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Stereotypes, Sexuality, and Intertextuality in Alice Randall's *The Wind Done Gone*

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Towards the end of Alice Randall's 2001 novel *The Wind Done Gone* (*TWDG)*, the reader is confronted by an epistolary inclusion: the narrator's mother, Mammy, writes from beyond the grave to negotiate a marriage proposal for her daughter. Mammy's voice is clear. As Cynara, the narrator, tells us, "...syllable and sound, the words were Mammy's" (162). *TWDG* retells the history of Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* (*GWTW*), along with the inclusion of Mammy's voice and identity as something far beyond being a mere appendage to *GWTW*'s protagonist, Scarlett. In similar ways, Randall gives voice to characters that lacked agency in *GWTW* and in doing so infuses them with complex personhood. *TWDG*'s countercultural approach signifies other literary works, especially its source text and slave narratives. The paper argues that *TWDG* intertextually parodies the portrayal of stereotypes and sexuality found in *GWTW* and highlights the African-American literary tradition through its use of irony, signposting front cover portraiture, and confirmation documents found in slave narratives. By doing so, the adaptation illustrates the continued haunting presence of slavery in today's cultural imagination and pushes against its ideological effects. This matters because Cheryl Wall, Henry Louis Gates Jr., Avery Gordon, and others show, African-American authors often rely on significant past works that constitute a sort of literary tradition highlighting racist discourse rather than analyzing the continuing and contemporary relevance of the horrors of slavery. The paper tries to modify the current theoretical discussion about postmodern adaptation which posits that reworking something that already exists intervenes in the previous political moment as well as the contemporary one to bring a new set of knowledge. This applies to *TWDG*; however, reworking and parody have a specific function that intersects with African-American literary criticism. This is essential since in Mitchell's iconographic text filled with nostalgia about the enslaved South, Cynara could not write her own text. There is no singular original she refers to, but rather a multitude of previous texts. *TWDG* responds in an original way to the romanticized view of the Confederate

South created in Mitchell's immensely popular epic and to recurring race and gender issues in the years since its publication.

Randall's entire literary project is a self-proclaimed "unauthorized parody" that seeks to "explode" the mythos of its source text (cover). African-American authors often respond to racist discourse by attacking "white racism through parody" (Gates 102). *TWDG*, on the other hand, accomplishes this by telling the story of Tara (here Tata) and representing Plantation from the point of view of one of its slaves thereby reversing the racist paradigm and benevolent paternalism set up in Mitchell's text. In this adaptation, Scarlett is herself part black through a Haitian ancestress, and she and Cynara are half-sisters through Mammy's affair with Scarlett's father. This sort of intertextuality through "embedded signification" was viewed as copyright breach by Mitchell's estate (Gates xxxi). Embedded signification is "revision through recontextualization" (xxxi), it creates something anew by referencing past works in a way that makes the adaptation become part of the original as much as the original becomes part of the adaptation (xxxi). Since Mitchell's estate saw Randall's choice to kill Scarlett as ending the potential for future adaptations, they took Randall to trial to prevent publication. Although the court found too many similarities between the texts to find Randall's work unrelated, her claim for the social significance of parody (particularly for African-American authors) allowed for the novel's publication. The case rested on the notion that *TWDG* is a "transformative work" (Grossett 1125). Much of this transformative work occurs in the novel's use of countercultural voice that resists *GWTW*'s known narrative. *TWDG* democratizes the authoritative resonance of *GWTW* and demonstrates that there are other voices that exist in tandem with the canonical tale. These voices include marginalized characters from *GWTW* as well as a history of African-American literary work. This populates *GWTW*'s story world with a plurality of perspectives and intentions. By relying on a countercultural approach, Randall creates a dialogic text that destabilizes the notion of a dominant perspective.

While *TWDG* was published over sixteen years ago, it has been the subject of little literary scholarship beyond an insightful book review by Lovalerie King, who briefly notes the text's practice of signification; an article by Nicole Argall, who defines Cynara's journey as "Africana womanist" (231); an article by Bettye Williams, who argues that the impetus of parody "…is that the appropriation fuels a critical commentary on the original" (313); and a devoted chapter in Richard Shur's*Parodies of Ownership* in which Shur applies what he calls hip-hop aesthetics to *TWDG*. Most other analyses of the novel focus purely

on legality issues surrounding the copyright battle brought forth by Mitchell's estate that sought to prevent publication of the adaptation. These responses use language from the court case and imagery from the novel as jumping off points to discuss larger issues of intellectual property, first amendment rights, the public domain, parody, and piracy. However, since *TWDG* has not been given much scholarly attention, it is important to do so because of the way it demonstrates African-American literary tradition and signification through the lens of adaptation. Although, the lack of scholarly attention given to *TWDG* is not correlated to its lack of popularity. The novel caused quite a stir at its (eventual) publication: it reached several bestseller lists and was even nominated for the NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Literary Work. Perhaps the adaptation has not been given much scholarly attention because it reads as a literary criticism itself, pointing out historical inaccuracies, broad assumptions, and racist ideology permeating *GWTW*. In a 2001 interview, Randall statedthat part of the inspiration for her parody novel was the pervasiveness of the phrase "I don't know nothin''bout birthin' babies"which she often heard used in the Southern United States (qtd. in Kirkpatrick 4). This phrase is used by the slave Prissy in the film version of *GWTW* and Randall grew tired of hearing white people using it as an indicator of ignorance (4). While much scholarship has pointed to the racism inherent in the portrayal of slaves and romanticized view of slaveholder culture in *GWTW*, Randall tries a different tactic and revises the novel itself. Her writing invokes many specific moments from the source text but reframes them to give the black characters more agency and, of course, to add some titillation.

African-American feminist scholars argue that oppression takes place through racism, sexism, and classism, and that these categories cannot be parsed; and *TWDG* explores this intersectionality[1] through its main character, an enslaved African-American woman. *TWDG* reflects an ongoing historical dialogue about African-American experience, hence the paper uses African-American theoretical criticism. It relies on Hazel Carby's argument about intersectionality, Cheryl Wall's study "worrying the line," Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s theory of African-American literary criticism, and Avery Gordon's discussion of haunting in the sociological imagination. The paper uses the theoretical works of Carby, Wall, Gates, and Gordon in tandem to show how *TWDG* intertextually signifies African-American literary tradition. Carby claims that traditional feminist theory cannot account for the

[1]Kimberle Crenshaw headed the Critical Race Theory (CRT) movement that introduced intersectional theory

experience of black women in America. Since literature is inextricable from culture, the vigilant scholar must consider the variable heteroglossic interactions even within the same community (17). Wall addresses this heteroglossia to demonstrate how African-American women writers play with literary tropes to stake a claim in a new tradition that represents collective experience in individual ways. In blues music, 'worrying the line' is an expression to describe changing the meaning or pitch of a melody; in African-American literary tradition, 'worrying the line' is like the signification and revision-as-process advocated by Gates and refined by Wall.

As Gates claims, signification and literary parody are used by African-American authors to "…create a new narrative space for representing the recurring referent of… the so-called black experience" (121). He argues that African-American authors signify and parody other texts to push back against dominant narratives. In *The Signifying Monkey*, Gates asserts a theory of African-American literary criticism that argues for the importance of signification or meta-discourse that involves doubling and re-doubling signs through repetition and revision (52, 57). He draws a parallel between African-American rhetoric and mythology to demonstrate that while this repetition and revision does respond to Western discourse, it also has roots in African history. Although African-Americans often respond to Western criticism, it also takes place a priori to this criticism. African-American literary tradition is not some monolithic entity being referenced, argues Gates, but rather a systematic approach to rhetoric through signification. Authors refer to other authors and their works and reuse thematic elements and motifs to create new rhetorical approaches to meaning. This extends Zora Neale Hurston's argument that "originality is the modification of ideas" rather than creating something entirely anew (42). Gates devotes an entire chapter to Hurston's acts of signification, which include formal revision of Frederick Douglass, Frances E.W. Harper, and Jean Toomer; later, Hurston's own work would be signified on by Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, and others. By referencing these specific acts of signification, Gates demonstrates the potency and continuity of a literary tradition long ignored in Western discourse. He gave a statement for Randall when she went to trial against Mitchell's estate, saying:

> Scholars have long established that parody is at the heart of African-American expression, because it is a creative mechanism for the exercise of political speech, sentiment, and commentary on the part of people who feel themselves oppressed or maligned and wish to protest that condition of op-

> pression or misrepresentation…and 'Transformative Uses'/ *TWDG* is only the most recent instance of a long and humorous tradition (Gates).

This assertion demonstrates the significance of the use of parody as a subversive response to oppressive discourse, specifically, for African-Americans.

Similarly, Wall also notes signification in the works of Walker, Morrison, and others, and argues that "…gender and class differences within black America complicate the color line" (6). She shows how stories by black women writers are negotiated intertextually and intergenerationally to recount past narratives. These writers show the impact of cultural memory through repetition, revisions, and allusions. This means that black women's writing, such as Randall's, is inherently intersectional and needs to be examined as it aligns with several literary traditions. Gordon's *Ghostly Matters* argues that the living death of slavery continues to haunt not only African-Americans but also people from all races. Gordon shows how people are connected through complex personhood, a concept which "…means that the stories people tell about themselves, about their troubles, about their social worlds, and about their society's problems are entangled and weave between what is immediately available as a story and what their imaginations are reaching toward" (104). This entanglement allows for shared cultural memory and dialogic histories. In *TWDG*, Randall signifies this collective African-American experience by showing how slavery haunts the cultural imagination and alluding to other slave narratives.

While some[2] have found fault with Randall's zealousness (such as her choice to call Scarlett the tongue-in-cheek title "Other," for example), the paper on the contrary argues that zealousness is a large part of what makes for productive parody. Randall uses what Bakhtin deems internally persuasive discourse, which invites dialogic response because it is "half ours and half someone else's" (Bakhtin 582). Randall not only parodies her source text but also self-parodies via "extraliterary heteroglossia" through critique of the racist ideology set forth in Mitchell's view of the Reconstruction South (Bakhtin 7). *TWDG* does not make the argument that Mitchell's version of events is incorrect and only the adaptation provides the true, right story. Rather, it puts forth the notion that there may be more than one story operating

[2]New York Times book reviewer Megan Harlan calls the novel, "spare, flat and oblique."

at any given time and that "truth" is discovered through shifting individualisms rather than being a static category. Authoritative discourse gains its power from existing removed from the individual; it comes from no-place, no-time, and infinite power. Though we know that Margaret Mitchell wrote *GWTW*, the distance in time between its composition, subsequent filmic popularity, and contemporary readings grants it a certain static power. Conversely, internally persuasive discourse invites dialogism because it is "half ours and half someone else's" (Bakhtin 582). By rewriting an authoritative narrative, Randall calls for the reader to question their own notion of cultural truth and to consider the haunting presence of *GWTW*'s authority throughout the American ideological imagination.

GWTW is a vast bildungsroman that tells the story of charming but temperamental Scarlett O'Hara alongside the backdrop of the South throughout the Civil War. The book romanticizes a lost Southern culture through its focus on social etiquette, love entanglements, and a sympathetic view of slavery. Its main theme lies within the struggle for survival: Scarlett seduces multiple men and breaks with lady like tradition to stay alive and keep her land. In *TWDG*, however, the narrator Cynara shows a different view of growing up on Tata Plantation. Her mother, Mammy, still dotes on Scarlett (here Other) as she does in *GWTW*, but in *TWDG* this attention is seen as vengeful. Mammy cultivates Scarlett's personality in an attempt to enact revenge against white men. Cynara is sent away from Tata because the plantation owner and Scarlett's father, Planter, wants Mammy to focus completely on that Other without any distraction of her own child. Further in the novel, Mammy dies and Cynara and Rhett (R.), whom she has been having an affair with, move to Washington. In response to this, Scarlett drinks herself to death. While this moment is somewhat anticlimactic in the text, it signifies Randall's true break with *GWTW*'s plotline. In another contentious move, Randall also fashions Scarlett's love interest Ashley (Dreamy Gentleman in *TWDG*) and the prostitute Belle (Beauty) as homosexual. The novel is overtly parodic, but the implicit critique in *TWDG* works to problematize intersectional racism in *GWTW*.

Randall shows the plurality of voices in any given authoritative narrative and historicizes her characters in a way that signifies *GWTW*. The characters in *GWTW* refer to many literary works including several of Shakespeare's plays and Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and dozens of historical figures and events. In *TWDG*, Cynara similarly references her awareness of and occasional interaction with historical figures including Edmonia Lewis, Dredd Scott, Harriet Ja-

cobs, Harriet Tubman, Sally Hemmings, Francis Cardozo, and others. At one point in the text Cynara even goes to visit Frederick Douglass at his house. This appeal to authority through inclusion of real people who could vouch for her presence, intertextually parodies *GWTW* and mimics the many autobiographical slave narratives that were introduced through someone else, usually a socially privileged white person. Cynara also demonstrates her familiarity with the English/American literary canon through a vast array of allusions including Calypso/Odysseus (13), Hansel and Gretel (37), Moses, Mary and Martha (50), and three of Shakespeare's plays: *Romeo and Juliet, Cleopatra*, and *Othello* (90), which extends Scarlett's allusions to *Julius Caesar*, *The Tempest*, and *Macbeth* in *GWTW*. Cynara even references Daphne du Maurier's famous opening line to *Rebecca*, published just two years after *GWTW*, when she says that "Last night I dreamed of cotton farm" (13). The shift of discussion from vast English estate to a place of forced servitude is ironic: Cynara is a contemporary construction meant to expose the ways that slavery continues to haunt us today.

TWDG demonstrates this kind of intertextuality and haunting by problematizing several stereotypes about African-American women, in particular the Mammy and Jezebel stereotypes. Randall challenges racism specifically as it intersects with gender, embodiment, and sexuality, and demonstrates the oppressiveness of these stereotypes. By appropriating and twisting stereotypes about women and sexuality, she also responds to stereotypes about women and sexuality that take place in the source text, particularly those produced through an oppressive lens. Patriarchal narratives in the antebellum south elevated white female purity and prudence while casting black women into sexual tropes. They were either the Mammy, an unsexed older woman who was often considered part of the family, or the Jezebel, who was believed to have a voracious sexual appetite. As Patricia Hill says, the Mammy stereotype was purposely "…created to justify the economic exploitation of house slaves and sustained to explain Black women's long-standing restriction to domestic service" (qtd. in Sewell 310). *GWTW* helped to solidify the Mammy trope in a kind-hearted but passionless flat character who tries to teach Scarlett the rules of courtship.

In *GWTW*, Mammy's only desire lies in her love for the O'Hara family, which is simplistic and unquestioning. She is depicted as old, black, and elephantine: she is "…a huge old woman with the small, shrewd eyes of an elephant... shining black, pure African"

(Mitchell 30). Yet despite her blatantly nonsexual portrayal, Mammy is oddly entwined with Scarlett's sexuality. While Lady O'Hara does not see through Scarlett's veneer of gentility, Mammy does, and takes it upon herself to chastise her charge when she feels she is behaving inappropriately. Mammy is also in charge of Scarlett's main means of attracting suitable mates—dressing in finery and lacing her tiny waist—and dictates rules that Scarlett has to follow to properly enter society. Rhett recognizes her position as "real head of the house" (1212) and yet Mammy has little, if any, agency. She instead sacrifices her own individuality and sexuality for the O'Hara family, even to the extent that she keeps working for them after emancipation.

TWDG undermines this dominant narrative but shows how it still haunts by satirizing Mammy as an overtly sexual creature with complex maternal inclinations while keeping her title of "Mammy." The juxtaposition of blatant sexual behavior with her sexless name parodies her positionality in *GWTW*. Here, despite her name, Mammy does not fit into the Mammy stereotype. By aligning a black mother character with subversive sexuality, Randall also invokes other slave narratives that accomplish similar projects. A shift in discourse takes place in *TWDG*. Mammy's character is the only one to be still called by her name from the source text, but her characterization is vastly different, thus, problematizing any preconceived notions about what constitutes a Mammy. In *TWDG*, Mammy has strong sexual urges is sexually driven and not very stereotypically maternal, which plays on stereotypes that still haunt the American imagination. She purposely sets out to seduce Planter to produce mixed children. In historic depictions of the Mammy stereotype, she was a "direct juxtaposition" to the Jezebel and her largeness contrasted white beauty ideals (Sewell 310).

However, in a subversion of her character's portrayal in *GWTW* and with the historical stereotype, Mammy's sexual attractiveness in *TWDG* is founded in her blackness rather than denied because of it. She is physically everything that Planter's wife is not, which is why he finds her desirable. In fact, Mammy's nights with Planter were of "passion" while Lady's were "civil rape" (Randall 49). This subverts the normative mode of understanding slaveholder/slave sexual encounters as non-consensual. It also satirizes the O'Hara's relationship in *GWTW*, a passionless marriage with a 28-year age gap. Gerald O'Hara in *GWTW* is portrayed as a tender man who "…could not bear to see a slave pouting under a reprimand, no matter how well deserved" (29). In *TWDG*, however, Randall makes Planter somewhat monstrous, which shows the other side of the coin: that slavery corrupts absolutely and a person cannot be tender-hearted while owning

slaves. Mammy uses her supposed love for the family to hide her secret project, that is, turning the Other into a revenge apparatus to take down white men. She and Prissy also kill white children born on the plantation to protect slaves from future slaveholders. This act violently rejects the attributes imposed onto her character in the source text and Randall utilizes this moment to show the many errors in assuming truth in one authoritative narrative. Mammy refuses to adhere to the passiveness imbuing her character in the source text, and this refusal takes place in as shocking a space as possible. To take care of her black children and family, Mammy commits infanticide upon white children. Mammy's change from passionless caretaker to sexual murderer demonstrates an intertextual interpretation of sexual otherness. By rewriting Mammy in this way, Randall problematizes the portrayal of her (lack of) sexuality in *GWTW*.

Randall also invokes and complicates the Jezebel stereotype through her portrayal of Cynara and Belle/Beauty. Racist beliefs about black savages and their uncontrollable sexuality was a myth used by slaveholders and colonialists to perpetuate systematic oppression and control over black bodies. Black women were often conflated with hypersexuality and wantonness. Their sexuality was conscripted as inextricable from their race. The Jezebel was the "hypersexual, unrapable black woman" who signified the unrestrained lust of white masculinity (Leath 196). As Collins says, since "…jezebel or the hoochie is constructed as a woman whose sexual appetites are at best inappropriate and, at worst, insatiable, it becomes a short step to imagine her as a "freak'" (83). The black women in *GWTW* are written as predominantly nonsexual, however, Mitchell portrays the prostitute, Belle, a woman who cannot contain her sexual excess, as "white trash" (12). The Slattery family is also portrayed as white trash, looked down on by the O'Haras and their slaves because they are poor and reside in the swamp bottom. The Slatterys have typhoid, which they pass to Scarlett's mother when she attempts to care for them. They are correlated with disease in a way analogous to Belle's sexual disorder. Since white trash are viewed as equal to or even below "darkies" (795), hypersexuality is conflated with racial dynamics. Further, while Mitchell does not explicitly include a black Jezebel character in her text, by writing such a strong Mammy stereotype she implies the existence of the flip side of the coin. A means by which the text responds to the Jezebel stereotype and diminish her "freakiness" is by writing characters who make use of the erotic to create more complex personhood. *TWDG* accomplishes this by rewriting Belle as a queer black woman and narrat-

ing Cynara's sexual encounters through her own voice, so that we as readers empathize with her.

In *TWDG*, Cynara has an ongoing sexual relationship with R., which would put her in the position of Jezebel's sexual excess if she were written as a flat stereotypical black character. Yet her sexuality here is something that brings her agency because she reclaims sexual embodiment from dominant white culture. At one point Cynara says, "my body becomes my place to play. I become my own playing ground" (Randall 29). She locates sexual freedom in her own body even though it has been so long controlled by others through enslavement. While she is having sex with R., she closes her eyes and sees Other (Scarlett) (13). As a young girl, Other made a claim to Cynara's mother's breast that even her daughter was not allowed. Cynara sees this reflected in her later sexual liaisons with a rich white man, a representative of the patriarchal racism that allowed for the sexual commodification of female bodies. She writes of their lovemaking in maternal terms: "Sometimes when we are in bed and he's sucking on one of my breast, pulling hard and steady so the pull only brings me pleasure, sometimes when he's nursing on me, I smile, because he can't get what he wants here" (16). This correlates with her frustrated desire to suckle at her mother's breast and parallels her impossibility to nurse. R. "can't get" what he wants from sucking on Cynara's breast just as she could not get what she wanted from her mother. Her smile is a self-reflexive admission of this correlation. While the normative way to escape the Jezebel stereotype would be through the apparatus of marriage, Cynara ultimately rejects this in order to pursue her own sexual agency. R. asks her to marry him several times over, but Cynara chooses a life of being a wife-sanctioned other woman of an African-American Congressman instead. Marrying R. might have saved her from being considered a Jezebel to the remnants of slaveholder culture ideology, but Cynara demonstrates her choice to move past that dialectic into a more progressive paradigm.

Randall also shows how stereotypes about black women and sexuality are constructed through the ideologies of slaveholder culture when Planter says that Cynara will become a "trusted Mammy" one day (39). Though she is young and lithe when he says this, Planter displays knowledge that there are only two possible positionalities for black women, at least in the eyes of people like him: the Jezebel or the Mammy. Once Cynara no longer embodies the Jezebel stereotype, the only alternative left for her is to become a Mammy. This shows how stereotypes are reproduced through social rhetoric and the lingering effects of slavery. Randall's employment of non-normative sexuality and satirical representations of stereotypes, therefore, does more than

one form of work: it exposes problematic racist beliefs in its source text while also 'worrying the line' by alluding to an African-American tradition of engaging in the same process through signification.

TWDG also intertextually responds to *GWTW's* exploration of the sexual dynamics of the antebellum south, which dictated that a woman who delayed engagement and sexual activity held the power in a relationship. However, this power diminished when she accepted the suitor's proposal (Richardson 53). This courtship-driven public romantic life was heavily informed by the patriarchal expectation that young women defend their virginity and only acquiesce to the right man within the confines of marriage following a long courtship (53). As Mitchell asserts in *GWTW*, "…before marriage, young girls must be, above all other things, sweet, gentle, beautiful and ornamental" (Mitchell 56). It was the young woman's duty to exude these qualities but also to fend off improper suitors and make the proper suitor wait long enough to realize her worth. Sexuality and its consequences lay largely in the female domain. *GWTW* epitomizes this view of sexuality through Scarlett's interactions with men; she indicates the pervasiveness of these rules by undergoing social consequences when she "flouts" them (54). Scarlett learns how to act seductively, but "…most of all she learned how to conceal from men a sharp intelligence beneath a face as sweet and bland as a baby's" (Mitchell 58). Her charming qualities make her desirable to nearly every man she meets. However, she "…learned only the outward signs of gentility" (58), and has no interior gentility to support her veneer. For example, to entice Ashley after she hears about his engagement to Melanie, Scarlett flirts with every man at a social gathering, which demonstrates her ability to charm while also exposing her inherent problematic desire. Even her fantasies of winning Ashley indicate a desire to flout social convention. She imagines that he would ask her to marry him but that "…she would have to say then that she simply couldn't think of marrying a man when he was engaged to another girl, but he would insist and finally she would let herself be persuaded" (71). Scarlett believes in giving the appearance of gentility but does not feel the need to partake in it.

In *TWDG*, Randall intertextually satirizes portrayals of female sexuality found in *GWTW* by depicting several modes of non-normative sexuality. These include the implication of female sexual agency that would be impossible in *TWDG*'s textual predecessor, many interracial couplings, and Ashley and Belle as homosexual. Cynara thinks that she can possess the African-American congressman

she becomes involved with, which means she may also be able to possess R. She wields sexuality as a potential weapon and means of entrapment, which shows appropriation of the normatively masculine realm. However, she simultaneously recognizes the intersections of oppression, she says that "One way of looking at it, all women are niggers. For sure, every woman I ever knew was a nigger—whether she knew it or not" (Randall 179). This shows Cynara's understanding that patriarchal oppression mirrors racial oppression. *TWDG* also includes a series of love letters between Lady O'Hara and her cousin which allow the cousin, who is a black slave, to have his own textual voice, and in doing so intertextually parodies Lady's past love life in *GWTW* where Ellen O'Hara had loved her cousin, Philippe Robillard, who is "black-eyed" with "snapping eyes and... wild ways" (Mitchell 41). He, however, leaves her and she ends up in a passionless marriage with Gerald. Randall signifies Philippe's black eyes by making him entirely black. Cynara reads these letters and comments that it is the "…same story, different tellers; only the fact of death remained" (Randall 126), which self-referentially indicates this signification. If Randall is telling the "same story" as Mitchell, just with a "different teller," then it must still end in death (126).

TWDG also parodies *GWTW*'s representation of sexuality through its depiction of homosexuality. In *GWTW*, Gerald O'Hara tries to dissuade Scarlett from her obsession with Ashley by telling her that the Wilkes are "…queer folk… not crazy… but queer in other ways, and there's no understanding" their queerness at all (Mitchell 33-4). Here Gerald expresses his dissatisfaction with Ashley's bookishness and solemnity but Randall capitalizes on his use of the term "queer" to rewrite Ashley as homosexual. An astute reader of *GWTW* will notice the parodic intent in this palimpsest. Similarly, Randall satirizes transgressive sexuality through Cynara's homosocial relationship with Beauty, an old brothel madam. In *GWTW*, we first view Belle through Scarlett's parochial gaze. After Uncle Peter refers to Belle without using an introductory "Miss" or "Mrs.," Scarlett states reprovingly that she "must be a bad woman!" (Mitchell 150). Here Belle is a clear foil to Scarlett, who knows the rules for being a good woman but is forced into badness by circumstance. Mitchell constructs this foil at several points throughout the novel through linguistic and behavioral similarities. Scarlett is the "belle of five counties" (59), the "belle of the barbecue" (102), "a delicately nurtured Southern belle" (195), the "belle of the County" (219), and so on. Belle, on the other hand, is the "most notorious woman in town" (248); and yet, Scarlett wants to feel "superior and virtuous about Belle" but cannot, since she is "on the same footing" with her and "supported by the same man" (557). Belle show-

casesher wantonness through her dyed red hair, inappropriately vivid clothing, and, most obviously, her business as a prostitute. She represents what Scarlett could become if she keeps eschewing Southern belle tradition: calculating, shrewd, and purchasable. The boundary between the two blurs especially in the iconic scene when Scarlett dresses herself in drapery to seduce Rhett into giving her money to save Tara. Though reluctantly, Scarlett puts herself up for sale in a way that mimics Belle's more explicit prostitution. Mitchell seems to assert a naturalistic view here. Belle and Scarlett are not so different after all and only the social environment that shapes them allows for different circumstances.

In *TWDG*, however, Beauty is more fleshed out than simply being a foil to another character. Randall rewrites her as a queer black woman who does sleep with Rhett and other men for profit but whose main labor entails nurturing other women. Beauty owns a brothel that she fills with girls she has purchased from slave-owners and has lesbian relationships with many of them. Cynara kisses her and another girl "for Beauty's sake" (Randall 34), to thank her for her many ways of assisting young women. Beauty does not have to adhere to the religious norms of society and so "…didn't wait for Sunday for communion" or wait for river baptism (23); instead, she creates her own religion simply by consuming, sharing, and cleansing each morning with her cup of coffee. She has a sort of mysticism and mystery about her as she "isn't young" yet attracts suitors (23). Her dyed hair and painted face represent an attempt to pass as white rather than a visual wantonness and her reliance on feminine powers gives her a sort of potency not found in other characters. In fact, talking to Beauty causes Cynara to go "straight crazy" and to remember images of her mother, R., and Other (25). Beauty comes out by appropriating masculinity in a European fairy tale, Cynara's dream reminds her of Hansel and Gretel, and when Cynara asks her if she's "the witch or the grandmother," Beauty replies, "Baby, I'm Hansel" (35). This intertextual twist of gendered sexual expectations further cements Randall's recursive project.

TWDG also highlights the continued haunting presence of slavery in the sociological imagination by showing how contemporary literature can be used to call forth the ghosts of past slave narratives. The novel is palimpsestic, both as an adaptation and as a text written in the African-American literary tradition. The book heavily alludes to its source text and to many other narratives about black experience, meaning that the act of reading *TWDG* also implies remembering and rereading these past texts. It intertextually invokes slave narratives by

employing several of their most potent rhetorical tools: irony, signposting front cover portraiture, and confirmation documents.[3] These tools made slave narratives palatable to a primarily white (and often female) audience while still subversively exposing the horrors of slavery. Slave narratives have historically relied on a mix of visceral imagery that describe the horrors of slavery with some sort of appeal to authority or spirituality. Gordon shows how these narratives, much like the discipline of sociology, combine autobiographic, ethnographic, and historic elements to further a political agenda. However, the political nature of these narratives required that they be not only believable but also consumable. To mediate this, slave narratives often told two tales: one that the author wanted to tell and one that was coded for a white audience. The slave narrative "forgot" many things to expose the horrors of slavery and its dehumanizing, objectifying nature. Simultaneously, it constructed the author as human and not too different from the intended audience.

The slave narrative meant to demonstrate how slavery perpetuates Otherness while contradictorily constructing the slave as sympathetic non-Other. The authors of these texts hoped to create a dialectic between reader and slave "…so that, in the best of narratives, the nexus of force, desire, belief, and practice that made slavery possible could be exposed and abolished" (Gordon 143). For example, to appeal to a white abolitionist audience, many autobiographical slave narratives use Christian imagery to show how religion was often used as justification for cruelty but also to prove that the author was civilized through religious indoctrination. It is an explicit act of double consciousness: such authors were appealing to the ethos of Christian authority while exposing its limitations at the same time.

Because of this double consciousness, autobiographical slave narratives often create ironic distance between narrator and text. There is a "dreadful irony" to how slave identity is still created within a dominant system of racism, classism, and sexism (Casmier-Paz 91, 98). Paradoxically, complex personhood is often located through a complicated identification with one's oppressor and their space of privilege (97). Slave narratives often attempt to write a free (and therefore white) person's story while simultaneously conforming to an identity handed down by the dominant class. The idea of the word "free" for slaves writing their narratives, Brewton argues, "…both draws from and contributes to the identity model of the white slave-

[3]See Nicole Aljoe and Ian Finseth's ed. *Journeys of the Slave Narrative in the Early Americas* and Harry Owen's ed. *Perspectives and Irony in American Slavery.*

holder...in an honor culture" (708). That is, their idea of "free" is connected to the idea of "respect" so integral to white slaveholder culture. Slave narratives were constrained by the ideological boundaries of white abolitionist readers both in what they would find believable and in what they would find not too different or too other from their interaction with the world. Davis and Gates argue that in writing a slave narrative, the slave writes himself into subjecthood (xxiii). Literacy was how "…the African would become the European, the slave become the ex-slave, the brute animal become the human being" (xxvii). To a slave, learning to read and write was, itself, subversive. Gaining mastery over language was breaking the rules. By mastering the language of the oppressor, slaves who wrote narratives were able to fight for subjecthood in a society that tried to render them objects. All systems of slavery rejected the slave from belonging to the dominant hegemonic society, hence, the experiences people had while being enslaved were meant to deny them subjecthood. Writing their narratives allowed for an attempt to reclaim this subjecthood.

In *TWDG*, Randall capitalizes on the restraints and distance used in autobiographical slave narratives by taking an ironically different narrational stance. While still an ostensible act of self-fashioning and self-reflexivity, Cynara's writing takes place in diary form. She does not expect anybody besides herself to ever read it and thus gives an uninhibited glimpse into her life. As readers, we join Cynarain her sexual encounters with several men and women. We are privy to her darker thoughts including wishing evil for Scarlett and denying faith in God. At one point, she even claims that R. was her God for some time and still should be (Randall 148), but that she no longer believes in his saving powers. Cynara's irony is also self-referential. When talking about the power of reading and writing to create new interpellations, she says that "Othello's just a creation. Maybe just like me" (118). This gives a sort of postmodern existential irony, which is further established when Cynara angrily writes to "you," in her diary later in the text after the black Congressman reads it. "You" refers directly to the diary, but the sudden second person narration reads as a fourth wall break that also hails the reader as somebody with responsibility for Cynara's experience. With this "you," Randall seems to imply that we are all responsible for the shared cultural memory of slavery. By giving a more realistic view of an enslaved black person's thoughts than provided in autobiographic slave narratives, Randall mimics the ironic rhetoric imbued throughout these narratives but twists it for a postmodern audience. We as readers see how Cynara hides parts of herself and her thoughts from R. and other

white people in a similar way to how slave narrative authors hid parts of themselves. Cynara writes an ostensibly personal diary that she later seeks to get published, which ironically shows how intimacy is put into circulation for money in a way that mimics Scarlett's and Belle's emotional and physical prostitution in *GWTW*. This ironic mimicry also shows how autobiographic slave narrative authors attempted to claim subjecthood but had to remain at an ironic distance from their work. It demonstrates how *TWDG* worries the line of these narratives and argues for their continued haunting presence.

Further, *TWDG* explores the power of linguistic irony. R. teaches Cynara how to read and write so that she can read her own slave sale notice and letter. The document upsets her. Even though Planter asks her new owner to treat her well, he still calls her a "thing" (Randall 36). She later writes, "I'm still playing pronoun games. Who is object; who is subject; is it me, or am I it?" (141). Haunting tells us that language is powerful and can invoke ghosts. This is perhaps best exemplified in Cynara's refusal to call Rhett and Scarlett by their full names. Instead, she refers to them as R. and Other. The mulatto is "unspeakable" other (Gordon 222), but Cynara voices the unspeakable when she calls Scarlett, a mulatto in *TWDG*, Other. By projecting otherness onto Scarlett, Cynara names herself. She says "they called me Cinnamon" (Randall 1), indicating that the slaveholders call her Cinnamonbut she does not accept this identity. Instead, she calls herself the name her mother gave her, Cynara, and only tells R. her real name as she is leaving him. She necessarily rejects many of the impositions placed upon her by her master, who is also her father, and in doing so affirms her connection to her problematic mother. As such, she refuses the enslaving patriarchal gaze, since she literally denies her father's name.

Randall also writes the multitude of ways in which countercultural voices can enter the popular imagination by ironically disrupting, and therefore revising, normative discourse. Cynara writes that her thoughts and language often feel disjointed because of her fragmented identity. She puts them into some kind of order through her writing and through song. Cynara's writing is how she ultimately begins a relationship with the congressman, who reads her diary and feels the power of her subversive words. Cynara accepts his reading of her diary because he can understand the reasoning behind her linguistic choices, but when members of the dominant white class attempt to understand her language she is defiant. Planter says he heard her "…making up little rhymes to sing" to herself (Randall 3). He attempts to control her song: "'Cindy, come sing, come sing! Ain't you my Cinnamon…?"

(3), yet Cynara responds to this with reluctance. Her song is her own type of transgression from normative modes of discourse and when her enslaver wants her to perform it for him she goes silent, refusing to grant him that power. When Cynara is put up for auction, she hears her mother call to her in terms of pastiched (re)collected song: "Forgetting is to forgiving as glass is to a diamond, mockingbird. If that golden ring turns to brass, Daddy's going to buy you a looking glass, mockingbird" (31). She alters the popular song in a way reminiscent of autobiographic slave narratives' ironic revisions of hegemonic discourse.

Another tool Randall uses in *TWDG* that is taken from slave narratives is the use of a cover portrait to signpost something about its author. Cover portraits were often included in slave narratives to provide a "graphic point of reference" for the author's embodied existence (Casmier-Paz 91). This framing gives the readers a point of reference for the slave as human. For example, even though Harriet Jacobs hides her corporeal form at the beginning of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* to literarily deny her abuser's sexual harassment, the reader is aware that at some point the text will have to come back to reconstruct the body as it appears on the cover. When the implied addressee (reader) completes the slave narrative, they are once again faced with the irrefutable personhood of the embodied author in the front cover picture. The picture creates a textual dialectic: it adheres to anticipated beliefs about the slave narrative by revealing the author's race, but simultaneously subverts these beliefs by illuminating what would be read as the author's civility. This follows in the tradition of sentimental literature front cover portraiture yet simultaneously satirizes it. By prefiguring a specific visual picture and embodied identity, autobiographic authors transgressively deny the power of the implied abstract image of "slave." As Casmier-Paz puts it, this is not the picture of a member of a "subservient class of servile human beings" (107). It is a picture of someone with a complex personhood.

Randall invokes Jacobs' portraiture in her choice of cover art, thus, worrying the line of African American women's literary tradition by referencing autobiographic slave narratives like hers. In her portrait, Jacobs stares straight ahead into the eyes of the readers as if to confront them frankly with her personhood. Her hands lie folded in her lap, perhaps to indicate that she is done with being forced to work. The person (assumed to be Cynara) on the cover of *TWDG* sits similarly to Jacobs, but looks to the side as if looking back not only on *GWTW* but also other slave narratives. The vector of the gaze signifies that Cynara

no longer needs to directly confront the public about the horrors of slavery, but instead looks back to examine how past events can affect current ideologies. Rather than resting, Cynara is at work writing and reinscribing a problematic historical emplotment. Her glance backward and the way she seems to be hiding her words with one hand also reinforce the notion that her act of writing was meant to be a secret recording of her true thoughts. Further, Cynara's portraiture is on top of what appears to be a leather-bound journal which is confirmed in the introductory "notes on the text" that declares it as a found document discovered among the effects of a certain "Prissy Cynara Brown" (vi). The placement of a picture atop a journal on the cover of *TWDG* creates a frame-within-a-frame-within-a-frame effect. This recursive *mise-en-abîme*[4] offers a framing metaphor for how literary "truths" come to be; Cynara's process of writing is not a pure representation but rather an intertextual signification between and through texts.

Randall also worries the line of African-American literary tradition through her inclusion of confirmation documents including allusion to a slave advertisement. In Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, her assertion of agency and subsequent construction of a new identity is exemplified by her inclusion of the advertisement posted for her capture. This advertisement advertises her body as an escaped slave. It dates back to a time when she allowed herself to be defined by the oppressor; the advertisement is written by Dr. Flint and represents an embodiment of Jacobs from the past. However, the advertisement she includes in her text is an altered version of Dr. Flint's original posting. Her depiction of the advertisement emphasizes her intelligence and includes certain details, such as the decayed spot on her tooth, missing from Dr. Flint's description.[5] This alteration indicates that Jacobs now has the power to manipulate dominant discourse and assert her own constructed identity. With this "ekphrastic self-portrait" (Blackwood 109), Jacobs conclusively denies Dr. Flint and slavery the power to define her. She portrays an image of herself as a woman, not slave; the subject now has a body to go along with her persona. It is not coincidental that this advertisement is placed quite nearly at the epicenter of the text since the moment when she decides

[4]It is a formal technique of placing a copy of an image within itself, often in a way that suggests an infinitely recurring sequence.

[5]*American Beacon*'s July 4, 1835 "Advertisement" in Norfolk, Virginia says that Jacobs, "…is a light mulatto, 21 years of age, about 5 feet 4 inches high, of a thick and corpulent habit, having on her head a thick covering of black hair that curls naturally, but which can be easily combed straight. She speaks easily and fluently, and has an agreeable carriage and address." This ignores her intelligence and tooth which Jacobs includes in her revised advertisement.

to escape is the climactic moment of the narrative. This advertisement and depiction of her bodily form divides the text into enslaved and escaped, incorporeal and material.

Similarly, *TWDG* includes a description of "…words on paper, a bill of sale written out at the slave market in Charleston, a name and a price" (Randall 80). This bill of sale defines Cynara as a slave, yet her decision to include it in her narrative (also at nearly the exact center of the text) demonstrates that she feels some kind of power over her own identity at the time of her writing. While Jacobs includes her slave advertisement as a sort of exaltation of her escape from enslavement, for Cynara her bill of sale threatens to define her as slave. However, she ultimately uses it as a confirmation of identity, and her identity is further established through confirmation documents like those found in autobiographic slave narratives. These narratives usually open with a preface written by a white abolitionist of some repute whoconfirm the author's identity and makes a case for why their narrative should be read. This preface gives reassurance to potential readers that the author of the narrative is telling the truth about the horrors of slavery yet somehow has not been corrupted by it. For example, *Incidents* is introduced by Jacobs' white editor who claims that "…those who know [Jacobs] will not be disposed to doubt her veracity" (11). Similarly, Cynara's diary is prefaced with "notes on the text" written by an anonymous source who refers to Cynara as an "elderly colored lady" (Randall vi), thus, presenting itself as not-colored.

Another confirmation document included in *TWDG* is a synopsis of Cynara's medical history, which places the narrator's health issues as directly related to the success of *GWTW*. Cynara was hospitalized coinciding "…with the publication and movie premiere of Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*," but otherwise lived a productive and fruitful life, "…frustrated only by her inability to get [her] diary published" (vi). By correlating the canonical text's notoriety with illness and frustration, Randall provides a useful metaphor of racist ideology as a sickness. The form of Cynara's text as a diary directly contrasts that of *GWTW* which is told from the third-person omniscient point of view and grants the narrator authoritative voice. We as readers do not question the story's events as we read because we are given no reason to believe that the narrator would mislead us. While Randall's court case rested primarily on the notion of parody as transformative, this inclusion seems a direct knock to Mitchell's slaveholder-sympathizer opus while also somehow calling into play the question of veracity: Randall implies that Mitchell's version of events is incorrect,

but the events themselves still happened. At the same time, the reality of Cynara's diary is also corroborated by the introduction's assertion that pressed into it were a picture, a fabric token, and the poem by Ernest Dowson that inspired the title of *GWTW*. This series of confirmation documents reflects the intertextual recursive theme of Randall's work. The material items in *TWDG* represent a sort of cultural production that confirms Cynara's version of a tale we as Americans have come to accept at a cultural, ideological level while simultaneously calling to mind the multitude of autobiographic slave narratives that were written before this novel and continue to haunt our cultural memory.

Finally, Randall's revisionary intertextual technique parodies *GWTW* and invokes the African-American literary tradition of past slave narratives through Cynara's own sense of being haunted. Randall writes Cynara's version of the story to remind us that the ghosts of slavery still haunt us today; this is reinforced through Cynara's own experiences with this haunting. Sometimes these ghosts are positive; for instance, Cynara can make Mammy's recipes from memory (Randall 29), demonstrating the staying power of a woman no longer alive. Cynara says she is "more afraid" of her past with every passing day (30) and that she thinks of her mother more "as the days pass" (100). This indicates Cynara knows that the past is never actually over and that we are called upon to reckon with slavery's ghosts through reading. As a freed slave, Cynara does not have the option of looking the other way when slavery's trauma continues to haunt her. Conversely, R. "doesn't choose to remember" as he would rather not see the residual trauma caused by slavery (30). Mirroring Randall's own project, Cynara ultimately takes on the purpose of reminding her oppressors about this trauma. After Mammy dies, Other tries to mourn with her but is frightened off when Cynara says "boo" (44). This scene alludes to the "boo" attributed to ghosts especially as it takes place on Mammy's literal deathbed. Later, after Other drinks herself to death, Cynara thinks of her as a perpetually youthful ghost whose beauty will bloom "forever" in R.'s mind in a way that makes her live "forever" (100). By making the slaveholder occupy a haunting position, Randall ironically equates a memory of beauty that will haunt forever with a memory of ugliness that will haunt forever.

TWDG is just one example of how the intertextual nature of neo-slave narratives and adaptations can showcase the ubiquitous nature of oppressive ideologies. Because of the difficulties in penetrating dominant (white) discourse, African-Americans have often turned to different forms of rhetoric to preserve traditions, rituals, and legends

(Donaldson 267). This rhetoric often uses irony, wordplay, signification, and lyricism to subvert authoritative discourse into language the oppressed could wield (Donaldson 267). Texts like *TWDG* that write back to dominant discourse find silences in their literature and "…retrieve them from the realm of the forgotten and give them voice" (Donaldson 268). In fact, Donaldson and others particularly identify *GWTW* as a "master narrative" that defines popular ideology regarding the antebellum South and slavery. There are other neo-slave narratives that write against this tradition, such as Edward P. Jones' *The Known World* and Valerie Martin's *Property*. In her unauthorized parody of *GWTW*, however, Randall more explicitly demonstrates how counter-cultural dialogue and the reclaiming of voice can destabilize racist thought. Simultaneously, the novel shows how pervasive the residual trauma of slavery is in the American cultural imagination. *TWDG* parodies stereotypes and portrayals of sexuality found in its source text and alludes to slave narratives through irony, front cover portraiture, and confirmation documents. In doing so, it problematizes embedded cultural beliefs depicted in its source text that still exist today. This kind of problematizing is necessary if we are to ever move past hateful racist rhetoric and inequality. By pointing out the flaws of *GWTW* and satirizing them, authors like Randall provide a call for action to readers to introspect their own interpellations and then challenge oppression.

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