

THE NATURE OF WORKING-CLASS LITERATURE:
AN ECOFEMINIST CRITIQUE

by

William DeGenaro

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the

English

Program

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

June, 1998

The Nature of Working-Class Literature:

An Ecofeminist Critique

William DeGenaro

I hereby release this thesis to the public. I understand this thesis will be housed at the Circulation Desk of the University library and will be available for public access. I also authorize the University or other individuals to make copies of this thesis as needed for scholarly research.

Signature: William DeGenaro 6/3/98
Student Date

Approvals: [Signature] 6/3/98
Thesis Advisor Date

Stephanie C. Ingley 6/3/98
Committee Member Date

Sherry Lee Ambler 6/3/98
Committee Member Date

Pete W. Korman 6/3/98
Dean of Graduate Studies Date

ABSTRACT

In recent years, literary scholars have begun to distrust, challenge, and expand the canon, which formerly limited students of literature to the study of dead, white, upper-class male writers. In addition to contemporary writers, women writers and writers of color, the academy has begun to study writers who come from and/or represent the causes of the working-class. This sub-genre has served a transformative, political function, and scholars, aided by the writings of Marx, have rightly recognized the class and gender issues that are often explicit in the texts. Another oppressed "other" is also present in several important texts of working-class fiction and poetry: the environment. Much working-class literature captures the abuse of the Earth, alongside the abuses of workers and of women, and scholars of working-class studies have yet to explore this literary territory. In this thesis, I propose an ecofeminist way of reading working-class literature that recognizes this additional "other." An ecofeminist reading seeks to avoid setting up a hierarchy of oppressions. As ecofeminist critic Patrick Murphy has noted, ecofeminism places multiple abuses in the global context of the relationships human beings have with the natural world. So I examine the ways nature is both oppressed and empowered in working-class literature; how the authors portray the ecology alongside issues of class and gender; and to the unique, sometimes contradictory ways nature is aligned with the feminine.

I. ECOFEMINISM AND THE ACADEMY

Above all, ecofeminism is a theoretical framework that calls for action, for the transformation of our world into something better. A brief review of the recent scholarly work in ecofeminism illustrates some of the ties an ecofeminist framework holds with the field of English. Ecofeminism asserts that what English scholars do in the classroom and in the pages of literary journals should not exist apart from what English scholars do on the weekends and in the voting booth. While many social justice movements such as the struggle for women's rights have had a giant impact on English studies, the environmental movement historically has not. Ecofeminism, therefore, seeks to add environmental concerns to issues of race, gender, and class, issues about which English scholars already are concerned. An ecofeminist viewpoint will pay particular attention to the ways literature and culture connect the feminine with the natural, taking interest in how both women and the Earth are oppressed by a patriarchal society -- and fight back against that oppression.

In a recent article in *College Composition and Communication*, Donald McAndrew explains some of the ways ecofeminism is tied to the field of English studies. In "Ecofeminism and the Teaching of Literacy," McAndrew argues that both literacy instruction and ecofeminism attempt to integrate multiple views, critique society, and reconstruct harmony among opposites. Action in the classroom, particularly when it involves teaching the ills of exploiting women and nature, can be a model for action outside the classroom, he writes. McAndrew explicates six of ecofeminism's central

claims and relates each to the teaching of English. The first claim is that exploitation is caused by patriarchal dominance. Thinking hierarchically sets up a system in which one thing is superior and another is inferior. So society views man as superior to woman, the mind as superior to the body, and so on. Similarly, in English studies the dominant paradigm has led to both canon formation and the lecture, which respectively sets up a certain body of literature and the teacher as being superior to non-canonical literature and students, which, in turn, are the inferiors.

McAndrew's second claim of ecofeminism is that women and nature are connected by objectification. Patriarchal society sees the inferior other (women, nature) as separate from the superior, autonomous, masculine self. Likewise, many literary critics have asserted that there exists one, objective reading of a text, and that its meaning is absolute. There has luckily been a move toward both reader-response and socially-aware criticisms. The third claim is that science and technology have been used as tools for dominance. The world of science has rejected emotion in favor of empiricism, and the arts and humanities, including English, have tried to imitate the supposed objectivity of science. Recent years, however, have seen a move toward context-based, qualitative studies of literacy.

The fourth claim of ecofeminism that McAndrew describes involves the move to restore the feminine. Ecofeminists have long argued that the feminine side of all individuals must be accepted and affirmed in all facets of society. All members of the society ought to look holistically at themselves, in the same way that the field of English ought to encourage holistic approaches to language and literature. The fifth claim is that the spiritual dimension of life should be explored. Society tends to value the material over

the other-worldly, just as literature scholars too-often forget to stress the healing potential of literature. Finally, McAndrew explains that patriarchal institutions and philosophies should be challenged. In English studies, as in all levels of the culture, we should strive toward political activism. Patrick Murphy also sees the English classroom as a center for ecofeminist action, action which begins by teachers adopting a “trickster midwife pedagogy” (139). Such a pedagogy would necessarily resist the banking notion, in which data is deposited in students’ minds to be withdrawn at a later date. Instead, teachers ought to incorporate storytelling (like tricksters) and foster the birth of female selves (like midwives). Thus an “ecofeminist enclave” or “base camp” will be created in English classes.

Many of the facets of ecofeminism in the classroom that McAndrew explains involve a move to resist claims of academic autonomy and egoism. He calls for “research that is motivated by love and not by control; that listens to nature or to writers as if in conversation” (378-9). Ecofeminism, according to McAndrew, should move beyond being a mere chore and become a means to making our classrooms spiritual centers. Murphy, one of the leading ecofeminist literary critics, feels the 1990's is the prime time for that transformation. In his article “Ground, Pivot, Motion: Ecofeminist Theory, Dialogics, and Literary Practice,” Murphy calls on ecofeminists to “alter...irrevocably” the field of English in this decade (146).

The key to ecofeminist literary criticism involves the adoption of Bakhtinian dialogics, writes Murphy. Dialogics stresses the importance, the moral power, of starting dialogue with texts and with others. Such a system, according to Murphy, inevitably

“telescopes out from the aesthetic text to larger questions of cultural community and political power under patriarchy” (147). That which we dialogue with, especially nature, should be examined as an autonomous being, not something that exists merely for us. Therefore, ecofeminist literature, in Murphy’s conception, should allow nature to speak. He uses the example of native American dance, in which dancers allow themselves to become things in nature. Dancers allow animals, for example, to speak through them. Writers with an ecofeminist orientation will allow nature to speak through their writing. This is in sharp contrast to the traditional pastoral paradigm, which portrays things-in-nature through the eyes of the (usually male) poet. Murphy asserts that pastorals don’t even portray a real encounter with nature; rather, pastoral poets merely idealize nature according to their cultural biases.

Murphy exalts writers as diverse as Willa Cather and Margaret Atwood, whose protagonists are so aligned with nature that they grow toward self-realization and an awareness of their own oppressions through the insights they gain in the natural world. These women writers and others have a knack for portraying both utopias and dystopias that grow out of the concerns of environmentalism. Yet, Murphy is careful to stress that ecofeminist readings are not limited to a specific body of writers who portray nature in a certain way. Rather, as ecofeminists, we should “use ecofeminism as a ground for critiquing all of the literature one reads” (154).

Critic Josephine Donovan, in her article “Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Reading the Orange,” conceives of ecofeminism as critiquing the entire “ontology” of domination that sets up a dominator and a dominated (161). Texts, according to Donovan, are

subjects that live and breath and exist as “thou” (162). “[Ecofeminism] liberate[s] the ‘thing,’ the literal, the natural the absent referent - which is conceived as a presence, a thou” (163). She feels the critic should avoid colonizing the text and looking on a reading with absolutist and essentialist notions. The ecofeminist critic will construct meaning collaboratively with the text, according to Donovan. Like Murphy, she supports allowing nature to speak and points out several writers who have done just that.

Dorothy Wordsworth, whose work has recently been uncovered, attempts to leave nature alone and show it with a refreshing sense of realism. According to Donovan, this hearkens back to Virginia Woolf’s suggestion that writers leave images as they are, and avoid distortion. As Patrick Murphy has shown, this kind of technique makes nature, and not the writer, the speaker. Donovan also points to Sarah Orne Jewett and Willa Cather, whose search for “presymbolic language” she admires (169). This is language that isn’t as loaded with human connotation, but rather conveys something pure from an object-in-nature. These are writers whose texts have been animated, or brought to life, and they appropriately used narrative as the mode to allow the natural other to tell her story. Like McAndrew, Donovan feels ecofeminism is a spirituality that can transform readers and prompt action: “The literal, constructed as a spiritual presence, will motivate people to treat the natural world...[as] a reality” (176).

Patrick Murphy expands on much of his and Donovan’s theory in his 1995 book, Literature, Nature, Other: Ecofeminist Critiques. He particularly expands on his theory that Bakhtinian dialogics can allow for the uniting of multiple concerns: “A triad of (re)perceptions has appeared, which, if integrated, can lead toward an affirmative praxis:

the Bakhtinian dialogical method, ecology, and feminism" (3). Murphy argues that feminism and environmentalism have been separated far too long, as have the concepts of theory and practice. Ecofeminism as a theoretical framework necessarily leads to action. The dialogic method necessarily leads to active contact -- dialogue -- between groups and concepts that suffer due to artificial separation. Murphy, for example, bemoans the tension between Marxists and feminists who argue over whether issues of class or gender should receive more attention. "Philosophical linearity" has kept the two groups of theorists apart, Murphy writes, "and the struggle to end *both* patriarchy and capitalism needs to be placed in an even larger context: the relationship of humanity with nature" (7).

The dualistic separations have kept nature writing marginalized, writes Murphy. Even The Norton Book of Nature Writing primarily consists of white, male authors. Nature writing that tends toward passive observation, the work of Thoreau and more recently Annie Dillard for example, gets the most exposure, Murphy argues. Thoreau and Dillard see nature as separate from themselves; nature, in fact, is a means of escape from the human world in those authors' works. A more feminist model of nature writing would involve resisting conceptions of nature as a primal wilderness. Murphy also suggests that feminist nature writing would not find God through nature, but rather as part of nature. He praises Donna Haraway and Susan Griffin, who are able to make a direct connection between nature, the self, and the divine. Murphy recommends Haraway's Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature and Gretel Erlich's The Solace of Open Spaces as titles that offer a metacritical interrogation of the traditional

methods of exploring the natural. He also praises Gloria Anzaldua's Borderlands, which refuses to separate the borders of natural territory from cultural borders.

Despite the powerful work of some of these postmodern writers, says Murphy, the Norton collection will basically define the canon since anthologies are most commonly taught. Murphy argues that the most heinous exclusion is Native-American writers, particularly Native-American women. "[T]he survivors of contact can teach our students, as well as us, about right ways to live in relation to the land and right ways to live with one another" (131). Native-American women possess a different view of nature informed by things like the way they value the spirit, the Matrilineal manner in which they trace descent, and the attempted genocide they've suffered. They offer a genuine critique of the ways humans have treated the natural world, and they allow the elements of nature to communicate directly.

Literature, Nature, Other also challenges the traditional way women and nature have been connected in literature, that is, through "Gaia," the Earth-Mother. The connection in and of itself is positive, but Gaia represents stereotypical sex-typing of Earth as a woman, Murphy says. The term carries, as Murphy puts it, "Greek patriarchal baggage" (59). In the ancient Greek myth, Gaia was dominated by her son/husband Uranos, the Father-Heaven. Such a connection is also anthropomorphic since it renders Earth in human terms like 'mother' and 'woman.'

Gretchen Legler echoes many of Murphy's concerns. In her succinct "Ecofeminist Literary Criticism," Legler defines ecofeminism as a hybrid criticism that mixes environmental and gender concerns for a very specific reason. She asserts that the

abuse of the land continues because Earth has historically been conceived of as feminine. Like Murphy, she calls for nature to be empowered in literature, and suggests that nature authors both allow nature to speak and blur the concepts of physical and psychological landscapes. She also calls for a new eroticism in literature, an eroticism in which the sex act is viewed as a conversation with the land.

Two authors, Robert Sessions, and Dorceta Taylor, begin to bring a class-consciousness to ecofeminism by means of an economic critique of society. In "Ecofeminism and Work," Sessions argues that both newspaper headlines and conventional wisdom would lead society to collectively believe it must choose between either saving jobs or saving the environment:

From within this system we tend to think of economic values such as cost and benefits, profits and efficiency, instead of environmental values such as biodiversity, ecosystemic health, homeostasis or the inherent worth of natural beings (176).

America, Sessions points out, will always choose jobs over the environment. Yet this is a false dichotomy that is, in fact, quite dangerous. To illustrate his thesis, Sessions uses the example of farms. As Marx said they would, farms have become industrialized, a part of big business. This has resulted in a push toward efficiency and maximum profit. According to Sessions, farmers have been thus put under pressure to use as much land as possible and practice chemical farming. This has resulted in erosion and polluted water, respectively. So in the long run, argues Sessions, farms are less profitable. An ecofeminist understands this bigger picture, and puts forth the further argument that since

women and children are harmed disproportionately by pollution, the environment is explicitly a feminist issue.

Sessions' farm example also illustrates the ways work in a capitalist society has become what Sessions calls "dysfunctional." The push to utilize more land has squeezed much of the rural population into the cities, as there is less living space in the country. In addition to leading to overcrowding and an urban job shortage, this makes farming lonely work. Farmers, usually men, are often alone, which breaks down a healthy familial situation and fulfills Marx's prediction of alienated labor. Again, this is explicitly a feminist issue.

Sessions argues that farming isn't the only industry in which dysfunctional work harms families. He writes that capitalism in general takes away leisure time and dichotomizes work and play. Capitalism pushes for a longer work day to increase productivity; leisure time is viewed as a break from the hectic work life. Sessions argues that an ecofeminist utopia would consist of a shorter work day, cutting down on industry damaging the Earth and long work days damaging relationships. Such a utopia would begin to lead to class and gender equality, and a healthier Earth, according to Sessions:

This goal has been central to a wide variety of proposals to alter modern work; what ecofeminism has to offer our thinking about right livelihood (Buddhism) or unalienated labor (Marx) or new work (Bergmann) is the link between women and nature plus a strong emphasis on caring relationships in context (186).

Sessions concludes that if his ecofeminist utopia was a reality, less "insecurity" about jobs

would begin to eradicate the need to feel superior that leads to the false dichotomies against which ecofeminism rages.

Dorceta Taylor, in "Women of Color, Environmental Justice, and Ecofeminism," adds the factor of race to Sessions' important discussion of class. She points out that environmentalism has traditionally excluded women of color, which is somewhat ironic since damage to the Earth is often most heinous in minority neighborhoods. Taylor praises the Environmental Justice movement, the latest stage of development of environmentalism, for incorporating a push for justice in terms of the Earth *as well as* race and class and gender. Taylor criticizes the field of ecofeminism for not doing as well as the Environmental Justice movement in "captur[ing the] complexity" of the concerns of women of color (63). The Justice movement, writes Taylor, revealed through tireless research that pollution hits minority neighborhoods disproportionately, and effects the health of women and children disproportionately. The movement "broke new ground when they began arguing that the capitalist exploitation of resources was connected to the degradation of nature and women" (58).

So ecofeminism serves as a call to action to recognize that the abuse of nature is tied to abuses of race, class, and gender in very complex ways. The philosophy of ecofeminism recognizes these multiple abuses in a non-hierarchical manner, and suggests we live our lives in a way that reduces these abuses. This challenge is difficult for those living in our Western society, since we are ingrained with tendencies to dichotomize man and woman, mind and body, culture and nature, human and non-human, work and play. As ecofeminists, we need to scrutinize these assumptions of separation and begin to

harmonize the two sides of the dichotomies.

II. TOWARD A DEFINITION OF WORKING-CLASS LITERATURE:

BEYOND THE 30s

Let us make a somewhat radical shift away from environmental criticism and talk about working-class studies. Such a discussion will inevitably lead us backwards, specifically to the 1930s. However, before going back that far, let us examine the years following the second World War. The Cold War years, with anti-Communist sentiment running rampant, saw little study of the bodies of literature often called “proletarian,” or “working-class.” Avowed writers of the proletariat like Mike Gold rarely ended up in a Norton or Heath anthology. Canonical writers like John Steinbeck and John Dos Passos maintained a high status, but their real-life, radical affiliations were often ignored as subjects of significant inquiry, and the social commentary of their writing was characterized as left-leaning, but not blatantly Communist. Critics wrote during the post-war years about the literary radicalism of the Great Depression era, but were careful not to appear too enthusiastic. After the 1974 publication of Tillie Olsen’s unfinished novel Yonondio: From the Thirties, however, working-class literature as a sub-genre began to gain momentum.

One of the immediate concerns becomes defining this radical sub-genre. Working-class literature can be defined as the pulp fiction consumed by the working-class, or the “art as propaganda” produced by members of the Communist and Socialist parties and/or the actual working-class, or as any writing portraying issues relevant to the working-class, or some combination of those three. Another problematic concern is one of time frames.

Should critics limit themselves to studying the written works of writers of the 1930s, the so-called “Red Decade” of the Great Depression? This, after all, was the era during which most of the major working-class writers were working and writing.

Consider another approach. Is John Grisham’s The Rainmaker a working-class novel? Grisham, an attorney and wealthy novelist and screen writer, is clearly not a member of the proletariat. The Rainmaker came out in 1995, sixty years after the proletarian novel was at its climax. These pieces of evidence seem to indicate that The Rainmaker is not a working-class novel. On the other hand, the book is a contemporary best-seller, enjoying a huge readership that cuts across class boundaries. Auto workers in Detroit, steel workers in Pittsburgh, and cannery workers in Anchorage are much more apt to read Grisham than, say, Tillie Olsen.

Furthermore, the novel’s plot has numerous working-class themes. The young lawyer Rudy Baylor, fresh out of law school, comes from humble Southern roots and works his way through school as a waiter. His first case involves an insurance dispute between a poor Memphis family and an evil corporation. The David and Goliath plot (itself a narrative feature common to working-class literature) allows Baylor to bankrupt the insurance company. Disillusioned, Baylor’s first case is his last case; he swears he’ll never again practice law (not unlike the protagonist in Grisham’s The Firm). Baylor is a classic proletarian hero. He defeats the capitalists and valiantly refuses any of the spoils. A sub-plot surrounds Baylor’s romantic interest, a woman whose alienated, blue-collar husband beats her.

I bring up this example partly to illustrate how complicated it is to develop a strict

definition of working-class literature. Grisham deals with some complex class and gender issues. Characters in The Rainmaker move between classes in interesting ways; those of lower classes break into the middle-class and the rich suffer socio-economic downfalls. Readers get a glimpse of the complicated ways corporations prey on poor neighborhoods; the evil insurance company sells bad policies door-to-door, and ignores all claims in hopes their “ignorant” customers will give up. Rudy Baylor’s character elicits an emotive response; we want him to triumph over the insurance company. Readers of The Rainmaker witness domestic violence every bit as graphic and sobering as readers of Yonnonidio. Grisham, like Olsen, even connects domestic violence with the deadening monotony of certain types of work. I would conclude that despite Grisham’s own status, his novel is definitely working-class.

Notice that in making the case that Grisham’s book is working-class, I used as the standard Tillie Olsen. This hints at the importance of the 1930s novel in any definition of working-class literature. I would argue that in setting up parameters for what is working-class literature, we ought not limit ourselves to novels of the Great Depression. However, working-class literature really did see its peak during the 1930s. So working-class literature certainly includes at its core the literature of the “Red Decade” (Agnes Smedley’s Daughter of Earth, Tillie Olsen’s Yonnonidio to name just a few). However, it also includes the work that clearly influenced this era (Life in the Iron Mills by Rebecca Harding Davis) as well as later work influenced by the proletarian era or writing that echoes its themes (The Rainmaker, probably neither political nor realistic, could possibly be included in this list if only for establishing empathy; as could the work of contemporary

poet Jim Daniels, who I will deal with later). In my conception, working-class literature doesn't have to be written by members of the working-class, or even necessarily consumed by the working-class. These parameters would exclude far too many pieces of politically-charged literature. However, working-class literature must be political and genuinely portray issues of relevance to the class struggle. This genuine portrayal may take the form of a realistic novel about workers, or a poem that exaggerates a set of working conditions or home life conditions. The point is, the representation of working-class issues must be sympathetic.

Having laid down a working (pardon the pun) definition of working-class literature, let us examine some of the working-class literary criticism the academy has produced. Barbara Foley's Radical Representations seems like a logical starting point. Foley also wrestles with the question of defining working-class literature, and writes that the body of writing can be written either by, for, or about the working-class. However, working-class literature, according to Foley, must advance class consciousness and be politically leftist. She limits her discussion to 1930s proletarian fiction, and describes the leftist literary movement as reactionary. The academy of the time possessed an "apolitical aesthetic" and resisted the inclusion of too many ideas and ideals in literature (3). Rather, mainstream academia subscribed to the Jamesian notion of "show, don't tell," which meant fiction should be opaque, never didactic.

Some leftist novels, writes Foley, were initially well-received, but mainstream critics began to bash them for moralizing, for doing too much telling rather than showing. Since leftists were using their art as a class weapon, critics berated them for subordinating

the quality of their work to their political ideology. Yet this was the nature of political novels, they were out to make a point and to advance their agenda. Further, argues Foley, their political nature did not, in and of itself, lessen the quality of the fiction. The legacy of McCarthyism and the Cold War, according to Foley, has left the academy with an unfairly sour view of proletarian fiction. Many 1930s radical novels not only provide windows into the leftist culture of the time, they are also good books.

Another reason why proletarian fiction is often underrated is that critics agree that modernism represents the highest level of writing of the time. Critics say that modernist writing was highly experimental while working-class literature stuck to realism, which placed a limitation on its achievement. Foley, however, counters with the argument that while writers like Dreiser and Cather did stick to realism, John Dos Passos was highly experimental, and was definitely a modernist. In fact, the editorial boards of leftist publications like New Masses and Partisan Review encouraged experimentation, writes Foley. Michael Gold praised Joyce's Ulysses for using its experimental, convoluted style to represent the destruction of capitalism. The radical literature scene surpassed mainstream modernism in establishing an international literary movement. Agnes Smedley, John Steinbeck, and others were translated into Russian and enjoyed a modest success overseas. The leftist journal International Literature allowed the United States and Soviet Union to mutually influence one another's literary movements.

There existed at times a contentious relationships between Marxist critics and Marxist creative writers. The critics -- including Philip Rahv, Joshua Kunitz, and Isidor Schneider -- were by and large a homogenous group of educated, Jewish, male New

Yorkers. The novelists, however, included miners, drillers, steel workers, and homemakers, from all over. As early as 1926, New Masses had issued a call to members of the proletariat to record their experiences. Richard Wright, Jack Conroy, and Smedley answered this call and began to document often semi-biographical/semi-autobiographical lives in the form of fiction. In these early days of the movement, the value of working-class literature was determined primarily on authorship. The more proletarian the author, the better the story, writes Foley:

The class was extended to considerations of literary style, and in assigning value to texts by authors with limited literary education, the leftists can be seen as making a statement against elitism (91).

In the 1930s, the movement began to also accept texts by middle-class authors with left-leaning politics. Although leftist critics praised, for example, Jack London for reaching a wide, working-class readership, authorship was a greater factor than audience in evaluating the value of a given text.

Most of these novels, even those well-received by critics and the general press, only sold a few thousand copies, causing bourgeois critics to claim that real working-class literature is comprised of only pulp romances and westerns. However, writes Foley, sales figures are misleading since many working-class readers couldn't afford hard-cover novels. Foley writes, "Empirical findings regarding the size and composition of actual audiences functioned as a spur for heightened activity" (109). Many people used libraries and passed around a single copy of a novel. Popular proletarian novels would be passed around at work -- as well as at the new worker's theaters and traveling collectives which

were springing up.

So leftist critics were evaluating texts primarily based on the perspective of the author. It was essential to have a revolutionary goal, to be “red,” but the mainstream academy began to criticize the worker’s movement for ignoring aesthetic value. This caused proletarian literary critics to shy away from this mindset in favor of subject matter as the primary criteria of evaluation. Mainly, they questioned the accuracy and detail of workplace settings described in worker novels. Unfortunately, leftist novels grew somewhat formulaic, at times being reduced to clichés like radical, unrealistic conversions. “Stock characters, formulaic plots, and a programmatic optimism” sometimes reduced the quality of the work, writes Foley (129).

The establishment by the mid-1930s was still charging leftists with producing propaganda masquerading as art. Marxists countered by saying that all writing is basically propaganda, but were forced to shift toward including politics as subtext, that is, making the political message less explicit. Marxist critics, writes Foley, began to call for straight mimesis:

The strongly antididactic aesthetic theory espoused by the 1930s Marxists gave a contradictory message to proletarian writers: their texts were to be used as weapons in the class struggle but should not too closely resemble weapons (159).

Still, writers remained committed to the class struggle.

One downside to the movement’s vigilance toward issues of class was that women’s issues were not deemed as being as important. Women, according to Foley,

were often charged with supporting their hard-working husbands, and raising class-conscious children:

Sex roles in the conventional nuclear family furnished a ground on which to base working-class political activism, rather than a target for political critique (219).

Foley alludes here to the potential for novels to critique not only the socio-economic conditions, but women's places within those socio-economic realities. Still, in the pages of leftist journals, one could find sexist cartoons and non-fiction pieces that considered "worker" to be synonymous with "male." Agnes Smedley received critical acclaim for the most part, but she was also accused of writing too much like a woman. Despite the sexism, women were heavily involved in every aspect of the movement, from organizing strikes to producing some of the best proletarian fiction. Party theorists, writes Foley, began to critique sexism as an integral part of capitalism and all its evils. Female writers like Tillie Olsen beautifully "link[ed] women's liberation with class emancipation" (235). Child rearing was portrayed as an oppressive form of labor, domestic violence an element and/or result of worker alienation. Thanks to women writers of the time, public and private realms began to merge into one, writes Foley, resulting in a "collective dimension" of life that seems very appropriate to the movement's goals.

Foley also describes how the novel, long associated with bourgeois individualism, as a form had to struggle to convey working-class collectivism. Writers searched for techniques that would contest middle-class values, figuring that radical politics called for a radical form. Settling on realism, proletarian writers took chances by avoiding easy

resolution and sappy romance and any hint of solitary drive. Although, according to Foley, Althusser and Barthes criticized realism for being egotistical, subjective, and even authoritarian, many continue to recognize that proletarian writers represented their radical politics with a fresh, radical form. Foley goes on to describe several of those radical forms.

The first is fictional autobiography and a prime example is Daughter of Earth by Agnes Smedley. This form typically portrays a narrator who is educated and in turn seeks to educate the reader about class warfare. Fictional autobiographies like Smedley's are laden with testimony that is meant to prompt action. Marie Rogers in Daughter of Earth becomes a spokesperson through both her voice and her actions. Presumably, what happens to the narrator is generalizable to a wide audience, that is, many can identify with the struggles described therein.

The next form that Foley describes is the proletarian bildungsroman, in which the protagonist starts out naive, but goes through a test and comes out strong. This form can be called bourgeoisie because the protagonist is often a solitary hero, but in working-class examples, the lesson learned is a political one, which prompts a conversion. Examples include William Cunningham's The Green Corn Rebellion and Myra Page's Daughter of the Hills. More common still is the proletarian social novel, which portrays a collective of protagonists, which usually belong to a partisan organization like a union. Among the many proletarian social novels are William Attaway's Blood on the Forge and Jack Conroy's A World to Win. Finally, Foley describes the collective novel, which goes one step further. In this form, a group acts as a single entity with a single consciousness.

Often the group either suffers together, or is converted to the left together, or both.

Examples include Josephine Johnson's Jordanstown and William Rollins' The Shadow Before.

Walter Rideout's The Radical Novel in the US: 1900-1954 also seeks to categorize proletarian fiction. In the nineteenth century, he writes, the workplace conditions during the Industrial Revolution led to pieces like Rebecca Harding Davis' Life in the Iron Mills and other representations of life at work. When the writings of Marx gained an international readership, the agenda of much writing about work took on a new dimension. In 1887, Edward and Eleanor Marx Auerling, after touring America, issued a call for an "Uncle Tom's Cabin of capitalism" (Rideout 10). Rideout writes about the two waves of proletarian fiction in the twentieth century in which writers "express through the literary form of the novel a predominantly Marxist point of view toward society" (3). The first wave occurred shortly after the turn of the century, and consisted primarily of investigative muckraking. Upton Sinclair's The Jungle used not only realism, but material gained by going undercover into meatpacking houses in Chicago.

Socialism and communism were gaining momentum and spawning a cultural movement. Publications like *The Comrade* sprang up and began to include fiction that would clearly be considered proletarian in terms of politics, authorship, and subject matter. These first-wave forms included sermons, epistolary novels, and utopias, all of which utilized harsh realism. These pieces of fiction had revolutionary goals and their dialogue served as a mouthpiece for radical thought, Rideout asserts. Again, the vast majority of these first-wave authors had working-class roots. Upton Sinclair was raised in Baltimore

by working-class parents who were displaced by the ante-bellum economy of the deep south. Sinclair witnessed his father drink himself to death. Sinclair underwent an early conversion to socialism and returned to the conversion theme in The Jungle. His novel, Rideout, helped push through legislation that led to the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906.

Similarly, Jack London was heavily influenced by The Communist Manifesto and wrote, according to Rideout, nineteen hours a day. He was clearly on a mission. London's The Iron Heel, a strike novel, serves as an illustration of his revolutionary fervor. Though most of his work was commercially successful, The Iron Heel was viewed as too violent by many members of the movement, which "reflects the faith of the Party's moderate majority in a peaceful transformation of society" (Rideout 53). Toward the end of the first wave, some authors began to veer away from realism. George Allen England's 1915 novel The Air Trust portrayed a monopolizing billionaire deciding he would control the air.

The Roaring Twenties, of course, saw an economic boom and little working-class fiction was subsequently produced, writes Rideout. This was the end of the first wave. Some notable exceptions include Dorothy Day, famous as the leader of the Catholic Worker's Movement. Day, a Chicago socialist, worked for publications like *The Call* and *The Masses*. Day's The Eleventh Virgin portrays a semi-autobiographical protagonist who familiarizes herself with several leftist groups but never actually joins one; in the end, she decides to settle down with a husband and abandon her radical ways. The novel serves as an example of how the decade was less radical. Upton Sinclair continued to

produce proletarian fiction (Boston, 100%) during the 1920s, as did Max Eastman (Venture).

The Great Depression, writes Rideout, ushered in the second wave of proletarian fiction in the United States:

[I]n October, 1929, when the prestige of the American businessman began dropping as decisively, if not so suddenly, as the quoted price of stock in American Telephone and Telegraph. Then, almost by displacement, the prestige of the Left at last began to rise once more (135).

Rideout stresses that as the depression was beginning here in America, the Soviet economy was booming. Marxism seemed to be an explanation as well as a goal for many and the 1930s quickly became the so-called Red Decade. The class struggle became an instant source of conflict for would-be writers, and many joined the movement.

Publications with socialist ideals became popular as did works like Smedley's Daughter of Earth and Michael Gold's Jews Without Money, both among the finest proletarian novels.

Like the first wave, the 1930s literary movement relied heavily on realism. According to Rideout, stories of education and the linking of public and personal revolutions (for example, works that rejected sexual repression and traditional sexual mores) also thrived.

Rideout writes that critics often had a negative response to second-wave proletarian fiction, claiming the movement's writers were "artists in uniform" (165). The phrase carries the double meaning of producing cookie-cutter, formulaic books, and subjugating aesthetic quality to political agenda. For all the similarities between the two waves Rideout describes, second-wave proletarian writers tended to be more radical than

their first-wave counterparts. Second-wave writers, according to Rideout, saw the class struggle as more of a war, and at times felt violent overthrow was justified. Second-wave proletarian novels consisted of strike novels like Sherwood Anderson's Beyond Desire, conversion novels like Jack Conroy's The Disinherited, 'bottom dog' novels (about those low on the socio-economic ladder) like the appropriately-named Bottom Dogs by Edward Dahlberg, and novels portraying the decay of the middle class like James Farrell's Studs Lonigan trilogy. The name of Dahlberg's novel doubtless served as the inspiration for Bottom Dog Press, a contemporary working-class press in Ohio.

In the late 1930s, according to Rideout, Spain came into international focus, and many leftists turned their attention from abolishing capitalism to simply abolishing fascism. Though many literary figures empathized and at times were even involved with the struggle in Spain, few used the struggle as subject matter. Rideout also writes about how the Cold War "Red scare" forced proletarian writers of the later part of the century like Chester Himes to be less explicit. He uses the example of Norman Mailer's The Naked and the Dead, which serves as a post-war critique on capitalism that deliberately avoids an in-your-face, didactic approach.

Alan Wald updates the work of Rideout and Foley in his essay "The 1930s Left in U.S. Literature Reconsidered." Wald sees the proletarian movement as having relevance in the 1990s, since "the democratizing social and cultural movements of our own day are very much indebted" to the 1930s left (15). The mission of much scholarship of the 1990s has been about raising new questions and new types of questions, as well as developing new frameworks. Wald asserts that such an environment provides the perfect opportunity

to revisit an era considered radical. Today we are learning about culture(s) by means of various types of texts, including but going beyond academic texts.

So in revisiting the radical culture of the 1930s, writes Wald, we can look at more than just the “kinds of texts traditionally seen as the site[s] of literary value or as the kind usually generating radical and resistant cultural practice” (18). An example would be the detective novels of Chester Himes. We are also avoiding binaries in the 1990s, Wald writes, providing the opportunity to look beyond the 1930s splits between realism and modernism, and communist and non-communist. Wald stresses that the 1990s is an ideal time to revisit the radical decade since today we’re seeing, for example, backlashes against feminism and multiculturalism, a movement against political correctness, and the persistence of homophobia.

III. INTERSECTIONS OF ECOFEMINISM AND WORKING-CLASS STUDIES

In the most general terms, ecofeminism is a theory and working-class literature is a body of creative writing. It is important to stress that these are general terms. There is, of course ecofeminist literature. Likewise, critics could very well approach a given piece of writing (again, John Grisham's The Rainmaker comes to mind) from a working-class studies perspective. Still, ecofeminism is primarily a theoretical framework, not unlike Marxist criticism or feminist criticism, that provides a method by which readers and critics approach a text. Specifically, ecofeminism calls for the audience of a text to identify elements of nature as autonomous characters, and investigate how those ecological elements interact with humans. Working-class literature, on the other hand, is primarily a body of writing, a way to group together and categorize the large amount of literature that societies have produced.

Having spent a great deal of energy defining the subfields of ecofeminism and working-class literature, and outlining some of the major pieces of secondary criticism, I would like to briefly sketch the locations of intersection between the two subjects. There exist a great many similarities between the two, some of which are implicit just in reading the preceding literature reviews. However, I would like to make those connections explicit in order to justify why I feel ecofeminism is an appropriate theory by which to read working-class literature. Such a theoretical reading, I feel, reveals a deeper social message in a great deal of the writing of the working-class. Further, study of the two fields in conjunction has the potential to increase the relevance of English studies. Let's examine

the similarities

(1.) Real-World Praxis

First of all, both ecofeminism and working-class studies foster a move beyond the classroom and into the real world. Ecofeminism not only provides a way to read a text, it also provides a way to be inspired by a text. Readers can potentially walk away from a piece of writing, looked at from an ecofeminist viewpoint, ready to change their worlds. Ecofeminism is simultaneously a theory, a spirituality, and a way of life. In studying ecofeminism, the opportunities for instructors to make material relevant are endless. Lessons about everything from recycling to political action can be extracted from texts. Political activism and community service can be combined with literary study, perhaps in the context of an interdisciplinary course. Students can gain greater critical literacy, long a goal of many in English studies. Further, they could walk away from an English class more prepared to actively participate in a democracy.

Similarly, working-class studies lends itself to real-world action. In reading working-class literature, students have the opportunity to connect subject matter with their own lives. They can examine their own classes, the work history of their families, and how society as they've experienced it has exhibited class bias and discrimination. Like with ecofeminism, courses can combine literary study with a critical examination of society, and perhaps even political activity. Labor studies and working-class studies seems to thrive in geographical areas with blue-collar roots because of the ability to connect material with students' lives. A working-class literature course can potentially produce

students that have a deeper understanding of how class affects so many different layers of society. More importantly, students can walk away from a class ready to actively participate in how society continuously assigns class roles.

(2.) Resistance of hierarchies

Ecofeminism centers around more than just ecology, comprising an inclusive belief in putting an end to abuse. As writers like Patrick Murphy have shown, ecofeminism does not seek to privilege any issue. Class is given the same amount of weight as gender and race and the human/non-human dualism. In short, all issues are looked upon as equal and, in fact, as contributing to one another. Class and race, for example, are so intertwined that they ought not be examined without one another. Ecofeminism seeks to avoid putting these multiple facets of the culture into a hierarchy. Ecofeminists have observed the damage that such a hierarchy can create, and want to avoid squabbling among like-thinking individuals who can grow more powerful if united.

Just as one might assume that ecofeminists are only concerned with nature and gender, one might similarly think that scholars of working-class studies are only interested in class -- or at least that they privilege class over other concerns. Yet this is not the case. Working-class literature provides a window not only into blue-collar life, but also how class affects gender and race. It is no coincidence that The Feminist Press has become a major outlet for working-class titles by Jo Sinclair, Agnes Smedley, and Rebecca Harding Davis. Tillie Olsen is perhaps better known as a feminist writer than as a working-class writer. Similarly, working-class novels by African-American writers like Chester Himes,

Ralph Ellison, and Alice Walker -- to name only a few -- have brilliantly captured race in the twentieth century. As a field, working-class studies recognizes that class can not be examined in a vacuum.

(3.) The Canon's Continuous Revision

Both ecofeminism and working-class studies as subfields continuously seek to challenge the canon of literature, notorious for its exclusion of (as I noted in my abstract) any writer not dead, white, male, and upper-class. The notion that the canon, what is studied in college literature classes and included in academic literature anthologies, was a fixed entity once permeated English studies. Now, many in academia recognize the canon first of all as being fallible and imperfect and biased, and second of all as being a work-in-progress that ought to be interrogated and revised. In short, the canon is always under construction. Ecofeminism and working-class studies have contributed extensively to canon construction.

Ecofeminists have fought for recognition of nature writing that considers Earth a speaking subject, that resists traditional pastoral modes. They have championed Native-American and Chicano/Chicana writers. They have fostered interest in postmodern science fiction that has challenged barriers between human and non-human, as well as natural and synthetic. These are all areas of literature whose presence in the canon is dubious at best. Yet ecofeminists have fought as hard in the canon wars as they have in the wars of the ecological movement.

In the same vein, working-class literature has exposed more writers that were

long-ignored in the page of academic journals and anthologies and literature course reading lists. Working-class studies has advanced the notion that proletarian writing in the 1930s represents some of the highest literary achievement of the first half of the twentieth century. Writers in the two recent volumes of poetry about work from the University of Illinois Press have expanded the subject matter for “good” poetry, attempted to rescue poetry in the 1990s from obscurity, and at times even modified the very definition of contemporary poetry. Students in a working-class literature course are likely to encounter writers they’ve never read before.

(4.) Cultural Studies Approach

Finally, it should be noted, both ecofeminism and the study of working-class literature lend themselves to a cultural studies approach. Again, we observe the two fields challenging traditional practices of English studies. As Anthony Easthope shows, traditional literary studies merely looked at a text and attempted to evaluate its aesthetic quality. Easthope asserts that literary studies was “developed during the 1930s as a means to deflect the contemporary challenge of Marxism” (7). This model had critics examining pieces of writing as sole objects. Recently, literary studies has given way to cultural studies, which examines texts as artifacts of a larger culture. Instead of looking at a culture to tell us more about a text, cultural critics look at texts to tell them more about a culture. Easthope writes: “One way to understand the paradigm shift away from literary study might be to view it as just a return of the repressed, accompanied by a radical politics and concern with...oppressions” (7).

Both ecofeminism and working-class studies are by their very nature political, thus inviting a cultural studies approach. More at their core, they also have the potential to teach us about our culture, as well as past cultures and foreign cultures. Ecofeminist writing can teach us about the ecological movement and about the ways various societies have treated their natural worlds. Native-American poetry, for example, often considered ecofeminist, teaches society about Native-American rituals, religion, and relationship with nature. Working-class literature, likewise, can teach us about the Red Decade, and the leftist culture the decade spawned. Going farther back, The Jungle can be studied in conjunction with turn-of-the-century legislature involving the workplace. Contemporary working-class poetry can be used along with other media to learn about our attitudes toward work in the 1990s.

I have argued that both of these important, political subfields of English invite real-world action, resist hierarchies of oppression, continuously revise the canon, and lend themselves to a cultural studies approach. Hopefully, these four intersections illuminate the reasons why working-class literature ought to be combined with ecofeminism. After all, isn't the transformation of English studies into something more relevant, something more inclusive, and something that can be used to learn about cultures a worthy goal? The following chapter will tackle this question of relevance, and discuss the work of a contemporary poet who I feel is, above all, relevant: working-class poet Jim Daniels.

IV. JIM DANIELS IN AN AGE OF PROSE

Let us look at an example of a writer of working-class literature and examine his relevance. Working-class poet Jim Daniels writes in an accessible idiom about familiar issues of blue-collar work and blue-collar family life. As such, his poetry maintains relevance outside the academy where poets tend to remain sheltered. Widely published and with an exciting, immediately-recognizable style, Daniels has proven himself during the last fifteen years to be a viable force in American poetry who will likely enter into the canon of American literature. A closer look at his work and career reveals Daniels as an ideal case study for poet and critic Dana Gioia's marketing plan for contemporary poetry. Gioia describes the ways poetry has lost relevance in contemporary American culture. Proactive and utilitarian, he also lays out steps that poets can take to better market themselves and their writing. In many ways, Jim Daniels resists the kind of irrelevance against which Gioia rages. Daniels also embodies many of Gioia's marketing suggestions.

In his critical essay "Can Poetry Matter?," Dana Gioia points out that poetry is "the specialized occupation of a relatively small and isolated group. Little of the frenetic activity it generates ever reaches outside that closed group" (1). The closed group that Gioia describes exists almost exclusively in English departments of colleges and universities. He bemoans the fact that the audience for poetry consists mainly of other poets. This trend in poetry's audience signifies that poetry has lost a great deal of its cultural significance. In short, poetry doesn't *matter* as much as it should and to as many people as it should. For example, Gioia writes, general interest periodicals never review

collections of poetry.

In order to matter, poems must appeal to something in the society:

Without a broader role in the culture, however, talented poets lack the confidence to create public speech. Occasionally, a writer links up rewardingly to a social or political movement (Gioia 11).

Gioia wishes that more poets played roles in facets of society other than university English departments. He reasons that they would write less poetry about merely their feelings and their lives as poets and teachers. Instead, such poets might write verse that resonates with people who don't do the same as thing as them. Poems would thus go beyond the subculture and reach a wider audience. To accomplish this, according to Gioia, poets should read the work of others at readings, juxtapose the performance of poetry with other art forms, write more critical prose, anthologize only verse they really like, teach students to perform poetry instead of just analyzing it, and use the medium of radio.

Another of Gioia's essays, "Business and Poetry," questions why poetry tends to avoid the "public institutions that dominate American life [and] the situations that increasingly typify it" (114). He writes that work is generally seen from the position of an outsider, not an insider. Despite the numerous examples of major poets who had careers in business, like Wallace Stevens and T.S. Eliot, few have chosen to write about the office, even though the workplace is a subject that could potentially resonate with readers. "Most American poetry has little in common with the world outside of literature," Gioia writes (127). Gioia feels that, as such, poets pass up prime opportunities to make important cultural statements. Thus society has a stereotyped but partially-accurate image

of the poet as bohemian and/or academic, someone who can't or won't hold a regular job.

Jim Daniels, meanwhile, has held several jobs, jobs which he transforms into the subject matter of his poetry. He addresses relevant topics that have meaning for a working-class audience. Gioia asserts that poets ought to involve themselves in social or political movements; Daniels does just that. His agenda revolves around demystifying blue-collar life. In his autobiographical essay "Troubleshooting: Poetry, the Factory, and the University," Daniels describes growing up in Detroit and its working-class suburbs, where no one in his family or neighborhood ever talked about working in automotive factories. He wants to bring the issues that arise from a monotonous life on the assembly line out into the open. In graduate school, Daniels writes, "the people I knew the best and cared about the most were not showing up in what I was reading" (90). This comment reflects Gioia's assertion that poetry has lost relevance for most people. Daniels decided to write poetry that would be relevant.

One could argue that Daniels writes about factory life as an outsider, or even a colonizer, and that he writes for a traditional, academic audience. After all, he presently teaches English at Carnegie Mellon University and publishes his poems in literary journals and university presses. However, Daniels grew up an insider, and worked his way through college at Ford Motor Company's Sterling Axle Plant. In "Business and Poetry," Gioia dreams of business people writing poems from the inside of the workplace. That is exactly what Daniels did. In "Troubleshooting: Poetry, the Factory, and the University," he describes jotting down images and the beginnings of poems while standing on the assembly line at the plant. It would be difficult to prove that Daniels appeals to a radically

different audience, but in his autobiographical essay, he describes his father selling copies of his first book at the factory's Christmas open house. So at least to an extent, Daniels has reached a wider population.

Jim Daniels brings a fresh aesthetic to his career as a poet. He obtained the credentials to get a tenure-track position right out of his master's program thanks to his hard-working background:

Many of the other graduate students were not sending their work out. There's a literary and artistic tradition of not appearing to pursue success too aggressively. It's considered crass. In my family, it's considered laziness. The work ethic my father instilled in me drove me ("Troubleshooting" 92).

From a young age, Daniels wrestled with the staleness and irrelevance of poetry that Gioia criticizes. Daniels did a great deal of writing, but resisted calling it poetry since the poetry he had read "didn't make any connections to my life" (88). Eventually, he realized poems could potentially deliver him from the drudgery of the factory. In college, he decided his writing could give voice to the issues of the working-class that usually remained silent. He also saw as his mission to clear up some of the misconceptions the academy had of the working-class.

Finally he wanted to challenge the notion of what belonged in a poem. He wanted poems to do more, to possess what Dana Gioia calls "cultural significance." Poems had too much civility and were too genteel. He wanted to portray honesty. In "Troubleshooting," he remembers Robert Bly visiting Alma College, where he got his

bachelor's. Several Alma professors showed Bly his poetry and Bly critiqued Daniels harshly for not developing enough metaphors and deep images. Interestingly, Bly is a poet on whom Gioia's ax falls particularly hard. Daniels saw the Bly school of thought to be irrelevant to his cultural goals:

The whole idea of deep images seemed absurd to me in the context of the hectic, grueling factory. That kind of contemplation seemed like an incredible luxury (Troubleshooting 90).

Instead of deep imagery, which Daniels associated with leisure time, something the characters in his poems had very little of, Daniels turned to realism and stark, blunt, easily-understood language. So Daniels not only uses accessible language for the sake of clarity, he also uses language that more deeply signifies the characters he creates.

One of Gioia's suggestions for the success of contemporary poetry is that poets mix their written words with other art forms. Daniels does this in several interesting ways. On his collection titled Punching Out, the cover portrays one of the panels of "Detroit Industry," a series of twenty-seven frescos by Diego Rivera. "Detroit Industry" covers several walls in the entrance atrium of the Detroit Institute of Arts and was commissioned by the Ford family, who wanted Rivera to capture the automotive industry in a positive manner. So the piece of art is an immediate, familiar marker for those from the Detroit area. Rivera painted scenes of workers on the assembly lines, scenes which capture the hard work in a noble but critical manner. The faces of the workers in the paintings convey dignity and a solid work ethic, but also exhaustion and at times disfigurement. In the many faces in the frescos, Rivera even hid several Soviets, suggesting a not-so-subtle

socialist critique of the industry. In many ways, Daniels offers a similar critique and his poems show automotive workers in the same way; his characters are dignified but also pained.

The five sections of Punching Out begin with other sorts of oddly-artistic renderings. For example, the title page of the first section, "Basic Training," shows safety warning signs from the factory. They carry slogans like "YOUR safety is OUR business" and "Daydreams Can Cause NIGHTMARES," slogans that are ironic and poetic in their own ways (11). The third section of Punching Out begins with a newspaper clipping that reports an incident in which two auto workers beat an Asian man to death at a nightclub because they "blamed him for the industry's joblessness" (47). The book takes on an almost pastiche quality, and almost a multi-media format, combining Daniels' poetry with images from Rivera's frescos and the various representations used on section title pages. As Gioia predicted, such a juxtaposition keeps the work exciting.

Gioia also stresses the importance of performance in reclaiming poetry as a vibrant art. Daniels' words appear like they're meant to be performed, not merely read, and certainly not merely analyzed. Consider as an example his poem "Signing" from Punching Out. "Signing" consists of eighteen common messages that assembly line workers communicate to one another by means of gesture since the noise level there is so loud. The poem lists each message followed by instructions on how to sign the message. The gestures are realistic as well as humorous, and are obviously meant to be gestured. The poem is quite literally physical, and Daniels both reads and gestures the poem at readings. The punch line comes in the poem's final line: "fuck you: you know that one" (56). On

one level, the poem provides a humorous glimpse into the automotive factory. On another level, Daniels includes communications that suggest the hierarchy of positions on the line, a common theme in his work. For example, the sign for “foreman coming” is to “tighten a tie,” which suggests the difference in position between line worker and foreman (56). This poem also illustrates how Daniels constantly pushes the proverbial envelope on what constitutes proper subject matter for poetry. Resisting the gentility of bourgeois poetry, he doesn’t shy away from including the phrase “fuck you.” Dana Gioia wrote that poems should be speak to something relevant in the culture. Not only is “Signing” relevant, it’s something real. On hearing or reading “Signing,” one has no doubt these gestures are taken right off the line and into a poem. Again, the subject matter resonates for many readers.

“Short-order Cook,” from Daniels’ first book Places/Everyone, provides a similar illustration. This poem, which narrates a heroic short-order cook filling a particularly large take-out order, is also clearly meant to be performed. The poem drips frantic energy and immediately puts the reader, or listener, in the diner where the poem takes place. Even reading a few lines of the poem to oneself, it is easy to become breathless:

It is the crucial point --
 they are ready for the cheese:
 my fingers shake as I tear off slices
 toss them on the burgers/fries done/dump/
 refill buckets/burgers ready/flip into buns/
 beat that melting cheese/wrap burgers in plastic/

into paper bags/fries done/dump/fill thirty bags/

bring them to the counter/wipe sweat on sleeve (61, slashes in original).

The energy level of “Short-order Cook” is as high as the energy level of the cook described therein. One wonders whether to pause or speed along when encountering Daniels’ slashes. The tendency appears to be to speed through them. Daniels ingeniously uses both the language and punctuation marks to suggest the pace of his character. Like “Signing,” the poem is full of gestures, of humorous small-scale actions that beg to be mimed. Again, the reader encounters unusual subject matter -- but subject matter that likely resonates for many readers, especially many readers outside of the academy.

Mainly, these two poems show how crucial performance is to the poetry of Jim Daniels.

The primary way in which Jim Daniels illustrates the concepts of Dana Gioia is through the language of his poetry. As in “Signing” and “Short-order Cook,” the language remains fresh and surprising, thanks to the honesty, which is captured in a down-to-earth idiom, an idiom that consists of a lack of luxury. As Daniels explained in “Troubleshooting,” his poems and his characters can’t afford deep images and metaphors (though they do occasionally splurge). Rather, he presents honest images and honest narrations of working-class life in and around Detroit. Gioia never explicitly called for simple language, but Daniels uses just that to give his work the broad kind of cultural significance for which Gioia issued a call. While “Business and Poetry” said that relevance might come from executives, in Daniels the relevance comes instead from factory workers and other working-class heroes.

Consider “Where I’m At: Factory Education,” from Punching Out (15). Daniels

provides a tight, concise narration of a young employee's inundation to factory life. The poem is in free verse, but flows very musically; its words jive conversationally. Three distinct voices appear in the poem: that of the narrator Digger, the foreman Santino, and an African-American co-worker named Spooner. On the surface, Digger gives a vivid description of where he is, that is, at the factory learning the job. However, a closer look reveals a deeper significance in the poem's title. The three voices in the poem suggest the importance of place, of position in the factory's hierarchy. The foreman's words, short and instructive ("After the machine cuts the tubes / hang them on these hooks"), are very different than Spooner's, which are confrontational and enhanced by rich dialect (what's the big hurry, boy?).

The story narrated in the poem also concerns itself with place. Digger is not merely educated by Santino on how to work on the assembly line. He also learns the tricks of the trade from Spooner. His factory education is all about learning his place, where he's at. Spooner and his other co-workers teach him that he doesn't have to sweat and work as hard as management want him to work. Rather, they teach him about the resistance of the factory workers. They teach him to slack, to ignore Santino, to refuse to do any job that's not explicitly his own. In fact, Spooner and the others make his place as a line worker very clear to Digger:

Later, Spooner grabs me by the neck

pushes my head against the machine.

Old Green shouts into my face:

You ain't supposed to go get Santino,

he's got to find you, dig? (15, italics in original)

Everyone in the factory has got a clearly-defined role and the role of the worker is to resist management. Daniels ironically portrays Santino in a t-shirt that reads "Your Safety is Our Business," but as Digger learns, his safety depends on him resisting Santino and the rest of management. If he doesn't do as Spooner and Old Green wish, he will again be physically assaulted by them. His safety depends on staying in his proper place in the factory's hierarchy. The notion of place within a social hierarchy is echoed in the title of Daniels' first book, Places/Everyone.

A poem like "Where I'm At: Factory Education" provides more than just a vivid description of the factory line. One could imagine Robert Bly, if he were writing about the automotive industry, composing a rich, lengthy description of an axle housing. Bly would concern himself with vivid imagery that suggests a complex metaphor. Jim Daniels, in contrast, takes advantage of this poem to raise issues of resistance in the workplace, to provide insights into the hierarchy of positions there, to empathize with a young man just starting out on the line, and to narrate a compelling story. Those things ring true with Gioia's notion of cultural relevance. Members of the culture, even those not of the working-class, can identify with hierarchy in the workplace. Members of the culture are also, quite simply, interested in good stories.

Numerous other examples exist in the body of Jim Daniels' work. Consider "Graffiti," also from Punching Out (22). "Graffiti" provides a litany of phrases written on the wall at a factory, so again Daniels pushes the limit of what is poetry. This poem is also something that is literally real in the culture. "Graffiti" certainly invites performance more

than analysis. As in his other work, the racism and sexism and homophobia of his characters comes through loud and clear. He doesn't resort to moralizing, rather the short lines of graffiti signify these issues: "Klan country...war on fags" (22). The obscenities in "Graffiti" illustrate Daniels' desire to resist the annoying gentility of much poetry. The last two lines, however, seem to do more: "Be artistic / Fuck you" (22). Daniels appears in this odd couplet to be speaking about the fact that he's defying poetic stereotypes, stereotypes which dictate he be artistic. His subsequent answer almost didn't have to be stated. Daniels doesn't concern himself so much with being artistic; rather, he desires to present something real.

Another very real, very culturally-significant, facet of work is being out-of-work. Digger, the recurring narrator in much of Daniels' work, is laid off in "Costs" (Punching Out 51). Daniels' narrator takes advantage of his time off of work to spend time with his dog. On the surface, "Costs" is a man's-best-friend piece: "My dog jangles / as he trots around the corner / and the music of his chain hits / a warm spot" (51). Many layers, however, exist in this short poem. One of the issues raised is how little time the narrator normally has. Again, here is Jim Daniels providing a story of something readers can identify with, a lack of leisure time. On an even deeper level, Daniels provides a description of the manner in which the dog agrees to be chained, "to wait patiently / while I hook and unhook it" (51). Juxtaposed with the subtle jabs at life on the line that exist in "Costs," Daniels seems to suggest that in many ways, the automotive industry has Digger on a chain, that the Big Three have him trained to accept his chain like a dog.

In "Costs," the narrator also regrets buying the friendship of his dog by buying

food. This sentiment is juxtaposed with a description of the narrator's dependence on the culture: "How many cars America buys / determines whether I work / or not, whether I have money / or not" (51). The narrator here becomes not only a figurative dog to the industry, but also a dog to the American people. He compares himself to a dog that depends on a master to buy it food. He similarly depends on society to buy the cars he makes, which buys him food and other necessities. "Costs" comes full circle and returns to Digger's love for his dog. He looks "for more ways to save" while he's out of work, but won't give up his dog (51). Digger knows he needs to cut costs, but won't give up his dog. It's just too important to him. This sentiment appears to directly address, to challenge, the auto companies, where costs are such a pervasive concern. Some things are more important than costs, this poem suggests.

In "May's Poem," from Places/Everyone, Daniels leaves the familiar arena of the auto factory and enters into the arena of a restaurant (62). Not surprisingly, he is interested in the employees, not the customers. In "May's Poem," Daniels' protagonist works the grill and has no hope for tomorrow: "grease sticks to my skin / a slimy reminder / of what my future holds" (62). The narrator dreams of becoming a writer and during a break, while getting high, shares his dreams with the cook, May, who tries to reassure him. More than anything, he says, he wants to write a beautiful poem. In reality, he wants beauty in his life. Poetry and life are equated in "May's Poem." The narrator's writing reflects his pessimistic life. Daniels, knowing that the common expectation for poetry is beauty, again toys with poetry's proper subject matter. He blurs the line between reality and poetry, a blurring that would please Dana Gioia.

Daniels continues to toy with exactly what the definition of a poem is when his narrator in "May's Poem" decides to make May into a poem. The blurring of reality and poetry becomes even thicker: "I turn and grab her / and hug her to me / pick her up / and twirl her in circles" (62). The two dance and revel until the poem's speaker has made May a poem. Yet reality won't let the fantasy continue. Work has left the pair sweaty, May is too heavy to keep twirling, and the manager makes the pair go back to work. A touch of beauty enters their lives, their poetry, but their class position doesn't allow that beauty to continue indefinitely. So this provides another piece of Daniels' manifesto on poetry; he seems to say here that he'll allow a touch of beauty to enter into his work, but he won't allow it to totally take over.

Significant is the blurring of work, life, and art that goes on in "May's Poem." In "Informed and Empowered Poetry: New Understanding Through Working-Class Literary Theory," Paulette Zubel argues that a working-class poetics will provide a representation of the integration of work, life, and art. Appropriately, Daniels' work captures both work and life, blurred into aesthetic expression. Zubel also maintains that working-class poetry must have as its political agenda convincing readers to value working-class experience. "[L]iterature," Zubel writes, "empowered by working-class experience, becomes an agent for change" (102). Jim Daniels has the potential to change a lot of things. His poetry could change attitudes toward the working-class. Perhaps more importantly, he could potentially change art, so that more opportunities to represent working-class experience would come about.

Dana Gioia would like to see writers like Daniels change poetry. Like many critics

of contemporary American poetry, he is somewhat pessimistic about the directions poetry has recently taken. Gioia worries about poetry that can't attract an audience outside of a university subculture, that can't contain social relevance. Daniels, though an academic, resists getting caught up in the university subculture. His subject matter is life in and out of the automotive factories of his native Detroit. This refreshing, original setting helps his work stay fresh and surprising. He constantly toys with following a more stereotyped paradigm, such as in "Factory Love" where the narrator professes a romantic, erotic love for his machine (Places/Everyone 75). "Factory Love" almost becomes a sentimental love poem; then comes the punch line: the object of the narrator's desire is the machine on the assembly line.

Vernon Shetley, in his book After The Death Of Poetry, agrees with Gioia that poetry has lost a great deal of its cultural impact. Shetley explicitly argues for a clever, intellectual poetry that will reclaim a significant audience for poetry. He desires verse in the tradition of Eliot, and supports "making poetry more difficult rather than less" (3). The difficult, elite idiom that Shetley supports stands in sharp contrast to the poetry of Jim Daniels. Shetley rightly has as his goal increasing the viability of contemporary poetry, yet the course he proposes verges on snobbery. He has little desire to attract a mass audience to the joys of poetry; rather he wants to regain "thinking people" and a "community of intellectuals" who have become devotees of critical theory (28).

Shetley's plan stands out as being undemocratic and, worse yet, ineffective. He claims to desire a significant audience for poetry, yet limits the membership of such an audience. Radically widening poetry's appeal, which seems to be the underlying goal of

the poetry of Jim Daniels, will ultimately rescue poetry. Shetley sees no problem with allowing poetry to remain a niche interest at colleges and universities; his plan involves making that niche bigger. Dana Gioia on the other hand recognizes that such inbreeding will continue to weaken contemporary poetry. Poetry that captures something to which a wide audience can relate seems a noble goal. “[T]he customary line between poetry and the working life is breaking down,” Coles and Oresick write in the introduction to For A Living: The Poetry of Work (xv). The two make an obvious but overlooked point about how pervasive work is in the lives of all Americans. If poetry, by Jim Daniels and others, continues to represent something so essential to the culture, it can truly become a driving social force. Dana Gioia will no doubt be pleased.

V. WHAT IS ABSENT IN WORKING-CLASS POETRY?:

NATURE, LOVE, & ECOFEMINISM IN THE POEMS OF JIM DANIELS

In the previous chapter, I looked at how Jim Daniels makes poetry more relevant by addressing working-class themes. I would now like to return to the issue of how working-class studies and ecofeminism intersect. Specifically, I will demonstrate in this chapter how Daniels, as a representative of contemporary working-class poets, also invites an ecofeminist reading. The verse that comprises Working Classics: Poems on Industrial Life, and For A Living: The Poetry of Work, anthologies which feature Daniels, differs radically in subject matter from high-brow, bourgeois poetry. Many of the clichés of ‘traditional’ poetry center around images of nature and professions of love for women. Instead of green fields, working-class poetry takes place in grey factories. Instead of idealized females, poets romance their machines. The poets who give voice to the worker shatter the “roses are red” and “how do I love thee?” stereotypes of poetry. In my paper, I would like to explore the question: *What is absent in working-class poetry?* The answer, at first glance, might seem to be the voices of women and nature. Though they give a voice to the blue-collar worker, those who write working-class poetry, mostly men, appear to be denying the voices of women and nature, inviting an ecofeminist critique.

However, I would like to propose a different way to read images of ‘woman’ and ‘nature’ in working-class poetry. It is true that the voices of women and Earth are frequently missing from working-class poems. By their conspicuous absence from poems about labor, however, the reader is reminded of how women and nature are frequently

silenced by labor. That which is absent from the poetry becomes something that is present in the poetry. The absence of women and nature is, in and of itself, subject matter. These poets aren't taking away their voices, they are creating an arena in which readers are reminded how, in real life, the two often have no voice.

Oftentimes, men are the obvious victims in this body of poetry. But in addition to the men, there are others injured: women and nature. The male worker is injured by hard labor in working-class poetry, but he frequently injures women as a result. Further, the industries he works for frequently injure the Earth. As human life is damaged, so is nature. Since women are often excluded from the work depicted in this poetry, and nature is damaged by the work, the poetry does indeed invite an ecofeminist reading. But not a reading that damns the poetry for exclusion and suggests the literature's complacency in misogyny and pollution. Rather, working-class poetry invites an ecofeminist reading that both acknowledges the abuse done to the ecosystem and women, and empowers them both, making them "speaking subjects" (Murphy 12).

According to Patrick Murphy's conception of ecofeminist empowerment, women and nature become speaking subjects because both are defined as independent beings, entities that do not merely exist in relation to men. In the literature, nature and women are not subjugated to their relation to men; rather, they are autonomous. This is precisely what goes on in working-class poetry. To illustrate this proposed way to read working-class poetry, I examine the three full-length poetry collections of Jim Daniels, one of the foremost working-class poets, as well as other selected pieces from Working Classics: Poems on Industrial Life and For A Living: The Poetry of Work, two anthologies of

working-class poetry.

Coles and Oresick, in their introduction to Working Classics, write, perhaps erroneously, that working-class poetry strays from the familiar poetic territory of “love, death, and nature” (xxi). Their point is that work is not a typical subject for poems. Their stated goal, to make work an important topic in the canon of American Literature, is a valid one. Coles and Oresick place working-class poets in succession of Walt Whitman, who “set out to democratize poetry” a century before (xxvi). They also allude to the industrial unemployment and underemployment that has resulted from both new technologies and a shift toward the service sector, which suggests that poems in an industrial setting will likely concern themselves with resistance. Coles and Oresick edited a second collection of working-class poetry in 1995: For A Living. That anthology further democratized poetry by defining work more broadly. The second collection includes poems about domestic work, childcare issues, commuting, and even entertaining.

A framework for reading working-class poetry has already been outlined by Paulette Zubel, who calls her method the “Womancentric Working Class Literary Critical Theory” (96). Zubel rightly acknowledges that this body of literature can empower working-class experience and serve as an impetus for transformation and political action:

Empowerment allows oppressed persons to become their own agents for change. In the same way, literature, empowered by working-class experience, becomes an agent for change, transforming that experience into important subject matter for aesthetic expression (102).

Zubel writes that reading poetry in light of her theory involves the recognition of content

that suggests class division. Part of the transformative politics of class-conscious poetry is the acknowledgment of the value and relevance of working-class life. In short, working-class experience deserves to be turned into art.

Zubel's theory is "Womancentric" because of the importance of everyday life, work, and art coming together. According to Zubel, working-class women have historically understood that these three elements of life do not exist as separate entities. A working-class woman, writes Zubel, weaves leisure time and artistic expression into time allotted for work, unlike even a working-class man, whose time is typically segmented between the three pursuits. Working-class poetry, similarly, weaves those worlds together, writes Zubel:

Recognition of...this integration of life, work, and art, constitutes the function of Working Class Theory. Analysis of literature from a working class perspective allows the critical reader to share this vision, to penetrate new layers of understanding, and to experience work transformed into art (105).

I would add another element to Zubel's list of experiences that working-class poetry weaves together: the ecosystem.

Zubel has demonstrated how working-class poetry strings together multiple elements that co-exist. Ecofeminism is a useful framework for sifting through these elements. Working-class poetry exposes the brutality of daily life and daily work. The reader witnesses the multiple layers of damage that the capitalist system brings about: damage to the worker, the Earth, and the family. Instead of setting up a hierarchy of

consciousness, ecofeminism serves as an 'umbrella theory' that acknowledges all levels of brutality. Ecofeminist philosopher Carol Bigwood explains the damaging effects of setting up such a hierarchy in her book Earth Muse. She writes that we ought to give equal weight to all the "consistently viewed inferior sides" (191). Bigwood identifies "metaphysical dualisms" like culture/nature, human/animal, reason/emotion, mind/body, self/other, and man/woman. All of these oppressive dichotomies support one another and provide a framework for both sexism and androcentrism. Belief in these dichotomies, and belief that some of these dichotomies are more damaging than others, reinforces segregation between the sexes and alienation from the Earth. So an ecofeminist reading of working-class poetry does not claim that issues of class are more important than issues of sex or issues of ecology. All these elements weave themselves together.

Murphy also acknowledges that non-hierarchical aspect of ecofeminism, praising the theory for putting "the struggles to end both patriarchy and capitalism...in an even larger context: the relationship of humanity with nature" (7). Murphy points out that recognition of Bakhtinian dialogics allows the examination of multiple oppressions, without imposing bothersome hierarchies (3). In addition to simultaneously raising reader awareness of sexism, classism, and the ecosystem, working-class poetry -- and all literature deconstructed by an ecofeminist reading -- also empowers both women and the environment. They do not remain victims, but rather fight back brutally.

So, in short, an ecofeminist reading of working-class poetry recognizes that women and nature are both present in the literature, despite their superficial absence. An ecofeminist reading also recognizes that both women and nature are autonomous, not

merely described in relation to men. Finally, an ecofeminist reading points to places in the text where both women and the ecosystem are victimized and fight back. All of these elements exist in the poetry of Detroit-native Jim Daniels. Daniels' work is widely published, and appears in both of Coles' and Oresick's anthologies. Nearly all of his poems concern themselves with the automobile industry in Daniels' hometown. Class awareness is clearly present in Daniels' three books: Places/Everyone, Punching Out, and M-80. But his work serves a wider political function when examined from an ecofeminist standpoint. Daniels illuminates the abuses of class, in addition to the abuses of gender and ecology.

First of all, Daniels does not completely ignore bourgeois poetry's traditional subject matter. Rather, he substitutes new settings and paradigms. Readers of poetry have come to expect poetry's subject matter to be nature and love. Daniels subverts reader expectation in a very deliberate way. Nature often appears in the form of landscapes or pastorals, describing the speaker's view of lush, nature scenes. Daniels uses a new type of landscape: the city of Detroit. His pastorals describe polluted streets and automotive factories. Daniels' concept of nature isn't relegated to a speaker's perception; his nature is an autonomous character. In "Factory Jungle," an automotive plant literally becomes a living, breathing jungle. The chains become vines, the chassis a "mad elephant" (Places 70).

The reader also witnesses Daniels' new conception of the love poem. Instead of cliché sentiment about the speaker's love for a woman, the speaker expresses love for his machine. "Factory Love" personifies the machinery in the factory as an object of sexual

desire: "I come to you...in and out, in and out, in and out" (Places 75). Daniels includes issues of romantic love like jealousy ("That guy on midnights, / I know he drinks, / and beats you") and escapism ("Let me carry you off / into the night on a hi-lo.") in "Factory Love." We also see the machine personified sexually in "Back to the Basics," a poem that describes the welding seem in an axle covers as looking "like a great big vagina" (Punching 34).

So, albeit in a different manner, Daniels' poetry includes elements of pastorals and love poems. He doesn't completely throw out the traditional ways nature and women have been imagined in poetry. His new paradigm for pastorals and love poems suggest an autonomy, that they have become what Patrick Murphy calls "speaking subjects." But it is the way Daniels portrays the victimization and revenge of both nature and women that especially invites an ecofeminist critique.

First let's look at the victimization in the poetry. As has been stated, most of Daniels' poems concern themselves with male workers on the assembly lines in Detroit. Men are the most explicit victims, victimized by capitalism, by the industry that dehumanizes them. The fact that women and nature are not as present as men is an act of resistance on Daniels' part. Their absence creates an arena in which readers are reminded of women and nature's abuse. The reader asks, for example, *Where are the women?*, and is reminded that women frequently are excluded from workplaces. Although it's not stated as explicitly, women and nature are also victimized. At the risk of oversimplifying Daniels' narrative, men are mistreated at work and in turn mistreat women and nature. That is indeed an oversimplification. Nature, in Daniels' poems, is also mistreated by the

automotive industry. Women at the workplace are also mistreated by the industry. Again, a complicated weaving of brutalities exists. And again, an ecofeminist reading suggests we avoid placing the various abuses in the context of a hierarchy.

There are a myriad of examples of the abuse of women in the poetry of Jim Daniels. Numerous poems portray female employees on the line who are abused verbally. One recurring character is Fat Gracie, constantly teased about her weight. Sexual harassment repeatedly rears its ugly head. So does domestic violence. In "Digger's Melted Ice," the recurring protagonist Digger drinks incessantly, abuses his wife and children, and tells his son that being an alcoholic is "part of my job" (M-80 52). Nearly all of Daniels' poems speak of working conditions. The victimization of women, however, isn't present in every poem. Its presence is there enough, though, to demonstrate how women are mistreated in the workplace and in the home.

The essence of ecofeminism involves women and nature being aligned. The way the two are aligned in Daniels' poetry is by his portrayal of both women and nature being simultaneously abused. For every instance of a woman being beaten by her husband or verbally harassed on the assembly line, there is an example of nature being abused. "Wild Country" takes place behind a trucking garage, "in a field of oil-stained weeds, rusty parts...broken down trucks in the fenced-in yard" (M-80 3). The poem is explicitly about a worker taking a break. There is also a subtext, however, that speaks about the environment being abused. The field is full of litter and broken glass. Rats and guard dogs keep the scene from being even remotely idyllic. "High school kids" defile the field by drinking and doing drugs there.

In "The Foreman's Booth," the air becomes heavy, constrictive, and unbreathable in the closed-in space in the factory, suggesting damage to the air we breathe (Punching 80). The landscape, the city of Detroit, is constantly described as damaged. Several poems talk about arson, several about the infamous Detroit riots of the late 1960's. "Still Lives: Benitau Street" describes litter in Detroit: "rubble sits piled like a funeral pyre" (M-80 80).

Another common theme of Daniels' is vacationing. Explicitly, Daniels' vacation poems are about how the workers need so desperately to get away from their jobs. The subtext, however, of an ecofeminist reading, suggests that the workers also need to get away from the pollution of Detroit. In "Soo Locks," Daniels' speaker contemplates about how the water around Sault Ste. Marie, in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, goes up and down in a way more beautiful than how the factory press goes up and down (Punching 77). Somehow the monotony of the water takes on a more positive connotation than the monotony of the job. In "Digger's Trip," the speaker sits on an idyllic beach, but his "Sterling Plant, Home of the Axle" T-shirt serves as a constant reminder of a less-attractive landscape. (M-80 54). In "1977," the speaker remembers a trip to the mountains, "where we stopped to breathe" (M-80 76).

Not only does Daniels connect women and nature by virtue of their victimization, he also connects the two by their empowerment and revenge. Indeed, in the text of his poetry, both women and the ecosystem reciprocate the violence and the brutality that has been dealt to them. First of all, the women in the workplace are among the strongest of Daniels' characters. Though they are picked on by their male co-workers, the female

workers on the line remain strong and often resistant to their abuse. In “Heaven Enough,” Nita is unfazed by the hard work in the automotive plant, and sings Aretha Franklin songs (Punching 37). Fat Gracie, in “Fun on the Line,” ignores the lewd comments her male co-workers make, and “never gets behind” (Punching 41). Gracie also appears in “Dishing it Out,” a poem in which she refuses to allow the plant security guard to inspect her lunch box (Punching 70). When the security guard grabs her arm, she “belts him with the pail, catches his nose with a sharp edge.” In Daniels’ poetry, the security guards often search the assembly line workers for drugs and alcohol. Gracie’s act is one of resistance, and she becomes the hero of the plant:

Later, men will ask her questions
and send her home. When she steps out
into the plant now with Jeannie and Nita
we surround her.

She slaps us high fives
and we feel the sting.

Despite the surface appearance that women aren’t a crucial part of the narrative of Daniels’ work, characters like Gracie and Nita show women as a source of both strength, hard work, and resistance. In short, women in the workplace fight back.

Woman is also empowered in “Digger Has a Dream” (Places 38). Daniels’ protagonist Digger dreams that his car breaks down, in itself a type of castration for the assembly line’s macho male, for whom cars mean so much. In the dream, “A woman with jumper cables / dangling from her steel breasts / clamps your hands / and you jerk to a

start.” The monstrous woman precedes to drive Digger like he was a car. So, again, woman becomes a strong aggressor, in this case objectifying man just as he objectifies her in the workplace.

The ecosystem also becomes an aggressor in the course of the poetry of Jim Daniels. Several of his poems portray harsh winter weather. Indeed harsh winters are a reality in Detroit, but an ecofeminist reading suggests there may be further significance. In “Snowstorm In Detroit,” the same workers whose jobs harm nature are in car accidents during a snowstorm (Places 25). “After Work” has virtually the same plot line (Punching 90). Similarly, “Digger Waters His Lawn” portrays Daniels’ recurring protagonist unsure of whether to water his lawn, knowing that if he does he will eventually have to cut it (Places 40). Digger stands, holding the “limp hose,” a symbol of his impotence. An ecofeminist reading suggests that nature is fighting back, enacting its revenge on those who attempt to destroy the ecosystem. We see in these poems nature become an autonomous “speaking subject,” not merely existing in relation to man.

In “Not Working,” nature even taunts man during his weakest moment: when he’s unemployed (Punching 49). In that poem, the lights annoyingly reflect off of a pond while the speaker contemplates his sad state. Nature also fights back in “Hard Times in the Motor City” (Places 17). The reader again sees man suffering while out of work. Nature appears to compound the problem when it refuses to bear sustenance: “men on their knees / pray over / their rotten tomatoes / their deformed carrots / their ragged, ragged lettuce.”

Clearly, looking at Daniels’ poetry as a unified narrative, the reader sees woman and nature connected by virtue of their victimization and subsequent empowerment. To

take this ecofeminist narrative one step further, we expect to see both the ecosystem and women, now empowered, exist in a more fully-realized state. Indeed, a poem like “Midnight Date” shows both nature and woman as a source of idealized happiness:

Tonight the moon looks full enough
to feed a lot of hearts. Mine rises
like the bird furthest from this factory.
Tonight let’s shed our clothes
and dance in this cool air.
Let’s taste the moon’s
clean white meat.

Similarly, woman and nature are united in “Anita, a New Hire on the Line” (Places 72). In this poem, Anita is new and virginal, possessing a free spirit “between her breasts.” Finally, the moon becomes a feminist spirit in “After Work” (Places 77). The speaker escapes from his dreary world in a milieu of nature and femininity:

You, moon, I bet you could
fill my cheeks with wet snow
make me forget I ever touched steel
make me forget even
that you
look like a headlight
moving toward me.

This last element of Daniels’ ecofeminist narrative suggests a somewhat happy ending, or

an ending that is at least hopeful.

The ecofeminist narrative present in the poetry of Jim Daniels appears in much of working-class poetry. Throughout Working Classics and For A Living, a similar narrative arises. Maggie Anderson's "Gray" describes the immediate environment of the closed steel mills of Western Pennsylvania (Working 6). As her title suggests, nature has become dismal and gray. In Gwen Hauser's "Printing Press No. 17," the speaker turns the tables on Daniels' "Factory Love" by personifying her machine as a man (Working 97). Women form a cohesive, resistant workplace bond in poems like Ronald Wallace's "In the Dress Factory" (Working 224). Domestic work, often overlooked, is empowered in Maggie Anderson's "Sonnet for her Labor" (Line 9). Many examples exist which show nature and women abused and empowered in working-class poetry. Jim Daniels' narrative is one among many.

VI. MOTHER ANNA, MOTHER EARTH: YONNONDIO & ECOFEMINISM

Finally, we will move into a text written during the Red Decade by one of the most revered working-class writers of the century: Tillie Olsen. Much of Deborah Silverton Rosenfelt's work on Olsen has involved placing her in the "socialist feminist literary tradition" (136). In her important essay "From the Thirties: Tillie Olsen and the Radical Tradition," Rosenfelt praises Olsen for bringing issues of gender and sexuality to the radical Left, a group whose main agenda involved issues of class. Writers like Olsen, according to Rosenfelt, sought to "unite a class consciousness and a feminist consciousness in their lives and creative work, who are concerned with the material circumstances of people's lives, who articulate the experiences and grievances of women and of other oppressed groups -- workers, national minorities, the colonized and the exploited -- and who speak out of a defining commitment to social change" (136).

Rosenfelt rightly acknowledges that radical Leftist writers hoped their literature would serve a transformative function, inspiring readers to transform a world suffering the results of sexism and classism. I would argue that the transformative political agenda of Olsen's work takes on a third dimension. In addition to issues of sex and class, Olsen's work also calls for the recognition of a third *other*: the environment. In her novel Yonnonidio: From the Thirties, Tillie Olsen describes an environment suffering within the context of both capitalism and the patriarchy, an environment that is victimized and silenced. Further, Olsen aligns nature with the feminine, thus inviting an ecofeminist critique. Yonnonidio: From the Thirties describes the simultaneous abuse of Anna

Holbrook and the abuse of the environment. Anna's physical and emotional abuse is explicit in the text; she is beaten and literally raped. Olsen also portrays the rape of the environment, albeit in a less-explicit way.

At the hands of the patriarchy, both Anna and the Earth are socialized during the course of the novel into violence and cruelty. Both figures learn how to be vicious and aggressive. Anna begins to beat her children, and Olsen portrays the Earth as consuming people like a stomach. The transformative politics in Yonnondio: From the Thirties includes the call to recognize how the creative power of both women and nature is destroyed. Rosenfelt writes, "The most powerful theme is the tension between human capacity and creativity -- the drive to know, to assert, to create, which Olsen sees as innate in human life -- and the social forces and institutions that repress and distort that capacity" (154). In describing the destruction of the human spirit in the novel, Rosenfelt captures the transformative politics present. However, she leaves out the important element of nature.

The drive Rosenfelt speaks of is not only "innate in human life," the drive to create is present in all life. To appreciate the potential for a fully-realized, creative existence, readers of Olsen can't ignore the non-human *other*. Ecofeminist philosopher Carol Bigwood explains the damaging effects of such dualism. "Ecofeminist revisioning of our human be-ing involves an attempt to give weight to nature and to the consistently viewed 'inferior' sides," Bigwood writes in Earth Muse (191). Bigwood identifies "metaphysical dualisms" like culture/nature, human/animal, reason/emotion, mind/body, self/other, and man/woman. All of these oppressive dichotomies support one another, and provide a

framework for both sexism and androcentrism. Belief in these dichotomies reinforces segregation between the sexes and alienation from the Earth, according to Bigwood. Both of these themes are present throughout Yonnonidio: From the Thirties.

Olsen constructs a living, breathing Earth, giving voice to the struggles of the ecosystem. Patrick Murphy describes this technique:

Numerous authors and artists have attempted to render nature as a speaking subject, not in the romantic mode of rendering nature an object for the self-constitution of the poet as speaking subject, but as a character within texts with its own existence (12).

In short, Murphy praises writers who give nature autonomy, as opposed to subjugating nature to its relationship to humans. He calls for “the recognition of the difference between things-in-themselves and things-for-us” (4). Thus nature, according to Murphy, becomes another manifestation of the concept of *other*:

I think these attempts are most successful when they include human characters as well, enabling the differential comparison of self and other. An ecofeminist dialogics requires this effort to render the other, primarily constituted by androcentrism as woman and nature (and actually the two intertwined: nature-as-woman and woman as nature), as speaking subjects within patriarchy in order to subvert that patriarchy (12-13).

Olsen clearly has political intentions for giving voice to the working class. Her concept of “silences” appears to be consistent with Murphy’s concept of “speaking subjects.”

Murphy writes about empowering nature with the gift of language. Olsen, in her essay

“Silences in Literature,” decries the manners that writers are kept quiet, not privileged with the circumstances that allow them to write. Olsen calls for society to give voice to these writers. In Yonnonidio: From the Thirties, she appears to give voice to another *other*: the Earth.

The novel begins with an epigraph by nineteenth-century American poet Walt Whitman. Whitman’s poetry recognized the nature-culture alienation Bigwood describes, and also made the Earth an autonomous “speaking subject.” Whitman’s poem “Yonnonidio” laments a “race of the woods, the landscapes free and the falls” that will soon disappear. The verse, from Leaves of Grass, connects the waning of nature with the waning of humanity. Whitman’s song rings out “amid the wilds, the rocks, the storm and wintry night...[in] a limitless ravine, with plains and mountains,” but is silenced. “A muffled sonorous sound, a wailing word is borne through the air for a moment, Then blank and gone and still, and utterly lost” (Whitman 385). Tillie Olsen’s novel borrows its name from Whitman’s poem, and uses part of the verse as an epigraph. In Yonnonidio: From the Thirties, Olsen echoes Whitman’s theme of connecting humanity with nature. She seems to take Whitman’s theme one step further, though, applying the “ecofeminist dialogics” of “nature-as-woman and woman-as-nature” (Murphy 13).

During the novel’s first section, in the mining community, Olsen establishes the connection between Earth and mother. The voice of the crazed Sheen McEvoy is the first to verbalize that connection. Referring to the mine, he says, “She only takes men ‘cause she aint got kids. All women want kids” (11). McEvoy attempts to throw young Mazie Holbrook into the mine, wanting her to return to mother Earth. The text also connects

Earth with mother in this section when Anna herself voices her enthusiasm for the rebirth she hopes will accompany the family's move to the country: "'A new life,' Anna said, 'in the spring'" (26). Olsen significantly allows the novel's mother to speak of the impending shift of the family's environment. The mother is somehow aware of the nature that will soon surround the Holbrooks. Old Man Caldwell verbalizes most clearly the connection between Mother Earth and Mother Anna; on his death bed, he tells Mazie to learn from Anna and the stars. Here, Olsen situates the mother as a moral center, a source of education aligned with nature.

The portrayal of the environment in Yonnonndio: From the Thirties is somewhat ambiguous. At times, nature is idealized as beautiful and idyllic. These positive images of nature occur primarily during the middle section of the novel, when the family lives on the farm. The text seems to judge farming less harshly than the other industries Jim becomes a part of. Jim's labor while at the farm isn't damaging in and of itself. Rather, the system of tenant farming brings the oppression. Thus the reader confronts a section of the novel where nature is not oppressed. Consider the Earth imagery Olsen uses during the farm sequence. On the farm, the "air was pure and soft like a baby's skin...that day there was laughter" (23). The Holbrooks and the land both come to life:

Land is here. Days falling freely into large rhythms of weather. Feet sinking into plowed earth, the plow making a bright furrow. Corn coming swiftly up. Tender green stalks with thin outer shoots, like grass. Oh Momma come look! Oh Daddy come look! Oh Mazie come look! Drama of things growing (29).

Briefly, at the farm, the reader, inundated with images of an idealized Earth, believes that the Holbrooks might transcend their misery:

The laughter of the summer was on the earth. Trees, rich and voluptuous, flowered by the roadside, brimming fields of corn waved in the sun, roses were in bloom, and the days were bright with the colored balls of song, birds tossed back and forth (31).

Olsen continues to assault the reader's senses with affirmative, happy images of Mother Earth:

Far east rolled the hills, the near ones flat brown, washed over with delicate green, the far ones repeating themselves over and over till they faded into blue hazes and dull mists -- indistinct blurs of lines against the spring sky (26).

Mazie even goes to the Earth after a beating and the land serves as her refuge:

Bedded in the clover, belly down, feeling the earth push back against her, feeling the patterns of clover smell twine into her nostrils till she was drugged with the scent (32).

Mazie and Old Man Caldwell lie on the grass and look at the stars. Caldwell compares the stars to flowers: "I'd like to smell the smell that would be comin off'n those flowers" (32).

Such positive images of nature are nearly confined to the novel's farm sequence. Elsewhere in the book, the Earth suffers at human hands. During the first section, in the mining community, Earth is used interchangeably with the mine, "that fearsome place below the ground" (1). Olsen describes "flowers growing lovely out of a hideous corpse"

(2) and the “grimy light” (3) of the sun. Unlike at the farm, Mazie remains unable to enjoy nature:

Mazie lay under the hot Wyoming sun, between the outhouse and the garbage dump. There was no other place for Mazie to lie, for the one patch of green in the yard was between these two spots. From the ground arose a nauseating smell. Food had been rotting in the garbage piles for years (3).

Later, Will and Mazie compare the sky to a window: “You can’t see through it ‘cause it’s dirty” (18).

The third section of the novel, which takes place in a large city, contains the most images of the abuse of the Earth. Olsen describes garbage flowing down the river and yards where the only flowers are lampposts. Poverty and squalor are at their worst in the city:

Over the cobbled streets, past the two blocks of dump and straggling grass, past the human dumpheap where the nameless Frank Lloyd Wright of the proletariat have wrought their wondrous futuristic structures of flat battered tin cans, fruit boxes and gunny sacks, cardboard and mother earth (48).

Olsen vividly describes the pollution in the city as well:

A fog of stink smothers down over it all -- so solid, so impenetrable, no other smell, crotch and underarm sweat, the smell of cooking or of burning, all are drowned under, merged into the vast, unmoving

stench (48).

Pitifully, the children have no where to play except for a trash heap. In the apartment, the milk sours and the potatoes rot, drawing flies and spreading more unbearable, oppressive smells:

Inside suffocated her (outside too when there was packing-house stench) but a need was in her to be out under a boundless sky, in unconfined air, not between walls, under the roof of a house (93).

The Holbrooks long to be reunited with nature, as they were on the farm:

The stink, the stink. What glares so? The air is feverish: it lies in a stagnant swill of heat haze over the river...Giant cracks have opened up the earth...her garden is dying (129).

Again, Yonnonidio: From the Thirties connects nature with mother, indeed with the feminine: "A regenerative life cycle of which mother and daughter are a part" (Rosenfelt 165). During the myriad sequences of the abuse of the Earth, the reader also confronts the abuse of Anna Holbrook, the mother in the novel. Olsen shows the "distorted shape motherhood has taken in patriarchal society" (Faulkner 37). Mazie recognizes the connection between Mother Earth and Mother Anna:

Ugly and ugly the earth. Patches of soiled snow oozing away, leaving the ground like great dirty sores between; scabs of old leaves that like a bruise hid the violets underneath. Trees fat with oily buds, and the swollen breasts of prairie. Ugly. She turned her eyes to the sky, for oblivion, but it was bellies, swollen bellies, black and corpse gray, puffing out baggier

and baggier...blood and pain of birth (43).

Olsen makes this connection by showing how life cycles are continuously interrupted. Mother Earth's life cycle is disturbed by the pollution and decay in the city. Anna's life cycle is unnaturally interrupted as well. Jim rapes and beats her, and causes her to miscarry. Anna, like the Earth, is not permitted to carry on as a creator. Olsen highlights this interruption of life cycles by the death of the baby chicks in the Holbrook oven, as well as when Mazie, horrified of Anna's miscarriage, swallows and then vomits up a raw egg. Olsen is reminding readers of women's creative power and how that power is stripped away by the patriarchy. Readers empathize with the mother in the novel. Elaine Orr praises Yonnonidio: From the Thirties for providing a feminist view of motherhood that isn't guilty of "distancing ourselves from maternity" ("On the Side" 209). Orr describes the novel as an opportunity "to read with the mother, to read on her side." Reading on the mother's side, we confront images of women with limited creative options. The only outlet for creativity seems to be bearing children. This view coincides with Olsen's real-life struggles finding time to write. Likewise, Earth, women's ally, experiences similar limitations in creative outlet. Earth's creative power seems somehow limited by human interference.

As Pearlman and Werlock have shown, the novel portrays women confined by spaces. "Anna and Mazie are trapped, too, by the actual physical spaces that define the novel," they write (39). Anna lives her life for Jim, "bound in helplessness to the male providers" (Pearlman 39). The physical places where the Holbrooks exist never provide adequate shelter for the family. Their environment isn't safe, particularly for the women in

the novel. Olsen portrays the “enclosed space as victimizer” (Pearlman 43). These spaces are also ecological spaces, which harm the Earth as well as Anna and Mazie. For example, the air becomes “sour” in the enclosed space of the mine (Yonnonidio 5).

Both mothers in Yonnonidio: From the Thirties fight back with reciprocated violence and cruelty. During the first section of the book, the Earth is repeatedly compared to bowels and intestines:

Bowels of earth. It means the mine. Bowels is the stummy. Earth is a stummy and mebbe she eats the men that come down. Men and daddy goin' in like the day, and comin' out black. Earth black, and pop's face and hands black, and he spits from his mouth black. Night comes and it is black. Coal is black -- it makes a fire. The sun is makin' a fire on me, but it is not black. Some color I am not knowen it is (4).

The Earth becomes an aggressor, something for humans to fear. Olsen appears to issue an indictment on those who destroy nature, those who consume natural resources. She turns the table with imagery of Earth consuming humans:

Earth sucks you in to spew out the coal, to make a few fat bellies fatter.

Earth takes your dreams that a few may languidly lie on couches (6).

Earth becomes complicit with capitalism and patriarchy in the destruction of life. The text shows nature as a part of the destructive cycles that exist. Mother Earth is polluted and victimized, but she also takes place in victimization.

Like the Earth, so too does Anna become a part of the corrupt system. Anna and Earth are bound together, “interlocking human and natural ecology” (Faulkner 39). As the

novel progresses, she not only allows Jim to beat the kids, she too begins to physically abuse them. Like the Earth, she consumes human life: "Anna grew monstrous fat as if she were feeding on them" (40). With such imagery, Olsen continues to subvert the maternal cycle. But it is a subversion that already exists in real life. "It is the circumstance of women [to be silenced]," according to Trenskey (510). "Silence...gives form and definition to women's lives" (Trenskey 509).

As Anna battles physical illness in the novel's final section, she becomes utterly unaware of what is happening in the house. The family searches for some sanity and order. The Holbrooks never reach that state of order; rather, their world remains quite insane. However, several glimpses of "revolutionary optimism" exist in the novel, as this is a requirement of proletariat fiction (Rosenfelt 156). Those glimpses of hope seem to exist in the family's ability to end their alienation from the motherhoods of both nature and Anna. Jim comforts Mazie, saying "I'll make a farm and warm you" (78). One of the only happy times in the city is when Anna and the children go back to nature, to look for dandelions. Mazie sees a "strange happiness in her mother's body...the mother look was back on her face" (101-2). According to Elaine Orr:

The pastoral setting is without hint of corruption. Rather, a beneficence is felt in the omnipresence of latent life that infuses and binds each to each. The picture of Anna and Mazie reflects this conjoined presence and evokes a sense of spiritual connection. Stroking her daughter's hair, the mother's fingers are a source of the energy singing through all of nature, suggesting the harmonious giving and receiving characteristic of

an envisioned world of peace and wholeness (Spiritual Vision 64).

Orr stresses the feminist spirituality present in Olsen's work, a "spiritual voice arriving from mothering realities" (52). The spirituality Orr talks about isn't tied to a certain denomination. Rather, it is the drive toward a realized existence in a "blossoming world" (43). The spirituality shows woman and nature communing in harmony, a sort of an ecofeminist utopia.

Anna Holbrook and our precious ecosystem share stark similarities in Tillie Olsen's novel Yonnonidio: From the Thirties. Both are abused by the systems of economics and gender roles, and both fight back viciously, socialized as part of those systems. This comparison adds a new dimension to the transformative agenda of proletariat fiction. Olsen issues an attack on those who would abuse our world. The conception of the *other* becomes broader, as readers are inundated with images of Earth's destruction. Deborah Rosenfelt recognizes Olsen's wider agenda as being "humanistic" (165). Rosenfelt writes:

[T]he hope *Yonnonidio* offers more persuasively, through its characterizations, its images and events, and its present conclusion, is less a vision of political and economic revolution than an assertion that the drive to love and achieve and create will survive somehow in spite of the social forces arraigned against it, because each new human being is born with it afresh (156).

Again, I would amend Rosenfelt's argument slightly, to include the entire Earth.

This wide agenda makes Olsen's novel all the more important. Tillie Olsen's novel is a call to action, clearly. Mara Faulkner, in Protest and Possibility in the Writing of Tillie

Olsen, has identified the multiple protests of class and gender present in her work. Patrick Murphy, in Literature, Nature, Other, praises ecofeminism for putting “the struggles to end both patriarchy and capitalism...in an even larger context: the relationship of humanity with nature” (7). Murphy attacks the “philosophical linearity” that has kept feminists and Marxists fighting over which struggles are most important. The novel in question is a call to recognize many oppressions: those based on class, gender, as well as our disregard for nature. As Murphy points out, ecofeminism’s recognition of Bakhtinian dialogics allows the examinations of multiple oppressions, without imposing bothersome hierarchies (3).

VII. CONCLUSION

I could continue to examine individual pieces of working-class literature from an ecofeminist framework. Rebecca Harding Davis' Life in the Iron Mills and Agnes Smedley's Daughter of Earth, for example, both portray elements of nature in ambiguous ways that recall Earth's role in Yonnonidio. Other work poets, the peers of Jim Daniels, tackle environmental issues, many in ways more explicit than Daniels himself. However, I think my point has been sufficiently clarified. I hope that in the pages of this paper, a dialogue between two schools of thought has been started. I would like to see that dialogue continue in the form of activity in and out of traditional literary environments, in both the academic world and the real world.

Working-class studies and ecofeminism both share a hope that the field of English can be made increasingly relevant. I have spent the last six years being an English major, and I tend to strive toward relevance as well. Thinking about ways literature matters beyond the classroom is extremely important. If the critical study of literature can lead to political action and awareness, shouldn't we develop strategies to make that happen. If fiction and poetry can teach us about who we are, not in an abstract sense but really give us insight about both our place in the natural world and our place in the world of work, shouldn't we likewise make that happen?

Works Cited

- Bigwood, Carol. Earth Muse. Philadelphia: Temple U.P., 1993.
- Coles, Nicholas and Peter Oresick. For A Living: The Poetry of Work. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1995. xv-xxiii.
- . Working Classics: Poems on Industrial Life. Urbana and Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1990.
- Daniels, Jim. M-80. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 1993.
- . Places/Everyone. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1985.
- . Punching Out. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1990.
- . "Troubleshooting: Poetry, the Factory, and the University." Liberating Memory: Our Work and Our Working-Class Consciousness. Ed. Janet Zandy. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers UP, 1995. 86-96.
- "Diego Rivera at the DIA." Detroit Institute of Arts Homepage. Internet. Netscape. <<http://www.diamondial.org/rivera/index.html>> Accessed 1 March, 1998.
- Donovan, Josephine. "Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Reading the Orange." *Hypatia* 11 (1996): 161-184.
- Easthope, Anthony. Literary Into Cultural Studies. London and New York: Routledge, 1991.
- Faulkner, Mara. Protest and Possibility in the Writing of Tillie Olsen. Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1993.
- Foley, Barbara. Radical Representation: Politics and form in U.S. Proletarian Fiction, 1929-1941. Durham and London: Duke UP, 1993.

- Gioia, Dana. "Business and Poetry." Can Poetry Matter: Essays on Poetry and American Culture. St. Paul: Greywolf Press, 1992. 113-140.
- . "Can Poetry Matter?" In Can Poetry Matter: 1-24.
- Grisham, John. The Rainmaker. New York: Dell, 1995.
- Legler, Gretchen T. "Ecofeminist Literary Criticism." In Warren: 227-238.
- McAndrew, Donald. "Ecofeminism and Teaching Literacy." *College Composition and Communication* 47 (1996): 367-382.
- Murphy, Patrick. "Ground, Pivot, Motion: Ecofeminist Theory, Dialogics, and Literary Practice." *Hypatia* 6 (1991): 146-161.
- . Literature, Nature, and Other: Ecofeminist Critiques. Albany: SUNY P., 1995.
- Olsen, Tillie. Yonnondio: From the Thirties. New York: Delta, 1974.
- . "Silences in Literature." Silences. New York: Delta, 1978.
- Orr, Elaine. "On the Side of the Mother: *Yonnondio* and *Call It Sleep*." Studies in American Fiction 21 (1993): 209-23.
- . Tillie Olsen and a Feminist Spiritual Vision. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1987.
- Pearlman, Mickey and Abby Werlock. Tillie Olsen. Boston: Twayne, 1991.
- Rideout, Walter. The Radical Novel in the United State: 1900-1954. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1956.
- Rosenfelt, Deborah. "From the Thirties: Tillie Olsen and the Radical Tradition."
Ed. Deborah Rosenfelt. *Women Writers Texts and Contexts*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1995. 133-76.
- Sessions, Robert Alan. "Ecofeminism and Work." In Warren: 176-192.

- Shetley, Vernon. After The Death Of Poetry. Durham, N.C.: Duke UP, 1993.
- Taylor, Dorceta E. "Women of Color, Environmental Justice, and Ecofeminism." In Warren:38-81.
- Trensky, Anne. "The Unnatural Silences of Tillie Olsen." *Studies in Short Fiction* 27 (1990): 509-16.
- Wald, Alan. "The 1930s Left in U.S. Literature Reconsidered." Radical Revisions: Rereading 1930s Culture. Ed. Bill Mullen and Sherry Linkon. Urbana and Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1996. 13-28.
- Warren, Karen, ed. Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature. Bloomington: Indiana U.P., 1997.
- Whitman, Walt. Leaves of Grass. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992.
- Zubel, Paulette. "Informed and Empowered Poetry: New Understanding Through Working Class Literary Theory." Studies in the Humanities 20 (1993): 95-106.