

# THE EXPOSITOR

2015



A JOURNAL OF UNDERGRADUATE PROSE

Trinity University

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Submission information is available from the Department of English:

*The Expositor*  
Department of English  
Trinity University  
One Trinity Place  
San Antonio, Texas 78212-7200

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Editors of *The Expositor* appreciate the English Department's financial and administrative support. In particular, they are grateful to Samuel Jensen and Ruby Contreras, both of whom played an instrumental role in preparing the journal for publication.

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## Auditory Similes in the Homeric *Iliad*

AUSTEN HALL

The similes of the *Iliad* are thematically complex, multiply referential, and richly emotional; as a result, they have received ample attention in the literature. Most of these attempts at analysis fall within one of two distinct lines of inquiry, attending to either what I refer to as the *historical* question or to the *aesthetic* question. The historical question is concerned with determining at what point and in what manner the various similes of the *Iliad* were developed as integral elements of the poem. The aesthetic question, on the other hand, deals specifically with the stylistic, thematic, and emotive functions of the *Iliad's* similes without reference to any extra-textual concerns. In other words, analyzing the poem's similes within a purely aesthetic context requires considering *only* their relevant function in contributing to the style, thematic program, and emotional weight of the work *qua* work of epic poetry, irrespective of the poem's historical development. These two lines of inquiry can be further distinguished from what might be called the *performative* question. This last question is concerned with what function the similes had during bardic performances in the poem's purely oral stages; perhaps they functioned as formulaic tools for maintaining the required meter or as means for rhapsodic improvisation. I do not possess the requisite knowledge to productively address either the historical question or the performative question, and thus leave the task of analysis in these areas to more qualified scholars. Instead, I will limit the scope of the forthcoming discussion to specific issues in the aesthetic<sup>1</sup> realm.

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<sup>1</sup> I use aesthetic to differentiate this question from the historical and performative, not as the general term to indicate concern with beauty or appreciation of beauty. All uses of "aesthetic" in this paper should be understood as adhering to the former usage.

There are myriad approaches to systematizing, categorizing, and evaluating the similes of the *Iliad* according to their aesthetic properties. So varied and rich are the existing answers to the aesthetic question, in fact, that a sufficiently detailed survey of them within the limited space of this paper is not possible. This does not mean, however, that nothing interesting may be said about these analyses as they have been hitherto formulated. Much of the existing discussion is unified, conspicuously, by a focus on the *visuality* of the Iliadic similes; these similes are analyzed and interpreted primarily with an emphasis on a certain *visual* function. Complex accounts of the stylistic, thematic, and emotive functions of these similes have been proposed, but at the basic *sensory* level these accounts evaluate the similes in terms of what they are meant to make the reader or listener *see*.

This approach, I believe, is a natural and useful way of assessing many of the similes in the *Iliad*, as the majority of the similes in the poem are primarily visual in nature. In fact, these visual similes are nearly ubiquitous. The sight of the glowing bronze of the Greek army is compared to “a fire raging through endless forests” (II. 485-87), the Trojan forces are likened visually to “cranes beating their metallic wings / In the stormy sky at winter’s onset” (III. 5-10), Gorgythion’s sagging head is connected to the image of “a poppy / In a garden, heavy with seeds and spring rain” (VIII. 310-311), and Athena and Achilles are both said to look like stars (IV. 85-88, XXII. 33-37). In one pair of repeated similes, Paris and Hector are each compared to a galloping horse: “*Picture* a horse that has eaten barley in its stall / Breaking its halter and galloping across the plain” (VI. 533-538, XV. 266-271). With the imperative “*picture*” the visual function of the simile is made verbally explicit; it is clearly meant to facilitate specific *visualizations* of Paris and Hector in the mind of the audience member. We *see* the rejuvenated warriors moving with the speed and exuberance of a freshly fed stallion “sure of his splendor” in our mental construction of the

scene (VI. 537, XV. 270). These examples, it seems, are representative of the majority of the similes in the *Iliad*; the general rule for the function of Iliadic similes is thus *primarily visual*. It makes perfect sense, then, that the existing discussions of the aesthetic question analyze the poem's similes in primarily visual terms.

That being said, however, I do not believe that the similes of the *Iliad* may *only* have visual functions; some exhibit another sensory component in addition to their visuality, and others even seem to be primarily non-visual. I will thus use the remainder of this paper to investigate an element of the *Iliad's* similes that I feel has received too little attention in the literature, namely their auditory component. Some clarifying statements and important distinctions must be made, however, before fully engaging in this proposed analysis.

First, by "auditory" I do not mean to describe the effect a given simile might have on the listener if read aloud, but rather the specifically aural effect a given simile has on the reader or listener's mental construction of a scene. Second, I distinguish between similes that are *primarily auditory* and those that are primarily non-auditory but that I take to have some interesting and significant *auditory component*. I will analyze both of these sub-classes in an attempt to show some measure of thematic cohesiveness among the sound similes, but I will address them independently, seeing as they do seem to display two non-trivially distinct types of auditory function. After offering an analysis of these strands of thematic cohesion and addressing problematic outliers to the observed patterns, I will conclude with the claim that auditory similes in the *Iliad* constitute an interesting and functionally dynamic sub-category of Iliadic simile that deserves further consideration from scholars interested in answering the aesthetic question.

It must be noted here that it is not the case that auditory similes have heretofore received *no* treatment in the literature. In

his “The Function of the Homeric Simile,” Michael Coffey includes *sound* as one of his six functional categories of Iliadic simile, along with *movement, appearance, a situation, psychological characteristics,* and the *measurement of space, time, and numbers* (118). He rightly identifies many of the similes that will be considered in the forthcoming discussion as primarily sound similes, but he does not contribute much else to the investigation. He groups these similes into a single category and points out that sound similes can be about both the noises of battle and the sounds of non-battle, but he does not offer anything resembling an account of cohesive themes or observable patterns among his examples. As such, his *sound* category is the most theoretically underdeveloped and lacking in unifying themes of his six categories, thereby leaving plenty of room for further analysis. Furthermore, Coffey does not address the distinction between primarily auditory similes and similes with an auditory component, failing to consider the fact that a *situation* simile, for example, might have an interesting and significant auditory component. Thus, while Coffey recognized well before I did that auditory similes are a viable sub-class of Iliadic simile, I believe that my analysis contributes something novel to the discussion.

With this necessary survey of Coffey’s account completed, I now turn my attention to discussing the similes that can be properly categorized as *primarily auditory*. These primarily auditory similes are not nearly as ubiquitous as those that have a primarily visual function, but a careful reading of the *Iliad* reveals a workable number of examples, which I now present in order of their appearance in the text. The voices of a group of Trojan elders are compared to “cicadas perched on a branch, / Their delicate voices shrill in the woods” (III. 158-159), and when Poseidon shouts on the battlefield, the sound of his voice is said to be “So loud it seemed that ten thousand warriors / Had been enlisted by Ares and shouted

at once" (XIV. 145-146). The "pulsating roar" of the clashing Greek and Trojan armies is at one point impressively likened to

The *pounding* of surf when arching breakers  
Roll in from the deep under painful northern winds,  
Or the *hissing* of a forest fire  
When it climbs the hills to burn all the woods,  
Or the *howling* of wind when it is angry with oaks  
And *moans* and *shrieks* through their leafy branches. (XIV.  
399-408)

As he is dying from a spear-wound inflicted by Patroclus, Sarpedon groans "like some tawny, spirited bull a lion has killed" (XVI. 522-524). Achilles' divinely amplified shout is compared to "the piercing sound of horns / when squadrons come to destroy a city" (XVIII. 234-235), and both Hippodamas' death-bellow and Scamander's roaring against Achilles are, as in the Sarpedon example, compared to the sound of a bull (XX. 231-232, XXI. 410). It is clear that each of these similes is instrumental in *sonically* amplifying the reader or listener's experience of the scene; the audience member, through these comparisons, mentally constructs the scene with a vivid aural engagement. Furthermore, it seems that facilitating this sort of aural engagement is primarily what these specific similes are *for*; thus, their designation as similes with a primarily auditory function is justified. Pointing out that primarily auditory similes simply exist, however, is uninteresting. Thus, the natural next step in this analysis is to search for unifying patterns that grant stable thematic cohesion to the body of examples.

Perhaps the most apparent pattern for this group of similes is that the sounds of individual humans are consistently compared to sounds of individual animals. The voices of Priam, Panthous, Thymoetes, Lampus, *et al.* are likened to the "delicate voices" of a group of cicadas; this parallel between the two groups (group of

elders and group of insects) can be interpretively deconstructed into a relationship between the *individuals* of one group and the *individuals* of the other. Thus, each elder Trojan corresponds to *one* of the cicadas “perched on a branch,” and therefore this simile fits the pattern of single human-to-animal fit, as the sounds of several *individual* humans correspond to the sounds of several *individual* animals. The other two similes reflective of this pattern require no such interpretive move; the one-to-one correspondences between Sarpedon’s groans and a “tawny, spirited bull” and Hippodamas’ bellow and the “way a bull / will bellow when dragged by young men / around Poseidon’s altar” are clear (XX. 415-418).

This theme of individual human sounds compared to individual animal sounds thereby provides a relatively stable pattern to which we can contrast the auditory simile involving armies. While I have provided only one example of an auditory army simile, I believe that a cohesive theme can nevertheless be established due to the multiple comparisons embedded in the example. In this simile, the roar of the embattled Greeks and Trojans is compared not only to the “pounding surf” but also to “hissing fire” and “howling wind” (XIV. 400-405). These three comparisons are connected in that they are all *forces of nature*; they go beyond all human capacity to control and bring with them the threat of imminent destruction. These themes of comparing armies to forces of nature while comparing individual humans to individual animals are independently cohesive, but they also interact *with one another* in an interesting and dynamic way. Animals, like individual humans, are largely under the human power to control and have limited destructive capability. Armies, on the other hand, are like oceans, forest fires, and windstorms—irrepressible and nearly limitless in their destructive power. Thus, we have before us a stable theme that provides a cohesive grounding for the primarily auditory similes: the sounds of *individual humans* are compared to the sounds of *individual animals*

while the sounds of *armies* are compared to the sounds of *forces of nature*, perhaps in order to highlight and reinforce the immense destructive potential of armies.

It must be pointed out, however, that this unifying pattern has been constructed without properly integrating three of the above examples: Poseidon's shout, Achilles' shout, and Scamander's being compared to a bull. These three similes do not at first glance fit easily into this newly explicated interpretive schema, but perhaps under closer inspection they are not as problematic as they may initially seem. Consider Poseidon's shout; this simile is certainly an outlier in that there is no precedent within the auditory similes for a god being compared to a horde of mortals. While certainly puzzling at first, I believe that this simile can be integrated into the pattern formulated above by interpreting it as follows. Poseidon, as the Earthshaker and God of the Sea, represents in a very strong sense a *force of nature*, the force of earthquakes and sea storms. He is compared to "ten thousand warriors" that have been "enlisted by Ares," *i.e.* an *army* of ten-thousand men. Thus, this simile is merely another example of the established *army-as-force-of-nature* pattern; the comparison simply runs from nature to army instead of from army to nature.

Achilles' shout cannot be integrated into the pattern quite as gracefully, but it can be shown that, at the very least, this simile does not threaten to *destabilize* the pattern. The comparison of Achilles' voice to that of "the piercing sound of horns / When squadrons come to destroy a city" is highly peculiar; it is unique among the auditory similes in that the object of comparison is a man-made (or, at least, man-altered, depending on what is meant by "horn") construction. Thus, we have a problematic instance in which an individual human is compared to something other than an individual animal. This is not surprising, however, in the case of Achilles. We might even expect, due to his characterization in Books 19 through 22, for him to be compared to a force of nature

and thus be figured as closer to an army (or a god) than to a single man, but this is not the case. Instead he is compared to the sounding of trumpets, and it is not initially clear how to interpret this. I propose that it is best understood as indicative of Achilles' intermediary status between god and man. To elucidate: A trumpet sounds louder than any one man (or animal) can shout, but it is not as powerful as the crashing of the sea or the howling of the winds. Thus, Achilles' comparison to a chorus of trumpets indicates that he is capable of far more than regular human beings, but he is not quite a force of nature (*i.e.* not quite a Poseidon) in that he does not transcend the jurisdiction of human control. He is, after all, ultimately killed by another mortal. The comparison of Achilles' shout to the sound of horns therefore remains an outlier, but an outlier that can be explained *in terms of* the observed pattern, and thus does not threaten to destabilize the cohesive theme.

The simile comparing Scamander—a force of nature—to a bull is more insolubly problematic. This simile explicitly misaligns the expected comparative relationships of an auditory simile and does not present any possible interpretation in which the problem might be resolved. In order to accommodate this difficulty, however, I feel that it is important to consider what may be reasonably expected from a proposed pattern of the *Iliad's* aesthetic elements. The poem is, most scholars contend, the product of a long, organic oral tradition; there was likely no systematic process of creation, and therefore to expect the work to adhere to any strict systematic interpretive schema without *any* outliers or counterexamples is too strong a requirement.

With the general cohesive pattern for primarily auditory similes thus formulated, subjected to problematic outliers, and successfully defended, I will now turn my attention to examining those similes that I take to have some significant auditory component. The first I will examine is one of the most famous of the

*Iliad's* similes, found in Book 12 during the Trojan assault on the Greek wall:

Snow flurries fall thick on a winter's day  
When Zeus in his cunning rouses himself  
To show humans the ammunition he has.  
He lulls the winds and he snows and snows  
Until he has covered all the mountain tops,  
Headlands and meadows and men's plowed fields.  
And the snow falls over the harbors  
And the shores of the grey sea, and only  
The waves keep it off. The rest of the world  
Is enveloped in the winter tempest of Zeus.  
The stones flew thick upon the Trojans  
And upon the Greeks, and the wooden wall  
Was beaten like a drum along its whole length. (XII. 287-  
299)

This particularly rich simile may be interpreted in a variety of ways. Its primary immediate function is, arguably, to represent *visually* the stones that fall from the Greek wall; the comparison of the stones to snowflakes creates a mental image of countless chunks of debris inundating the troops on both sides. Considered within the broader context of the poem's holistic program of similes, the "snow flurries" simile interacts symbiotically with the overarching motif of young warriors being compared to vegetation (such as the aforementioned Gorgythion simile). Just as a blanket of freezing snow snuffs out vegetative life, so too do the stones cut short the lives of many young Trojan and Greek warriors. One of the more intriguing interpretations in the literature is put forward by David Porter in his "Violent Juxtaposition in the Similes of the *Iliad*," in which he argues that this simile, as a scene of *calm in nature*, functions to create a "violent juxtaposition" with the scene of battle

in which it is nested, thus heightening the poem's sense of the vicious and destructive nature of war (17-18). While Porter's interpretation is not necessarily authoritative, it is nevertheless highly relevant to the current discussion in that this "violent juxtaposition" is achieved in large part by the hitherto unexamined *auditory component* of the simile, something that Porter himself does not address. As such, I now move to examine this auditory component and its function in facilitating a violent juxtaposition.

Although the language of the simile does not explicitly provoke it, there seems to be a prominent sonic element to the reader's or listener's mental construction of the "snow flurries" scene. While the primary component is certainly the *visual* experience of picturing lightly falling snow, there is an important corresponding *auditory* component—the soft impact of flakes settling on a snowbank, the gentle whisper of the wind in a peaceful flurry, etc. Once this subtle auditory component is articulated, the manner by which a "violent juxtaposition" is thereby sonically achieved becomes clear. This serene, near silent aural construction in the mind of the reader or listener is immediately and violently juxtaposed with the cacophony of the battle in which the simile is nested. Interestingly, the language of the text directly following the simile *does* in fact explicitly refer to sound: "and the wooden wall / Was *beaten like a drum*" (XII. 298-299). This drum reference (itself a miniature sound simile) practically necessitates an auditory contrast to be made between the tranquil aural character of the simile and the chaotic din of the Trojan assault. Thus, it seems, the implicit auditory component of the "snow flurries" simile is the primary means through which a violent juxtaposition, and resultant intensification of the poem's sense of the brutality and pandemonium of war, is achieved.

This connection between a simile's auditory component and the concept of violent juxtaposition can be seen in at least one other

example. When Hector decides against supplicating Achilles in Book 22, he says to himself,

This is no time  
For talking, the way a boy and a girl  
Whisper to each other from oak tree or rock  
A boy and a girl with all their sweet talk.  
Better to lock up in mortal combat  
As soon as possible and see to whom  
God on Olympus grants the victory. (XXII. 143-148)

This simile, like the “snow flurries” simile, does not appear to be primarily auditory. While it is true that a sound element (whispering) is mentioned explicitly, the visual aspect of the boy and girl spatially situated amongst the landscape of oaks and rocks is perhaps the simile’s most vital component. It is possible to disagree with this claim, but, at the very least, I take this ambiguity in discerning this simile’s primary function as reason enough to classify it as an instance of the “auditory component” category rather than the “primarily auditory” category. Porter argues that this simile functions to create a violent juxtaposition because it compares war to the *life of children*. This is not incorrect, but it is also not the *only* way in which a violent juxtaposition is achieved by the simile. I contend that, just as in the “snow flurries” example, the auditory component of the “whispering boy/ girl” simile *itself* contributes to the creation of a violent juxtaposition. Thus, two separate but related juxtapositions are created by the same simile through the comparison of children to warriors and whispering to sounds of battle (war-cries, etc.) in both the past conflicts of the poem and the approaching clash of Hector and Achilles. Thus, for both of these examined *auditory component* examples, it holds true that the similes in this category function, at least insofar as their

sonic element is concerned, to facilitate a violent juxtaposition between their sound component and the sounds of war.

Now that cohesive themes have been established for both the “primarily auditory” and “auditory component” sub-classes, I will conclude by attempting to synthesize the observations of the preceding discussion in order to offer a definitive pattern for the sound similes of the *Iliad*. Similes that are primarily auditory have been shown to compare individual humans to individual animals and armies to forces of nature, and the problematic cases of Achilles and Poseidon have been successfully integrated into this schema. Furthermore, primarily auditory similes have the feature of what I will now refer to as “natural correspondence”—*i.e.* these similes create something completely the opposite of a “violent juxtaposition.” There is a natural and unsurprising correspondence between the roar of two armies clashing and the roar of the sea, for example. Auditory component similes, on the other hand, have been shown to facilitate violent juxtapositions through comparing their sonic element to the sounds of war. To recapitulate: primarily auditory similes, in addition to the more specific patterns discussed above, create natural correspondences between compared scenes; auditory component similes, by contrast, create violent juxtapositions between compared scenes. Since a divergence of function between the two sub-classes was anticipated, this analysis seems to be a relatively satisfying, stable account of cohesion among the body of provided examples.

The account presented in this paper is not meant to be taken as a conclusive or decisive analysis of auditory similes in the *Iliad*. It is highly possible, perhaps probable, that I have either missed instances of what might be properly called “auditory” similes in the poem, or failed to recognize interesting connections among them, or both. At the very least, however, I hope to have shown that sound similes constitute an interesting and functionally versatile category of Iliadic simile, and by doing so encourage more

scholarly attention to be focused on this currently underrepresented aesthetic component of the epic.

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# The Prevalence of Sexual Assault on College Campuses

BRENNA HILL

## Abstract

Sexual assault is a social problem that disproportionately affects college students. Sexual assault perpetrated by men against women is a common occurrence on college campuses. Although situations involving alcohol and drug use often play a role in sexual assault cases, the root cause of the problem is the general perception of violence against women that is perpetuated in society and is implicitly tolerated as an aspect of the status quo. The impact of sexual assault on the survivor is far-reaching. Not only does the survivor experience physical and mental suffering from the assault, the experience jeopardizes the survivor's college education. It contributes to students' decisions about whether to stay in school, where to live, and what classes to take, as well as their sense of safety and security. The experience often makes it difficult for survivors to focus on their academic studies and to perform effectively. Although many institutions are responding to the problem of sexual assault, more improvements are necessary. Student prevention programs and education regarding sexual violence, improved protocol and campus responses to assault, and additional legislation at the federal and state level are all measures that should be implemented.

Sexual assault perpetuated by men against women is a major social problem, particularly on college campuses. The World Health Organization defines sexual assault as “any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work” (2002). College women experience three times the risk of experiencing sexual assault as other women, and the United States Department of Justice reports that one in four women attending college experiences sexual violence during her four years of study (Luke 2009 and Christensen 2013). Sexual assault, particularly the victimization of college-age women, is a significant social problem that is reluctantly accepted by many as inevitable or as an unfortunate but unavoidable part of the existing social structure.

### **Effects on Survivors**

Not only is the prevalence of sexual assault against college women high, but the negative impact on victims is extensive. In addition to the immediate physical injury of the assault, long-term effects on the victim can include sleep difficulties, depression, unwanted pregnancy, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Joseph, Gray, and Mayer 2013). In addition to health concerns, sexual assault influences the survivor’s ability to complete her education, her future career choices, and her sense of security and well-being (Russo 2001). Survivors often disengage from their course work or school activities due to fear of seeing their perpetrator on campus or in class (Christensen 2013). Many sexual assault survivors already experience self-blame, and when family members or friends also blame or do not believe the victim, the victim’s emotional suffering increases; she experiences an increased likelihood of negative outcomes such as shame, depression, and

post-traumatic stress disorder (Hayes-Smith and Hayes-Smith 2009; Joseph, Gray, and Mayer 2013).

### **Debunking Sexual Assault Myths**

Myths concerning sexual assault perpetuate the problem and make it difficult to have a productive discussion to determine solutions. These myths are widely held yet incorrect beliefs about how and why sexual assaults occur. The media frequently depicts sexual assault as being committed by violent strangers when the reality is that most victims are assaulted by people they know. For this reason, many sexual assaults go unreported because victims do not necessarily define the act as rape or sexual assault (Hayes-Smith and Hayes-Smith 2009). According to system justification theory, disadvantaged individuals accept and often defend unjust circumstances because rationalizing existing social conditions tends to increase their sense of control and overall satisfaction (Joseph, Gray, and Mayer 2013). System justification perpetuates the status quo and makes change less likely. Under system justification theory, victims of an acquaintance-perpetrated assault are less likely to label their experience as “rape” because events do not fit the description of a “stereotypical” sexual assault, such as being assaulted by a stranger (Joseph, Gray, and Mayer 2013).

Many people believe that most rapists are “mentally ill” or “psychologically disturbed” individuals who lack the ability to control their behavior (Joseph, Gray, and Mayer 2013; Scully and Marolla 2005). However, research has failed to discover a particular personality type or character disorder that differentiates rapists from other men (Scully and Marolla 2005). Evidence indicates that rape is not a behavior confined to a few “sick” men; instead, many men hold the attitudes and beliefs necessary to commit sexual violence. Another example of a myth regarding victims of sexual assault is that women who dress provocatively are “asking for it”

(Joseph, Gray, and Mayer 2013). In addition, many young men have come to believe another common myth that perpetuates date rape: that women want sex just as much as men do, but are socialized to say no, even if they mean yes (Kimmel 2008). These myths, and many others, trivialize sexual assaults, preventing society from acknowledging the severity of the problem. These myths are reinforced and violence against women is normalized through television, movies, advertising, music, and pornography (Joseph, Gray, and Mayer 2013).

### **Party Culture on College Campuses**

Alcohol plays a large role in the pervasiveness of sexual assault on college campuses and is a factor in approximately half of all sexual assaults (Luke 2009). Among all the categories of acquaintance rape, the most common is “party rape,” which is defined by the United States Department of Justice as a rape that “occurs at an off-campus house or campus fraternity and involves... plying a woman with alcohol or targeting an intoxicated woman” (2002). Alcohol is often used as a strategy to avoid responsibility. Alcohol may “release pent-up aggression, dull one’s perceptions, and make one more vulnerable to peer pressure” (Kimmel 2008). Many college students consider partying to be a central part of the college experience. It serves as a means to exercise independence from parents as well as a form of entertainment (Luke 2009). Especially among freshmen, college students experience a new sense of freedom being away from their parents and are eager to prove themselves to their new peers, often by experimenting with alcohol for the first time (Kimmel 2014). At universities with a large Greek culture, fraternities typically host all the parties, partly due to the fact that national sororities are not permitted to serve alcohol at their parties. In addition to party culture and binge drinking habits among college students, campus

all-male organizations also contribute to the prevalence of sexual assault on college campuses (Martin and Hummer 1999).

### **Fraternities and Male Athletes**

Many scholars have studied all-male organizations such as fraternities and athletic teams and have determined that masculinity within these groups can cause women to be viewed as passive and over-sexualized (Luke 2009). Fraternity houses often offer a place free from the scrutiny of campus administration and police officers where it is easier for members to use alcohol or to engage in other risky behaviors. "Hooking up" defines a common form of social and sexual relationship among college students, and a common way for a member of an all-male organization to prove his masculinity and feel accepted within the group is to "hook up" with as many women as possible (Kimmel 2008). Women are treated as commodities and as the spoils of competition among some fraternity members striving to appear masculine and popular. All-male organizations often provide "male peer support" by normalizing sexual aggression toward women and portraying it as a form of masculinity (Schwartz and DeKeseredy 1997).

Not all all-male organizations display these patterns of behavior, and research has shown that higher-prestige fraternities and athletic programs promote a higher level of sexual entitlement (Kimmel 2008). Many college athletic programs have promoted "female hostess programs" to entice recruits to come to their institutions. In 1987, it was revealed that Southern Methodist University football boosters had paid sorority women up to \$400 a weekend to have sex with high-school football recruits (Kimmel 2008). Fraternity members and student athletes are more prone to sexual violence, not because they are fraternity members or athletes, but because participation in these groups can confer on them an elite status that is easily translated into a sense of

entitlement and because the bonds of these groups are so intense (Kimmel 2008).

### **Popular Culture and Pornography**

Young men and women grow up looking at sexualized images of women in the mainstream media and this can lead men to feel entitled to women's bodies (Kimmel 2008). In addition to the influences of popular culture, pornography also affects gender stereotypes and expectations of sexual activity. Pornography is an expression of rape culture where women are seen as objects available for use by men (Scully and Marolla 2005). Even though pornography may not directly cause rape or violence, it does sexualize violence against women and makes it look acceptable (Kimmel 2008). In addition, self-control plays a factor in pornography consumption and other behaviors. Those with less self-control are more likely to participate in risky behaviors such as pornography consumption and alcohol and drug use, behaviors that in turn, can affect sexual assault (Franklin, Bouffard, and Pratt 2012).

### **Interactions Among Women**

Although interactions between men and women have been viewed as the primary factor in sexual violence, few studies have focused on interactions among women. Women participate in "othering" when they judge other women or view survivors of sexual assault as being promiscuous or "asking for it" by their behavior, appearance, or past sexual experiences (Luke 2009). Women may do this to distance themselves from the dangers of sexual assault. These judgments about other women represent an "internalized technology of gender" and set the precedent for what is and what is not appropriate behavior for women (Luke 2009).

Women rely on individualized strategies in preventing sexual assault, indicating a wide-spread belief that it is the responsibility of the woman to keep herself safe. Women mostly rely on defensive strategies such as carrying pepper spray, wearing less-revealing clothing, and monitoring where they set down their drinks rather than holding men accountable for their actions or questioning the larger social culture and structure that encourages sexual assault (Luke 2009). Another common strategy among women is the “buddy system.” Women look out for each other by agreeing to leave a party or bar at the same time and helping friends who have had too much to drink. This demonstrates that women recognize that sexual assault is a shared problem, not an individual one; however, this strategy is unlikely to be successful in all instances of heavy drinking or circumstances where a woman is pursuing a particular social or sexual agenda (Luke 2009).

### **Existing Legislation**

Specific legislation, such as Title IX, has required universities to provide women with resources to cope with sexual assault and recognize gender inequalities by adhering to certain standards of equality (Hayes-Smith and Hayes-Smith 2009). Title IX holds colleges accountable for responding to sexual violence that occurs on their campuses. The current policy guidelines do not, however, require universities to report sexual assaults to local police or to investigate sexual assaults in coordination with local law enforcement. Instead, the current policies allow universities to deal with sexual assaults internally and to establish their own investigations and procedures without the oversight, assistance, or involvement of law enforcement agencies (DeBold 2014). In addition, the Student Right-to-Know and Campus Security Act requires institutions that receive public funding to publicly release crime statistics as well as campus crime procedures.

The Dear Colleague Letter (DCL), issued by the Department of Education (DOE), was released to provide more concrete guidelines on how universities are to comply with Title IX (2011). The DCL stipulates that colleges are required to adopt a notice of nondiscrimination that prohibits sexual violence, appoint a Title IX coordinator to oversee sexual assault investigations, and provide a prompt grievance procedure when a complaint is filed. Absent from the DCL's policy guidelines are established procedures for how university officials and outside law enforcement agencies should coordinate to exercise jurisdiction over sexual assault cases. Although the DOE has specifically stated that it is not the job of university personnel to take on the role of law enforcement, the DOE has not required universities to contact law enforcement when a sexual assault is reported (DeBold 2014). Because there is no federal reporting requirement, the criminal justice system will only become involved in a campus sexual assault if: the university has entered into a voluntary memorandum of understanding with a local law enforcement agency, state law mandates joint investigations, or a victim chooses to contact law enforcement at his or her own discretion (DeBold 2014). While it is true that universities may be better able to provide certain services such as counseling and educational programs, this does not mean that universities have the capability or resources to take on the role of the criminal justice system in investigating instances of sexual violence (DeBold 2014).

In addition to campus protocol for dealing with sexual assault cases, state and federal legislation is also inconsistent between states and leaves much room for improvement. Eight states still have legislation requiring victim resistance to rape and an additional sixteen states define the elements of force, consent, or specific sex offenses in terms of a victim's resistance. Most sex offense laws require the victim to vigorously assert non-consent or resist, rather than require the defendant to obtain consent before

committing a sexual act (Decker & Baroni 2011). A victim, frozen with fear, who fails to express approval by words or actions should have that decision protected by the criminal justice system. Sexual activity should be based on a freely given agreement between adults and sex should not rightly occur unless each party consents before the act takes place (Decker & Baroni 2011). Even with the implementation of several pieces of legislation and many other state mandates, sexual assault continues to remain a major problem on college campuses.

### **Additional Measures to be Taken**

Although legislation has improved the way college campuses handle sexual assault, more measures need to be taken to minimize the number of sexual assaults, ensure a legitimate means for justice, and provide a support system for victims. Colleges need to clearly define all forms of sexual assault and specify what acts constitute assault; describe circumstances in which sexual assault most commonly occurs; discuss the prevalence of acquaintance or non-stranger sexual assault; and provide information about community and university resources for victims of sexual assault (Hayes-Smith and Hayes-Smith 2009). Students should also be warned of the strong connection between drugs and alcohol and sexual assault. Sexual assault myths must be exposed as non-factual so that potential perpetrators will not continue to assume that assault is acceptable at any level and potential victims will not risk being unfairly blamed for their suffering. It is also important to inform family and friends of victims, ensure that victims have a secure support system, and develop advocacy programs to assist survivors throughout the healing process.

Because a lack of clear communication and involvement of alcohol often contribute to instances of sexual assault, colleges

should maintain specific guidelines of the definition of consent and should educate students on the importance of receiving clear consent before engaging in any sexual activity. At Antioch College in Ohio, the Code of Conduct dictates that verbal consent is required for any sexual contact and states: “do not take silence as consent, it isn’t” (Kimmel 2008). Consent to sexual activity requires more than not saying no, and colleges should emphasize this to their students and clearly state this in their campus policies. The conversation about consent is an important one that needs to be considered in the discussion of sexual assault.

Prevention and education programs on college campuses need to be improved. The majority of sexual assault prevention programs currently offered to college students tend to focus on addressing relationship skill deficits and countering myths about assault with facts. In regard to skill deficits, training students on specific tasks such as clearly communicating wants and needs and drinking alcohol in moderation can be a valuable learning experience. Engaging men in a group discussion of self-identified values consistent with masculinity but inconsistent with assault behaviors can help to redefine masculinity and move away from the violent behaviors that are often associated with it (Joseph, Gray, Mayer 2013). Programs also need to encourage participants to examine the positive and negative aspects of gender stereotypes. An example would be for participants to identify moments in their own lives when adhering to gender stereotypes led to positive or negative outcomes, followed by a nonjudgmental discussion of these experiences. (Joseph, Gray, and Mayer 2013).

Bystander intervention programs can be a positive step toward engaging students on a college campus to intervene in situations in which there is potential for sexual violence to occur (Christensen 2013). These programs teach students to be proactive and help transform the social norms that perpetuate the acceptance of sexual violence. In addition, programs incorporating the arts and

other forms of creative expression can be a valuable outlet to promote social change. For example, theatre of the oppressed uses theatre to draw attention to a particular social problem. Theatre troupe members act out a scene in which the social problem occurs, in this case sexual assault, and other community members are invited to freeze the action and propose alternative outcomes to the scene (Christensen 2013). Engaging community members in acting out possible solutions to a social problem provides the community an opportunity to visualize and discuss solutions that can be practiced in real life rather than have outside experts define issues and provide solutions (Christensen 2013).

In addition to campus programs and protocol, the federal government should seek to ensure more accountability and transparency from universities by requiring them to work with local law enforcement agencies to investigate sexual assaults on their campuses. Failing to carve out a meaningful role for the criminal justice system to be involved in investigating campus sexual assaults downplays the serious nature of sexual violence. When a college student is sexually assaulted, the assault should not be treated as an institutional matter of gender discrimination, but should be handled by the justice system.

## **Conclusion**

Sexual assault perpetrated by males against females continues to be a problematic, yet unfortunately tolerated element of the status quo. The observed spike in sexual assault prevalence during women's late teens and early twenties places college students at the greatest risk. This phenomenon could be the result of college students living on their own for the first time, learning to make decisions without the guidance of parents, seeking social bonding, having increased access to alcohol, and enjoying longer stretches of unstructured free time (Joseph, Gray, and Mayer 2013).

Sexual assault is a problem that cannot be resolved unless potential perpetrators are also included in prevention efforts. Programs originally designed for female-only audiences should be adapted to include male-only or mixed-gender programs (Joseph, Gray, and Mayer 2013). Only when men can confront each other, and support each other in standing up for what is right, can we develop a new model of masculinity. Being a man should mean doing the right thing, standing up to immorality, and expressing compassion. Addressing the problem of sexual assault on college campuses must be integral to the agenda of educators, administrators, activists, students, and legislators. Efforts to address sexual assault should aim to create a community of respect in which students feel safe and secure and are able to learn and grow in an environment that values each individual.

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## Ambiguity in *The Turn of the Screw*

FAITH POYNOR

Henry James's novella *The Turn of the Screw* is a complex piece of literary art that has been the subject of much interpretive debate regarding many aspects of the story, including the very nature of the story itself. The numerous different readings of this tale are related to the ambiguous language and narration that James employs. The pervasive ambiguity of *The Turn of the Screw* invites a deconstructive reading that allows readers to accept the novella as both a ghost story and a psychological thriller, bringing into question the narrative reliability of a neurotic nineteenth-century governess.

Knowing the historical background, status, and role of Victorian governesses is necessary in understanding the motives, emotions, and thoughts of the governess protagonist. The society and economy of Victorian England was such that many women from the rising middle class were driven into the profession of governess out of the necessity to provide for their families. Middle-class women who did not marry had only the choice of becoming a governess to a wealthy, upper-class family in order to support themselves. The occupation of governess offered no rank or respectability, a condition that a contemporary of the time, Anna Jameson, found detestable: "The inferior position of the woman, and the inferior value of her services, as compared with the same classes in the other sex, is in no instance so obvious, so bitterly felt, so unspeakably unjust, as in this" (in Beidler 162). Governesses, who were often seen as below servants in the social hierarchy, were often mistreated by their employers but were resigned to suffer through their service, a job at least offering a home to stay in and a meagre salary on which to survive. The social and gender inequalities that the female governesses had to face are part of what

made “the position of a governess [the] hardest of all to bear” (Beidler 176). The demands placed on a governess were exceedingly unreasonable; a governess was expected to be sufficiently learned and intelligent to teach children well, to be socially cultured in order to interact with the upper class, and always to restrain and withhold her sexuality according to Victorian propriety. These expectations and qualifications made it very difficult for a governess to find a job and be able to keep it, resulting in an overcrowded, underpaid profession.

The Governesses’ Benevolent Institution was established at 66 Harley Street, London, in 1843 as a place of refuge where governesses could have a place to stay while searching for employment (Beidler 169). These women suffered through terrible poverty and isolation as a result of their profession. According to Jameson, “with the woman, ‘whose proper sphere is home,’ —the woman who either has no home, or is exiled from that which she has,—the occupation of governess is sought merely through necessity” (Beidler 162). This idea is exemplified by the difficult family circumstances which forced the governess of James’s story into her position: “As one of several children of a poor country parson, the new governess at Bly would have had few options. Without a dowry, her chances of marrying were slender, so the only profession open to her was that of governess” (Beidler 165). As Douglas explains in the prologue of the story, “But the salary offered much exceeded her modest measure, and on a second interview she faced the music, she engaged” (James 28). Thus, desperate for employment in a difficult job market where there was no choice but to take any job she could get, the governess agreed to the outrageous condition of the master of Bly: that she should never bother him.

This historical information shows how the instability of the profession of governess would have psychological consequences for the protagonist of the novella. Psychoanalytic interpretation

reveals the effects of these consequences. James's governess represents the limitations placed on women in Victorian society, particularly sexual limitations. Given her background as the daughter of a clergyman, as well as the expectation that, as a governess, she must inhibit any expression of her sexuality, sexual repression is an important psychological factor in the actions and thoughts of the governess. In the prologue, Douglas reveals the governess's sexual attraction to the master. She must repress these sexual urges due to societal expectations and the absence of the object of her desire. Her desire for his approval increases her anxiety over meeting the great expectations placed on her—an ambition that is countered by the reality of her circumstances. The governess “finds in the children's uncle a symbol of an imaginative order, the Lacanian ‘big Other,’ who offers psychic wholeness” (Zacharias 322). The master is the judge of all her actions, the one to whom she constantly seeks to conform.

The governess's fear of failure and her sexual repression are the sources of her desperation and fantasy. As Greg W. Zacharias argues, “her narrative [reads] as a confession—a representation of truth shaped by the unconscious—of a difficult period in her life” (Zacharias 320). The governess's truth is her perception of the ghosts. The part of her mind that is not aware, her unconscious, shapes her fantasy of the ghosts that allows her to deal with the demands and difficulties of her situation at Bly (Zacharias 321). Her anxiety is greatest just before her first ghost sighting. She thinks about her duties to the master and of her own pleasure at the thought of pleasing him: “I was giving pleasure—if he ever thought of it!—to the person to whose pressure I had yielded. What I was doing was what he had earnestly hoped and directly asked of me, and that I *could*, after all, do it proved even a greater joy than I had expected” (James 38). This language is loaded with sexual subtext, further indicating the repression of her sexual urges regarding the master. She desires to see the master again and to be accepted by

him, represented by her wish to encounter someone who approves of her while on her nightly stroll. Her wish soon comes true, and she sees an apparition standing at the top of the tower, staring down at her. Thus, the ghosts reflect projections of her own desires; they are the result of a fantasy about a romantic encounter combined with the effect of anxieties on the mind.

There is a discernible link between the governess's increasing desire to control her circumstances and her increasing certainty about the existence of the ghosts of Quint and Jessel. The harder she tries to keep control over her difficult situation, the more she becomes lost in the fantasy. The governess actually takes pleasure in the presence of the ghosts because they allow her to play the hero in the fantasy: "I was in these days literally able to find a joy in the extraordinary flight of heroism the occasion demanded of me" (James 53). A twisted sense of duty to the children and a desire to be approved by the master motivate her to take up the role of hero and defender of the children's innocence against the corruption of the supposedly wicked servants. The ironic pleasure she finds in such terrifying conditions is referred to as *jouissance*, a Lacanian notion that roughly means finding pleasure in pain (Zacharias 324). Power comes with the illusion of control, and the governess becomes obsessed with her ability to perceive the ghosts when no one else can. When it seems that she has lost her special power, she becomes anxious and fears that she will not be able to keep the children safe and therefore not be able to please the master and succeed at her job. The governess tells Mrs. Grose that "it would from that moment distress me much more to lose my power than to keep it" (James 80). She is convinced that the ghosts are still present around her, but she cannot see them. Believing that the apparitions are evil strengthens her fantasy, because "she can combat wickedness itself as the heroine of the scene. The Lacanian fantasy that she protects Bly against malevolent ghosts who seek to harm the children... is central to the governess's representation of

herself as the heroine of Bly" (Zacharias 328-329). The governess believes she has been called to carry out her brave mission of defending the children, a more noble pursuit that allows her to better fulfil the demands of the big Other, the master, and achieve greater psychic wholeness.

The various neuroses of the governess call into question her reliability as narrator of the tale. She is a naïve, impressionable, and, by her own admission, volatile character who jumps to conclusions and is distracted by physical beauty. Her attempt to deny her sexuality causes her to "[disavow] her attraction toward the uncle by conjuring a figure who is both repulsive and beneath her in class terms" (Teahan 398). In other words, her neurotic sexual repression leads her to displace her sexual feelings for the uncle onto a phantasmal being who is equally physically attractive, but even less sexually available to her. If the governess's tale is merely a fantasy of her own making, she is an unreliable narrator. However, her reliability remains in question due to the narrative structure of the novella.

There are three levels of narration in the story: the first person narrator, Douglas, and the governess. Multiple narrators acting as characters in the tale create stories within stories due to differences of perspectives, leaving readers struggling to find reality in layers of narrative. The prologue of the novella functions as the frame narrative that serves to establish the background and context of the story as well as the credibility of the governess narrator. According to Sheila Teahan, "the frame narrative that introduces *The Turn of the Screw* is a source of ambiguity as well as important background information" (Teahan 393). James uses the prologue to both ensure readers of the governess's reliability and to further obscure the truth. In convincing readers to fix meaning to ambiguous scenes without meaning, James manipulates readers' perception of certainty and reality. As Douglas assures his audience of the trustworthiness and respectability of the governess, the first

person narrator questions his objectivity, thereby inviting the reader to question both Douglas and the governess as reliable sources of information. Douglas has a personal history with the governess; he was romantically and sexually attracted to her, confounding his view of her as stable and sane. Douglas's certainty about the governess's story is suspicious, foreshadowing a theme of uncertainty in the rest of the story.

The governess discloses her tale in the manuscript that comprises the rest of the novella. The reader must decide whether or not to trust her. She seems to be gullible but honest, creating further tension and ambiguity about the reality of the events she describes. If readers accept that she believes in the truth of her tale, it is still impossible to determine if her truth is real, if the ghosts she sees truly exist. The ambiguous reliability of the governess intensifies the ambiguous nature of the tale, with the ghost story and psychological story playing off each other to create further unresolved tension. The presence of a prologue and the absence of an epilogue generates more ambiguity and tension. Without an epilogue, there is no stability, relief of tension, or explanation that could lead to a better understanding of the story. Thus, the complex narrative structure of *The Turn of the Screw* creates ambiguity about the nature of the story itself.

The ambiguity of the governess's narrative is apparent in the tension between doubt and certitude, subjectivity and objectivity, and knowledge and emotion in the novella. The governess repeatedly says that she is certain and has proof of the apparitions she sees. Vision is the primary method of determining certitude about the existence of something, yet she claims certitude based on a psychic sixth sense. While at the lake with Flora, the governess "[begins] to take in with certitude and yet without direct vision the presence, a good way off, of a third person" (James 54). The governess becomes convinced that Flora also sees the woman and claims that Flora's lack of response is proof of her recognition

of the ghost of Jessel. James uses such vague language as “I became aware,” “I would assure myself,” and “I found myself forming” to describe the governess’s perception of the apparitions. Ambiguity about apparitions is influenced by the governess’s confusing emotion and knowledge. She lets her fear control her rational thought, saying that she is certain of the presence of ghosts because she does not see them. This paradox shows she is so desperate to hold on to her power—her ability to see ghosts—that she convinces herself of her own certitude.

Perhaps the most ambiguous aspect of the story is that of Miles’s death. The manuscript, written in the first person, is the main narrative and reveals the governess as a self-conscious teller who locked away her story after having written it, as if ashamed of what she had divulged about herself. This revelation further determines the story to be the governess’s confession and self-justification for the tragic occurrences at Bly, culminating in the death of Miles. His death requires an explanation, one that the governess feels compelled to give in a manner similar to the Catholic practice of confession of sins. When speculating with Mrs. Grose about Miles’s transgression that caused him to be expelled from school, the governess says, “I’ll get it out of him. He’ll meet me. He’ll confess. If he confesses he’s saved. And if he’s saved—” (James 110). Mrs. Grose responds, saying, “Then *you* are?” (James 110). The governess sees confession as a means of salvation and believes that she needs to save Miles from possession by Quint to be saved herself. She becomes obsessed with her power and need to control, saying, “I was infatuated—I was blind with victory” (James 118). This admission could suggest that she murdered Miles out of a twisted sense of duty. It suggests that the corruption of the children is hers and that when Miles is “dispossessed,” it is of her, rather than the ghosts (James 120). The premature ending without an epilogue raises questions about the state of mind of the governess while writing about the death of Miles. Considering

ambiguity over whether or not she smothered him in the end, it is conceivable that in reliving the terrible event, she was shocked back to quietude at the reality of the situation and the possibility that it is her fault. She repeats the phrase “quiet day” several times in the final paragraphs, perhaps suggesting the stark realization of her own fantasy, leaving her with nothing else to say.

A reader’s impression and interpretation of the story depends on how the reader constructs meaning from ambiguity, just as the governess’s truth depends on how she constructs meaning out of the unusual situation at Bly. As Zacharias states, “the unconscious shapes the way each of us reads *The Turn of the Screw*, just as... the governess’s unconscious shapes in James’s tale the reading of her own history” (Zacharias 332). Because the ghosts are at once both absent and present, one can never know the full story. Determining that the ghosts are real to the governess still does not answer the question of the reality of the ghosts themselves. Christine Brooke-Rose suggests that readers should not seek an answer but instead should try to “preserve the total ambiguity” of the story because “there is no word or incident in the story that cannot be interpreted both ways” (Beidler 243). The ambiguity of James’s masterfully complex story should be seen as the end goal of the literary artwork itself.

These ideas support a deconstructive reading of the text. According to the literary theory of deconstruction, context defines meaning and perspective, and the reality in a text is constructed, just as reality itself is a construction of interpretation. Most importantly, deconstruction emphasizes finding multiple meanings and interpretations in literature as in life. There is not only one way of reading the world or a literary text. A deconstructive reading of *The Turn of the Screw* is one that accepts the novella as both ghost story and psychological thriller, rather than one or the other. Teahan believes the novella is an allegory of reading and that the governess “actually ‘writes’ or constructs” the

ghosts (Teahan 400). Quint and Jessel are not ghosts at all, but are constructed creations of the governess's fears, desires, and preconceptions. Her unconscious projects all this onto a form the governess can fight: demonic apparitions. Such projection allows her to deal with her difficult circumstances and to explain her frenzied actions. Teahan argues that "James's story is an allegory of (mis)reading because every reader, including the present one, is condemned to repeat the governess's impossible but necessary effort to master a text that can never be mastered" (Teahan 405). The best a reader can do is interpret the story as simultaneously a ghost story and a psychological story.

The deconstructive reading of *The Turn of the Screw* accepts the ambiguity of the story and the multiple interpretations it invites. The historical, cultural, social, and political setting of the novella helps explain the basis of neurosis in the governess, while issues of narrator unreliability and complex narrative structure are the main instruments in creating the great tension and ambiguity throughout Henry James's artfully crafted story.

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## Littlepage's Complaint: The Realist Regionalism of Sarah Orne Jewett

MASON WALKER

*"In that handful of houses they fancy they comprehend the universe."*  
Captain Littlepage, *The Country of the Pointed Firs*

In his manifesto "Criticism and Fiction," William Dean Howells called for American writers to stop penning their stories in perfect English. In order to portray a diversified nation with accuracy, Howells proposed rejecting the "priggish and artificial" speech of British literature in favor of styles that better reflected localized American dialects. "I should like to hear [characters] speak true American," he proclaimed, "with all the varying Tennessean, Philadelphian, Bostonian, and New York accents" (Howells 303). Suggestions like these were part of Howells's larger project, and of Realism's larger project as well; with national idealism crushed by the emotional weight of the Civil War, many Realists aimed to initiate a new literary tradition that emphasized accurate portraits of specific regions.

These Realists were particularly interested in capturing the color and content of small, self-contained communities. Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Oldtown Fireside Stories*, Alice Dunbar Nelson's Creole romances, Mark Twain's Calaveras County tall tales—all of these are attempts to capture the routines and eccentricities of tiny, more or less isolated localities. However, it could be argued that these stories, with their unimpeachably humorous tone and uniformly happy endings, are not realistic enough to succeed

completely as Realist fictions. They have the sort of detailed local color called for by Howells, but their simple, optimistic portraits of those localities lack the sort of complex accuracy that was also an essential facet of Howells's Realist project. It is exactly that sort of complexity that Sarah Orne Jewett, a prolific nineteenth-century Realist and regionalist writer, provides in her fiction. As careful study of her work reveals, Jewett frequently and thoroughly examines both the advantages and disadvantages of small-town life. Like Stowe, Dunbar Nelson, and Twain, Jewett does express the eccentric joys of these towns, with their close-knit elders and quaint rituals, but she also conveys the personal sorrow and communal damage that may occur when one lives the rural life incorrectly. In her novel *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, as well as in short stories like "A White Heron" and "By The Morning Boat," Jewett imprints a complex and truly *realistic* impression of nineteenth-century rural regionalism, examining how benefits of community, privacy, and simplicity may, in some cases, come at the cost of individual knowledge and societal health.

One of Jewett's most extensive examinations of rural realism appears in *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, an interconnected series of vignettes chronicling a writer's visit to the secluded community of Dunnet Landing. In an early chapter, the writer converses with an old sailor, Captain Littlepage, who provides one of the book's earliest ruminations on rural regionalist existence. Recounting his past days at sea, Littlepage tells the writer about the struggles of being a sailor; according to him, the occupation provides a "dog's life," full of "hard driving" and "old and leaky" ships (Jewett 1996, 20). He also recounts a specific voyage where the sailors, all sick, tired, and threatening mutiny, came upon a

frightening place with “fog-shaped men” that “wa’n’t a right feeling part of the world” (26-27). This story, with its combination of physical affliction and psychological torment, appears to discourage a life of travel, and by painting the outside world as garish and bewildering, Littlepage would seem implicitly to embrace the calmness and safety of Dunnet Landing.

But for all the struggles of his sailor’s life, the captain does ultimately value the time he spent at sea. Indeed, he bemoans the fact that *more* people are not spending time on such adventures. According to Littlepage, sailing, for all the trouble it caused, allowed the men of his generation to see “the world for themselves, and like ’s not their wives and children saw it ... . When folks left home in the old days, they left it to some purpose, and when they got home they stayed there and had some pride in it” (Jewett 1996, 21). In these lines, Littlepage argues that journeying provides not only a general sense of worldliness, but also specific worldview-shifting experiences, which can lead to the development of an individual conscience. In addition to arguing in favor of ocean travel, Littlepage effectively rebuts a major objection to his argument: the idea that those who frequently leave their hometowns do so because they do not love them enough to stay. For Littlepage, on the contrary, those who occasionally journey away from their towns care about them and provide for them even *more*, and when they return from their various voyages, they will bring back new and useful knowledge. Furthermore, their time away from the town will have renewed their appreciation for it (“when they got home... they had some pride in it”). As Susan Gillman notes, Littlepage’s assessment of the benefits of travel is a “vision which encompasses the domestic and the heroic” (Gillman

106). In other words, a sailor's odyssey helps him develop his technical knowledge and survival skills (things he needs at sea), but what he acquires on that odyssey will also prove useful in his home life, consequently improving the well-being of his native town.

The idyllic isle of Dunnet Landing is indeed beautiful, but Littlepage provides a potent warning about the dangers of idolizing this one place at the expense of travel to other places. An exchange of knowledge between and among different regions is necessary for the maintenance and growth of all involved—and, as Littlepage (and Jewett) reminds us, one of the dangers of rural regionalism is an excessively comfortable provincialism that disregards the larger perspective offered by such things as inter-regional traveling and learning.

If Littlepage's lament presents a traveler's sadness at the lack of adventurous men, it also expresses an old man's dissatisfaction with the state of Dunnet Landing's youth. The dearth of young sailors in Dunnet Landing is quite clearly related to a general dearth of young people: in *Pointed Firs*, Jewett's community consists almost entirely of widows, spinsters, and the otherwise unmarried. In both the text and the town it chronicles, the appearance of children is far from the norm. This lack of newborns, as Sarah Ensor notes, is due in no small part to the fact that many of the women on the island do not *want* to have children. Many single adults in Jewett's community ascribe to a world-view that Ensor calls "non-reproductive futurity"; that is, they "exemplify ... an alternative mode of inhabitation" by contributing to the town's figurative growth instead of its literal population expansion" (Ensor 422). By doing so, these people transform their lack of reproductive activity from "a chastening limitation to a

quietly affirmative state” (Ensor 422). Despite renouncing child-rearing, these individuals know their closely joined community well enough to contribute to it in other ways—by selling herbs, by catching fish, by hosting gatherings, and so on. Because their small town allows them easily to find their niches and to discover alternative ways to benefit their community, these people are able to transform childlessness, potentially a tragic state, into something positive and productive.

At least in some ways, then, it is clearly beneficial that Dunnet Landing makes room for the spinsters, widows, and single people of the world, and that the unique position of the town allows these people to thrive without being tied down by the confines of gender stereotypes and normative domesticity. However, these benefits come at a cost. While figurative growth is necessary, a community must also grow in a more literal way, through the creation of new citizens. Ultimately, it is the young who perpetuate a town and its traditions—and, as Littlepage’s lament about the lack of new sailors reveals, it is often the young who venture *beyond* that town in order to bring back fresh knowledge and a renewed sense of local pride. When the kind of “non-reproductive futurity” enabled by a small region like Dunnet Landing becomes excessive, childbirth becomes a rarity, and this venturing-out, this necessary exchange, simply stops.

There is also another, more metaphysical difficulty brought about by a lack of new life. Amidst all the kindness and charm, a sense of mournfulness pervades the inhabitants of Dunnet Landing. This becomes especially clear, for example, in the Bowden reunion scene, where various members of the town meet for a large celebratory gathering. At the end of that gathering, the writer,

observing the Dunnet Landing citizens taking their leave, notes that such a joyous occasion is very rare for these people, since they often have little cause to see one another. More depressingly, the writer goes on to that, in this community, a majority of large gatherings usually take place for decidedly less joyous reasons: "Funerals in this country of the pointed firs were not without their social advantages and satisfactions" (Jewett 1996, 101). Observing this town of spinsters, unmarried people, and elders, the writer tells us that the chief occasion of social gathering is not the celebration of a birth or a wedding, but, significantly, the mourning of a death. In a community with little new life, loss provides the dominant ritual. Dunnet Landing's "non-reproductive futurity" may offer important protections against hegemony, and it may make necessary room for those who are often unfairly treated as outcasts. But as a true Realist, Jewett knows that such a lifestyle has its darker side as well.

With its comprehensive treatment of the delights and dangers of rural regionalism, *The Country of the Pointed Firs* provides an appreciably realistic account of Dunnet Landing. *Firs*, however, is not Jewett's final word on the complexities of local life, and several of her short stories engage with these questions as well. In the most famous of these, "A White Heron," Jewett uses an encounter between a country girl and a city man to dramatize the unique strengths and weaknesses of the rural and the urban. Admittedly, the story, with its fanciful plot about a nature-loving girl who saves a heron from the hands of an ornithologist, initially seems simplistic in comparison to *The Country of the Pointed Firs*. Indeed, in its early pages, the narrative is somewhat conventional: Sylvia, the "little-woods girl," meets a city man with a "determined,

aggressive whistle” and decides to protect a rare bird instead of giving it to him to “stuff and preserve” as a trophy (Jewett 1997, 73 and 75). This opening presents the reader with a highly romanticized view of nature, and thus of rural regionalist life as well. Because Sylvia lives in a small locality near a forest, she has developed a closeness to and empathy with nature—an empathy which the ornithologist, who grew up in the busy amorality of the Great Wide World, ultimately lacks. At this point in “A White Heron,” it appears as though the struggle in the story will be between the good of the rural and the evil of the urban.

However, Jewett, a constant complicator of easy binaries, has something more nuanced in mind. When Sylvia finally decides not to tell the ornithologist where the heron lives, one might expect a triumphalist finale: nature has beaten human cruelty. But at exactly the moment we might expect the writer to laud Sylvia’s decision, she begins to question it: “What is it that suddenly forbids her and makes her dumb? Has she been nine years growing and now, when the great world for the first time puts out a hand to her, must she thrust it aside for a bird’s sake?” (Jewett 1997, 79). Suddenly, Sylvia has had a Realist thought in the midst of what was previously an almost Romantic narrative. Could it be that her rural regionalist worldview has some negative consequences? In this moment, Sylvia’s closeness with the animal world has cost her a rare chance to become connected to the *human* world by securing the ornithologist’s money, knowledge, and friendship. Her choice to save the bird’s life comes at the expense of the sort of travel and inter-regional understanding that Captain Littlepage defends so passionately in *Pointed Firs*.

By its final lines, this story's once-simplistic narrative has become confused and ambiguous. As the story draws to a close, Jewett (as narrator) asks the question taking shape in Sylvia's head: "Were the birds better friends than their hunter might have been? Who can tell?" (Jewett 1997, 80). As Josephine Donovan argues, part of the story's strength lies in the fact that Jewett makes it difficult to answer these questions. While the story does indeed "reject ... the evils of the industrial city (symbolized in the man's gun)," it also "acknowledges the limitations of the country world ... and [the] opportunity for ... growth [that] the city represents" (Donovan 72). The sort of isolated regionalist environment in which Sylvia was raised has left her with a deep, practical understanding of nature, and, as such, has inculcated an empathy with the natural world that a "city person" would likely lack. However, this attachment to the natural world leaves Sylvia unsure of how to interact with other humans—and, for better or worse, it renders her incapable of seizing a significant opportunity for growth. In the world of "Heron," as in the world of *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, rural regionalism's beauties and burdens are connected and, quite often, inextricable.

*The Country of the Pointed Firs* and "A White Heron" thus examine issues of rural regionalism with the sort of Realism that William Dean Howells held in high esteem. But of all her published work, it is in "By the Morning Boat" that Jewett deals with these issues most explicitly. This story, which chronicles the final hours before a young man departs from coastal Maine for a temporary job in Boston, is centered almost exclusively on questions of place. As young Elisha prepares to leave from the tiny, enclosed community in which he was raised, various characters ponder the benefits and

drawbacks of that departure. One of his family's main concerns is that the virtuous child they raised will be negatively influenced by the cruelty of the city. As Jewett describes them, Elisha's family are "speechless with grief: they could not bear to part with [his] pride and hope and boyish strength" (Jewett n.d.). His young sister is particularly distressed, fearing that her brother will lose all of the qualities instilled by his rural upbringing: "It was a world of favor to which little Lydia's brother had gone, ... but who would know ... [of his] country boy's bashfulness and humble raiment from the cheap counter of a country store?"

As the ornithologist in "A White Heron" reminds us, contact with the wider world can certainly have its unsavory side, and it is therefore sensible that his relatives worry about the effect such unsavoriness will have on Elisha. Far from optimistically hoping that the city will bring blessings to the boy, they fear that it will cause him to give in to faddishness, trading the "humble raiment" of his country upbringing for the more vapid and less kindly fashions of modernity. Moreover, Elisha's mother worries that her son's departure will hurt the family dynamic. Discussing the matter with her own father, Elisha's mother confesses that she had long ago "settled on [Elisha] as the one to keep," and states that "p'raps folks was right about our needing of him" (Jewett n.d.). In a rural family as close and interdependent as this one, the departure of a single individual can cause significant emotional damage—and, since the departing person is in this case a strong, capable male, that departure may damage them economically and domestically as well. But Elisha's mother's uncertainty about Elisha's journey goes beyond a practical "needing of him." Long ago, Elisha's own father was killed in a boat accident while on a

shipping job very similar to the one Elisha is about to take. The possibility of Elijah's departure therefore brings back traumatic memories; the mother says that she "couldn't git much sleep" because of "things I don't relish the feelin' of, all over again." If Elijah chose to stay on the coast of Maine, it would quell his sister's worries about his morality, stop the family from fraying, and ensure that he does not meet the same sad fate as his father.

Overall, there are many reasons for Elisha to stay in his safe, rural home. But, as Jewett suggests towards the end of the story, the reasons for him to leave, though fewer, are greater. As the boy prepares to sail away, Jewett addresses the audience directly, lauding her character's decision. According to her, Elisha's journey is part of the "natural processes" of growth, the only thing that will give him "a joyful sense of manliness and responsibility" (Jewett n.d.). As Elisha sails off to Boston, Jewett proclaims that he is embarking upon "the great adventure of life's fortunes," at last ready to be ranked "by his own character and ability." Although Elisha's mother and siblings may think of his journey in negative terms, it is clear from phrases like these that the narrator conceives of it positively. Perhaps this is because the narrator knows what Captain Littlepage knows: regardless of the risks, such journeys are what invigorate individuals, and, by extension, their communities. It would seem that, for Jewett, the way to keep a rural town alive is not to over-Romanticize it and cling to it jealously, but to venture away from it and return a little wiser. To paraphrase Littlepage: the only way a little town will stay healthy is if some of its residents leave with a purpose and then return with pride. In an excessively Romantic world, people like Elisha could be seen as betraying their native regions by temporarily abandoning them for the city. In

Jewett's realistic world, people like Elijah are the ones keeping their native regions alive.

In his analysis of "A White Heron," Terry Heller refers to the story as "a drama of human incompleteness" and states that the fact "that Sylvia wants to belong to both great worlds (the country and the city) points to the incompleteness of each" (Heller 192). By way of conclusion, then, it will be helpful to envision *all* three of these Jewett texts as "dramas of human incompleteness," examinations of what the rural regionalist lifestyle can and cannot contribute to our struggle for human wholeness. In all of these works, the close-knit rural community can provide benefits that other kinds of community cannot: closeness with nature, communal acceptance of alternative lifestyles, and a general sense of safety, to name just a few. However, these communities also have their drawbacks. Closeness with nature may come at the expense of proper human interaction. Alternative lifestyles may have a negative impact on a community's future. And, as all three of these works reveal, an excessive regard for rootedness and safety may lead to a lack of new knowledge and understanding—and that will *definitely* have a negative impact on a community's future.

Ultimately, Jewett's small towns are, like any social arrangement, uniquely capable and uniquely incapable, singularly gifted but ultimately incomplete. They are, in other words, what Howells might call "life-like." Many other nineteenth-century American authors attempted to paint truthful portraits of rural regionalist life, but, as these pieces show, Jewett's eye for detail, disdain for inaccuracy, and openness to ambiguity allowed her to reach a level of realistic portrayal that few of her colleagues achieved. If readers feel as though they have inhabited Jewett's

locations, it is because her dispassionate eye and compassionate heart allowed her to inhabit them herself.

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