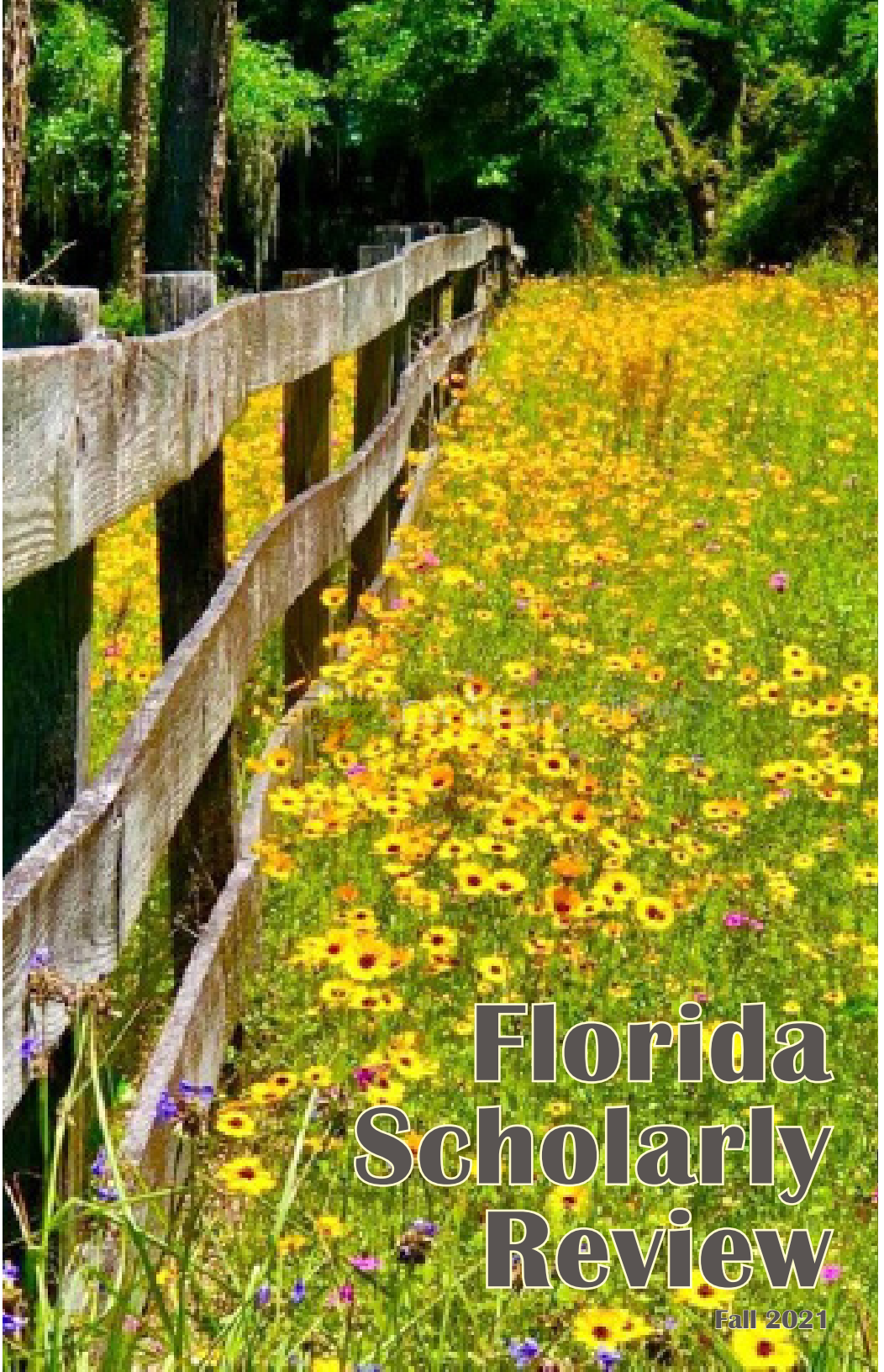

Florida Scholarly Review

Fall 2021

FLORIDA SCHOLARLY REVIEW

A peer-reviewed publication of the Florida College English Association
2021

Table of Contents

1 **It Sounds Sweeter in Spanish: Imagining Miami Through a Different Language**
by Lawrence J. Byrne, Barry University

17 **"Like Ponce de Leon, I Have Come to Find Manhood": Archibald Clavering Gunter's A Florida Enchantment**
by Maurice J. O'Sullivan, Rollins College

35 **The Dark Side of the Florida Keys Representations in Film and Television**
by *Bonnie Bonincontri, Lynn University*

47 **"When he speaks of Cuba:" Expansionism and Domestic Desire in Lucy Holcombe Pickens's The Free Flag of Cuba**
by Patricia Feito, Barry University

61 **Jester and Fat Man: Anomalous Bodies in Harry Crews' *Naked in Garden Hills***
by John David Harding, Saint Leo University

73 **"Dense like Dying Stars:" Rhetorical Resignification in Crazy Ex-Girlfriend**
by Wesley Johnson, Pasco-Hernando State College

87 **Tiny Ecology: Florida Nature in the Humanities Classroom**
by Andy Oler, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University

101 **From First Dates to Relationships: Creating Community in the Composition Classroom**
by Rachel Rinehart Johnson, Eastern Florida State College

111 **The Freshman Writing Snafu, or the New Normal**
by Thomas Buckingham, Independent Scholar

127 **Techniques for Instructors to Facilitate Student Satisfaction with Online Classes**
by Laura Tichy-Smith, Florida SouthWestern State College

Photography throughout the Issue

Ann Leshy Wood was born in Deland, Florida while her parents were attending Stetson University. She graduated from the University of Florida with her undergraduate degree in English Literature, and returned at age 41 to do post grad work in creative writing poetry. She is a vocalist in a major master-chorale at the University of Florida and sings in five languages. Her poetry has been published in many creative journals and she was recently nominated for a Pushcart Prize for one of her poems.

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~1~

IT SOUNDS SWEETER IN SPANISH: IMAGINING MIAMI THROUGH A DIFFERENT LANGUAGE

by Lawrence J. Byrne
Barry University

In his introduction to Diaspora, an anthology of Hispanic-American short fiction, Gerardo Cárdenas describes a relatively recent phenomenon, Hispanic authors living and working in the United States who choose to write their stories and poems in Spanish. The reasons for such a decision are varied, some political, some cultural, some deeply personal. But the results are images of life in their adopted country that offer a quite different perspective from that found in canonical American literature. For, as generations of travelers and immigrants have learned, place is a matter of relationship. The geography of a city, for example, cannot be simply traced on a map, but is created by the ways a body moves through and lives in that place. Finding themselves surrounded by a quite different, often seemingly hostile "place," these authors cling to their "native" tongue as a means of retaining their identities, even as they undergo the inevitable process of losing or at least transforming those identities. This dynamic relation between place and person is complicated by another group of Hispanic authors who choose to write in English. Indeed, it may well be the case that this group of hyphenated and often quite young authors render a more accurate, if not always complimentary portrait of the way Hispanics,

particularly Cubans, live now in the United States. Comparing and contrasting the different sets of fictional images that these two groups of authors provide, both in Spanish and English, opens surprisingly lively and varied ways of reconfiguring and re-imagining both place and personhood, and the complex processes by which the one inevitably creates the "other." This essay briefly explores some of these reconfigurings and re-imaginings, especially as they occur within the fictional landscape of Miami.

A fundamental question, then, is why these authors choose to write in Spanish. It is not simply the nature of the stories they tell which often deal with the problems inherent in immigration but in ways that highlight essentially human and universal themes, but it is the language itself that matters. And this is so because, as we continually learn from our most recent literary and linguistic criticism, language is never merely a vehicle of and for communication. Rather it is itself our home, our country, and most intimately, our identity. It is only natural, therefore, that when we wish to think about, talk about, and write about those things that are the most important to us, we should use the language not only with which we are most comfortable, but that creates and sustains us as thinking and feeling beings. It is for this reason, the need to survive, that at the more communal level these authors feel compelled to write, not simply about their experience of exile, but of all their human experiences, in Spanish. The Peruvian writer Eduardo Gonzalez Viaña puts the matter perhaps most succinctly, but most passionately when he describes the immigrant's relationship to the word: ". . . as an immigrant writer, the word—despite its disguises—is the only thing that will survive my old body or the spirit that I have left behind in my land. I think now that the word is the only thing that makes me survive, and that perhaps I write out of the fear of death" (159). The African-American novelist Walter Mosley offers additional insight into this process when he states that

an ethnic or racial group does not exist unless and until it finds itself in literature, that is, in the stories, poems, and dramas that do not merely represent it, but create its common identity as a group for itself. Writing in Spanish is, therefore, not simply a personal, but a decidedly political, even polemical choice. In his Preface to the anthology América Nuestra José Castro Urioste claims that the stories he has gathered are an attempt to counter the tendency, even among "experts" in the field, to limit Latino literature, so- called, to the literature written in English by Hispanic authors. It is now necessary, he argues, to acknowledge and celebrate the growing body of Spanish literature being written in and for the Hispanic community in the United States.

At the same time, however, labels such as Hispanic and Latino are, like all such generalizations, misleading. For in the case of Hispanic literature written in the United states there are several different types and categories and even various ways to categorize this inevitably diverse surge of creativity. It is again Urioste in his Preface to América Nuestra who offers one helpful way of sectioning off and thus understanding this growing body of work. The first group he labels the literature of nostalgia, for its authors, whether political exiles or willing expatriates, carry their native countries and language so tightly within themselves that they produce a literature indistinguishable from the type they supposedly have left behind. That is, they write stories that they could very easily have written in their native countries. It is as if they have never left home since they write as if they are still living there. A second type of literature, one that introduces bits and pieces of the adopted country, might be seen as a kind of halfway house between the old way of life and the new, a tentative entrance that recognizes the need to let go of lost parts of the past and to launch out into the new, unfamiliar, and daunting future. But still, these stories often make use of the new landscapes and experiences as more or less elaborate window

dressing, extraneous to the nerve and the heart of the fiction. And finally Urioste describes a third type and stage of Hispanic literature that consciously strives to create a new Hispanic identity in a new land with a new voice, neither carried from the past or pieced together tentatively in the present, but spoken and written for the first time here in the United States. Most of the anthologies that are similar to Urioste's and certainly the stories briefly touched on here deal with this third type of Hispanic literature.

Yet there is a still further complication to this already complex literary landscape. As the years of exile have passed, especially in the Cuban community in Miami, so have inevitably the generations. There is now in Miami an entire generation who were born, raised, and reached their maturity in the United States, and for whom, in a decidedly ironic reversal, English is their native, if not their mother tongue. They know Spanish, speak with family members in Spanish, but they feel most comfortable, most at home, and most themselves in English. Out of this generation come writers such as Ana Menéndez and Jennine Capo Crucét, among others, who offer what must be considered the most compelling and accurate, if not always the most complementary accounts of the Cuban community, first, second, and even third generation, in Miami. In many ways this evolution is inevitable and merely follows the trajectory of previous immigrant communities as they have arrived, adapted, and flourished in the United States. But the success and number of young Hispanic authors who now choose English rather than Spanish may dilute if not completely dissolve the purposes and power of the new Spanish language literature in the United States that Cardenas and Urioste wish to champion and encourage. In what follows I can offer only a brief, admittedly idiosyncratic overview of several stories, some written in Spanish, some in English, that serve as examples of the type of Hispanic literature being produced now in the United States.

"¿Qué Hay Para Mi?" by Eli Bravo offers a convenient starting point for this brief survey since it clearly belongs to Urioste's third category of stories, that is, those that attempt to recount the difficult but necessary process of identity building that exile forces upon the individual. The story stands out not only for its careful tracing of the protagonist's transformation from alienated foreigner to almost comfortable resident, but because it grafts this transformation to the history of Miami, a history that itself offers numerous examples of transplanted Americans who had to make the difficult adjustment to a new, often hostile subtropical environment. Among them are some of Miami's most prominent early settlers such as Julia Tuttle and Robert Merrick. It is especially Tuttle's gradual immersion in her unfamiliar, flamboyantly lush world that the protagonist most admires and identifies with as he struggles to achieve his own transition.

Gustavo, the protagonist, has, like millions of immigrants before him, come to the United States seeking that nebulous "better" life the land of the free extends to newcomers. It is not clear why he has chosen Miami as his point of entry, but it may be assumed it has much to do with the loudly vaunted cosmopolitan, read Hispanic, flavor of the city where Spanish is more likely to be heard than English. Nevertheless, he finds the city daunting, confusing, and most tellingly a place that "no tiene alma," has no soul (27). But one day, as he is walking along Flagler Avenue, purely by chance, he notices an odd-looking door with an even odder sign attached. The small sign reads only "Weng Di Paola. Coach migratorio" (24) Wondering what exactly an immigrant coach is and does, Gustavo climbs a narrow staircase, knocks on another door, and is admitted to a sparsely furnished room where an older gentleman with decidedly Asian features but an Argentine accent to his fluent Spanish assures Gustavo that he is, in fact, an immigration coach. Imitating and promising the same sort of success as what are now called "life coaches," Weng offers his services to

Gustavo in the form of therapy sessions, for a price, of course. Vaguely curious, but more dubious than confident, Gustavo half-heartedly accepts Señor Weng's offer. The subsequent "therapy" takes the form of brief snippets of Miami's history that highlight the life stories of several early settlers. Julia Tuttle's difficult transition from transplanted Northerner to Miami booster occupies the centerpiece of Weng's history lessons. When Gustavo openly wonders what Tuttle has to do with his discontent and loneliness, Weng replies, that Tuttle had a vision that sustained and motivated her. She wanted to see the wilderness that first surrounded her transformed into an orderly, productive, and humanized land. He suggests that Gustavo take a water voyage on Biscayne Bay to try if he might, too, catch a bit of the vision Tuttle had of the city.

It so happens that sailing was one of Gustavo's favorite pastimes in his native country, but one he has neglected since coming to America. He thus gladly takes Weng's advice and while out on the Bay, during a brief rain shower, he sees a rainbow that arcs across the city's tall towers. This unmistakable sign of promise begins his gradual inner transformation. On a subsequent visit, Weng likens the process of immigration to walking across a suspension bridge. "There is a moment," he says, "when we are suspended in the air, between the past and the future, when the sensation of emptiness can be overwhelming" ("Hay un momento en el que estamos suspedidos en el air, entre pasado y futuo, cuando la sensación de vacio puede ser abrumadora") (36). Gustavo says that he feels exactly such an airy, weightless sensation. Weng simply advises him to continue advancing, because the bridge has an end. And at that end, Gustavo can plant his two feet on the new solid ground of his adopted city and country. The climax of the story arrives when, having discovered a statue of Tuttle in downtown Miami, Gustavo is approached by a group of Japanese tourists who ask him to take their photo standing with the legendary figure, whom

they treat as a kind of Disney-like character. At this moment he has crossed his bridge. The alienated and isolated foreigner is now a resident; the outsider now a knowing wanderer through a city with familiar landmarks. As the story ends, he has not quite completely settled in, but thanks to the mysterious Mr. Weng and his even more mysterious and subtle "coaching," Gustavo is well on his way to becoming a citizen, in every sense of the word, of Miami. And his passage from immigrant to inhabitant demonstrates, as Weng insisted, that the movement is an internal one, a change of the self that yields a change in the landscape, and only when the newcomer is willing to begin the process, to undertake it as an adventure and a challenge, a mission like Julia Tuttle's, only then can he be certain that he will reach the far side of the uncomfortable, even perilous bridge he started out on when he left his home.

There are any number of stories that follow newcomers like Gustavo as they wend their way toward some sense of belonging, some fundamental alteration in their relationship with a new place, a new culture, and a new identity. In many cases the results are positive, promising, and the stories are encouraging, uplifting, and offer the familiar tale of the immigrant who finds a new and different, if not always better self in what was once an unfamiliar, even hostile land. But, inevitably, there are also stories of failed attempts at this difficult realignment of the inner being. One narrator insists that Miami "is not and never has been his city" ("no es y nunca ha ido mi ciudad") ("Abducciones en La Que No Es y Nunca Fue Tu Ciudad"). Another story recounts the ultimate failure to arrive, literally, in narrating the fate of three young men who fatally misjudge the rigors and dangers of the perilous crossing from Cuba to Miami ("Las palmeras detrás"). And there are still others, a good number in fact, that have nothing to do with immigration, but are simply stories of all types and genres and deal with every imaginable human dilemma and range of human emotion. Indeed, the variety and depth of the short

fiction in Spanish, the number of anthologies that increases rapidly, and the growing critical commentary on this body of work attest to the claims of writers like Cardenas y Urioste that the literature in Spanish being produced in the United States is reshaping this country's national identity and making Spanish a de facto, if not officially recognized, national tongue.

Yet for all the richness and variety of this upsurge of creative energy and even with the intimate glimpses it gives us, especially of the Hispanic immigrant's efforts to adapt and adopt, these stories in Spanish are missing the final piece of the narrative that begins with the first step on that suspension bridge Señor Weng uses as his analogy for immigration. For this narrative, at least as it features Hispanic authors, now spans two generations, and its most recent chapters can only be written by the newest arrivals, not in place but in time. The full and most accurate perspective on this unique and difficult process of arriving can only be added by the children of the first immigrants who, in experience and in their language, straddle both worlds, not the old country and the new, for to them there is only one country, the United States, but precisely the divide between the very real America where they have grown up and where they feel most at home and the largely illusory, lost except in memory, Cuba that they have known only through the stories and traditions told and cherished by their grandparents and parents. For this young generation of American- born Cubans (Alonso-Gallo) the problem is no longer fitting in, but of fitting together two pieces of a jagged edged puzzle: a past whose customs and rituals continually pull them back to the barrios of their upbringing and a present, with the promise of a future, that exactly resembles the present and future of all young Americans coming of age at or near the birth of the new century. These authors write in English because English is their native, if not their mother tongue. And they write about their parents' struggles to escape, to arrive, to adapt, and to flourish while themselves

enjoying the creative freedom conferred by distance. The harrowing or mundane adventures of their refugee ancestors can be mined, embellished, rearranged, and represented for artistic effect because the experiences themselves, even for the people who have lived them, have by now passed from reality into myth and legend. The central concern of writers such as Ana Menéndez and Jenine Capo Crucét is not the ordeal of escape, but the long process of transformation and adoption that begins and continues happening after arrival. They are first and foremost writers who have inherited a rich body of human experience out of which to weave their stories. And while they cannot choose to be other than who their past has made them, they can and do choose to create as many versions of that past as there are stories to be told and emotions to be evoked from and through these stories.

In her collection, In Cuba I Was a German Shepherd, for example, Menéndez moves back and forth between the old and the new generations, between American-born Cubans like herself who know only life as it is lived here and the older men and women of her parents' age who, now retired and often comfortably successful, possess two conflicting sets of experiences and often find it difficult to line up the pieces so they yield one perfectly unified and whole self. For example, in the title story of the collection, Menéndez focuses on four elderly men who gather each day in a park the narrator calls Domino Park, located at the edge of Calle Ocho, the central artery running through la Pequeña Habana, Little Havana. They play this traditional board game with intensity, but more for the companionship and simply something to do. The story singles out Maximo, one of the group, as its protagonist. He has arrived in Miami years before, among the first wave of exiles. Like most in this generation, he has suffered numerous diminutions, not simply losing his property and savings, but his professional life and identity as well. In Cuba he was a professor at the university. But, as he says, when he arrives in

Miami, his foreign credentials mean nothing. He has, however, the insight and good fortune to hit upon a business, a small restaurant, that with the help of his wife and a dogged degree of hard work, provides him with a good living. He buys a house, raises two daughters, and lives out the ideal immigrant dream of arriving in and benefiting from the land of endless opportunity.

When the story opens, he has retired, sold his home, and after his wife dies he finds himself with a great deal of empty time on his hands. The domino playing and its lively conversations thus become a central part of his life. In addition, he distinguishes himself as the joke teller of the small group, sometimes managing to make his companions genuinely laugh at his stories, other times eliciting merely groans of dismissal and mild rejection.

The central irony of the story arrives with the tour buses that stop nearly every day, unloading groups of visitors from Nebraska, Minnesota, and other parts north who are eager to photograph and soak up, in a few rushed minutes, a "taste" of authentic Miami. The old men thus find themselves, in the ultimate reduction of their humanity, little more than empty figures, a "collection of old bones"(14) Maximo calls them, set against their tourist poster background of a genuine barrio in the heart of salsa land. They have traveled miles and years only to end as landmarks and stick figures, the embodiment of an exotic difference in the country they have devoted nearly half a lifetime to making their own.

One day Maximo, unable to endure any longer this daily degradation, rises from the tale, shouts in response to a tour guides unctuous description of the domino players, "Mierda!" . . . "that's the biggest bullshit I've ever heard" (26), and lunges at the fence lined with the peering tourists. The other men quickly grab him and usher him back to the playing table. Maximo's small attempt at rebellion thus ends in utter defeat and embarrassment. As if to counter the uncomfortable

feelings he has raised in the others, he finishes a joke he had begun a few days before. It seems Juanito, a scruffy mutt, has just arrived in Miami from Havana. He is waking down Brickell Avenue, awed by the tall buildings, when he spies a beautiful poodle, an Americana. Unaware of the customs in his new country, he approaches the poodle and tries out his charm on her. The poodle, predictably, is scandalized by this effrontery, tells the poor dog that this is America and he needs to speak English and assures him she can have nothing to do with such a mangy mutt. Poor Juanito's only response is to insist: "Here in America I may be a short, insignificant mutt, but in Cuba I was a German shepherd" (28). The humor here barely masks the painful hurt the story carries. While the other men laugh half-heartedly at the truth that will never be relieved by any joking, Maximo turns his face away so they will not see the tears in his eyes. Like many old men, he cannot free himself from the nagging sense that, after all, he has accomplished little in all his years. But as an exile who finds himself still the exotic outsider haunted by the memories of his youth in Cuba when, he imagines, he was most truly alive, he has an additional weight of memory and loss to bear. And the other men's pained, subdued laughter confirms that they too feel, like Maximo, twice removed from a sense of accomplishment and belonging.

Jennine Capo Crucét's stories frequently carry a sharper edge than Menéndez's. There is humor in them, certainly, but it is often in the service of a carefully aimed, finely honed satire. She is unrelenting in displaying the irrational, the addictive, the violent, the absurd, and the grossly outlandish in the behavior of her Cuban relatives and even in the troubled, confused lives of her own generation. As readers we find ourselves uncomfortably unsure whether to laugh at the scenes she narrates in such damning detail or tactfully look away in embarrassment. Such is the case, for example, with the culminating scene of the story "El Destino Hauling." In a shabby

funeral parlor in Hialeah, two women engage in a Roller Derby-esque cat fight before the open casket of a dead man. One woman is the man's estranged wife, the other his sister, and they are fighting apparently to prove who has the greater right to mourn him. The scene ends when the estranged wife crawls into the casket with the deceased, significantly damaging his carefully reconstructed face. He died when his son accidentally backed over him with the dump truck they intended to use in a hare-brained scheme to make some legitimate money for a change, and the mortician's herculean efforts at restoring the dead man's features are thus ruined by his overwrought and a bit overweight ex-wife's exaggerated display of grief.

In the closing story of the collection, "How to Leave Hialeah," Capo Crucét painstakingly lays out the double bind that young Cubans like her (indeed, all young Hispanics) face in the country she must call her home. The narrator, a young woman who is clearly a stand-in for Capo Crucét herself, attempts to make her escape from Hialeah, one of the strongholds of the Cuban population located on the northwest edge of Miami. She enrolls in a college in New England and after graduating, goes on to graduate school at a university located in what she calls the Great White North—that is the Midwest, the very heartland of America. As the story unfolds, she has landed an adjunct position at a junior college in southern Wisconsin. It would seem, both through her academic successes and her geographical location, that she has accomplished her goal of escape. But the ties that bind her to her Cuban family and her city prove finally impossibly sturdy. These bonds take the most obvious form in the near weekly calls from her mother that always end with the same question: when is she coming "home." Yet more profoundly, the narrator finds, like the old men in Menéndez's story, that wherever she goes and whatever she manages to accomplish, she is always seen and treated as a type, a Latina, someone distinctly different by nature from the accepted, acceptable,

and recognizable group of Americans who surround her. Even the special treatment she is afforded through grants and scholarships, campus organizations, and the official policies of the universities toward minorities do little more to underscore her difference, to isolate and categorize her, ignoring whatever it is that has created her as an individual. She becomes at best part of the university's program to insure its diversity, a beaming Latina face in the glossy promotional literature, just as the old men playing dominoes are reduced to photo-ops for American tourists. For this young woman, it is not so much true that she cannot go home again, but that she can never leave the home she carries with her and that is as much a part of her as her crinkly hair and dark skin. She wears Hialeah on her body and lives with it as the essence of her consciousness.

It is obvious that immigration always involves the crossing of frontiers, the passing of boundaries, whether these are literal or glided over in flight. And such borders can be, must be, left behind. But Edmundo Paz Soldáno and Alberto Fuguet, in their introduction to Se Habla Español: Voces Latinas en USA (18), suggest that such crossings leave an indelible mark, a scar, that can never be erased, that, like a literal scar, will be borne in the consciousness of the immigrant for the rest of his or her days. It is this scar that the narrator of Capo Crucét's story discovers as part of her identity, the essential part that she will never be able to escape. And yet, it is this scar that, in a sort of dual purpose irony, serves to inspire writers like Menéndez and Capo Crucét. From this indelible mark they draw their creative energy and the stories that spring from this double-edged source.

The success, commercial and artistic, of writers like Menéndez and Capo Crucét raises some difficult questions concerning the future of Spanish language fiction in the United States. Gerardo Cárdenas in his Prólogo to the anthology Diáspora offers nearly two paragraphs full of such questions. He wonders, for example, who, in the next ten or

fifteen years, will continue to write this type of literature. More importantly, given the inevitable process of Americanization that is occurring and will continue to occur over the next few generations, he asks who will be, if anyone, the audience for such fiction. Cárdenas provides no answers, and, at present, there can be none. Only the future will determine the fate of this writing. In the meantime, many of these authors will continue to show us that some things do indeed sound sweeter in Spanish.

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~2~

"LIKE PONCE DE LEON, I HAVE COME TO FIND MANHOOD": ARCHIBALD CLAVERING GUNTER'S A FLORIDA ENCHANTMENT

by Maurice J. O'Sullivan
Rollins College

When the "eminent dramatist and romancer"[i] Archibald Clavering Gunter (1848-1907) began a month long stay at St. Augustine's Cordova Hotel, today the Casa Monica, in March of 1891, most of his readers might well have predicted that he was looking for material for his next work. The result of that stay, however, must have surprised those familiar with his comic plays and popular novels like Mr. Barnes of New York (1887), the picaresque European adventures of a resourceful Yank.

A Florida Enchantment (1891) offers a very different set of adventures as it traces the physical and psychological metamorphosis of a young society woman from New York into a man. Perhaps most remarkably, Gunter presents his transformation as a triumph unlike the fate of the central characters undergoing radical changes in such other contemporary novels as Robert Louis Stevenson's The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886), Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray (1890), and Bram Stoker's Dracula (1897). Eventually, Gunter's novel would inspire one of the most popular and reviled plays in fin de siècle New York's theater history and a wildly slapstick 1914 movie, which may well be the first American LBGTQ feature film.

A popular writer who took some time to find his calling, Archibald Clavering Gunter seems at first like an odd figure to write such a potentially controversial book.[ii] Born in Liverpool in 1848, he was brought to the United States as a child and raised largely in California. After attending the University of California School of Mines, he took a job as a civil engineer with Central Pacific Railroad and then moved on to work as a chemist in the California Assay Office, a Superintendent of the McKay Mines in Utah, and a stock broker in San Francisco.

Clearly unsatisfied with those jobs and perhaps intrigued by a play about mining that he had written in 1872, Found the True Vein, Gunter moved to New York to become a writer in 1879. He had some success with his plays but, unable to find a publisher for his novel Mr. Barnes of New York, he founded the Home Publishing Company. The book's success—he claimed three million copies, but most literary historians suggest it was more likely closer to a million—made him not only wealthy but litigious as he tried to protect his copyrights in laissez faire publishing world of America's Golden Age.

The frontispiece to a later edition of A Florida Enchantment shows an apparently self-satisfied, full figured and unremarkable figure in a fashionable suit with pince-nez and full mustache, although in a letter to The *Denver Post* on October 31, 1896, a correspondent uncharitably describes him as "obese in figure with a lisp in speech" (9). Gunter and his wife lived well among the privileged, often appearing in the society pages. However, he never achieved the kind of literary recognition that most authors seek. A gossipy story in the New York Times on May 6, 1894, for example, reported that the Author's Club had blackballed him because his books were below par by literary standards. Home Publishing Company relied so heavily on his work that it declared bankruptcy soon after his death in 1907.

Gunter organizes his novel into three books, the titles

of which reflect its author's journey as she moves from a proper young Victorian lady undergoing a classical, Ovidian transformation in the first book ("The Metamorphosis of Miss Lillian Travers"), to the amorphously gendered adolescent in the second book ("The Boyhood of Lilly Travers"), and finally into the jubilantly transfigured picaro of the final chapter ("The Wonderful Adventures of Mr. Lawrence Talbot").

Miss Lillian Travers, a wealthy heiress from New York City, begins her metamorphosis in St. Augustine during a visit in February 1891 at "Vedder's extraordinary museum, which is devoted to commerce in the form of disposing of Florida curiosities and horrors to Northern tourists" (7). Gunter's opening sets his playfully satiric tone with its juxtaposition of shameless Southern capitalism and naïve Northern consumerism. At Vedder's she sees "an old moth-eaten, cobweb-covered black box" found on Anastasia Island which reminds her of a similar box at her aunt's house (8).

Lillian, "considered twenty-one by her friends" (10), is "exquisitely graceful and feminine," qualities that help redeem her from Gunter's gentle jabs at her sex, especially when she ignored a young boy touting snakes to the other women in the shop which "calls forth from various ladies stifled exclamations of horror, emphasized by vivacious feminine shudders" (9).

Gunter's gentle satire continues in his descriptions of Lillian's best friend, Bessie Horton, and her father: "Miss Bessie Horton is a plump little blonde, with golden hair and violet eyes and a rounded figure whose graceful outlines and exquisite contours go straight to the masculine eye and enslave the masculine heart" (11). Her unreconstructed father may long for an antebellum fantasy world but has accommodated him to the real one: "Major Calhoun Benham Horton has given up any animosity he may have felt towards Northerners at the close of the war, in the delight of selling them phosphate properties; the Southern eye being as quick to see and the Southern hand as deft to catch the almighty

dollar as those of their perhaps shrewder but no more eager brothers of Connecticut and Massachusetts" (13).

Lillian has come South, at the beginning of Lent, an appropriate time of affliction and rebirth, to see her fiancé, a society physician who devotes his career to the care of affluent hotel guests. The author reveals his character in an extended description that notes both a lack of nobility and suggests a telling flaw:

[Doctor Frederick Cassadene] is nearly six feet tall, of slight yet handsome proportions, and has a kind of off-hand insouciance in his attitude. . .. His forehead is high and would be noble, were it not contradicted by his other features; for his eyes, though beautiful, are careless, reckless, insincere; his nose, though dominating, is not delicate, and his handsome mouth, under his long drooping mustache, shows passion rather than love, a face that would scarcely be true to wife, maid or widow—certainly not to wife. His figure and bearing are of that manly recklessness, jovial good humor and dashing devil-may-care coolness—perhaps impudence—that makes deadly war upon female hearts,--the face of an Adam Eves will run after for all time, and who are for all time will betray his despairing Eves.

When Lillian realizes he is paying too much attention to the female guests, especially a beautiful, wealthy, and aptly named widow Stella Lovejoy (23-24), she returns to her aunt Connie's home, miserable and angry, wishing only, "Oh, if I could love like a man!" (25). That wish reflects Gunter's technique as an equal opportunity satirist. All the males in the novel are simply human tomcats, with the possible exception of Lillian's altered ego, Lawrence Talbot. While Lawrence apparently sows some oats in Manhattan late in the book after his engagement to Bessie and flirts with the provocative widow Lovejoy, he tears himself away and appears to vow fidelity to his true love. Perhaps his previous female sensibility gives him the knowledge and strength to remain true. All other

men seem as dedicated to straying as women do to flirting.

At Aunt Constantia's, Lillian opens the box she found at Vedder's and discovers a manuscript from her grandfather, Captain Hauser Oglethorpe, a sea captain and occasional slaver, and a vial with four seeds. She sets both aside when Bessie and Fred visit. Fred wins her over with explanations but then quickly betrays her again. Gunter, who loves labeling his characters—"Mr. Assurance," "this medical Machiavelli," "Miss Innocence"—points out that the "reckless doctor" (33) is "perfectly irresponsible," especially in the presence of a beautiful widow "playing invalid" (40).

As Lillian learns of her fiancé's additional dalliance, she turns to her unmarried aunt for advice. That advice, underscored by Gunter's beloved exclamation points, turns out to be an unexpectedly comic reflection of the author's recognition of the power imbalance between men and women:

"As a woman who has profited from sixty years of heart-breaking spinsterhood, I tell you, Lilly, don't remain single, as I am! Marry and believe!"

"Everything?"

Everything!" returns Miss Elder Spinster. "If your husband says he has been detained until two in the morning by business, swallow it! If he declares that he has been at his club until three—don't ask him which Club! If he swears he was locked out and struggles to get into the front door all night, DON'T DOUBT IT! Have the faith of the martyrs—believe in miracles! It is the only way to be a happy wife!" (45)

When Lillian asks if all women are martyrs, Connie answers "Most wives are!" Does that mean men are wretches? "Not at all! They are what nature made them—selfish animals, and as nature has been very kind to them," remarks her aunt with a grim smile, "they do the best for themselves, and have a pretty good time in this world. Ours will come in the next, my dear!" (46).

Determined not to be a martyr, Lillian stays up and reads her grandfather's account of how he found what he regards as his treasure. Beneath his portrait with its "small cunning cruel eyes [which] seem to grin and leer at, and mock her," (47) Lillian reads his account of a trip to Africa where he found a tribe with no men. An elder introduced him to the tribe's Tree of Sex and Change, which produces seeds that allow people to change genders. In the novel's hierarchy of values, where women are clearly less complete than men, all the females of the tribe choose to take the seeds. But no men ate them. The captain and his men ate one each, became women, and then quickly ate a second.

In the vial are four amber colored seeds with the cynical captain's mocking inscription: "For Women Who Suffer. Ha! Ha! Ha!" (49). After contemplating her alternatives, the more she learns of her fiancé's dallying, the more she sees only one choice to retain her autonomy. If she remains a woman, she realizes, "he will come to me, and again cajole me and take my feeble female heart into his grasp, to juggle with, until I forget his treachery—and love him again and so suffer on and on so long as I live!" Her last words before taking the seed are "Why not?" (70).

There is an immediate physiological and emotional effect as she feels herself transformed in language that could easily describe an orgasm. As if to prove Gunter's belief in essential gender differences, once she takes the pill, "her mind appears to suddenly become more logical than it had been before, and her nerves to grow stronger" (70). At the same time, her behavior changes abruptly as she undresses "with reckless untidy haste" and leaps into bed, ignoring her usual ritual of checking for intruders, muttering Burglars be blowed!" (71).

Just as Lilly's language changes into a parody of upper class Victorian male slang—when Lilly wakes up, she greets her servant with the comment, "Jane, you're a brick!" (75)—so does her entire view of the world. In this novel, unlike his later

Susan Turnbull; or, The Power of Women, women appear to be purely affective creatures, controlled primarily by their need for a man. They are essentially incomplete, with every woman desiring the completion that only manhood can provide. After all, every woman in the tribe Hauser Oglethorpe visited chose malehood despite having the ability to revert to her original sex by taking a second seed. Homer and his men quickly changed back after briefly experiencing life as a woman. That sense of masculinity as an advanced stage of life continues throughout the story. After returning to New York, for example, Lilly "longs to enter society as one of the sex into which she has graduated." (165).

In dealing with its African-American characters, Gunter invariably relies on his own comic version of the black dialect of his time, a version W.R. Davie challenged in an essay cited in the New York Evening Post and quoted in Charleston's The Weekly News and Courier on September 22, 1897. When given the choice to become a man, Jane immediately agrees: "Ob co'se—I'd like to be a man, de bes' in de worl'! Did yo ebber see a woman dat wouldn't be ef she could—cause I ain't" (115). And when this "untutored masculine maidservant" begins pushing her male boundaries, Lilly can only control her by threatening to give her another seed and force her to return to womanhood (136).

Once Jane begins her metamorphosis, she becomes even more masculine and aggressive than Lilly. Reflecting on Jane's new-found aggressiveness and sexual freedom, Lilly wonders, "Am I like Frankenstein? Have a raised up in Jane a monster that will destroy me?" (143). Her allusion to that novel about re-creation by the daughter of the author of A Vindication of the Rights of Women underlies Gunter's more serious questioning of sexual roles in society. And while his portrait of blacks is usually comic, he also shows admiration for the skilled river pilots on the Ocklawaha and for Jane's willingness to challenge her mistress/master and negotiate her salary after her transformation.

But the male qualities Gunter describes are equally limited and limiting. Lilly wakes up with "an exalted sense of supremacy" (75). The author/narrator, who loves editorial comments, adds, "if as a woman, she was entirely engrossed in Fred Cassadene, as a man she is entirely absorbed in self" (76). Just as Fred's inconstancy motivated her decision, the now "putative young lady" (86) relishes flirting even as she finds herself falling in love with her best friend, Bessie. She spends a great deal of time kissing not only Bessie but also the widow, who responds passionately, "uttering a kind of lingering, longing sigh" (81). She also can now regularly compliment Fred on his romantic conquests.

As Fred observes the new Lilly's popularity with women, he receives "two shocks to his manly vanity—which as usual in his sex is very great and excessively touchy" (84). If Gunter's men have greater freedom of action than his women, they are equally limited by nature, ego, and society. Unable to understand Lilly's new attitude towards him, Fred announces, "Your conduct is very unnatural" (88).

While that adjective suggests the possibility of introducing a moral or religious lens to the story, Gunter chooses to turn it upside down and treat the idea comically. When Lilly announces that at a Ponce de Leon hop she will dance only with girls, an idea that her aunt finds "unnatural," Gunter, tongue firmly in cheek, has the young debutante "prophetically" reply that "tonight, I am going to be unnatural" (96).

And her new nature appeals to her dance partners. Bessie gushes, "How beautifully you guide—just like a man! Your arms seem so strong and firm . . ." (103). But caught between genders, this "woman-man" (131) recognizes that her current duality has restrictions. As Gunter enumerates them, he simultaneously adds to his satiric portrait of the modern male: "She cannot assume all the privileges of the sex, she cannot boast and brag to her fellows of her conquests—she can't

stroke her mustache in a knowing manner when Stella's name is mentioned . . . For the late Miss Travers is still only a reckless boy" (106).

Throughout this center section on Lilly's boyhood, Gunter moves slowly but steadily toward his gender shift. When Lilly tells Fred, "I love another—she's a darling," he assumes the pronoun is a "slip of language" (111). She and Jane struggle with the terms to identify each other. When the mistress sees her maid, she comments, "Ah! That's my man Jane" (118), to which the servant replies, "Miss-Massa Lilly" (119).

Victorian morality oddly appears when Bessie and Major Horton spend the night at Aunt Connie's and the young girl wants nothing more than to cuddle and kiss in her best friend Lilly's bed. But Lilly, aware of her growing love for Bessie, comically fights her off, luckily with the help of Jane's escapades. After beating up her former boyfriend Gus, Jane must hide from the law, embodied by Major Horton, until she and Lilly can catch the Florida Special north. Lilly, who has learned "to fib during her two day manhood" (145), protects Jane and offers a $100 bribe to Gus to drop the charges. That generous amount contrasts sharply with the dainty quarter and fifty cent tips the feminine Lilly gave out early in the novel.

In New York City Lilly carefully prepares for the final stage of her transformation, changing all her assets into unregulated government bonds and placing them in a safe deposit box which only she and her alter ego, Lawrence M. Talbot, will have access to. Her password for the account reinforces the novel's theme of male self-determination, "My turn next!" (155). After her maid Jane, now her valet Jack, discovers the possibility of making a fortune at a dime museum as "de greatest freak on earth" (161), Lilly finally has nightmares which Gunter represents as a poster advertising "The Woman Man!" (163).

Despite those occasional fears, Lilly still prefers her emerging life. She buys a new wardrobe, has a fling with some male acquaintances, and then sets out for her final curtain call

by taking the Florida Special to Jacksonville and transferring to Ocala for a steam boat ride down the Ocklawaha River. Fred surprises her on the boat but is himself surprised by Lilly's increasingly masculine appearance and behavior. However, his "vanity again deceives him" when he sees a longing in her eye, assuming it is for him until she tells him in her new slang that she actually has "a hankering after his cigar, not him" (173).

The Ocklawaha offers a fitting symbol for Lilly's final transformation. During the Golden Age, its steamboats offered Northern tourists a chance to experience the thrill of a darker vision of Eden, with its predators, murky waters, and dense, threatening foliage. In this novel of rebirth, its Florida setting is essential. As she prepares for her last step, the first creatures the Okahumpka's passengers encounter are water moccasins curled around overhanging branches, menacing echoes of the first serpent's promise of forbidden knowledge.

As she prepares her final fall from womanhood into manhood, symbolically drowning her female clothes in the Ocklawaha in a curious baptismal ritual, Lilly connects her decision with the state's most famous myth: she, "Like Ponce de Leon who came to find youth, I have come to find manhood." But is a fairly rare moment of self-doubt, this new Adam worries, "Shall I be disappointed also?" (169).

Stung by Lilly's rebuffs, Fred's ego cannot allow him to let her go. He even convinces himself that he still loves her in his own desultory fashion" (176). Sitting on the deck, thinking about their deteriorating relationship, Fred sees a fashionably dressed young man and his valet disembark. The man's resemblance to Lilly startles him but he concludes, "Everyone I look at seems to have her optics!" (177).

With Book III, the pronouns change permanently to he and him for both Lawrence and John. After recovering his trunks in Orlando, Lawrence returns to St. Augustine as a "natty young fellow" (182). When he sees Bessie talking to a potential rival, he experiences "masculine jealousy" (184). She dances with

him, surprised that he has the same steps as Lilly, as well as the same flashes in his eyes and "twist" in his voice (187). Since everyone recognizes remarkable similarities between the cousins, their failure to suspect what has happened can only stem from their inability to think outside convention.

As his "savage, wild, torturing masculine jealousy" (192) grows, Lawrence decides, "thoughtlessly" (195) to punish her by flirting with Stella Lovejoy. The widow, delighted, takes advantage of the inexperience of this "young neophyte in manhood" (195) by teasing him with "a very slight but catching peep of ankle in view" (196) and inviting him to visit her, showing up in a revealing outfit, the result of "some Parisian man milliner villain to give women dominion over his sex" (226). Gunter suggests that she is both Circe and the Medicean Venus.

The abandoned doctor develops a double strategy to deal with the disappearance of his fiancée and the simultaneous appearance of a new rival. He decides either to find proof that Lawrence killed Lilly or, after hearing that that the young man is a terrible shot, provoking him to a duel. While the idea of dueling appeals to the chivalric nature of Major Horton, Lawrence's future father-in law, Gunter makes clear his view by pointing out that the tradition is aided by "the father of all duels—his Satanic Majesty" (233)

When Fred provokes a quarrel by insulting "the young bantam," Lawrence finds "some of his old feminine nature returning" (235). He walks "up to his tormentor and soundly boxes his ears, an accomplishment he has learned as Miss Lilly Travers at a girls' boarding-school." But the doctor, a product of "a more masculine seminary," knocks him down" (236).

Once Fred finds evidence of Lilly Travers' disappearance, he again confronts Lawrence with the threat of prison. The worried young man, with the help of his valet, holds his accuser down and forces a seed down his throat. Transformed, the doctor "simpers," (251) returns to "her room," and flees St. Augustine (252).

Some weeks later, Lawrence, on a trip to Jacksonville, meets "a tall, gaunt, masculine-looking woman with a hunted look in her face." This doctress, as Gunter terms her, proposes marriage in language that echoes Aunt Connie's advice: "I will make you the best wife in this world. I will complain of nothing. I will be your slave—your idolater—your worshipper, my own, my beautiful boy! You shall go to the club and I will not reproach you if you stay out till the morning hours (255). Lawrence, naturally, rejects the offer.

Unlike Dr. Jekyll, Dorian Gray, and Count Dracula, the protagonists of contemporary novels who undergo forbidden transformations, Gunter ends his sentimental, satiric work on a series of positive notes. Even Fred, now the doctress, finds hope when he re-appears and begs Lawrence for the last seed so he can become a man again and marry the wealthy widow, Stella Lovejoy. Noting Lawrence's hesitation, his former rival warns him that if he keeps it, Bessie may find it and inevitably choose to become a man. Remembering that the headstrong Bessie had once confided her fear that her father might remarry and give "her a stepmother to rule her" (20), Lawrence concludes that, given the chance, his "inquisitive and impulsive little bride" would inevitably opt to become a man. So, he grants Fred's wish (259).

Now that the unscrupulous, avaricious doctor is free to marry the seductive, libidinous widow, the novel can end of a note of celebration as his young couple return from the New Word to the Old. Surrounded by a cheering honor guard of tugboats, they sail into the summer with no clouds or dangers on their horizon:

Then the Etruria, 'mid the saluting whistles of surrounding steam tugs, puts her prow down North River, towards Sandy Hook, and steams away upon her voyage across a summer sea, bearing the happiness and love in different scenes from the old Florida orange groves, Lawrence Talbot, who will be a man forever, and his bride, Bessie, who will still remain to him

forever a [iii]woman, and a joy.

Although he continued to be known primarily as the author of Mr. Barnes of New York, Gunter like A Florida Enchantment enough to turn it into a play which premiered at Hoyt's Theatre in New York in 1896. Although the play's reputation spread throughout the country and The Galveston Daily News reported on November 1, 1896 that it was "one of the big financial successes of the season" (22), no copy appears to exist. That may well be because, as the Galveston paper also noted, this "comic frolic" received "universal and sweeping condemnation."

That comment almost seems like understatement from reviews throughout the country. In the Denver Post, Nancy Sykes called it "the nastiest and most putrid play that it has been my misfortune to witness." *The New York Times* announced, "What is needed now at Hoyt's Theatre is not criticism, but chloride of lime" and termed it "the worst play ever produced in New York."[iv] The Chicago Daily Inter Ocean cited a line from *The New York Herald's* review in its theater column calling it "a singular instance of inanity and vulgarity,"[v] while the Morning Oregonian quoted the *New York Evening Sun's* succinct review: "It is disgusting."[vi]

Either despite or because of those reviews, the play proved popular, with a production later the same year at the Harlem Opera House and another in 1912 at Columbia Theatre. A curious footnote about the play appeared in *The New York Times* on April 22, 1935 in a gossip piece about Mae West. The entertainer and sex symbol, who that year was the highest paid woman and second highest paid person in the United States after publisher William Randolph Hearst, had long mocked the idea of marriage: "Marriage is a great institution but I'm not ready for an institution yet." The Times' article was the first to report that she had actually been married early in her career to Frank Wilson (actually Frank Wallace, the stage name of Frank Szatkus) in Milwaukee where they were

"acting in a vaudeville act-and-dance piece called A Florida Enchantment" (19).

Although Gunter died in 1907, his novel had one more incarnation when the famed director Sidney Drew (1863-1919), an uncle of the famous Barrymore acting clan, filmed it on location in 1914 as arguable the first LBGTQ feature. Curiously casting himself at 51 as the "medical Adonis" Fred Cassadene, Drew chose the popular, athletic Edith Storey, then 22, as Lilly. Employing many of the comic conventions of the time, from a Keystone Cop chase to whites performing in blackface, the movie shifts the original's satire to slapstick and opts for a conventional ending, with Lilly waking from a dream in which she imagines becoming a man to find the magic seeds still in her hand. The mismatched couple embrace as they prepare for their wedding. The slapstick humor apparently softened Lilly's romantic encounters with both Bessie and the widow enough to allow the film to escape the scorn heaped upon the play.

Gunter appears pleased not only with his Florida novel but with the state itself. He returned throughout the decade and wrote two other notable works set in the Sunshine State. In 1896 he published what would prove to be the state's first detective novel, Don Balasco of Key West. Its hero, Thomas Duff Mastic of the U.S. Revenue Service, comes to the keys to catch filibusterers smuggling arms to Cuba. Less effective than A Florida Enchantment, Gunter often wanders into digressions for long periods before returning to his main plot. When the author does focus on his main character, however, he creates the kind of conflicted detective hero who would re-appear steadily in Florida's fiction. Caught between his sympathy for the Cuban rebels and his superiors' orders to stop them, Mastic struggles to do his job.

The author's last Florida novel, *The Power of Women*, or Susan Turnbull (1897), is his most ambitious and successful. A marvelous epic which traces the odyssey of its deeply flawed heroine from English boarding school through the

New Smyrna colony and the Turkish conquest of Greece, its characters finally wind up in Paris during the French Revolution. Filled with characters as colorful as the history through which they pass, Gunter's final Florida novel is an impressive work of historical fiction. With these three remarkable novels, the little-known Archibald Clavering Gunter certainly deserves a major place among Florida's nineteenth-century writers.

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Notes

[i] Edward A. Dithmar, New York Times. October, 8 1896. A10.

[ii] Gunter himself may have recognized the book's

potential for controversy by listing a co-author, Fergus Redmond. There seems to be little evidence that any such person was involved with his writing or publishing and the name may well be another fiction by a man proud of his imagination.

[iii] October 19, 1896. P. 4

[iv] October 13, 1896.

[v] October 18, 1896. P 41

[vi] October 19, 1896. P. 4.

~3~

THE DARK SIDE OF THE FLORIDA KEYS REPRESENTATIONS IN FILM AND TELEVISION

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The Florida Keys. The words invoke images of sunshine, palm trees, boats, rocky beaches, independent lifestyle, new identity, as well as mystery and shady activities. There are two sides to the Florida Keys: The sunny, happy, carefree side of life that welcomes homesteaders and tourists, and the dark, nefarious, unsettled side that lures transients and criminals. Are these stereotypes or generalizations? Are they accurate? Is a place and life there ever that simple? The Florida Keys provide an atmosphere and ambience that is distinctive with its relaxed eclectic style and natural tropical settings that offer a choice of sunshine joy or volatile fear. These are the 'types' generally found in films and television shows with the Florida Keys. Which one allures you?

"Florida has a strange magnetism that's been attracting humans for untold eons," declares Charlie Carlson in his book: Weird Florida. He continues discussing three types of Florida: the first, the artificial one for tourists, the second is the "Real Florida, the one that few tourists seldom venture into. It's the one with swamps, snakes, fish camps, gators, and swarms of mosquitoes. But there is the third Florida, a sometimes elusive one; it's the eccentric one that is woven into the fabric of the other two. Florida is a mixture of fact, fantasy, and

folklore, and they are not always easy to separate. That is what gives the state its unique culture." It is this uniqueness that provides provocative locations and backgrounds for film. A distinctiveness realized in the locale and people: citizens of the Keys whose individuality is matchless to anywhere else, and draws filmmakers to it like the call of a mermaid to fishermen. "Filmmakers have been attracted to the state for more than its climate….Over time Florida has meant many different things to people, and filmmakers have played a part in either reinforcing or undermining popular images of the state. Wherever actually filmed, movies provide more than images of Florida; they also project ideas about Florida" (Fernandez and Ingalls 6).

Many films claim to be set in the Keys, some actually film there but do not take place there, and a few film there and are set there. Only a rare finding indulges in the actual location and lets it become part of the story. The film Key Largo (1948) directed by John Huston and the Netflix television series Bloodline (2015) created by Glenn Kessler, Todd A. Kessler, and Daniel Zelman are two examples. Of these two, Bloodline embraces the dark side of the Florida Keys.

Key Largo the film is a story of criminals holding a hotel owner, his daughter-in-law, and a visitor hostage during a hurricane – nature's force controlling, dominating, and destroying man – outside shots were filmed in the Key of its same name. A second unit filmed "Highway 1 as it snaked along Key Largo. Most of this footage appears at the beginning of the film and captures the Key Largo of the 1940s" (Doll and Morrow 79). It also summons the audience along for this adventure into the tropical and isolated Keys, but the interiors were shot on a set built in a studio in Hollywood, CA.. Historical guidebook author Joy Williams confirms this idea, stating, "with the exception of a few interior set scenes shot inside the bar The Caribbean Club, [the movie] was filmed entirely on a soundstage in Hollywood" (10). The

actors were never even in the Keys. A studio setting provides control of the environment and the action preventing nature from interfering. But the ambience, the influence of the Keys prevails over the story. Perhaps that is why Key Largo was chosen as the setting of the film for its isolation and exotic locale especially for 1948 when the movie was shot. "Outlaws and others living on the fringe were drawn to its tolerance" (Leslie and Boese 17). A hurricane holds everyone captive, even the criminals for most of the film. During the storm which the audience experiences with dim lights, sounds of howling winds and scratching palm fronds, the captive aging hotel owner regales of "'The worst storm we ever had was back in '35. The wind whipped up a big wave…. Eight hundred people were washed out to sea.' Upon hearing this, the frightened gangster... responds, 'You're a liar. Nobody would live here after a thing like that happened'" (Fernandez and Ingalls 20). Yet, they did and still do. The story sadly is true and referring to the category-5 hurricane with 200-250 mph winds and a 25 foot storm surge that hit the Upper Keys on Labor Day in 1935 (Doll and Morrow 61). At Mile Marker 81.6 is a coral limestone monument to the 423 victims (79). So, even though in the film these gangsters fled to the Keys for a meet and then quick escape to Cuba, a hurricane, often a severer power in the Keys than in larger land masses becomes a dark force even stronger and more dangerous than the gangsters. "As the film progresses, the increasingly violent storm becomes a metaphor for the intensifying crisis as the gangsters become more and more nervous" (Doll and Morrow 59). The storm is also a metaphor for the lead character, Frank's "own postwar turmoil… Frank had become alienated from mainstream society by the experiences of war." This alienated character was drawn to the isolation and unknown atmosphere of the Keys, looking for what he did not know. After the hurricane, good wins out in the end; it is a movie after all and American audiences like a happy ending. "The strength of this postwar

drama is its soothing message of healing, which would surely have resonated with audiences when Key Largo was released in 1948" (Doll and Morrow 59). At the end of this film, Key Largo remains an interesting and exotic place that entices but may also be dangerous to visit with that dark allure of the Keys prevailing.

"The Keys don't really go from light to dark. The Keys sparkle downward, warm and bright, full of light and air and a bit of intrigue. The Keys are relaxed, a little reckless" (Williams xi). Are the Florida Keys only dark and dangerous? Of course not. Are they exotic and alluring? Yes. Can they be both, at the same time? Yes. If so, does one aspect dominate the other? Well, that depends. "Cinematic images of Florida's environment tend to alternate between the extremes of dream and nightmare, leaving little room for subtlety" (Fernandez and Ingalls 15). The Netflix television series Bloodline does just that. It is bright and beautiful, exotic and alluring, and dark and dangerous, layered and hypnotic. The viewer is filled with dread and interest and excitement and repulsion all at once. Bloodline was released in March 2015 as a 13 episode one hour each series that could be streamed all at once, one after another. And that is exactly what happens. The viewer continues to press play on the computer absorbed with each episode being drawn into the comprehensive narrative, complex characters, tropical setting, and pull of what will happen next with the contrast of light and dark, and good and bad fixed in this intoxicating environment of the Florida Key of Islamorada. "Bloodline is less about what happens or whodunit, so much as what drove them to it and who, if anyone, is the villain. Maybe everyone is, a little bit" (Poniewozik).

The entire series was shot on Islamorada Key and that authenticity is evident in the locales, sets, cinematography, characters, and costumes that give the show life. "The show is fluidly edited, scored and shot like a movie, with lots of arresting aerial views of the snaking coastal roads, flanked

by lush greenery and pristine blue waters, all of it drenched in hot white daylight or soupy night. The setting is both a sanctuary and an isolating trap, a duality that evokes a rich tradition of Florida crime fiction" (Rooney). The setting of the Islamorada Key is one of the characters of the series. It would not be the same story if it was set somewhere else. It is as vital to the show as wind to a hurricane. The viewers believe in this character as they can feel the calm of the salty breeze off the bay, the warmth of the penetrating rays of the sun, the intriguing lure of the Keys, as well as, the bite in that breeze, the burn of the sun, and the secret temptation of the Keys. It is this captivating dichotomy that is the pulse of Bloodline. For example, "The setting in a Florida Keys hotel has a faint echo of the classic Humphrey Bogart movie Key Largo, but the stars of Bloodline don't instantly project a sense of menace….The Rayburns seem like an unusually companionable, affectionate and easygoing group. Of course, the Keys also seem dreamily balmy and serene. It's paradise until the first tropical storm blackens the sky and drenches the landscape" (Stanley).

The first episode opens with a straight-on shot of a beautiful beach with background music singing "a young man looking for the diamond in the sea…" then cuts to night to day to night to day to sun to storm to total black screen. Then a voice over an aerial shot of the Key says, "Sometimes you know something's coming, you feel it in the air, in your gut, and you don't sleep at night. A voice in your head is telling you something is going to go terribly wrong and there's nothing you can do to stop it. That's how I felt when my brother came home" (Bloodline).

The series is a fictional family saga of the Rayburn Family, but it is only a short visit with them during a few weeks at present time, blended with foreshadowing of the future, metaphors, and peeks into the past. And it is all swirled together between four siblings, two parents, and a Florida Key that erupts into an emotional hurricane. The tone is set

with the opening shot as described here: "From the beginning, there's so much tension between the Rayburns' addict son Danny and everyone else, the only way things can go is wrong. And when they do, in a flash-forward reveal at the end of the pilot, it will make you press play on the next episode immediately…What makes Bloodline different is that by the time the pilot's over, you already know what's going to happen, which only sharpens the tension. That creeping sense of dread John feels? It sums up the experience of watching this gripping thriller" (Maerz 86).

The family consists of John, the second eldest brother, who is the strength and caretaker of the family. John is a deputy sheriff and provides the voice over. He is the narrator of the story, omniscient, not just because he is the narrator, but his character understands people, remembers the family drama, and appreciates the uniqueness of the Keys. He is a central force in the family and the story - the eye of the hurricane. His sister Meg is the next born and a lawyer. She is beautiful, smart, and pragmatic. She is serious and pleasure. The youngest is Kevin. He operates a small boat yard. He is wild, simple, and fun. He embodies the free-spirit life of the Keys. Asked if his experiences in life might be limited, he replies, "I went to Orlando once- it was too cold" (Bloodline). Then the oldest, Danny. The classic black sheep: irresponsible, trouble-maker, and manipulative. He is the cold, dark force blowing over the family once again. He is who John warns the viewer of in the voice-over in the opening lines of the series and he is evil. He is the storm in the opening credits. He is the dark side of the beautiful Keys. From his first shot on screen, the viewer knows this guy is trouble. He once again brings turmoil and conflict to the happy Rayburn family.

In the opening episode, the father is being honored by the town and a pier is being named after the patriarch for the contributions the family owned Inn has given to the community. At a party that first night, the father gives a speech

introducing his children, "hinting at the roles they play: Meg is the smart one, Kevin is the hothead, John is the caretaker, Danny is the black sheep" (Maerz 87). Throughout the season, the siblings shift roles as quickly and intermittently as shifts in the Florida weather. While "each sibling aligns with or against the others, so does the viewer" (87). Yet, Danny has come home because the mother wants the whole family there. She says, "I'm happy when all my children are in one place." But will she be? John waits at the bus stop to pick Danny up, but he has gotten off at the stop before. Danny meets up with an old low-life parolee friend and they get high and start trashing the Rayburns: the friend says, You know how they were always, "banishing us from paradise…you know how your brother is… come over to the dark side" (Bloodline). Danny is the dark side. The majority of Danny's scenes are in shadows, seedy locales, or at night. He is always drinking and smoking. The morning after his late arrival to his family's party, the mother finds him passed out on the pier of their Inn naked in full view of their guests.

Yet, "Things move slow in Florida, especially down in the Keys, swampy and tropical and swaddled in salty breezes. But there's something attractive about that slowness, isn't there? Something arresting about the creeping way that darkness can invade these balmy backwaters?...So, the show teases us, offering little glimpses of what's to come and then drawing us back into the show's present, when the family's many tiny fractures are deepened and widened" (Lawson) through each episode. Layers of character complexities and narrative plotlines keep the viewer interested like the many colors, shapes, and sizes of seashells on a beach and the fascination and wonder of their origination. Included are "Little lies and half-truths, slights and minor betrayals [that] have a way of festering in the humidity" (Lawson).

The use of voice-over is common in film noir and necessary in telling flashbacks, and it is a device that ensnares the viewer

and reveals secrets and truths. Bloodline uses voice-over for these revelations as well as shock moments. The second voice-over from John is over a gray scene of storm, thunder, rain, and swampy mangroves. "I couldn't have known then where all this was going to end up. I didn't know why he decided to come back. I didn't know then what he's running from. None of us did. I just knew he was always getting into trouble. And I was always coming to his rescue. Trying to save him from himself. But this time - I didn't know whether I'd be able to save him" (Bloodline).

The family creed is "You don't give up on family." But the question soon becomes whether John could save the family from Danny. It is a compelling series where each episode provides insights into the characters and the story and new twists as with each new tide.

"For non-Floridians any reference to Florida can stir visions of natural beauty or natural disaster, depending on their particular images of the state" (Fernandez and Ingalls 257). The last voice-over from John, "I'm going to tell you everything. It's not very pleasant. But it's the truth. Please don't judge us. What we did to our brother, we had to do. We are not bad people, but we did a bad thing." The three siblings are connected in this act: by action, character, birthright, and place.

The Florida Keys once again dominate in a story, whether in fiction, film, or television, in lives-- of either characters or actual people--and in weather, sunny or stormy. It is a place like no other, memorable as it creates or controls memories. Is it simply those two sides: light or dark? Or is it more complex offering viewers and visitors a choice in what type of adventure awaits?

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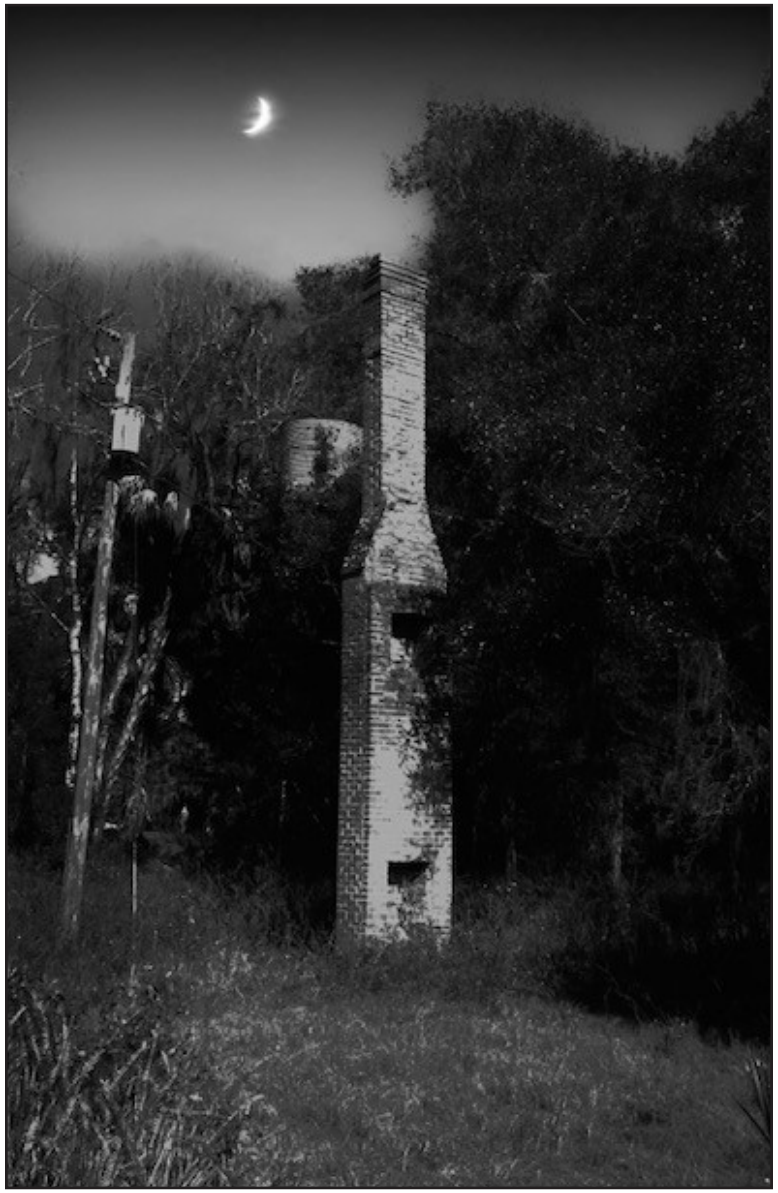

Photograph by Ann Leshy Wood

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"WHEN HE SPEAKS OF CUBA:" EXPANSIONISM AND DOMESTIC DESIRE IN LUCY HOLCOMBE PICKENS'S THE FREE FLAG OF CUBA

by Patricia Feito
Barry University

One would not normally associate a Southern antebellum socialite with the political struggles of a Caribbean Spanish colony, and yet, Lucy Holcombe Pickens's recently recovered novel of 1854, The *Free Flag* of Cuba (alternatively entitled, The Martyrdom of Lopez) weds the unlikely pair. In their 2002 edition of this lost novel, scholars Orville Burton and Georganne Burton, offer up a comprehensive introduction to this unique literary creation written, as they note, by a woman the Charleston News and Courier proclaimed "one of the most famous women in the South, and one whose name will live in history" (1). Born in 1832 into a long line of military Holcombes from tide-water Virginia, Lucy Petway Holcombe was raised in Kentucky and North Texas cotton plantations, educated in Philadelphia, and later introduced to Washington society. At 25, Holcombe was to ensure her fame by strategically marrying the much older Francis Wilkinson Pickens, a statesman who would eventually become Confederate Governor of South Carolina. As pointed out by her biographer, Elizabeth Wittenmyer Lewis, as First Lady of the first state to secede from the Union and an ardent believer in "The Cause," she had a Carolinian unit named in her honor during the Civil War while the press of her day touted her the "Uncrowned Queen of the Confederacy."

Moreover, during the Civil War this symbiotic image as both a symbol of southern femininity and Confederate authority reached its public heights when her profile was stamped onto the Confederate one hundred dollar bill (vii).

Lucy Holcombe wrote *Free Flag* at the age of nineteen after being introduced to General Narciso Lopez in the parlor of a Mississippi plantation house belonging to family friend, Governor John Quitman. According to her biographer, it was during an elegant dinner party that Lopez, a Venezuelan who had married into elite Cuban society, revealed his plans to take an expedition to Cuba for the purposes of liberating it from the Spanish Crown (Lewis 39-41). Indeed, Holcombe's very overt purpose in writing the novel was clearly proclaimed in her preface as one that was meant to clear the name of Lopez and his generals by glorifying their failed mission as one of liberation of the Cuban people while also condemning the foreign policies of her day, especially the administration of President Fillmore which outwardly condemned such "patriotic" efforts as illegal and mercenary:

The effort to liberate the Island Queen has commenced, and though intermitted, it is not over; for never can the struggle between tyranny and freedom cease, while chains are galling and Liberty is dear. Every age has its error,…the error of the present day…is to suppose that our government can by any national obligation restrain its constituents from individually assisting a people to throw off a yoke, degrading to their moral character, hateful and oppressive to their political energies (*Free Flag* 210-211).

This mission of 1851, like the two failed expeditions that preceded it, was known as a filibuster or filibustero, a military practice that hallmarked numerous expeditions by the U.S. in the 1800s to annex countries and territories such as Mexico and Texas. Backed mostly by private citizens, many of whom where Cuban exiles such as Laurent Sigur, publisher-owner of the New Orleans Delta News, Lopez's many expeditions were

also supported by U.S. Southerners and Northerners alike (Lewis 41). In 1851, Lopez, with the aid of several aristocratic Southern families, especially John Quitman of Mississippi, enlisted a small volunteer army of 500 men, mostly Southerners, to be co-led by Colonel William Crittenden of Kentucky. Ill-fated from the start, Lopez's filibuster left New Orleans in August and landed outside of Havana only to be overwhelmed by Spanish forces. Both leaders were ultimately executed by the Spanish and their men imprisoned (Lewis 44-46).

I would like to explore the ways The *Free Flag* of Cuba works overtly to promote the filibustering mission to "liberate" Cuba and found a Republic, but also how it simultaneously imagines this "Island Queen" within a particularly Southern domestic discourse. Although scholars like Burton and Burton have certainly pointed out this unity of U.S. Manifest Destiny expansion with domesticity in the novel, it still remains undeveloped in terms of a close reading of its dynamics (5-7). Moreover, while the novel certainly represents U.S expansionist views emerging since the 1840s, it also partakes in a "discourse of Cubanness" or cubanidad so essential to creating this country's eventual national ethos—from within as well as without the country of Cuba. This is especially true of the domestic discourse of the novel's heroines and indeed, the construction of Holcombe's authorial voice itself. Military campaigns and exotic foreign lands are—at least regionally—domesticated by emotionally overlapping the movement toward Cuba Libre within the island, with the South's domestic manners, codes of conduct, and economic interests. Rather than simply stemming from an American ideology that moves from the center-out to the edges of the Caribbean, *Free Flag* , also taps into ideological movements within Cuba itself.

The *Free Flag* of Cuba plays out the Lopez expedition within a narrative articulated within the domestic sphere of the large Mississippi plantation, Ellawarre. Here, two friends, one a Southern belle romantically called, Genevieve

Clifton, and her visiting friend from New England, the wise and learned, Mabel Royal, fall in love with Colonel Ralph Dudley and the Louisiana Creole, Eugene de France. The plot of courtship between these couples envelopes a narrative frame that charts the details of the Lopez expedition from its conception in the genteel parlors of Ellawarre to the subsequent victorious battle of Cafetal del Frias, and finally culminating in the inevitable capture and execution of Critttenden and the "martyrdom "of Lopez at that hands of the evil Captain-General of Cuba, Jose Gutierrez de la Concha. The novel closes its frame appropriately with surviving officers, Colonel Ralph Dudley and Captain Stuart Raymond participating in a double-wedding at Ellawarre: Genevieve to Colonel Dudley and Mabel- now past her grief over the fallen Eugene—to the more apt partner, Captain Raymond.

It is from the plantation house that indeed, the novel's literary authority is established. As both the novel's heroine and its most ardent commentator, Mabel Royal, as her name suggests, embodies the regal position of speech in the novel, one from which the author shapes the authorial space required to articulate and influence matters of politics and history. The plantation's name itself- Ella-warre or She-War- grounds it in both the economic and cultural roots of the South, while suggesting the seat of authority from which a white woman will speak and legitimize an expansionist agenda:

Ellawarre, the beautiful plantation of Mrs. Clifton, lay on the fertile coast of the grand old Mississippi; that generous river, knowing neither north nor south, but alike kissing the frozen banks of the snow-hill states, and the sunny shore of the flower-dowered south…. The house was of modern structure, and really southern in all its conveniences…. Exquisite taste had planned the shaded walks winding to the river, giving you coquettish views of its mighty waves…The haughty magnolia, 'the pride of the south,' stood in graceful and unbending beauty (*Free Flag* 81).

Like its beautiful, but different heroines, Genevieve and Mabel, the description invokes the beauty and "coquettish" grace of the women it upholds while allegorically also connecting the Southern, Genevieve, to the more intellectual friend from the North, Mabel. Much more potently though, the description of Ellawarre announces its cultural architecture by emphasizing its direct relationship with the economic institutions of Cuba: namely, the production of sugar and of course, the systems of slavery that upheld it:

Off in the distance, where the young sugar-cane waved in verdant beauty, stood the negro houses, or, in southern parlance "The Quarter." Ah! How I wish some honest, but mis-judging north-born friend we have, could or would take the trouble to see the many neat and comfortable settlements on the beautiful plantations of the south (*Free Flag* 81).

As noted by Hugh Thomas in his landmark history of Cuba, the United States of course, had a long history of annexationist movements toward the island—especially those that peaked during the 1840s. Thomas argues that both national forces in Manifest Destiny as well as purely southern commercial interests in promoting and extending southern plantation economies-- with of course their preservation of the institutions of slavery-- fueled the expansionist desires of both the North and the South (129-30). Moses Yale Beach, editor of the New York Sun, traveled to Cuba in 1847 along with John O'Sullivan, editor of the Democratic Review and famous for coining the term, "manifest destiny," and upon his return printed a proclamation that "'Cuba by geographical position and right…must be ours'" (qtd. in Thomas 130). Simultaneously, Cuban annexationists argued for a mutually beneficial union based on compatible commercial interests between the US and Cuba:

Cuba, united to this strong and respected nation [the US], whose southern interests would be identified with hers, would be assured serenity and future prosperity; her riches

would increase, her farms and slaves would double their value [author's italics] and her whole territory treble its value. Liberty would be given to private enterprise and the system of hateful and harmful restrictions which paralyze commerce would be destroyed. (qtd. in Thomas 130-31)

A few months later, President Polk would offer to buy Cuba from the Spanish Crown, and only two years later, Narciso Lopez would mount his first of three filibustering attempts despite violating the federal Neutrality Laws of 1818.

It is within the novel's plantation structure that the heroine Mabel Royal works to establish an authority that allows her to speak of both romance and moral codes of conduct along with issues residing in the more public spheres of masculine codes of honor and war and indeed, for Holcombe to align Ellawarre with the sugar centrales of the Cuban colony. The novel opens with Generals Lopez and Quitman meeting in the great halls of Ellawarre to collaborate on their plans to invade the island, directly followed by a courtship scene between Colonel Ralph Dudley and the Southern belle, Genevieve. Here, their courtship is circumscribed within an elaborate romantic language that situates their love within the ambitions and lofty ideals of the filibustering mission: "Then Genevieve lift that dear head; there is nothing to fear. Liberty and Cuba! How my heart bounds with the words! Ere the autumn leaves have come, I will be with you love, and our theme shall be joy—not only our joy, but the joy of a people"(*Free Flag* 80).

This proclamation of love by the future "liberator" is quickly followed by an "animated discussion around the dinner-table, when Mabel, who was late, entered" (*Free Flag* 106). This discussion enlists Mabel's New England education into the service of a light banter initiated by Ellawarre's patriarch, Mr. Clifton, cautioning Mabel not to encourage "incautious young men" into rushing into battles "filibustering over the Mexican sea" (110). What results is both an overtly propagandistic exchange and an articulation of a unique feminine voice

that marshals the gendered roles of antebellum women as it equally underscores their power at defining masculine and feminine conduct within the home. Mabel, the novel's mouthpiece for political opinion and for upholding the idealistic and highly romanticized codes of honor and republicanism presumably motivating the Lopez expedition, is mildly rebuked by her host as an "ambitious woman." To this Mabel responds "I am not ambitious. What has a woman to do with ambition? Hers is a humbler, but for her, a holier and better sphere of action." "But" she cleverly responds, "for the man I loved, I should be very ambitious. The more I loved him, the more gladly would I welcome the fair goddess of Fame as my rival." Dexterously, Mabel recasts Captain Raymond's later almost flirtatious tease that "Perhaps…Miss Royal would change the position of her sex—would give woman the right to throw herself into the whirlpool of politics…to place herself at the head of a gallant regiment and shout with her silver-toned voice, the cry of victory" (107). Mabel acquiesces once again by deftly accepting her domestic sphere, but only by simultaneously insisting on her power to circumscribe –indeed define—his public roles: "No, I think woman's position is right, just as it is…. I regret and condemn the growing strong-mindedness of my sex. Yet, I think, if man was truer to his duties, woman would not seek to assist him in his legitimate sphere" (108).

Rodrigo Lazo, in his extensive study of filibustering and American journalism, has argued that for many Cuban exile writers in nineteenth-century America, the very concept of the filibuster symbolized a built in contradiction between wanting autonomous rule on the island and the loss of economic independence to the United States. Exiles like Lopez himself, Lazo continues, came to symbolize the "new man of Cuba" who combined "militarism and masculinity" (100). In his reading of *Free Flag* 's conflicting characterization of Lopez as both heroic and inferior to the US soldiers, he also reaffirms views that the

novel "inscribes a set of conventional gender roles for wealthy southern white women and frames the filibustero's quest in terms of masculine duty" (115). But far from "conventional" roles here, I would argue that it is the white women who have the actual power to make these distinctions within the language of domesticity-- that is, not despite it. Moreover, they also seem to use this power to unite the white couples in marking out the boundaries of the United States border, themselves in flux not only between North and South America, but within the Union itself.

In the previous scene, Mabel carves out an authority to "assist in his legitimate sphere" of action by aligning the domestic power of women with expression of desire. But it is in a conversation with Genevieve just prior to this more public articulation, that Mabel integrates proper feminine desire with the filibustering mission to Cuba and with the idealized ambitions of Cuban Republicanism. In the novel's foundational and didactic scene of reading, Genevieve cajoles Mabel into entertaining as a love-interest either the dashing Captain Stuart Raymond or the more urbane Creole, Eugene. A discussion on sexual relations and attraction ensues, one where we find that the noble cause of freeing Cuba from Spanish rule takes on the expression of a feminine desire quantified by the very ardor in which men espouse the very words of Cuban freedom. Indeed, Cuba Libre could be said to be the stamp by which a genteel Southern woman may recognize an acceptable sexual match. Here is their dialogue:

"He has beautiful eyes," said Genevieve.

"Very beautiful, royal purple eyes—colored like the dark leaf of the pansy. He is not really handsome; but then his features are fine, and full of character, with such dignity of expression."

"I think him too cold and calm" said Genevieve.

"Yes; until his interest is awakened. Then how his face lights up with enthusiasm!"

"When he speaks of Cuba, for instance."

"His face could never be handsome to me," [continues Genevieve] "while his lips dwelt on the fancied wrongs of that troublesome island, who does not deserve half the fuss they make over her."

"Fancied wrongs!" Exclaimed Mabel, indignantly. "Genevieve, it is fearful to say that. In all the world there does not exist such cruel despotism as that exercised over these unhappy people" (*Free Flag* 104).

Indeed, although Mabel is reeducating Genevieve into the rightful laws of sexual attraction, it will take the death of her present love-interest, Eugene, and Captain Raymond's safe return from Cuba, for her to fully recognize her own ideology and rightfully marry the man who "speaks of Cuba."

Literary theorist Amy Kaplan has coined the term Manifest Domesticity to characterize how this language of courtship might influence geopolitics. While we understand how the "separate spheres" ideology in the literary works of nineteenth-women functions to build the middle-classes in both Britain and the U.S., Kaplan extends the deconstruction of this binary between public and private by applying it to the binary of domestic and foreign as a function that unites genders within a country in the domestication of a nation's boundaries, especially during antebellum America (581-582). As applied to my reading, while Mabel employs domesticity to indoctrinate a coupling that supports this union between domestic and foreign, the novel also simultaneously creates and supports that authority by aligning itself with already existing insurgent sentiments within the island, especially those among its wealthy sugar planters. *Free Flag* accomplishes an identification with the "foreign" through its representation of Cuba within the terms of feminine subjectivity, a project figured in the character of Oralize Morentez, the very embodiment of the suffering "Island Queen" of Cuba, and an idealization of the future Republic itself. Once Lopez lands in

Cuba, the island is described in strictly feminine terms:

Once possessed, the deadly grasp of avarice and oppression crushed and marred her glorious loveliness….No ear heeded the sweet, complaining voice…. Poor Cuba! Long has she mourned, but not always in vain, for her deliverer has come; he who is to commence the work of her final disenthralment, to break the first link in the chain of her moral and political servitude—stands on her shore (*Free Flag* 130).

The beautiful romantic maiden, "the fairest child of southern waters," Cuba is ravaged by the "dark, treacherous arms" of her European oppressor. Oralize Morentez is herself introduced as a "tall, delicate girl" whose "white dress was gathered low off her shoulders, fastened at her breast by a rich girdle of gold and purple silk. Her large lustrous eyes were sad, shedding a holy, Madonna expression on a pale, weary looking young-face, whose raven hair coiled around an exquisite Grecian head" (*Free Flag* 145).

While beautiful and wealthy, Oralize is also a fearless patriot and a supporter of the U.S. liberating army. She gives the fallen body of Mabel's first love, Eugene, proper Christian rites; she composes a letter of sympathy to Mabel, whom she immediately admires; she secures the *Free Flag* of the Republic from Eugene, and in doing so is immediately associated with Mabel Royal, whose last name she echoes in her Regal image. Oralize, as the Cuban Mabel, speaks from the center of Cuban planter culture, while still aligning herself with U.S. ideals, since as we learn, she is the daughter of a Louisiana Creole mother and a Cuban Creole sugar-planter father, one who speaks perfect English and one who is ultimately carried away by General Concha's soldiers while reading "a volume of American history" while in her father's "mansion" of "marble steps" and a "luxurious chamber" (*Free Flag* 149-150). It is from this mansion that Oralize is dragged out and brought before Concha who executes her for treason after she snubs his bribes to incriminate her insurgent father. That execution reads like a

medieval martyrdom of the saints, as she is beheaded and "her blood…gurgled on the luxurious carpet, dabbling the feet of the Spanish General as he stood gloating over the fair victim" (*Free Flag* 154).

Indeed, this early representation of Cuba as both victim and heroine characterizes as it foreshadows many future American literary and journalistic representations of what historian Teresa Prados-Torreira has termed the Mambisa, the female version of the masculine, mambi or nineteenth-century Cuban insurgent. As she argues: "Mambisas are unique because they helped define the meaning of cubanidad" (7). It is this already politicized femininity that speaks from the domestic power of the Cuban sugar plantation as it is both coopted and propagated in order to fuel Holcombe's narrative authority. As Hugh Thomas argues, the annexationists who emerged in the 1840s and 1850s within Cuba itself were "the most enterprising and most realistic of the Cuban planters. Intelligent Cubans [who] had been sending their sons to US schools and universities for a generation" (129).

Holcombe's *Free Flag* , by speaking with confident authority from the seat of the Southern home, in effect, institutionalizes both the economic interests of the Southern states and the Cuban planters while it simultaneously shapes the boundaries of both the future Republic and the future Confederacy. As Mabel Royal ever so firmly reminds Genevieve—and the reader: "It is the woman- after all- who crowns the hero" (105).

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JESTER AND FAT MAN: ANOMALOUS BODIES IN HARRY CREWS' *NAKED IN GARDEN HILLS*

by John David Harding
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Southern writer Harry Crews is well known for crafting characters who experience life on the fringe of society, whether of their own accord or because they are ostracized for non-normative behaviors or atypical physical characteristics. In Crews' first two novels, central characters experience social isolation for possessing bodies deemed abnormal by average-bodied society. As I argued previously, the character Foot in Crews' first novel, *The Gospel Singer*, abandons his wealthy family in order to travel the country as the leader of a freak show, of which he is the star attraction due to his dwarfism and his unusually large foot (Harding). Crews' interest in physical difference and public spectacle likewise informs the plot of his second novel, *Naked in Garden Hills*, the central characters of which include a morbidly obese person referred to as Fat Man and his African American butler, a little person nicknamed Jester. Because society constructs these characters' identities according to what they see and what they expect of each man based on his appearance, the novels are thus encoded with a social constructionist approach to identity formation. Several characters in Crews' first two novels acquire nicknames based on physical features (Fat Man, Foot, and Frecks) or social positions (Jester and Ice Man), and their nicknames only serve

to reify social stigmas imposed upon them. Indeed, how could they hope to transcend outsider status when their very names serve as reinforcement?

The Ideology of Ability

I propose that several of Crews' characters, including Fat Man and Jester, serve as literary representations emerging from, or in concert with, "the ideology of ability." This foundational concept for the field of disability studies was first proposed in Tobin Siebers' *Disability Theory*. From Sieber's perspective, the ideology of ability constitutes a system of assumptions, expectations, and contradictions by which identity, ability, and human value are defined. Put another way, this ideology enforces a socially constructed supremacy of the perfect human form, one free of blemish, impairment, illness, or individuality. Such an ideology leaves no room for the existence of human variation, the evidence of which is of course abundant. In fact, one of the ideology's goals pertains to the erasure of disability by dehumanizing any person who exists in contradiction to its principles. Siebers explains, "[Within this ideology,] ability is the ideological baseline by which humanness is determined. The lesser the ability, the lesser the human being. The ideology of ability simultaneously banishes disability and turns it into a principle of exclusion" (10). Its logic suggests, among other things, that students with disabilities must be taught in separate spaces; people with impaired memory from Alzheimer's disease must be confined to nursing homes where they are neither seen nor heard; and people with physical or cognitive impairments must not be employed in any public-facing position, lest an average-bodied person be made to feel uncomfortable at witnessing an example of human difference.

By no means comprehensive, these examples establish a baseline from which a conversation about the ideology of ability might emerge. No matter the social setting, we

are bombarded with negative messages about people with disabilities. Indeed, the ideology of ability pervades social institutions (including universities) considered to be progressive and sensitive to diversity. Even those public spaces without proper hand railings or elevators tell the story of our society's attitude toward disability. More often than not, physical or mental differences, when interpreted through this ideology, make someone the object of public scrutiny, frustration, and disdain.

Disability in *Naked in Garden Hills*

Whether any one person or group can be "blamed" for this social order is less important than disentangling its messages about disability. It is within this context that I turn my attention to Jester and Fat Man, the principle characters of Crews' *Naked in Garden Hills*. I contend that each character demonstrates the ideology of ability's pervasiveness, thus providing a perspective from which to better understand its pernicious influence on everything from industry to interpersonal relationships. While Jeff Abernathy views the novel as exposing "twentieth-century industrialism" (68) following America's shift from agrarianism, I would briefly contribute to this idea by mapping the ideology of ability to the goals of industrialism, a capitalist mode of production that values precision, automation, and standardization while it devalues the human body, especially those bodies considered to be defective models, such as Fat Man's and Jester's.

With regards to the little person Jester, it would be difficult and perhaps unnecessary to identify his specific form of dwarfism. Doing so might also fulfill an ableist impulse to define disability, a privilege mostly reserved for average-bodied people. Labeling someone according to his/her disability signifies but one of myriad ways the ideology of ability asserts its power (Siebers 10). Notably, this process is different when compared to a person claiming a disabled

identity. In that case, they do so to accrue political power or to establish a sense of shared community. Rather, when society melds identity and disability by saying, for example, that a person is blind, a person is morbidly obese, or a person is a dwarf, it does so to compress a person's individuality into a manageable and heterogeneous form. However, I want to analyze Jester's physical features as they are presented precisely because the novel conveys dwarfism in one-dimensional fashion, thereby enacting several tropes borne of the ideology of ability.

First, I should not expect Crews to employ medical terminology when describing Jester's stature, as this vocabulary and level of detail would clash with the novel's overall aesthetic. However, as was the case with Foot's portrayal in *The Gospel Singer*, Crews depicts Jester's dwarfism in ways unsophisticated and circumlocutive. The most precise description of Jester's height—he is "almost four feet tall"—occurs early in the novel (Crews 4). In the same section, Jester is described as having "short, bowed legs" (4). Later, during a discussion with Fat Man about weight (a primary topic of conversation between the two men), Jester says, "Know what I weigh. Always weighed the same. Dressed to ride [horses], it's ninety pounds" (25). This final detail about riding horses reveals another common theme: the utility of Jester's size vis-à-vis horseracing, his former profession before becoming butler to Fat Man.

It could be that Crews does not specify the exact nature of Jester's dwarfism for stylistic reasons. Perhaps Crews wanted to call more attention to Jester's low social standing rather than his anatomical size, or maybe, whether consciously or not, Crews could not be bothered to differentiate between the hundreds of types and subtypes of dwarfism (Kruse 176). Whatever the case, details about Jester's dwarfism are noticeably scant in a novel otherwise marked by Crews' trademark brand of hyper-detailed literary realism.

In fact, one-third of the novel passes before Jester is formally characterized as a "dwarf" (Crews 63). Relayed through the perspective of Dolly (a secondary character obsessed by Fat Man's body and fortune), descriptions of Jester in this section evoke several stereotypes common to literary representations of little people. First, Jester fulfills the promise of his nickname by attending to Fat Man, the richest man in Garden Hills, who is "alone in a castle with a dwarf that wore silk and smiled gold" (63). Seen in this light, not only does Jester entertain Fat Man, but he does so while wearing aggrandizing attire, calling forth the trope of the "greedy" dwarf (Adelson 102). Next, assessing Jester's person, Dolly notices "there was not a wrinkle, not a crease in his face and he did not look as though he was breathing" (Crews 64). Here, Dolly's analysis relies upon another trope, that of the "not-quite-human dwarf," one who exists outside of time and does not age (Adelson 216). And, in an earlier passage, the narrator compares Jester to a child, which is perhaps the most common stereotype endured by people of short stature (Adelson 88). By explaining Jester's physical self as proof of his moral failings, otherworldly powers, and physical and/or psychosocial retardation, each of these stereotypes operates from within the ideology of ability.

However, Jester's size within the context of horseracing is viewed as an asset, because horse jockeys tend to be small and lightweight. But Jester's riding career ends abruptly when his horse plows headfirst into a wall, killing itself and ending Jester's chance at hitting the big time. Now, his position as servant to Fat Man—or, figuratively, as court jester to the king of Garden Hills—secures his place as an object of ridicule and erotic fixation. Fat Man regularly objectifies Jester's body as "small" and "perfect," and, even more, "Fat Man liked to weigh him; he liked to touch him" (149). Not only does Fat Man dress Jester in silk costumes, he also requires Jester's assistance when bathing, an act rife with erotic potential, though Jester

simply goes through the motions. While Jester enjoys more freedom than when he worked for the circus—for which he would sit upon a "child's rocking horse" (53) suspended above a dunk tank while thrill-seekers threw baseballs at the target to try to dunk the dwarf—Jester endures psychological pain concomitant to his short stature, class, and race. Had he lived in a time and place when the dwarf identity project aligned itself with the disability rights movement, he might have enjoyed a measure of political power made possible by identity politics. Jester, however, belongs to no such community, nor does his employer, Mayhugh Aaron, Jr., also known as Fat Man.

Is Fat Man Disabled?

In contrast to ambiguous descriptions of Jester's body, Fat Man's body is described in exacting detail. When first encountering the character, the reader learns that Fat Man stands "five feet tall and weigh[s] five hundred and seventy-eight pounds" (Crews 19). As heir to the Garden Hills phosphate fortune, Fat Man resides in an aging manse overlooking this ruined kingdom. What was previously a thriving planned community surrounding the once-booming phosphate factory, Garden Hills becomes a roadside destination for tourists travelling on Interstate 4 between Orlando and Tampa, Florida. The phosphate factory itself has been repurposed as the town's main attraction: DOLLY'S A GO-GO, a freak show starring the young Phosphate Queen of Garden Hills clad only in a bikini and suspended in a cage from the factory ceiling; Jester wearing cowboy attire and riding in circles atop a pony; and Ice Man digging a hole that is refilled each day so that he can dig it up again for the next crowd. This enterprise relies upon profits from the quarter-a-look telescope located across the way in Reclamation Park. At a safe distance in the park, tourists line up to pay a quarter in order to gawk at the freaks of Garden Hills.

While debate exists about whether obesity should be considered a disabled identity, Fat Man's portrayal all but confirms that, in his case, his size is disabling, both physically and socially. First, Fat Man's limited mobility prevents him from engaging unaided in activities such as bathing and driving (Crews 23, 7). Because the front seat of Fat Man's Buick cannot accommodate his size, Fat Man must ride in the backseat while Jester drives. However, Jester must also adapt to the car's standardized dimensions by utilizing pedal extenders (7). That Jester and Fat Man do not fit into the Buick as average-bodied people might provides a prime example of the ideology of ability's widespread influence.

From the size of automobiles to the height of doorknobs, public spaces and commodities reflect pervading ideas about what a body's size, shape, and ability should be. Described by Siebers as "lack of fit" (105), this phenomenon reflects how a disabled person's physical self can clash with the able-bodied world, as can their interior lives. Fat Man, for example, is haunted by memories of his relationship with Obediah Martin, a champion long-distance runner at Florida Northern University, whose freckled face earns him the nickname Frecks. Fat Man's platonic relationship with Frecks changes dramatically one night when, as roommates at Florida Northern, one of their nightly wrestling matches turns sexual. Fat Man's attraction to Frecks is initially grounded in admiration for the idealized male form (the opposite of his own) and Frecks' brute athleticism. But these feelings evolve over time and prompt him to "[kiss] the cross-country champion on the mouth because he loved him" (Crews 116). Although the story never clarifies whether Fat Man's relationship with Frecks constitutes a homosexual identity per se, Fat Man falls into a state of depression while longing to be reunited with Frecks.

This facet of Fat Man's identity becomes an obstacle when Dolly, a lifelong virgin, decides that she is ready to lose her

virginity to Fat Man, through force if necessary. No matter what, Dolly plans to claim her rightful place as de facto queen of Garden Hills. At first, Fat Man attempts—and then refuses—intercourse with Dolly, but not because of a physical deficiency (although the narrator suggests as much when describing Fat Man's genitalia as "invisible," as if obesity has neutered him) (Crews 194). Rather, Fat Man rebuffs Dolly's advances because his devotion to Frecks eclipses all other relationships. When Fat Man cannot elude Dolly's advances, she proceeds without his consent. In this scenario, readers are asked to assume that Fat Man's size immobilizes him and enables his rape.

Dolly's intent to reproduce with Fat Man carries obvious resonance with the failed phosphate factory upon which the town was built. As such, Dolly's sexual violence towards Fat Man becomes a form of weaponized industrial capitalism. Within this context, wherein hegemonic values of family and reproduction predominate, Fat Man's body lacks purpose and meaning beyond its ability to reproduce. As such, any sexual activity outside the confines of reproductive sex contradicts the concurrent goals of industrialism and patriarchy. Thus, Fat Man's engagement in sex with Frecks for non-procreative purposes, plus the real and spiritual isolation he experiences as a result, ultimately contributes to his being doubly disabled by his physical size and by his undefined, if fluid, sexual orientation.

What's more, obesity in the United States is often viewed as a character flaw rather than a disability or, most controversial, an acceptable mode of self-presentation. Medical anthropologist Alexandra Brewis writes in her monograph *Obesity* that "fear and loathing of body fat and conversely the veneration of slimness are powerful, pervasive ideas in the industrialized West" (106). Brewis continues, "Fat as failure links to a broader Western core value that attributes any form of failure … to a lack of motivation to succeed and thus a failing of the individual" (109). While Brewis brings to

the fore a discussion of social stigmas attached to obesity, she does so within the context of a medical field that regularly pathologizes obesity as a harbinger of illness. The medical perspective maintains that fat bodies must be reduced in size in order to ensure a long and healthy life. From this point of view, an obese person's corporeal self becomes evidence of terminal disease that must be eradicated through medical intervention, regardless of an individual's ability or desire to alter their body. Fat Man's own obsessive desire to lose weight by drinking copious amounts of the diet drink Metrecal provides an ironic commentary on the medical pathologization of obesity, a perspective arising out of the ideology of ability. The diet drink that is supposed to help him lose weight ultimately makes Fat Man sicker, more isolated, and more depressed.

The Spectrum of Human Variation

As in *The Gospel Singer* before it, *Naked in Garden Hills* concludes with an angry mob whose frenzied rage threatens to destroy the novel's central character. Both the Gospel Singer's and Fat Man's physical features make them targets of this hysteria, primarily because neither man fits with what society expects of him. Although the Gospel Singer sings exceptionally well, he fails to be the Christ-like figure the people of Enigma need him to be. Likewise, Fat Man's unearned privilege only compounds public disgust for his large body. Forced out of his mansion because neither Jester nor Dolly will bring him food, Fat Man unwittingly stumbles outside naked in his search of sustenance. Upon seeing his fat, nude, and queer body, the spectators overtake him and rush him into a cage as part of DOLLY'S A-GO-GO, wherein he can be properly maligned. In both novels, the revelation of each character's true identity produces societal discord of epic proportions. And, as with Foot in the *The Gospel Singer*, Jester ultimately becomes complicit in his own exploitation by

agreeing to join Dolly's freak fair, if only to obtain a taste of the former glory he enjoyed as a real horse jockey.

If it is true that some novelists tell the same stories again and again, only in slightly different form, then the core of Crews' message, at least for his first two novels, might be summarized as such: The wages of industrialism, capitalism, and the ideology of ability is death. Such exploitation, I contend, constricts individual identity in an effort to alienate anomalous bodies. Not even Fat Man's wealth or social stature spares him the shame of the freak show cage. Crews thus ironically confirms the freak show as the great equalizer, a fitting allegory for the ideology of ability's inconsistent logic. Crews exposes these inconsistencies by encouraging the reader to sympathize with Fat Man and Jester, not because they are different from us, but because their so-called differences are merely physical characteristics that exist on the full spectrum of human variation, a spectrum to which we all belong.

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"DENSE LIKE DYING STARS:" RHETORICAL RESIGNIFICATION IN CRAZY EX-GIRLFRIEND

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At first glance, the CW's musical television show *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* seems like traditional network fare. In it, the heroine, Rebecca, leaves a successful career in New York after a chance meeting with a former boyfriend. In the pilot episode, the audience watches as a depressed and medicated Rebecca relocates to California to find happiness through a rekindled relationship. However, despite the less than surprising outline, *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* has been read by critics as a Trojan horse that uses humor and the genre of musical theater to satirize and critique issues of mental health, body norms, and gender roles. Throughout the series, the heroine, Rebecca Bunch struggles to create meaningful relationships and deal with depression and family trauma. However, *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* does not use these narrative points for ratings fodder. Instead, the show deploys stereotypes and cultural norms as a means of deconstructing the contemporary romance genre. Furthermore, by exploring Rebecca's complex psychology and identity, *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*'s resignification and cultural analysis examines norms that prescribe female identity.

Broadly considered, *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* deploys tropes and common gendered norms. However, these invocations actually attempt to resignify the diverse motifs peppered throughout

the show's narrative. Through resignification, *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* serves as an attack to popular representations of gendered readings of romance and female practices. Resignification is the rhetorical strategy by which rhetors "reject the connotation of a symbol, expose how the meaning of the symbol is constructed, and attempt to change its connotation" (Palczewski, Ice, and Fritch 56).Through this resignifying, the political and social ramifications of *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* are clarified. The show is not merely interested in perpetuating prescriptions of gendered behavior and norms. Instead by deconstructing the various narratives of *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*, the show advances a progressive feminist ideology.

The trope of the crazy-ex is a cultural construction which perpetuates the stereotype of women as romance obsessed and unable to let go of a relationship. Accordingly, in the crazy-ex trope, women are described as willing to go to extremes with the express purpose of satisfying their base need for romance and love. At its most violent, this social construction includes Glenn Close's character in Fatal Attraction: a jilted mistress will kill to get her man. While *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* does not go to this violent extreme, it is still employing the same cultural narrative of an obsessive woman convinced that romantic fulfillment[1] will equate with professional and personal fulfillment. The most blatant and repeated occurrence of resignification is present in the title of the show and the accompanying title song. During the title song of *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*, a jovial chorus declares "She's the crazy ex-girlfriend!...She's so broken inside!" (Bloom "Title Song"). Clearly, the chorus represents the normative vision that seeks to perpetuate the crazy ex-girlfriend stereotype as internally deficient and obsessed. The declaration that the heroine Rebecca is broken inside only further illuminates the position that the decision to uproot her life is one of desperation and romantic obsession. Here, the chorus represents "the dominant discourse [that] tells [women] that depression…[results from

the female mind], [which is] constructed as non-resistant and weak" (Hurt 296). Even in this early example, however, the show's feminist vision is manifest. The chorus' voice does not go unchecked. It is countered repeatedly during the song. Rebecca vehemently rejects the chorus' repetition that she is the crazy ex-girlfriend. Initially, Rebecca responds, "What? No, I'm not" (Bloom "Title Song"). But, as the chorus continues with vigor, Rebecca's responses become increasingly forceful and critical as she proclaims "That's a sexist term! Can you guys just stop singing for a second? The situation's a lot more nuanced than that! (Bloom "Title Song"). Even before *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* actually begins to resignify the cultural tropes through its plotlines and humor, the theme song illustrates the conflict that the show will ultimately be engaging in. Of course, this repetition in the title song is not mere coincidence. As part of rhetorical resignification, symbolic and linguistic connotation must be deconstructed: "If a connotation develops as the result of repeated [derogatory] usage, [. . .]..., it can only change as the result of repeated usage, [. . .] ...with new, positive connotations. Resignification requires the repeated invocation of a term, linking it to praise, normalization, and celebration" (Palczewski, Ice, and Fritch 57). Accordingly, the crazy ex connotation has to be reformulated through careful analysis and critical engagement. This is the process that unfolds weekly during the theme song of *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*. And, while this theme song doesn't quite get to the celebratory function of resignification, the repetition seeks to normalize and revel in the moniker. And as the actual behavior of the characters in *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* develop, the celebratory function does appear[2].

Crazy Ex-Girlfriend invokes numerous stereotypes on its path to contradicting them. Rhetorically, this strategy is best understood as strategic essentialism. By "making an identity ingredient the core part of one's persona," Rebecca acts as a member of the marginalized and maligned

group; and she "actively take[s] possession of an identity and define[s] it in [her] own terms" (Palczewski, Ice, and Fritch 174-5). Initially, *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*'s protagonist is presented as the stereotypical social construction of the man obsessed ex-girlfriend who uproots her life for an idealized (and unreasonable) love. And, while this does provide the foundation of the central conflict for the show, co-creator and lead actor Rachel Bloom clarifies that "the whole show is about deconstructing stereotypes, finding the truth beneath tropes. And so that's why the title is … provocative…[in its use of] the label crazy ex-girlfriend" (Cornish). Using the derogatory crazy ex construction, Bloom and co-creator Aline Brosh McKenna employ strategic essentialism in defining the character of Rebecca. *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*'s writers "consciously pick[ed] one identity ingredient to foreground" as a means of creating "audience identification through the appeal to that one shared" facet (Palczewski, Fritch, and Ice 174). By foregrounding Rebecca as a stereotype, *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* examines the cultural reinforcement of this social construction and in the process examines other gender specific identity norms.

Despite Rebecca's essentialized identity, *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* moves into a critique of a wide range of body norms and gender ideals. The use of rhetorical analysis of body norms allows *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* to create detailed critiques of pervasive and relatable norms. For many, the construction of the crazy ex that is willing to uproot everything to chase romance may ring false. However, rhetoric of the body "foregrounds the body as part of the symbolic act" (Palczewski, Ice, and Fritch 77). This is significant as all women are familiar with misogynistic body norms that impact daily life. While the crazy ex construction might prove too nuanced to be relatable, the body is a relatable site of political resistance.

Many of the musical moments from *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* examine female body standards. Here, vulgar humor deconstructs social norms[3]. Two videos from the first-

season of *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* demonstrate the variety of social messages explored by the show. "The Sexy Getting Ready Song" and "Heavy Boobs" also demonstrate the diverse musical genres deployed along the path towards the feminist politics of *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*. Superficially, "The Sexy Getting Ready Song" recounts the process that Rebecca goes through to prepare for a party where her love interest will be. Filmed like a high-budget music video with background dancers and a hip-hop interlude, "The Sexy Getting Ready Song" initially reads as a perpetuation of female body norms with its lingerie clad dancers and raspy vocals. But, as Susan Dominus of New York Magazine writes, the CW network aired what was most likely broadcast television's first-ever depiction of anal waxing. The scene, on the show *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*, was not explicit, yet nor was it ambiguous. A young woman in her bathroom, wearing a short robe, leans forward and then reaches toward her backside with a wax strip in her hand. There is the sound of something ripping, a scream and then a cut to the spattering of blood on the side of the tub (38).

Despite its catchy tune and high production value, "The Sexy Getting Ready Song" offers an extended look into the body modifications and pain women think they must endure in the name of securing love interests. Here, as Rebecca endures the torturous practices that she believes are necessary for her date (these include anal waxing, grinding the calluses on her feet, employing hair removal creams, and burning her neck with a hair straightener), she is enacting the argument of "The Sexy Getting Ready Song." That is she is "engaging in symbolic action [to] function as proof of the argument s/he [is] advanc[ing]" (Palczewski, Ice, and Fritch 77). It's not enough to merely offer a lyrical takedown of the misogynistic body norms. Instead, Rebecca participates in these norms to demonstrate the physical suffering she (and other women) endure.

The lyrics of the song supports this deconstruction; during the hip hop interlude, rapper Nipsey Hussle declares,

"God, what/ This is how you get ready? This is horrifying, like a scary movie or something/Like some nasty-ass patriarchal bullshit…I'm forever changed after what I just seen" (Bloom "Sexy"). But, the message is reinforced through the visuals which show Rebecca squeezed into Spanx because she knows that men "Like an hourglass silhouette" (Bloom "Sexy"). For show creator Bloom, "The Sexy Getting Ready Song" is a response to the "fetishizing of… a woman getting ready… [and] the contrast between how things are portrayed in pop culture…and how things really are" (Cornish). In *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*, female sexuality and bodies are displayed not as merely sexual objects. Instead, they are deployed as part of the process of resignifying social norms. These depictions counter the reality that "the visible, material, female body has been so thoroughly mediated through the dominant discourses that paint it in the devalued terms of the private, the everyday, the shameful, and the base" (Hammers "Talking About" 237). Through this contradictory deployment, *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* creates a rhetorical practice that essentializes to dismantle the oppressive social structures that enforce heteronormative visions of female bodies and sexuality. To secure this politically active goal, *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* deploys the oversexualized fantasy tropes of musical theater as a means of investigating the social and psychological workings of Rebecca while she attempts to navigate the contemporary landscape of love and interpersonal relationships.

Additionally, *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*'s deconstructive rhetoric moves beyond the physical. Susan Dominus of the *New York Magazine* clarifies that *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* is not only interested in examining ideas about man obsession or the physical body and romantic normative constructions. Instead, the essentializing tropes deployed by the television show "contrast Rebecca's professional competence with her personal vulnerabilities including her desperation for friends of any kind" (Dominus 39-40). This contrast allows the show to delve into

serious issues of mental health and interpersonal relationships from more than just a jovial, comedic perspective. Certainly, the musical theater format of *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* seems initially at odds with the serious tone of the issues explored by the show. But this juxtaposition reinforces the anxiety and depression of Rebecca and provides insight into her attempts at escapism through elaborate musical theatrics (Cornish).

Additionally, *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*'s resignifying rhetoric moves beyond the daily, culturally constructed practices women enact. The show uses its content to tackle issues of representation and audience. One of the clearest examples of this attack is presented through the song and accompanying video for "Heavy Boobs," which attacks the sexualized visuals that accompany women's breasts in popular media. Certainly, this textual example plays on many of the body rhetoric issues with which *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* is concerned. However, the multidimensionality of the show's deconstruction demonstrates the wide scope of *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*'s resignifying practices. The show is comfortable bouncing between constant critical analysis of cultural practices in addition to more subtle gendered ideologies manifest in media industries and viewership.

As "Heavy Boobs" opens, Rebecca sings, "I've got those heavy boobs/ dense like dying stars;" she is accompanied by dancers who violently swing their bodies (Bloom "Heavy Boobs"). Initially, this song would seem like a prime example of a text that perpetuates the social construction of women's bodies as objects to ogle and commodify. However, the choreography and accompanying theme of the song rescripts these ideals. As a result of their gesticulations, the dancers defy the rules of sexiness. Their movements are about embodying heavy boobs and that's it…they don't care…whether a hypothetical heterosexual male will see them. The dance is …asexy. It's danced neither to repulse nor attract men; instead it's danced as if sexiness is entirely and

completely irrelevant. There's no male gaze because, in that two minutes, there's not a man in sight. (Wade)

Much like "The Sexy Getting Ready Song" illuminates the inconsistencies and ridiculous nature of body norms and overly sexualized bodies, "Heavy Boobs" does not suggest that breasts are sexually suggestive or erotic objects. Instead, as the lyrics suggest, breasts are just "sacks of yellow fat" (Bloom "Heavy Boobs"). While the audience may include males, this text does not privilege a heterosexual male gaze. Instead, it offers a counter narrative that breasts are physiological burdens. This video, like all of the musical numbers in *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*, while humorous, is best considered as performative rhetoric that counters normative social structures. Specifically, Rebecca's frequent attacks of patriarchal sexuality and the male gaze "challenge[s]…society's values in order to highlight unspoken (and sometimes contradictory) norms attached to particular social roles" (Palczewski, Fritch, and Ice 169). These attacks underscore the essentialized identities foisted upon women in popular culture and social life. Through *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*'s humorous deconstruction, show creators Bloom and Brosh-McKenna illuminate the heteronormative aggressions that create and perpetuate stereotypical thinking and behavior.

By offering a complex vision of the female body that does not perpetuate a sexualized vision of male viewership, *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* communicates with different audiences to achieve its signifying practices. At the literal level, songs like "Heavy Boobs" seem to communicate to a second persona, "the 'you' to whom the rhetor speaks, the implied audience for whom a rhetor constructs symbolic actions" (Palczewski, Ice, and Fritch 213). But, this literal interpretation would suggest that there is a completely hegemonic audience and ignores the political nature of *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*'s deconstructive texts. To fully understand the activism of the television show, it is useful to consider the audience that might be eavesdropping on

the conversations of the show. This eavesdropping audience is the group "whom the rhetor desires to hear the message despite explicitly targeting the message at a different audience" (Palczewski, Ice, and Fritch 217). On one hand, *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* seems targeted at a young, female demographic. However, like all feminist activism, appealing to women alone is not enough for complete social change. It is necessary to dismantle the patriarchal practices stratified by men. And, as a result, the eavesdropping audience, for whom the show's anti-misogynist message might be constructed, is best understood to be a male audience. Through this complicated network of audience appeals, *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* attacks the "gendered nature of the bias against" women and feminist practices that would seek to de-marginalize women's bodies and practices in popular media (Hammers "Talking About" 224).

Despite gains in political and social life, women are frequently essentialized on television. Certainly, there are examples of shows that focus on women's bodies and identities in social and professional life. However, shows like Sex in the City, Girls, and Ally McBeal offer relatively straightforward narrative constructions. And while some of the plot lines may actually attempt to rescript normative social structures, the actual format and genre concerns are left out of the resignifying process. Additionally, a show like Ally McBeal which attempted to examine the professional life of a female protagonist is problematized in that it operates on one level as a "cautionary tale about the dangers presented by the co-optation… of feminist discourse" for the ultimate goal of perpetuating the idea that professional women are hyper concerned with reproduction and ultimately must deploy sexuality as a means of professional success (Hammers "Cautionary Tale" 168). Typically, these one dimensional identities reinforce heteronormative values and visions of women's bodies.

However, *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*'s resignification employs a

myriad of critical, rhetorical practices as a means of countering dominant, patriarchal culture. Certainly, *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* is based around the primary strategy of strategic essentialism which underscores how the show creators "seek to control how they are defined. Instead of passively being labeled by…[dominant culture], they actively take possession of an identity and define it in their own terms. (Palczewski, Fritch, and Ice 174). By using the man-obsessed social construction, Bloom and Brosh McKenna can attack social norms and question dominant cultural values. As an overarching theme, this essentialism might, at first glance, be read as perpetuating the ideals that the show actually rejects. Instead, these essentialized identity practices allow the show to communicate at a functional and realistic level with viewers. From a network television perspective this makes sense. A show that reads completely literally as anti-patriarchy may be difficult to sell to corporate owned networks. Instead, the covert feminism of *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* is housed in a subversive and palatable package. Additionally, the use of humor in the show "create[s] a new kind of temporary community, not based on homogeneity or rigid identities, but rather on a shared dislocation out of the customary lines of identity" (Willet, Willet, and Sherman 245). Here, the feminist ethic of *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* is manifest. Instead of mere social critique, *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*'s satire deconstructs stable social norms and patriarchal values which emphasize the social disparity and suffering that feminism works to unravel.

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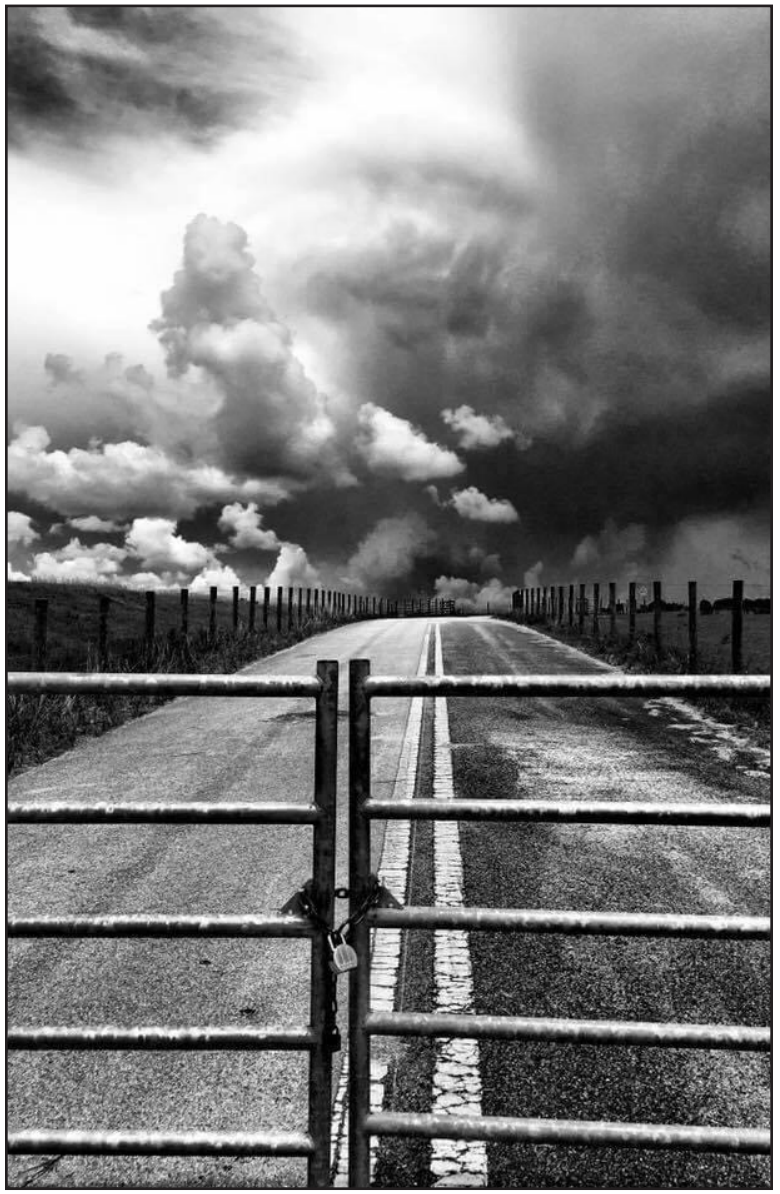
Notes

[1] Often, this romantic fulfilment is based in heterosexual fulfillment. In this regard, *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* operates under the same principle.

[2] The best friend character, Paula, represents the most obvious example of the celebratory function. For Paula, Rebecca's decision to uproot her life is a devotional act of heroism.

[3] One could argue that the use of vulgarity and sexually explicit lyrics, hallmarks of *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* and show creator Rachel Bloom whose career took off with the YouTube release of her song "Fuck Me, Ray Bradbury," is another weapon in the feminist rhetorical tool box of *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*.



Photograph by Ann Leshy Wood

~7~

TINY ECOLOGY: FLORIDA NATURE IN THE HUMANITIES CLASSROOM

by Andy Oler
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University

I teach writing and humanities courses at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, FL. ERAU students get a top-flight education in the practical, technical, and theoretical aspects of air travel, and the university places its graduates in various sectors of the aerospace industry. I am not a pilot, however, nor an engineer, a meteorologist, or a mechanic. As a member of ERAU's Humanities and Communication Department, my goal is to help my students think about life outside the cockpit. Beyond composition and technical writing, some of the main courses taught by members of my department are lower-level humanities classes that also fulfill an intensive writing requirement. Since my abiding scholarly interest lies in regionalism and place-based literature, I developed an interdisciplinary humanities course entitled "Greetings from Florida: Literature, Culture, and Ecology in the Sunshine State."

In many ways, this course is a revised version of a topics-based composition course that I taught at Indiana University called "The American Midwest: Small Town Sweetness, Main Street Mayhem." Both courses attempted to present and then complicate the standard narratives of their respective regions. In the Midwest class, we explored nostalgic interpretations of

the small town and the pastoral family farm. In the Florida class, we considered the beach, the swamp, and the status of Florida as a paradise in the popular imagination. For both courses, students' final papers were multi-genre cultural analyses designed to poke holes in those simplistic narratives. Though they ended in a similar place, the overall assignment sequence was different. In the Midwest class, students wrote three papers: a synthesis of two articles on Midwestern history, a film analysis focusing on representations of the region as out of control, and a final paper addressing the contradictions we studied throughout the course. Befitting a composition course, those three papers were supported by several semi-formal skill-based assignments such as a summary and a photo analysis.

The assignment sequence of "Greetings from Florida" is more finely attuned to course content. It features two formal papers: a close reading of a literary passage and the final cultural analysis. I supported those with a midterm exam synthesizing essays about Florida as well as several semi-formal and informal writing assignments. The first of these I called "Experiencing Florida," in which students wrote short travel stories about two locations, one more of a tourist space and the other more representative of "natural Florida." For each visit, students wrote a short paper describing the place's layout and contents, their experience of the visit, and the space's relationship to common conceptions of Florida. This assignment asked that students experience Florida as a tourist, acknowledging and reflecting on the in-and-out nature of many people's understanding of the state. One of my other main goals for the course was for students to experience Florida as a resident. I accomplished this through an informal writing assignment called "Tiny Ecology". In this assignment, students "choose an outdoor place for intense ecological attentiveness" ("Tiny"), observe it each week, and write a weekly paragraph describing details and reflecting on those observations. Corresponding to Lisa Ede's suggestion

to grade journals based on their "commitment, ambition, and engagement" (169), each Tiny Ecology journal entry was evaluated according to length, focus on the space, description of details, and relation to earlier observations or the space's history, as well as (very lightly) grammar and tone. The goal of this assignment is to develop the observational and analytical skills that students will deploy more formally in their final papers.

I modeled "Tiny Ecology" on Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's assignment of the same name, which he used during a graduate literature seminar at George Washington University. I borrowed Cohen's language liberally, altering it in two ways. First, I made the instructions more concrete and directive by separating this graduate level assignment's long paragraph into sections and then adding more specific language about the weekly writing that I expected students to do. In addition to clarifying the instructions, I made the language more accessible. For instance, when discussing how to choose a place, Cohen writes, "Best is an area close to home that you have lived with or near for some time without paying much regard to what unfolds within its little biome" (Cohen). First, I streamlined the syntax: "Best is an area close to home that you have lived near but haven't paid much attention" ("Tiny"). In the name of simplification, I also removed the reference to the space's "biome," by which Cohen reinforces the types of observations that students should make. I made that aspect implicit, partly because I had already clarified what I expected from their weekly writing.

Students chose a wide variety of spaces for their Tiny Ecology observations, from bike racks and picnic tables, to trees near their dorm rooms or apartments, to hammocks in our campus hammock park. No matter what type of space they chose, however, they were able to achieve the goals of the assignment, which was to practice observational, descriptive, and analytical skills on a weekly, low-pressure basis. Students often succeeded at this goal, and when they did, it was marvelous. Here is a sample student entry:

> This student's observation succeeds on multiple levels. The grammar and punctuation are imperfect, but that is not the central concern of this assignment. More importantly, he notes the number, size, and color of the paint chips, then takes the time to speculate on why the paint chips at all. Finally, he observes human interaction with the space, including both passers-by and himself. Along with his entry, this student also submitted a photograph (see Fig. 1), which was encouraged but not required. The value of this assignment is particularly clear with reference to the course's humanities mission—because of it, students paid more careful and thoughtful attention to the world around them. As one student wrote on an anonymous survey, "I really enjoyed the assignment because it got me to connect with a small area that is typically looked past as nothing special."

Despite these successes, it was less clear to me that the assignment effectively achieved one of the other core goals of the project: that students' weekly writing would improve their performance on the final paper. According to Peter Elbow, low-stakes writing helps students become more active in their own learning, allows the instructor to assess student learning frequently, encourages students to keep up with assigned reading, and improves student writing in both high-stakes and low-stakes assignments (7-8). Accordingly, Tiny Ecology is designed to develop skills that will improve students' overall performance in the course. Throughout the project, it is necessary to remind students regularly how the skills practiced in Tiny Ecology apply to other assignments, primarily because "students are more effective learners when they possess a rich arsenal of learning strategies, awareness of their strategies, knowledge of the contexts in which the strategies will be effective, and a willingness to apply their strategies" (Bangert-Drowns et al. 32).

Fig. 1. Sample Tiny Ecology photograph, taken on Daytona Beach boardwalk, January 2015.

To determine whether Tiny Ecology helped students succeed on the final paper or in the course at large, I collected data on the project. This included the times of day they observed, the weather, how often they mentioned different types of plants and animals, notable changes to the space, and so on. All but two of my students agreed to participate in this study, which left me with a data pool of 66. After culling participants who dropped the course or otherwise did not fulfill the weekly nature of the assignment, I was left with a pool of 46. The following graphs, then, represent those students who fully participated in Tiny Ecology. Initial analysis of the data bears out my uncertainty as to whether Tiny Ecology improved students' overall performance in the course. On one hand, as you can see in Fig. 2, students' Tiny Ecology grades generally track alongside their final grades for the course. This seems to suggest that students who did well in Tiny Ecology were more likely to do well in the course overall. And that might be true. But in comparison with Fig. 3, which juxtaposes Tiny Ecology with the

Paper 2 grades, the result is less clear. In the second graph, the trendline shows a fairly clear relationship between the Paper 2 grade and the final course grade. The comparison reveals that there's only a rough correlation between Tiny Ecology and the final course grade, just as there's a similar one between the final paper and the course grade. The conclusion I could draw from this is limited and common-sensical: stronger students tend to be more successful, both throughout the class and on any given assignment.

Still, students felt that Tiny Ecology helped improve their writing. According to one student, "I enjoyed journal entries because it was a way to practice being elaborate on such minute changes." Another wrote that "I think having to do all of these little write-ups helped in the end with both paper 1 and 2. It sharpened my observation skills and my paragraph structuring." Taking a cue from students who appreciated the assignment's attention to detail, I questioned whether the mere act of mentioning more details would cause students to achieve at higher rates. While I found a rough correlation between details and Tiny Ecology success, not all spots seemed to generate quite as much animal life or human traffic, so I also looked at two details available to everyone: the time of day and weather. This resulted in another rough correlation—perhaps slightly more meaningful, but with an awful lot of variation. I also investigated students who did research for their posts and compared scores on journals with their end-of-semester presentations, neither of which produced a clear relationship.

After assessing overall performance, I turned to students' achievements during different periods of the semester. I graded the Tiny Ecology journals in three chunks: three entries in January, six leading up to spring break, and five after spring break. With the January review, there was not a lot of variation among Tiny Ecology grades, while there is for the course final grade. There is a rough correlation between the two trendlines,

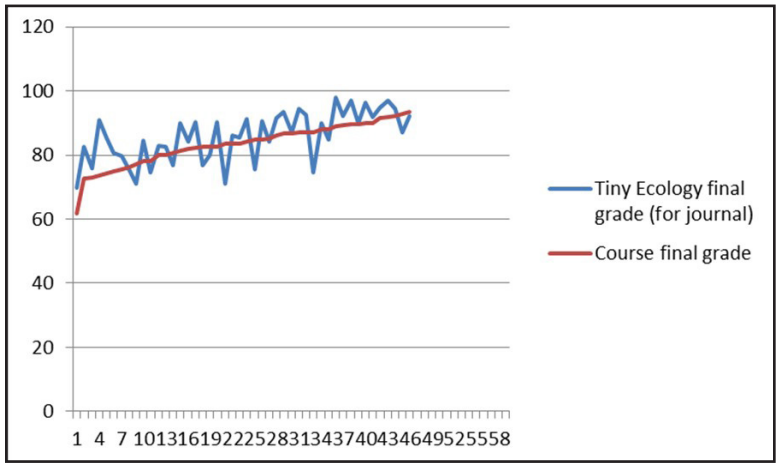


Fig. 2. Tiny Ecology final grade by course final grade. X = number of students, Y = grade percentage.

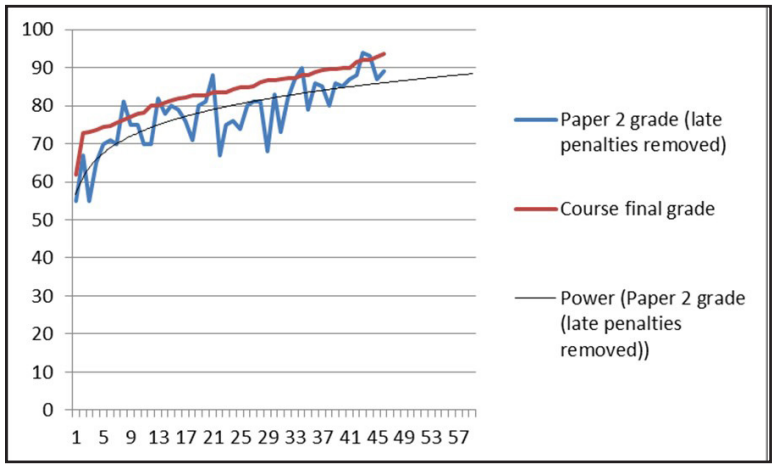


Fig. 3. Course final grade by final paper grade. X = number of students, Y = grade percentage.

which does not exist in the final, post-spring-break section. These two periods correspond with problems that students face with this assignment and, more generally, for their work across all classes. The first problem is that, in January, some students do not understand the goals of Tiny Ecology, nor

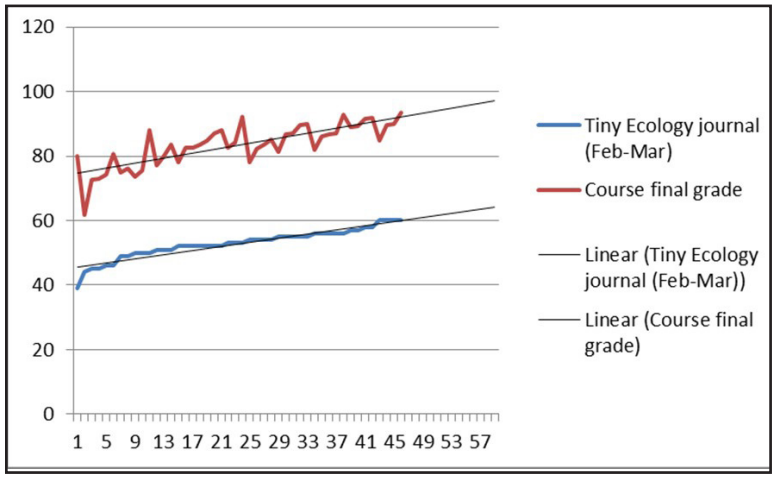


Fig. 4. Tiny Ecology journal (Feb.-Mar.) by course final grade. X = number of students, Y = grade percentage (course grade) and points scored (Tiny Ecology).

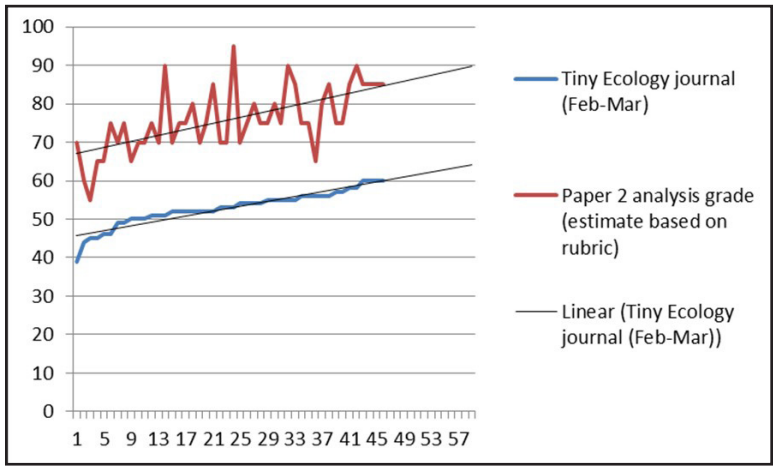


Fig. 5. Tiny Ecology journal (Feb.-Mar.) by Paper 2 analysis grade. X = number of students, Y = grade percentage (course grade) and points scored (Tiny Ecology).

how to perform a successful observation. The second is that, in March and April, some students get bored with the project or overwhelmed with their work in this and other classes.

The strongest correlation, seen in Fig. 4, occurs between the course final grade and the Tiny Ecology journals published in February and March. In that section of journals, you can see a greater variation within the grades, which tracks alongside the trendline for the final course grade.

February/March is the time of the semester when students struggle to notice details and find something to say about their space. When they engage in that difficult work—which is the most productive aspect of this assignment—they develop the skills to succeed in the course generally and also for the analytical portion of their final paper. The trendline for the Paper 2 analysis grade (see Fig. 5) bears out this relationship. This correlation suggests that if I want more students to develop these analytical skills, I need to add scaffolding at this key moment. One reason for doing so is to curtail one type of student complaint. In an end-of-semester survey, several students offered some version of this comment: "doing it every week was a pain. I think it should be done biweekly." I disagree almost entirely. This project has to happen long enough and regularly enough for students to get frustrated with it. When that happens, they are forced to go in with a plan, to look closely and describe carefully. That struggle is where the project's benefits really come to the front. That said, adding a bit more structure in February won't preclude students' productive struggle with the long-term aspects of the assignment.

In subsequent semesters, I have altered the assignment to facilitate more detailed entries and stronger skill development in preparation for the final paper. First, I have made two changes to each weekly entry: I require a photo each week as well as a header noting the weather and the time of observation. As for the header, asking students to begin with a couple details puts them in the mindset to notice more. Typically, students who forget this step also write less detailed entries overall. The greater change has been the

photo—the act of choosing what and how to photograph their space also helps students choose what perspectives to adopt in their journal. Most students quickly realize that a close-up photograph is more visually interesting than a series of medium-distance shots. Much like the student photograph and journal entry quoted earlier in this article, the photographs have resulted in journal entries with a more focused perspective. Furthermore, once students decide on their photo, they are able to continue to observe details after they leave the site. A final benefit has been that students have had more material for their end-of-semester presentation, and those have been more creative and appealing in part because of the photo requirement.

To further enhance each entry's focus, I have also provided more weekly assignments. When I first taught this course, near the end of the semester I asked students to choose a 12-inch by 12-inch square and spend the entire journal describing that one small area. Unsurprisingly, those were some of the best, most descriptive entries of the whole semester. Since then, I have repeated this assignment and added several others, some of which can be seen in Appendix I. For instance, I have suggested that students lie down on the ground, find a higher vantage, bring a friend, relate their observations to course readings, or close their eyes and focus exclusively on texture or sound. In the future, I may require students to research an aspect of their space or to create a drawing or diagram. In particular, Chris Anson and Richard Beach find that drawing and diagramming allow students to "perceive their thoughts in visual form, something particularly appealing for those with a high 'visual/spatial' intelligence" (102). Whether they are actually physically drawing their space, each of these assignments conforms in some ways to Anson and Beach's suggestion that students take a "particle, wave, field" approach, encouraging them to shift focus to account for differences in perspective (104-105).

Students had success with each of these weekly assignments, and it has been productive to make them more prevalent. These changes result in students approaching each observation more thoughtfully—more intentionally—which directly relates to the analytical work they do in their final papers. A side benefit has been that it is be easier for students to notice something new, mitigating some of those "it got boring" complaints (though certainly not all of them!). This assignment forces students to pay attention to the world outside the cockpit, the hangar, and the lab. They discover unnoticed details and begin to value spaces that they otherwise overlook. That works perfectly in a course on Florida, which has such an overt cultural narrative. It also would have worked in my earlier class on the Midwest, or on any course with a place-based component—not only because the assignment encourages students to dismantle simplistic stories, but also because it could provide a method for defining those places and thinking through geological, climatic, and ecological effects on local literature and culture.

Note

"Tiny Ecology" was developed with the support of a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Grant from the Embry-Riddle Center for Teaching and Learning. I am grateful for the support and guidance of Shirley Waterhouse, Lori Mumpower, and other CTLE staff members who were instrumental in helping improve both the project and refine my assessment methods.

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Appendix

Tiny Ecology

Description one-paragraph weekly writing and five-minute final presentation, 20% of final grade
Due journal weekly, on Sunday at midnight
presentation final week of class

Assignment
Choose an outdoor place for intense ecological attentiveness. During the course of this semester, you will make frequent visits to note its changes from August until December. There are no special requirements for the place you choose: it may be a natural space, a built environment, a humanly curated space (park, garden, landscaping), an abandoned corner or lot, or a recurrent puddle. The area can be as small as a garbage can by this building or as large as a tree and its environs. Best is an area close to home that you have lived near but haven't paid much attention.

Observation
Every week you will spend at least five minutes observing your chosen space. Take a photograph while you're there. Go at different times and during different weather conditions. Pay attention to and take notes on human influence and neglect, nonhuman forces (weather, sunlight, microclimates, pollution, decay, gentrification), and the surfacings of particular histories (especially but not limited to the species of animals and plants evident; you may have to learn the difference between sedge and St. Augustine grass, limestone and coquina, an egret and a heron).

Journal
Write up your observations and post them to your Tiny Ecology discussion on Canvas (see instructions below for how to create and post to the discussion topic). Each week, you will turn your observation notes into a solid paragraph (150 words or more). Begin with a header noting the time of day, time spent observing, and weather conditions. Next, post your photograph. Then, in your paragraph, closely describe the scene, focusing on the key details that you observed. Think about any changes that have occurred and why that may have happened.

I encourage you to read other students' journals and reply to them. Late journals will be accepted until Tuesday night, with a 10% deduction for lateness.

Presentation
At the end of the semester, you will give a five-minute oral presentation on how your Tiny Ecology changed (or didn't) as well as propose ideas for how the space might be improved or better used. For this presentation, you will develop a multimodal visual aid. Tutors at the Digital Studio can help you develop and improve your visuals.

Grading Criteria

Journal
- Adequate length each week. Includes appropriate photograph and header.
- Focuses on a particular aspect of the space. Photo enhances the journal's focus.
- Carefully describes details demonstrating human and nonhuman influence.
- Considers how that week's observations relate to previous weeks' observations and/or to that space's past.
- Writing has an appropriate tone with a clear, readable style.
- Few errors in grammar, mechanics, and sentence structure.

Presentation
- Five minutes long.
- Describes the space to an audience who is unfamiliar with it.
- Tells the story of that space over the course of the semester, considering why it may have changed (or not).
- Offers 1-2 suggestions for how to use that space in the future.
- Features multimodal visual aid.

Additional Benefits
The space you choose for your Tiny Ecology may or may not be related to your final paper topic. Even if the topic is not directly related, however, each week you will practice observational, descriptive, and analytical skills, which will improve your performance on the final paper. Furthermore, your attention to the way you use the space around you could develop into projects improving specific aspects of campus and community life.

Weekly Assignments
Each week, you will complete your Tiny Ecology observation and journal. Some weeks will be entirely open, dependent upon what you see during your observation. Some weeks, I will ask you to take a particular approach. These assignments are below.

9/5	Describe your space generally and zoom in on something.
9/11	Open
9/18	Focus on a 12-inch square (or cube). For suggestions, look at the National Geographic blog post on the Tiny Ecology Canvas page.
9/25	How does your spot compare to a description of nature in one of the novels? How does this help you notice something about your spot?
10/2	Open
10/9	No post this week – Hurricane Matthew.
10/16	Focus on texture. Note differences pre- and post-hurricane.
10/23	Choose a quotation from Joy Williams or Susan Cerulean. Use it to help you explain something about your spot (you don't have to agree with the author).
10/30	Choose a quotation from Susan Orlean's *The Orchid Thief*. Use it to help you explain something about your spot (you don't have to agree with Orlean).
11/6	No post this week – focus on your midterm exam.
11/13	Close your eyes. Focus on sound.
11/27	Open
12/4	Reflect on the changes you have seen this semester and the reasons for them. If you are presenting on 12/2, you should complete this post early.

~8~

FROM FIRST DATES TO RELATIONSHIPS: CREATING COMMUNITY IN THE COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

by Rachel Rinehart Johnson
Eastern Florida State College

> "While lecture plays a role in our college classrooms, there are other research-based strategies available to college instructors that are worthy of our consideration. These strategies can move students from memorizing facts to learning metacognitive processes and academic skills that can transcend any one of our courses and lead to deeper understanding. Sydney J. Harris (1917-1986), a noted American journalist, once wrote that 'Most people are mirrors, reflecting the moods and emotions of the times; few are windows, bringing light to bear on the dark corners where troubles fester. The whole purpose of education is to turn mirrors into windows' (Stewart, 2003 p. 186). It is time to consider putting more contemporary theory into practice in our college classrooms by reducing our talk and increasing talking among our students. By doing so, we may well turn more mirrors into windows" (Feden 21-22).

Today, students are becoming more comfortable with social media interactions but more isolated in the classroom setting, and they are finding it difficult to focus on tasks,

communicate with each other, and invest in anything not on their screens. One study…from the International Center for Media & the Public Agenda (ICMPA) at the University of Maryland, concludes that most college students are not just unwilling, but functionally unable to be without their media links to the world. 'I clearly am addicted and the dependency is sickening,' said one person in the study. 'I feel like most people these days are in a similar situation, for between having a […smart phone], a laptop, a television, and an iPod, people have become unable to shed their media skin.' (Merrill)

In fact, in "Social Media is Changing How College Students Deal with Mental Health, For Better or Worse," Griffin states that "College students today are more detached from their peers than ever before." Students are so connected, they are disconnected. This emerging complication intensifies many typical challenges in the composition classrooms, such as how to create a community of learners, bring energy into the classroom, maintain student engagement, transfer ownership to students, and encourage honest and thoughtful feedback during workshops. One way to successfully address these classroom concerns is with a technique modeled after Speed Dating.

This Speed Dating technique works well in the composition classroom from the first day of introductions through essay workshops. Classroom Speed Dating is not only a fun and high-energy course opener, but it quickly creates a community of learners who are engaged and willing to work together in a focused, open, and responsible way.

When I first began teaching composition classes at the college level, a colleague gave me the idea of using Speeding Dating as an icebreaker. From that first semester, I started using it on the first day of classes and found that it worked quickly and efficiently to build a community of learners. I still use her idea and activity almost completely; however, I have adapted and added to it to fit my needs and invite you

to do the same. When students arrive on the first day of class, they are asked to write a letter to the class, using a prompt that addresses who they are as a writer, reader, researcher, and student. Once they have completed the letter (after a quick overview of the class competencies and syllabus), the students are asked to introduce themselves, using the information from their letter, to the other students at their table. After approximately ten minutes, I ask them to stand up and find two to three others they do not know and introduce themselves to the new students. At first, they often share a nervous laugh or react with surprise as though they are not sure what to do or why I am asking them to move around the room. But soon, the room is full of conversation, sincere laughter, and an exchange of people who are beginning to know one another. By the third time, when I ask them to find two or three more new people to introduce themselves to, they are usually fully engaged and interested. In the composition classroom, I start off with this Speed Dating activity, and near the end of the period, I have each student walk to the front of the room to offer a brief introduction. This first day icebreaker activity is like a tree root for the classroom that begins to produce a community of writers.

Using this technique allows for student involvement, ownership, energy, critical thinking, and curiosity. It is as silly as speed dating, but students are laughing and talking, having that first conversation, creating connections and confidence. In "Cohorts and Relatedness: Self-Determination Theory as an Explanation of How Learning Communities Affect Educational Outcomes," the authors convey how

Deci and Ryan (1985) identified three basic needs conducive to the development of more highly internalized motivation. These are: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. [. . .] Relatedness is described as 'the need to feel belongingness and connectedness with others' (Ryan and Deci 2000, pp. 68–69, 73). [. . .] Feelings of relatedness, measured

in terms of 'school climate' and teacher-student relationships, have been linked to outcomes including self-efficacy, engagement, interest in school, higher grades, and retention (Furrer and Skinner 2003; Inkelas and Weisman 2003; Inkelas et al. 2007). (Beachboard et al. 856).

These all set the tone and expectations for the class and semester, and without this, the community is not as possible and the semester is not as successful. For instance, one semester, I decided to try a different activity the first day of classes; students still worked in groups, engaged with each other, and began studying class content; however, I skipped the Speed Dating part and put them in groups to get to know each other that way. The experience was not as successful, and the students did not become a connected community of learners in the way they had previously. And this happened in all five of my composition classes that semester. However, when I begin with Classroom Speed Dating, the classroom has a different feel and energy to it, and the students are a more cohesive unit from that day on.

After the foundation is laid, the branches all begin working together. For instance, group work throughout the semester is stronger because the students know each other and want to help each other. In "Improving student engagement: Ten proposals for action," the authors argue that "Engaged students are intrinsically motivated and want to exercise their agency" (Zepke & Leach 169). When students start out by becoming engaged in a community of learners, they are willing to brainstorm ideas, form different groups, engage in conversation, and even become team teachers to lead the class at times. In fact, the authors discovered:

[A]ctive learning in groups, peer relationships and social skills are important in engaging learners. In a study examining the extent to which student–teacher interaction, quality of student effort and peer interaction contributed to students' perception of engagement, Moran and Gonyea (2003) found

that peer interaction had the strongest predictive capacity for engagement and outcomes. Ahlfeldt et al. (2005) found that students' levels of cooperative learning, levels of cognitive challenge and the development of personal skills were highly correlated and statistically significant. Some researchers have extended the idea of group learning to working as part of learning communities. Zhao and Kuh (2004) found that learning community experience was positively associated with student gains in personal and social development, practical competence, greater effort and deeper engagement. Similarly Krause (2005) found that working in learning communities enhanced students' sense of belonging, particularly when they were full-time students. (Zepke & Leach 171)

In "Teaching without telling: Contemporary pedagogical theory put into practice," Feden agrees that:

The research conducted during this first decade of the 21st century is consistent in both its findings and what it suggests for college teachers. It calls for, among other things, instructional practices that move the instructor away from being the center of the activity and instead placing learners at the center. It focuses on learning outcomes rather than on teaching inputs. It calls for collaboration rather than competition among learners. (6-7)

Engagement in their studies, the class, and their peers allows for stronger community and learning.

A few years after I began using this technique, I remember a student loitering in the hallway during my first ENC 1101 class of the day (that was a semester where I ended up with three Comp 1 classes all in a row). In the ten minutes in between my classes, the student asked if he could switch to my class because it looked like everyone was having so much fun that he wanted to join in. He ended up taking both Composition 1 and 2 with me and being an active participant in his learning.

During that same semester where I had three Comp 1

classes in a row, I discovered, quite by accident, a new way to use this Speed Dating technique. In the hallway before class, I ran into a colleague, and we talked for a few minutes about how very unexcited I was to have students do peer workshops on their essays again that day. I was frustrated with them rushing through the workshop and then gossiping about other things and/or simply saying that the essays in their group were great without providing constructive criticism. Too often, even with strong communities, extensive time spent teaching workshop techniques, and strong essay workshop handouts, students struggled to stay on task during workshop and found it difficult to deliver productive feedback. While I believed in essay workshops, I began to wonder if the time would be better spent on something else. After sharing these frustrations with my colleague that morning, she stuck her head in my classroom and made a spur of the moment suggestion. "Why not put the tables in a square and do a round robin workshop?" she offered. "What've you got to lose?"

At wit's end, I took the idea and ran with it. So, that morning I gave them the workshop checklist as well as another handout I created that had a place for five signatures and five different students to mark down strengths and weaknesses. First, I modeled the main issues for them to search for with a sample essay. Second, I had the students write their main questions and concerns for their own essay at the end of their paper. Then, we moved the desks into a square shape and put half of the class on the inside and half on the outside. Next, the students read each other's essays and conferenced. I gave them around 15 to 20 minutes; then, the ones on the outside stood up and rotated clockwise to conference with another student.

That day, the students left with actual marks all over their papers, and they worked hard the entire class period. I was excited to see their energy, enthusiasm, and involvement. In the end, the students had more than five different people

read their essay and give them ideas before student-teacher conferences, which also allowed them to see more papers and learn, from other students, what to do and not to do.

That day worked so well that I now use this round robin technique for workshops every semester, though I have adapted it, and I see students more engaged and invested. They are more willing to give and receive feedback.

The Classroom Speed Dating technique increases student engagement and involvement, fosters collaboration and relatedness, which ensures student success. Utilizing Classroom Speed Dating for both community building and enhanced peer workshop works well in the composition classroom. The examples I shared today were taken from my Composition 1 class; however, this approach can be applied in other disciplines that employ written assignments or group activities.

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~9~

THE FRESHMAN WRITING SNAFU, OR THE NEW NORMAL

by Thomas Buckingham
Independent Scholar

It is the first assignment in freshman composition one class, and the professor is encountering the "usual" quality of writing that he has come to expect from his students in recent years. Four or five of the papers have followed the assignment, stated a thesis, constructed a recognizable organization, have coherence and cohesion, and are for the most part grammatically and stylistically tenable. Then there are the other twenty papers. Scenarios of "errors" or "poor writing" are rampant. For example, most of the papers have multiple errors in punctuation. One might have no comma usage at all. Another has commas everywhere, indiscriminately used both in the needed spaces as well as unneeded ones. Fragments are common in many of the papers. Some students specialize in run-ons and comma splices, with one or more in every paragraph. Others, seemingly as a compensation strategy to avoid compound and complex structures and those tricky grammar rules that come with them, have used only simple sentences. Non-idiomatic English is found in several papers. Subtle grammatically "correct' but stylistically "foreign" usages are seen as well. This paper examines what has become the "new normal" of freshman college writing and discusses the challenges this presents to the effectiveness of the freshman

course, as well as the college curricular ramifications of said effectiveness (or ineffectiveness). Specifically, it explains the seemingly poor performance of students as part of an ongoing process of teaching and learning and opens a discussion of what the college could do to improve their overall progress in the writing area. Methodologically, this paper draws upon national assessments, college faculty and staff interviews, psychological theories and students' voices to portray what is happening in college freshman classes, especially at the Florida colleges, where students are only required a recent Florida high school diploma to be deemed by the state's government as "college ready."

This author has dubbed these struggles in writing classes as the freshman "snafu" (situation normal, all fouled up). Borrowed from the WWII military usage, it is appropriate for this situation in two distinct ways. First, as a generalized term, military personnel used this to describe the often chaotic happenings of what was happening in the field and the front lines as opposed to the regulations and expectations of official military doctrine. In the midst of war, military discipline, rules, and procedures often broke down or were altogether ineffective. Overall, it represented the soldiers' reality, that how things were supposed to run ("by the book") did not. Here, students who have been identified—whether by authorities or self—as "college ready" struggle at the basics of composition at even the sentence level. Their normal attests to what is supposed to be true, is not necessarily true as well. Another correlation to that term is the famous "snafu" effect, or how over-reporting of success by a bureaucratic system has produced an illusion of success that distorts the reality of 'the front lines." For this paper, pronouncements of college readiness by educational departments and government are in stark contrast to what college professors are encountering in the classroom, and it is the to dilemma of college instructors to fight to get these students ready for college or whether to pass

on these struggling writers to the next course and instructor to deal with, thus continuing the "new normal."

The structure of this paper follows the learning process of the student, first looking at statistical data as to students' college readiness in literacy, then focusing on those literacy practices of the students in and out of the classroom to flesh out this freshman experience. Third, it explores the students' performance within the classroom in terms of recent literacy and psychological theories. Finally, it outlines topics of discussion and possible scenarios to improve the process and progress of freshmen students' academic writing.

The literacy levels of incoming freshmen: the NAEP

Part of the difficulty of discussing college readiness for Florida college system students in broad terms is the absence of college testing for recent Florida high school graduates (Florida State DOE). Whereas Florida University System students still are required to take the ACT or SAT for college acceptance (and these tests have decades of statistical data and in-depth correlational studies to college success), students entering the state colleges are "college ready" by simply finishing high school. Looking at the secondary in-state assessment, the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) proves problematic since the scoring of this criterion referenced test has no correlation to college tests. Florida students do participate in the National Assessment of Education Progress, however, which is a congressionally sponsored test designed and administered through the National Center for Education Statistics, a branch of the U.S. Department of Education. Named "The Nation's Report Card," this highly respected instrument assesses state and municipality education progress through consistent criterion referenced tests given to participating states over the last five decades. While the writing portion of the test has not as yet come on line, the reading tests has produced a long history of

results and has direct bearing on the functioning of incoming freshmen's ability to perform. In the most recent NAEP Grade 12 Reading assessment, Florida had 36 percent of its students performing at or above proficiency (The Nation's Report Card).1 While this measure put the state high school students right at national average, the reality of what this means only comes to light when comparing it with the number of students entering college from those schools: while 36 percent of Florida 12th graders read proficiently, 63.4 percent of them attended college (College-Going Rates). According to these findings, 43.2 percent of students entering Florida post-secondary institutions do not read at twelfth grade proficiency. Given that the Florida colleges contain over 60 percent of those students entering post-secondary education (FLDOE) and considering that the Florida Universities' entrance standards would bar a great many of these non-proficient readers, it is easy to deduce that Florida colleges admit an overwhelming majority of high school graduates who are not reading proficiently on the twelfth grade level.

The view from the classroom: what is the new normal?

At a recent *Florida College English* conference, the author informally questioned English professors as to how many students in a typical classroom were at the college level with their writing. Answers ranged from "none" to "four or five" to "maybe ten" with four and five being commonly quoted. In an interview with one such professor, she claimed that of her most recent class of composition one freshmen "maybe four are at college level", another four or five were pretty close, and the remainder of her class of 24 were needing great improvement before finishing her composition one course (Tichy-Smith). Accordingly, struggling writers are the majority, the new normal, in these college writing classes.

A great source of information about how all the students

of a college perform and not just a single professor's group is the staff of the college writing center. According to a full time writing center educator with five years at a Florida College, one that has taught writing at varying levels for four decades and sits down with over four hundred students per semester, struggling writers pervade her campus. Besides the usual issues of comma splices, fragments, subject verb agreement, misuse of vocabulary, poor argument support, etc., another, more pervasive and more distressing issue for her students is "sentence sense.". In a given week, she says, nearly half of her students cannot define or identify what a sentence is and what it does. "Five years ago, this was definitely the case for developmental students, but now this is the case for all writing class students—including ENC 1101, 1102 and Humanities" (Chrisman). Indeed, tracking statistics for the college writing centers show that over 80 percent of writing help is for college level classes vs. developmental and ESL students (FSW Annual report 7). What is significant about this finding is that, contrary to what people might assume about those seeking help at support centers, is that students seeking writing help in these classes consistently perform better than those who don't. In fact, students seeking writing help as a group attain a passing grade in ENC 1101 and ENC 1102 at over 10 percent more than those who don't. (FSW Annual report 9).

Another prominent issue that was reported and seemed to corroborate the NAEP findings was the inability of students to read and follow directions (Tichy-Smith). One professor stated that she was astounded how after class lectures on an assignment, handouts, on-line examples, additional e-mail explanations, and then additional on-line supplemental explanations, many of her students, even the "best" students, would contact her days later unsure of how to proceed (Tichy-Smith). This phenomenon of difficulty reading and following directions was also pointed out by the writing center staff member (Chrisman).

How did they get this way? Schooling and the underdevelopment of academic writing

While there are many factors well beyond the scope of this paper of how students are or are not developing in schools, two keys that become apparent when discussing writing accomplishment are feedback and practice. Students report that feedback from college instructors is much more thorough and in much greater detail than their high school experience. Sadly, many students have related that papers in high school would often come back with only one single symbol on them—a checkmark. Another reflection made by students is the dearth of practice and the corresponding explanation of its replacement by never-ending, continuous test preparation for standardized assessments. One faculty member quoted a student as lamenting that her writing was actually worse after her senior year as she had not practiced writing at all in lieu of "test prep" (Tichy-Smith). The message from the schools is obvious to these students—if the schools only value standardized tests, why should I care about writing? Another form of feedback, grades, could also have added to low expectations for writing practice. A local school district awards 50 percent of a student's grade based on attendance. Thus, if simply showing up gets you half the grade, then a 60percent on a writing assignment gives one an 80 percent mark for the day. Again, if the schools reward students routinely doing low standard work, why should students strive to do better?

The literacy practices of a new generation

To understand the students struggling with college academic writing practices, it is only prudent to examine what literacy, communication, writing practices that they do have. For if these students are not yet "college writers', they may possess their own practice and identity which may be a far cry from the literacy of academia but may hold their own significance. Specifically, students are incessant readers

and writers in social media and texting. A recent survey has determined that young adults 18-24 years old text and receive texts, on average, 128 times per day or 3853 texts per month (Experian Marketing Services, qtd. in Burke). Given that texts are often one sentence or less communications that average 7.7 words per entry, this equates to 29668 words typed or read each month. These strings of conversations, when taken as one long rambling discourse, equal in size to over 100 pages of a thesis. Thus over the course of a semester, students send and receive texts producing as many words as Pride and Prejudice (120,000 for the Jane Austen novel). These texts are their own discourse, have their own characteristics and rules, and portray the authors in a particular way. A short synopsis of texting would include the following.

Figure 1. Characteristics of the new normal

- Text is a short burst of words conveying a thought or partial thought
- 7.7 words per text
- Full of initialisms as word: lol, omg
- Specialized usage of punctuations and spellings
- Specialized purpose of personal communication, in-group identity
- Organically intertextual
- Significant emotional investment and life importance

Recent literature relates this discourse as more than a loose communication among friends but one with specific rules that convey meaning in themselves. For example, in a recent review of a website, Wired magazine reports that punctuation has taken on new meanings when texting, even to the point of allowing the texter to flirt and pick-up someone. Sam Greenspan, creator and author of the website 11 Points website, shows how punctuation in texts conveys meanings vital connecting with future friends and dating partners. He

states, "The way you use an exclamation point can change your dating life" ("11 Secret Meanings").

> Example 1: In texting, you don't have to end a sentence with any punctuation. It's totally acceptable to just let it dangle. So using a period gives a certain air of finality to a statement. Compare:
>
> · "I'm heading out to the party now."
> · "I'm heading out to the party now"

In the first one, the meaning is clear: we've had our back-and-forth over text, but I have plans, and they do not include continuing this conversation – period. In the second one, *without the period, it feels much more open-ended * – I'm heading out to the party now but who knows what I'm doing later, and you just might be part of it. Periods end things. Leaving one out keeps things open.

> Example 2: The exclamation point is the most valuable punctuation mark you have in your arsenal, but it's also the most dangerous. When used properly, a single exclamation point can set a light tone, convey excitement, and even demonstrate interest. Compare:
>
> · Sounds good. Not sure if we're going but I might see you at the party. If you leave, let me know
> · Sounds good. Not sure if we're going but I might see you at the party. If you leave, let me know!

The person in the second example seems far, far more interested in getting together ... and did it without changing a word. ("11 Secret Meanings")

The point demonstrated here is that textual practice and discourse, especially that of young adults producing

mass quantities of production each day are part of the social discourse of students. These discourses have complex and nuanced rules and they have become part of the intimate world of the practitioner. This discourse exemplifies what the socio-linguist James Gee describes as an identity toolkit of which a person's literacy is a part. Gee terms this literacy usage as Discourse with a capital "D," and concludes that literacy itself is part of the social construct, not just a cognitive construct void of culture and values (Gee 4).

Having developed a distinct, prolific literacy identity outside the classroom has many ramifications, and could possibly help explain the classroom phenomena that instructors are reporting. The first point to make is one of value or importance. How does a couple of squiggly red marks on a piece of paper and a substandard grade compare with the ability to entice a romantic partner! Joking aside, the argument here is not that students are confusing their on-line discourse for that of academia—while it is certain some of our students are substantially more versed in one over the other. What could be happening, however, is that the immediate, constant feedback of text communication offers quick and ample instruction to a new learner of that Discourse community, comparing favorably with the clumsy, untimely feedback of academic writing with its formalized reward structures and possibly punitive outcomes. In this light, the instructions of an assignment that seem so redundant for the professor may not be a cognitive issue at all, but rather an issue of expecting more interchange than the professor, and those from her generation, are accustomed to having. Therefore, these requests may be more affective than cognitive, letting the student know that the progress of this particular writing is going well.

The culture of disbelief

Another phenomenon of the new normal is what this

author describes as the culture of disbelief. Knowing that students are needing help and wanting to address their needs as quickly as possible in the semester, professors often give an early assignment that entails copious feedback to the students' papers. The idea is that once the areas needing to be addressed are recognized, the student will begin the process of improvement. Yet all too frequently, students do not address these issues at all. In fact, they repeat the same mistakes and bad habits on the next writing assignment and repeatedly ignore the pleas of the instructor to visit the writing center or to meet in office hours. Professors are astounded by this behavior, not knowing why the student does not feel motivated to learn. One explanation is that students do not believe that they have to change. Causes and contributors to this disbelief have already been mentioned—the inflated grading system that has encouraged poor effort being one. Another explanation is that they actually see themselves as accomplished writers. This would certainly be in line with the writing identities established in the texting world outside the classroom. It would also be a normal belief for someone whose self-esteem greatly inflated her abilities. The phenomenon of US schools producing great self-esteem is well documented. One recent Economist writer recently quipped that his children are "drowning in self-esteem," his view being that they are being taught little in school but are made to feel grand about it (Astill). Akin to this idea of self-esteem being detrimental to understanding is the Dunning-Kruger effect. Addison Anderson explains this as follows:

> "When psychologists Dunning and [Justin] Kruger first described the effect in 1999, they argued that people lacking knowledge and skill in particular areas suffer a double curse. First, they make mistakes and reach poor decisions. But second, those same knowledge gaps also prevent them from catching their errors. In other words, poor performers lack the very expertise needed to recognize how badly they're doing." (Anderson in Lopez)

Given the prevalence of esteem building in schools and the apparent lack of knowledge of academic writing that students show, this phenomena could very well explain students' slow start in the taking seriously the lessons of freshman composition.

Conclusion

This short paper has described the new normal of Florida college English classes, giving observation, observation, and suggestions as to how this normal has evolved. In so doing, it has portrayed the many ways that students seem to struggle—students reading below college level, academic writing loaded with errors, students in disbelief about their current state of writing abilities, etc. Accordingly, it argues that the new normal of college composition classes is not what official sources have described it as being. Instead there is a snafu taking place, a normal that has led these people to the college doorstep with false beliefs and unpracticed academic literacy. This contention is that an analysis of how students perform in class and the possible causes for their actions is necessary to begin to plot a course to bridge student practices and knowledges to the academic writing tasks at hand. One discovery that holds promise is the literacy identity that students have developed outside the realm of schooling. Texting and social media usage makes many of these young writers more prolific in volume (and perhaps in readership) than the academics who are now teaching them. Perhaps writing teachers no longer have to worry about developing a "voice" or a "writing identity" since so many college students are arriving with strong ones in hand. Consequently, it may be the task of the college, and of the English faculty, to learn to connect to these established literacies—not as a means of adaptation—but as a way of promoting understanding of what practices should be

learned, how to learn those practices, and the reasons why these academic competencies are important. Students need to be given more time to practice writing and safe spaces in which to do so. Moreover, the occurrence of this new normal, of students steeped in an identity and literacy outside school bounds may mean that professors need to explain the why of college writing, the meanings and values of modern academic writing forms beyond the quoting of the old adage, "that is how it is done here." This is a great challenge for all parties involved.

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Photograph by Ann Leshy Wood

~10~

TECHNIQUES FOR INSTRUCTORS TO FACILITATE STUDENT SATISFACTION WITH ONLINE CLASSES

by Laura Tichy-Smith
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The Internet has opened expansive opportunities for distance education that were not available to earlier generations of students. With the advantages, for both instructors and students, of flexibility in the timing and location for attending to coursework has come the challenge for instructors to adapt teaching styles to fit with the now-virtual classroom (Karon qtd. in Kidd 48).

This may prove particularly challenging to seasoned instructors well experienced with the dynamics of face-to-face teaching and grading by hand assignments submitted on physical pieces of paper who must now transfer those skills to a virtual delivery method (Motte 259). Such instructors may be less comfortable or versed with using technology and therefore may not utilize the full capacity of their school's learning management system, which is the secure website-based system used to offer online classes.

It could also prove challenging to less-experienced instructors new to teaching because, while they likely took some online classes in the course of their own educations, most of their educational experiences still involved sitting in classes. Most of the instructional techniques they have seen modeled would have been in traditional classroom settings.

Instructors additionally may face the challenge of helping students not only to learn about the topic of the course but also about how to use the learning management system and other technologies if those students are inexperienced with the technological course delivery website or technology in general. This paper is intended to provide a compiled resource of published techniques proven through research to be effective practices for the unique situations posed to instructors by online teaching.

Who is the typical online student?

The old writers' adage to always consider the audience has merit for online instructors as they design and layout classes within their schools' learning management systems. However, instructors need to take care that they do not base those audience considerations upon stereotypical assumptions about the characteristics and demographics of their online students (Johnson 7-8).

Moskal et al. conducted at the University of Central Florida and published in 2010 provided some unexpected insights into the demographic identity of online students that dispelled the assumption that online classes appealed primarily to younger students because those students are digital natives, that is, people who are comfortable with technology because they grew up using it (54). Adult students were found to be about twice as likely to have taken multiple online classes than were traditional-aged college students, and the adult students were more likely than younger students to feel satisfied about taking online classes (Moskal et al. 58).

Johnson at Curtin University in Western Australia published in 2015 indicated that fully online students were, on average, more than 10 years older than the average age of students enrolled in the on-campus sections of the same course (9). While the older, fully online students at Curtin University tended to be heavy users of technology for their age group,

they did lag behind younger students in the adoption of newer interactive web technologies, such as Twitter (9). Since newer technologies tend to appeal to younger students (Smith qtd. in Johnson 9), Johnson recommends to instructors that "care should be exercised in introducing emergent learning technologies in fully online programs (9).

Regarding another online student stereotype, a study published in 2011 comparing students enrolled in online and on-campus sections of the same class at Florida Atlantic University challenged the assumption that students who preferred an independent learning style, out of six learning styles studied, were the most likely to enroll in online classes (Brown 464). Instead, Brown found that convenience was the number one factor that students considered when deciding whether to enroll in an online or in-person section (465). Although at one time the concepts of online learner and independent learner may have been synonymous, technological changes have added more interactive and social dynamics to online classes (Brown 460). Brown recommends to instructors that they need to design online classes with components to accommodate a variety of learning styles, "just as the instructor would do for an on-campus class" (466).

As the delivery methods for online classes change and advance, and as the number and type of classes taught online expands, instructors may need to consider staying abreast of the latest research into student demographics as well as consulting updated statistics about online students enrolled at their own institutions. By doing so, they will be able to knowledgably address the needs of the audience when designing online classes.

What other audience factors should instructors consider when designing online classes?

Online classes delivered via the web provide the opportunity to utilize exciting multi-media teaching tools that go

beyond text, such as photos, graphics, audio podcasts, video, animations, and simulations (Kidd 48). This moves online classes far beyond the old mode of distance education, which were correspondence courses offered years ago that were facilitated via postal mail.

However, many online instructors either do not use the variety of instructional modalities available in the learning management systems or do not use them to their full effectiveness (Thomson et al. 67). While instructors might not embrace these additional teaching tools because of a lack of familiarity with technology, the use of media beyond text in online courses does also raise concerns about accessibility.

Many times, when instructors do incorporate video into online classes, they use it to transmit a substitute for traditional classroom lectures, resulting in the "talking head" familiar from television pundit programs (Thomson et al. 69). The power of video lies in its ability to "show not tell," so lengthy video lectures fail to take best advantage of the medium and would be better suited to present via audio podcasts (Thomson et al. 69, 71). Video works best for short instructional pieces illustrating tutorials or providing virtual on-location fieldtrips (Thomson et al. 71). Tutorials might include demonstrating information for the course topic, such as demonstrating use of a software program in a computer class. Tutorials also could include information about how to use aspects of the learning management system if the class is one in which many first-year students, who would be inexperienced with the system, might enroll.

The potential to add multi-media aspects to classes greatly enhances the potential teaching techniques available to online instructors; one concern is that some students may have impairments to hearing or vision. Classes must be accessible to all, and text-based online classes offer the advantage that hearing-impaired students would require no special accommodations and vision-impaired students would use text-to-speech adaptive technology, or screen readers, to "read" their

assignments to them.

According to Burgstahler, the principle of universal design for instruction asserts that, rather than designing classes for the typical student, classes should be designed for a highly diverse group of students. To accommodate vision-impaired students, visual media such as photos, graphics, and videos need alternate text-based descriptors included in the course design, and the layout of pages within the course need to be presented in an uncluttered manner. To accommodate hearing-impaired students, videos need closed captioning and audio podcasts need to have text transcripts available as an alternative means of accessing the information (Burgstahler).

If the class has been designed from the beginning to accommodate a diverse group of students, who might include people with disabilities or people whose first language is not English, universal design principles assert that the class will be more accessible and benefit students beyond those who need accommodations to participate (Burgstahler). Students who normally do not need accommodations may experience technology problems that prevent them from accessing multi-media components of the class and therefore they would also utilize the alternative of the universal design accommodations, such as transcripts of podcasts, that have been built into the class (Burgstahler).

What factors contribute to student satisfaction with online classes?

Surveys of online learners and other research into student satisfaction levels with online classes provide information that could give insights that would guide instructors to ways to better facilitate their classes. The University of Central Florida considers student satisfaction so important that the institution has set it as one of five measures for continuous quality improvement of its online classes based upon "the assumption that a satisfied and engaged client base is a primary contribu-

tor to an effective learning environment" (Moskal et al. 57).

Research at the institution revealed that two characteristics that helped online students feel satisfied with their instructors were the students' perception of an instructor's "ability to facilitate student learning and . . . ability [to] communicate ideas and information effectively" (Moskal et al. 61). This fits with several principles the university administration has set to guide the design of its online classes, which include that instructors are expected to serve as guides to students as they learn and the classes are to focus on highly interactive communications to facilitate students forming learning communities rather than focus on "content-centric course design" (Moskal et al. 56). These principles also fit with the idea that online learning provides maximum value through providing opportunities for both planned learning as well as self-directed, unplanned learning that is facilitated by active, "student centered pedagogical techniques" (Kidd 49-50).

Additionally, a review of literature cited in the same University of Central Florida study found that convenience and flexibility were other important factors that played a critical role in determining student satisfaction with online classes (Moskal et al. 61). Further, in a study commissioned by the A.P. Sloan Foundation, eight underlying factors were identified that enhanced the students' perceptions of the flexibility level of online classes, which were reduced ambiguity, enhanced student sense of value in courses, reduced ambivalence, clarified rules of engagement, more individually responsive learning environments, improved interaction, augmented learning, and increased freedom or latitude (Moskal et al. 61-62).

By considering the findings of the research into the factors important to producing student satisfaction with online classes, instructors will gain insight and guidance for conducting online classes in ways that could better help their students to learn.

What are effective ways for online instructors to communicate with their students?

Given the critical role communication plays in online classes and the importance ascribed to instructor communications in terms of student satisfaction with classes, several techniques can help foster better communication with students.

Because the virtual classroom lacks the factor of a physical meeting between class participants and because instructors and students visit the online classroom at asynchronous times, students may feel that instructors are not present and involved in the class (Motte 262). Instructors may be very involved and present but are doing so in a manner that is passive, observational, behind the scenes, and doing so at times when the students are not signed into the learning management system. Motte recommends that instructors employ several strategies to intentionally leave behind evidence to the students that they have in fact signed in and been engaged in the class, creating a virtual presence (262). These techniques focus on intentional communications, rather than leaving students to identify visits based solely upon factors such as the postings of fresh marks in the grade book. Suggested strategies include communications with both individual students as well as the class as a whole.

Providing written feedback in the grade book as well as answering emails obviously demonstrates instructor presence to individual students (Motte 262). While schools have their own policies about how quickly online instructors are required to respond to email, instructors may want to consider checking more frequently at times when more students may start sending time-sensitive email, such as when the due date for major assignments is approaching or during finals (Motte 261).

Obviously, communicating with the class as a whole is a more efficient use of time. Recommended strategies for providing a sense of virtual classroom presence to the entire class include postings of instructor announcements, video

message recordings, "getting to know you" discussion boards, participation in graded discussion assignments, and regular virtual office hours with opportunities for synchronous chats or conversations via telephone or video communications such as Skype (Motte 261-262). Students may choose to hold off on the back-and-forth of email if they know there is a time and place to discuss questions and concerns in a synchronous manner (Motte 262). Thus, virtual office hours can actually help to reduce an instructor's overall email load (Motte 261).

Instructor participation in graded discussion boards does present challenges (Motte 263). While modeling provides a teaching technique that could improve student responses in the discussions by demonstrating how to write discussion posts, excessive graded discussion board participation by instructors runs the risk that they may "squash the voice of their students" (Motte 263). Discussion boards help to facilitate students learning from one another, and over-participation from instructors could limit student expression by either causing feelings of intimidation or simply leaving nothing for students to say because the instructor has already covered the ideas (Motte 263).

Another method for efficient use of communication time is to compile the answers to questions received by email from individual students into a frequently asked questions announcement or bulletin board posting as other students may have the same question, thus cutting back on other students sending emails repeating the same question (Motte 260). The advantage of posting the frequently asked questions to a discussion board, rather than to announcements, is this can also encourage students to answer one another's questions, which may reduce the number of emails the instructor has to answer (Motte 260). Instructors may also consider sending communications via class-wide email in addition to posting them in the announcements section of the course in order to "push" the information to students in a timely manner rather than relying

upon them to sign into the course on the learning management system (Motte 261).

Use of these techniques should help instructors with the all-important task of staying in touch with their students through timely and useful communications while doing so in a time-efficient manner.

How can instructors determine if they are effectively facilitating student learning?

Students' perception of an online instructor's ability to facilitate learning can be a trickier factor to manage than the students' perception of communication. Instructors know how frequently they communicate with students, whether individually or collectively. They can also get a sense of how effectively they have succeeded in communicating based upon the number of questions they receive.

However, determining effectiveness in facilitating learning does not have such straightforward measures. The collective grade trends of a class may give some hint, but an instructor may not learn the full extent of his or her effectiveness, or lack thereof, until the class finals and the student evaluations that come in after the end of the semester. While these post-mortem assessments could benefit students in future semesters, these measures do nothing for the students struggling in the current class.

A technique for determining the need for ongoing improvements and corrections to instruction methods within the semester does exist. Formative assessments measure what students are learning in a class and how they are learning it (Jacobs 5). They check the students' understanding about the material being taught by the instructor (Jacobs 5). This form of assessment differs from the more-familiar summative assessments, such as final exams, that measure how much students have learned about the topic of the class (Jacobs 5). Formative assessments also differ from summative assessments in that

they are not graded, since they are intended to provide feedback to guide the instructor with teaching the class and to help students determine areas to focus upon for improvement (Jacobs 5). Formative assessments provide an alternate stream of feedback that helps to substitute for the information instructors would be able to see and hear immediately in a face-to-face classroom interaction regarding the students' comprehension of the subject material being presented (Jacobs 8).

Since formative assessments are not as familiar to students as summative assessments, instructors may need to explain the purpose behind the tool and the intended application of the results. When used in online classes, formative assessments "should emphasize mastering the task and achieving the goal" (Jacobs 6). Since the goal is better understanding of the topic, instructors should help students see errors on formative assessments as an opportunity to learn from mistakes (Jacobs 6). This puts students into a position where they have the opportunity to exercise some control over the outcome of their learning, while the instructor also uses the assessments as information to change teaching techniques to instruct the students more effectively (Jacobs 6).

Techniques that provide useful formative assessments in online classes include student self-assessments, reflection papers, minute papers, role-play, hook questions, and question walls (Jacobs 6-8). Self-assessment sets students to evaluate their own work in comparison to what they would prefer it to be in order to determine ways to improve their skills, while reflection papers have students go back to analyze a particular assignment or discussion post (Jacobs 6-7). A minute paper can be a particularly effective formative assessment to guide instructors, as it centers around questions about what the students felt were the most important things they learned from a lesson or what they found to be the "muddiest point" in it, as well as requests they pose follow-up or clarifying questions (Jacobs 7). Role play puts students more in charge of discus-

sion boards, as they serve in the role of facilitator or summarizer of the board, which facilitates self-assessment, while hook questions are posted by the instructor in relation to a reading to discover if students have misunderstandings about the topic (Jacobs 7). Question walls provide a discussion board where anyone in the class, whether student or instructor, can pose questions of interest about the course topic in an unstructured environment where the line between student and instructor is blurred (Jacobs 8).

While the virtual classroom poses more challenges to instructors attempting to gauge the effectiveness and success of their instructional techniques and ability to facilitate student learning, the incorporation of less-familiar tools, such as formative assessments, can provide effective substitutes to guide the application of alternative teaching techniques, when needed, to help students who are struggling with the course topic.

What are additional techniques that online instructors can use to help students succeed?

Beyond communication, learning facilitation, and accommodating student diversity, other course design factors can improve student usability of online classes. Techniques as simple as course organization and scaffolding assignments, which involves breaking assignments down into mini-assignments that build upon one another, can improve student satisfaction with classes (Motte 259, 264).

Although it sounds like common sense, understanding how their particular institution's learning management system works helps instructors to serve students better (Motte 259). Instructors should proactively seek out the training resources available through their school, and if available, they should complete the training in an online format so that they experience what their online students will experience (Gibbons and Wentworth qtd. in Motte 259). Training should then transition into periodic professional development and evaluation in or-

der to stay abreast of the rapid changes in online teaching and in order to seek ways to improve as an instructor (Motte 265).

Poorly organized online courses frustrate students, for whom course organization is more than a convenience; in the busy lives that have likely pushed them into online classes, students must be able to locate assignments quickly (Motte 259). Well-organized classes have been shown to contribute to improved student attitude, better learning outcomes, and student success (Simonson qtd. in Motte 260). Transparency in course design is a critical factor, meaning that beyond a logical organizational structure, information is not difficult to locate, especially if it is essential to successfully completing the course (Motte 260).

Some instructors include a "start here" button when designing their online classes (Motte 260). This rhetorical device takes into consideration the needs of students, as they start the class (or perhaps start online learning for the first time), to locate quickly essential items such as the syllabus, course policies, assignments, and grade book in one convenient and easy-to-locate place so that they may more easily begin learning and not overlook needed information (Motte 260). Other instructors accomplish the same task by sending introductory emails with essential information prior to the beginning of class (Motte 260).

While scaffolding of assignments is done in traditional classroom settings, the technique may be even more critical in an online environment, particularly at the beginning of semesters or in classes that are required at the beginning of online degree programs and have many first-time online students (Motte 264). Scaffolding may be more important in the virtual classroom than in the traditional classroom because in the face-to-face classes instructors can observe students working on and progressing with projects; online instructors have little means for replicating this (Motte 264). Requiring check-ins about progress or sending progressive parts of a major as-

signment assures instructors that students are working on the project (Motte 264). The scaffolding technique not only teaches students about the topic of the project but also about how to break down and organize large projects effectively (Motte 264).

What benefit will student satisfaction with online classes provide for instructors?

Satisfied students will help to create satisfied instructors (Moskal et al. 62). When any class is running effectively, whether in a face-to-face or online setting, instructors are more likely to feel relaxed and happy about their work. The work put in at the beginning to organize the class efficiently with a realistic understanding of student demographics while providing alternate content delivery methods to accommodate a diverse group of students will provide a foundation for students to have a smooth start to the semester. Consistent communication and formative assessments to make any corrections to instruction will help students feel satisfied about the level of instructor involvement. Scaffolding assignments will help students complete projects effectively, helping them to conclude a semester that they may feel positive about because their instructor took steps to help them complete it successfully.

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