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Literary Theory and Southern Literary Studies

AS CAROL ANN JOHNSTON AND OTHERS¹ HAVE NOTED, “MANY INFLUENTIAL critical voices in Southern literary studies remain untrusting of critical theory” (272). For scholars who came of age in the last decades of the twentieth century, critical theory may most often mean that familiar doctoral curriculum of Saussure, Lacan, Derrida, Cixous, Butler, and other linguistic, psychoanalytic, post-structuralist, and feminist theorists, many of whom seem to play a relatively minor role in Southern studies today. The contrast between learning about the revolution of Theory in graduate school and entering a discipline in which this type of theory is not prevalent can lead to a sense of disconnection and disjunction, especially for the emerging scholar of Southern literature who has sampled other fields.

In *Inventing Southern Literature*, Michael Kreyling observes that

The “old pattern” of the New Critics has held sway until the current age of “theory,” the advent of which has opened cracks in heretofore solid literary edifices. Southern literary study seems to have resisted theory with particular fervor. To be sure, theory (like any “new” strategy for looking at the familiar—like New Criticism itself in the 1930s and 1940s) is a threat. But to what? (36)

Significantly, Kreyling links New Criticism to the more current mode of theory, reminding us of Southern literature’s tradition of embracing new approaches as he questions the later resistance. Within the roots of this

¹The need for more gender theory in Southern literary studies has been asserted particularly well by Eudora Welty scholars. Pearl McHaney summarizes these calls for change. Jefferson Humphries responds to the general distrust of critical theory and outlines a theoretical agenda for a new post-Louis Rubin generation of Southern literature scholars, including viewing history and literature as mirror images and incorporating “European modes of thinking about literature, culture, and history” (xiii).

resistance lies the idea that Southern studies is a discipline with a longstanding tradition of its own embedded theories and theorists, a discipline that elevates these theorists almost to the level of its major writers, as Carol Manning notes:

The reputations of the scholars who have chiefly shaped our thinking about Southern literature—Allan Tate, Hugh Holman, Louis D. Rubin, Jr., Lewis P. Simpson, to name a few—rival the reputations of many of the artists about whom they write. We might safely say that the critical theory on the Southern Renaissance has itself become part of the Southern Renaissance. (37)

From this vantage point, it may seem backward to claim that the field of Southern literary studies somehow lacks or neglects theory and needs to play catch-up by working through linguistic, psychoanalytic, post-structural, and postmodern theories. However, just as Manning examines the sometimes closed circuit between Southern writers and theorists as the foundation for an argument about gender, and just as Kreyling builds an argument about the repression of sexism (as well as racism) within a Southern literary tradition resistant to new theory, I wish to call for greater attention to gender theory in Southern studies. I also want to make more explicit the connections between long-term and widespread resistance to theory within Southern literary studies and later calls for greater attention to gender theory, such as those made frequently in Welty studies.²

An advantage of working within disciplines that exhibit a high level of interaction with linguistic, psychoanalytic, and post-structural theory—such as Victorian or Renaissance studies—is that they use this interaction to forge new models of gender criticism. One result of the resistance to theory within Southern studies may be that we lack some of the theory-based gender criticism that evolved within other disciplines.³ Rather than reach back to the 1980s and 90s heyday of theoretical approaches in order to build new gender criticism approaches, however, I argue that Southern studies might investigate other theoretical options with the same spirit of openness that has both embraced and interrogated global Southern studies and material culture

²See previous references to McHaney and Johnston.

³It is important to acknowledge the excellent work on gender theory in Southern literature by Rebecca Mark, Thadious Davis, Minrose Gwin, Anne Goodwyn Jones, Susan Donaldson, Trudier Harris, Patricia Yaeger, and many others.

approaches in recent years. We can continue the field's strong tradition of doing what works for and with Southern literature, rather than replicating the scholarship of other disciplines.

Why Bourdieu?

In this pragmatic vein, the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and the field of contemporary Southern women's literature would seem to make strange bedfellows.⁴ However, Bourdieuan gender criticism has the potential to transcend disciplinary boundaries to unite sociological, linguistic, and material culture with literary studies.⁵ And while Bourdieu himself was not overtly concerned with gender (with his much-criticized 1998 work *Masculine Domination* as the central exception), his work minutely investigates distinctions in culture, especially material culture, which has led to calls for expanding his work "into a feminist materialism" (Fowler 134). Similarly, in recent years, "feminists seeking new approaches to the social dynamics of gender relations" have turned to Bourdieu "for inspiration" (Bennett xxii). This essay will explain the relevance of Bourdieuan gender analysis to the field of contemporary Southern women's literature, with a particular emphasis on the interaction between gender and educational institutions, via analysis of Lee Smith's recent novel *On Agate Hill* (2006).

I came across Bourdieu's work on cultural capital as a result of the well-crafted 2010 Biennial Society for the Study of Southern Literature Conference call for papers by Rebecca Mark and Barbara Ewell announcing the conference's theme—"Everybody Loves You When You're Down and South: Cultural Capital in Hard Times." Without directly referencing Bourdieu, the proposal deftly uses his concept of cultural capital, and more importantly uses the concept in a distinctly Bourdieuan way. The call for papers questions the ways in which the South has both become national cultural capital and a projection screen

⁴In *Negotiating A Perilous Empowerment: Appalachian Women's Literacies* (2011), Erica Abrams Locklear provides brief but insightful connections between Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, his notion of school as a force of symbolic violence (the two Bourdieuan foci of this essay), and literacy acquisition within Appalachian fiction.

⁵Bridget Fowler, in the introduction to *Pierre Bourdieu and Cultural Theory*, remarks that Bourdieu may provide a refreshing theoretical change of pace to "anyone suffering from post-Lacanian excess on the issue of the subject" (1).

for a host of ills, while simultaneously acting as agent for its own manipulation of cultural capital. The SSSL document becomes reflexive in its willingness to, in Bourdieu's words, "turn on [its] own viewpoints that objectifying point of view which is fundamental to the analysis" (*The Rules of Art* 207).⁶ Bourdieu argues for sociologists to recognize their roles as active participants in any study, participants with the ability to shift the power dynamics around them. He denies the possibility of a neutral, detached observer, and urges sociologists not only to acknowledge their role in the fields of power they observe, but also to analyze the roles they play and the effects of those roles. Similarly, Mark and Ewell recognize the South's potential as both projection screen and agent, implying that scholars should recognize and analyze their participation in the ever-shifting status of the South's cultural capital.

Further investigation of Bourdieu's wide-ranging theories reveals his interests in educational systems, class codes, taste (or, in Bourdieu's lexicon, "distinction"), class-based responses to works of art and literature, social capital, and the aforementioned cultural capital, including its embodied, objectified, and institutionalized forms. Within this vast network of interests and subjects, literature became central to Bourdieu's application of theory and the focus of *The Rules of Art* (1992, translated into English 1995). As Anna Boschetti, one of Bourdieu's former students, has remarked, the sociologist's unusual literary interest was due to literature's place as "a central theoretical object" in "French intellectual space" (135). Given Bourdieu's interest in literature, one might wonder why literature, and especially its American critics, hasn't been more interested in him.

United States Reception of Bourdieu's Work

Despite Bourdieu's widespread popularity in Europe and among some art and literature scholars in the United Kingdom, in the United States, "the application of his theory has been very limited when compared to

⁶Bourdieu's concept of reflexive sociology has, of course, literary counterparts of meta-critique and self-analysis as reflected in post-structuralist and postmodernist theory, but Mark and Ewell's work would seem to have particularly Bourdieuan overtones in its concerns with the interplay of economic and social structures, as well as its focus on cultural capital.

other countries" (Boschetti 147).⁷ Why? The simplest explanation is that Bourdieu's sociological and historical methodology found little traction in the American humanities, which feminist literary scholar Toril Moi calls "a theoretical space dominated . . . by poststructuralism and postmodernism" (1018). This rationale, however, might support the use of Bourdieu's theory within Southern literary studies: if Bourdieu's work is not founded in post-structuralism and postmodernism, then he becomes a more fitting theoretical touchstone for a discipline such as Southern studies, which is not deeply entangled with those approaches. Countering lack of engagement with post-structuralism as a reason to overlook Bourdieu, Moi points to the current renewed interest in the "social and historical determinants of cultural production" (1018), an interest evident in Southern literary scholarship today.

Another line of thinking categorizes Bourdieu as either "too European" or "too French" for American tastes, and Bourdieu himself recognizes this bias in his preface to the English language edition of *Distinction*, remarking that "I have every reason to fear that this book will strike the reader as 'very French'—which I know is not always a compliment" (xiii). Yet, as Jefferson Humphries reminds us in his introduction to *Southern Literature and Literary Theory*, a post-Rubin generation of Southern literature scholars has embraced "continental philosophy" and does so in a context of connections between Southern United States and French intellectual life: Allen Tate's "affinity" for Paul Valéry, the influence of French poetry on William Faulkner, and the translations of Edgar Allan Poe's work into French by Baudelaire and Mallarmé, which garnered for Poe more recognition in France than in the United States (ix). Currently, according to *Transatlantica*, a French American Studies journal, both Faulkner and O'Connor remain popular in France and a small but vocal group of French Welty scholars, often led by Géraldine Chouard, continues the French/Southern United States connection. In this vein, Bourdieu's very French-ness, grounded in the material culture life of his country, seems to make his theoretical approaches more appropriate for Southern studies, not less.

In his preface to *Distinction*, Bourdieu voices the hopes of any theorist: "the ambition of drawing out universal propositions" (xiii),

⁷For a comprehensive overview of the reasons why Bourdieu has not achieved widespread popularity as a theorist within the American academy, see Boschetti and Guillory.

which, given the scope of his work, seems entirely possible despite the French origin of many of his literary and cultural examples. This argument for the application of the local to the universal would seem to carry particular weight with Southern literature scholars, since we often find ourselves making connections between regional and national or even global phenomena. Additionally, perhaps the next phase of the New Southern Studies, with its focus on global context, might involve increased incorporation of more global theoretical perspectives.

Loïc Wacquant expands the debate over Bourdieu's global applicability by questioning American scholars' willingness to incorporate the theories of Habermas and Foucault, although these theories would seem to be equally alien, especially to "American categories of sociological understanding." Wacquant theorizes that Habermas and Foucault acquire a kind of "legitimate 'otherness'" via their status as philosophers, in juxtaposition to Bourdieu's self-categorization as a sociologist (242). John Guillory also mentions "the notorious difficulty of [Bourdieu's] prose" (367) as a reason for his under-representation in American scholarship, but Wacquant's counterexamples of Habermas and Foucault would seem to refute this line of reasoning as well.

A further rationale for Bourdieu's tepid American reception, suggested by Guillory, is that Bourdieu has not found a place in the American climate of cultural studies and "*voluntarism*" (369)—the practice of justifying scholarship by "asserting it as the vehicle of political transformation" (370). In contrast to American cultural studies, Bourdieu views social change as the failure of reproduction of culture and its capital, "an effect of struggles that do not usually have as their conscious end the progressive transformation of society implied in the cultural studies project" (370). Similarly, Bourdieu's seeming inattention to race and ethnicity concerns some critics, but, as Tony Bennett notes, "Bourdieu's hands were tied here by the French legislation prohibiting the inclusion of questions on ethnicity in social surveys" (xxii).

As Bennett, Moi, and Terry Lovell have suggested, rather than rejecting Bourdieu's theories because of perceived gaps in their direct theorization of gender⁸ and race issues, current scholars might view these

⁸It is important to note that Bourdieu clearly addresses gender in *Masculine Domination*, first published in 1998 and translated into English in 2001. British feminist sociologist Terry Lovell criticizes the work's "lack of engagement" with prominent

gaps as opportunities for expansion of Bourdieu's work. If we are to take up this challenge, we must then ask ourselves what Bourdieuan feminist analysis looks like. In *The Rules of Art*, Bourdieu states his conviction that "scientific analysis of the social conditions of the production and reception of a work of art, far from reducing it or destroying it, in fact intensifies the literary experience" (xix). Bourdieu does not wish to lose sight of the text itself; instead, he employs a "*strictly internal reading*" (3, emphasis Bourdieu's) to reveal "the structure of the social space in which its author himself was situated" (3), analyzing characters as "symbols charged with marking and representing the pertinent positions in the social space" (5).

Bourdieu's notion of a strictly internal reading, however, is not the New Criticism version of an internal reading. In *The Rules of Art*, after carefully mapping the field of power (the space of social and material competition) and the habitus (dispositions, knowledge, techniques, and habits that enable a person to compete in a particular field)⁹ of Flaubert's *Sentimental Education*, Bourdieu illuminates the conditions of production of the text, including the context of rapid changes from a patronage system to an industrial literature system. He also offers supplementary materials, such as a map of *Sentimental Education's* Paris. But the focus of the reading, its starting point, is the text itself, which Bourdieu imbues with the ability to analyze itself (hence the Prologue's title, "Flaubert, Analyst of Flaubert"), that is, to reveal social and power structures essential to its meaning if the reader is willing to look past the "veil" (33) of the "reality effect" to fight against the author's "control of the return of the repressed" (32).

Feminist Applications of Bourdieu

So far, Bourdieu's methodology sounds like that of a thorough literary critic, albeit with a decidedly sociological bent, one sometimes found in

feminist theorists and its failure to distinguish between diverse strands of contemporary feminist thought (44). See also Adkins and Skeggs. Adkins posits that Bourdieu's relative neglect of gender makes his work a good fit with feminist approaches because of contemporary feminism's move away from "the sex/gender distinction as one of its key objects" (4).

⁹For a complete explanation of these terms see Bourdieu's *Sociology in Question* (72-73) and Moi, who links habitus to the educationalist concept of the "silent curriculum"—norms and values inculcated not through specific lessons but through the school environment (1022).

new historicism. Here, I depart from the methodology Bourdieu suggests for literature in favor of an application of his theory modified to include gender studies and specifically feminist analysis, using Moi's work as a loose framework, but adding my own application of Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, one he did not typically associate with the analysis of literature. Moi calls for analysis of the social context of the production of the text as well as the social contexts within the text itself (the *énoncé* as well as the *énonciation*) with the ultimate goal of the reconceptualization of "gender as a social category in a way which undercuts the traditional essentialist/nonessentialist divide" (1019). She acknowledges Bourdieu's chief strength, the development of a "*microtheory* of social power" (1019, emphasis Moi's). In other words, Bourdieu shows precisely how we might analyze the minutiae of daily life (music preferences, teachers' marginalia on student papers, home furnishings) to support the well-worn generalization that "gender is socially constructed" (1019).

Moi rightly points out that Bourdieu is neither the first nor the only theorist to reclaim daily life as a subject of analysis, but he does provide a strong model for placing a wide variety of daily details into complex relationships that shed light on the nature of social power. Since these details have been traditionally devalued and associated with "women's gossip," Bourdieu can wield particular power for feminists, despite his lack of a specific feminist theory or agenda (1020). Additionally, Bourdieu offers a special appeal to scholars of Southern literature interested in material culture approaches. However, Moi's suggestion that feminist Bourdieuan literary analysis should also take into account the educational system as "one of the principal agents of symbolic violence in modern democracies" (1023) makes this approach particularly well suited to an analysis of Lee Smith's *On Agate Hill*. Contrary to reviewers' descriptions of the novel as primarily a lively or exotic piece of Southern historical fiction (Hoffman, Rifkind), *On Agate Hill* is a novel about gender and education with systemic, rather than superficial biographical, ties to Smith's own educational habitus.

Smith at Hollins College: A Field in Flux and the Creation of a Writer's Habitus

While a full analysis of the social conditions of production of *On Agate Hill* is not feasible in the scope of this essay, I will comment on the social context of its production, or in more Bourdieuan terms, Smith's

field (the space of social and material competition) and habitus (the dispositions, knowledge, techniques, and habits that enable a person to compete in a particular field) before moving into a brief Bourdieuan feminist textual analysis.

In reference to Simone de Beauvoir's writing career, Moi notes a paradox: outsiders or "miraculous exceptions" who succeed within a given environment or field (social space of competition) frequently support, rather than challenge, the institutions of that field (1037). Moi points out the ways in which Beauvoir avoided this trap and challenged institutional forms of sexism after benefitting from those same institutions. Like Beauvoir, Lee Smith names and challenges gender inequities, even when she has benefitted from some of the same systems she critiques. Smith seems to have experienced a rare blend of early educational nurturance and success tempered with just enough early social resistance (in the form of class-based prejudice and paternalistic restrictions on her conduct) to encourage her to carefully critique social systems, particularly social and educational systems of gender.

As a high school junior, Smith left a middle-class household in the Appalachian foothill town of Grundy, Virginia, for a prestigious boarding school in Richmond, where she felt herself to be an outsider among her wealthy fellow students (Parrish, *Lee Smith* 170). Similar experiences of outsider status, later followed by minor rebellion, marked Smith's years at Hollins College in western Virginia, a school which was in a liminal state during her time there. Smith's college career aligns with Rubin's years at Hollins, during which he worked toward the professional development of the faculty, instituted writers in residence and visiting writers programs (which included Eudora Welty and Flannery O'Connor), and propelled the writing program to national recognition (55-58). Smith blossomed in this newly created community of serious young female writers, but she challenged social norms elsewhere. In her first year at Hollins, Smith and her fellow first-year writers found themselves shut out of the literary magazines dominated by older students, so they started their own magazine (95). As sophomores, the group adopted the unofficial motto of "Anarchy and Arrogance Forever" when they were funneled off into what they perceived to be a lower-status writing seminar, separated from more senior students (98). Smith's most serious rebellion was also her most costly: while enrolled in study abroad in Paris, she "stay[ed] out all night in a café talking to a young man," was expelled from Hollins, and had to re-apply for

admittance (178). Through her feature columns for the school paper, she criticized a paternalistic college culture as well as the intellectual apathy of her fellow students, although she softened many of her less serious columns with humor (180).

Smith has compared her college years at Hollins to “falling into a womb” (Parrish, “Interview” 400). This image conveys the social and intellectual support she found for her writing, but perhaps more importantly, Smith uses this image to convey early support for herself as writer and for her ability to actively embrace a writing identity and a writing life. But as Nancy Parrish notes, the womb is more than a comfortable pocket of gestation; it’s also a physically and politically turbulent microclimate (*Lee Smith* 1-2). Smith’s career is marked by an early field of power in transition, in the form of the progressive and newly developed community of female writers she experienced while at Hollins and in the form of her own questioning of social norms for polite young Southern women. Her resulting habitus—one foot in a creative intellectual life and one foot within a rule-bound Southern social life—allowed for easy transition between academic and popular cultures, enabling her writing to make the same kinds of transitions. She is an overtly feminist contemporary Southern writer, although her ability to navigate social structures, her friendly and approachable persona, and her commercial success often obscure her feminist politics, perhaps in a way that ultimately aids the popular dissemination of her ideas.

Readers of *On Agate Hill* familiar with Smith’s biography will draw subtle parallels between her education and that of her protagonist, Molly Petree. As an abandoned orphan from a poor family, Molly stands out from her wealthy peers at Gatewood Academy. Mariah Snow, headmistress of the school, attempts to isolate Molly from the others, believing that she might “taint” the other girls because she has been sexually assaulted. While Molly’s circumstances and exile are clearly far more dramatic than Smith’s, her response—her ability to navigate a field of power, to gather social capital through her own agency, and to refashion her own habitus as that of a student and ultimately a teacher—parallels Smith’s own navigation of her environment. The key parallel lies not in the biographical details, but in the path navigated in distinctly gendered fields of power: patriarchal women’s educational institutions in transition. Just as Hollins made the shift from sleepy seminary to aspiring “Southern stepsister” of the Seven Sisters (Parrish, *Lee* 7), the fictional Gatewood Academy that Molly Petree attends

struggles to establish post-Civil War financial stability and masculine leadership. Smith, like Molly, found herself in an institutional moment ripe for change. In response, each young woman forged a path of partial social assimilation to contemporary Southern feminine norms, competed with peers while gathering strength from an intellectual community, engaged in rebellion against social restrictions and norms, and ultimately gained the cultural capital of an education, along with the social capital of professional identity.

I am particularly interested in the ways in which Bourdieuan concepts of field, habitus, and especially cultural capital begin to shift when the institutions, the fields in question, are themselves in liminal states. These states, not surprisingly, offer unique opportunities for women to take what might have previously been perceived as more than their fair share of cultural capital. Molly Petree provides an interesting test case for Bourdieu's theories because she is deprived of cultural capital as an orphaned child and attempts to fashion her own capital in the form of a rich fantasy life, replete with fairies, phenomena (her collection of bones and artifacts), and ghosts. Molly is then reinscribed with cultural capital as an adolescent at Gatewood Academy, although the liminal state of the school's leadership and finances threatens the process of reinscription and contributes to the ultimate failure of the process. In her educational experiences, arguably the heart of the novel, Molly gains institutionalized cultural capital at the same time that she is being made into objectified cultural capital for the marriage market, with the expectation that she will be the conduit of embodied cultural capital over time for the family's offspring. Molly, however, ultimately rejects much of this cultural capital through her own sexual choices as an adult.

A Bourdieuan Feminist Analysis of *On Agate Hill*

As an orphaned child in the post-Civil War South, Molly Petree is no stranger to the denial of her own wants and needs. She is also no stranger to the concept of *self*-denial, even in the face of those who would scheme to own what little is left of Agate Hill, her home. Yet Molly's brand of self-denial runs counter to the type of feminine Christian self-sacrifice her few remaining relatives and her future teachers at Gatewood Academy would recommend. Rather, she crafts a kind of self-denial that, on its surface, appears to be a blend of "sour grapes" psychological defenses and proto-feminism. I would argue, however, that

Molly's self-denial, although incorporating these elements, is actually a complex mechanism that works to replace the forms of cultural capital lost to her with the disintegration of her home and family. Through the denial of traditional femininity and her own need for community with others, she creates a theater for spectacles and phenomena that offers a kind of rehearsal for her re-entry into a larger world later in the novel. The spectacles and phenomena form a substitute for cultural capital that Molly will gain through her time at Gatewood Academy, then ultimately reject as she crafts a life more in line with her early rejection of ladylike ways.

At the beginning of the novel, Molly frequently describes herself as a "ghost girl," assigning herself the task of keeping alive the memories of her dead family members and using this identity to justify and normalize her loneliness (12). Undoubtedly affected deeply by her losses, she lists her life plans in the negative, stating that she will "NEVER have a baby" herself (8) and because of the maintenance required "will NEVER have" household items such as "china and God knows what all, all the things ladies have" (37). When scolded for her rebellious nature and reminded of her eternal soul, Molly replies,

Well I dont want it. . . . I dont want to be an angel any more than I want to be a ghost girl. I want to be a real girl and live as hard as I can in this world, I dont want to lie in the bed like Mama or be sick like Mary White. Or be a lady. I would rather work my fingers to the bone and die like Fannie. I want to live so hard and love so much I will use myself all the way up like a candle, it seems to me like this is the point of it all, not Heaven. (78)

Here, perhaps because she has had the opportunity to make a friend in Mary White, Molly has already begun to reject the concept of herself as ghost girl. Yet even her relationship to the sickly Mary White offers another role to refuse: that of disabled femininity, which Molly seems to closely align with ladyhood. Work, which Molly now recognizes as a part of life, becomes not only acceptable, but the preferable way to use the self up completely. Molly denies herself even the dream of a life of leisure, perhaps because this ideal is unimaginable to her since she was born just two years before the beginning of the Civil War.

Forms of Cultural Capital: The Embodied, Objectified, and Institutionalized States

Molly's life has left her with only the cloudiest notions of the cultural capital that might have been available to her before the war, and because she has not been indoctrinated with the value of these forms of cultural capital, they are easy to reject. Using the forms of cultural capital developed by Bourdieu—the embodied state, the objectified state, and the institutionalized state—we find Molly rejecting all three because she lives within the ghostly outlines rather than the reality of plantation life. She lacks the embodied state, "the long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body" (Bourdieu, "Forms" 243) of ladyhood, leisure, and Christianity because she has had few role models for these ideals and only spotty parental indoctrination of their benefits. At moments, Molly has access to embodied cultural capital, such as the memory of her mother's uttering the classic Southern maxim, "Horses sweat, men perspire, ladies glow," but she denies the validity of her mother's words, noting that "that was back before ladies worked" (30). Similarly, she denies herself the artifacts of these ideals, the objectified state of cultural capital, when she allows Victoria and Blanche, the tenant farmer's daughters, to take her mother's silk camisoles and the hoops from her hoopskirts. Even though Molly acknowledges Bess's plea that "Miss Fannie done save these things for you by the hardest," she repeatedly claims not to want the camisoles (31). Victoria, unwilling to part with her treasure, rips the camisole, and the hoops become playthings, with Molly finally joining in to roll the hoops with the other girls (31-32). Molly transforms what might have been the objectified state of her inherited cultural capital into a hollow toy because it has no other use for her.

The third form of cultural capital, institutional recognition, involves official recognition of cultural capital, often through academic degrees ("Forms"). Although it would seem that Molly has no hope of attaining the institutionalized state of cultural capital, her mysterious benefactor Simon Black arrives just in time to whisk her away to Gatewood Academy, which states as its primary objective "to qualify young ladies for the discharge of the duties of subsequent life" (140). Although Simon Black tries to force institutionalized cultural capital on Molly, the plan fails, but not, as Molly's teachers suspect, through her own willfulness and willingness to deny herself the social benefits her education could provide. When Molly, working as a teacher in the Appalachian

mountains after graduation, tells Jack Jarvis, “I am not a real lady,” he replies, “You’re a schoolteacher, ain’t you? You look like a lady to me. Shoot, you have even been to lady school.” Molly replies, “Well, maybe it didn’t take” (265).

Fairies and Phenomena: The Creation of a Cultural Capital Fantasy

Molly’s childhood fantasy world often appears in contrast to, but also aided by, the now-dead fantasy of becoming a Southern lady. Interestingly, Smith does not craft Molly into a tomboy frankly opposed to all things feminine. Instead, Molly carefully outfits the hiding place she calls her “cubbyhole” with stolen and found items, including fresh flowers, a “fairy tale chair” with painted flowers, a table made from ammunition boxes, and “fairy lights” made from sweetgum balls and lard (19). Molly finds the overall effect “elegant,” clearly still drawing on the embodied cultural capital of the past, even recalling Nora Gwyn’s words: “There is nothing like flowers to dress up a house and Flowers soothe the soul” (19). Here too, Molly acts in a seemingly contradictory manner, hoarding family items in secret while having previously rejected the camisoles and hoops. The difference in behaviors lies in Molly’s own agency: she rejects items which have been carefully saved for her to ensure her safe passage into ladyhood, to literally shape her body, but she willingly scavenges materials to create a comfortable and private space of her own. In this way, Molly blends a pre-War aesthetic with wartime survival strategies, while also privileging self-reliance and personal comfort over bodily restraint.

The references to a “fairy tale chair” and “fairy lights” prefigure Molly’s new habit of fairy hunting, which is introduced by Mary White, whom Molly describes as looking like a “princess in a fairy tale book” (42). The fairies, uniformly dressed in their “little green jackets and red caps with an owl feather sticking up at a jaunty angle,” disappear just before the girls’ arrival (44), suggesting a world outside of Agate Hill teeming with life, a world that is now beyond both girls’ reach. The fairies’ jackets and caps, along with their introduction into the narrative in close proximity to a “man doll” the girls name Robert E. Lee and marry off to all available female dolls, give the fairies, as well as the girls’ other pastimes, a military flair (45). Children raised in wartime, like most children, are bound to incorporate their cultural milieux into their games, but Mary White and Molly, both particularly isolated children,

do not directly "play war" or even play a feminine homefront version of war. Instead, the girls are drawn to games that rehearse entry into a postbellum society, such as searching for an active, more populated fairy world and marrying a Civil War hero through an unlikely romantic meeting in the game they invent for Robert E. Lee. Mary White, like Molly, has been cut off from cultural capital: she is the illegitimate child of a Yankee soldier and suffers from chronic illness. Both girls lack the embodied, objectified, and institutionalized cultural capital needed to enter antebellum social life, and they cannot envision what they might need to enter a new social order still overpopulated with ghostly armies and underpopulated with marriageable men.

When they are not fairy hunting, the girls happily collect bones of wild and farm animals. Molly comments on this collection: "Here is a possum skull, here is a big cow leg bone, here is a turkey foot ripped off the barn wall where somebody had nailed it, I know this one is cheating" (43). As in Molly's furnishing of the cubbyhole, agency—specifically the act of finding the bones oneself—dominates the game and makes the turkey foot on the barn wall "cheating." The "jewel" of the phenomena collection arrives in the form of a human hand, found with "two finger bones sticking up out of the ground like flower bulbs growing" (53, 52). The girls wrap the bones in honeysuckle, learn their probable origin from Uncle Junius, and place them in what Molly calls "a fancy little box I have had forever, just waiting" (53). Mary White then labels the box "YANKEE BONES, *Property of Mary White Worthington and Molly Petree*" in "very fancy handwriting with many curls and flourishes" (53). In this section of the novel, Molly and Mary White merge their fantasy world with the realities of war and death. Molly compares bones to flowers, imagining them as their own opposite, something about to flourish. She then wraps the bones in flowers, cocooning the artifacts of war in a girl's world of daisy chains and picked bouquets. Last, Mary White and Molly encase these bones in layers of pretty wrappings to transform their meaning, perhaps into something approaching the girls' lost cultural capital.

Aunt Cecelia and the Tableaux Vivants: The Attempt to Restore Embodied Cultural Capital

During her visit to Agate Hill, Aunt Cecelia attempts to restore some sense of lost embodied cultural capital by, in her words, "edifying" Molly

and Mary White on topics such as mythology (66). Cecelia takes the girls to a nearby town to view the *Tableaux Vivants* of The Nine Muses. Molly and Mary White cast the performance in the language of spectacle they have used for the fairies, noting how various light sources—luminaries along the walkway, kerosene lamps in the windows, candles glowing on stage, and lanterns on ropes—create an effect “as dazzling as the sun” (68).

Molly begins with a description of Calliope—“One pretty hand rested on the short sword stuck in the rope at her waist, while she glared off to the side at some oncoming enemy army”—then abruptly moves on: “But the one I most wanted to be was Tragedy, who knelt in an attitude of misery and despair [sic]. Her head was bowed so low that we could not even see her features. She wore a crown of myrtle leaves over her smooth black hair” (69). While Calliope, with her eye toward an “oncoming enemy army,” attracts her attention, Molly does not want to be the muse of epic poetry and rhetoric, despite her penchant for language, her diary writing, and her love of poetry. Here, Molly seems to reject the role of living within war or locked within others’ memories of war. However, her strong attraction to Tragedy, her desire to *be* Tragedy, suggests that Molly may be so deeply mired in her past and the neglect of her upbringing that even her rebellious nature may not lead to her survival. Molly’s choice does not offer the reader hope unless we interpret the attraction to tragedy as a flair for the dramatic or as a way to have a life of drama without being fully on display, to keep one’s head so low “that we could not even see her features,” much like Molly’s dramatic secret life of fairies and furnished cubbyholes. Tragedy’s myrtle crown, with its associations of Venus and love, recalls Molly’s desire for a “demon lover” and subtly foreshadows the tragedy of her marriage to Jacky Jarvis (49). She cannot, however, maintain her fixation on Tragedy, just as she cannot maintain the idea of herself as the “ghost girl” of Agate Hill. After describing all of the other muses in the tableaux, Molly ends with Terpsichore: “Terpsichore wore full white trousers and held a difficult dance pose, to everyones [sic] amazement. Immediately I wanted to be her, instead of Tragedy” (69). This shift suggests that Molly, despite her lost cultural capital, can find her own stage and setting amid extremes, although she too must hold the “difficult dance pose” of navigating her way through a world for which she has not been prepared.

At this point in the novel, in order to move the plot beyond the childhood phase of rehearsing for another life, Smith creates a narrative break. She does so in the form of Nicky Eck, Selena's lover, and his sexual assault of Molly. In her diary entry describing the event—the assault, the rescue by Spence,¹⁰ and the arrival of Simon Black—Molly parts ways with her childhood. As she prepares to leave for Gatewood Academy, she unites her key childhood scenes of rehearsal, writing, "this is the last time I will ever be here in my cubbyhole . . . or consider my collection of phenomena" (121). Smith ends this section of the novel with Molly's ultimate self-denial: "I do not care that the fairy ring is gone from the woods now I do not care that I am leaving my ghosts I am such a bad girl I do not care about anything" (122).

Although Molly renounces the media of her rehearsal for the larger world—cubbyhole, fairies, and Tableaux Vivants—she does not reject the intangible social and personal gains that these spectacles have provided. Readers understand that this is not a return to the kind of self-denial visible at the beginning of the novel. In those cases, Molly denied wanting her mother's possessions and denied the trappings of a lady's life that seemed out of reach. The Tableaux Vivants—along with her own creation of a fairy world, a private cubby-hole, and a collection of phenomena—have offered Molly ways to decide what she will value, as well as to rehearse her values in the absence of embodied cultural capital handed down from family. These skills will serve her well at Gatewood Academy.

Gatewood Academy: Institutionalized Cultural Capital

The Gatewood Academy portion of *On Agate Hill* is called "Paradise Lost," the name chosen by Tuscany Miller, a character who serves as the novel's framing device and link to our contemporary era. Tuscany is a graduate school dropout hoping that the historical papers she has found (Molly's diary and letter), as well as the papers she has sought out (the Gatewood Academy records and legal proceedings from Molly's trial), will allow her to re-enter the "Documentary Studies" program of her North Carolina university. Smith positions the reader as a smarter student of the papers than Tuscany, yet Tuscany seems to have her own brand of cunning as well: she attempts to use the found papers as a form

¹⁰Parrish notes the "victimization of women," often in the form of sexual abuse or rape, as a dominant theme throughout Smith's fiction (*Lee Smith* 183, 206).

of cultural capital that Dr. Ferrell may or may not allow her to translate into institutionalized capital. By framing the story within Tuscany's letters to Dr. Ferrell, Smith aligns the reader with the professor as he opens the box containing the text, a position of judgment and authority, reiterating the power structures implicit in educational systems.

In this way, Smith creates a narrative of an education within a narrative of an education, doubling the emphasis on institutionalized capital and school systems. Both Tuscany and Molly await the educational system to decide their future. Molly, now a ward of the court, must rely completely on the Academy and its representatives in loco parentis. While this situation might seem preferable to the neglect and abuse she faced on the ruined plantation, it also makes Molly particularly susceptible to the type of symbolic violence Bourdieu ascribes to educational systems.

Bourdieu defines symbolic violence as "*the imposition of a cultural arbitrary by an arbitrary power*" (*Reproduction* 5). The process of transmitting a cultural arbitrary in the service of the socioeconomic status quo is what he terms "reproduction," the reproduction of cultural values, structures, mores, aesthetics—"the cultural arbitrary." Reproduction takes place in school systems, churches, families, and other instructive institutions through what Bourdieu names "pedagogic action" (5). Interestingly, pedagogic action does not always reproduce the norms of the dominant group; it may "reproduce the cultural arbitrary of the dominant or of the dominated classes" (5), depending on the habitus of the pedagogic authority (6, 11-12). Hence, a pedagogic authority in a transitional or liminal state, such as Gatewood Academy after the Civil War, would seem to have the potential to produce conflicted results, or an incompletely reproduced cultural arbitrary. For example, Mariah Snow, headmistress of Gatewood Academy, is often too mired in her post-war power struggle with Dr. Snow to attend to Molly fully, and she passes some of her care to the more permissive Agnes.¹¹ Reproduction may also fail when its preconditions are not met. Gatewood Academy cannot inculcate in Molly its middle-class mores because she has not had a childhood that would make her receptive to either the values themselves or the acceptance of the total authority of her teachers.

¹¹Although raised as Mariah's sister, Agnes is actually Mariah's child from a previous relationship, a fact revealed later in the novel.

The reader enters Gatewood Academy with the expectation that a mysterious hero, the benefactor Simon Black, who has rescued our heroine Molly for now, will return as her sexual/romantic partner when she has come of age and obtained an education that will make her suitably ladylike. Mariah supports this view in her journal entries. One could argue that Molly subverts this traditional romantic narrative through her own agency, her own pluck, revealed in her rejection of both Simon Black and a bourgeois marriage, her choice of career as an Appalachian schoolteacher, and her later choice to give up her career and marry an "unsuitable" man. A Bourdieuan analysis of the social conditions of Molly's education, however, reveals a different picture of her choices within this system. Along with his recognition of the symbolic violence inherent in educational systems, Bourdieu theorizes that the "democratization of schooling" is largely a sham in some systems: "schooling as a liberating force"¹² becomes "schooling as a conservative force" (*Distinction* 139). In these cases, "the social identity the school system seems to promise, or the one it offers on a temporary basis" does not match the available social identities, a situation that generates adolescent rebellion (*Distinction* 139). Although Bourdieu was writing about mid-twentieth century French schools, his theory sheds light on Molly's experience. Just as Bourdieu's working-class students are "relegated to second-class courses or eliminated" (139), so too is Molly, fallen from wealth and assumed to be sexually "ruined," relegated throughout this section of the novel to a second-class status that circumscribes her social options and creates an education with a social capital not equal to its institutional capital. In other words, Molly does not necessarily become a lady just because she has been to "lady school."

Many of these inequities take place at the hands of Mariah Snow, who finds herself in a rapidly changing field of power. Mariah ran the school single-handedly during the Civil War (turning a profit in the process) and continues to run most of the day-to-day operations. Dr. Snow, upon his return, begins to make unilateral decisions about the school and its finances, informing Mariah of these decisions after the fact and expecting

¹²Paulo Freire (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*), bell hooks (*Teaching to Transgress, Teaching Community*), and others have written extensively about the potentially liberating force of education when pedagogy is consciously structured in a way that is not politically and socially oppressive. Bourdieu's analysis seems restricted to more conventional pedagogies, with an emphasis on the proffered identities (i.e. "You can be anything!") rather than on particular pedagogies.

her to manage any extra work that his decisions create. One of Dr. Snow's unilateral decisions is to accept Molly, an "unsuitable" girl, for admission because of Simon Black's large financial gifts to the school. Like Lee Smith herself, Molly enters an education field of power in flux, but unlike Smith, Molly does not have the benefit of late twentieth-century social advances for women in education. In the Gatewood Academy power struggle, Mariah repeatedly loses. In her shrinking sphere of influence, she attempts to limit Molly's social and educational opportunities, perhaps because she views Molly as sexually "ruined" like herself.

Mariah, and to some extent her sister/daughter Agnes, continually challenges Simon Black's attempts to purchase institutional capital for Molly with arguments that her social identity makes the reproduction of institutional capital impossible. The opening of the "Paradise Lost" section reveals this conflict with an almost obsessive focus on Molly's belongings. Although Molly has just been sexually assaulted (and an awareness of this event seems to elude Agnes beyond her comment that "something is wrong there" [132]), Agnes focuses on what Molly does not own. She remarks that Molly "will have to be completely outfitted and clothed once we have got her at the Academy. . . . She had almost no clothing and no personal effects. Her pitiful belongings fit into an old haversack we found in the closet" (136). The lack of physical possessions, however, stands in marked contrast to Molly's self-possession, and what may be either the remnants of her formerly leisure-class embodied cultural capital or the capital she has created for herself in the form of fairies and phenomena. Molly seems to have chosen her fantasy world as her true habitus over the squalor Selena provided as her mother figure. Once bathed and dressed for the journey, Molly becomes "like a different girl, head held high, back straight" (137). Agnes sees Molly's new demeanor and makes two somewhat contradictory remarks: "She will be a handful, Mariah" and "I think she has a great deal of natural composure and determination" (137). But given a Bourdieuan lens of cultural capital and symbolic violence through reproduction, these two comments are not contradictory at all. Molly will be "a handful" because she does not have the embodied cultural capital of a girl of her former class: a willingness to bend to authority cultivated since birth. Her "natural" composure and determination, defenses built in the face of neglect and abuse, counter the symbolic violence needed to instill in Molly the cultural capital of upper-middle-class Southern femininity.

The Gatewood Academy papers foreshadow the symbolic violence revealed in the narratives written by Mariah and Agnes. A school mission statement asserts, "The primary object of our course of instruction is to qualify young ladies for the discharge of the duties of subsequent life" (140). In this way, the school would not seem to offer any temporary social identities unavailable after graduation, the kind of temporary offering of social identities Bourdieu links with adolescent rebellion. Instead, with "thorough and rigorous" instruction, the academy seeks "to cultivate in every pupil a sense of her responsibility for time and for eternity" (140). Apparently time and eternity require a lot of accouterments; the same mission statement provides a list of required belongings: "raincoat and rubbers, her own towels and table napkins, 1 pair sheets, 1 bolster case or 2 pillow cases, a counterpane, and a drinking vessel" as well as a long list of "recommended" belongings including "dictionaries of Latin or French, and sheet music" (140). The school makes plain that it primarily prepares young women to be reasonably educated wives and mothers. But Smith, in her construction of the school's mission statement and description, also foregrounds the symbolic violence that will take place, the hidden curriculum of materialism. Gatewood Academy teaches young women to own and care for material things, to learn to live around "nice" things (the kinds that the child Molly vowed never to own), and to relate to others who are interested in the preservation of objects. For the other girls, this is a continued curriculum that began at home, but placing Molly in their midst, with her distinct lack of cultural and embodied capital, highlights the school's silent curriculum. Similarly, Smith uses the school's mission statement to break the narrative flow, creating anxiety about how Molly will obtain the material goods she needs.

Simon Black, perhaps because of his own experiences as a soldier and businessman, immediately grasps both the stated and hidden sets of curricula and uses this knowledge to his advantage in his attempts to remake Molly. When Mariah protests that Molly is not fit to enter the school and will "sully" the other girls, he counters by mentioning the school's stated mission of being a "Christian establishment of charity, of love" (149). He presses his argument by making a large donation to the school, and then instructs that Molly be outfitted so that "no outward distinction can possibly be made between [her] & the others" (149). In this way, he combines the school's own moral rhetoric with its need for capital and the knowledge of what Molly will need to succeed within the

stated and hidden curricula. Once properly outfitted, Molly can begin the process of becoming the lady her mother once was, the lady Simon Black loved. Unfortunately, at least for Black, the shortcut transmission of cultural capital is destined to fail. Molly's "ghost girl" persona remains, setting her apart from those who have acquired various types of cultural capital from their families and home communities. Even with all the right accessories, Molly is treated differently in a myriad of ways, many resulting from the power struggle between Dr. Snow and Mariah Snow. Mariah initially segregates her from the others by making her sleep in a room alone. Later, Molly is passed over for a writing prize, although she is obviously the best writer. Finally, Dr. Snow sexually assaults Molly just after her graduation, causing her to abandon her plan to stay on at the academy as a teacher. Each of these incidents makes plain that Molly cannot truly blend with the other students.

Through Molly, Smith argues that objectified capital combined with institutional capital (all the material things that the other girls have plus a formal education) do not add up to the social capital (marriage prospects and subsequent life as wife and mother) that is the goal of Molly's education. Simon Black believes that the academy can compensate for Molly's ghost-girl youth through a kind of immersion program in upper-middle-class life, but the novel presents a bourgeoisie life constantly just out of Molly's reach, with incidents late in her academic career, just before her entry into the marriage market, particularly marking Molly as different from the other girls. Bourdieu has argued that taste, or distinction, is learned. Without the embodied cultural capital of early youth—the habits of mind and person that would have been passed down had Molly lived in a functioning plantation family—the reproduction of class values via education remains incomplete. Molly cannot be expected to choose (or even to want) a romantic partner and a domestic life associated with values she did not internalize early on, and the later investment of the outward accouterments of these values cannot be expected to retroactively produce the values themselves. To a lesser extent, Gatewood Academy may have failed in its mission regarding Molly because of its lack of cohesion: how can a school with financial difficulties and internal power struggles (signs of ill-reproduced cultural capital in themselves) claim to seamlessly transmit and bolster students' cultural capital? The less-than-ideal fates of several of the other Gatewood Academy students,

as well as the ultimate demise of the school (215), bolster the theory of a more generally ill-reproduced cultural capital at the institutional level.

After Dr. Snow assaults Molly, and Dr. Snow and Mariah conspire to cover up the incident, Agnes and Molly leave Gatewood Academy for Bobcat School, a rural one-room schoolhouse in the Appalachian mountains. Here Smith revisits the familiar territory of *Oral History* and its one-room school, yet readers view the narrative solely from the perspective of the outsider schoolteachers. As Erica Abrams Locklear notes, "Smith recasts the invasive teacher figure" through Molly, moving "past the destructive pedagogical model represented by Richard Burlage (in *Oral History*) and Miss Torrington (in *Fair and Tender Ladies*)" to present "a more hopeful prototype of instruction for mountain students"¹³ (176).

In this transitional section of the book, Molly refuses her wealthy suitor, the aptly named Ben Valiant, the brother of her close friend Eliza, who has been courting her since her Gatewood days. Molly attempts to explain to Agnes her refusal of Ben, remarking that "It's just . . . not . . . right" (238). Molly deems "it" (presumably being married to Ben) and not "him" (Ben himself) "not right." Unspoken in the pauses of this sentence are Molly's months of "unschooling" since Gatewood: she now makes her own money, hears stories from a new friend of women's assertive sexuality, and manages rowdy students who have never before been to school. The "kind of security you have never had" (239), which Agnes begs Molly to consider, no longer appeals when Molly escapes Gatewood and the spell of its promises of cultural capital. A past with little "security" and the incomplete reproduction of cultural capital at Gatewood provide Molly the agency to flout community standards by staying out all night with Henderson Hanes, a wealthy "bad boy" who fits Molly's image of herself as a "bad girl" (250).

But neither Ben Valiant nor Henderson Hanes can compare to Jacky Jarvis for sheer "unsuitability" for a Gatewood young lady. Molly leaves Henderson just before their marriage, even though she barely knows Jacky, a philandering traveling musician. However, it is more than Molly's rejection of the school's cultural capital that leads her to a life of

¹³Locklear argues that the acquisition of new literacies often creates "identity-based dilemmas" for mountain women when their new and old worlds collide, but Molly's own education, despite its trials, "infuses her with a love of learning" rather than a presumption that she will bring to her students superior discourse communities (176).

hardship with Jacky. Her childhood also deeply informs her choice of Jacky as life partner. By preemptively denying herself the embodied and objectified states of cultural capital—the material goods and last remaining vestiges of a ladyhood—while still a child, Molly opens a space for otherworldly spectacle, including her “cubbyhole,” her belief in a world of fairies, her collection of bones and other “phenomena,” and the lasting effects of the *Tableaux Vivants* she witnesses under Aunt Cecelia’s care. Having decided she wants neither babies nor decorative household items she would have to care for, Molly does not bother playing a traditional childhood version of “house” with herself in the role of mother. Instead, she decides that she will have a “demon lover,” which she defines as “a lover who comes in the night to kiss you on the mouth!” (50). With this fantasy-world background, Jacky Jarvis, a “fancy man” (323) musician with a near-mythical reputation for his talents as well as his romantic liaisons, becomes a logical partner for the grown Molly, despite the drop in social status compared to her former beaux.

In this sense, the cultural capital that Molly carefully constructs for herself from a childhood fantasy world of fairies and phenomena entirely trumps the cultural capital, including the institutional capital of an education that promises a lady’s life, purchased by Simon Black. In this development, Smith makes her most feminist move of all, suggesting that girls do not need inheritances or fancy educations in order to invest themselves with the cultural capital they need. She posits a cultural capital that can be collected and stored in physical and metaphorical form by the child-self, to be accessed by the adult woman who has rejected the culture for which she was bred. This choice, however, carries consequences, such as material insecurity, vagrancy, childlessness, the possibility of criminal charges, and social rejection by the community. But Smith leaves us with an unrepentant Molly, one who loudly proclaims the possibilities for women’s agency, possibilities not to be thwarted by the claims of cultural capital. Near the end of her life, Molly declares, “Oh I know what they say about us in town, and I say, the hell with them! I tell you, I don’t give a damn. I have got to be an old woman in the twinkling of an eye, and it is sort of a relief, I can tell you. I do what I want to now” (352).

Yet Molly had often done what she wanted in her younger years as well, avoiding gender proscriptions by remaining slightly outside of traditional educational systems. In many ways, she aligns with Smith and her own classmates, with their somewhat ironic battle cry of “Anarchy

and Arrogance Forever" (98). At the same time that she rejects the symbolic violence of educational systems, Molly also uses the systems for her own purpose—to bolster her agency for a life beyond school. Her actions mirror Smith's own choices to rebel against Hollins's patronizing rules and traditions while also using the school as a "womb" for her new writing identity (Parrish, *Lee Smith* 213; "Interview" 400).

A Bourdieuan analysis combining the usually separate approaches of cultural capital and symbolic violence makes plain the fields of power comprising a young woman's habitus, many of which are gender-specific. As Moi notes, this analysis also allows for an elaboration on the notion of gender as socially constructed (1019). In the case of *On Agate Hill*, the Bourdieuan framework offers a conceptual map of spaces, institutions, and time periods, highlighting both the overlap and the conflict among their fields of power. This analysis uncovers the moments when educational institutions in flux (Hollins College, Gatewood Academy, Bobcat School) transmit incompletely reproduced cultural capital, which amount to cracks in the wall. Through these cracks, new forms of feminine agency can slip, sometimes almost unnoticed. Perhaps Southern studies, with its relative lack of interaction with Theory, becomes a similar field of power in flux, creating opportunities for generative gender theories.

What can Bourdieuan readings like this one offer to gender studies of Southern literature? At their simplest, feminist adaptations of Bourdieu's work can extend the paths already forged in gender studies by Rebecca Mark, Thadious Davis, Minrose Gwin, Anne Goodwyn Jones, Susan Donaldson, Trudier Harris, Patricia Yaeger, and many others. Expanded feminist Bourdieuan studies would explore how race fits into the changing notion of habitus and the acquisition of cultural capital and would examine the material conditions of the production of a text. This new mode of gender theory provides a nuanced framework for layered analysis of all types of power systems, with an eye toward how formal and informal educational experiences shape the social formation of gender. Especially as we venture further into global and material culture approaches, it seems essential to examine the deep connections between gender, cultural capital, social class, sexuality, and educational habitus.

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