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**115 Vernon**

The Journal of the  
Writing Associates at  
Trinity College

## **Editorial Board**

Taylor Denson '13, Elizabeth Preysnor '13, Emma Sternlof '13

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## Writing Philosophy

Sarah Iuli

He raised the tip of his brush, but paused before allowing the color to saturate the paper. Looking over his shoulder at his professor, he asked, “What do you think? The blue, or the violet?” The professor bent down next to the student’s work, studied it for a minute, then said, “What feeling do you want to convey? Think back to when we studied Monet’s use of color in his paintings- how did he use tone to change the feeling of his painting?” The student looked back at the half completed painting in front of him, dipped his brush back into the deep blue, and swiped it across the page.

Writing is a form of art, and like any form of artistry, it involves interaction, communication, and studying the work of others. It is a way of expressing one’s ideas through the communication of words on paper-- ideas that stem from an individual’s interaction between his or her surrounding world and the reaction to the work of others. Where then, do tutors and the methods that we use to tutor students fit into the idea of the writer and her writing represented as an artist and her artwork? It is difficult to know where to begin when attempting to teach writing. Who is to say how it should be taught or learned? It often seems as if the methods that have been adopted for tutoring are either too invasive or not invasive enough. However, I have found that it is possible to merge tutoring methods with this idea of artistry in an effective way, such that the writer’s journey as an artist is both guided and fulfilling.

Upon first glance, using directive and nondirective methods, as described by Peter Carino, in tutoring sessions might not seem to align with the artistry of writing; they deal directly with issues of power and authority in the writing center. If a tutor takes too much power, then

how will the writer be able to fully explore the artistry of writing? If a tutor gives all the power to the student, then how will the writer learn the founding principles of writing as a form of art? However, as Steven J. Corbett suggests, "...if we keep our pedagogy flexible and attuned to one writer at a time, we may better anticipate when to urge a closer rethinking of content or claim, when to pay attention to conventions and mechanics, and how and when to do both" (153). In adopting this flexible mentality, students will both gain the foundations they need as writers and be given the opportunity to fully evolve as artists.

As I have found to be the case in my tutoring sessions, I would argue that with less experienced writers, a more directive approach is necessary. For example, in any introductory level art class, the focus is usually centered around studying and imitating the styles and methods of experienced artists. This gives students direction, an opportunity to do in-depth studies of required skills, and yet still allows for some creativity and self-expression. On the other hand, with more experienced writers, a more nondirective approach can be used. Experienced writers already have the foundation they needed to be successful. Only once a solid foundation is formed can the writer truly begin to explore writing as a form of art.

Writing is a form of artistry, and while the methods that are used to teach writing might not always seem conducive to fostering artistic development, it is helpful to remember that evolving artists require many different levels of guidance. As tutors, we must have an open mind and be able to adjust according to the situation. In doing so, we will hopefully help to mold more perceptive and successful writers.

## **What do We Really Know about Medieval Women?**

Carolina Galdiz

At the onset of this project, I had hoped to do a comparative analysis of women in different social classes. My vision was that sources on the subject would endeavor to discuss women as a group and explore the rich factions that existed within that larger group. Instead, I found that the majority of sources compared women as a whole to men as a whole and rarely spent time comparing women to each other. An analysis of this class was made possible only by comparing the sources filled exclusively with information on noble women to the sources dedicated exclusively to research on manorial women. To some degree, the partiality in the sources might be due to the fact that the majority of the information we have about women from this time period arrives to us after passing through a male lens. This should come as no surprise when we consider that the legal estates of women at the time were based on their relationships to men and the control that specific men could therein exercise over them. In short, men have played an integral role in providing what we know today about the lives of Medieval women both by providing a baseline for their identity, and recording certain details about their lives.

Men's roles as clerks placed them in a unique position to narrate the daily occurrences of their judiciary system. Specifically, men in this job would have been responsible for writing the Manorial Court Rolls or the Records of the King's Justices of the Peace. According to Jewell,

[Manorial court rolls] are probably the best single source for the history of rural women in the Middle Ages, but they are limited to matter relevant to the manorial court, which dealt with manorial tenure, petty crimes such as breaching the assize of ale (and more rarely, bread), illicit gleaning and damaging woodlands, and more sophisticated civil disputes within the tenantry such as breach of contract and unjust detention of goods or animals. (58).

From these rolls, we get a clear picture of the daily life of a manorial woman, who primarily worked in the home and on the estate. It is interesting to note that “27 to 30 percent of the total people appearing, some 600 out of just over 2,000” were women (Jewell 58). Does this indicate that women would have done anything to preserve and add to her family’s resources? Or, rather, does it reflect the dependence of manors on working women at this time? These women were not merely sitting around and playing with the children; they were earnest laborers who toiled on the land. The other people represented on these rolls would have been “richer male tenants...in their capacity as manorial officials and pledges” (Jewell 58). The Records of the King’s Justices of the Peace would have contained similar accounts, but would have reflected the next tier up of society. What does it reveal about Medieval society that our richest source of information about women of the time are the accounts of the crimes they committed? Nonetheless, these records segregate the history by gender and class, providing us with accounts of manorial women’s lives that did not stack up to the laws men that imposed on them.

Conversely, medieval art, both in its function and in its content, clearly illuminates the disparity of lifestyles in women of different social classes. For the noble woman, art could be used as way to wield power. Coss notes, “high-born ladies could be generous patrons” (8). Specifically, he cites Countess Judith’s commissioned Crucifixion scene from the Weingarten Gospel book into which she had herself painted as a penitent before the cross (8). These gestures reinforced their influence despite their womanhood, and served as a visual reminder of the artist’s dependence on them. As we move into the highest social class, we see a subversion of the social assumption that women as a group were inferior to men as a group. Coss offers a more dramatic example of an aristocratic woman flaunting sovereignty when he notes that Juliana de St. Remy, lady of the manor, donated a church to Kenilworth Priory in 1189. At her pronouncement, this wealth was reallocated; She chose freely to manage that asset in that way.

Another artistic arena over which medieval noble ladies had full reign was their seals. This vehicle of self-expression was stamped on hot wax that sealed letters during their delivery, to certify that it had come from the noble person who had signed it. "Ladies' seals were normally oval in shape rather than round as in male equestrian seals" (Coss 38). Although originally "they portrayed the lady as a standing figure," they "soon came to contain heraldry, mirroring those of aristocratic males" (Coss 38). This transition from women marketing themselves as independent individuals, to women attributing their identities to their male ancestors, is telling of women's self-perceptions. In a space where they could define themselves authentically, they chose to do so in a way that associated them to their male houses. One obvious example of this is Eleanor Maudit's seal of 1325, an icon that featured four shields in a circle (Coss 45). These shields showed that "she was of the house of Clare, and that she had married Richard Fitz Marmaduke, Robert de Umfraville and Roger Maudit...In short, there was a considerable freedom as to which relationships might be shown, and why, and how" (Coss 45-6). Joan de Stuteville's seal, for example, "shows her riding side-saddle holding not her husband's but her father's shield, signifying perhaps her status as sole heiress" (Coss 47). Stuteville's was a very unusual choice considering the legal conventions of being a wife, as we will see when we discuss the women's three legal estates.

These two ways in which noble women autonomously interacted with art, as patrons of painters and as artisans of seals, had very different implications. Although both served as benign ways to exhibit their sovereignty, it is important to note a key distinction between the two; the former was public and the latter was private. In public gestures, such as commissioning of artwork or donating buildings, these women seemed to have wanted to disseminate a notion that they enjoyed a certain level of authority. Conversely, when it was a matter of branding themselves, they chose to do so in terms of their male relatives. What is the significance of this inconsistency? What does it tell us about women's self-perception in Medieval times?



In terms of manorial women, artwork of the time should be observed with a critical eye. Jewell notes “Artwork is a fairly dubious source for the countrywoman, for although reapers and wool carders and suchlike are represented, their appearance in luxury manuscripts for the upper classes may have had a touch of the Arcadian about it: the peasants depicted about their tasks seem rather too well dressed” (59). What does this tell us about the society? How should we interpret this misrepresentation of their actual situation? Should we, as modern critics, interpret it as a reflection on the women or a reflection on the artist?

One possible answer to this question can be found when considering the following from Bardsley’s work: “Women brewed ale, wove silk, nursed babies, lent money, sold foodstuffs, sold their bodies as prostitutes, and managed wealthy households. Despite this range of occupations, women’s work had one thing in common: women tended to work at lots of tasks, often simultaneously” (Bardsley 59). Bearing in mind that manorial women in the Middle Ages were so busy that they were forced to multitask, we can conclude that it is unlikely that these women were posing for paintings. Therefore, although the goings-on of their lives were known and recorded in manorial court rolls and the records of the king’s justices of the peace, the artists might not have interacted directly with these women. Consequently, the author may have chosen to fuse the noble woman’s appearance with the hardworking virtue of an aristocratic woman to project an image of the ideal woman. This accurately reflects the cultural lumping together of women as a whole that I observed in my research.

This convergence is further evident in the legal estates of women, in which the influence of men is exceptionally apparent. Mitchell explains that “Legal systems throughout medieval Europe recognized three specific states in women’s lives, based upon marital status. Unlike men, who were either minors (under the legal guardianship of parents or custodians) or men-of-full-age with legal autonomy, women were unmarried maidens, wives or widows” (7). It is important to immediately note that Mitchell opens

her discussion by first articulating men's legal designations, seemingly setting them up as the barometer with which to compare those assigned to women. Additionally, these three groups transcended social class reinforcing the notion the women were merely lumped together. These legal distinctions are only worth making because the person to whom a woman is beholden changes as she moves through the categories. Mitchell continues by explaining each of the three estates of women saying,

In moving among these estates, a woman's legal status changed. Maidens remained under their fathers' control – or that of a guardian – until they married. When married, husbands assumed legal control over their wives. During widowhood, women in post-1066 England – unlike many on the Continent – were released from guardianship and were able to govern themselves and their property without the intervention of a male tutor, although they did not automatically have control over their choice to remarry or to remain single. (7)

Per our class discussion on the first estate, unmarried maidens were prized for their virginity. Most strikingly, we see this in the case of the Virginia of the Physician's Tale, who is sacrificed by her father in order to preserve this virtue when a threat to her virginity is made. Lacking agency of her own, she is completely subject to her father's will, which poses death as the only possible course of action. His decision to force her into martyrdom is completely unchallenged, as if he were ruling over property. His total control is most clear in that he names her Virginia as an extension of himself, Virginius.

Unambiguously, and in accordance with the laws of the time, she belonged to him.

We find an example of a similarly submissive woman in the "wife" estate in *Griselde of the Clerk's Tale*. Here, Chaucer provides us with the unlikely scenario of a marquis, Walter, marrying a peasant woman. He binds Griselde with an oath that she will remain loyal to his wishes regardless of their nature. Despite Walter's many tests, she remains submissive to him and always complies with his decrees. Additionally, although the tale mentions that she is, at times, called upon to adjudicate

disputes amongst the people, this virtue is ultimately projected onto Walter for choosing her and raising her to a position to do so.

The most infamous manifestation of these estates in Chaucer is the Wife of Bath. Socially, this widow masters the art of seduction and knows how to manipulate her resources to get what she wants. She views marriage as an institution of supply and demand and sees herself as an agent in this process. She wields her control over her body as her tool to amass material wealth, which she then consumes as her own discretion. Alison has this agency only because she has the wealth, both physically and financially, to do so. Her complicated character is interestingly explained through the window she gives us into her time as an unmarried maiden, during which she is married off at her father's behest at a very young age. As readers, we must ask ourselves whether this initial experience builds her resiliency as she enters being a widow, or undermines it. It is in asking these questions that we can begin to get a clearer picture of how a medieval woman's sense of self was formed. We can enrich our analysis of this question and circle it back to our initial conundrum of the male lens on female life when we ask why Chaucer characterized her the way he did. What is the effect of the Host's affinity for her? Why did Chaucer change the tale he had originally intended for her and replace it with one that further complicates her? Why are the female characters in the Tales themselves infinitely more static and is that a commentary on how Chaucer perceived that other men perceived women?

To conclude, it is difficult to verify the degree in which the male lens on our sources on female life impact their validity. It is necessary to acknowledge that this barrier to a comprehensive understanding of Medieval women exists. That being said, in researching their lives, we mirror the struggles of women of the time; just as they had to live in a society rampant with male conventions, we must filter through these conventions to find the women that lie beneath.

**The Circus in *Hard Times***  
Lillian Young

In *Hard Times* the circus most obviously represents amusement. As Sleary says, “People must be amused, [...] they can’t be always a worker, nor yet they can’t be always a learner” (Dickens 35). This business of amusement acts as a counter to, and a commentary on, Gradgrind’s prescription of Facts, Facts, Facts (Dickens 5). As Dickens points out, the one thing needful is not Facts but something else. Integral to that something else is amusement. Yet, although what Sleary says is true, the primary purpose of the circus in the novel is not amusement. It does not push forward the narrative by amusing any of the main characters, and its primary contribution to the themes of the novel is not in any philosophy of amusement beyond what Sleary has just put forward. The main purpose of the circus in the novel lies elsewhere.

Sleary’s circus is the first counter to the orderly, efficient world that both Bounderby and Gradgrind represent at this point in the novel. Dickens’s description of the circus is messy and chaotic, with people and objects engaged in all sorts of unusual activities that fail to cohere into any sort of intelligible pattern. Dickens never gives any of the circus acts a clear beginning middle and end, even though in reality they must have had them. This sort of behavior will not fit in the mathematical world that Gradgrind is selling. How do you mathematically calculate the value of a worker whose contribution to the work force is to “dance upon rolling caskets, stand upon bottles, catch knives and balls, twirl hand-basins, ride upon anything, jump over everything, and stick at nothing” (Dickens 31)? You cannot calculate the value of such a thing and you ought not to try. That does not mean that it is valueless.

This is the mistake that Gradgrind makes. He assumes that because the value of the circus cannot be calculated, the circus has no value. For Gradgrind and Bounderby the circus is

“wonder, idleness, and folly” (Dickens 14). That is, it produces nothing useful for them and so they assume that it does no work. This view Dickens specifically rejects. He consistently describes the circus as a craft and a trade. It is difficult and skilled work that people have to train at for a long time. The fact that circus performers learn through apprenticeships is key here. For Bounderby this is a ridiculous notion (Dickens 30), because in his mind there is no reason to apprentice yourself to something useless, to idleness.

For Dickens the value of the circus is in its relations. The circus people have “an untiring readiness to help and pity one another” (Dickens 31) that is missing from the worldview of Bounderby and Gradgrind. This is the crux of the matter for Dickens. They are good people whether or not they participate in the system of production. This is why they are “deserving, often of as much respect, and always of as much generous construction, as the every-day virtues of any class of people in the world” (Dickens 31). It is their compassion that Dickens consistently puts forward as their primary trait, and he makes use of it throughout the novel to move the plot forward. Sleary and the others exhibit more familial love (as distinct from the sort of love Stephen and Rachel have) for Sissy in the first 30 pages than anyone else does in the next 150. It is Sissy’s compassion and love for Louisa that makes her so effective in the second half of the novel. It is also Sleary’s compassion for Sissy that makes him willing to rescue Tom in the end. This is Dickens’s purpose for the community of circus people and the trait that he values most.

Still, Dickens is very much aware that the lifestyle and community that the circus represents is dying. It is an old type that will not survive the industrial revolution. The concept of apprenticeship is again important. The circus people are skilled craftsmen. They need the institution of apprenticeship to learn their skills. The major feature of the industrial revolution is

that skilled craftsmen were replaced by unskilled laborers. Dickens is as aware of this as anybody, and his answer is not to go back to the pre-industrial organization. All Stephen Blackpool wants to do is work at his power-loom in peace and marry Rachel, and Dickens validates that. The industrial type of work is not in and of itself the problem.

This can be seen in the fact that Dickens does not choose circus life for Sissy. Circus life is brutal. It requires balms and oils and broken bones and occasionally drives a man to abandon his daughter. When Sissy leaves the circus to live with Gradgrind, Sleary says to her, "You'll make your fortune, I hope, and none of our poor folkth will ever trouble you" (Dickens 34). This acknowledges that Sissy has a better chance in the life that Gradgrind can give her than she would have had in the circus.

Dickens's descriptions of circus people also indicate that their lifestyle is not the primary model of a good life. Dickens describes Sleary as "with one fixed eye and one loose eye, a voice (if it can be called so) like the efforts of a broken old pair of bellows, a flabby surface, and a muddled head that was never sober and never drunk" (31). Sleary, like the other people of the circus, is physically infirm. He has a voice that is fading away and barely functions as such. Sleary's lisp is a constant reminder of this and gives him the sense of someone who never quite gets through. Like the circus, Sleary's voice is more the memory of a thing than it is the vital, dynamic thing itself. Sleary's drinking, which Dickens emphasizes in Sleary's last scene (217-8) serves a similar purpose. Sleary is never quite all there. He is always on the edge of fading away.

This characteristic of the circus as fading is evident in its use in the plot. It emerges long enough to deposit Sissy and make an impression, and then the reader does not see it again until the end. There it comes forward to save Tom, and then disappears from the lives of the main characters in Dickens's final description. The reason for this is that the circus represents the old

form of labor and community. The circus then fades out again in Dickens's final description because there is no real place for it in Dickens's world, except perhaps as a reminder. Sleary both at the beginning and the end says, "Make the best of it; not the worst" (Dickens 35 and 218). He does not want to fit into Gradgrind's city or his life. The circus is past the edge. Dickens does support industrial society, so long as it does not lose its humanity. The circus, as a pre-industrial form of labor, is not the ideal and Dickens is aware that it is outdated. Yet he insists that the wise thing and the kind thing is not to be cross with it (Dickens 218) for falling behind, not to try to fold it into industrialized life, but to allow it to exist separately and to take from it the qualities that the industrialized city needs.

The gentle compassion that Dickens associates with the circus should be carried over into the industrial world. Sissy is one very real way in which values are transferred from one to the other. The old form is also necessary to rescue Tom, because the industrial world has very little room for mercy interfering with law and order. Gradgrind and Louisa could not have circumvented the law in that way. As modern people, they do not have the tools, but need to call on an older type of person and an older set of values for help. The circus's main value to the plot is not in bringing amusement but in bringing compassion in the form of Sissy and help in a time of need. As Sleary says, "there is a love in the world, not all self-interest after all, but something very different" (Dickens 218). Gradgrind recognizes this in the form of "Faith, Hope, and Charity" (Dickens 221). These, not facts, were always the things that were needful in order to counter the problems of the industrial city. The circus, in depositing its best qualities into the industrial world, has made the place human.

## Financial Investment as Part of a Christian Ethic

Lillian Young

All Christians are called to live as a reflection of their faith in Christ. Matthew says, “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. [...] In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”<sup>1</sup> With God in mind, the Christian must make decisions in light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That includes decisions about economics. One difficulty that arises when talking about financial investment from a Christian perspective is that the main purpose of investment is to increase the wealth of the investor. People invest their money in companies primarily for the sake of gaining a return. At the same time, the acquisition of wealth for its own sake is highly suspect. How does the ethical Christian balance an activity like investment with the principle of radical giving that appears in the Bible and church tradition? The Gospel of Christ expresses itself in certain concrete principles that define the kind of relationship a Christian ought to have with God, with the world, and with other people. These principles are faith, hope, and love, and they can help Christians create a sound ethic of investment.

First, “God created the heavens and the earth.”<sup>2</sup> What people have is not theirs alone, but has been given to them. These gifts come with a responsibility. The Bible describes a series of covenants that express that responsibility in different terms, but the message is always the same. God is giving these things to you and you will do something in return. The idea that the gifts of God come with a responsibility to use them wisely is the basis for the notion of stewardship.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 5:14,16 (ESV).

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 1:1.



Critics of the stewardship ethic have accused it of being synonymous with mastery,<sup>3</sup> but that is not a full interpretation of the doctrine. As Luke says, “Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.”<sup>4</sup> The gifts of God are not license for abuse, though some have interpreted them that way. A robust stewardship ethic provides obligations that are in proportion to privileges. The ethical Christian has to keep in mind the fact that nothing is his own. It has been given to him as part of a trust, a covenant. People must keep faith with that covenant, and so have faith in God.

Second, because God created the world and people in it, that creation is good. The creation story in Genesis 1 ends, “And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.”<sup>5</sup> The world and the people in it are, as created, essentially good. This does not mean that the world is perfect. It is a fallen world, and the people are fallen in it. There are now sin and death, which did not exist at the beginning and will not exist in the end. Things can and do go terribly wrong, but this does not change the fact that there is something essentially good in the way the world has been constructed. After the great flood, which is the most widespread and devastating natural event that is described in the Bible, “The LORD said in his heart, ‘I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man’s heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done.’”<sup>6</sup> The earth and the living things in it have value to God beyond the intentions of people. Whether man is good or not, creation is good. This has been borne out by the prevailing theology. Any kind of radical dualism, where the world is evil, has been rejected since the earliest days of the church.

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<sup>3</sup> Georges Enderle, “In Search of a Common Ethical Ground: Corporate Environmental Responsibility from the Perspective of Christian Environmental Stewardship,” *Journal of Business Ethics* 16, no. 2 (1997): 176-7, accessed January 26, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25072880>.

<sup>4</sup> Luke 12:48.

<sup>5</sup> Genesis 1:31.

<sup>6</sup> Genesis 8:21.

In addition to the world being good, people have the capacity to be good, “for God made man in his own image.”<sup>7</sup> A man’s intentions may be evil, but he was still created in the image of God, and he cannot be pushed aside. Further, it is important to remember that from a Christian perspective, people have been, or are being, redeemed by Christ. Sin and death still exist, but they are defeated by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. At the very least this means that there is hope for the future of mankind. As Jeremiah says, “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.”<sup>8</sup>

Third, Christians are called to be concerned about others in addition to or before themselves. Christians do not exist in isolation. They were made for and ideally live in community. This is not unique to Christian groups, but it is a strong value within Christianity. People are naturally, by God’s design, intended to be social and function better when they are working together in groups. Ecclesiastes says, “Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow.”<sup>9</sup> Paul’s classic metaphor for this is that the church is the body of Christ, and “if one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.”<sup>10</sup> People are not only part of the community to which they belong, they are also fundamentally affected by that community; it helps them to become who they are. This means that in community people can be either built up or stomped down. Paul uses the language of building up to instruct the members of his churches in their relationships with one another. In this way Christians must be mindful of the ways that their actions affect the people around them.

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<sup>7</sup> Genesis 9:6, see also Genesis 1:27.

<sup>8</sup> Jeremiah 29:11.

<sup>9</sup> Ecclesiastes 4:9-10.

<sup>10</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, specifically 12:26.

## **Red Tomatoes**

Jackie Sanders

I see this woman every Saturday morning at the farmer's market I work at. I sell flowers and corn on the cob with my ma and little sis. This woman, I think her name is Janie. I've heard her say it once or twice. She pulls up alone in a green Ford pick up that's seen better days. She's probably in her fifties or so, at least she looks it. Shoulder-length grey hair with slight crow's feet at the corners of her eyes.

Every time she comes to the market, she only stops at one stand. She gets out of her truck, slowly. Sometimes she doesn't get out of her car for a good five minutes, instead she's smiling in the rearview mirror and talking to herself or something. She wears no makeup, as far as I can tell, except for this bright, bright red lipstick. She always has it on. I think it makes her look real pretty, like how I want to be someday. When she finally gets out of her car, she's looking at her feet and whispering to herself. She walks past my stand, and I can tell she knows where she's going.

When she approaches the stand, she starts wringing her hands. She sometimes closes her eyes and you can see her chest moving up and down. I think she's trying to calm her nerves. She walks over, and stands in front of the owner, Henry. He's a great guy and really nice to my family.

Henry is strong and has broad shoulders. He wears flannel shirts and worn-in jeans with mud stains on them. But he's not a tough guy. His eyes are friendly and his handshake is firm. He's got little family, if any. I've never seen them. When Janie approaches his stand, his face breaks into a huge grin. Whenever I get the chance, I sneak over to hear them speak.

“The usual?” he’ll ask her. She’ll move her head up and down so fast I wonder if it hurts. He usually does the talking, while she just nods or smiles or laughs nervously.

Henry sells tomatoes, the biggest and juiciest ones I’ve ever seen. Their bright red color is the same shade as Janie’s lips. He puts 4 or 5 in a brown burlap sack for Janie. I think he chooses the best ones for her. Once his hand brushed hers and she turned red. About the same color as her lips too. It’s romantic I think, how she seems to like Henry. I hope I find someone like that one day.

She leaves pretty soon after she gets her tomatoes. I can tell she wants to talk more but she can’t think of anything else to say. When she leaves she walks at a faster pace. She’s no longer wringing her hands and she looks around to see the other people at the market.

When she gets near her car she turns around and peeks behind her shoulder one last time. At this point you can only make out the distinct red on her lips and in her sack. She approaches a tin garbage can, and opens up the lid. Slowly, she empties the tomatoes from the bag into the can. One by one they tumble and their redness disappears. I wonder if I should tell Henry she doesn’t keep his tomatoes, but I’m afraid then that their love story won’t come true. After, she tucks her sack under her shoulder and walks back to her car. I know she’ll be back next week.

*Trauma as a Vehicle for Sympathy*  
Jackie Sanders

In Patricia Highsmith's *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, main character Tom Ripley continuously makes decisions that jeopardize himself and those around him. He is first introduced hiding from the police, vulnerably seeking shelter from the world. As the novel progresses, more information about Tom's traumatic past appears. His scarring childhood and repeated failures haunt him and influence every decision he makes, and the attempted repression of these events only helps in subconsciously motivating his psychopathic mind. However, this hurt and humiliation in the past make him appear weak, vulnerable and more captivating to readers. His suffering serves as an outlet that we, as readers, use to justify his actions. Ultimately, Highsmith uses Tom's traumatic past as a mechanism to make readers sympathize with him, despite his villainous energy.

Tom's heartbreaking stories of childhood circle around his Aunt Dottie's tough love towards him. He shows readers Aunt Dottie's harshness by remembering the time she called him a sissy. He reflects, "Aunt Dottie insisted that his upbringing had cost her more than his father had left in insurance, and maybe it had, but did she have to keep rubbing it in his face? Did anybody human keep rubbing a thing like that in a child's face?" (40). Anyone who reads this type of raw emotion cannot help but feel sorry for Tom. At the point when he says this, we are unaware of what he will do in the future, so we have no reason not to sympathize. By mentioning Aunt Dottie's resentment of his father, he also inadvertently hints at his father's weakness. His father's money could not even take care of his child, and that is failure to Aunt Dottie, and, as a

result, Tom begins to feel the burden as well. From this first retrospection, readers are on Tom's side and hope that the future brings him more happiness.

Tom's description of Aunt Dottie leads to more information about Tom's relationship with his deceased parents. Because both his mother and father died when he was so young, he immediately switches into a family full of women. He lacks any sort of male role-model, and this matriarchal upbringing subconsciously hurts him more than he realizes. When Herbert Greenleaf proposes the quest to Italy, Tom enjoys the attention given to him. For the first time in his life, he has a father figure who supports him. After Mr. and Mrs. Greenleaf give him a going-away basket, he reflects, "to him, they had always been something you saw in florists' windows for fantastic prices and laughed at. Now he found himself with tears in his eyes, and he put his face down in his hands suddenly and began to sob" (37). Here, Tom is so touched by even the simplest signs of affection. Highsmith has Tom not only cry, or have one tear fall down his cheek, but actually sob. The power in this emotion really reaches the core of Tom, and reflects back to his parents' absence. Of course, he knows that the Greenleaf's support him because he plans to bring back their son, but in turn Mr. Greenleaf's obvious affection drives Tom's fascination with Dickie and deepens his desire to takeover his life. Here, Highsmith paints the picture that Tom is more deserving of loving parents than Dickie, because Dickie does not even want any contact with them. The readers, again, feel sympathy towards Tom and see his vulnerable sobbing as a sign of humanity and a result of repressed feelings.

The audience's compassion appears again when Tom is trying on Dickie's clothes and Dickie angrily walks in. Reading it from Tom's perspective, we almost feel angry with Dickie for reacting so negatively because we can justify Tom's actions. We, as readers, know of Tom's past and have seen fragments of his history, and seeing the episode from Tom's traumatized

point of view gives us a rationale. Even though Tom's behavior is abnormal, his faulty childhood explains his reasoning and leaves readers hoping Dickie does not hate him.

As the novel continues and Dickie lashes out at Tom more frequently, Tom's thoughts fill with self-doubt. Right before Tom kills Dickie, Dickie yells at Tom a final time and quotes a line of William Wordsworth's poem in order to insult Tom. This insult obviously affects Tom, as Highsmith writes, "it startled Tom, then he felt that sharp thrust of shame... he remembered Aunt Dottie's taunt: *sissy! He's a sissy from the ground up. Just like his father!*" (96). Here, both Aunt Dottie and his father reappear; Aunt Dottie's insult still remains and continues to pop up in Tom's mind whenever he feels upset, and his father's absence hangs around in a ghostly manner. Dickie found the line in one of Marge's poetry books that he borrowed from her. By having Dickie use an insult that indirectly pairs himself with Marge, Highsmith preys on Tom's self-worth. Tom's biggest fear is Marge, who threatens to take Dickie and everything else away from him.

Although the future only brings more trouble for Tom, readers again cannot help but sympathize with him during Freddie's murder. Freddie shows up to Tom's apartment unannounced, and Tom begins to panic. Tom describes Freddie as "the kind of ox who might beat up somebody he thought was a pansy, especially if the conditions were as propitious as these. Tom was afraid of his eyes" (136). This intimidating description of Freddie makes us worry about Tom's safety, and how he will defend himself if challenged. It portrays Freddie as the "bad guy," while Tom is the weakling, and the supposed victim. Once again, from knowing about Tom's weaknesses and past failures, the audience feels nervous about Tom's defense. When Tom suddenly attacks Freddie, Highsmith describes, "he hit the neck again and again, terrified that Freddie might only be pretending and that one of his huge arms might suddenly

circle his legs and pull him down” (137). Here, readers are not hoping Freddie will wake up and kill Tom, because the murder is seen from Tom’s point of view. The raw emotion makes his vulnerability apparent throughout the course of violence. The way Highsmith uses the words “terrified” and “pretending” show Tom’s paranoia and fear that only results after constant failure. Reading this, we feel so immersed in the action that our hearts beat faster, hoping that Tom’s repeated striking has some sort of impact (both literally and figuratively.) His traumatic past plays on our soft spot for him and as a result we do not see it as a merciless beating.

Ultimately, brief glances into Tom’s rocky childhood give readers a reason to have a soft spot for Tom and, as a result, sympathize with him. We, as observers of Tom’s mind, admire his dexterity throughout the novel, despite his troubled history. However, we do not initially realize this trauma fuels his paranoia and ultimately drives him to murder Dickie and Freddie. He feels that the only way to escape his past is to assume a new identity without a broken family or cowardly thinking. When we finally realize at the end that we are sympathizing with deranged man, Highsmith’s writing capability emerges. No matter what Highsmith makes Tom feel or act upon, she knows her readers will believe in him and, perhaps even subconsciously, hope he succeeds. Her ability to manipulate readers into sympathizing with a psychopath is an immensely powerful tool in which she uses to envelop her audience into the crime.