



THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF EVANS: AN ECOFEMINIST READING
OF CARSON MCCULLERS' *THE BALLAD OF THE SAD CAFÉ*

BY

MR. CHUTIMUN MORANON

AN INDEPENDENT STUDY SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
FACULTY OF LIBERAL ARTS
THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY
ACADEMIC YEAR 2019
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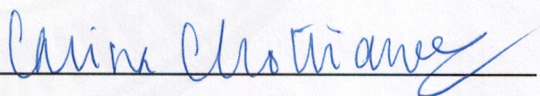
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was approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

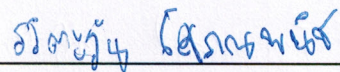
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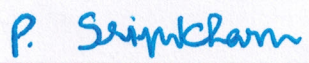
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Independent Study Title	THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF EVANS: AN ECOFEMINIST READING OF CARSON MCCULLERS' <i>THE BALLAD OF THE SAD CAFÉ</i>
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Degree	Master of Arts
Major Field/Faculty/University	English Language and Literature Faculty of Liberal Arts Thammasat University
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Academic Year	2019

ABSTRACT

This research explores Carson McCullers' *The Ballad of the Sad Café* (1951) through Ariel Salleh's ecofeminist lens. It argues that Miss Amelia Evans attempts to re-materialize what it means to be the South, and the South as such is deconstructed by Marvin Macy and Cousin Lymon. The paper discusses Salleh's 1/0 culture and M/W=N hegemony so as to point out how androgynous Amelia represents Southern culture as she practices and practices what it means to be the South: being a life-destroying capitalist of Southern family romance and being a life-affirming plantation mistress. The research postulates that the characterization of Marvin Macy is related to the concept of the wild as Marvin's toxic existence posits a racial threat to the cultural purity of Amelia's 1/0 South.

Keywords: Carson McCullers, *The Ballad of the Sad Café*, ecofeminism

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This individual research is completed with assistance and support from my literary professors at Thammasat University. My deepest gratitude is for Prof. Dr. Rawitawan Sophonpanich and Asst. Prof. Carina Chotirawe for every constructive academic suggestion. I am indebted to Asst. Prof. Maytawee Holasut and Prof. Dr. Sutida Wimuttikosol for their advice regarding criteria of individual research. I am also grateful to Assoc. Prof. Chusak Pattarakulvanit for the course work Seminar on American Writers that contributes to my personal interpretation and comprehensions regarding the Deep South.

I would express my appreciation to my family and friends who always gave me their love and continuous support. I would also express my appreciation to literary professors at Kasetsart University as they were the ones who sparked literary spirit in me during the first four years for Bachelor of Arts. Above all, I am grateful for myself who never gave up on any obstacles.

All deficiencies in this paper are entirely my own responsibility.

Mr. Chutimun Moranon

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Carson McCullers' brief biography

The Ballad of the Sad Café (1951), one of Carson McCullers' critically acclaimed fictions, is a Southern Gothic classic. It was a selected work for *Martha Foley's Best American Short Stories* during 1940s. In 1963, the book was adapted into a play by Edward Albee. *The Ballad* became a film directed by Simon Callow, released in cinemas in 1991 with mixed critical responses. Joe Brown, a critic from *The Washington Post*, (as cited in LoBianco, 2020) points out that, "the film can be seen as a painterly tableau vivant of the Deep South¹."

The story of *The Ballad* is set in the Deep South where McCullers grew. Graver suggests that *The Ballad* was inspired by a real-life person she met in Brooklyn: "A strutting hunchback who came each evening to a bar near the Brooklyn Navy Yard now lives in "The Ballad of the Sad Café" (Graver, 1969, p. 8). McCullers' observation in Brooklyn (as cited in Mass, 2010) led to her literary success:

"it was at a bar in [Sand] Street . . . that [McCullers] saw and was fascinated by a remarkable couple. Among the customers there was a woman who was tall and strong as a giantess, and at her heels she had a little hunchback. [McCullers] just observed them once, and it was not until some weeks later that the illumination of *The Ballad of the Sad Café* struck [McCullers]" (233).

¹ LoBianco, L. (2020, May 27). THE BALLAD OF THE SAD CAFE. Retrieved from <https://archive.vn/20200527103026/http://www.tcm.com/this-month/article/430514%7C355230/The-Ballad-of-the-Sad-Cafe.html#selection-2899.13-2899.21>

Before her success as a professional writer, McCullers' life in the deep South, however, was not a bed of roses.

At 15, Carson McCullers, one of the prominent female writers of the American South, burned out of her passion to become a concert pianist. Burning with the desire to become a writer instead, she turned to take refuge in New York City. Such a decision to settle herself in the urban city was indirectly inspired by her English teacher who had given her unpleasant grades despite her think-outside-the-box potentials to become a professional writer. Her English teacher Lawrence (as cited in Presley, 1974) also wrote about McCullers' writing skill:

“I encountered Carson's mother on the bus . . . I remember telling her that I would be more than glad to give Carson a better grade if she would produce for me some of this work of which she was capable” (20).

Accordingly, showing some sign of being a non-conformist, amateur writer did not guarantee her career success as an author. Graver (as cited in Graver, 1969) observes McCullers' non-conformist writing style that,

“[McCullers'] first effort at writing was a play . . . [her] idol was Eugene O'Neill and this first masterpiece was thick with incest, lunacy, and murder . . . Among those vanished adolescent works were . . . “Fire of Life,” a two-character verse play in which Christ debates with Nietzsche” (5).

At the age of 17, Carson McCullers broke away from deep-South Georgia of Columbus for Brooklyn of New York.

Having successfully broken away from her constrained life in the Deep South, McCullers seemed to be a new woman who defied conventions. As shown in her style of dressing during her re-visitation in Columbus, Lawrence (as cited in Presley, 1974) observed McCullers that “[McCullers] adopted an arty looking hair style—long, stringy bob with long stringy bangs” (25). She continued to productively publish several works despite the fact that *The Ballad of the Sad Café* was the only one which appeased several critics at the time. McCullers (as cited in Presley, 1974) also wrote

an essay about her new life in Brooklyn in “Brooklyn Is My Neighborhood” suggesting that Brooklyn life “is one of the things [she] love[d] . . . Everyone is not expected to be exactly like everyone else” (24). Besides, Reeves McCullers, her husband who shared with her the yearning for becoming a professional writer, (as cited in Presley, 1974) also wrote to his friend Vincent regarding Carson McCullers’s hatred of the South that “I have to keep Carson tied by a leg to the bedpost at times to keep her from going mad as she hates the South so” (23). Thereby, McCullers’ past experiences in the Deep South had traumatized her and deeply rooted itself inside her, affecting her ways of living.

McCullers seemed to have psychologically suffered from the oppressive power of the Southern conventions. Westling notes that McCullers’ mother, as well as Southern conventions, had a great influence on her:

“McCullers’s own situation is an extreme example of both the strength of matriarchal tendencies in Southern life and the difficult problem of self-definition for the Southern girl who wants to become a writer . . . her mother dominated her childhood and hovered solicitously nearby through most of her life” (Westling, 1985, p. 111).

Furthermore, Kieft (as cited in Bloom, 2005) also postulates that,

“ [McCullers’ mother’ s] dominance contributed to the ambivalence she always felt about her two paradoxical needs: to be separate, independent, uniquely gifted; and to belong, be dependent, a member merging her identity with that of others” (79).

McCullers’ hatred of the Southernness must be transformed into her successful writings. As Presley points out,

“[She] built her life on the hope that, somehow, Paris or New York would reach down and rescue her from the frustration and stagnation she felt and feared in the South” (Presley, 1974, p. 32).

Undoubtedly, *The Ballad of the Sad Café* could be read in terms of how Miss Amelia Evans's life is confined and ideologically programmed to be a patriarchal subject who tries to perpetuate any practices of Southern culture.

McCullers herself could thus be seen as the victim of the Southern culture. A journalist from *Charlotte Observer* (as cited in Presley, 1974) notes that McCullers totally goes against Southernness:

“ [T]he journalist asked why the author never returned to the South. Carson McCullers' quick answer perhaps revealed more than she or her interviewer realized at the time 'No roots,' she replied. 'No roots' ” (32).

The hearing of anything related to the Southernness could trigger any psychological illness because her experiences in the South must be so hurtful that they become her stigma. Presley thereby postulates that McCullers' early works were associated with psychological struggle with the Southern culture she had been through:

“ The fact that she was a Southerner was a great burden she struggled to displace very early in her career. Significantly, out of the struggle emerged some literature of the first order ” (Presley, 1974, p. 19).

Under this circumstance, Miss Amelia Evans in *The Ballad* could be read and understood as a representative character for the aspects of Southernness that McCullers tried to reject.

To clarify, McCullers herself tried to stay away from the South as much as possible while Miss Amelia Evans, her Southern female protagonist, struggles to revitalize the Southernness. Amelia could be seen in this way as a doppelgänger of real-life McCullers because Amelia could not escape from the Southern conventions. That being said, Amelia dwells in a completely different world from real-life McCullers. In other words, Amelia lives in a stagnant, Southern world, whereas McCullers could spend her lifetime in Brooklyn where her life moved on according to her own free will. With this in mind, Amelia must be seen as the what-if character had McCullers chosen to stay in the South. What if McCullers could not escape from the South? Would she

end up being like Amelia who is in search of lost, antebellum time believed to abound in capitalism-free values? Inevitably, the concept of gender becomes the main concern for several critics because of Amelia's characteristics of androgyny.

1.2 Literature review

The Ballad of the Sad Café becomes a site for gender criticism. As a tomboy, Miss Amelia Evans is a protagonist that posits a threat to patriarchal eyes. For this reason, this section will discuss the former gender concepts of *The Ballad*.

Having no knowledge of any female troubles despite being a woman, Miss Amelia Evans's sexuality becomes the central concern for most gender critics. Broughton (as cited in Bloom, 2005) points out that Amelia is in "flight from the feminine" (27). Because Amelia's Southern town gives privileges to masculinity associated with capitalist value, anything that relates to femininity is not treated as a valuable resource for capitalism. She thereby takes a patriarchal position of power to monopolize the economy of her patriarchal town to gain productive value for herself. Broughton (as cited in Bloom, 2005) explicates that the social value in Amelia's town can be seen as "feminine and contemptible on the one hand and masculine and admirable on the other" (25). She is in flight from being a woman because masculinity is more associated with power. Accordingly, masculinity represents for economic value which could empower her, whereas femininity cannot be used as a capitalist resource. Despite being unusable in capitalist mode of production, femininity, Broughton still maintains, contains spiritual value which Amelia chooses to leave behind, making her end up lacking compassion. For Broughton, binary oppositions between material and spiritual value play an important role in representing masculinity and femininity respectively. Amelia is destined to become lonesome because her rejection of the femininity makes her lack spiritual value representing life-affirming force. This lack, as Broughton (as cited in Bloom, 2005) indicates, "renders men and women alike incapable of loving and thereby escaping the prisons of their own spiritual isolation" (29). Thus, Amelia's life becomes lonesome due to her cling onto masculine power.

This distances her from femininity that can contribute spiritual value. However, Broughton's gender analysis still overlooks how Amelia turns out to be more conservative in the ways that she tends to perform as a domestic woman. In fact, I would argue that Amelia is rather in flight *to* the feminine than *from* it, especially the time when Cousin Lymon appears, making Amelia lower her capitalist guard down and become more feminine.

Westling pushes further the concept of gender in *The Ballad*. Unlike that of Broughton which suggests that lack of femininity leads to spiritual isolation, Westling's analysis indicates that Amelia transgresses her feminine boundary by her capitalist shrewdness, so she must be tamed by Marvin Macy and Cousin Lymon at the end. For Westling (as cited in Bloom, 2005), Marvin returns to destroy Amelia's masculinity as implicitly shown in Marvin's characteristics: "He is the devil male . . . and the Satanic is also suggested by his red shirt and the fact that he never sweats" (51). Amelia, the only woman warrior in the town, must be suppressed because, according to Westling, it is impossible for women to break away from the essentialist conventions. Thus, Westling (as cited in Bloom, 2005) sees *The Ballad* as a springboard for McCullers to portray Frankie in *The Member of the Wedding* as a conventional woman:

"[McCullers] inexorably moves Frankie toward an acceptance of conventional femininity . . . She knew that Frankie would have to submit as Miss Amelia had not" (52).

Like Broughton's conclusion, Westling suggests that the punishment for the gender transgression heavily relies on the inevitable fact that Amelia must be left all alone with herself because she does not conform to feminine conventions. That must be why Westling's research (as cited in Bloom, 2005) is titled as "*Carson McCullers' Amazon Nightmare*" (45). Once more, Amelia is considered *in flight from* the feminine. This flight is against gender essentialism of Man/Woman as nature-given fact. However, I would argue that the nightmare is not exclusive to Amelia but to this Southern society as a whole as "the town itself is dreary; not much is there except . . . a miserable main street only a hundred yards long" (McCullers, 2005, p. 3). Why does the setting turn

apocalyptic after Amelia is punished? Is this Southern town punished at the same time owing to the fact that the town lacks a plantation mistress like Amelia to take care of them all through sustaining the natural balance between their culture and nature?

The gender concept of *The Ballad* is further complexified by Fowler using Freudian and Lacanian frameworks of the primal scene and the phallus, the concept of gender can be pushed further due to the following reasons.

Fowler provides more answers to the question why *The Ballad* is the story of *the taming of the shrewed* Amelia who must be left alone at the end. The primal scene is the scene that a child (imaginatively) witnesses some sexual intercourse between his or her parents. The witness then leads the child to develop castration anxiety because the father takes the position of a castrator who has more power to castrate the mother during the sexual intercourse. At this time, the child would be afraid of being castrated by the father. Then, the child would be split or fragmented from the mother because the child is part of her during the primal scene which can be compared to the Lacanian mirror stage. The split then paves way for the child to develop his or her selfhood out of the mother in the symbolic order according to the Father's Law, Lacanianly speaking. The child's sense of desire for the mother developed in Freud's primal scene or Lacan's mirror stage would be repressed.

In *The Ballad*, Fowler then suggests that Amelia is a phallic mother because she defies being castrated by Marvin Macy who assumes the father's role or the (Lacanian) phallus as she refuses to consummate with him, causing their marriage to last only 10 days. Returning to the primal scene for Freud and the desire of the Mother for Lacan is to return to the womb, i.e., to be part of the Mother again after the first split. Consummation is the substitute for the return. Fowler notes that, "Marvin Macy's failure to consummate his marriage to Miss Amelia represents a failed primal scene" (Fowler, 2002, p. 264). For Marvin, I have observed that conforming to being a chivalric, Southern gentleman promises the return to the primal scene, as he "reformed himself completely . . . he trained himself to rise and give his chair to a lady" (McCullers, 2005, p. 29). If successful, revisiting the primal scene would grant him power over Amelia who can be seen as the mother. However, Amelia rejects

having sexual intercourse with him after their wedding, making him fail to revisit the phallus which is the father's role during the primal scene.

Marvin could be seen as the father and Amelia the mother during the final battle which can be seen as another primal scene, and it turns out the latter castrates the former in this context instead. Unlike the first failed primal scene, Cousin Lymon appears as a child witnessing this final attempt to revisit the primal scene. The roles are reversed. Fowler then labels Amelia as the phallic mother who is not yet tamed or castrated by any patriarchal figure. Fowler also notices that Marvin fails to take the father position again during the final battle between Amelia and him. During the battle in the café, it is Lymon who takes the position of being a child figure witnessing their primal scene. However, Lymon unpredictably takes the father position and castrates Amelia, the phallic mother. As Fowler observes,

“In this reprise of the primal scene, Lymon, the watching child-figure, assumes the role of father. He symbolically enacts the father's power both to copulate with the mother and to disempower her” (Fowler, 2002, p. 267).

This turning point triggers Lymon's *jouissance* because he transgresses the symbolic order and returns to the imaginary order. Fowler indicates that,

“Lymon's cry is the cry of a man experiencing orgasm or, in Lacanian terms, *jouissance*, *Jouissance* is the always momentary rapture experienced in attempting to reclaim the missing phallus . . . In sexual intercourse, the woman is the fetish object substituting for the missing phallus and allowing the man to conceal his phallic lack” (Fowler, 2002, p. 267).

Amelia then represents the mother, who is Lymon's lost object of desire. The way he turns to perform the father's role to castrate Amelia comes to empower him, i.e., to symbolically become *I*. Fowler also postulates that, “*Jouissance* marks the moment of violating the law against a narcissistic merging and momentarily overcoming lack” (Fowler, 2002, p. 267). Fowler's psychoanalytical research then suggests that being a phallic mother who defies being castrated by the phallus would result in loneliness.

At it again, this psychoanalytical research concludes that Amelia is shrewd and transgressive as she defies gender essentialism; therefore, she must be tamed and punished in the same way as the former two gender critics suggest.

In addition to the gendered and psychoanalytical studies, some critics also recognize the importance of the narrator in *The Ballad*, especially the underlying structure of the narrative. McNally notes that the narrator is the actual character in the story, whose return to the town is to find some spiritual sanctuary. His voice comes to surface whenever the digressions, such as the importance of Amelia's whiskey and the chain gang, are narrated. The underlying structure of the use of the digressions, for McNally, suggests that the narrator has developed "*ennui*" (McNally, 1973, p. 43). The prosperous past of this Southern town haunts him in the present. McNally further suggests that the narrator tries to find solution to his *ennui* by suggesting to the reader to go to listen to the song sung by the chain gang. Because there is no sense of community anymore in this Southern town, the narrator points out that the reader can find the communal sense and temporarily escape from the harsh reality of the ruined town through listening to the chain gang. This can re-vitalize the communal sense of "the human spirit" (McNally, 1973, p. 44).

Furthermore, Millichap also recognizes the narrator as a ballad maker. True to its name, this work (as cited in Bloom, 2005) can be seen as a ballad because the narrator uses digressions as refrains in any ballad, "often commenting like a chorus of spectators from the village (the refrain of the ballad sometimes has this same function)" (13). Likewise, Cousin Lymon is another element for the story to be seen as a ballad character. Amelia (as cited in Bloom, 2005) can be seen as a mother figure who enjoys taking care of her fairy children:

"Cousin Lymon seems akin to the fairy children of folk tale and ballad—pixies, elves, leprechauns . . . Miss Amelia is attracted to him by these childish qualities" (16).

This could be inferred that the fairy qualities as such contribute spiritual value for Amelia to be able to continue to live her life. Losing Lymon is then equated to losing her spirituality to continue her living.

Unlike Millichap's narrator, Dazey notes that the single narrator in *The Ballad* has dual voices: colloquial and poetic. The former is the lamentation addressing the reader by the word "you" and uses present tense to subjectively comment on some specific details, whereas the latter is the voice of the ballad maker whose past tense objectively narrates the story. Dazey's observation of McCullers's linguistic pattern (as cited in Bloom, 2005) suggests that McCullers frames the story by letting the subjective, colloquial voice interpret the objective poetic voice, i.e., the voice in the present interprets the past events:

"The specific action of a character is told in past tense, but the interpretation is always in the present tense . . . The ballad teller asks a question, and the lamenting voice answers it" (58-60).

Accordingly, the use of the linguistic pattern as such could be inferred that there is some nostalgic sense as the narrator with the poetic voice longs for the irredeemable, Southern past that abounds with modesty, propriety, hospitality and so on. Such qualities belong to the Southern project of self-creation that were long gone.

Like Dazey, McDowell also points out that the narrator voices as both the worker and balladeer, whose voices sound colloquial and poetic respectively. McDowell further notes that McCullers's narration contains some Gothic elements. Such Southern Gothic elements (as cited in Bloom, 2005) include the "combination of beauty and the sinister and . . . juxtaposition of the comic and the tragic" (37). Accordingly, McDowell's narratological analysis indicates that the narrator represents the tragic events in the past through his comic, colloquial voice, and he shifts his comic voice to the balladeer's poetic voice in order to convey some philosophical messages to the reader. As McDowell (as cited in Bloom, 2005) notes, "He moves in a moment from the comic to the profound" (42). Thereby, the 3 narratological researches of *The Ballad* tend to focus on the double voice of the single narrator and his agenda in narrating the story. Such a narrator uses rhetorical styles including ballad and Gothic elements. Under this circumstance, the gap origin of this narrator, I believe, should be filled through the sociological context of the South. Is this story a memoir for the

narrator to romanticize the aspects of what it had meant to be the true South that was deconstructed by Marvin Macy, a marginalized person despised by Southern townspeople due to his association with swampscape?

Apart from the significance of the gender and the narrator, the Gothic is another focal point for most critics. Whatling (as cited in Bloom, 2005) argues that Miss Amelia's sexual ambivalence "leads [her] to situate the contradictions posed by McCullers character within the style commonly known as the grotesque" (93). For Whatling, the Gothic elements are to distort heteronormatives, i.e., to defamiliarize the familiar and to familiarize the unfamiliar. Amelia's unconventional characteristics such as having hairy thighs appear so blatant that no one is able to suppress it. For Whatling (as cited in Bloom, 2005), what must be repressed remaining manifest is what can be seen as the grotesque: "the grotesque in *The Ballad* functions around 'what is visually obscure, but demands to be seen' . . . Our fear imagines its own horrors" (94). Whatling (as cited in Bloom, 2005) also terms "grotesque parody" (99) in order to describe the role reversal between masculine Amelia and effeminate Lymon, whose relationship do not conform to the heteronormative matching of a Southern gentleman and a Southern belle. In other words, the role reversal between Amelia as a courtly lover and Lymon as the beloved lady is presented so as to challenge heteronormatives of white Southerners. This parody suggests an attempt to deconstruct Southern conventions of gender expectations through Gothic elements.

In addition to the Gothic as the grotesque parody, Gleeson-White (as cited in Bloom, 2005) further suggests that *The Ballad* presents the concept of "grotesque androgyny" (119). She notes that the concept of androgyny can be divided into two types: male and female androgyny. Psychoanalytically speaking, the former (as cited in Bloom, 2005) is to return to the womb:

"Psychoanalytic theory, for example, does not consider (the fantasy of) the androgynous pregnant man a menacing figure . . . [who represents] 'a descent into feminine castration and abjection'" (124).

Such a return can let the man be reborn as a better person as can be seen in the character of Biff Brannon in *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*. On the other hand, the female counterpart, according to what Fowler's analysis has suggested, concerns Amelia as the phallic mother who still occupies the phallus representing power. The way Amelia rejects Macy's attempt to consummate with her in order to return to the primal scene is the way Amelia protects her own phallus, i.e., her patriarchal position as the only powerful, phallic mother in her house. Thereby, the female androgyny is a threat to the patriarchal society as a whole. Amelia's masculinity is excessive while her femininity is below average. This grotesque androgyny defies the stability of one's identity. She must be repressed and tamed at the end when Lymon betrays her for Marvin, symbolically castrating her phallus by destroying her properties. She cannot be reborn like Biff Brannon in *The Heart*. The Gothic elements in *The Ballad* thus functions to corrode or distort the essentialist beliefs of gender of the patriarchal society.

Despite several researches on the topics of gender, narrator, and Gothic, the significance of the nature tropes such as edenic and apocalyptic settings of the town, Amelia's swamp, and so forth is hardly any critics' main concerns. Among a few works on the topic "*On Ecofeminism in The Ballad of the Sad Café*" (2009), Xing-Mei is the first who studied *The Ballad* through ecofeminist lens. She argues that patriarchy, modernity, and anthropocentrism are the main cause of Amelia's loneliness and the ultimate destruction of the town.

First of all, Xing-Mei points out that nature can empower Amelia's female creativity. In the beginning, Amelia can be seen as an autonomous woman who can work by her own hands. Nature elevates Amelia's soul. Her source of female creativity and autonomy are derived from her relationship with nature, which can be seen as her self-sufficient agricultural economy. Amelia knows nature through her work, and nature simply gives her back the spiritual value.

Likewise, Xing-mei also suggests that the arrival of Cousin Lymon causes Amelia to lose her contact with nature. Because his coming propels her to establish the café, Lymon, for Xing-mei, could thereby be seen as a metaphor for the outside,

materialistic world penetrating Amelia's natural place little by little. Xing-mei also points out that the café can represent the intrusion of the modernity, making Amelia's edenic sphere overwhelmed with the yearning for materialistic value. Such value, for Xing-mei, replaces the spiritual value provided by nature. Amelia's natural and spiritual place, which is *locus amoenus*, is penetrated by a greedy, materialistic, male figure from the modern world. The return of Marvin Macy also signals the same thing for Xing-mei. Lymon and Macy, the two patriarchal figures, like other former critics' conclusions, comes to suppress the autonomous woman. That being said, the shrewd woman like Amelia must be tamed. Thereby, Amelia's sense of autonomy, accompanied by her spiritual value provided by nature, becomes lost due to her interactions with the patriarchal world.

For several critics who focus on patriarchal anxiety, Miss Amelia Evans is the autonomous, unconventional, transgressive, and non-conformist woman who does not live up to the social expectations. She must be punished for that. Play the phallus, pay the price. Reading *The Ballad* otherwise, it, however, seems clear to me that Amelia is not a non-conformist woman as most former critics suggest at all but, rather, a quintessence for the most conventional, Southern woman of all female characters in Southern literary works. It is possible that *The Ballad* could be reread through Ariel Salleh's ecofeminist lens because the way Amelia tries to do throughout the course of the story is to revitalize and reconcretize the myth of Southern agrarianism socially romanticized by the South. To put it another way, Amelia's attempt is to re-materialize, what Salleh calls, 1/0 culture of the South which prioritizes patriarchy and marginalizes femininity, nature, and othered labours having no productive value in capitalism. That is to say, 1/0 culture is the culture internalized in people's consciousness, causing them to develop their worldviews based on binary oppositions between 1 (having productive value) and 0 (having reproductive value). 1 symbolizes the phallus, and 0 the womb. The latter must be dealt with by the former as the former is considered superior and more valuable in capitalist mode of production despite how life-affirming the latter is.

I would like to offer an alternative ecofeminist reading which is different from that of Xing-mei. That being said, I would like to suggest that the ecofeminist analysis of *The Ballad* could be more complexified in terms of socio-cultural context of the South. If so, the ecofeminist revision is possible. Xing-mei notes that the conflict and the catastrophe take place due to the outside forces from the modern world. However, this analysis is still problematic because Cousin Lymon can be seen as the doppelgänger for Morris Finestein, the marginalized, effeminate, Jewish cripple who does not conform to 1/0 society. Cousin Lymon is also likened to be a “swamphaunt” (McCuller, 2005, p. 49) suggesting his connection to Amelia’s swamp, the trope that implies resistance toward Southern colonization of the natural world. Thereby, Cousin Lymon represents those who are kept in the margin including the marginalized and nature at the same time. Likewise, Xing-mei also indicates that the coming of modernity or modern industrialization, represented by Lymon and Macy, is the source of human and natural corruption. The penetration as such triggers the sense of loss and loneliness. However, the decadence of this society already takes place long before Lymon’s arrival because of Amelia’s capitalist exploitation:

“if Miss Amelia so much as stumbled over a rock in the road she would glance around instinctively as though looking for something to sue about it ... every day was very much like the day that had gone before” (McCullers, 2005, p. 5).

Instead, Lymon’s arrival generates spiritual value as he triggers love as well as femininity in Amelia. The café cannot thus represent materialistic value but, rather, the spiritual value because this place provides, what most critics call, agapé or communal vitality, causing this Southern society to recall their Southern ideals such as hospitality, fellowship and propriety. As McCullers wrote,

“For the atmosphere of a proper café implies these qualities: fellowship, the satisfaction of the belly, and a certain gaiety and grace of behavior” (McCullers, 2005, p. 22).

Most criticisms in Harold Bloom’s edited collection are also problematic because they tend to solely focus on the text, not the context of the South. Their

analyses turn out to be half-sung criticisms as they lack socio-cultural contexts. In order to provide a new analysis to the criticism of *The Ballad* as well as to ecofeminism, the context of the South must be taken into consideration. Some contextual ideas that are left behind by the mainstream critics are as follows:

One of Southern people's beliefs is the concept of Southern family romance. It is obvious that Southern gentlemen are the protectors of the Southern ladies. The latter are queens of the home. Richard H. King notes that Southern, female identity were sometimes performative because they must be able to take their husbands' positions of power if any patriarchal figures were absent from home:

"The Southern woman was caught in a social double-bind: toward men she was to be submissive, meek and gentle; with the children and slaves and in the management of the household, she was supposed to display competence, initiative, and energy. But she remained a shadowy figure, always there and ever necessary, but rarely emerging in full force. She was "queen of the home" (King, 1982, p. 35).

Likewise, King also notes that anyone who became a Southern mother must appear sexless, i.e., she had to keep herself away from everything relating to sexual arousal. She had to be seen as "asexual mother of the Southern male hero" (King, 1982, p. 35). She must be the moral compass in her patriarchal sphere. Undoubtedly, the belief in pure bloodline also arose from the family romance as can be seen in Edgar Allan Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher*. Incest could be the result of this belief. Descendants were assigned to protect the belief. As King wrote about The Great Depression during 1930s and the Southern family romance, "the tradition of the family romance came under intense scrutiny. This was the assignment and the burden of the generation of the 1930s" (King, 1982, p. 38). The fall of the Usher family takes place due to masculine culture. That is to say, the familial catastrophe is sex-gendered. As Wilson observes,

"Poe represents the swamp as permeating the very society that shunned it, reflecting society's internal corruption rather

than generating its own. He ultimately renders it the symbolic vehicle of a self-destructively insular culture's own implosion" (Wilson, 2005, p. XX).

Masculine culture plagues its own patriarchal subjects. By the same token, the fall of the house of Evans is also sex-gendered as masculine culture romanticized by the South ends up ruining Amelia as well as the town apocalyptically.

Due to the fact that Southern regions are meant to be agricultural spaces, Southern people were eager to convert Southern swamps into arable lands so as to tame them to be more capitalistically productive. However, southern swamps were full of miasma, malaria, and other disease carriers. Thereby, they were the main enemies of the patriarchal culture of the South because they resisted cultural subordinations. They were opposed to every southern project of self-creation. Since southern people could not suppress swamps physically, they turned to linguistically paint swamps as demonized places for monsters, criminals, slaves, and marginalized people. Southern swamps are the places full of earth and water, i.e., they are liminal spaces. Wilson suggests that,

"From the antebellum era through Reconstruction, as we have seen, the swamp in the Southern mind was largely demonized but indomitable, endless and impenetrable, a region that posed a genuine threat to Southern order" (Wilson, 2005, p. 124).

Although they are demonized, they are, in fact, full of bio-diversity. Southern culture could not label any fixed meaning upon swamps. Therefore, Southern swamps can represent wild or untamed nature as opposed to the patriarchal, Southern culture that tries to tame, capitalize, appropriate, colonize, incorporate, or exploit them for the sake of capitalism in the name of Southernness or Humanity. According to this swampscape context, *The Ballad* can contribute to ecofeminist analysis because Amelia is ideologically programmed to practice the Southern family romance through assuming the image of a plantation mistress whose job is to mediate nature for patriarchal, capitalist system.

1.3 Argument and research questions

If seen through Ariel Salleh's ecofeminist lens, *The Ballad*, I argue, shows Miss Amelia Evans's attempt to re-materialize the long gone, old, Southern tradition, which becomes de-mythologized or deconstructed by Marvin Macy and Cousin Lymon at the end. The text manifests the two marginalized characters and ecological disasters as intractable villains to fight back, challenge, and resist *natural* subordinations from Amelia's patriarchal capitalism. Therefore, Amelia and her café can represent the Southern culture, and she is ideologically programmed to protect her cultural family legacy and to mediate nature for patriarchal capitalism. To what extent can Amelia be seen as a conventional woman despite the fact that several critics have long argued she is transgressive and unconventional? What do Marvin Macy and Cousin Lymon represent? What purpose does the interplay between culture and nature serve?

In *Ecofeminism As Politics: Nature, Marx, and the Post Modern* (2017), Ariel Salleh, an Australian sociologist whose works are associated with the intersection between ecology, feminism and materialism, has presented new perspectives on challenging the overlooked perpetuation of patriarchal, capitalist oppressions. She coins the term *embodied materialism* to describe how othered labour beyond the realm of the proletariat and their meta-industrial work, which are excluded from capitalist modes of production, are part of sustaining lives on Earth despite the fact that they are ignored and still oppressed by patriarchy as well as capitalism. The meta-industrial forms of the othered labours such as those of local minorities and women's lived experiences with nature disrupted by capitalism do not gain political awareness from mainstream history, criticism, or media in spite of how life-affirming their activities with nature are. As Vandana Shiva, another ecofeminist, wrote about embodied materialism in her foreword to Salleh's *Ecofeminism As Politics*,

“When it comes to real solutions to real problems faced by the planet and people, it is subjugated knowledges and invisible non-violent co-production with nature that shows the way to human survival, peace and well-being in the future. This

is what Ariel Salleh's challenge to eco-socialists and postmodern liberals refers to as an 'embodied materialism' " (Salleh, 2017, p. xviii).

The othered labours including women, nature, and other marginalized groups are still exploited as resource although socialist and feminist revolutions take place.

Ecofeminism is then to politically foreground othered labours' embodied materialism, which concerns with the overlooked lived experiences. The meta-industrial ways of living practiced by othered labours help maintain reciprocal relationship between human beings and nature. Such internal relationship involves life-ameliorating activities such as give-and-take agriculture that capitalism in the name of advanced civilization, patriarchy, or industrial progress tends to deteriorate. Salleh notes that the socialist revolution that brings back means of production to the proletariat still ends up causing people to be alienated from the reciprocal relationship because

" Socialist revolution will release working men, allowing them to take the reins of production. . . . The limits imposed by the green wild will finally be broken. Arriving at his utopia by a road paved with abstractions—meaningful to urban men though not necessarily to women—the philosopher and his project for human emancipation lose touch with the messy, viscous dialectic of life process. The fact that nature is our ground and sustenance is superseded by the freedom fetish inherent in the timeless logic of bourgeois masculinity" (Salleh, 2017, p. 119-120).

Salleh's critique on this Marxist concept of class revolution suggests the vicious cycle of masculine culture. That being said, the proletariat takes the phallic position of power and becomes the new oppressive bourgeoisie. Thereby, the proletariat who regains their means of production from the oppressive bourgeoisie still stays more and more alienated from their internal reciprocity with nature because they must leave behind such metabolic exchange with nature so as to serve capitalism and attain monetary

value in the form of salaries in the new setting. This departure from embodied materialism perpetuates the patriarchal, capitalist system because the meta-industrial labours are not included in this liberation; they are still ignored and exploited as resource for the patriarchal capitalism to consume their energies so as to set its wheel in motion.

The obvious example must be women as they are not included in the class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. In other words, some domestic women are still treated as woman class, the group whose meta-industrial labour is seen as reproductive labour that has 0 value in capitalist mode of production. The class struggle thus turns out to be the battle between Man vs. Man fighting against each other to usurp positions of power with women excluded and still exploited in the domestic sphere. Thereby, socialists' utopian dream for the proletariat becomes another nightmare for the othered labours who are still kept in the periphery. To clarify, sex-gendered and ecological dimensions regarding oppressions are still kept silent. As Salleh replied to Hanson during an interview,

"Certainly, a revised theory of value has to resonate with ecological, indigenous, and feminist sensibilities, not just socialist ones" (Hanson and Salleh, 1999, p. 214).

This goes along well with liberal feminism. With right-seeking principle, some elites or middle-class, Salleh maintains, are offered well-paid careers so that they attain as a well-to-do position of power as patriarchal men do. Such a capacity building, in turn, helps silence the patriarchal oppression and makes some middle-class women distance themselves from the internal relations between nature and human beings as they turn to external relations with masculine, capitalist culture, weakening "solidarity among oppressed communities" (Salleh, 2017, p. 183). Feminism as such becomes patriarchy in disguise as othered labour is still kept in the margin. Salleh postulates that ecofeminism "is to help equality feminists see how their emancipatory dreams assist capitalist patriarchal colonisation and environmental degradation" (Salleh, 2017, p. 172).

Accordingly, ecofeminism is rather womanist than feminist because it focuses more on how lived experiences with natural surroundings are affected by patriarchal capitalism. It centers around how life-preserving the embodied materialism of othered labour is because it is a *holding* practice that helps save the planet Earth as well as lives on it. As Salleh replied to Hanson, “‘holding practices’ spells out how the temporal frameworks of hands-on labours dovetail more . . . with complex ecosystemic processes than mechanised labours can. The latter are distorted by highly abstract instrumental reasoning and reductive 1/0 technologies (Hanson and Salleh, 1999, p. 215).

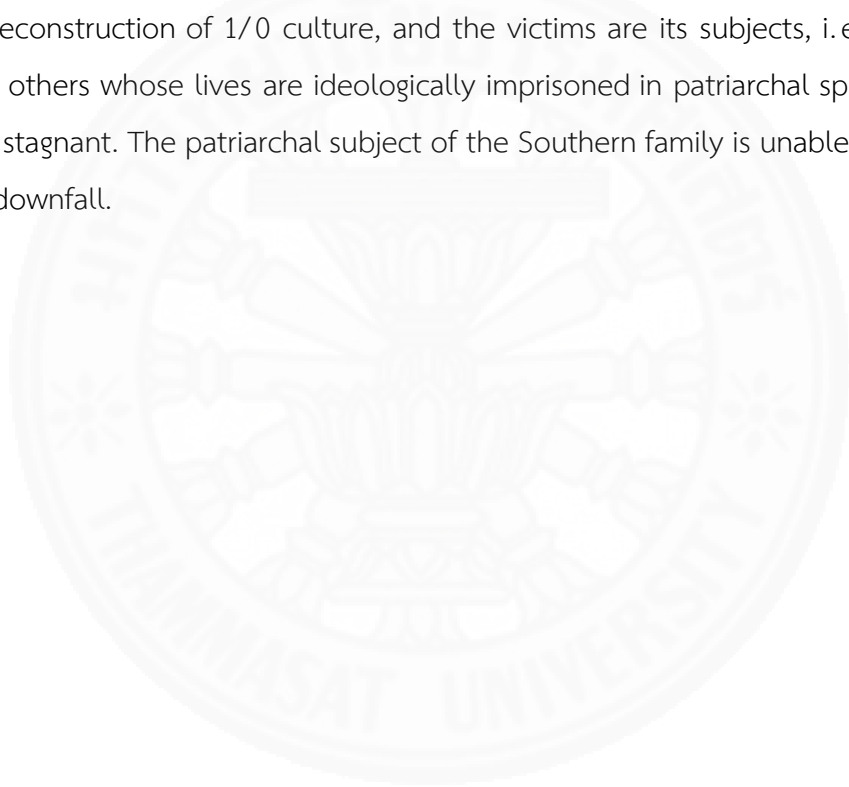
In the following chapter, Salleh’s ecofeminist theory of 1/0 culture and M/W=N hegemony, the concepts that prioritize patriarchal capitalism over the feminine, the natural, and so on, will be discussed. I will describe how Salleh provides ways to see women, workers, other marginalized people, and nature as the oppressed groups. Her methodology can be applied to Southern tradition. Her concepts will be the main points which will be followed by evidences drawn from Southern culture. According to Salleh, women, men, nature, and marginal people can be M/W=N products for patriarchal men to abuse and exploit. Some Southern subjects were programmed to practice the ideology of Southern family romance so as to maintain or perpetuate 1/0 culture of the South.

Chapter 3 will focus on Miss Amelia Evans and her relationship with Cousin Lymon. Applying Salleh’s concepts, Amelia is an epitome of a conventional, ante-bellum Southern woman who is ideologically programmed to protect family legacy. This part concerns the construction of the café together with the reemergence of internal reciprocity associated with Southern ideals. Using Salleh’s framework, Amelia can be seen as a patriarchal subject that mediates nature in order to perpetuate patriarchal capitalism. I will discuss how the tension between Amelia’s culture and nature serves the theme of Southern patriarchy.

Chapter 4 concerns the return of Marvin Macy and the change in Cousin Lymon. The Southern project of self-creation marginalizes other people who do not contribute to the society. In other words, the project crosses out those who defy and

resist the cultural incorporation of the Southern patriarchal time. Marvin Macy's return signals the time to fight back Southern culture, i.e., to deconstruct or de-mythologize Southern ideals. Marvin's return also triggers natural disasters as his toxic masculinity is life-destroying. Under this circumstance, Amelia must perform as a masculine subject to protect the purity of the South against the contamination engendered by Marvin, a swamp person seen as the Other of the South.

Chapter 5 is the conclusion of my research. Research findings will try to suggest that Miss Amelia Evans is the victim of 1/0 culture. Therefore, the text shows the deconstruction of 1/0 culture, and the victims are its subjects, i.e., Amelia and some others whose lives are ideologically imprisoned in patriarchal space. Amelia's life is stagnant. The patriarchal subject of the Southern family is unable to escape her own downfall.



CHAPTER 2

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY AND FRAMEWORK

2.1 1/0 culture and Man/Woman=Nature

Salleh indicates that every society has the common *denominator* which is the root of all oppressions. In other words, every society shares a common archetype regarding binary oppositions. Patriarchy and capitalism, two faces of the same coin, clearly represent life-destroying force: the former oppresses and exploits women, and the latter nature and some other marginalized groups. Understanding patriarchal thoughts in terms of binary oppositions, Salleh coins “1/0 culture” (Salleh, 2017, p. 61) as an underlying metaphor to describe how androcentric culture figuratively prioritizes the phallus (1) over the womb (0). The left column represents for Man having a value of 1, whereas the right stands for Woman and othered labours having 0 value. It is patriarchal men who possess industrial labour of 1 that can function in capitalist modes of production. This equation becomes an ideological process of othering, and the right column is considered inferior and less privileged, i.e., the side of 0 is the Other. Any 1/0 culture then would see the world based on 1/0 essentialism.

Thereby, anyone that can identify themselves as 1 must distance themselves from 0. Salleh then points out another equation, “Man/Woman=Nature” (Salleh, 2017, p. 86). This body logic of M/W=N hegemony is archetypically used as an ideological state apparatus for the left column of 1 to have a right to subject the right column of 0 in the name of Humanity, Progress, and so forth. As Salleh notes,

“In too many cultures, girls come to adulthood with assumptions about themselves as essentially Other: as instinct-driven, irrational creatures, as temptress, Earth Mother, dark, evil, damp, passive, moon . . . Masculinity, by contrast, elicits associations of rationality, sun, activity, goodness, light and order . . . Woman implies chaos and unpredictability” (Salleh, 2017, p. 63).

1/0 culture sees M/W= N body logic as natural which is, in fact, a social construction for patriarchy to marginalize what does not conform to the culture. Patriarchy is a man-made system of time, and its ideology robs anyone of their nature-given time which is the time when internal reciprocity or metabolic exchange between nature and human beings take place harmoniously without any external penetration from capitalism.

Furthermore, Salleh postulates that, during childbirth, men are the ones who *lack* the internal life process unlike that of women who can concretely give birth. To compensate their lack, patriarchal men would come up with ideologies of God, History, Science, Technology, and so on as the abstract “ ‘ principles of continuity’ ” (Salleh, 2017, p. 70). Experiencing alienative consciousness which is the moment of lack of life process, patriarchal men compensate their lack with patriarchal laws, ideologies, and some other abstract principles so as to position themselves as superior. In other words, the abstract principles from patriarchal men are meant to place them in the superior position of power, causing men to become closer to culture. As Salleh notes,

“It is the capitalist patriarchal ego that experiences itself as void (0) and must constantly affirm itself by consuming the energy of the Other – native, woman, child (1)” (Salleh, 2017, p. 75).

The ones who have 0 value should be patriarchal men in the natural time; however, they come up with capitalist, patriarchal principles to make them superior, oppressing and robbing the Others of natural time. Thereby, the principles of God, Technology, Southernness, and so on are “substitute[s] for the lost knowledge of oneness” (Salleh, 2017, p. 75). Women, indigenous people, nature, and othered labours exploited as resource thus represent patriarchal men’s absence or lack of internal life process. Such absence is repressed as the othered labours are sublimated into or objectified as patriarchal images such as women seen as queens of the home, nature romanticized as spiritual sanctuary, and so on.

Consequently, women, other marginal groups, and nature that have 0 value in the patriarchal time must be tamed, suppressed, oppressed, or exploited as

life energy in order for patriarchal men to consume as resource to have power and not to sense the void of themselves. If only women and other marginal groups do what patriarchal men would like them to do, they would be valued in patriarchal, capitalist system. As Salleh notes,

“In many cultures, a woman is valued only once she has produced a son . . . this gives her a vicarious right to hold the phallus, universal emblem of patriarchal power” (Salleh, 2017, p. 117).

Such patriarchal obeisance is similar to cultural colonisation, causing the patriarchal or colonized subjects to lack sense of becoming as the subjects are assigned with cultural identities to function in or devote their entire lives to 1/0 society. Ecofeminist politics is then to deconstruct or decolonized 1/0 essentialism so as to regain natural time or metabolic exchange with nature. Under this circumstance, Miss Amelia Evans is an anachronistic person who clings onto the Old South. Her job is to perform as a plantation mistress so as to help sustain the family as well as her community. That said, her project is to re-concretize or reconstruct the 1/0 culture of the South.

2.2 Culture, women, and nature in the South

Patriarchal capitalism thereby plays an important role in silencing or marginalizing othered labours in the name of Humanity, Religion, Progress, and so on. During the ante-bellum South, Southern women were put right by patriarchy as woman class. Women's roles during that period were associated with meta-industrial labour, the holding labour that helped hold the patriarchal capitalism. Scott observes that the image of Southern belles (as cited in Scott, 1970) was just a fictional myth compared with ante-bellum women's real-life experiences or materialism:

“‘a necessity thrust upon her by circumstances . . . not to mention the incessant and heavy demands of hospitality, made her the real burden-bearer of the community.’ ‘From supervising the sitting of turkeys to fighting pestilence, there was nothing which

was not her work,' added another Virginian. 'Mother Williams works harder than any Northern farmer's wife I know,' wrote the surprised bride of a southern planter, who had pictured herself marrying into a life of ease . . . No matter how large or wealthy the establishment, the mistress was expected to understand not only the skills of . . . gardening, care of poultry, care of the sick . . . A Virginian gentleman's bland assertion that 'a considerable portion of her life must be spent in the nursery and the sickroom' was a simple description of reality . . . Even extraordinary wealth could not buy leisure for a planter's wife" (29-31).

Scott's observation on ante-bellum herstory suggests that ante-bellum women of all classes were expected to be mediators tending nature for men. Conditioned by monetary constraints believed to be what could keep patriarchal business alive, plantation mistresses had to devote their bodies and souls to patriarchal time: "A widow in Wilkinson County, Louisiana, ran a plantation from the time her husband died until her son was old enough to assume responsibilities. Her correspondence with a New Orleans factor is filled with careful detail and astute negotiation" (Scott, 1970, p. 34-35). Capitalism alienated plantation mistresses from their natural time as they had to maintain and sustain their families via capitalist modes. In other words, they were expected to exercise both industrial and meta-industrial labour so as to maintain their families as well as their Southern society.

Wearing feminist lenses, some southern women could be seen as liberal feminists because they broke away from Southern belle myth by assuming the image of the plantation mistress whose industrial and meta-industrial duties were to serve her Southern society and protect her family legacies such as husbandry and distillery. However, Ariel Salleh maintains that being liberal or socialist feminists also perpetuates patriarchal oppressions because the idea of gender equality is also a utopian myth that still serves patriarchy in the form of anthropocentrism. It is the "androgynous equality" that some feminists crave for. As Salleh postulates,

“Not owners, though occasional shareholders, they are utterly financially dependent for a living wage on the capitalist patriarchal economy . . . the social position of this sector is inherently anti-ecological . . . A handful of women, often liberal feminists, do arrive at high-status positions in the public workforce, but the stakes for them generally become identical with men’s more technocratic commitment. Such women are unlikely to upset the capitalist patriarchal status quo” (Salleh, 2017, p. 23-24).

In the name of Humanity (or Southern Culture in this case), liberal or socialist feminists’ actions could end up suppressing gender difference because they exclusively gain new power through assuming the position of a matriarch in a patriarchal, capitalist system of the South, whereas other oppressed or marginalized classes, races, and genders are still ignored. As a capacity building, being a plantation mistress brings wealth but helps silence patriarchal oppressions, distancing the mistress from internal relationship with the Others.

Southern plantation mistresses and their lands are then abused resources in the name of Southern culture. Westling also notes about Southern lands and Southern gentlemen that,

“[Yet] they knew they had abused its integrity with greedy and destructive methods of husbandry. Their attitude towards its fecundity was often as ambivalent as their attitude towards the females with whom it was associated” (Westling, 2008, p. 9).

Land or nature is associated with Southern women, and Southern culture can be paired with patriarchy and anthropocentrism. The latter group could trigger ecological crisis as a result of their unchecked advancements, and it is the former group who takes responsibilities or face the inevitable consequences. In terms of ecofeminism, Salleh then points out that,

“ecological crisis is the inevitable effect of a eurocentric capitalist patriarchal culture built on the domination of Nature, and domination of Woman ‘as nature’ . . . it is the inevitable

effect of a culture constructed on the domination of women,
and domination of Nature ‘as feminine’” (Salleh, 2017, p. 35).

Accordingly, harmful external factors or unpredictable consequences derived from the unchecked developments of patriarchal capitalism can take place, returning to harm Southerners themselves. Thereby, ecological crises are sex-gendered as any disasters come from patriarchal or masculine culture, whereas nature, women, and othered labours are the ones that are caught in the crossfire.

Some othered labours, for ecofeminists, inevitably face natural catastrophes from unexamined developments of patriarchal capitalism as well. Due to the fact that agrarian lives in the South were associated with growing monocrops, tobacco was the most profitable before the prosperity of cotton. However, the monocrop culture turned out to be disastrous, especially for the Southern farmers, because it led to soil erosion. The erosion triggered by the monocrop culture made it harder to grow any other crops. Furthermore, The monocrop practice would end up attracting pests, disrupting ecological system and making it imbalanced as the drastic increase of the population of one pest species occurred as a consequence. What these pests carried with them had to be diseases not only to crops but also to human beings.

Around 1900 to 1930, the American South was known for The Boll Weevil Invasion. These boll weevils left Mexico for the Southern American cotton. Rieger indicates that the invasion triggered

“a boll weevil infestation, a tularemia outbreak among rabbits,
a yellow fever epidemic, a great flood, widespread droughts,
drastic erosion, and the clear-cutting of millions of acres of
forests” (Rieger, 2009, p. 9).

To cope with these cotton insects, insecticides were introduced and widely used to maintain the monocrop culture. However, the chemicals remained either in water after the rains or in the plants themselves. In other words, the ecological system became poisonous and contaminated with chemicals. As Rachel Carson describes water from sprayed cotton fields in Alabama,

“For the most part this pollution is unseen and invisible, making its presence known when hundreds or thousands of fish die, but more often never detected at all” (Carson, 2002, p. 41).

Such a silent contamination resulted from the long-run practice of the Southern monocrop culture led to death of animals. Its deadly effects also returned to human beings, especially the farm workers who unconsciously practiced and practiced husbandry for the market until it was too late when the monocrop culture led to The Dust Bowl in 1930s. Dust storms and barren lands were thereby inevitable consequences of the monocrop business. Therefore, unchecked patriarchal capitalism destroyed the Southern culture itself as metabolic exchange or reciprocal relationship between human beings and nature was disrupted for the sake of the most profit.

Undoubtedly, any Southern writer must be aware of ecological disasters, especially those who witnessed the Great Depression during 1930s. Due to the fact that sex-gendered, ecological disasters such as The Boll Weevil Invasion and The Dust Bowl resulted from the cultural practice of the Southerners themselves, it is inevitable that disaster motif would be born as a result. Pells (as cited in Rieger, 2009) observes that some Southern writers use the idea of natural catastrophe as a metaphor for the cultural decline in the South:

“ ‘Men became preoccupied with floods, dust storms, and soil erosion not only because these constituted real problems but also because they were perfect metaphors for a breakdown that appeared more physical than social or economic.’ The apparent collapse of nature itself provided Southern writers not only a metaphor for chaotic, fragmented modern society, but also fertile ground (so to speak) for a changed pastoral vision, a reimagining of humans’ relations with the natural environment” (Rieger 10).

Natural disasters could then be used as a literary device to suggest the decline of traditional Southern order because the South is self-destructive due to its sex-

gendered monoculture. Thereby, men, women, or other marginal groups who are, as Salleh calls, *closer to nature* due to their differences must liberate themselves from any ideological or physical oppressions so as not only to save themselves but also to help protect the Earth from the monocrop culture, patriarchal system, and capitalism. As Salleh replied to Hanson,

“The historical reality is that a majority of human beings . . . are engaged in . . . care-giving activities at the interface with ‘nature’ . . . they constitute a hitherto unrecognised ‘meta-industrial class’ . . . this class holds insight and skills which we need to learn from to find our way out of the 20th Century industrial catastrophe” (Hanson, 1999, p. 208).

The next chapter will provide a textual analysis on Miss Amelia Evans and her relationship with Cousin Lymon. Applying Salleh’s concepts of 1/0 culture and M/W=N hegemony, Miss Amelia Evans can be seen as the epitome of a conventional, ante-bellum Southern woman as she practices and practices the ideology of Southern family romance through her life-destroying industrial labour as well as the ideology of Southern plantation mistress through her life-affirming, meta-industrial labour. She is programmed to practice such ideologies so that her quest in re-creating what it means to be the South can be achieved.

CHAPTER 3

THE RISE OF THE HOUSE OF EVANS

3.1 Introduction

Ralph McGill, *an editor of the Atlanta Journal Constitution*, once interviewed Carson McCullers about her successful novel *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* (1940) regarding what it meant to be in the South. She expressed her personal view on the collective consciousness exclusively belonging to Southerners:

All of us seek a time and a way to communicate something of the sense of loneliness and solitude that is in us—the human heart is a lonely hunter—but the search of us Southerners is more anguished. There is a special guilt in us, a seeking for something had—and lost. It is a consciousness of guilt not fully knowable, or communicable. Southerners are the more lonely and spiritually estranged, I think, because we have lived so long in an artificial social system that we insisted was natural and right and just—when all along we knew it wasn't (qtd. in Groba, 2008, p. 47).

McCullers must have tried to depict to McGill what it meant to be a Southerner who was alienated from one's body and soul due to the influence of some invisible Southern force manipulating him or her behind the curtain. Such masterminding force must possess some Southerners to propel themselves to practice and practice socially constructed myth, ideologies, or any false consciousness until it naturally becomes their reality. In other words, the South ideologically imprisons its subjects, constraining their growth of self-awareness. The imprisonment as such robs some Southerners of their selfhood, stunting the growth of sense of becoming. Through Salleh's ecofeminist lens, the imprisonment as such influences Miss Amelia Evans, as she practices and practices the ideologies of the Southern family romance and a Southern plantation mistress so as to perpetuate her 1/0 culture of the South. To what extent can Amelia

be seen as a conventional woman whose life is rendered stagnant and anachronistic? How does patriarchal capitalism affect her and other characters? What purpose does the interplay between culture and nature serve?

The Ballad tells a story of Miss Amelia Evans, a plantation mistress having no internal relationship with anyone except her solitude in her age-old house which was once a prosperous café. She is described as a person who possesses both male and female traits:

“With all things which could be made by the hands Miss Amelia prospered . . . was skilled in carpentering. It was only with people that Miss Amelia was not at ease. People, unless they are nilly-willy or very sick, cannot be taken into the hands and changed overnight to something more worthwhile and profitable. So that the only use that Miss Amelia had for other people was to make money out of them” (McCullers, 2005, p. 5).

Likewise, Amelia is “a dark, tall woman with bones and muscles like a man” (McCullers, 2005, p. 4). She even has “a piece of her strong, hairy thigh” which “could be seen by anyone who cared to look at it” (McCullers, 2005, p. 59). Amelia’s queer, physical body together with her industrial and meta-industrial soul can suggest that she is an androgynous subject who devotes her body and soul to perpetuate patriarchal capitalism. Incorporating Cousin Lymon into her sphere, Amelia develops capitalism-free hospitality. When Marvin Macy returns to take revenge on her for rejecting his desire for marital consummation and for emasculating him by taking away his properties, Amelia’s life and the town become disastrous. The natural disorder triggered by Marvin and Lymon so as to deconstruct Amelia’s 1/0 culture of the South at the end occurs when Amelia, the subject of the following practices, fails to perpetuate the Southernness.

3.2 Amelia as a subject of Southern family romance

Southern family romance plays an important role in alienating Amelia from her selfhood. King describes the concept of family romance by employing Rank's intertextual study of mythical figures to come up with his own synthesis:

"In the collective myth and in the family romance, the parents are generally split into "real" and "foster" and sometimes into "good" and "bad." Sometimes the foster parents are of lowly origin or are even animals. The myth of the hero culminates when the son returns to displace the father and, in the case of Oedipus, to marry the mother. Thereby he assumes the high or noble station which is rightly his" (King, 1982, p. 28).

The Southern family romance thereby prioritizes the quest for maintaining the family legacy. The quest becomes the hero's main principle to continue his life journey. King further points out that, "If the Southern family romance placed the father-son relationship at its center, the white woman was expected to play the role of the mother" (King, 1982, p. 35). Then, a Southern male figure is expected to do productive labour to acquire monetary income in public sphere, whereas a Southern female figure reproductive labour in domestic sphere to acquire social and familial accolades. Amelia is an androgynous character that can do both productive and reproductive labour in both public and domestic spheres. Lacking a male figure to carry the weight of the productive labour, Amelia alone transgresses gender fixation of M/W= N essentialism so as to highlight productive value as importantly as reproductive value. Being androgynous is necessary for Amelia to maintain the quest for the Southern family romance.

King also notes that the Southern family romance can be hidden between the lines in any Southern literary works. He postulates that,

"the Southern family romance was the South's dream. Though related to the "plantation legend" of ante-bellum popular fiction . . . was never expressed in any consistent theoretical or

literary way. One must find it “between the lines” . . . it was the collective fantasy which made up the “structure of feeling” of that culture. It constituted the values, attitudes toward the region itself, the family, the relationship between the races and sexes” (King, 1982, p. 27).

McCullers characterizes Amelia as a person who clings onto the past, as she is jacked into the project for the family romance in order to maintain family legacy. We are told that, “Miss Amelia inherited the building from her father” (McCullers, 2005, p. 4). We are further told that Amelia’s upstairs rooms remain the same for generations:

“This part of the premises remained exactly as it had been all of Miss Amelia’s life, as it was in the time of her father, and most likely his father before him. The three rooms . . . were immaculately clean . . . everything was wiped and dusted by Jeff, the servant of Miss Amelia, each morning. The front room belonged to Cousin Lymon—it was the room where Marvin Macy had stayed during the few nights . . . and before that it was the bedroom of Miss Amelia’s father” (McCullers, 2005, p. 34).

Amelia’s father’s room must be a memory space reminding her of the importance of the family, and it is sex-gendered as only male figures like Cousin Lymon and Marvin Macy can spend nights there. Amelia also collects an acorn on the day of her father’s death to be a memory token to remind herself of how the father figure had a great influence on her: “the large acorn, was precious to her—but when she looked at it her face was always saddened and perplexed” (McCullers, 2005, p. 35). Amelia can thus be seen as an anachronistic person whose natural time of selfhood is taken away and replaced with patriarchal time that jacks her into the project of maintaining the family. Such a Southern culture to maintain causes Amelia to be far away from internal relationship with other townsfolk as she has to approach capitalism for the sake of her family despite how life-destroying capitalism is to the townsfolk.

Southern family romance compels Amelia to be temporarily androgynous so that she can perform as a male figure, incorporating herself into capitalist realm in order to maintain the family legacy. The way she appears astute towards others is to perpetuate her family, and it gives her wealth in return: “the only use that Miss Amelia had for other people was to make money out of them . . . she was the richest woman for miles around” (McCullers, 2005, p. 5). Putting her guard up in this life-destroying way distances her from othered labour and nature. The othered labour, including the ones excluded from the left and marginalized into the right in 1/0 culture or M/W= N equation, is the townsfolk still capitalistically and ideologically oppressed by Amelia and God concept:

“ For people in this town were then unused to gathering together for the sake of pleasure. They met to work in the mill. Or on Sunday there would be an all-day camp meeting—and though is a pleasure, the intention of the whole affair is to sharpen your view of Hell and put into you a keen fear of the Lord Almighty” (McCullers, 2005, 22).

The othered labours are not liberated from Amelia’s patriarchal time because they still *sweat* unlike Marvin Macy who “never sweated . . . and that surely is a sign worth pondering over” (McCullers, 2005, p. 51). The café provides a temporary respite, but they still have no natural time of their own. Marvin already has his natural time when he returns, but othered labours are still exploited as resource for Amelia’s patriarchal capitalism. However, the coming of Cousin Lymon leads her to be closer to nature and othered labours due to the life-sustaining force called love. Thereby, breaking the Southern gender tradition during the modern time by assuming the position of a matriarch in the past leads Amelia to the position of *1*, but othered labours including the proletariat, other oppressed women, the marginalized, nature, and so on are still kept in the periphery. Amelia’s capitalist position is like that of some liberal feminists who could break up gender conventions by being able to work outside the home but end up helping to perpetuate the oppression of patriarchy because

othered labours and some minority groups are still exploited as resource for the stability of Amelia's family business.

3.3 Amelia as a plantation mistress

Love leads Amelia to become a plantation mistress due to the re-emergence of the long lost communal warmth, the social value of the antebellum South. In fact, Amelia is already the mistress before Lymon's arrival. However, she is the plantation mistress that only pays attention to maintaining the family romance due to her capitalist guard that causes her to be far away from mutual relationship with othered labours. Owing to his adaptability and fluidity in nature, Cousin Lymon, carrying Amelia's father's snuffbox which is a memory token recalling Amelia's father, triggers "an air of intimacy in the room and a vague festivity . . . as though he had lived in the town for years" (McCullers, 2005, p. 19-20). The memory token as such, together with his gregariousness, helps masquerade Lymon and surprisingly conveys the sense of Southern agapé, the communal warmth that is long lost since the antebellum period. As Amelia opens her office door, symbolizing the time to expose herself to agapé, the mistress of life-destroying capitalism becomes the mistress of life-affirming Southern culture as she "broke this rule" (McCullers, 2005, p. 21) of capitalism for her beloved Lymon.

King postulates that the Southern family romance is not only based on familial but also societal levels:

"there was a strong strain in Southern thought which saw society as the family writ large . . . Individual and regional identity, self-worth, and status were determined by family relationships. The actual family was destiny; and the region was conceived of as a vast metaphorical family, hierarchically organized and organically linked by (pseudo-) ties of blood" (King, 1982, p. 27).

Cousin Lymon's arrival engenders Amelia to become more egalitarian, as she develops hospitality and compassion towards othered labours:

"Now Miss Amelia had dug up an aged barrel . . . had siphoned it into bottles back by the still. This night she took the money from the customers and counted it beneath the bright light . . . There she had never allowed liquor to be opened or drunk by anyone but herself. Now for the first time she broke this rule . . . she brought back the bottles into the warm bright store. More than that she furnished some glasses and opened two boxes of crackers so that they were there *hospitably* in a platter on the counter and anyone who wished could take one free" (emphasis added, McCullers, 2005, p. 21).

The townspeople seem to develop internal reciprocity with one another, and the night appears capitalism-free. The café can be seen as a symbolic place overwhelmed with life-sustaining activities.

Amelia's café symbolizes for the lost Southernness of the antebellum South. King observes that what it means to be Southernness is associated with etiquette or aristocratic social manners:

"At the center of this popular image of the South was the plantation legend, which expressed a yearning for "intellectual distinction, genteel taste, private and public decorum" . . . the nation was becoming increasingly heterogenous, the South prided itself on its aristocratic origins and bemoaned the destruction of the aristocratic way of life" (King, 1982, p. 28-29).

Southerners who cling onto antebellum values must prioritize propriety and feel unsatisfied with discourtesy. We are told that the people in the café recall Southern propriety by themselves:

"But the spirit of a café is altogether different. Even the richest, greediest old rascal will behave himself . . . in a proper café.

And poor people look about them gratefully and pinch up the salt in a dainty and modest manner. For the atmosphere of a proper café implies these qualities: fellowship, the satisfactions of the belly, and a certain gaiety and grace of behavior. This had never been told to the gathering in Miss Amelia's store that night. *But they knew it of themselves*" (emphasis added, McCullers, 2005, p. 22).

The spirit of the antebellum age resurfaces after the mistress puts her capitalist guard down. We are also told that, "the night was gloomy as in wintertime . . . But inside there was company and a genial warmth" (McCullers, 2005, p. 22). The characters including bourgeois Amelia and othered labours are put together in the same capitalism-free space. This implies the internal reciprocity that is revitalized, leading Amelia closer to othered labours and nature. Therefore, the old Southern values such as hospitality, propriety, and fellowship are believed to be associated with internal relations without capitalist penetration. The rise of the house of Evans, together with the emergence of the café which is the symbol of the old Southernness, is also associated with the natural surroundings.

McCullers' use of foreshadowing implies Amelia will become closer to the natural surroundings as well as internal reciprocity. Before Amelia's first contact with Cousin Lymon, we are told that,

"toward midnight . . . The sky was the color of a blue swamp iris, the moon clear and bright. The crops that spring promised well . . . Miss Amelia watched the road in silence. She had put down her rope and was fingering the straps of her overalls with her brown bony hand. She scowled, and a dark lock of hair fell down on her forehead . . . within the range of the yellow light from the porch that they saw clearly what had come" (McCullers, 2005, p. 5-6).

McCullers characterizes Amelia as a patriarchal subject who devotes her lifetime to productive and reproductive labour in patriarchal time for the sake of the family

romance, as she usually appears with swamp boots. Even her bedroom contains no decorations in contrast to her father's:

“it was smaller and very simple . . . she had hammered two nails in the closet wall on which to hang her swamp boots. There were no curtains, rugs, or ornaments of any kind” (McCullers, 2005, p. 34-35).

However, the atmosphere seems to come lively and animated, foretelling she will metaphorically put her capitalist guard down and become more effeminate as “she had put down her rope” (McCullers, 2005, p. 6).

The setting appears more and more lively as Amelia lets Cousin Lymon in. We are told that,

“The next morning was serene, with a sunrise of warm purple mixed with rose . . . the furrows were newly plowed, and very early the tenants were at work setting out the young, deep green tobacco plants. The wild crows flew down close to the fields, making swift blue shadows on the earth. In town the people set out early with their dinner pails, and the windows of the mill were blinding gold in the sun. The air was fresh and the peach trees light as March clouds with their blossoms” (McCullers, 2005, p. 12).

An Edenic mood takes place to foreshadow what is going to be revived: the old Southern values of the antebellum South. As Wilson suggests, the South identifies itself as idyllic space, which is “the myth of pastoral Eden that defined the antebellum South” (Wilson, 2005, p. IX). As a subject of Southern family romance, Miss Amelia's quest for reconstructing or re-materializing the long gone Southernness corresponds to the idyllic setting as such. In other words, the capitalism-free description above implies the return of the myth of the internal reciprocity between Southern human beings and nature. The imagery also depicts the town as *locus amoenus*, a pleasant place in which human beings and nature live in harmony. Thereby, what it means to be the South is associated with pastoral ideal or agrarianism which is socially

romanticized by white Southerners themselves. As Clark (as cited in Wilson, 2005) indicates, “[i]n the minds of many Americans, there are two Souths”; one is “an idyllic land of plenty ... inhabited by a happy and hospitable people for whom life is pleasure and pleasure a way of life,” the other, a “nightmare world of torrid and stifling heat in which uncontrollable passions and senseless acts of violence become the outward manifestations of a blighting inner corruption, a secret sin poisoning the very mainstreams of Southern life” (4). Having Cousin Lymon as a beloved male figure at home, Amelia can lower her guard and become more feminine so as to finish the project of what it means to be the 1/0 or M/W=N South. That is to say, the edenic writing corresponds to the time when masculine Amelia begins to develop femininity according to 1/0 essentialism of gender. Under this circumstance, what it means to be the South by having agrarian life is associated with the time when Amelia can descend from the position of 1 to the position of 0 so that she can be a calculable woman in a domestic sphere which is a proper place according to 1/0 eyes of the South.

Amelia, the only plantation mistress of the town, becomes a central figure who represents life-preserving principle due to being a utilitarian doctor. Her ecological science or native knowledge in medicine plays an important role in preventing the collapse of the 1/0 society. The role as such is a meta-industrial labour that conveys life to other subjects under this 1/0 regime. We are told that,

“for she enjoyed doctoring and did a great deal of it . . . For unlocated sickness there were any number of different medicines which she had brewed herself from unknown recipes. They wrenched loose the bowels very well, but they could not be given to small children, as they caused bad convulsions; for them she had an entirely separate draught, gentler and sweet-flavored . . . the most dangerous and extraordinary treatment she did not hesitate, and no disease was so terrible but what she would undertake to cure it” (McCullers, 2005, p. 16-17).

Amelia is in charge of coping with natural sickness. She is a patriarchal subject who tends the nature for patriarchal capitalism as her patients are those othered labours who work for her in return.

As a mediator of nature for patriarchal capitalism, Amelia also oppresses herself as a guinea pig. We are told that,

“There were times when Miss Amelia seemed to go into a sort of trance. And . . . whenever she invented a new medicine she always tried it out first on herself. She would swallow an enormous dose and spend the following day walking thoughtfully back and forth from the café to the brick privy. Often, when there was a sudden keen gripe, she would stand quite still, her queer eyes staring down at the ground and her fists clenched; she was trying to decide which organ was being worked upon, and what misery the new medicine might be most likely to cure” (McCullers, 2005, p. 49).

Her body, soul, and time do not belong to her but to the family and the society as a whole. Being a nursing mistress helps sustain the communal network, keeping the town still alive.

Amelia’s life-preserving ecological science, the meta-industrial labour, then helps numb the life-destroying force of patriarchal capitalism, impeding the entropy. As the narrator points out regarding the townspeople’s thought about self-worth in the capitalist system,

“All useful things have a price . . . that is the way the world is run . . . But no value has been put on human life; it is given to us free and taken without being paid for. What is it worth? . . . the value may seem to be little or nothing at all. Often after you have sweated and tried and things are not better for you, there comes a feeling deep down in the soul that you are not worth much” (McCullers, 2005, p. 54).

The townspeople must be alienated and fragmented from themselves and social harmony due to capitalism, causing them to lack self-esteem. If there is no mistress who performs a nursing role for them and a café to empower them physically and spiritually as “people . . . were likewise proud when sitting at the tables in the café” (McCullers, 2005, p. 55), this Southern town would experience apocalyptic ruin because life-deteriorating capitalism would dehumanize the townsfolk until “the town is dreary . . . the road is empty, white with dust . . . the soul rots with boredom” (McCullers, 2005, p. 69-70). The apocalyptic mood of the nightmarish South as such is impeded by the internal reciprocity of the Southern values sustaining self-worth in the townsfolk in the café.

Apart from medicinal work, Amelia’s liquor also possesses a life-affirming force. Her liquor helps the townspeople who suffer from capitalist alienation to temporarily resume their natural time. Consuming Amelia’s liquor takes drinkers to some escapist zone, which is a spiritual or physical sanctuary. As McCullers wrote,

“But if the paper is held for a moment to the fire then the letters turn brown and the meaning becomes clear. Imagine that the whisky is the fire and that the message is that which is known only in the soul of a man — then the worth of Miss Amelia’s liquor can be understood. Things that have gone unnoticed, thoughts that have been harbored far back in the dark mind, are suddenly recognized and comprehended . . . he has warmed his soul and seen the message hidden there” (McCullers, 2005, p. 10).

A plantation mistress like Amelia tends nature for sustaining the society as she converts a natural swamp that has no value in capitalism to be a place for distillery so that she can maintain the family business and the town at the same time.

Thereby, Amelia embodies two faces of the same coin: the masculine project for maintaining the family via capitalist means representing for life-destroying force and feminine duties as a life-preserving mistress. As an androgynous subject, she can balance or mediate the two opposing sides. Metaphorically speaking, Amelia

herself is the coin of patriarchal capitalism that functions as a bodily space for *negotiation* between life-deteriorating 1/0 culture and life-ameliorating nature. That being said, the tension between Amelia as industrial culture and Amelia as meta-industrial nature is solved by the theme that Amelia is an androgynous subject who perpetuates Southern patriarchy. The coming of Cousin Lymon helps Amelia sustain 1/0 culture as the old Southernness triggered by him is believed to be capitalism-free and full of internal reciprocity. However, the old Southern values are just fictional myth or false consciousness that can be perceived as reality. To recall what McCullers tries to de-mythologize, “we have lived so long in an artificial social system that we insisted was natural and right and just—when all along we knew it wasn’t.” What does she refer to by the word “an artificial social system” deeply rooted in Southerners’ collective consciousness until they considered it as natural to their reality?

Letting Cousin Lymon in, Amelia becomes closer to 1/0 culture of the South, i.e., she becomes closer to the naturalization of M/W=N oppression. As Amelia tells Lymon about her father, she narrates her story as if she would like Lymon to replace her father’s position:

“I’d go to bed just as the lamp was turned on and sleep . . . Then come daybreak Big Papa would walk in and put his hand down on my shoulder. “Get stirring, Little,” he would say. Then later he would holler up the stairs from the kitchen when the stove was hot . . . And I’d run down the stairs and dress by the hot stove” (McCullers, 2005, p. 36).

Why does Amelia enjoy narrating her story regarding her father to Lymon? Would she like Lymon to take her father’s position so that she could put her capitalist guard down for good and descend from the phallic position of 1 to the position of being a domestic woman of 0 according to the 1/0 myth of Southern belle? Lymon is the only person who could access every property that belongs to Amelia: “He alone knew where she kept the chart . . . He alone had access to her bank-book . . . He owned almost everything on the premises” (McCullers, 2005, p. 37). Amelia must try to make Lymon more masculine as Lymon owns more and more properties of hers.

Furthermore, Lymon could sleep in Amelia's father's bedroom. No matter what Amelia thinks about Lymon's existence, it is certain that she seems to develop more and more friendliness or compassion towards other people, which suggests the development of her feminine drive: "she put on a dark red dress . . . Her manners, however, and her way of life were greatly changed . . . she was not so quick to cheat her fellow man and to exact cruel payments" (McCullers, 2005, p. 24). She seems to be more feminine according to the right column of 1/0 culture. Thereby, Amelia's love for Lymon urges her to yearn for the image of Virgin Mary or Queen of the home: "she had no patience with any traveling; those who had made the trip to Atlanta or traveled fifty miles from home . . . Those restless people she despised" (McCullers, 2005, p. 52). The image as such is a cultural construction that can confine her in the reproductive sphere valued by Southern patriarchy.

Amelia also prefers living in the domestic sphere to staying outside the home due to her love for Cousin Lymon, causing herself to become closer to M/W=N essentialism. We are told that Amelia has developed homesickness:

"Miss Amelia, as she always liked to have him near to her, and was prone to be terribly homesick when she had to go any distance away . . . before leaving she found a stick and drew a heavy line all around the barbecue pit . . . and told him not to trespass beyond that boundary" (McCuller, 2005, p. 45).

Amelia's stored-up love imprisons Cousin Lymon whose adaptable and fluid nature together with his natural time is disrupted. He is likened to a "swamphaunt" (McCullers, 2005, p. 49) suggesting that he has some characteristics of swamps. Southern swamps are seen as intractable due to the fact that they are earth and water mixed together, making it resistant to being incorporated into capitalist modes of production. Such an attempt to incorporate or colonize swamps is associated with the quest for maintaining Southern family romance or Southern project of self-creation. Thus, Amelia's attempt to make Cousin Lymon's life stagnate with her in the café symbolizing the old Southern culture cannot be successful due to Cousin Lymon's intractability, untamability and fluidity in nature.

The force of Amelia's love is then associated with Southernness yearning to colonize and confine Cousin Lymon in 1/0 culture of the South. The narrator's theory of love is as follows:

"Often the beloved is only a stimulus for all the stored-up love which has lain quiet within the lover . . . He feels in his soul that his love is a solitary thing. He comes to know a new, strange loneliness and it is this knowledge which makes him suffer . . . He must house his love within himself as best he can; he must create for himself a whole new inward world — a world intense and strange, complete in himself" (McCullers, 2005, p. 25-26).

Lacking a Southern male figure to replace her father's position, Amelia must store up her love of the Southern family romance for a long time until she meets Cousin Lymon. Her heterosocial love for him must propel her to create a whole new inward world, which is the café symbolizing for the old Southern culture.

Undoubtedly, Miss Amelia's failure in maintaining the existence of the café represents the collapse of the 1/0 culture of the South. As an androgynous person performing as a middle ground, Amelia's life-destroying patriarchal capitalism from being the subject of Southern family romance and life-preserving femininity from being the plantation mistress are combined to perpetuate the illusive internal reciprocity within 1/0 culture instead:

"When [Lymon] walked into the room, there was always a quick feeling of tension . . . when the hunchback marched into the café everyone looked around at him and there was a quick outburst of talking and drawing of corks . . . [Amelia] was proud, and there was in it the hint of a threat, as though daring anyone to try to hold him to account for all his foolery" (McCullers, 2005, p. 39-40).

The delusive internal relationship that helps perpetuate 1/0 oppression as such is de-mythologized or deconstructed when Marvin Macy, who represents the marginalized

and othered labours exploited as resource in this 1/0 regime, returns. Accompanied by Cousin Lymon whose life becomes stagnant thanks to Miss Amelia, Marvin returns to take revenge on the oppressive culture of the South, causing Amelia to exercise her masculine force as an ego self-defense mechanism during the final battle scene. Marvin's return causes her to lose Cousin Lymon whose existence triggers life-affirming feminine drive in her. The internal network between Southern culture and nature becomes imbalanced as the townsfolk lack life-preserving femininity, the meta-industrial labour, from Amelia as the mediator of nature for them: "Everything in the café had suddenly risen in price . . . And what sort of a café is that? . . . Now all this wise doctoring was over" (McCullers, 2005, p. 68-69). This lack of femininity representing life-healing nature causes Amelia's 1/0 culture of the South to experience apocalyptic and solitary atmosphere as there is no natural feminine force to prevent its own nightmarish entropy. The deteriorated café in the dreary setting at the end thus symbolizes the collapse of the Southern culture due its own self-deteriorating capitalist system. Therefore, the collapse as such is sex-gendered as the masculine culture in the name of Southern family romance, which Miss Amelia adopts as her consciousness, not only destroys itself but causes other townsfolk to be caught in the crossfire as well.

3.4 Conclusion

On the whole, Amelia is jacked into being a resource for patriarchal capitalism as she performs as a subject for maintaining Southern family romance and plantation mistress. Being androgynous serves to perpetuate the oppression of patriarchal capitalism over the townspeople thanks to Amelia's interplay between life-deteriorating capitalism for the sake of Southern family romance and life-ameliorating activities. Likewise, although she defeminizes herself and keeps a very long distance from femininity so as to take the patriarchal position of 1, she ends up developing compassion as a feminine force due to her love and fear of loneliness. As a mediator of nature according to M/W= N ideal, Amelia conforms to ideologies of the Southern

family romance and a plantation mistress so that she will not have to spend her entire life alone. Unfortunately, she fails to perpetuate the Southernness. Miss Amelia Evans' reconstruction project of the 1/0 South is deconstructed by Marvin Macy representing the Other according to the following chapter.



CHAPTER 4

THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF EVANS

4.1 Introduction

When Jack Mangan, a host of a talk show *Ship's Reporter*, conducted an exclusive interview with Carson McCullers regarding *The Member of the Wedding* (1946), McCullers explained to him how she came up with the idea for composing the novel:

“Well, I hadn’t thought about it in terms of social problems . . . I always think more about in terms of human beings . . . the basic theme is just the need to belong . . . to belong to something . . . to feel oneself of a part of life.”²

Social inclusion and exclusion matters for McCullers, but what inherently alienates Southern people from each other, especially in *The Ballad*? Is it because of any Southern ideologies or essentialism of racial honor that she tries to interrogate throughout the text? Undoubtedly, the yearning for the sense of social belonging as such is also reflected in the characterization of Marvin Macy, the socially constructed villain in *The Ballad*. The more he tried to be part of the Southern culture, the more isolated he became. In other words, the more Marvin attempts to appropriate 1/0 or M/W=N mindset for the gratification of his love, the more marginalized he appears. Such marginalization is an act of preventing the Southern position of 1 that is threatened by Marvin Macy whose masculinity is toxic. In this chapter, I will explore the development of Marvin Macy’s masculinity through Ariel Salleh’s ecofeminist framework of 1/0 culture together with M/W=N equation and points out how the nature of his masculinity is associated with the concept of the wild.

² Durken, Teater. (2013, June 8). *Carson McCullers interview YouTube* [Video]. Youtube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xkDY_NPbkRs

4.2 Southern society and manhood

What it means to be a man in the South could be explored throughout *The Ballad*. The concept of Southern manhood is a social construction deeply rooted in an attempt to construct what it means to be the old South. As Wilson observes,

“until after the Second World War, the Southern elite has attempted to define itself and its region according to a set of interdependent myths. The Cavalier ideal, the myth of racial purity, and the Cult of Southern Womanhood all emerged as a means of justifying the South to outside observers, first in a supercilious colonial- era Europe and subsequently in an equally disdainful North. At the heart of all these myths was a drive for cultural and social order, a codification of accepted Southern behavior that would become an obsessive project for defenders of the plantation aristocratic culture” (Wilson, 2005, p. XVII).

That being said, Southern culture expected men to be above and over nature as well as women, distancing the men from women and nature in order to acquire masculine identity and power. Such distancing from women and nature, the M/ W= N hierarchization, propels men to come up with patriarchal justifications that consider women and nature as inferior; therefore, they have a right to tame, exploit, colonize, appropriate, or incorporate such an inferior grouping. In this case, women, nature, and other marginal groups are considered having no identity on their own, and they must be incorporated into patriarchal time, the time when ones are robbed of their natural time or selfhood and are assigned with socially constructed identities to serve patriarchy in the name of Southernness. Westling wrote about the M/W=N nexus that Southern women were equated to Southern land as Southern gentlemen were socially constructed to be the masters and breadwinners:

“the Southern woman in her ideal form was the traditional view of the land itself as feminine. Southern gentlemen loved

their land and fought a disastrous war to preserve what they felt was their honor and their proper stewardship” (Westling, 2008, p. 9).

The concept of Southern manhood is thus an essentialist belief that associates the self-construction of Southern gentlemen with what it means to be the South. That said, the gentleman image is equated to Southernness.

Apart from the gentleman image, domestic women and lands also represent racial purity of Southern culture for white Southern gentlemen. Considered as having no identity on their own, women and lands are associated with the image of the Virgin Mary and virginal lands for the men to protect and value through husbanding and husbandry respectively so as to guarantee their own chivalrous, gentleman image. For this reason, possessing domestic women and lands is an indication for what it means to be a gentleman in the South. The indication as such compensates for men's lack as discussed in Chapter 2. To put it another way, it represents men's absence of internal life process. Thereby, women and lands, when made manageable, purified, and sublimated by patriarchal principles of Southern culture into virginal images, can be used as resources for men to exercise their power upon so as to guarantee their position of 1 as well as their masculinity. Gentleman is gentleman when queen of the home and virginal land are under his control. White Southern gentlemen's essentialist burden was then to incorporate women and nature into their patriarchal time in order to construct what it means to be the South, normalizing M/W= N oppressions in the name of Southernness.

However, Southern swamp and some Southern people considered as the Others resist such a patriarchal naturalization, opposing to the construction of masculine identity as well as the Southern culture. Southern swampscape focuses on how swamps and marginalized people who do not conform to the 1/0 images of the South are paired. As Wilson wrote, southern swamps, the wetlands mixed with water and earth, cannot be converted into resources for patriarchy to exploit for capitalist goals in the name of Southernness:

“for the antebellum South, the swamp is from the beginning not only the antithesis of the pastoral ideal but a very real obstacle to commercial prosperity . . . the swamp becomes more clearly opposed, both figuratively and practically, to prevailing ideals of white Southern society, which emphasized racial and cultural purity and ironclad class distinctions” (Wilson, 2006, p. XVII).

In Southern-centric mind, swamps (as cited in Wilson, 2006) are deprecated as “breeding ground for ‘the virus of human greed’” (5). The relationship between Southern culture and swamps is relational as the latter are linguistically painted as less civilized than the former. Southern swamps are also regarded as impenetrable and uninviting for white men as they are places full of poisonous animals and diseases. Thereby, nature, if having no productive value to capitalism, is an enemy to Southern culture by default:

“The Southern aristocracy came to view its lot as a perpetual fight against nature itself: against the uncivilized individualists who threatened to infect the delicate system with the virtue of greed; against those of impure blood, lineage, or reputation who might also wear away at the bedrock of Southern society; and against moral infection, which had its roots within, in the carefully controlled but ever-present animal self” (Wilson, 2006, p. 6).

By marginalizing swamps or other Southern subjects including runaway slaves that could not contribute to the Southern project of what it means to be the pure South, Southern culture prioritized the purity of bloodline. That being said, Southerners’ quest was to maintain distances away from what their culture considered dirty, animalistic, or instinctive nature. Southern culture was obsessed with Victorianism. As Wilson (as cited in Wilson, 2006) postulates,

“on certain aspects of Victorian mind . . . Since the earliest times, honor was inseparable from hierarchy and entitlement,

defense of family blood and community needs. All these exigencies required the rejection of the lowly, the alien, and the shamed. Such unhappy creatures belonged outside the circle of honor” . . . And yet, those unhappy creatures always seemed to threaten the borders of that circle” (5).

1/0 regime in the South creates dualism and speciesism so that patriarchal subjects can consider themselves as superior to the Others that are outside their 1/0 circle of honor. Southern inclusion is sex-gendered as what is considered superior must be qualified by Cavalier ideal, the patriarchal myth that prioritizes racial purity and womanly image of Queen of the home. As Wilson points out about what it means to be a Southern man according to the gentleman image of the Cavalier myth,

“ The quintessence of Southern gentlemanly behavior, the cavalier became the defender of purity, the paragon of control and civilization . . . He maintained moral, social, and sexual purity at all costs; he was master of his domain and, most importantly, master of himself. If the Cavalier myth can be interpreted as a literary and linguistic attempt to control fundamentally uncontrollable forces, then the swamp emerges as its nemesis: the distillation of pure wildness, the uncontrollable element in the pastoral garden (Wilson, 2005, p. 6-7).

Furthermore, Scott (as cited in King, 1982) points out that what it means to be a Southern woman is associated with the image of “queen of the home” (35). King also points out about sexuality and the queen image that,

“ sexuality or erotic appeal was denied her. In extreme form she was stripped of any emotional, nurturing attributes at all. Eventually, she came to assume a quasi-Virgin Mary role as the asexual mother of the Southern male hero (King, 1982, p. 35).

Therefore, the image of being the chivalrous gentleman representing the superior position of 1 and the image of being the queen of the home embodying the inferior

position of 0 are qualified to be part of the 1/0 circle of honor indicating what it means to be the South, whereas what is different from these two 1/0 images (gentleman/queen images) such as swamps, bastards, the unbaptised, and so on must be seen as enemies of the 1/0 state. The enemies as such must be excluded from the Southern project of self-construction or the circle of Southern honor. Undoubtedly, such an exclusion happens to Marvin Macy as his wild, unpolished masculinity does not conform to the gentleman image according to 1/0 South.

4.3 Marvin Macy's masculinity

Marvin Macy's association with the Southern swamp indicates he is the odd one out in 1/0 regime. Originally, Marvin was a bastard whose parents were not properly married according to 1/0 culture. McCullers wrote that Marvin "was one of seven unwanted children whose parents were wild younguns who liked to fish and roam around the swamp" (McCullers, 2005, p. 28). Although swamp is a demonized space for Southern culture, it is a wilderness, an escapist zone, for Marvin's parents to enjoy what is considered dirty or animalistic, i.e., unrepressed sexual behaviors. Unfortunately, childish Marvin, together with other six children, had to tolerate their parents' domestic violence in their childhood:

"At night when they came home from the mill they would look at the children as though they did not know where they had come from. If the children cried they were beaten, and the first thing they learned in this world was to seek the darkest corner of the room and try to hide themselves as best they could" (McCullers, 2005, p. 28).

Why did Marvin's parents exercise violence over their own children? Filling the gap, I interpret such domestic violence as a manifestation of intra-racial racism. Due to the fact that Marvin's parents' natural time is related to the (sexual) enjoyment time in the swamp, the townspeople in the mill, who have 1/0 eyes, must develop anxiety as Marvin's parents' transgressive, premature act of love must threaten the purity of 1/0

circle of honor of the South. The anxiety as such must propel the townspeople to see Marvin's parents as the Others who do not conform to 1/0 institution of marriage according to Christianity. Thereby, Marvin's parents must develop stress and feel alienated from the society as they must internalize racist thoughts of criminalized and impure swamp from other townsfolk in the society. Such internalization must propel Marvin's parents to project their psychological suffering upon their own children in the form of domestic violence as a way out. That being said, they must see their children as the Others as other townspeople see them. Therefore, 1/0 specicism or racism of the South alienates childish Marvin, together with other six children, from his parents as the parents could not tolerate 1/0 eyes any longer: "Finally, they were abandoned by their parents altogether and left to the mercies of the town" (28). As a result, the townspeople's 1/0 cultural hatred over swamp race ends up creating villainous, hypermasculine Marvin Macy in return.

The development of Marvin's masculinity is opposed to the cultural image of chivalrous gentleman. Initially, Marvin and Henry Macy are the two who continued to live in the town, yet the two's masculinity seems to develop differently, ending up becoming foil characters towards each other. Although the two are seen as part of swamp people, they are still whites:

"But this is not a town to let white orphans perish in the road before your eyes . . . There was a good woman in the town named Mrs. Mary Hale, and she took Marvin Macy and Henry Macy and loved them as her own. They were raised in her household and treated well" (McCullers, 2005, p. 28).

Henry grows chivalrous and becomes a gentleman according to 1/0 circle of honor, whereas Marvin turns out to be an anti-social macho:

"Henry Macy, who is so opposite to his brother, is the kindest and gentlest man in the town. He lends his wages to those who are unfortunate, and in the old days he used to care for the children . . . Marvin Macy, however, grew to be bold and fearless and cruel. His heart turned tough as the horns of Satan,

and until the time when he loved Miss Amelia he brought to his brother and the good woman who raised him nothing but shame and trouble” (McCullers, 2005, p. 29).

Why does Marvin Macy turn out to be an aggressive macho? Salleh suggests that being hypermasculine is an act of ego self-defense mechanism that propels some men to develop machismo as their guard due to the lack of proper childcare practice:

“At the same time, the father remains a distant figure in too many cultures, often unknown, deserting, gone to war, or simply a nine-to-five man. He is rarely a primary carer; rather, he presents a hazy, abstract role—an imaginary ideal. But insecure identification for a son can lead to overcompensating macho posturing. In any event, the skewed process of identity formation appears to leave young boys in touch with only half of their psychological resources. Not surprisingly institutions that bolster the fragile ego have a long history. In this respect, the props of capitalist patriarchal privilege set up deforming and vicious circle for men as much as for women” (Salleh, 2017, p. 74).

Despite having Mrs. Hale as a mother figure, Marvin still lacks a cultural father figure to identify with, causing him to end up constructing his personal image of what it means to be a man by himself. That is to say, in order to become a man, Marvin must distance himself from Mrs. Hale. Such a M/Other distancing allows him to be a self-constructed man rather than a man of honor polished by 1/0 culture of the South. As Salleh observes,

“ while a girl experiences her first living relationship empathically as a fusional continuum between self and mother, the boy child’s ego identity emerges negatively, by differentiation between self and M/Other. Masculine identity is developed oppositionally in infancy by exclusion of those characteristics that nurturant Woman displays, 1/0. Hence the

need for separation from intimacy by flight or fight, which many men go on to show in relations with women right throughout their lives” (Salleh, 2017, p. 74).

Thereby, the origin of Marvin Macy’s masculine development goes unpolished by the Southern culture. Innately marginalized and secluded, Marvin develops unchecked masculinity, allowing himself to appear anti-social and toxic towards the Southern culture.

Compared with Marvin Macy’s origin of his masculinity, Miss Amelia Evans’ origin of her masculinity is on the contrary. We are told that Amelia “raised motherless by her father who was a solitary man . . . her ways and habits of life were too peculiar ever to reason about” (McCullers, 2005, p. 14). Unlike Marvin who lacks a cultural father figure to tame him, Amelia lacks a mother figure to identify with. In other words, she lacks, what Salleh postulates, *a fusional continuum between self and mother*. Thereby, Amelia is distanced away from natural femininity, ending up identifying with cultural masculinity from her father in aristocratic, Southern culture instead. That must be why Amelia knows nothing regarding “female complaint” (McCullers, 2005, p. 17). Under this circumstance, Amelia’s masculinity represents 1/0 culture of the South that propels her to re-construct Southernness symbolized by the café, whereas Marvin’s masculinity represents the untamed wild whose existence threatens the racial purity of the South.

Marvin Macy’s unchecked masculinity threatens the 1/0 circle of Southern honor, contaminating the culture with his toxic masculinity. His masculinity is determined by the fact that he is a more well-to-do macho than other townspeople: “He was well off, made good wages” (McCullers, 2005, p. 27). Unlike Amelia whose memory tokens of her father such as acorn, snuffbox and her father’s bedroom represent her patriarchal time to maintain, Marvin has his natural time that is not penetrated, appropriated, or colonized by Southern patriarchal time as he has “a gold watch which opened in the back to a picture of a waterfall” (McCullers, 2005, p. 27). Moreover, Marvin also threatens both Southern men’s position of 1 and their Southern project of self-construction through his exercise of violence, indirectly emasculating

the men of Southern culture: “For years, when he was a boy, he had carried about with him the dried and salted ear of a man he had killed in a razor fight” (McCullers, 2005, p. 27). Likewise, Marvin also ruins Southern nature and queens of the home which are indications of what it means to be a Southern gentleman if those considered inferior can be protected:

“He had chopped off the tails of squirrels in the pinewoods just to please his fancy . . . there were at the time several young girls who were clean-haired and soft-eyed, with tender sweet little buttocks and charming ways. These gentle young girls he degraded and shamed” (McCullers, 2005, p. 27).

Marvin also possesses “timberwood” (McCullers, 2005, p. 33), a virginal land meant to be accumulated into Southern culture to be used as a resource for Southern project of cultural construction of agrarianism, but it belongs to the anti-social man like Marvin instead. Thereby, Marvin Macy’s existence in the Southern society must be dealt with and exterminated. Otherwise, Southern perfectionism of 1/0 purity is adulterated by his wildness.

4.4 Marvin Macy’s wildness

In *Politics in/of the Wilderness* (1996), Salleh observes how Eurocentric culture constructs the concept of wilderness. Wilderness is the term socially constructed and romanticized by the West:

“for indigenous peoples sacred wilderness is imbued with cultural *presence*, whereas for white men wilderness is sacred precisely because it represents their *absence*. The nature/culture split in eurocentric thought is fuelled by self-loathing . . . wilderness politics creates ‘natural objects’ to be viewed for entertainment or, more recently, protected as ‘resource banks’” (Salleh, 1996, p. 26).

White colonizers constructed the image of pastoral agrarianism, pastoral idyll, and so on so as to penetrate wilderness because they considered the area was *terra nullius*, treating othered labour such as indigenous people, whose capitalism-free ways of living help save the Earth, as if the indigenous were not really there. Thereby, Salleh's observation divides the concept of wilderness into two notions: wilderness romanticized by white colonizers and wilderness that, according to eco-centric view, has its own autonomy. Under this circumstance, the latter is connected to having selfhood and natural time:

“land is never vacant as in *terra nullius*, but an intractable ‘subject’ in its own right . . . ‘wilderness’ speaks of potentials to re- discover in ourselves. Moreover, with the push by pharmaceutical corporations into ‘gene splicing’ and the ‘re- design and patenting of animal parts’, the ‘wild’ is lost forever . . . As opposed to the coloniser’s *terra nullius*, there is a liberating meaning of wilderness as something inalienable with intrinsic value, something beyond the myopia of capitalist deals and commodities” (Salleh, 1996, p. 29-30).

What it means to be the wild for Salleh is related to having their own wilderness representing natural time that escapes patriarchal control or capitalist accumulation. Thereby, Marvin Macy, a Southern non-conformist derived from swamp race, can be seen as the wild as his existence posits a threat to the 1/0 culture of the South. As Salleh notes, “Nature does not conform to the 1/0 and must be put right by Humanity” (Salleh, 2017, p. 62).

Marvin and his unpolished masculinity represent the untameable wild; therefore, Amelia, whose café symbolizes Southern culture, must get rid of him so as to maintain the 1/0 purity of the South. Originally, Marvin lacks a cultural father figure to enculturate his masculinity. This lack from his childhood must propel him to be drawn toward Amelia. As a masculine woman, Amelia is the person who can be a substitute for his lack. In order to fulfill his lack, Marvin must masquerade himself with

the Southern gentleman image so that he can be closer to Amelia, i.e., to incorporate himself into 1/0 circle of honor. We are told that,

“He would stand near the door of her premises, his cap in his hand, his eyes meek and longing and misty gray. He reformed himself completely. He was good to his brother and foster mother, and he saved his wages and learned thrift. Moreover, he reached out toward God . . . he attended church services and was present at all religious meetings. He learned good manners: he trained himself to rise and give his chair to a lady, and he quit swearing and fighting and using holy names in vain” (McCullers, 2005, p. 32).

Furthermore, Marvin even leaves his wild time behind so as to fulfill his lack in patriarchal time: “he went one evening to Miss Amelia, carrying a bunch of swamp flowers, a sack of chitterlins, and a silver ring—that night Marvin Macy declared himself” (McCullers, 2005, p.29).

However, Amelia is not romantically drawn towards Marvin. Her lack from childhood must be associated with the absence of her mother. As we are told,

“Miss Amelia had been born dark and somewhat queer of face, raised motherless by her father who was a solitary man . . . not natural for a woman, and that her ways and habits of life were too peculiar ever to reason about” (McCullers, 2005, p. 14).

Her lack of a mother figure must be repressed, and the repressed lack can manifest in the shape of a life partner. For this reason, Amelia is a half-formed person. Thereby, she must be rather drawn toward Cousin Lymon who is an effeminate person that can be the substitute for the lack—not Marvin who masks himself as a Southern gentleman. Whatling (as cited in Bloom, 2005) also suggests that

“Amelia as faithful retainer to Lymon’s southern belle—a performance he maintains even to the traditional descent from the staircase. In short, Lymon takes up the traditionally

feminine role as (s)he who is wooed, with Amelia in the masculine role as wooer” (99).

Accordingly, the marriage between Marvin and Amelia becomes a marriage between Man/Man=N—not Man/Woman=Nature. As we are told, “It was a winter afternoon and the clear sun shone through the ruby windows of the church and put a curious glow on the pair before the altar” (McCullers, 2005, p. 30). As a result, their bridal house becomes a contested space between man and man.

To clarify, masqueraded Marvin physically and capitalistically struggles to put Amelia right back to the right column of M/ W= N nexus through sexual consummation, whereas Amelia maintains her masculine guard and waits to appropriate Marvin’s properties as her own. We are told that,

“A groom is in a sorry fix when he is unable to bring his well-beloved bride to bed with him . . . he went to Cheehaw and came back with a lawyer. Then in Miss Amelia’s office he signed over to her the whole of his worldly goods, which was ten acres of timberland which he had bought with the money he had saved . . . He was trying to tell her something, but before he could open his mouth she had swung once with her fist and hit his face so hard that he was thrown back against the wall” (McCullers, 2005, p. 32).

Marvin’s total loss of his properties is equated to the loss of his masculinity. In other words, he is emasculated by Amelia as she is left with “everything that Marvin Macy had ever owned—his timberwood, his gilt watch, every one of his possessions” (McCullers, 2005, p. 33). Marvin, the Other of 1/0 culture, is exploited as resource for Amelia to be more prosperous: “So all that he had ever done was to make her richer” (McCullers, 2005, p. 33). Amelia and the townspeople are also delighted when Marvin is imprisoned in the penitentiary: “Miss Amelia was deeply gratified . . . The town laughed a long time over this grotesque [marital] affair” (McCullers, 2005, p. 33).

With these in mind, Marvin is put right by Amelia, a Southern agent. That being said, he must be excluded from the 1/0 circle of honor as his status quo posits

a threat to the purity of what it means to be the South. Despite the fact that he can reform himself through the power of love, Amelia still sees him as the Other: “Strange to say, she never once referred to him by name but always mentioned him scornfully as ‘that loom-fixer I was married to’” (McCullers, 2005, p. 33). We are also told that, “there was about him a secret meanness that clung to him almost like a smell” (McCullers, 2005, p. 51). No matter how Marvin tries to be part of Amelia’s reconstruction project of what it means to be the South, he still ends up being marginalized as the Other. He is labeled as part of the Other, swamp race, and the like forever. Therefore, Marvin Macy can be seen as a colonized subject who imitates the Southern colonizer image of a Christianized gentleman so as to compensate for his lack. Such an imitation threatens the white purity of colonizers’ culture of the South; thereby, he must be put right back to where he belongs according to Southerners’ 1/0 eyes.

Marvin’s return to fight back against the South is a symbolic act of de-normalization. 1/0 culture normalizes its oppressions and exploitations over the Others, allowing its patriarchal subjects to become conscious of race, gender, and class divides. The normalization as such creates dualism, racism, specicism, sexism, classism, and the like. These cultural ideologies can shape people’s consciousness until such ideologies become people’s reality by default. The normalization can be seen through the use of foreshadowing of the re-emergence of the internal reciprocity together with the Southern values. To recall,

“The next morning was serene, with a sunrise of warm purple mixed with rose. In the fields around the town the furrows were newly plowed, and very early the tenants were at work setting out the young, deep green tobacco plants. The wild crows flew down close to the fields, making swift blue shadows on the earth. In town the people set out early with their dinner pails, and the windows of the mill were blinding gold in the sun. The air was fresh and the peach trees light as March clouds with their blossoms” (McCullers, 2005, p. 12).

Without Marvin Macy's existence, Amelia lets Cousin Lymon in, and the setting appears suggestive of the up-coming of Southern internal reciprocity and agrarianism. That being said, the setting appears auspicious for Amelia's quest of reconstructing the South together with Southern M/W=N nexus as she turns more feminine discussed in the former chapter. Under this circumstance, the background suggestion of the revitalized Southern M/W=N order as such is equated to the normalization of 1/0 culture. In other words, Amelia will put herself right back to where she belongs. i.e., the domestic space according to Southern essentialism. Therefore, in white Southern mind, the 1/0 or M/W=N normalization becomes the natural construction as the setting corresponds to it. In fact, it is a cultural construction romanticized by the South.

McCullers' use of magical realism is associated with Marvin Macy, whose return is to de-normalize the 1/0 culture. As Clark (as cited in Wilson, 2005) points out about two contrasting images of the South including Edenic and apocalyptic images,

“[i]n the minds of many Americans, there are two Souths”; one is “an idyllic land of plenty . . . inhabited by a happy and hospitable people for whom life is pleasure and pleasure a way of life,” the other, a “nightmare world of torrid and stifling heat in which uncontrollable passions and senseless acts of violence become the outward manifestations of a blighting inner corruption, a secret sin poisoning the very mainstreams of Southern life” (4).

The natural surroundings turn abnormal pursuant to Marvin Macy's return. His return is to fight back via contaminating the purity of the South that Amelia tries to reconstruct and perpetuate. We are told that,

“The next day the weather turned suddenly, and it became hot. Even in the early morning there was a sticky sultriness in the atmosphere, the wind carried the rotten smell of the swamp, and delicate shrill mosquitoes webbed the green millpond . . . what sausage could keep in such weather as this? After a few days there was everywhere the smell of slowly

spoiling meat, and an atmosphere of dreary waste. Worse yet, a family reunion near the Forks Falls highway ate pork roast and died, every one of them. It was plain that their hog had been infected—and who could tell whether the rest of the meat was safe or not? . . . It was a time of waste and confusion” (McCullers, 2005, p. 51).

Apart from contaminated nature of the South and toxic meat, it also snows abnormally in snowless deep Southern province like this: “Marvin Macy laid claim to the snowfall . . . it was as though he owned every flake” (McCullers, 2005, p. 57). Under this abnormal circumstance, Marvin Macy’s existence and the magical realism serve as metaphor for figuratively contaminating the 1/0 purity of the South as the magical events could not be explicated by 1/0 rationalism. As we are told about Amelia’s reaction to the unnatural snowfall, “she was unable to form an immediate opinion of this new event . . . she preferred to ignore it” (McCullers, 2005, p. 57). The magic belongs to the Other like Marvin. To clarify, this 1/0 society creates villainous Marvin Macy in the first place as he and his family were marginalized into swamp race, allowing his wild masculinity to go toxic towards the 1/0 regime itself in return. As Marvin talks back to Amelia, “‘Everything you holler at me bounces back on yourself. Yah! Yah!’” (McCullers, 2005, p. 61). Symbolically speaking, Marvin implies that Southern culture destroys itself. Thus, nature corresponds with Marvin to de-naturalize the 1/0 culture, deconstructing the normalization of the 1/0 dualism of the South.

Moreover, Marvin also returns to reclaim his possessions, the masculine indications of being the intractable wild. Cousin Lymon also identifies with Marvin and accompanies him to ruin the symbolic café, symbolically deconstructing the 1/0 culture that robs them off their natural time:

“They carved terrible words on the café tables. They found the watch that opened in the back to show a picture of a waterfall and took that also . . . They went out in the swamp and completely wrecked the still, ruining the big new condenser and the cooler, and setting fire to the shack itself . . . They did

everything ruinous they could think of without actually breaking into the office where Miss Amelia stayed the night. Then they went off together, the two of them" (McCullers, 2005, p. 68).

Getting the watch back represents getting his wild time back for Marvin. We are also told that Marvin and Lymon "would be gone for hours together out in the swamp" (McCullers, 2005, p. 55). Cousin Lymon must be the one whose desire is to go wild. Southern culture cannot incorporate or colonize him as he does not know his age. That being said, Cousin Lymon is immune to human culture or human time as he does not know his linear time of age: "he had no idea how long he had been on the earth, whether for ten years or a hundred! So his age remained a puzzle" (McCullers, 2005, p. 63). Thereby, he identifies with the swamp race as it is outside the 1/0 circle of honor. No matter how much Amelia tries to make Lymon's life stagnant in the café representing the South, he would transgress the boundary anyway: "Before leaving she found a stick and drew a heavy line all around the barbecue pit, about two feet back from the edge, and told him not to trespass beyond that boundary" (McCullers, 2005, p. 45-46). Figuratively speaking, Amelia's act of drawing the boundary is equated to her attempt to confine Lymon within the Southern circle of honor. However, Cousin Lymon is a swamphaunt that resists cultural stagnation. For this reason, Cousin Lymon accompanies Marvin Macy as a form of male bonding to go wild on their own.

The epilogue regarding the chain gang at the end thus implies that the bonding between the Others oppressed in any 1/0 culture can be a guide to their survival. We are told about the singing of the chain gang at the end that,

"The music will swell until at last it seems that the sound does not come from the twelve men on the gang, but from the earth itself, or the wide sky . . . And what kind of gang is this that can make such music? . . . Just twelve mortal men who are together" (McCullers, 2005, p. 70-71).

The twelve men, despite being whites and blacks, bond with each other through singing without any racial prejudices. The group singing as such helps them temporarily

get through the suffering of hardwork that they are experiencing. For this reason, the epilogue serves as a metaphorical conclusion to the bonding between Marvin Macy and Cousin Lymon as they are the oppressed Others who together acts in unison to liberate themselves from Amelia's 1/0 culture.

4.5 Conclusion

The development of Marvin Macy's wild masculinity derived from cultural seclusion goes toxic toward the 1/0 culture itself. Androcentric culture tends to create binary oppositions so as to construct class, race, and gender hierarchy and justifies itself as more civilized. Such cultural justification is used to normalize oppressions, blinding its subjects with ideologies and social values. However, Southern culture never overcomes swamps physically. Neither does the South overcome Marvin Macy whose wild masculinity returns to de-naturalize the socially constructed nature of Southern oppressions. For this reason, the South linguistically paints swamp as the villainous threat instead as can be seen in the characterization of Marvin Macy whose origin is associated with swamps. Marvin Macy is characterized as a political agent who is in charge of deconstructing the oppressive 1/0 culture in the form of Amelia's reconstruction project of the South.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In *The Fall of the House of Evans: An Ecofeminist Reading of Carson McCullers' The Ballad of the Sad Café*, I propose that Miss Amelia, the protagonist, represents the Southern culture, whereas Marvin Macy, the villain accompanied by Cousin Lymon, embodies a political agent who threatens the culture as such. Examining the text in ecological and sex-gendered depth, I have contributed another mode of reading that can contribute to the community of *The Ballad* as well as ecofeminism as follows.

In the first chapter, an anecdotal introduction to reading my independent research is provided so as to familiarize the reader with Carson McCullers' life and the mainstream criticisms on *The Ballad of the Sad Café*. It seems McCullers psychologically suffered from the Southern culture that she had to depart from in order that she was able to prosper elsewhere and to rejuvenate her sense of selfhood. Due to McCullers' creative writing skill, most critics paid their attentions to *The Ballad*, especially through the lenses of gender studies, narratology, and Gothic studies.

In terms of gender criticism, sex-gendered dimensions are brought into focus, yet Broughton, Westling, and Fowler end up coming up with the similar conclusion regarding the taming of the shrewed Amelia. To push the discussion of gender further, I present another reading through Ariel Salleh's ecofeminist lens explored in Chapter 3. It seems clear to me that seeing *The Ballad* through sociological contexts of Southern family romance and what it means to be a plantation mistress can contribute a new interpretation in an opposite direction. That being said, while the former gender critics see Amelia as transgressive, my research has paved a new way in reading Amelia as submissive to the southern attempt in reconcretizing the long lost Southernness for fear that she has to live alone.

In terms of narrative criticism, the form of the text is explored by several critics so as to come up with the concepts of why *The Ballad* is titled as *The Ballad*. Concerning the dual voice of a single narrator contributes to the interpretation that

some long lost values are irredeemable. My interpretations in Chapter 3 and 4 have complexified such a focus on Southern values that underlie Miss Amelia Evans' cultural reconstruction of the café and Marvin Macy's deconstruction of it.

Pursuant to several criticisms on McCullers' use of Southern Gothic elements, the former critics postulate that gender distortions in the characterization of masculine Amelia and effeminate Cousin Lymon can be seen as the grotesque that threatens the sex-gendered essentialism of the phallus-loving society. Filling the sex-gendered gap, I have explored ecological dimensions in the background that play an important role in Amelia's quest of cultural naturalization and Marvin's revenge as de-naturalization in chapter 3 and Chapter 4 respectively. The exploration as such has contributed a new reading that concerns the significance of the edenic setting romanticized by the South in chapter 3 and McCullers' use of nature trope to suggest the collapse of the Southern society in Chapter 4.

According to such criticisms, What could be concluded from these critics are that Miss Amelia Evans is a non-conformist woman whose transgression results in her loneliness, and she must be dealt with by Marvin Macy and Cousin Lymon, the two male revengers. However, it seems clear to me that if the concept of nature, together with gender according to Southern cultural expectation, in *The Ballad* is dugged out, an ecofeminist revision is possible.

Thereby, my second chapter focuses on Ariel Salleh's 1/0 culture and M/W=N concept as well as some sociological contexts of the South. Salleh proposes that men's alienative consciousness, the moment of lacking the natural process during childbirth, contributes to the establishment of institutions such as Law, Church, and other cultural creations in order to compensate for the lack. These contributions to patriarchal culture give privilege to patriarchal men because they have the phallus of 1 which signifies their capacity of productive or industrial labour. Having womb which suggests 0 value in capitalist modes of production, women are compartmentalized into the domestic realm of reproductive or meta-industrial labour. The latter is thereby to be treated as resource for patriarchal capitalism in the name of Humanity, Civilization, and so forth. Salleh also indicates that patriarchal capitalism comes to

disrupt and interfere with natural reciprocity between human beings and natural surroundings for the sake of profits. The penetration as such can trigger natural crises which are taken for granted by patriarchal capitalism. The ecological disasters are thereby sex-gendered; patriarchal culture represents life-destroying force, while meta-industrial or othered labour life-sustaining force that helps maintain ecological balance on Earth. Looking into the Southern context, I traced back the *herstory* of Southern plantation mistresses who were expected to be both industrial and meta-industrial labour at the same time. Furthermore, ecostories of The Boll Weevil Invasion and The Dust Bowl are put on surface as the two crises occurred due to patriarchal capitalism of the South itself that came to interfere with Southern nature. This suggests that Southern culture creates its own destruction like what I have pointed out in the characterization of Marvin Macy and his toxic masculinity in Chapter 4.

In Chapter 3, Miss Amelia Evans is jacked into the ideology of Southern family romance and that of being a plantation mistress in order to perpetuate her patriarchal capitalism for her family as well as her 1/0 society of the South. Putting her astute guard on, Amelia breaks away from feminine conventions to assume a protective image as an astute businessperson. That said, Amelia's quest is to maintain her family legacy according to Southern family romance. Being a plantation mistress as she is the only family member left, Amelia accedes to the phallic position of 1 to mediate nature for profits. In other words, she is a patriarchal subject who incorporates herself into exercising industrial labour for monetary gains so as to maintain her family institution. On societal scale, Amelia uses her meta-industrial labour to sustain other people in the town. This life-sustaining labour such as her ecological knowledge to heal the sick helps prevent the entropy because the ways she treats them help them return to function well again for Amelia's industry. In other words, the tension between Amelia as life-deteriorating capitalism and Amelia as life-ameliorating nature is solved by the theme that Amelia tries to reconstruct and perpetuate Southern patriarchy.

In addition, the coming of Cousin Lymon leads Amelia toward love, causing her to develop more on her reciprocal relations to others. This results in making her closer to nature and temporarily farther away from capitalism. Amelia's café thereby

represents the old Southernness that prioritizes communal warmth or Southern values such as hospitality and fellowship over capitalism. However, the Southern values are deceiving myth as the myth is used to perpetuate and maintain complacency in othered labour, normalizing in disguise the oppression of 1/0 culture.

In Chapter 4, I have examined the characterization of Marvin Macy as his toxic masculinity posits a threat to Miss Amelia's 1/0 quest in re-constructing the South. As an unbaptized bastard, Marvin is the Other whose masculinity is unpolished. Accordingly, he is marginalized by other Southerners as his parents are swamp people whose premature love is socially considered early ripe, early rotten. This racism against swamp people releases Marvin's masculinity to go unchecked. However, Marvin can reform himself as he develops romance towards Miss Amelia. Unfortunately, Marvin is still seen as Marvin no matter how much he tries to mask himself as a chivalrous gentleman of the South. Having been emasculated as he lost all properties to Miss Amelia, Marvin returns to plague Miss Amelia's 1/0 culture, deconstructing the 1/0 dualism of the South as he, together with Cousin Lymon, symbolically destroys Miss Amelia's café representing the South. Thereby, Miss Amelia is the Southern agent, whereas Marvin Macy, accompanied by Cousin Lymon, is another political agent whose existence deteriorates or contaminates the 1/0 purity of the South.

Therefore, rereading Carson McCullers' *The Ballad of the Sad Café* through Ariel Salleh's ecofeminist lens is very crucial because it helps give voice to the Southern people, especially marginalized ones who are not mentioned in mainstream criticism, media, or history as can be seen in the characterization of Marvin Macy. Also, the characterization of Miss Amelia Evans indicates that she is an internalized victim of patriarchal culture. That being said, Miss Amelia Evans is destined to maintain the 1/0 culture, having no sense of becoming except the image of a plantation mistress.

Although my research provides a new understanding of *The Ballad of the Sad Café* in terms of the relationship between Southern culture and nature, it rather aims to deconstruct the former criticisms, especially those regarding gendered and ecofeminist concepts. For this reason, other concepts including narratology, Gothic

and psychoanalysis are still left for future critics to explore. In order to contribute new criticisms to *The Ballad*, the intersection among gender, nature, Gothic, psychoanalysis, and so on can be used by future critics. The intersectionality as such can be the concept of ecogothic, ecological psychology, eco-socialism, and so on. Wearing such intersectional lenses, future critics, I believe, would complexify criticism of *The Ballad* and fill more gaps that former critics as well as I have overlooked.

As a result, the ecofeminist politics fails in *The Ballad*. In other words, Miss Amelia Evans and other minor characters oppressed in the town still are not liberated. Marvin Macy and Cousin Lymon are the only ones who regain their natural time of selfhood, whereas other Southern characters do not. The internal reciprocity between human beings and nature does not take place as Miss Amelia still appears astute at the end. A person like Amelia must have been taught to see the old Southernness as the reality principle. This reality helps stunt the sense of becoming in any cultural subject. Under this circumstance, the ecofeminist politics must fail so that we could see Amelia as another victim of 1/0 culture whose life is confined to perpetuate patriarchal capitalism. Having no false consciousness or patriarchal principle of continuity anymore, Amelia as the victim of 1/0 culture becomes stagnant in her life and unable to move on. Such a universal stagnation of the body imposed by identitarian assignments from 1/0 culture is deeply rooted in patriarchal capitalism that tend to be overlooked by not only critics but also people like us.

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