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Femininity as Performance in Carson McCullers' *The Ballad of the Sad Café*, *The Member of the Wedding* and *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*

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Abstract:

The central role of gender in shaping the identity of women in the United States during and after World War II is reflected in literature in the novels of Carson McCullers. In exposing the fallacy of the prescribed gender binary, the writer resorts to the figures of the Freak and the Androgyne as liberating female alternatives to the constricting norms of Southern patriarchy. Throughout *The Ballad of the Sad Café*, *The Member of the Wedding* and *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*, the role of femininity as traditionally understood in the South, under the guise of the Southern Belle, is deliberately deconstructed, genders are intertwined and scrambled, and the resulting dysfunctional relationships fail as a sign of society's rejection of otherness. Thus, McCullers' most 'feminine' characters are tellingly either not female or too young to pick a gender, temporarily inhabiting the gender of their choice as an experiment in establishing an identity. The results are grotesque: *The Ballad...*'s Cousin Lymon, an unattractive hunchback, adopts the attention-seeking, narcissistic, 'feminine' behaviour of the belle, just as Baby, Biff Brannon's five year-old niece, prances around town with salon-curved hair - a grotesque miniature of an adult woman. Teenage girls, especially, are confronted with the dilemma of deciding which gender to choose. An artificial construct ratified by society, femininity is a path not easily taken by the tomboyish Mick Kelly and Frankie Addams, who are aware that the limited options are either to renounce their real nature and become respectable young ladies, or to embrace their lack of femininity and be labelled as 'Freaks' (like the androgynous Miss Amelia Evans). Relying on Judith Butler's theory of femininity as performance, the paper is concerned with highlighting the disparity between gender and sex, femininity and femaleness, in the Southern author's fiction.

Keywords:

Carson McCullers, American literature, gender, femininity as performance, identity.

The aim of the paper is to trace the instances of gender as performativity in three of Carson McCullers' works, with a focus on the three main categories that perform femininity through the superimposition of the figures of the child and Belle. In her seminal books *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution* (1988) and *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), philosopher and queer studies theorist Judith Butler's critique of "received notions of masculinity and femininity" (Butler 1999, 8) changed the face of feminist theory, questioning the very concept the field of gender studies was based on. In the same introduction to the revised 1990 text, the author explains her rejection of the dyadic approach to gender as an attempt "to open up the field of possibility for gender without dictating which kinds of possibilities ought to be realized", thus creating a theoretical platform for the so-called "in-between", queer categories subsumed by the LGTB community. As far as the theory of the performativity of gender is concerned, Butler draws on post-structuralism, especially Derrida, and French feminism, to define it as the reiteration and repetition of an anticipation/pre-formed perception of a so-called "gender essence". (Butler 1999, 15) This "essence" is a psychological construct based on "stylized set of acts" which, although perceived as internal and natural, originate, in fact, in the exterior. Butler's theory is related to what, in film studies, had been identified with the masquerade of femininity (Modleski 1991)¹, an exaggeration or over-performance of femininity in order to subvert it. In her 2003 study, Sarah Gleeson-White notes the way in which Carson McCullers dismantles the dyadic male-female view on gender by resorting to the grotesque, a pliable, open space where "identity, particularly racial and gender identity, is fluid, changeable, amorphous" (Jenkins 1999, 149).

This fluid view on gender borrows from both traditional categories to create eclectic hybrids based on the Androgyne, the half-man, half-woman Freak that arrests Frankie Addams' attention at the Chattahoochee fair - Miss Amelia Evans, who blatantly disregards received notions of femininity, would be a case in point. In stark opposition to the masculine Amelia stands the quintessential Southern belle, whose code of behaviour is strictly regulated by a set of infantilizing rules that prevent the expression of personality or opinion. Scarlet O'Hara, who manages to exert agency on her life, does so by playing by the rules of the patriarchal system she is a part of, outwardly performing the role of the belle while subverting it: she makes use of her charms to seduce the power-wielding men, and uses the institution of marriage to reach her goals - to have money and save Tara.

(Lee Seidel 1985, 53-55). While McCullers explodes the stereotype from the outside, Margaret Mitchell's heroine is relevant because she epitomizes the traits of the belle: spoiled, charming, mannered, outwardly pleasing, yet viciously selfish and narcissistic. According to Kathryn Seidel, the psychology of the belle revolves around the Madonna-Magdalen duality that she must simultaneously inhabit: "she is asked to sexually exhibit herself as sexually desirable to the appropriate males, yet she must not herself respond sexually. She must be as alluring as the Dark Lady, yet as pure as the White Maiden." (xvi). Marie St. Clare's (*Uncle Tom's Cabin*) hysterical illness and jealousy fits are the results of lifelong repression; vain and vapid, the belle's looks are all she sets store on. Her behaviour is that of a spoiled child, who throws a tantrum when wishes are not instantly granted. Essentially decorative, her role is to please and entertain while remaining dependant on the better judgement of her father or husband. In her helplessness, charm and innocence, the Southern belle is a reified, infantilized version of womanhood.

Childish Men, Manly Women

Carson McCullers' stance on the petite, charming, but utterly vapid belle is to entirely deconstruct it. If Scarlett O'Hara performs the gender society expects her to, the author of *The Ballad of the Sad Café* deliberately has the most inappropriate characters perform femininity. Of indeterminate age, Cousin Lymon displays "an instinct which is usually found only in small children, an instinct to establish immediate and vital contact between himself and all things in the world." (McCullers 1983, 8) He is of child-like stature, too, forming a ridiculous couple with the tall, strong Amelia, who helplessly succumbs to his charm. The genders are reversed, performed by the "wrong actors" of the courtship ritual (Reid Broughton 1974, 40-41). The Southern Belle's infantilism and narcissism are embodied by Cousin Lymon, who preys on Miss Amelia's love to live a sheltered life. The male and female genders are inverted, in a mockery of Southern gallantry: it is the manly woman who woos the reluctant, prissy male, as the latter accepts her tokens of affection without ever hinting at reciprocity.

The hunchback's wooing by Miss Amelia scrambles, thus, the different planes of parental and romantic relationships. Although it would be tempting to make a Freudian case out of the Lymon-Amelia relationship, the latter's interest in her alleged cousin is clearly romantic, not Oedipal. The confusion naturally arises due to an intentional *double-entendre*: if women, modelled on the Southern belle, are childish, spoiled and prissy, Cousin Lymon, who is essentially feminine, will naturally borrow these attributes. Amelia does, indeed, spoil Lymon: she carries him on her back while swimming in the swamps, she takes him to town to see "a picture-show in Cheehaw, or to some distant fair or cockfight; the hunchback took a passionate delight in spectacles." (McCullers 1983, 10), she smiles benevolently on his tall tales, indulging his very whim. Cousin Lymon, in turn, finds and exploits Amelia's weakness, feigning helplessness. The hunchback resembles a child fixated at the oral stage, his greatest pleasures seeming to be eating (sweets in particular) and talking (especially lying). The ensuing incongruous spectacle is replete with grotesque, contradictory pairings of childhood and adulthood, similar to Frankie Addams' age-inappropriate wedding dress and Mick Kelly's 'grown-up' treat of beer and ice-cream. Cousin Lymon's favourite treat is an apt metaphor of his inconsistency: instead of the grown-up snuff (tobacco), he prefers "a mixture of sugar and cocoa. This he took, though, as snuff, pocketing a little wad of it beneath his lower lip and licking down neatly into this with a flick of his tongue which made a frequent grimace come over his face." (McCullers 1983, 7) What Lymon offers is a fluid performance of gender, blending elements of femininity, such as the penchant for sweets, with masculine-coded behaviours, such as the snorting of snuff. His bragging and telling of tall tales, boasting about having stepped on an alligator "long as from the front door to the kitchen and thicker than a hog" (16) is also conflicting, since the childishness of the preposterous, obvious lies occurs in a context where it is customary for men to retell and embellish on their stories of valour and bravery, which are masculine traits *par excellence*. Lymon's boast, being neither, remains pitiful and childish, as though he were a child aspiring to become a man. His femininity becomes apparent, however, when he claims, like a downright vain Southern Belle, to be the centre of attention:

Cousin Lymon had come in. The hunchback strutted into the café as he did every night, and when he reached the exact center of the room he stopped short and looked shrewdly around him, summing up the people and making a quick pattern of the emotional material at hand that night. The hunchback was a great mischief-maker. He enjoyed any kind of to-do, and without saying a word he could set the people at each other in a way that was miraculous. It was due to him that the Rainey twins had quarreled over a jackknife two years past, and had not spoken one word to each other since. He was present at the big fight between Rip Wellborn and Robert Calvert Hale, and every other fight for that matter since he had come into the town. He nosed around everywhere, knew the intimate business of everybody, and trespassed every waking hour. (McCullers 1983, 16)

The hunch-back's "mischief-making", which would have been deemed charming in the spit-fire images of, say, Scarlett O'Hara (whose sins are forgiven simply because of physical allure) is, in this case, grotesque.

McCullers' deconstruction of the 'belle' myth revolves precisely around the preposterousness of gender performance; just as the Tarleton twins are rivals for Scarlett O'Hara's affections, Lymon plants the seeds of discord between the Rainey twins over the most trivial of motives, a jackknife. The hunchback does not walk - he "struts", wishing to be noticed, and self-consciously occupies the entire room with his presence, placing himself at its centre. Greedy, demanding, selfish and fun-seeking, Cousin Lymon is the pleasure-principle driven child, for whom the adult deferral of desire is impossible. His child-like quality is further emphasized by his talent in exploiting people's soft spots. His complete selfishness is apparent in his rejection of any intimation of life before his very own: "it tantalized him as did any mention of subjects which others knew about and of which he was ignorant -- such as any reference to the old sawmill that had been torn down before he came, or a chance word about poor Morris Finestein, or the recollection of any event that had occurred before his time."(McCullers 1983, 8)

Little Women and Dolls

The moral and psychological ugliness of the infantilization of women is expressed, in Carson McCullers's books, in the bodily construction of the characters, many of whom resemble the circus freaks of Chattahoochee fair. Women are belittled constantly by Southern patriarchy, a practice to which McCullers responds by endowing a significant number of adult characters with child-like physical attributes, as I previously attempted to demonstrate in analyzing the Southern Belle behaviour of Cousin Lymon. However, while the heterosexual male characters are largely physically unimpaired, women who are not white or traditionally feminine inevitably become social outcasts. Such an example would be Berenice, Frankie Addams' cook, maid and stand-in mother, an outcast because of her race and gender. At the physical level, this double social rejection translates into a petite frame, as a marker of her infantilized gender, and her blue glass eye, as a racial statement in a society that champions whiteness. Berenice enters adulthood at the tender age of thirteen, when she first marries, thus entering the stereotypical gender binary of matrimony, where femaleness/femininity are rendered the equal counterparts of masculinity.

The physical change triggered by Berenice's marriage is tell-tale – she stops growing, retaining, for the rest of her life, the child-like frame of a thirteen-year-old. Even when happy, as is the case with Berenice's first marriage, the emergence of the young female into the grown-up world of sexuality is equated with stagnation, blockage, arrested development. By marrying, Berenice inevitably subscribes to the prescribed female gender implicated by the traditional institution of marriage that does not tolerate aberrations from its gender binary norms. Additionally, all her subsequent marriages, unhappy ones, result in further physical markings on Berenice's body, ill-used at the hands of the men in her life. As if continually branded by patriarchy, by which she is treated as a possession, to be owned and stamped with proof of ownership, Berenice loses an eye as a result of a particularly savage beating at the hands of her second husband. The way in which Frankie's companion consciously alters her body after the domestic abuse is, again, significant – in a presumable tongue-in-cheek critique of prescribed notions about "beauty", Berenice chooses not to match the colour of her fake eye to its counterpart.

The blue glass eye is not only an act through which Berenice masquerades whiteness and takes control over her body, but also a subtle reminder of the objectification of women, who, throughout *The Member of the Wedding*, are indirectly, but constantly, compared to dolls. The ideal of the Southern Belle is, indeed, a construct on which all white Southern Women are encouraged to fashion themselves after, and resembles, in artificiality, the frozen charm of the plastic-and-porcelain doll, a passive, non-responsive custom-made for the pleasure of its owners. The young Frankie receives such a doll from her brother's bride, petite and pretty, whom she admires and wishes to become, but is, at the same time, disappointed that her brother does not remember her rather unusual tastes in toys. The tomboyish Frankie, who had never played with dolls, receives a reminder and a warning from the grown-up Southern bride: in her imminent pubertal maturation, Frankie is to either adopt and perform the female gender, wearing dresses, heels and make-up, observing decorum, or she will be considered a Freak and treated accordingly. In fact, being a Freak is Frankie's biggest fear, since, at age 12, she is already too tall to play with the other children, spending the summer in seclusion, alongside Berenice and her younger cousin, John Henry. Frankie fancies herself of gigantesque stature:

She stood before the mirror and she was afraid. It was the summer of fear, for Frankie, and there was one fear that could be figured in arithmetic with paper and pencil at the table. This August she was twelve and five-sixths years old. She was five feet and three quarter inches tall, and she wore a number seven shoe. In the past year she had grown four inches, or at least that was what she judged. Already the hateful little summer children hollered to her: 'Is it cold up there?' (...) Therefore, according to mathematics and unless she could somehow stop herself, she would grow to be over nine feet tall. And

what would be a **lady** (my emphasis) who is over nine feet high? She would be a Freak. (McCullers 2001, 475)

The lady-freak comparison physically translates the petite-tall binary that infantilizes women, opposing them to the swarthy stature of men. By not being petite, Frankie has escaped the doll-like mould; her chances of being accepted and of marrying – the ideal of any Southern girl – are seriously jeopardized. At the level of consciously used language, “lady” and “Freak” (always spelled with a capital ‘F’ in the text) are the two antithetic coordinates that regulate Southern society. To these, McCullers subversively adds a third, thus breaking the *status quo* of the norm – the “queer” so conspicuously used throughout *The Member of the Wedding*: “I just never saw two people like them. When they walked in the house today it was so queer.”, “John Henry had covered the walls with queer, child drawings,...” (McCullers 2001, 464), “After the darkening yard the kitchen was hot and bright and queer” (466), “Then the spring of that year had been a long queer season,...” (479). The fluid, androgynous category of “queer” allows identity to manifest itself outside the arbitrary confinements of gender, permitting an infinite array of in-between states.

In *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*, grown femininity is mocked and distorted in the guise of Mick’s older sisters, Etta and Hazel, avid performers of femininity and aspiring Belles. Etta, with her hair in steel rollers and covered in face cream as she puts nail polish on her toe-nails, “primed all the day long” (McCullers 1967, 35), dreaming of going to Hollywood, “getting a job as a secretary and being buddies with Jeanette MacDonald and getting in the movies herself.” (35) We are told that, despite her grandiose plans to enter the movie industry, Etta’s preoccupation with her appearance is indebted to deeply-rooted qualms about her “chinlessness”, which prompts her to work even harder to disguise this physical defect: “She would pull at her jaw and go through a lot of chin exercises she had read in a movie book. She was always looking at her side profile in the mirror and trying to keep her mouth set in a certain way”. (35) The pressure for Southern girls to be pretty is so strong, that “sometimes Etta would hold her hands with her face and cry in the night about it.” (35) The naturally pretty Hazel, on the other hand, is not impelled to worry in any way – like a huge, somnolent, cat, she is “plain lazy”, “good-looking but thick in the head”. Since her chances of marrying well are increased by these attributesⁱⁱ, Hazel gets, to Frankie’s puzzlement, “the first and biggest share of everything – the first whack at the new clothes and the biggest part of any special treat. Hazel never had to grab for anything and she was soft.” (35) While poor Etta is further plagued with painful ovarian cysts that completely debilitate her, forcing her to quit her job, Hazel, the pretty one, has it easy. Mick’s scornful view of the two older sisters, lying around in their room in typically passive hypostases that encourage a superficial obsession about looks, is a criticism of the woman’s role in the South, a role that reduces womanhood to decorative and reproductive uses.

Child Performers of Adulthood

In the second part of *The Member of the Wedding*, Frankie Addams’ summer of fear ends on a life-changing resolution: that of leaving her native Sugarville to live with her brother and wife. To this goal a new identity is attached: she will no longer call herself the androgynous “Frankie”, but the much more feminine F. Jasmine. A change in appearance is also required: the girl renounces her tomboyish shorts and vest for a proper organdie dress and patent leather shoes. Before venturing into town on her own, she has a long bath, scrubbing her knees and elbows, and puts on scent. Thus bedecked, Frankie is ready to flaunt her new identity to the world, sharing her resolution (that she will leave town to live with Jarvis and Janice) to anyone who is willing to listen. Now gendered female, F. Jasmine can no longer innocently brave the streets – her pink dress and scent send a clear message. Trouble promptly ensues when a drunk soldier on leave asks her on what she will later find out is a date. F. Jasmine’s encounter with the soldier borders on the grotesque: the drunk young man is fighting with the organ-grinder, trying to buy his monkey. The superimposition here of two images – one of innocent childhood, one of lecherous adulthood, is incongruous. The red-haired young man (devious if only because of his hair color, if fairy tales are anything to go by), highly intoxicated, wishes to purchase, of all things, a monkeyⁱⁱⁱ – the animal which symbolizes chaos, excess and last, but not least, sexuality. The symbol of Frankie’s innocent childhood, the organ-grinder with his cute little pet is tarnished; as compensation for not having been able to buy the pet, the soldier focuses his attention on Frankie instead. The comical superimposition Frankie/monkey highlights the girl’s foolishness in masquerading about in grown-up clothes, primping herself up like a sex-object; on the other hand, women in South are indeed mere pretty accessories intended to please. The same unlikely association between childhood and adulthood occurs at the end of *The Ballad of the Sad Café*, when Mick, in her skirt and high-heeled shoes, stops by at her favourite place after her work day is over to have a glass of beer and an ice-cream – a strange association of food, endearing and sad at the same time, emphasizing Mick’s vulnerability and youth.

The pair eventually meet at the Blue Moon, a sleazy hotel “she had known in an unworded way it was a forbidden place for children”. (McCullers 2001, 510) Unsurprisingly, the date almost ends in rape, which

Frances' propensity for tomboyish fights and games prevent. Despite her performance of femininity, complete with pumps and dress, Frankie is still a child, unprepared for sexuality. Her performance is fraught with errors: she misreads the soldier's intentions, cannot tell he is drunk, and accepts going upstairs to his room. The pick-up line he uses is lost on Frankie, although she vaguely recalls having heard it before in a film – one that the reader recognizes as a potential love scene. Frankie has the name and the clothes of the Southern belle, but is unable to play the part; the tragic-comical troubles she gets herself into are a tongue-in-cheek criticism of the arbitrariness of gender roles and the easiness with which they can be masqueraded.

Another case of children playing at adults is that of Biff Brannon's (*The Heart is A Lonely Hunter*) niece.. Five-year-old Baby Wilson's mother is an obsessive unhappy divorcee, "too worn out and thin for her age"(McCullers, 1967, 101), who projects all her frustrations on her daughter,^{iv} for whom she has decided that a career in the movies à la Shirley Temple is the only option. Consequently, she transforms "Baby" into a grotesque travesty of femininity: her hair is professionally waved at the salon ("I been giving Baby finger waves down at the shop"(106), her mother boasts to Biff Brannon, her brother-in-law, on the day of Alice's funeral), and she is always dressed in matching sets that are more fit for a human living doll than for a healthy, rambunctious child who likes to play about: "for the funeral Baby had on a little white dress with white shoes and white socks and even small white gloves"(106). Baby is an accurate name choice for the little girl, as it underscores the incongruous superimposition of roles for women in the South, since it is the denominator for both a child and a lover. Mick's brother Bubber accidentally shoots Baby in the head while she practices her ballet in a pink tutu in the street because she won't play with him or let him touch her pretty costume. The consequences of the contradictions inherent in the Southern belle, who is essentially a tease – meant to arouse and titillate while preserving an air of innocence, is evident in the little girl's manner. A precocious narcissist and exhibitionist, Baby goes out every evening to practice her dance, knowing full well she will be seen and admired by the other children:

'Lookit, ' Bubber said suddenly. 'Here comes Baby again. She sure is pretty in the pink costume.'

Baby walked toward them slowly. She had been given a box of popcorn candy and was reaching in the box for the prize. She walked in that same prissy, dainty way. You could tell that she knew they were all looking at her.

'Please, Baby_____' Bubber said when she started to pass them. 'Lemme see you pink little pocketbook and touch your pink costume.'

Baby started humming a song to herself and did not listen. She passed without letting Bubber play with her. She only ducked her head and grinned at him a little. (McCullers 1967, 141)

The scene between children encapsulates a miniature rendition of the dynamics of gender roles in the South and it tellingly lands Mick Kelly and Baby's families in ruin. Bubber's tale is essentially one of male rejection eliciting a violent response, which forces him to grow up prematurely – following the accident he will no longer be endearingly be called Bubber, but George, since he no longer belongs to the guarded space of childhood that protects children from harm and evil. Perhaps of superior significance are the causes that lead to such events. The children are directly influenced by the mindsets of the adults, copying their attitudes and their ways. Baby is clearly a parody of a Southern Belle, whose reaction to Bubber's interest is contradictory: the belle wants to tease, but to remain/retain the appearance of innocence. The little boy learns the important lesson of not mistaking appearance for the essence – though "made in the image" of a doll, Baby, once shot in the head, will not deflate and swiftly "be fixed" again, as in children's games, or cartoon violence, where aggression is slapstick, pain is unreal, Tom and Jerry hit, punch and shoot at each other repeatedly. Despite her doll-like appearance, Baby is a girl of flesh and blood, on which preternatural adult wishes to be pretty and please have been artificially grafted. In her construed, exaggerated, age-inappropriate femininity, Baby is grotesque, emphasizing the converse silliness/impropriety of womanly childishness and of childish womanhood held in such high regard in McCullers' depiction of the South.

The Belle, the representative of Southern womanhood, is infantilized: she is forbidden control over her own life and barred from making decisions because of her presumed intellectual inferiority. The stylized acts that become the "gender essence" which ultimately lead to performativity translate, in the case of McCullers' protagonists, into de-constructed reiterations of this restrictive ideal. The selfishness, vanity, and deceptive charm of Scarlett O'Hara are transmuted to Cousin Lymon and Baby Wilson, while the prettiness and innocence of Frankie Addams are mistaken for veiled sexual invitations that fit the flirtatious code of the Belle. By scrambling the attributes of each gender, McCullers fashions "queer" adults whose identities are very much in place despite their subversion of gendered patterns: Amelia Evans is a successful business woman until the arrival of Cousin Lymon, as are the tomboyish Mick Kelly and Frankie Addams before the prospects of going to

highschool and “getting a beau” arise. The dilemma, with McCullers’ characters, occurs when gender and identity are restrictively regulated by a society that assigns “natural” legitimacy to a constructed, performative persona, equating the social with the biological. McCullers’ solution is to expose the fallacy of the male-female dyad by creating a third category that encompasses any category of gender in-betweens. Although grotesque, protean, fluid and liminal, these Bakhtinian characters find an identity and liberation (Gleeson-White 2003, iv) in their bodily excess, an excess which is a defiance of society’s rejection of them.

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ⁱ First introduced by psychoanalyst Joan Riviere in the 1930s.

ⁱⁱ Flannery O'Connor mocks the stereotype of the ideal, pretty-but-dumb, wife, in 'The Life You Save May Be Your Own', where a mother effectively rids herself of her mentally challenged deaf-mute daughter Lucynell by giving her away in marriage, alongside an old car, to a complete stranger who drifts into their yard looking for work.

ⁱⁱⁱ Louise Westling, in her book *Sacred Groves and Ravaged Gardens*, notes the 'narrative childishness' used by McCullers in *The Ballad...* and elsewhere, a childishness used as a strategy to place the story in the remote *illo tempore* of fairy tales. (p. 119) If we are to employ Bruno Bettelheim's reading of fairy stories in conjunction with McCullers' characters' catastrophic erotic encounters, the animals that surround sexual initiation would intimate the monstrosity of sexuality for the pre-adolescent girl. The monkey, in this case, would be the equivalent 'frog' of the fairy tale, supposedly morphing into a prince Charming once the pubertal body no longer perceives sexuality like a monstrous, disgusting, threat. Westling quotes Robert S. Phillips' article that highlights the similarities between *The Ballad...* and a story McCullers professed her admiration to, Isak Dinesen's 'The Monkey' from *Seven Gothic Tales*, featuring a young female protagonist, Athena Hopballehaus, who resembles Frankie and Mick in her gigantesque stature and the fact that she is motherless (120-22). In a similar encounter like that between Frankie and the soldier, Athena, the ideal of heroic femininity, knocks the teeth out Boris, who tries to force himself on her.

^{iv} For a discussion of the narcissistic Southern mother, see Kathryn Lee Seidel's *The Southern Belle in the American Novel*.