with the corruption and moral duplicity that often accompanied Southern faith. He recognized that the inhabitants of the South were “a special brand of Puritan, reliving an old heresy” and that they “acknowledged the ascendancy of God’s light, but were fascinated with the darkness” (Taylor 54). Influenced by the problematic attitudes around him, Faulkner created a complex tapestry of fatherless/Fatherless characters and placed them against the Calvinistic undertow of Jefferson, Mississippi. Each central character in *Light in August* must find his or her way through life without the guiding force of a positive paternal figure. The fatherly influences that are supposed to preside over Southern households, protect young minds, and provide spiritual guidance are absent or lacking in their lives.

This void leaves each main character open to spiritual, physical, and emotional manipulation at the hands of newly acquired surrogates, but none as abundantly as Joe Christmas. Each replacement father figure in Joe’s life “rears” the orphan however he sees fit, insisting all the while that every aspect of the upbringing, no matter how debauched, is done to glorify almighty God, which remains the highest Father of all in small-town Jefferson. I intend to explore the dysfunctional fatherhood in *Light in August* by closely examining each of Joe Christ-

mas's surrogates. I will discuss how these men found a safe haven and justifying force in the Calvinistic ideologies of the day, from Hines's bolstering racism to McEachern's physical violence, and will expound on why Faulkner chose to tether his main character to a cyclic world of depraved paternalism. Ultimately, I argue that the novel does not merely serve as a study of the mulatto plight, but as a comprehensive critique of the religiously perpetuated racism and sadism towards the child that permeated Faulkner's Southern world and adulterated the majority of paternal and familial relationships.

Through the decades, admiring scholars and abrasive critics alike have focused on various aspects of Faulkner's work, making him one of the most written-about authors in the English language. The typical keyword search of an online database will result in thousands of articles, books, interviews, and videos about the author and his large literary catalog. However, very few focus on Faulkner's *Light in August* and even fewer, none to my knowledge, zero in on Faulkner's criticism of religion through dysfunctional fatherhood. The critical reception of *Light in August* deals primarily with gender issues, the mulatto plight, and the mythology of the American South. In the few cases where Faulknerians do mention religion in relation to this novel, it is usually via character study where critics argue that Joe Christmas represents a Christ-like martyr and Lena Grove embodies the struggles of Mary Magdalene. It is my hope to bring justice to a neglected novel and shed some light on Faulkner's subtle criticism of dysfunctional Calvinistic fatherhood.

During this time in the South, fatherhood was viewed as a means of control, a way to ensure obedience and shape moral values of the family. Women during this time, much like the fictional representations of Mrs. McEachern and Mrs. Hines, were often pushed to the baseboards and forced to watch silently as their husbands ruled the household. In *Born Southern: Childbirth, Motherhood, and Social Networks in the Old South*, V. Lynn Kennedy writes that

southern fatherhood meant acting as the head-of-household and providing for one's family [. . .] both control and sentiment became part of the identity of southern fathers, providing an important facet of their personal identity and marking their position within the southern community. Southern social mores taught white men to view their households as small kingdoms in which they themselves exercised all the high functions of an unlimited monarch" (126-127).

The men in *Light in August* harbor similar beliefs. Under immense pressure to produce the perfect family before both God and community, Doc Hines and McEachern become entirely debased, religiously hypocritical, and wholly destructive as father figures to Joe Christmas.

The most influential father figure in the protagonist's life, it would seem, is Doc Hines. Although he is introduced late in the novel, and although he Christmas is never acutely aware of his blood ties to the man, Hines plays an integral role in destroying the life of Faulkner's troubled central character. Hines is first described by the members of Mottstown, which is where both he and his wife reside and where Joe Christmas is captured after the murder of Joanna Burden. The townspeople regard him as "untalkative" and "dirty" with a "furious and preclusive expression about the eyes which [they] took for insanity." He ventures into "remote negro churches" to preach the "superiority of the white race [. . .] in fanatic and unconscious paradox" and often has to be dragged from the pulpit (343).

While in town one day, possibly in search of a Negro church service to bombard, Hines hears Christmas's name fly into the air. The old man instantly spins into an unexpected rage and tries to force his way through the crowd to look at the bloodied captor. With "thin mouth slaving" and his movements containing the "supple fury of a weasel," Hines shoulders through the crowd, glares at Joe Christmas, and strikes the captive with his walking stick, while screaming, "Kill the bastard!" (345). Already, by describing this man in such noxious and volatile terms, Faulkner sets Hines up as one of the novel's antagonists. Faulkner is warning all surveyors of the novel to be watchful of this eccentric man, much in the same way that the people of Mottstown seem to do on a daily basis. Doc Hines is clearly an unstable character, representative of the highest form of hyperreligious insanity. However, it is not realized until later in the text just how far this unscrupulous character is willing to go in the name of God.

After the unexplained, and seemingly unsanctioned, moment in the text where Hines calls for Christmas's execution, it is revealed that Doc Hines is Christmas's racist, religiously misguided, and vengeful grandfather. Unlike McEachern, Hines is not a father figure that directly influences the day-to-day life of Christmas. However, an account of the history between the two men (Christmas and Hines), which is delivered by Mrs. Hines and Byron Bunch, later reveals just how much Hines's *peripheral* influence affected the young Joe Christmas. Hines sets the foundation for the devastation of Joe Christmas when the young man

is still in the womb of Hines's besmirched daughter, Milly. From the beginning of the illegitimate pregnancy, the race of Milly's chosen lover is unknown. Yet, Doc Hines is positive that he can "see the black curse of the God Almighty" in the impregnator's face (374). After hunting the young man down, shooting him, and dragging his pregnant daughter home, Hines tells his wife that he has "brought [...] back the devil's laidby crop" (377).

Faulkner chooses these words of disdain very carefully. Up to this point, no other character in the novel has exhibited such vicious and undying prejudice towards anyone, much less an unborn and innocent child. Several characters have had the chance, however, to exhibit a comparable type of religious intolerance. Lena Grove has toted her illegitimate pregnancy through several different Southern cities, "a-walking" all the way from Alabama "a fur piece" (3). However, *this* pregnant woman has only positive experiences to speak of, likely due to the fact that she never had the misfortune of meeting Doc Hines. By referring to Joe Christmas as the "devil's laidby crop," Faulkner shows just how dated and unmoving Hines's thinking is. Hines is a Calvinist from a different generation, a Calvinist of the worst kind. He is a man of religious cruelty and unwavering rigidity whose convictions have not changed in the years since seeing his daughter fist impregnated.

After forcibly bringing his daughter back home, Doc Hines goes on an unconstrained mission to seek out a doctor who can abort what he refers to as an "abomination already stinking in God's sight" (374). When he cannot locate one, he opts for the only other option he has: to hope for and halfway initiate the death of the child by refusing to procure a doctor during the labor process. However, it is Milly who dies during childbirth, not the illegitimate babe. Unwilling to serve as father for a child that Hines views as the embodiment of lechery, miscegenation, and shame, he abandons the babe on the doorstep of an orphanage on Christmas Eve, hence the name Joe Christmas. One would assume that the unforgiving man would stop there, leave the child alone, and return home to his grieving wife. However, his racism towards and hatred for the child run deep. As Ilse Lind writes in "The Calvinistic Burden of *Light in August*", "a doctrine of white supremacy maintained on religious grounds [. . .] account[s] for the shattering of Hines's past when, by a fate he could not avert [. . .], a presumed part-Negro child [being] born of his own blood. Such an event, impossible in his eyes as a true expression of God's will [. . .] can only [be] construed as an extraordinary providence, representing God's will in reverse, divine 'vengeance'" (313).

To put it more plainly, Hines reconciles the birth of Joe Christmas with his obdurate faith by looking at the entire experience as a religious test that he must pass. In Hines's mind, Joe Christmas is the "Lord God's abomination," while he (Hines) is the "instrument of His will" (380). Thinking that his every action is ordained by God, Hines obtains a job at the orphanage and sets out to instill a sense of inferiority in Joe Christmas. However, his true mission is not condoned by God in the least. By positing Hines at the orphanage, Faulkner works to show yet another problematic part of Southern faith: vengeance in the name of God. While Hines may believe wholeheartedly that his judgments against the young protagonist are justified by a higher power, his true mission is far less sanctified. Hines wishes to chastise the young boy for *his own* loss of control, both as a father and a Christian. In other words, Hines could not prevent the sexual misconduct of his daughter or the resultant birth, a fact that symbolizes a shameful loss of supremacy for him both as a father and moral leader. Filled with rage and outmoded religious dogma, Hines sets out on his mission of vengeance.

Due to Hines's vengeful endeavors, Joe's years at the orphanage are marked by cruelty. Feeding on rumors that Hines propagates, the other children jeer and heckle him, and many of the adults, still imbued with a strong sense of prejudice, abuse the boy, as well. All the while, Hines views his efforts as God-ordained and just, remarking that "It was the Lord. *He* was there [. . .] The Lord told old Doc Hines what to do and old Doc Hines done it [. . .] the Lord said to old Doc Hines, 'You watch, now. You watch My will a-working.' And Old Doc Hines watched and heard the mouths of little children, of God's own fatherless and motherless, putting His words and knowledge into their mouths even when they couldn't know it since they were without sin yet [. . .]" (382). Faulkner uses repeated phrases like "My will" and "His words" together with common southern vernacular like "a-working." This fanatic terminology shows how the unstable Hines is trying desperately to justify his torment of a small child through his religious beliefs. He is trying to convince himself that God is "signing off" on his cruel actions. Yet, it is clear that the only person condoning these actions is Hines himself.

After years of distress and degradation, Joe Christmas is preparing to be adopted by a family that Hines knows nothing about. In an effort to prolong his "ordained" domination over the young and vulnerable Christmas, Hines abducts the boy. However, the plan to abduct Joe and ensure a future full of "Hines-based degradation and punishment" fails; the pair is caught a few days later. Following the capture and Joe's

adoption to the McEacherns, the bitter grandfather finally falls to the wayside. In an effort to satisfy his ebbing racism and exhale his acrid views on life, he takes up the hobby of preaching white supremacy to black audiences. In relation to Joe Christmas, Hines is only mentioned once more in the novel.

After the murder of Joanna Burden, Doc Hines suddenly materializes to passionately call for his grandson's lynching, proving that thirty years has done little to change the man's mind. Ilse Lind remarks on Hines's impact on Joe Christmas, writing that "these exchanges [the one-on-one talks that Hines and Christmas had at the orphanage] soon faded from conscious recollection, but they did not fade from consciousness; 'Memory believes before knowing remembers'" (314). In other words, Joe Christmas may not remember the specifics of every conversation; he may not recall every jeer that he bore at his grandfather's expense. Yet, Christmas unwittingly carries a sense of lowliness within him that bears Hines's signature. Ultimately, Hines, the poisonous marginal father, instilled the young protagonist with the very thought that causes his destruction: "That—that child, that Christmas boy, is a nigger" (132).

A father figure whom Christmas clearly remembers and who plays a more direct and observable role in his life is his adoptive father, Simon McEachern. McEachern is a strict, cold man that communicates with his son through detached verbal threats and compulsory violence for offences. Unlike Doc Hines, McEachern is not motivated by deep-seated racism. Instead, he is driven by the obsessive need to control and mold his adopted son into a respectable, God-fearing Christian. Lind states that

McEachern is not perversely cruel [. . .] [His] actions always conform to his principles, but these principles, as he understands and applies them, are merciless. They make no provision for human frailty; they outlaw the affections. The Calvinistic conception of. [. . .] the family sets forth for him his role as a father, just as it had determined the role into which he had cast himself as a husband. Mrs. McEachern's subordination had been long ago accomplished. "Timid," "hunched," with a "beaten face," she looked "fifteen years older than the rugged and vigorous husband [. . .] as if she were the medium and. . . the husband the control" (315).

This observation not only offers insight into Mr. McEachern's emotional makeup, but also shows a living example of his forced compliance. Mrs.

McEachern is already submissive to her husband's authority, defeated after years of frigid marriage. McEachern has already gained control of his wife; his only remaining mission in life is to do the same with his newly adopted son. Thus, the relationship between Christmas and his adoptive father is not one of paternal affection and adoration. Instead, it is a relationship founded on McEachern's attempts to gain compliance from his adopted son and Joe's utter defiance. To achieve this end, McEachern often resorts to verbal threats and physical violence.

Child abuse in the name of religion was a concept that Faulkner would have been familiar with. "Spare the rod and spoil the child" was a common Bible verse that many Southerners lived by in the early thirties. The meaning behind this verse is quite literal (i.e., if parents fail to use physical punishment as a way to reprimand insubordination, the result will be an unruly and disobedient child). Many Jeffersonians likely believed in this method. Another common principle held by orthodox Presbyterians is the concept of original sin, which argues that children enter into the world with a "wayward will." As Donald Capps discusses in "Religion and Child Abuse: Perfect Together," the concept of original sin also postulates that it is the "responsibility of the parents to break, challenge, and frustrate the child's nature [. . .] [so] that he or she will [. . .] be able to respond to parental guidance and live in conformity with the superior will of God" (3). McEachern, with his Presbyterian roots, strongly believes that his purpose as a father is to correct the inherently sinful nature of his son and mold him into a God-fearing Christian. Therefore, he must "break" his sons will through whatever means necessary.

Therefore, the violence begins early on in the father-son relationship. Christmas recalls an incident from his childhood where McEachern scolds and eventually whips him for not memorizing his catechism by heart. After the first whipping, he begins to ask Joe in hourly intervals if he has committed the text to memory. When Joe refuses to even acknowledge the question, McEachern whips the boy again, repeating this cycle until the boy passes out from hunger. When Joe wakes, he is in his bed. His new father is beside him and immediately begins to pray for forgiveness, asking that he be forgiven for "lifting his hand against a child, an orphan, who was dear to God" and that Joe be forgiven for "the sin of disobedience" (152). Following the prayer, McEachern places the catechism book back in Christmas's hands and coldly leaves the room.

Christmas's childhood is littered with comparable instances. Faulkner creates in the character of McEachern a rigid and unmoving man whose emotionless methods affect Joe Christmas as deeply as the sadistic Hines.

Although Joe claims to like the “hard, just ruthless man” who “merely depended on him to act in a certain way,” this lifestyle with McEachern touches his life more than he wishes to acknowledge (168). Indeed, the adoptive father is predictable. However, he is also cold, unfeeling, and aggressive towards the boy. Although McEachern believes that his staunch tactics are just and eagerly awaits the day when his adoptive son will comply, his attempts backfire as Christmas continues to strive for his independence. As Lind writes, “McEachern’s ultra-puritanical attitude drives Christmas to express through sexual activity his impulses of defiance and escape, and his longing for some undefinable cessation of his tensions which he calls ‘peace’” (317). This is why Joe seeks relationships with prostitutes and occasionally mirrors the abusiveness of his adoptive father. Christmas needs a place to break free from the strictness and lifelessness of McEachern’s world. Yet, while trying to release himself from McEachern’s rigid humanity and find some manner of autonomy, he always unconsciously returns to his adoptive father’s religious training. In other words, whenever he encounters the affectionate “muck” of the outside world, he reacts with violence and disdain.

That is McEachern’s enduring effect on Christmas. Although there is no biological connection between the two, McEachern inadvertently instills Joe with some of his own worst qualities. The religious dogma that McEachern fought to implant in his son was not the aspect that Joe absorbed from the man’s training. Instead of becoming a God-fearing young man, Joe became aloof, taciturn, and prone to bouts of extreme violence. McEachern’s detached methods of child rearing, combined with the subconscious influences exacted upon Joe by Doc Hines, formed a perfect storm in the protagonist. One man subjected Joe to mental and emotional abuse, while the other added physical abuse and frigidity to the mixture. This all-inclusive combination of religiously condoned abuse is what drives Joe to his first breaking point in the novel. In an act of rage, defiance, and hatred, Joe Christmas takes a chair to the head of his adoptive father and kills him. Afterwards, Joe rides back to his homestead, musing on how “Faustus” must have felt after “having put behind...once and for all the Shalt Not” and “being free at last of Honor and law” (207).

Similar to the liberty felt by Faustus after making a deal with the devil, Christmas is now free of McEachern’s restrictive religious code. However, the devil always receives what is due to him and, like Faustus, Christmas will not live the rest of his life without repercussions from his experience with McEachern. The religious sternness and icy com-

placency that the man instilled in Christmas, will forever serve as a barrier between Faulkner's protagonist and his own humanity. As a direct result of McEachern's religious childrearing, Joe will never evolve into a self-actualized individual and his human relationships will remain petty and two-dimensional. Anyone, Joanna Burden for example, who tries to delve deeper and develop a more profound relationship with Joe will be met with the same violence implanted by Simon McEachern.

Joe Christmas, who is seventeen at the time of Mr. McEachern's murder, deserts his adoptive mother and lives the remainder of his life without any paternal or maternal influences. He drifts from place to place, attempting to find where he belongs, yet never succeeds at assimilating into any one culture or race. His only serious relationship with a woman is with Joanna Burden, whom he later kills after she begs him to kneel with her and pray. Even though Joanna is not well-respected in the community (the people of Jefferson often refer to her as a "nigger sympathizer"), she is still a white woman murdered at the hands of a supposed black man. To avenge the murder, white-supremacist Percy Grimm hunts Christmas down and castrates him, thus ending his tragic and difficult life.

Many critics have argued that Christmas is a Christ figure or that *Light in August* is a story about the struggles of having an ambiguous heritage. However, I believe that the novel more passionately criticizes a type of religiously corrupt parenting and offers stringent examples through the characters of Doc Hines and Simon McEachern. Neither of these men possesses the compassion or clear-headedness needed to raise a well-balanced child. Yet, both uncover a safe haven and justifying force in the Calvinistic ideologies of Faulkner's time. Hines, although not a direct, day-to-day paternal influence, uses his own interpretations of the Bible to punish and chastise a young Christmas for his own failures as a father and moral guide. With his vicious and unfounded rumors, Hines instills Joe with a lowered sense of self, which continues to corrode the protagonist throughout his life. Hines represents an uncompromising generation of Calvinism, in which incestuous, white Southern communities' interpret the Bible to serve their own ends. Christian ideals in place, Hines can make no room to sympathize with his daughter Milly or his grandchild.

Aside from Hines's peripheral influences, *Light in August* also seeks to criticize sadism towards the child and belief in the old proverb "spare the rod, spoil the child." Faulkner builds McEachern for this purpose, creating in him a character that blindly follows the rules of Presbyterianism

and tries to forcibly conform his entire family. The physical abuse that Hines never had the chance to employ against Joe Christmas, McEachern layers on thickly, therefore producing a violent, detached young man instead of an obedient follower. All negativity aside, *Light in August* also contains a glimmer of hope. The castratory death of Joe Christmas signifies the cessation of this debauched cycle of paternalism and the release of the disturbed protagonist. In the final chapter, Lena, her newborn babe, and the hopeful Byron Bunch emerge above this world of tragic childrearing. The optimistic trio symbolizes the possibility of respectable parenting and unrestricted love while they move slowly down the road with hopes high, determined not to “quit now” (506).

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## The Man of the House?: Fathers *In Absentia* in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*

by Aubrey Wynne

The Second World War brought more than political and economic change to countries worldwide: it also altered the perception of adults within individual homes. As Ralph LaRossa notes in his 1997 work *The Modernization of Fatherhood: A Social and Political History*, “with the mobilization of World War II, the interests, identities and experiences of fathers fundamentally changed. The war ushered in an image and ideal of men as protectors and providers—a perspective that remained [. . .] and became more firmly entrenched over the course of the postwar period” (19). Fathers left home to battle in a war affecting family and security, a war that kept many fathers from returning to their families altogether. The loss of fathers across the globe led to more than mourning in homes, for families with little boys felt the loss as a much heavier burden psychologically, in addition to the physical absence of a father figure. The father-son relationship, according to psychologist Eric Miller, is an important entity in more ways than one, for studies “from at least the writings of Sigmund Freud [show] the father-son relationship has often been characterized as one replete with much tension and discomfort. Contemporary academic literature on the nature of the father-son relationship largely portrays the father as critical to how the son sees himself as an emerging adult” (194). Without fathers in their lives, children, especially young boys, find themselves at a loss for what fundamentals fathers provide and instill in their offspring. Following war time, the loss of a parent is not the only damaging aftermath the family experiences; studies show that in addition to never knowing their fathers, some children feel denied answers to what happened to end their father’s life, and false hope runs rampant in households where bodies of the fallen soldier remain unfound. “Research shows that unless a body is recovered and we actually experience a ceremony of closure we can recall, not just be told about like a story, we continue to share that secret wish” (Taylor 230).

Literature following the war, such as William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, often brings to light the plight of the fatherless son. The boys in the novel tragically become marooned on a beautiful but dangerous and uncharted island after a plane crash—a plane ironically leading the boys to safety from war-stricken England. Golding places the boys in a utopian setting, but the feeling of paradise turns dark when the reality sets in that the boys are alone on the island with no adults to guide them. The first resolution of Jack Merridew upon this realization is simple: “Then we’ll have to look after ourselves,” and the boys elect a “chief” to be a substitute parent to all the young males involved (20). Ralph, or “the fair-haired boy” with whom the novel opens, receives the title of chief, and promises the boys, “We want to be rescued; and of course we shall be rescued.” He gives the boys, both younger and older, a sense that he is a leader, and “the weight of Ralph’s new authority [brings] light and happiness [to the group]” (35). Ralph believes his own father, a member of her Majesty’s Royal Navy, will rescue them from their desperate situation, and this belief—while portraying the undying affection and almost hyperbolized parental abilities a boy projects onto his father—shows just how young and immature this boy is at the start of the novel. Ralph’s naiveté is pointed out by Piggy, the porky boy who receives jeers and little respect from the others, but who possesses common sense enough to know that rescue, especially from Ralph’s father, is a futile hope. Piggy claims that the boys are “acting like a crowd of kids!” when trying to build a fire to bring rescue (36). Golding’s work depicts this problem—children without the guidance of fathers—in a setting that seems distant and irrelevant to the modern lands from which the boys came. However, I argue that the truth of the novel’s concern with the absent father lies not only in the remote corners of the world, but in those homes across the warring nations that suffer the loss of a father in battle. The absence of fatherhood poses a problem within the infrastructure of the home, and many young men, like the boys in the novel, take it upon themselves to become “man of the house.” Yet as Golding’s work shows, a boy replacing a father cannot result positively, for the role of the father as a guide and mentor remains critical, even posthumously.

The roles of the parent prior to and following World War II shifted to a more father-centered protection system, and when fathers died on the warfront, families suffered from a one-sided form of parenting. The article “Understanding the Contribution of a Father’s Warmth on His Child’s Social Skills” states that “both parents can provide sensitive and

responsive caregiving to enhance the development of their children”; yet the article also suggests that parents typically play different roles. Mothers tend to “calm and soothe children,” while fathers allow them to feel “confident of protection” (Paquette, as quoted by Webster). The boys in Golding’s novel initially feel this protection, even though their situation has carried them far away from their families. In postwar times, many boys who find themselves to be the so-called “man of the house” take on many responsibilities, like caring for their mother and other siblings. The shock of losing a parent makes life hard for the entire family, according to Sharon Taylor, a war daughter who writes about the influence of a soldier’s death on the family. In Taylor’s estimation, the mother “never seemed to recover from the loss of her husband,” and the children care for themselves “in an attempt to maintain control and gain acceptance” (234). Acceptance remains a factor young boys never seem to gain following the loss of their father, and later in life “many men are burdened with feelings that they never knew their fathers, nor how their fathers felt as men, nor if their fathers even liked them, nor if their fathers ever really approved of them” (Miller 294). This lack of knowledge influences the young males after their fathers pass: they fall into constant battle with themselves, trying to gain approval from a father who is no longer living.

Young men have difficulty attaining proper maturation without the presence of an older male mentor, a fact that Golding explores in his novel while cushioning the situation in a distant land, though the problem of boys trying to become men happens in homes, as well. Golding also uses this work to portray the class differences of the boys on the island, bringing his own disdain for the social order into a setting where it becomes evident that superiority of class is not innate, but something that is taught, and something that children with no adult guidance and supervision can abuse to the extreme, causing death and destruction. Also, the male characters who attempt to act as fathers—Ralph as the “chief” of the boys, and Jack who dictates the actions of the choirboys—assume a role deemed difficult even for adults. Even years of practice do not make one a “perfect parent” who makes the right decisions consistently, and this fact makes successful “parenting” impossible for the novel’s adolescents, unprepared and selfish in their desires (Webster). Jack’s lust for meat and blood leads his group to neglect the fire, cutting the group off from potential rescue. This fire, in a way, provides a shaky sense of fatherhood for the boys, for Ralph tells the group “we must make smoke on top of the mountain. We must make a fire” in order

for passing ships to take notice of the island and take the boys back to their homes “sooner or later” (35). Being the surrogate father and chief, Ralph keeps the hope alive in the young boys, much like the situations seen in homes post-war when the oldest sibling must assume control. However, the role of the father cannot be performed by anyone or anything other than the father himself, and attempts by young boys to do otherwise lead to disastrous consequences—both on Golding’s fictional island and real-life homes where fathers become absent after the war.

In Golding’s personal life, the father-figure was not absent, but instead transformed into something cold and distant. And much as a father’s absence would affect a young boy, Golding’s strained relationship as a child shaped his adult life. The relationship of Golding and his own father, Alec, is said to be an almost teacher-student interaction as opposed to a loving father-son bond, for Alec, according to biographer John Carey, had a “shortcoming” when raising his son: “pedagogical zeal,” a trait young William found “far from welcome” in his childhood (25). Golding’s parents also held strong aversions to anything referring to sex, and thus their son lacked social outings and experiences, because even the theater was “[associated] with sex, and [his parents] felt uneasy about it” (Carey 28). Golding lived in an older house with many characteristics a growing boy would consider frightening, as William did, and ghost stories told by his Celtic mother did nothing to ease the fear. “Golding’s childhood as he describes it,” writes Carey, “could not be called happy” and his familial relationships were dismal at best. “[H]e was alienated from his parents” and the memory of his father “gave [Golding] an image of ‘what man ought to be’—a watcher and a wanderer” (29). Golding continued to “drift,” as Carey writes, and eventually married, became a father, and enlisted in the military. After his “unhappy” childhood, Golding experienced the Second World War as a member of the Royal Navy. Starting his career as a lower man in the military led to an instant debasement, for at twenty-nine years old, he quickly took notice of the age gap between himself and the other seamen. John Carey writes of Golding’s early adulthood that he “learnt other things about himself during the war, among them that he could think clearly and act courageously even when terrified,” a trait that Golding uses Ralph to portray in *Lord of the Flies*. To his superiors, Golding seemed fearless, able to hold a smile even in the face of great danger (82). His time in the armed forces lasted from 1940-1945, and he barely survived the horrifying massacre in Walcheren. Carey writes “that really was the end of Golding’s war,” for his own wife “thought he

was dead.” According to Carey, Golding wrote about the brutality of war to tell his children of his experiences, much as his own father kept a journal for much of his life (110).

Golding’s father may not have been physically absent in his life, but the emotional and mental barriers set up by both father and son led to negative effects later on. Golding worked these effects into his writing to show the importance of the father figure in a son’s life, for without it a young boy can turn anywhere from drunkard to murderer, the side showcased in his novel. Some critics like Paul Crawford deem Golding’s novel to be one that does not simply showcase what happens after the war, but brings to light Golding’s feelings on modern issues, as well. *Lord of the Flies* makes evident “Golding’s deep bitterness at and hatred of the evils of class,” since three of the main characters come from different social classes: Jack from a “privileged choir-school background,” Ralph’s “father is officer-class,” and Piggy, from the way he dresses down to his inner-city accent are made fun of because his evident lower-class stance (51). Golding tells in one of his later essays that he has lost “belief in the perfectibility of social man,” and this social construct on the island sets Jack and Piggy in almost instant opposition, an opposition also present in England post-war, because class definitely determined the weight of the burden young boys took on after their fathers died. Higher-class boys, like Jack and Ralph, find themselves believing (however falsely) in the power they hold, even as children in a very daunting, even as an adult, situation. Piggy, however, sees the lower-class end of their predicament, and notes the unpreparedness the boys have for taking on the task of hunting for food and other tasks to care for one another. His belief in the power of the “chief” only lasts for a moment until Ralph refuses to let Piggy join the “upper-class” boys on their trek to see if their new habitat is indeed an island. Ironically, Piggy’s lack of belief in the boys to care for themselves shows in one of his first revelations after Ralph insists his father will come and rescue them. Piggy proclaims that they “may stay [on the island] till [they] die,” showing mental maturity not present in Ralph’s promises of rescue, though Ralph does not allow him to take on the expedition to study the island (14). Piggy continues to exude wisdom beyond his years, and wears “the martyred expression of a parent who has to keep up with the senseless ebullience of the children” (36).

This contrast between Piggy and Ralph initially leads to the consideration of the age and mental capacity of the boys who, in a sense, have lost their fathers due to the war. Moreover, there remains very little hope of the boys ever being restored to their patriarchal leaders who have the

ability to influence their lives greatly, and, in Ralph's case, embody a hero that the boy believes can accomplish even the impossible. Piggy, raised by distant family members and not his own paternal and maternal beings, does not feel the need to rely on Ralph's father to come rescue them, for he believes in the potential the boys have to care for themselves, and be their own leaders. Hence his strong feelings about the conch and the power it contains when a person is holding it. The survival of the boys on the island hangs in the balance of the ability of their leader, Ralph, to make decisions that benefit all of the castaways, but also in the ability of each individual to lend a hand in hunting and making shelter for sleeping and carrying out daily actions. Ralph's leadership abilities are limited to assuring the boys of rescue and delegating jobs like hunting parties and boys to watch the fire, and when the first ship passes the island with the fire not lit, Ralph realizes he "can't think. Not like Piggy," and changes the way he approaches the other boys in the next meeting (71).

Realizing his shortcomings and re-evaluating his leadership skills leads Ralph to the conclusion that Piggy "had brains," but Ralph, in his role as surrogate father, held the power to make a change with the other children (71). Jack's character, opposite the other boys, does not choose to rely on the conch or a father to come rescue them—or a surrogate father to care for him while on the island. Along with the claim that the boys must care for themselves, he sets his choir boys apart as hunters, the meat providers for the group. When they kill their first pig, it comes at the expense of the fire going out, and Jack explains his transgression by declaring that the boys "needed meat" (the "manliest" of all the food groups) in order to have a better life on the island (64). Ralph, however, can think only of the ship that passed by while the bloodthirsty Jack overcame a pig, "outwitted a living thing, imposed [his] will upon it, [took] away its life like a long satisfying drink" (64). Jack's belief in the necessity of meat stems from his upper-class reliance on the best life has to offer, from better food to the ability to accomplish things on his own, without relying on a father figure to assist him—though without a wealthy father, his life would compare closer to that of Piggy's.

Golding's comparison of the boys' situation and the family of men involved in the war does not only find similarities in the time after the war, but for some critics, this "Literature of Atrocity" exposes the boys as Nazi-like characters, stating that "the only 'Beast' on the island is the fascist group of English adolescent males who kill or attempt to kill outsiders: Simon, Piggy, and Ralph. In their [. . .] violent and carnivalesque behavior, we witness English schoolboys not only dressing but even act-

ing like Nazis” (Crawford 51). Yet I refuse to accept Golding’s novel as an attack on Englishmen as a whole. Instead, I argue that Golding focuses his text more on the study of class difference and, when looking through the lens of the absent father, how different class fathers affect the way their sons respond to problems in their absence. Simply comparing the boys to Nazis leaves out the reality that Golding uses his novel to show humanity’s capacity for evil in general—not just Fascism threatening the English race (Crawford 54). The inner evil seems to be brought out of the boys because of dangerous conditions and hopeless situations, but the absence of the father figure to guide the boys and help them see the possibility for good in their fellow man goes further to push Jack and his choirboys closer to the savagery that eventually consumes them and, in turn, the island in its wild actions and wild fire. Ironically, the wild fire caused by the savagery of the boys leads to the boys’ rescue, for as Ralph dictates from the beginning, the presence of a signal fire performed an essential role in achieving rescue for the stranded young group. Father figures in the lives of young boys present an avenue of sorts that show their sons the simplest path to experiencing life and the different benefits offered to the separate classes of the post-war time.

However, because the father figures do not exist in Golding’s novel, the boys create their own paths. This responsibility, thrust upon the boys without precedent, creates a disaster evident by the destruction to the island itself and the deterioration of the group of boys mentally and physically. The absence of the father affects the decisions and actions of the boys negatively, and causes them to even go so far as to cause the death of some of their peers. The lack of fathers on the island not only takes its toll on the older “leaders” of the group, but on the “littluns,” as well, the younger group of boys nicknamed by Piggy in the early pages of the novel (12). The boys find a “Beast” on the mountainside, a creature that they believe to be dangerous, but in reality is only the body of a dead parachutist trapped in a tree. This finding of the creature causes a great stir amongst the boys, and Ralph notes that life on the island “began well; [they] were happy,” but something changed among the group when “people started to get frightened” (74).

This fear of the young child stems initially from the boys placed in an adult situation, and being afraid of what action to take when there seems to be a “monster” of sorts on the island, but no adult to protect them or advise them on a course of action. Young boys without guidance and protection on Golding’s fictional island correlates with the idea of the young boy on the home front after the war, a new life without a

father, new fears of what comes next, and the potential for things like meat and shelter may come at great cost if the widowed mother does not or cannot work. The “Beast” symbolizes fears in general, and fear became a household term following the war, for the unknown posed a great threat to families and countries alike at this time—with the threat of nuclear warfare spreading throughout all countries when the Soviet Union discovered how to make their own atomic bomb. The fear on the island also is for the unknown, for although the boys are not aware the “Beast” is not dangerous in the least, none are brave enough to go study it closely to see how big of a threat it presents. The threat lies in the older boys, more specifically Jack Merridew and his choirboys, who possess blood lust and desire for power offered by the island and the pigs that inhabit it. Looking through a political post-war lens, the boys that perform the hunting for the group embody the lust for power the countries of the world desire after feeling helpless in the aftermath of the United States dropping the atomic bomb. Essentially, the boys on the island are in a war zone all their own, where the Beast represents fear present, even after the time of fighting seems to be over, and the different sets of boys: Jack’s crew, the littluns, and Ralph and Piggy, represent warring civilizations that, while not in murderous battle, have the potential to wreak havoc on those who oppose them. Thus, Golding’s novel makes an “oblique response to the sociopolitical context of World War II and its aftermath. [It provides] an easy coexistence of the universal and historical,” linking reality and fiction seamlessly through the trials the boys face, socially and physically (Crawford 54).

At first glance, *Lord of the Flies*, Golding’s first novel, shows the inner evil of humanity taken out of modern society. However, upon closer inspection, issues of class, parental influence, and absent fatherhood surface as the greater challenges and antagonists in the novel. This “war zone” where the boys are placed describes a world simple to view from a distance, but harder to face when considering the similarities between the fictional island and real-life England. The absence of the father in the novel leads to more than just death and destruction: it exposes influences fathers have even when they are physically absent. Class stereotypes, confidence in paternal abilities, and ability for leadership become evident in the roles of Ralph, Jack, and Piggy. Considering the life of a boy in Britain after the father has been killed in the war, these influences still exist in post-war society, and Golding’s novel brings to light the influence the war had not only on whole countries but in private homes, as well.

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