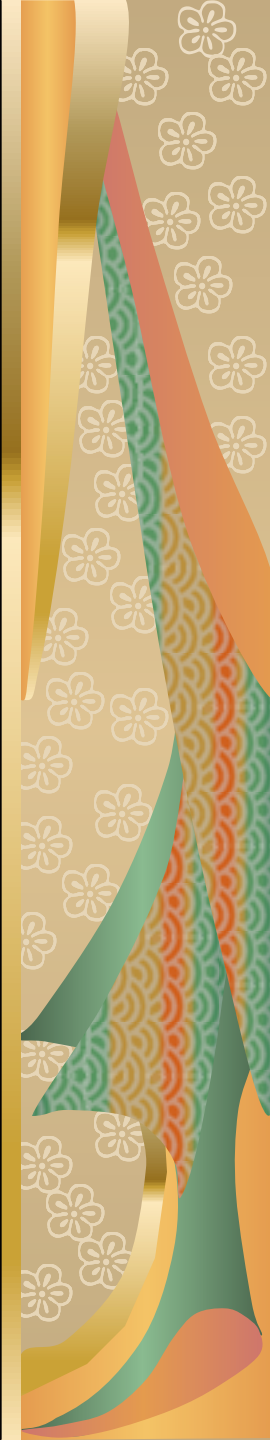


# Jaime's Journal Experience



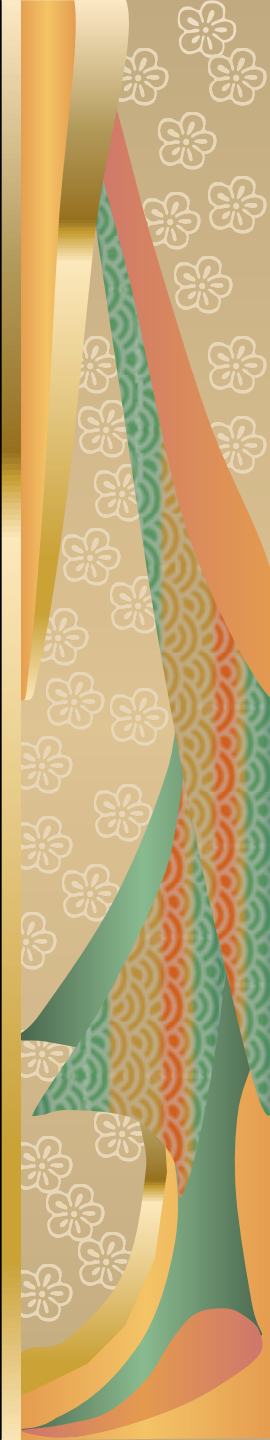
- The Beginning: appreciating, but not scrutinizing.





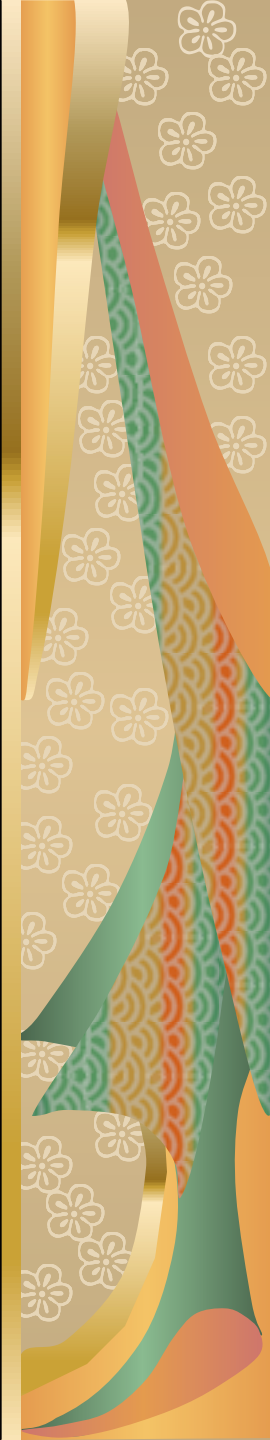
I simply reword what the author has said. I don't include much commentary.


“Mary McCarthy is offended, as an author, that people might think she had bent the truth or fabricated a story and called it autobiography. The interest of the story for her was that it was true, and she wanted to note down her reactions to the incident.”




I Assume that the first conclusion is the correct one.

“I put my own readings onto things, rather than really examining the author’s argument on its own terms. For example, I thought I understood what Frost meant by self-belief, but when I went back and re-read what he actually said, he was describing something different from what I’d assumed.”

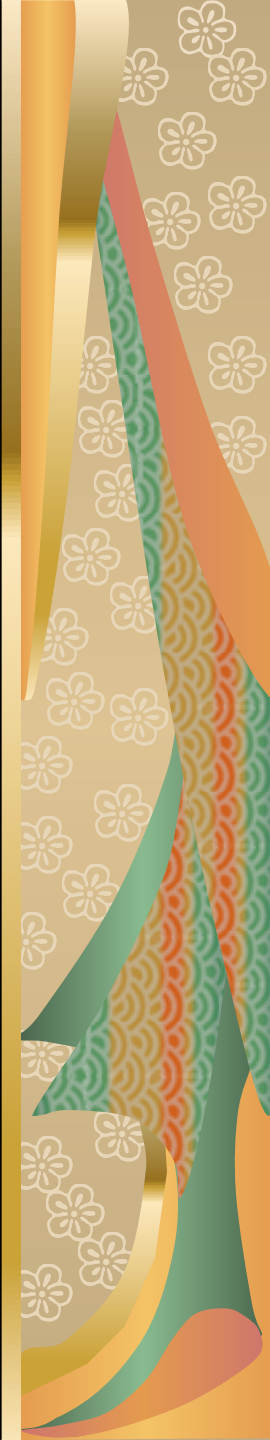




I tend not to question the author's opinion. For example, in McCarthy's article, I agreed with her statement that there was "no deeper level" to her story than the story itself.



But when I looked at the story again, I wondered, was this true? Later on, McCarthy points out several issues she was exploring that were definitely on a different level than simple narrative. She goes into the deeper meaning of "uniform" as it relates to artists and Jews alike, for example. There are things that, consciously or unconsciously, operate on deeper levels in her story.

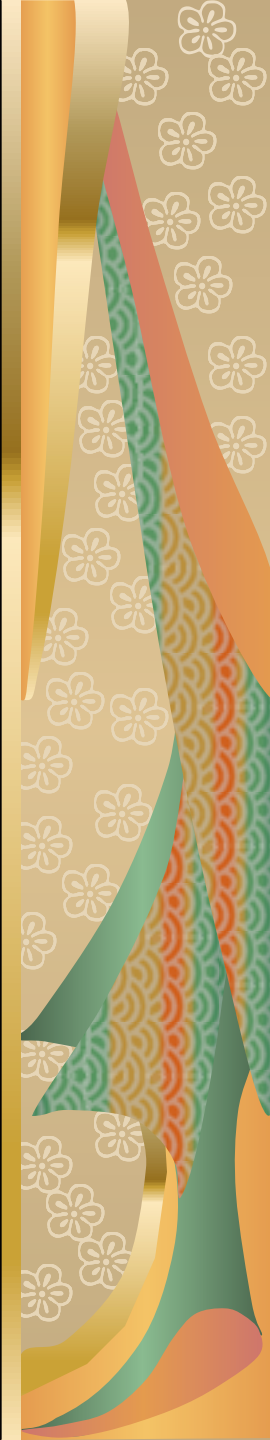


# Looking more closely



I am starting to look beyond the surface. I started out reading Hemingway just for the story, but found there were other aspects I hadn't considered.

- Some of the unknown things I ran into in "The Revolutionist" (like Mantegna) led me to do some searching on the internet. I found it very helpful to see the artwork itself-- it clarified what Hemingway was getting at in his discussion of the Revolutionist.
- At first, I had little to say about this very short story. I was amazed though, how when I read and reread, I picked up significant details each time. Hemingway's choice of detail is very telling.



## Fondling details

I'm spending more time on smaller moments in the text and finding them very revealing.



“In “A Good Man Is Hard To Find,” The grandmother’s way of seeing is very skewed. She’s very concerned with rules and propriety, the speed limit, the impoliteness of the children. She won’t let them litter out of the window. But her own larger transgressions (racism, selfishness) go unnoticed”.

“It was an interesting moment when Red Sam’s wife says that you can’t trust anybody. The way she looks at Red Sam after she says that implies that she has a grudge against her husband. Even Red Sam, who longs for a world where people can be trusted, is not trustworthy himself”.



# Backsliding

- Readings lose depth. I do cursory Journal entries that Only address surface issues.



“Young Gal’ s Blues has the structure of a blues poem, and is peppered with slang and black American idioms. The repetition adds to the sad mood here.”

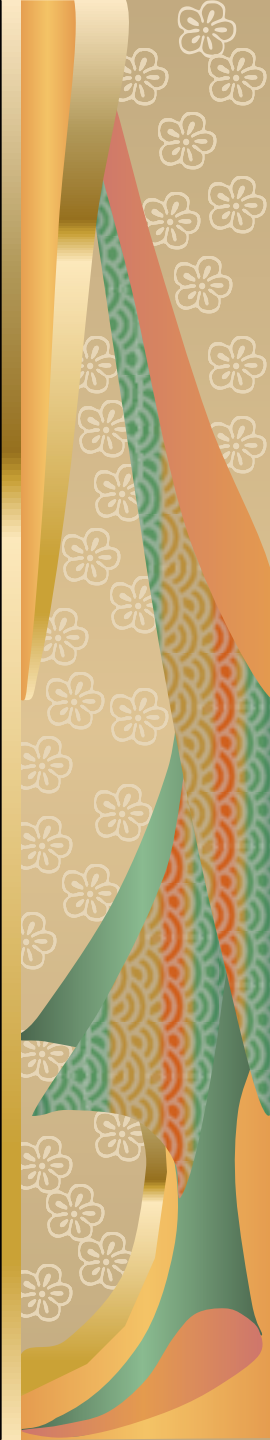


## Journal includes generalization And Personal Reactions.



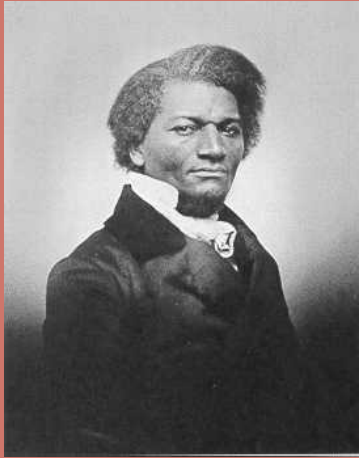
I read through the articles on Jefferson very quickly, noting each different point of view, but skimming past the subtleties of each person's argument. I wrote: "the way we resolve this conflict will say much about American values about race," but don't go any further in explaining what that might be.

I responded very well to McCarthy's article, probably because I found her experience so easy to relate to. I have had stories critiqued in workshop based on their "symbolism" when I hadn't intended anything other than to tell a story.

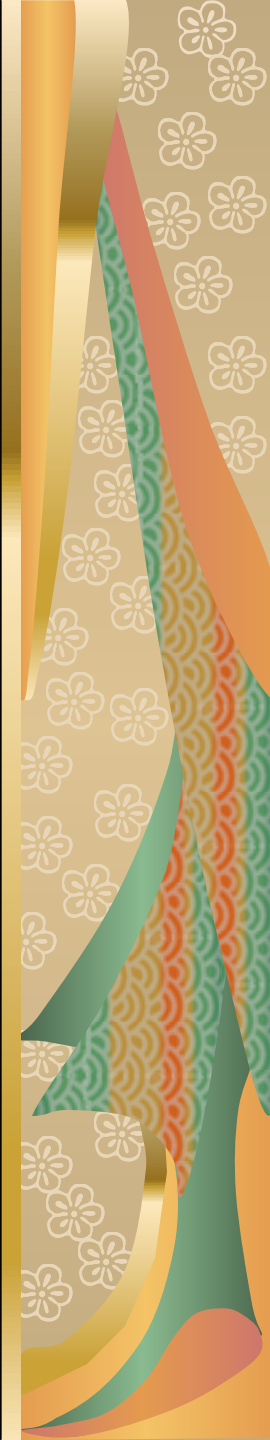
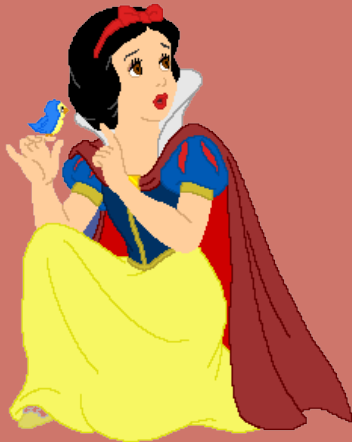
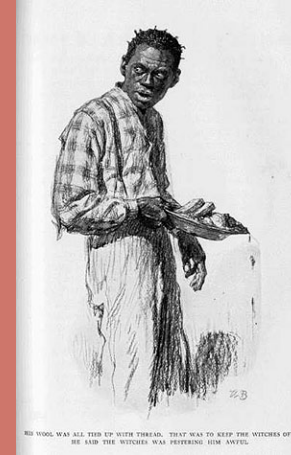




# Connections Between Texts



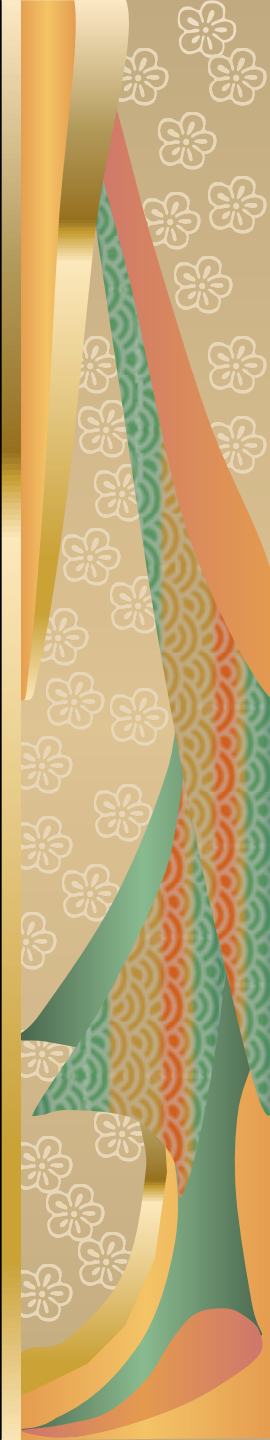
Many of the authors we read, although speaking about different issues, in different contexts, seem to be confronting the same kinds of problems.

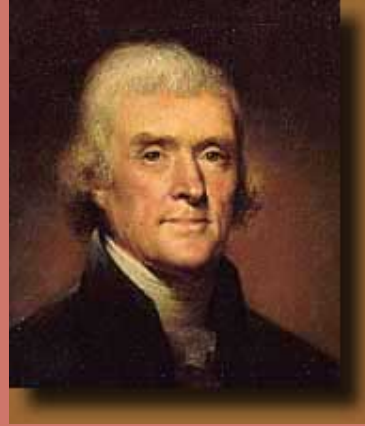


# Echoes In Other Works

■ Kolodny's mention of "the fundamental problem of "reading" correctly within cohabiting but differently structured conceptual worlds" comes up again in Toni Morrison's article, where she puzzles how African-American literature should be read and included in the canon.

I noticed a similarity between Wood's discussion of blacks as "natural cultural resources," and Gilbert and Gubar's discussion of women relating to nature rather than culture. Both relate back to the comment made to Douglass that he provide the facts, they (the white men) will provide the philosophy. The privilege of assigning meaning goes to those in power.





■ The Wood essay was especially interesting in the way it showed a shift in racial power. I wrote: Wood's choice of words at the end, that the YBT will have to "earn their place among us" echoes a sentiment in one of the Jefferson essays. Just as the white Jeffersons set higher standards for the black Hemings to prove their belonging to the family, Wood seems to be setting a certain standard for white people before his culture will be convinced to "take in a few good ex-whites." An interesting reversal.



## Noticing some weak spots

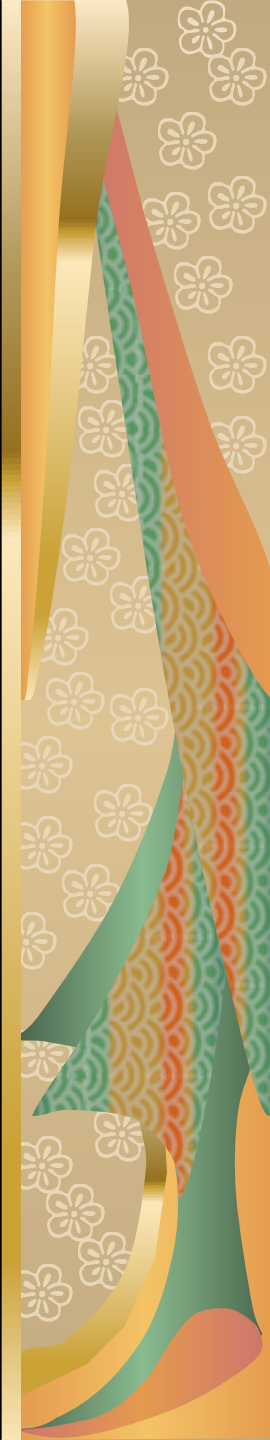
- Although I like the poetry we read, I struggle to find things to say about it. I feel like I Should be Getting Something out of it that I'm not. Part of the problem is my lack of confidence in this area, and the other part is that I tend to get annoyed with poetry when I feel it's being purposefully opaque.
- T.S. Eliot: "I really feel like I am inside the poet's brain here, but without any translation of his thoughts."
- Hilda Doolittle: I couldn't think of anything to say about Leda. It's beautiful imagery, but I don't see much going on besides that."



Older poetry, for some reason, is easier for me. I had less trouble with the Wheatley and Bradstreet than with the more modern poets.

There is also a lot of flattery of male poetry here, as if she is trying to appease male critics in advance of them reading her poetry. She requests only a small acknowledgment from their “high flown quills.”

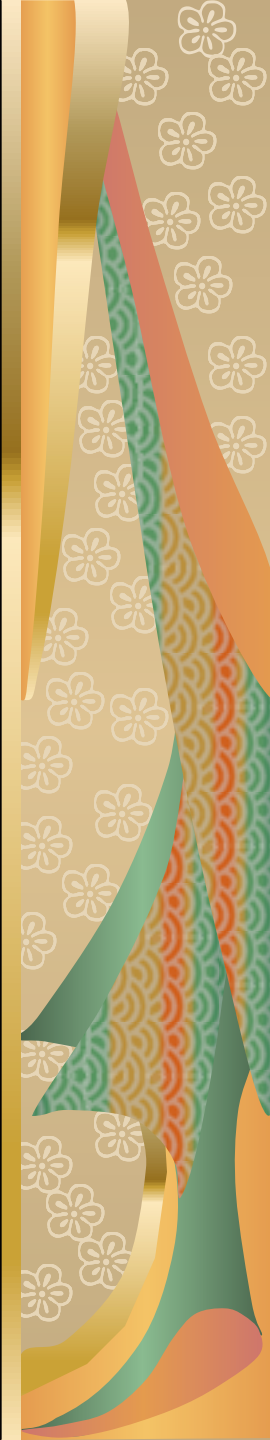
I find her tone kind of schizophrenic, declaring independence and then currying for favor. Maybe this is representative of the fine line she had to walk as a female poet in those times.



# Putting This and That Together

I'm starting to see re-occurring themes everywhere.

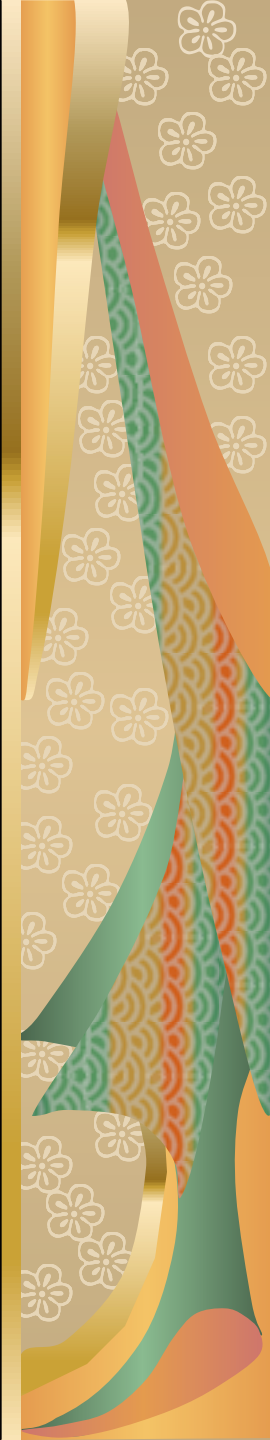
- Stevens' "violence from within that combats the violence without" applies to Faulkner and O'Connor, but also to some of the texts about women that we've looked at, like "The Yellow Wallpaper" and "The Last Seduction," where women use violent behavior to reject an oppressive world. The concept of the "violence from within" reappears again and again--in Douglass' fight with Mr. Covey, in Sula cutting off the tip of her finger to frighten away her tormenters, and in Mindy Faber's mother acting out hysteria.



# Reading Critically

Rather than taking the author's thesis at face value, I am really evaluating the validity of her argument.

- In the Smiley, I really take a more critical view than I have before. "I questioned Smiley's out-and-out rejection of Huck Finn as having something valuable to say about racism. I think there is a huge difference in Stowe's and Twain's intentions when writing their respective novels. Stowe was writing a tragedy, an abolitionist tract whose goal was to call attention to the evils of slavery. Twain, writing after the Civil War had ended, meant to satirize a society which embraced slavery, along with many other wrong-headed notions."



# Embracing Uncertainty

■ When I don't understand what's going on, I don't feel as uncomfortable as I used to, but try to work through the ideas.



■ I had to reread this passage several times to understand what Stevens was saying. He says that nobility appears false and dead and ugly because it comes from the past. I think he's saying that nobility seems out of our time and beyond our reach in the present, and so we reject it as untrue. It took me by surprise that he would describe nobility as violence, but I suppose that if it is a force, as he says, then it does have a violent aspect to it. I would have liked to have known how he defined the "violence without." I assumed that meant the ignoble things in the world that affect us, but I wasn't sure.

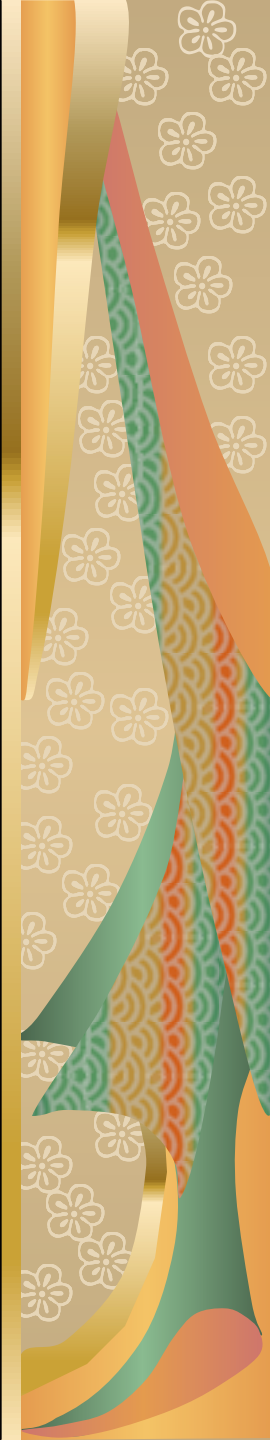




## *The Water We Swim In*



- Texts start to relate not only to each other, but to aspects of life usually taken for granted.



- I was interested in Morrison's comment that the goal of "political ideology is to pass itself off as immutable, natural and innocent." When it comes to the canon, the standards themselves are the property of the dominant culture, so minority writers are immediately put in a bind.
- This reminded me of the struggle Democrats have to assert themselves in the current political climate. The current administration defines situations as "natural" and "immutable," so it's difficult to attack their policies.
- The dominant culture controls us at a level that we can't begin to confront, because it is for the most part invisible.



IT'S BECAUSE  
I'M A WOMAN,  
ISN'T IT!?



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I liked Joan Didion's observation that writing is aggression. As such, it makes sense that men would be able to embrace writing, because aggression is considered natural to their makeup, yet women are condemned for doing so.

It relates back to that article about "bully broads," showing that women asserting their authority (not just through writing) can inspire fear and contempt--authority misconstrued as aggression.

# *Portrait of a more active reader*

