

THESIS GUIDELINES

Department of English and Foreign Languages

The master's thesis is the capstone requirement for the M.A. degree in English. In it, you will demonstrate your mastery of the conventions of a scholarly or creative sub-field. Depending on your specialization, the finished thesis will be either a scholarly essay or a substantial creative work. Writing a master's thesis in the literature specialization requires that you become familiar with current scholarly debates, available scholarly resources and develop a good working knowledge of research methods. You will organize your ideas and present them in a single, unified argument in critical prose. In the creative writing specialization, your thesis will be a creative work or body of works demonstrating your knowledge of the stylistic conventions of the genre within which you are working and a knowledge of the relevant contemporary works in that genre.

Writing a thesis will further your understanding of the breadth and depth of advanced work in English and the humanities. Writing a thesis also:

- _ Helps prepare students to pursue a Ph.D. or M.F.A. by refining the reading and writing skills necessary for professional scholarly or creative publication.
- _ Provides prospective teachers in secondary education and community colleges with requisite knowledge, skills and credentials.
- _ Prepares students for future engagement with a wider scholarly and creative community through publication. Publication is not required for the successful completion of your thesis, but some stages in the process will require you to demonstrate familiarity with your subject area's publication standards and conventions.

Your thesis must demonstrate your ability to conceive a project of professional quality as well as prove your familiarity with the current, relevant critical and creative conversation. It must also make a sustained attempt to contribute to the larger intellectual conversation in the subject area you choose. Creative projects should reflect the writer's knowledge of the current trends and practices of the genre to which his or her project belongs. For instance, a collection of poems in the style of John Keats could be perceived as reflecting the writer's failure to have satisfactorily researched the contemporary practice of poetry. (Consult the UWF library for model theses).

You must submit in sequence THREE separate documents to satisfy the departmental thesis requirement:

- _ a letter of intent,
- _ a formal prospectus, and,
- _ a thesis approved by your thesis director and reader, the department chair, and the dean of the Graduate School.

Your finished scholarly thesis should be between 20 and 30 pages long (creative projects may vary) and conform to the *UWF Thesis Guidelines* (available online at the following web address: http://uwf.edu/graduate/theses_dissertations.html). In all three documents you submit, MLA format and documentation are required. An example of a letter of intent and prospectus are provided in attachments A, B and C of this document. Other examples are available in the English and Foreign Languages department office. Completed theses are available in English and Foreign Languages department office and the UWF library.

The time between the initial submission of your letter of intent and the final registering of the thesis varies from student to student. Generally, you should expect to work on your thesis for two terms from the time you initially submit your letter of intent to the English and Foreign Languages department chair. If your thesis is not completed and approved within three years of the initial submission of your letter of intent, you will be required to restart the thesis process.

Thesis Guidelines

- _ According to Graduate School regulations, you must be registered for at least one thesis hour each semester while working on your thesis. This will allow continued access to UWF library facilities and faculty consultation.
- _ You are required to complete a total of three thesis hours (ENG 6971).
- _ These credit hours may be used to count for three of the required 33 master's degree hours.
- _ You may register for no more than one thesis hour in advance of the approval of your formal prospectus by your director and reader.
- _ You are not permitted to register for thesis hours if you have not completed the thesis within three years from the first submission of your letter of intent.
- _ Thesis direction and evaluation cannot be completed during the summer terms without the prior and full consent of your thesis director and reader.

The following are required to complete the master's thesis:

- A. Letter of Intent**
- B. Initial Meeting with Thesis Director and Reader**
- C. Prospectus and Annotated Bibliography.**
- D. Evaluation of Prospectus**
- E. Prospectus Follow-up Meeting**
- F. Drafting, Revision, and Completion of Thesis**
- G. Registering Your Thesis**

A: Letter of Intent

You must first submit a letter of intent to the English and Foreign Languages department secretary. The purpose of this letter is to encourage you to formulate and declare your plans for the thesis. This document will be reviewed by the chair and Graduate Committee who will then identify your thesis director and one reader. You are encouraged to speak with potential directors or readers in advance of submitting your letter of intent. If a faculty member has expressed an interest in serving as a director or reader, you should indicate this in the letter. The chair, however, reserves the right to recommend the appointment of a director and reader according to the professional expertise and workload within the department. Once a decision has been made, the chair will notify you of your thesis director and reader. The thesis director will be your primary contact during the remainder of the entire process. Your director will help you to design and revise your prospectus and will act as your principal consultant in the composition of your thesis.

Your letter of intent should be a one-page memo to the chair stating:

- _ Your subject (i.e. an analysis of poetry penned by WWI soldiers, an exploration of Shakespeare's Moors, the writing of a collection of poetry).
- _ The specific texts you will examine, the question(s) you will raise, and the provisional claim(s) or contribution you will make (for example, if you have chosen combat poetry of WWI, which poems will you look at? What dimension of combat poetry of WWI will you investigate? What will you argue?).
- _ Why you think the subject worthy of investigation.

B: Initial Meeting with Thesis Director and Reader:

Once you have received notification from the Chair naming your director and reader, you must arrange to meet with them to discuss the writing of your prospectus. At this point, you and your director will a) establish the goals for and form of your thesis, and b) set a deadline for the formal submission of your prospectus.

C: Prospectus and Annotated Bibliography:

You are required to submit a formal prospectus to your director and reader that consists of the following items:

- _ A three to five-page project prospectus. This prospectus should, more clearly than your letter of intent, identify the scope and target of your project. A clear statement of thesis/purpose as well as a paragraph

discussing your intended audience must be included. As part of your paragraph on audience, you are required to identify one journal you believe might be interested in publishing your project once it is completed. A good source to consult is the MLA Directory of Periodicals. To your prospectus, append a photocopy of the journal's mission statement and submission requirements (this information is typically supplied in the opening or closing pages of any journal). Again, please note that publication is not a requirement for the successful completion of a master's thesis.

_ An annotated bibliography of at least twenty items relating to your project (divided into primary and secondary works). In constructing this list, you are required to consult with both director and reader who will provide you with a partial list of works to include in your annotated bibliography.

When you submit your prospectus, be sure to ask your director when you may expect your committee to have completed their evaluation of your prospectus.

D: Evaluation of Prospectus:

Once you complete and submit the prospectus, your director and reader will meet to evaluate your prospectus. At this point, your director and reader may require substantial revisions of the prospectus before they will allow the project to proceed to the drafting stage of your thesis.

E: Prospectus Follow-up Meeting:

Once the director and reader have finished reading and evaluating your prospectus, you must arrange to meet with your director to discuss your prospectus. In this meeting, your director will provide you with comments, suggestions for revisions, and additional readings. Again, your director may require that you substantially revise your prospectus and resubmit. Once the prospectus is formally approved, and under consultation with your director, you will be required to set a schedule for completion taking into account the deadlines concerning theses set by the College of Arts and Sciences as well as the University Office of Research.

F: Drafting and Completion of Thesis:

After you obtain approval from the thesis director to proceed with your thesis, you will work primarily with the director until the final stages of composition. The number of drafts you produce is entirely up to the discretion of your thesis director. You will be expected to meet regularly with your director about your progress. When you submit the last draft of the completed thesis to the director, the director will critique it and send it on to the reader who will add comments and return it to the director. The director will then consult you about the suggested modifications. You will then proceed to compose your final draft, taking into

consideration the recommendations of the thesis director and reader and following the *UWF Thesis Guidelines*. Once approved by your thesis director, the final draft will then be submitted to a university reader, examined for conformity to university standards and returned to the thesis director. At this point, the draft will be awarded "pass with no revisions," "pass with revisions" (returned to you for additional corrections before you formally register your thesis), or "fail."

G: Registering Your Thesis:

Consult the *UWF Thesis Guidelines* (see http://uwf.edu/graduate/theses_dissertations.html) for the final steps in registering your thesis.

SAMPLE LETTER OF INTENT

Robert Yeager, Chair
Department of English and Foreign Languages
University of West Florida
11000 University Parkway
Pensacola, FL 32514

November 17, 2009

Dr. Yeager,

I am submitting this letter to state my intentions for my master's thesis which I would like to begin in the Spring 2010 semester. I have previously submitted a paper for ENG 5009 in which I examine Angela Carters novel *Wise Children*, and I would like to expand this paper into my thesis.

Carter's novel chronicles the lives of the illegitimate twin daughters of a Shakespearean actor. The illegitimacy of the daughters creates problems for them in establishing their identities as part of their father's famous acting family. The satirizing of William Shakespeare's plays and Sigmund Freud's works in this novel suggests that Carter is critiquing the concept of constructed identity, particularly the construct of the literary canon. In my thesis, I intend to show how Carter uses satire to question the construct of "greatness" and emphasize the need to break from such socially constructed identities.

The primary sources I will use in my examination of *Wise Children* are Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* and Sigmund Freud's "Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria ("Dora")." Since the narrator of *Wise Children* is named Dora and the novel alludes to a variety of Freud's theories, I feel this work by Freud is significant to the novel. Butler's work emphasizes gender and sexuality as factors of identity formation and will be critical to my thesis since the main characters of the novel break from the traditional concepts of gender and sexuality.

I look forward to hearing from you soon and would like to begin working on my thesis as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

SAMPLE THESIS PROSPECTUS

Norman Merit

The University of West Florida

MA Thesis Proposal

28 Mar. 2002

“History Will Bear Me Out!”: The Voice of the Torture(d) in J. M. Coetzee’s Waiting for the Barbarians
“The night is best: sometimes when you have difficulty in falling asleep it is because your ears have been reached by the cries of the dead which, like their writings, are open to many interpretations.” (Coetzee, Waiting 110)

J. M. Coetzee’s Waiting for the Barbarians, a novel filled with ambiguity and images of hopeless despair, seems to suggest that the violence inspired by the dichotomy of Empire and Barbarian, of *self* and *other*, is inescapable. Recent analyses by critics such as Susan Van Zanten Gallagher and Michael Valdez Moses focus on the issue of torture and suggest that Waiting for the Barbarians presents a move in Coetzee’s fiction away from the particular situation of South African apartheid and toward a general critique of (self-termed) “civilized” government.¹ Gallagher’s article “Torture and the Novel: J. M.

¹ Also see Barbara Eckstein, “The Body, the Word, and the State: J. M. Coetzee’s Waiting for the Barbarians” in Novel: A Forum on Fiction 22.2 (Winter 1989): 175-98; and Erhard Reckwitz, “‘I Am Not Myself Anymore’: Problems of Identity in Writing by White South Africans” in English in Africa 20.1 (May 1993): 1-23. Eckstein’s deconstructionist argument seeks to allay the “fear of uncertainty and the hostility toward deconstruction” (176), instead focusing on “politics and the political novel” while still “question[ing] the metaphysics of presence which pursued *the truth*” (177). From this perspective, Eckstein posits that torture—or at least its effect, pain—escapes pain, for “the person in pain cannot doubt it” (179); however, the language which describes torture and pain (re)presents the deconstructionist problem, so Eckstein views Coetzee’s novel as examining “the differences between, and difference within, body and voice” (185). Reckwitz shares Gallagher and Moses’s view that Waiting for the Barbarians

Coetzee's Waiting for the Barbarians" proposes that Coetzee's novel provides a discussion of representations of torture, the tortured, and the torturer, suggesting that Coetzee resolves the split between the tortured and the torturer by "eliminating the distinction between 'them' and 'us,' the evil and the innocent," resulting in "an assertion that everyone is guilty" (284).² While this universal guilt presents, from one perspective, a hopeless view from which torture is an inescapable aspect of "civilized" society, Gallagher concludes her article on a hopeful note, proposing that this guilt causes people to recognize their need to articulate "the truth about this kind of oppression" as well as their own inability to do so (285).³ I intend to take up discussion of this point where Gallagher leaves off by suggesting that the moment noted above, in which the Magistrate constructs various interpretations of unintelligible markings on wooden slips at Colonel Joll's insistence, provides such a glimmer of hope by creating a space in which the victim of torture can have a voice, a space where the pain of those forcibly silenced by Empire can be represented.

In The Lives of Animals, Coetzee's fictional novelist Elizabeth Costello points out the guilt of all members of a society in which atrocities occur, emphasizing that these individuals repress their guilt for the sake of their own sanity yet insisting that their repressed knowledge destroys their own humanity. Costello prefaces her lecture, a philosophic approach to the discourse of animal rights, with remarks about the Holocaust of World War II, suggesting that, while the people who lived in the countryside surrounding Nazi concentration camps "might have known" what was happening within the camps, "in another sense they did not know, could not afford to know, for their own sake" (Coetzee, Lives 19). Albeit an act of self-preservation, this repression is inexcusable for Costello: "It was and is inconceivable that people who *did not know* (in that special sense) about the camps can be fully human" (21). Similarly, in his acceptance escapes the setting of South Africa to become "decontextualized" (9), but Reckwitz asserts that this refusal to follow a directly allegorical pattern underscores the emptiness left by the reliance on an *other* to define the *self*.

² Also, see the chapter "The Novelist and Torture: Waiting for the Barbarians" in Gallagher's A Story of South Africa: J. M. Coetzee's Fiction in Context (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1991).

³ Certainly, the discussion concerning the possibility for the victim of torture to have a voice involves a response to the questions of representation raised in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?"

speech for the Jerusalem Prize in 1987, Coetzee asserts that the systems of colonialism and apartheid in South Africa have brought about “a deformed and stunted inner life” and that “[a]ll expressions of that inner life [. . .] suffer from the same stuntedness and deformity” (Doubling 98).⁴ In a society based on force and oppression, the human spirit is no longer human, but deformed, and this deformity applies in a general way, including all members of society—from the overt wielders of power to the silent who proclaim to be uninvolved. And in Waiting for the Barbarians, the Magistrate tells himself, “When some men suffer unjustly [. . .] it is the fate of those who witness their suffering to suffer the shame of it” (136). Guilt is universal, then, but Coetzee also asserts, in an interview with David Atwell, that, in the contest between “the authority of the dying and the authority of the classics,” in the contest between the oppressed and the oppressors, “the outcome [. . .] is irrelevant,” suggesting instead that “[w]hat matters is that the contest is staged, that the dead have their say” (Doubling 250). The act of speech itself, the re-presentation of the silenced, becomes an act of triumph, an act of—or at least toward—social healing.

My intended audience for “History Will Bear Me Out!”: The Voice of the Torture(d) in J. M. Coetzee’s Waiting for the Barbarians, includes professional scholars of the contemporary novel and advanced students of literature. The journal I have identified as one for which this article might be suitable is Twentieth-Century Literature. Please see the photocopied information on submissions to the journal attached to my proposal.

⁴ For an examination of images of deformity and disability in Coetzee’s text, see Ato Quayson, “Looking Awry: Tropes of Disability in Post-Colonial Writing” in Rod Mengham, ed., An Introduction to Contemporary Fiction: International Writing in English since 1970 (Cambridge: Polity P, 1999), 53-68. Quayson suggests that the Magistrate, feeling contradictory feelings of obsession and repulsion toward the barbarian girl, “seems to be in an odd position of psychological denial” in which he “simultaneously desires her to be without the marks of torture” and “[seems] to be attracted to her because of them” (59-60).

SAMPLE THESIS PROSPECTUS – WRITING TRACK

Nick Rupert

Proposal for “Unreal Cities”: A Collection of Short Stories

Post-apocalyptic art appeals to me through its mythical function, resurrecting and restructuring fictional visions of the past and future rather than attempting literal predictions. Though “Unreal Cities,” my proposed collection of short stories, expresses post-apocalyptic tendencies, it falls short of acknowledging any true disaster or holocaust. “Unreal Cities” will include three short stories set within a fictional, somewhat atemporal American landscape. Though each story will occupy a specific time period, several decades pass between each piece, such that the combined narratives and their political environments generate a fictional history. Western culture remains fascinated with the prospect of its own destruction, whether by pathogen, natural disaster, or technological cataclysm. Filmic disasters and holocausts continue to saturate cinema, while mainstream literature seems inclined to match pace. Though these films inevitably fail to project realistic prophecies, Western culture maintains an obsession with its own ruination.

As a writer, I have been influenced by authors ranging from difficult social theorists to lowly-regarded science fiction dabblers. My prose style shifted after I studied Kurt Vonnegut’s *Slaughterhouse-Five*. I came to the conclusion that Vonnegut’s humor drifts like a thin sheet of ice over a deep, cold pool of underlying sobriety. His humor is never dismissive, and seldom cheap. Sarcasm and satire offer dim relief to Dresden and the novel’s more ancillary tragedies. In this capacity, Vonnegut’s fresh voice resonated with me in a way that other canonical writers could not. His work demonstrates the possibility of expressing humor without becoming irrelevant. I do not attempt to reproduce Vonnegut’s wit any more than his trademark metafictional intrusions. However, like the fiction of Vonnegut and George Saunders, my body of work does attempt to navigate between humor and tragedy. In his novel *Timequake*, Vonnegut’s fictionalized persona fears that he and his character Trout both create caricatures rather than characters. This is a problem to consider in my own fiction as well; characters must be colorful, but not cartoonish.

I aim for “Unreal Cities” to resist generic classification into science fiction or post-apocalyptic fiction. Its satirical devices, I hope, will attract a somewhat progressive fiction market. In short, my audience includes readers who pursue or

are willing to tolerate satire. My goals for thesis publication are ambitious. I plan to submit at least one short fiction piece to *Virginia Quarterly Review*. I will also submit work to several smaller publications, such as Emerson College's *Ploughshares*.

My collection eschews the traditional post-apocalyptic wasteland motif of more contemporary texts, such as Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*. McCarthy's frigid landscape showers black ash and precipitate, its dilapidation the direct result of some obfuscated disaster that seems to leave only a handful of wretched derelicts, many of whom must cannibalize each other to survive. McCarthy's scenes unfold in vivid and painstaking detail, never faltering in their attempt at verisimilitude. By contrast, in "Unreal Cities," landscapes rely on implied economic disaster; the stories refuse realistic portrayal, conveying instead distorted settings and circumstances. Though set vaguely in the future, the collection makes little effort to date itself or establish any sense of social or technological progression—a method inspired by George Saunders's fiction. While the planet itself remains intact, limited resources cause technological regression. Constant warfare, both civil and global, reduces towns to sprawling ruins and cripples the economy to the point that rebuilding cities is never a consideration—the country exists in a perpetual state of self-depletion. Only a small number of monopolist corporations linger on to turn profits. Meanwhile, civilians live either in hovels or among the crumbled ruins of previous generations. Due to implicitly scarce resources, very few motor vehicles navigate the roads. Most travel highways on foot or pedal bicycles. Unlike many prior post-apocalyptic narratives, however, crops continue to grow, and rivers continue to run, however tainted they may be. Though individual characters will occupy no more than one story, the ruined American wasteland and its war-time tensions will tie the individual stories in "Unreal Cities" together.

The three stories in "Unreal Cities" unfold from a third person point of view, each story's actions taking place in past tense. Having very limited access to textual history, characters in the collection generally express a sense of moral and spiritual uncertainty. Social value systems have become predictably nebulous, but not necessarily anarchic. "Unreal Cities" portrays gang violence of political motivation rather than McCarthy's cannibalism or the more conventional post-apocalyptic highway renegades. The tone of each piece must perform a delicate balance between dramatic emphasis and satire. Each of the three works introduces its protagonist to difficult, often absurd circumstances which resonate with but never fully allude to our contemporary social climate. For example, in "The Incident at Macro-Mart," myriad political tensions stress Caleb, including a war-induced drive toward patriotism and personal motivation for economic success at the expense of co-worker exploitation. The project resists falling into overt polemics by obscuring its sympathies. Though some passages may seem to critique issues such as compulsory patriotism and consumerism, the stories create equally

scathing critiques of blind protest and the increasingly caustic world that exists “beyond” consumerism.

While each text struggles to reconcile the historical and cultural losses that dictate its setting, characters endeavor to reconcile their own histories as well. “Lloyd’s Sea Show” depends heavily on memory for its narrative progression. Murray, the story’s fraudulent prophet, represents the early generations of the post-destruction era. He wishes to ruin whatever sense of innocence central protagonists Mica and Levy still possess. In “The Incident at Macro-Mart,” the narrative opens with protagonist Caleb’s recollection of his father’s death from contaminated fish meat. Caleb is without a father both literally and figuratively; much like Murray, he inhabits a sort of historical void. In the final story, “Marko Rides the Mountain,” Marko Castor exists in a sort of liminal suspense; though he physically inhabits Maui, he is unable to simply escape Chattanooga, his home town, where civil strife still threatens the Cumberland Union. During Marko’s childhood, soldiers came to power as generals merely by hoarding the most ammunition stores. His grandfather was old enough to remember when the country buzzed with mass transit and the southeast was part of The Mainland. By denying their respective pasts, James Van Syke and Cassidy Taylor both attempt a figurative repression of memory, while Castor actively engages his traumatic past. Though memory in McCarthy’s *The Road* functions as a dangerous distraction that degrades along with the landscape, memory in “Unreal Cities” both characterizes protagonists and generates contexts for each story’s sociopolitical climate.

To emphasize the gap between contemporary culture and the cultures constructed in “Unreal Cities,” each text relies partly on a mythological framework for narrative drive. In “Lloyd’s Sea Show,” Murray produces a new religion inspired from the *Old Testament*’s Jonah in the belly of the whale. That is, he swears that Tick-Tock the whale “gave him purpose” by swallowing and regurgitating him alive. The text explores the myth’s inadequacies, as Murray must finally be exposed as a con man who uses his orca as leverage to manipulate the townspeople. His plans fail when he finally understands that he loves the whale too much to slay it. The orca, in many ways an absurdity within the story’s setting, still appeals to characters like Levy and Murray, though Mica feels no sense of connection with the creature.

“The Incident at Macro-Mart” relies less extensively on a mythical framework. The story insists on the significance of Macro-Mart’s physical makeup as much as its characters. The fictional concept for Macro-Mart’s western consolidation of global cultures stems in part from Jorge Luis Borges’s description of a one-to-one map in his essay “On Exactitude in Science.” Borges affirms that utterly impractical, the map was left to decompose in the desert. Of course, Macro-Mart cannot fully satisfy the mythical map, and must instead function as a reductive model. Much like a theme park, Macro-Mart becomes its own landscape by reducing civilizations to cultural zones. The complexity of Macro-Mart

also begs comparisons to various labyrinths from Greek mythology, including Ovid's interpretation of Daedalus's labyrinth in "Minos and Ariadne." As protagonist Caleb demonstrates in my story, reductive cultural simulation in the form of map-like "cultural zones" encourages Macro-Mart patrons to locate a simplified form of difference between themselves and the orientalized, hyperbolic vision of cultural others. Caleb is acculturated, and cannot recognize the ease with which this museumification dehumanizes the Japanese, who are reduced to caricature-like mannequins propped among rice paddies.

Concurrently, "Marko Rides the Mountain" generates a revised version of Euripides' *The Bacchae*. Marko aligns with Pentheus to some degree, although his character may command greater sympathy, and his vocation as a street vendor is far less privileged than Pentheus's Theban kingship. James Van Syke embodies some Dionysian characteristics; he openly celebrates carnal pleasure and eschews violent action. For many Mauians, Van Syke presents the capacity for change, as his impromptu rallies and unusual physical presence identify him as something of a prophet. Hedging what would otherwise invite an unsympathetic characterization of Marko is the argument that rather than standing as a "true" prophet, Van Syke only sustains a sort of liberal fascism—his ideas are vacuous, and progressive only to the extent that they enable a sort of compulsory challenge to the status quo. Unlike Dionysus, Van Syke is only human, and while Marko makes no literal effort to incarcerate Van Syke, his actions do catalyze Van Syke's undoing, thereby inverting Euripides' tragedy.

Fiction inevitably testifies to the conditions that produce it. "Unreal Cities" is certainly no exception. Although the collection obsesses over the issue of warfare, its characters are not blessed with any simple solutions. My collection seeks instead to scrutinize contemporary ideas and distort them, constructing more abstract and complex problems that carry significance beyond individual historical epochs.

SAMPLE ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Annotated Bibliography for *Housekeeping*

Caver, Christine. "Nothing Left to Lose: *Housekeeping*'s Strange Freedoms." *American Literature* (68) 1996: 111-37.

Reading *Housekeeping* through a psychoanalytical interpretation, Caver focuses primarily on the types of trauma experienced by Lucille and Ruthie. Because of these traumas, Caver argues, Ruthie eventually loses her identity and "cannot differentiate between herself and the others to whom she attaches her identity" (131). Ultimately, Caver understands *Housekeeping* to end problematically, representing "the power of traumatic experience to destroy not only language and the illusion of a coherent self capable of agency but also a person's place within a larger community" (111).

Champagne, Rosaria. "Women's History and *Housekeeping*: Memory, Representation and Reinscription" *Women's Studies* (20) 1992: 321-9.

Champagne argues that the practice of housekeeping in *Housekeeping* shows "the category of place privileges male control of women's bodies and minds" (321). She further claims that the feminist, postmodern reading that her essay performs allows the reader to see "postmodernism as a practice, and thus as a hermeneutical politics of reading" (322).

Although she implies that her essay has two separate though related concerns, her primary focus appears to be the deconstruction of a history that suggests an origin and the hierarchical structure that stems from it.

Foster, Thomas. "History, Critical Theory, and Women's Social Practices: 'Women's Time' and *Housekeeping*." *Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 14 (1988): 73-99.

Foster provides a Marxist-feminist critique of *Housekeeping*, arguing that *Housekeeping* uses Julia Kristeva's "Women's Time" to "organize a narrative of women's resistance to the historical limitations imposed on them" (74). Focusing specifically on the houses found in the novel, Foster indicates how *Housekeeping* breaks down the boundaries between the public and private sphere that confined women.

Geyh, Paula E. "Burning Down the House? Domestic Space and Female Subjectivity in Marilynne Robinson's *Housekeeping*." *Contemporary Literature* (34) 1993: 103-21.

Concerned with the creation of a female subject, Geyh employs a psychoanalytical critique regarding Lucille, Ruthie, and Sylvie. In particular, Geyh examines the relationship between the house and the creation of this subject. She investigates "the ways in which feminine subjectivity both constitutes itself and is constituted either through or in opposition to the space of 'house' or 'home' in Marilynne Robinson's novel *Housekeeping*" (104).

Concerned with the creation of a female subject, Geyh employs a psychoanalytical critique regarding Lucille, Ruthie, and Sylvie. In particular, Geyh examines the relationship between the house and the creation of this subject. She investigates "the ways in which feminine subjectivity both constitutes itself and is constituted either through or in opposition to the space of 'house' or 'home' in Marilynne Robinson's novel *Housekeeping*" (104).

Hedrick, Tace. " 'The Perimeters of our Wandering are Nowhere': Breaching the Domestic in

Housekeeping.” *Critique* (40) (1999): 10pp. 9 November 2002

<http://newfirstsearch.oclc.org/WebZ/FSPage?pagename=tampftascii:pagetype>>

Although Tace focuses on the fissures and cracks found within *Housekeeping*, reading the novel through Emerson implies a structuralist interpretation. Tace suggests that “the problematics of domestic space in *Housekeeping* is affected by a textual accumulation of melancholic Emersonian images of loss, erasure, and fragmentation.” In examining the domestic space, Tace investigates not only the house itself, but also the water and window images along with the relationship among Ruthie, Sylvie, and the mother.

Kaivola, Karen. “The Pleasures and Perils of Merging: Female Subjectivity in Marilynne Robinson’s *Housekeeping.*” *Contemporary Literature* (34) 1993: 103-22.

The interest of “The Pleasures” appears to lie with the ending of *Housekeeping* and Sylvie and Ruthie’s “escape” from Fingerbone. Although Kaivola provides a feminist interpretation, she also suggests that the novel “signifies in contradictory ways for feminist critics” (672).

Examining Ruthie’s subjectivity through her connection with Sylvie, her father, and her mother demonstrates that Ruthie’s attempt for escape “is complicated by an equal if not more powerful desire not to become she longs to merge with others, to lose herself” (675).

Analyzing these relationships and how they relate to the ending of the novel, Kaivola argues, shows how *Housekeeping* “represent[s] how compelling it can be – especially in the context of significant loss and perhaps especially for women – to try to overrun boundaries between self and other, to merge, to be absorbed” (687).

King, Kristin. “Resurfacings of *The Deeps*: Semiotic Balance in Marilynne Robinson’s *Housekeeping.*” *Studies in the Novel* (28) 1996: 565-80.

King analyzes the language of *Housekeeping* to suggest that the novel maintains a tension between the symbolic and semiotic realms. Throughout her essay, King examines how Ruth's use of language creates this tension. Offering a reading that touches on both psychoanalytical and constructionist theories, King claims that "the desire for freedom and a new form of identity based on mergings rather than distinctions" develops through the "maintaining [of] a disruptive presence within, of laying claim to both the pre-Oedipal mother and the symbolic realm of language that registers that energy" (566).

Mile, Sian. "Femme Foetal: The Construction/Destruction of Female Subjectivity in *Housekeeping*, or Nothing Gained." *Genders* (8) 1990: 129-36.

Mile provides a feminist reading of *Housekeeping* which she argues reacts against the French feminist definition of the female. Mile insists that instead of reading in the manner of the French feminist that *Housekeeping* shows the constitution of the female body, she interprets *Housekeeping* as rejecting any notion of "the female body, the Mother Mary, the material world, and the sexual self" since they are "useless in the process of defining a woman's subjecthood" (129). Examining the properties of the body, motherhood, and even material items in *Housekeeping*, Mile focuses on how Robinson disowns boundaries so that the subject can merge with the other world, and the sexual self" since they are "useless in the process of defining a woman's subjecthood" (129). Examining the properties of the body, motherhood, and even material items in *Housekeeping*, Mile focuses on how Robinson disowns boundaries so that the subject can merge with the other.