Literary Imagination and Community Mental Health: A Deleuzian Analysis of Discourse in a Fiction Reading Group

Rodney Teague

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Rodney C. Teague

August 2012
ABSTRACT

LITERARY IMAGINATION AND COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH: A
DELEUZIAN ANALYSIS OF DISCOURSE IN A FICTION READING GROUP

By
Rodney C. Teague
August 2012

Dissertation supervised by Eva Simms, Ph.D.

Anecdotes about life-altering encounters with literature are not hard to find. We commonly hear someone refer to a novel (or other fictional work) as "life changing." The mechanisms by which literary imagination effects its transformations, however, are more elusive. Rather than an after-the-fact outcome study or reflection on what a literary work has meant to someone, this study presents an empirical, qualitative investigation of transformations as they occurred in the participants' language during a fiction reading and discussion group in a community mental health setting. Session transcripts—with embedded fictional texts that were read aloud during group sessions—have been analyzed from the perspective of researcher as literary critic and through the Deleuzian lens of rhizomatic assemblages (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2005). This nonlinear, non-hierarchical and non-referential approach allows for a re-imagination of the relationship among readers, texts and authors. Initial interpretive commentary lays the groundwork
for and is followed by specific and detailed theoretical analysis of three primary themes that follow from the rhizomatic perspective and which arise in the transcript data.

The first of these, *Assemblage*, details the ways that participants engage in and with fictional story-worlds. This engagement is such that text, readers, author, and other elements of context join together in chains or blocks of becoming. These becomings rely on the particular mimetic structure of the fictional text that simulates 'real life' experiences for readers. The special kind of engagement occasioned by fictional texts leads to transformations of linguistic forms, images and concepts.

Transformations addressed in the next segment, *De-formations*, include analysis of mental health talk as it encounters the poetic story world in our sessions. One demonstrable result of this encounter is what I am calling the *vernacularization* of mental health talk. Elements of clinical, usually diagnostic, language introduced in our sessions are transformed in the direction of more colloquial and 'plain-language' use. This result suggests that fiction reading moves mental health consumers away from the problem-saturated language of mental health discourse (White & Epston, 1990) that too often reifies and reinforces illness and dis-ease rather than supporting wellness. As they encounter rich, literary characterizations, diagnostic terms are fleshed-out, embodied and contextualized as compared to their antiseptic, clinical presentations in diagnostic manuals and clinical charts.

The final section, *Re-narration*, examines implications of transformations in participants' language for narrative identity, that is, participants' self-understanding and re-contextualization in light of their encounters with the fictional story-world (Ricoeur, 2005). Participants were not assessed following the group's conclusion, but it is possible
to discern nascent or potential changes in narrative identity in the language of discussants and to speculate on what changes participants may carry forward into their lives beyond the reading and discussion group.

Finally, implications are discussed for re-understanding the therapist as literary critic and for the development of locally produced bodies of literary criticism as work appropriate to community mental health providers and clients. Also, affinities and areas for possible coordination between literary therapy, bibliotherapy and narrative therapy are discussed.
DEDICATION

For Erin, my love. You're in my heart and soul. And for our children Tal, Ches, and Emma Ruby. You four are my latest in a long run of excellent teachers. For your lessons, I am the most grateful.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

As I approached my classroom on my first day of teaching at Tuskegee University I overheard one student in the hallway ask another about me, "is that a teacher or a student?" I can only assume he referred to my youthful and relaxed appearance. I was far too nervous to reply or even to acknowledge the question of course, but, reflecting later, my answer could only have been, "God willing, always both."

Reflecting further, I realize that I have been unusually blessed by and through a constant stream of truly excellent teachers. What follows is an abridged thank-you list:

• My mother and father who taught me how to value and treat other people and who have modeled faithfulness and integrity in all things;

• Laura Shoffner, my high school literature teacher who startled her students on the first day of class by scrambling on top of her metal desk and banging out the thunder from the first scene of Macbeth. She taught me how to make crazy work in one's favor. She also introduced me to some fantastic fiction and set me on a path toward psychology via Jung's collective unconscious;

• Robert Sardello who taught me about the silent language of the soul;

• my father-in-law, Larry Allums, who taught me about the fiery grace and joy of a contemplative life and that to be a teacher means learning generously;

• Glenn Arbery whose admonishing voice I have heard throughout this project, warning me against profanity, saying "poetry isn't for anything;"

• Louise Cowan for her piercing vision, fiercely independent intellect, and gentle, generous humility;
• Dan Warner who taught me that there's a lot to be said for being normal, and who will always be a better friend than I;

• Tony Barton who taught me that it is my ethical obligation to make crazy work in my favor... and about letting people in on the secret, wink-wink;

• and for my director, Eva Simms, for reading Rilke during our first class meeting, thereby confirming for me that I was in the right place. For her steadfast dedication to her intellectual and personal vision and for lending me the confidence to pursue mine. For space-clearing and guarding the space for my lengthy gestation and laying-in with this project. For intuiting how to motivate me, including a few timely butt-kickings. You have from our earliest interactions listened earnestly to my ideas and have maintained enthusiastic faith in my ability to follow through on them. This dissertation process has been long and difficult, but it has also been by far the most satisfying experience of my academic career. I have finally done the project that I wanted to do. You helped me figure out what that was and you en-couraged me--that is, you fostered in me the courage to see it through. Thank you.

• Generally, this has been the tenor of my experience through graduate study at Duquesne--en-couragement to find and pursue what I am called to. I am better for the experience. Thanks to all of my teachers here--faculty, staff, clients and fellow students.

• I am grateful for material, moral, and financial support from my Mama-G and from my extended family. If you ever doubted me, you never let on...

• and finally, I am thankful to My wife Erin and our children who are all four my teachers as well. I am grateful for their patience and forbearance. It is to them that this work is dedicated. Tal, it's finally over, buddy. You may never know how motivating and
wrenching were your tears those times when I refused to stop working and play catch with you. I hope you will forgive me for those times...

To all of you, my teachers, mentioned and unmentioned here, I am grateful.
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Introduction

Skinny, funky, dreadlocked Avery spoke easily about his life as a street artist. He actually held a brush in his hand as we listened—everyone at ease—to his stories of privation, fear, abjectness, hopelessness. Odysseus’ lamentations for his lost men and his lost home fade from our hearing precisely as they ground this collective moment. Homelessness in Homer is thematized naturally and to powerful effect; no one left storyless regarding homelessness.

No one breathed while Juanita told of finding a payphone and just enough change to call her mother one day in the driving rain.

“Mi Madre,” she said, “told me she didn’t want me.”

The “no,” the silence, the click. The fullness of the impossibility of home.

Many years ago I co-facilitated a literary reading and discussion group that profoundly impacted my thinking about literature, psychology and community. That group, which inspired the current study, was formed as a joint venture between my employer (at the time), The Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture, a small, nonprofit, community educational institution, and a neighboring halfway house and recovery program for “dual diagnosis” psychiatric patients. Our collaboration, named “Windows on the Arts,” brought halfway house residents across the street to the Dallas Institute on most Friday afternoons. Previously, and following are presented a few remembered scenes and musings from those afternoon sessions:

Desperation of prison life, isolation in a loveless marriage, a child’s death, a spouse’s trauma, bankruptcy and ruin. We exchanged losses like handmade gifts—reluctant at their giving and their taking. A common focus on the concrete story of a fictional-mythical character loosened something and primed the flowing of all of these stories—these tellings, these connectings. All irreconcilably different but undeniably connected as we all were through the exchange. Through

1 These patients carry diagnoses of both substance use disorders and at least one other psychiatric diagnosis
connection and difference, determination and possibility, hopelessness changed in the telling of tales.

My work with the reading groups bridged my interests in poetry, literature and clinical psychology in a very satisfying way. Still, years after my experience I have questions about what was going on in those groups. Was our work merely recreational or might it have some lasting effects for me and for my fellow readers? I came to psychology through literature and have long been convinced of their affinity. When I returned to literature after receiving a B.S. in psychology I (re)discovered greater insight regarding the human world in the novels of Dostoevsky and Faulkner than I had found in four years of psychology textbooks. But just how do stories and other artistic productions inform us about people? More importantly for me, how do they work on people? Participants said that their experiences of the world were changed through their encounters with texts and with each other vis-à-vis the texts. What did they mean? Further, to what discipline did our work—and to some extent do I—belong? Is this educational work in the Humanities? Is it healing, transformational, recovery work in psychological science? Could it belong to both? What happens in the estuarial mingling of these disciplines?

My sense of personal satisfaction around the work of the reading groups is supplemented by the responses and reactions of resident-participants throughout the program. The population of halfway house residents, and so of the reading groups, was diverse along age, ethnic, and socioeconomic dimensions. Young teens enrolled by parents at their wits’ end, juvenile and adult offenders court mandated to the program, young and middle aged adult parents, former business executives, ex-convicts fresh from hard stints, men and women living on the street, older multiple-repeat residents—all
comprised our groups. Beyond this diversity of backgrounds among participants, average length of stay for halfway house residents was around three months, which meant a high turnover rate for our groups. Every few months the group’s composition changed completely. Participation was strictly voluntary; the Windows on the Arts program never became an official part of the treatment/recovery program. Still, nearly everyone did participate. Residents encouraged each other to show up with their books and to participate in discussions. Across the hundreds of very different residents who participated in reading groups, many similar comments came to my ears over and over. Countless participants made a point to tell me that they appreciated the opportunity to read and to talk. “It feels good to use my mind again,” some said. Many told me that they had forgotten that they used to like to read or that they never had before. Many commented that our sessions provided a much needed break, a kind of thinking and relating alternative to the heavy schedule of required therapeutic activities and groups that comprised the treatment and recovery program. Many residents indicated that our sessions had actually been important to their recovery. Their unsolicited testimonies suggested to me that they felt some manner of empowerment through their participation—that they learned something about themselves and, by and large, they enjoyed the learning. I learned from the halfway house administration that during exit interviews following completion of their treatment programs, patient-residents consistently named the Windows on the Arts program as a significant factor in their treatment program.

My sense about the value of the groups is the wellspring of my research interest in reading groups as appropriate to mental health settings, but questions arise for me about
how this kind of work fits into the profession and practices of mental health. Again, it is significant that our groups were not part of any official treatment program. Halfway house staff members did not attend our groups (except occasionally as voluntary participants in our discussions), so there were no (working) mental health personnel or practitioners involved in its process. There was never any planning or discussion for its integration in the larger therapeutic goals of the recovery program. There was no evaluation of residents’ participation—which was, again, strictly voluntary. It is not simply that our groups were beneficial in spite of the program’s ostensibly non-therapeutic purpose and status. Rather, its status outside of the rubric and discourse of traditional therapy and treatment was a primary feature of the Windows on the Arts program. It may be that it was beneficial (effective) precisely because it was an explicitly nontherapeutic activity and experience. It is further striking that this nontherapeutic modality was consistently evaluated by residents as therapeutically valuable to their treatment and recovery efforts. But for my purposes it is not enough (and not quite right) to say that the group was nontherapeutic. I wish to investigate a particular kind of (extra-therapeutic) engagement with literary language and forms.

**A Research Question in Two Parts**

What happened in the Dallas group and how might such effects be articulated so as to recommend similar groups as appropriate offerings in mental and behavioral health

________________________

2 This progression may be helpful in saying what I mean by therapeutic. Helpful is vague and also value-laden. Effectiveness points to what is demonstrated in the analysis and presented in results.
settings? These questions from my experience with the Dallas group lead me to the following research question: “what is therapeutic about (explicitly) nontherapeutic reading groups?” This study will interrogate my sense of the bridge between literature’s poetic imagination and clinical psychological work. While this transversal relation is not the primary focus of my research, it figures as a reflexive index for my point of view as researcher.

The present study is an investigation of a reading group, based loosely on the model of the “Windows on the Arts” program in Dallas. Its investigations address two aspects of the research question stated above, one negative (although it will turn out to be positive) and the other positive (although it will involve some degree of self-negation).

The negative: nontherapeutic groups.

The reading group I have studied shared features with explicitly therapeutic group modalities. It will have elements of focus on the group’s own processes. It will be largely self-regulating in the flows and interruptions of its movement and directions. It will have its own specific situation and context—its timing, conventions and duration—aspects referred to in psychotherapy literature as “frame” (Yalom, 1995). But more interesting for my purposes will be its departures from traditional therapeutic modes. This is the first and negative aspect of my research question: my claim regarding the group’s nontherapeutic status. The activity of the Dallas groups, though tied to the sponsoring mental health organization, starkly contrasted the regimented and closely monitored schedule of chores and therapy groups of the halfway house recovery program. The nonevaluative and loosely structured format allowed more freedom and a more relaxed discursive environment. That is, the discursive focus (tone) of the group was different
from those of the process, psychoeducational, twelve-step and other therapy groups in which residents spent most of their days. Aspects of what I will call mental health talk (or discourse) that did arise in our group interactions did so because of the prior immersion of group members in these discourses. I include myself in this “immersion,” since I had a B.S. in psychology and an interest in psychopathology.

But the notion that mental health talk was somehow imported into our group is misleading. It is not as though elements of psychiatric discourse somehow contaminated an otherwise purely “artistic” or literary or humanistic discourse. Rather, mental health talk—self stories about addiction, diagnosis, treatment successes and failures were regular fare for the group. This calls into question, perhaps, whether it was truly a nontherapeutic group. However, although the group provided space for participants to engage mental health discourses as they were relevant to their experiences, the group did not insist on or initiate those discourses nor reward participants for their reproduction or punish them for their abrogation. That is, the arts group did not explicitly or purposely produce, reproduce or reinforce mental health discourses and it is in this sense that I claim it was “nontherapeutic.”

Mental health discourses—in their diagnostic labeling and normative aspects—tend to be self-reinforcing (Foucault, 1971/1972; Parker, Georgaca, Harper, McLaughlin, & Stowell-Smith, 1995). That is to say that like any professional jargon, psychiatric/psychological language (as well as the specialized language of addictions recovery) invents and then continually falls back on its own categories of understanding. Patients (or clients, consumers, etc) may become initiated into such discourses as ways of re-understanding themselves. It may even be that recovery from substance use or other
psychiatric disorder *means* coming to identify with and to deploy new discursive structures associated with psychiatric and behavioral health. Foucault understood discourses as practices that systematically form the objects and subjects they address (Foucault, 1971/1972). Mental health discourse proceeds by categorizing mental patients or addicts and continually constructs mental illness identities for the persons who take them on.

A woman spontaneously introduced herself upon her first appearance in the Dallas reading group by standing and forcefully stating, “Hello, my name is Alice, and I am an alcoholic.” She brought with her into the group a subjective practice belonging to the culture of addiction recovery, particularly the twelve-step model. It is right to assume that every one of us brought numerous discursive practices with us into the reading groups. And since our groups were composed primarily of folks who were currently and presently ensconced in a culture of addiction recovery and mental health treatment, it stands to reason that they brought with them discursive practices—like Alice’s self-identification—appropriate to addiction recovery and mental health treatment. It is my presumption that a key therapeutic element of nontherapeutic reading groups involves interrupting discursive practices that determine a (therapeutic) group’s composition and focus. That is, the activities of a group composed of psychiatric patients brought together because of their status as psychiatric patients for the purpose of focusing on causes and potential cures of their psychiatric conditions will remain largely within a psychiatric discourse concerned primarily with diagnostic nosologies, symptomatology, and medicalized treatments. We might expect some symptom improvement working solely within that discourse, but so is there significant criticism of psychiatric discourse from a
variety of perspectives including Foucault's genealogical deconstruction (1961/1988; 1971/1972), anti-psychiatry (Szasz, 2007; Laing, 1967; Guattari, 1992/1995), social constructionism and rhetoric (Gergen, 2000; Cloud, 1998), and critical psychology (Parker, et al., 1995; Parker I., 2002), among others. These authors argue in various ways that psychiatric discourse is part of the creation and sustenance of mental illness. While it is problematic to characterize psychiatric talk or mental health talk as unitary discourses, they do adhere—even in their variants—to what Mikhail Bakhtin (2006) calls centripetalizing discourses. That is, they seek to centralize and codify understanding under an authoritative voice. They continually consolidate their own power through formation of the objects and subjectivities they (purport to) describe. The present study provides, I believe another dimension to this critique from a literary perspective exemplified by Ransom's appeal to the "delicate needs of the [human] organism" that are not amenable to the "gross practical enterprises" of science (1941, p. 22).

It is also wrong to assume that typical therapy groups operate solely within the discourse of mental health talk. Multivalency and polysemy—centrifugalizing or deterritorializing trends—are powerful forces in any human interaction (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987/2005; Holquist, 1981). Multiple and heterogeneous discursive strains or lines operate concurrently and interdependently. In any conversations between two people there is some degree of understanding (accord) as well as misunderstanding (discord). In any relation there are territorializing and centripetal forces as well as movements working to resist these unifying forces—forces of deterritorialization and centrifugalization. I am interested in examining these processes—to investigate their movements and workings. My assumption is that literary talk in mental health settings
interrupts dominant psychiatric or mental health discourses and disrupts its processes of self-creation and self-sustenance. When Alice talked about her experiences of marriage as contrasted with those of Homer’s heroine, she spoke angrily and with the authority of experience—no longer, for the moment, identified and positioned as “an alcoholic.” This kind of disruption opens up possibilities for transformation that remain closed channels within the dominant, centripetalizing discourse(s).

It is in this sense that the negative construction “nontherapeutic” turns out to be positive. Nontherapeutic does not mean “not therapeutic” in the sense of “not helpful.” Rather, the reading group is helpful because it develops its own therapeutic modes, outside and beyond those discourses constructed and condoned by the mental health professions.

The positive: why literature?

I draw on four theorists for the understanding of literature with which I began this project as well as methodological grounding. I will rely more heavily, for both theoretical and methodological grounding, on three sources. First, I am indebted to the works of Gaston Bachelard, whose phenomenology of poetic imagination describes the powerful, de-formational function of the literary image. Next, I will tap the post-humanist, post-phenomenological work of Felix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze (D&G), whose radically nonrepresentational perspective on language and the literary work of art charts the transversal movements and transformational becomings affected through engagement with such works. Then I will make a brief excursion into late work by Paul Ricoeur related to narrative identity, and finally, I will turn to the literary scholarship of Mikhail Bakhtin, whose theory of the novel and of novelization through multivoiced discourse
(heteroglossia) will further situate literary talk’s power to de-form typical constructions and uses of language.

Bachelard’s poetics proceed by specific (phenomenological) analysis of poetic images as they appear to a reader in a text. He emphasizes the *interruptive* nature of the poetic image as a “sudden salience on the surface of the psyche” (Bachelard G., 1958/1994). Imagination produces novelty, deconstructing existing forms. Bachelard writes:

We always think of the imagination as the faculty that *forms* images. On the contrary, it *deforms* what we perceive; it is, above all, the faculty that frees us from immediate images and *changes* them. If there is no change, or unexpected fusion of images, there is no imagination; there is no *imaginative act*. If the image that is *present* does not make us think of one that is *absent*, if an image does not determine an abundance—an explosion—of unusual images, then there is no imagination….Thanks to the *imaginary*, imagination is essentially *open* and *elusive*. It is the human psyche’s experience of openness and *novelty* (Bachelard G., 1943/2002).

In the same work, *Air and Dreams*, Bachelard writes that poetic works always aspire toward new images that propel us in a kind of spiritual mobility; “imagination allows us to leave the ordinary course of things” (p. 2-3). In a later work, *The Poetics of Space*, Bachelard writes that the novelty of the poetic image places it apart from processes of signification. It is outside of regular language and regular events, placing language into a “state of emergence, in which life becomes manifest through its vivacity” (1958/1994).
Bachelard explores the question of how images do their deformational work through a phenomenological question: “what happens when I encounter the image?” He refuses to attribute cause to poetic image, claiming that the (psychoanalytic) search for its antecedents in the life of the poet will not yield its secrets. Rather, his study requires “a study of the phenomenon of the poetic image when it emerges into the consciousness as a direct product of the heart, soul and being of man” (1958/1994, p. xviii). But how can the image be transmitted, affect others besides the poet? Bachelard’s answer relies on reverberation of the image in a depth of imagination activated in the reader by the novelty of the image. Bachelard’s image is characterized by transsubjectivity precisely because of its deformational functions. Its action undoes categories and calls boundaries into question. “At the level of the poetic image, the duality of subject and object is iridescent, shimmering, unceasingly active in its inversions” (1958/1994, p. xix).

Bachelard anticipates the work of Deleuze and Guattari (on, for example, "strange becomings and unnatural participations" (1980/2005, p. 240)), that novelty does not simply reside in the (static) image, but that a new subjectivity is (provisionally) formed in the encounter of reader and image. He writes, “in this union, through the image, of a pure but short-lived subjectivity and a reality which will not necessarily reach its final constitution, the phenomenologist finds a field for countless experiments” (1958/1994, p. xix). For this proposal, I take Bachelard’s question as my own: what may be said of the subject(ivities) appropriate to and appropriated by a particular (encounter with an) image or text?

But Bachelard’s project is solipsistic and modern—his investigation of his own presumably solitary encounters with countless poetic texts. My interest expands the scope
of this investigation. At the level of the individual, Bachelard’s method is appropriate. And, he points to the increasing complexity of (trans)subjectivity involved in writing and reading: the poet, image-word, and reader combine in a mysterious kind of union that is Bachelard’s field of exploration. Still, I wish to carry this project further, to a level of greater complexity, taking account of still more dimensions of significance relevant to the situated encounter of reader with text. Here, Deleuze and Guattari’s (D&G) (1972/1983) explication of rhizomatic assemblages will assist me. For D&G, there are no individuals. “Everyone is a little group,” they write, insisting that too rigidly parsing the world into individual, human persons is arbitrary and simplistic, missing the complexity and multiplicity of attachments that go to make up any entity. They prefer to speak of assemblages of elements—multiplicities—“plugged-into” one another in endless and machinic chains (emphasizing the productive nature of assemblages). Rhizomatic assemblages “do not have fixed origins like the roots of a tree; they are tuberous—multiplicitous, adventitious—and connect in nonlinear assemblages to other things” (Jackson, 2003). In any assemblage are found formal elements of stratification (territorialization) as well as “lines of flight” that potentiate movements of deterritorialization. “In a book, as in all things,” D&G write, “there are lines of articulation or segmentarity, strata and territories; but also lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification” (1980/2005, p. 3). While they emphasize the dynamic play of stratifying and loosening forces, they are clear in their position that the overall movement of all multiplicities is in the direction of deterritorialization and continuous variation. This is not a movement toward chaos, but rather toward innovation
and novelty\(^3\). They do not claim that we should prefer absolute deterritorialization in the sense of utter deconstruction or disorganization. Rather, we should recognize that organization and deterritorialization are always in dynamic play and that the latter is the vital impulse driving creativity and innovation.

Not only is any book (or text or passage or image) its own assemblage, D&G argue that these word-assemblages straddle the (imaginary) divide between organization and deterritorialization. The organization of its language (i.e. its grammar, syntax, and signification) gives the text certain and definite form. At the same time, since language is plastic and multivalent—open to variable interpretations—the text-assemblage is open for novelty in interpretation and use. One side of the text-assemblage “faces the strata…or signifying totality, or determination attributable to a subject; it also has a side…which is continually dismantling the organism” (p. 4). The text opens onto countless possibilities and interpretations. It is a portal, a jumping off point or a plugging-in hub for access to connections within and among assemblages. The lack of definite starting and ending points marks the text, conceived in this way, as a rhizomatic assemblage. But, the text-assemblage is not a closed system. Rather, it plugs-in and is plugged into other assemblages that form, with its addition, new assemblages.

As an assemblage, a book has only itself, in connection with other assemblages…We will never ask what a book means, as signified or signifier; we will not look for anything to understand in it. We will ask what it functions with, in connection with what other things it does or does not transmit intensities, in

\(^3\) Here an affinity immediately appears between D&G and Bachelard’s claims regarding poetic imagination’s procession toward novelty.
which other multiplicities its own are inserted and metamorphosed….A book itself is a little machine…the only question is which other machine the literary machine can be plugged into, must be plugged into in order to work (p. 4).

The text does not contain or express meanings. Rather, it affects, through its connections and becomings with readers, discursive and nondiscursive practices, and institutions movements and becomings involving all of its constituents.

As a reader approaches a text and encounters its images through the organization of its language (its form), aspects of the reader-assemblage plug into aspects of the text-assemblage based on valances in each, forming novel reader-text assemblages. There is a double-becoming of reader and text. Each is changed by the other, by plugging into and working on the other. New subjectivities are in this way formed.

Bachelard’s notion of the image echoes this rhizomic understanding of the text. It is deformational, unattributable, non-causal, but functional despite meaning or representing nothing. It is its own becoming. Its function depends on the double-becoming bond described above, the nexus of which comprises the reading subjectivity. This is a (trans)subjectivity that tends toward increasing valence. Greater possibility. Deterritorialization is the possibility and assurance of innovation—of telling a different story or working according to a different image.

This last point—telling a different story—simultaneously illuminates the ways literature works in and on readers and brings us back around to the question of therapeutic effect. Paul Ricoeur, whose foundational, philosophical work on narrative form and function has been seminal to the narrative turn in psychology and the other social sciences (Freeman, 2004; Murray M., 2003; Sarbin, 2004), revisited related
material in his final published work, *On Recognition*. There I read a passage that I found inspirational to this project. He wrote in an extended section on narrative identity that the reader of stories may, through critical consideration, learn to "narrate oneself," and further that "learning to narrate oneself is also learning to narrate oneself in other ways" (2005, p. 101). For Ricoeur, this possibility rests on the fictional plot's ability to draw the reader's attention to the tension between a character as continuous and immutable (self as "idem") even while she adapts to (historical) emplotted events (self as "ipse"). Narrative identity is forged, then, for characters and for readers "at the intersection of coherence conferred by emplotment and the discordance arising from the peripeteia within the narrated action" (p. 101)—at the threshold, that is, of order and chaos, the line straddled by the text-assemblage in D&G. The reader's engagement at that threshold potentiates new (narrative) identities, new ways of storying her or his life—a potent potential outcome for psychological therapy work.

Finally, I’ll turn to M.M. Bakhtin, whose work on the novel informs portions of D&G’s *A thousand plateaus* and has gained popularity among not only literary theorists and critics but among critical theorists and poststructuralist thinkers across disciplines. Rather than a generic theory, which would argue for a list of criteria and characteristics that mark a literary work as a member of the category (genre) “novel,” Bakhtin argues that it is precisely the *impossibility* of such a pre-established list of criteria that marks the novel’s uniqueness (Bakhtin, 2006). The combination of uncombinable elements makes the novel novel. Two tendencies produce the novel: first, *heteroglossia*, the co-presence of varied and heterogeneous voices, elements, languages, styles, and subjectivities, and second, the *dialogic* tension of centripetal and centrifugal forces working within words.
and discourses owing to the profoundly perspectival (contextual) situation of dialogic participants (actors and producers). Bakhtin writes,

> distinctive links and interrelationships between utterances and languages, this movement of the theme through different languages and speech types, its dispersion into the rivulets and droplets of social heteroglossia, its dialogization—this is the basic distinguishing feature of the stylistics of the novel (2006, p. 263).

Bakhtin argues for the (generic) novel as the ultimate (artistic) emblem of the way discourse works in the world—that is, through dialogic heteroglossia. Translator and editor Michael Holquist describes, in his introduction to four Bakhtin essays collected as *The dialogic imagination*, Bakhtin’s emphasis on the struggle between centripetal and centrifugal forces in life and language.

> This Zoroastrian clash is present in culture as well as nature, and in the specificity of individual consciousness; it is at work in the even greater particularity of individual utterances. The most complete and complex reflection of these forces is found in human language, and the best transcription of language so understood is the novel (2006, p. xviii).

The implications of Bakhtin’s theory transcend (generic) literary studies (as evidenced by the adoption of his work in cultural studies, philosophy, and psychoanalytic theory). Holquist goes on to argue that Bakhtin came to understand the “novel” not as a canonical category of literature taking its place alongside epic and lyrical forms, but rather as a *force* at work within a given system to reveal the limits and artificial constraints of that system (p. xxxi). Thus, when instances of heteroglossia are found within traditional lyrical forms, it is due to the *novelization* of that form. Similarly,
elucidation of the dialogic forces at work within utterances, assemblages and
discourses—that is, elucidation of tendencies toward orderliness, unity, and stability as
well as forces that resist and threaten stability—may be said to work toward the

*novelization* of these forms (discourses, assemblages). Critical, narrative analytic
methods conceived as tools to understand the ways in which assemblages of actors
(reading group participants) actively produce ordered, predictable patterns of relating as
well as innovating interruptions, deformations and lines of flight may said to be practices
of (discovery and production of) novelization.

The preceding discussion of literary and poetic language points to the
participation of this kind of language in something extra-linguistic or extra-discursive.
Bachelard's image is a flickering of soul communicated in shimmering, transsubjective
resonance. Bakhtin writes of dialogic forces swirling through conversations and works of
art and grappling for an upper hand in either cohesion or explosion. Deleuze and Guattari
portray literary language straddling a threshold bordering form and orderliness on one
hand and on the other a consistency that resists the stratification of any form whatsoever
(including linguistic form). Reading together works not just to open up discursive
possibilities. Stories *move* and they *move* people.
Statement of Critical Perspective

The reader may infer quite a lot about me from the foregoing theoretical introduction to this project. The present section is intended to bridge theory and method by making explicit my point of view as I approach this research. It is about my worldview and my personality and my politics and how these have led to the present study as well as to my (intended) approach to the task of group facilitation and subsequently of critical interpretation and analysis.

It is important to note that I am writing this as retrospective reflection in the spirit of Walsh's understanding of research approach as the clearing through which phenomena come into view (Walsh, 1995, p. 335). According to this perspective, the researcher's attitudes, which form the conditions of a phenomenon's appearance, are themselves invisible at the time of that appearance. In addition, these attitudes inevitably change in their encounter with phenomena of interest. Only afterward, in light of the phenomenon that has revealed itself, may the attitudes that presaged the phenomenon be fleshed out through questioning the nature of the world (clearing) into which this phenomenon has been born. Walsh writes,

The structure of any phenomenon is the structure as seen by a particular researcher from the vantage point of a particular approach. The understanding of a phenomenon therefore requires a thorough delineation of the approach through which that particular phenomenon came into view. (p. 338)

This delineation is a questioning about point of view. From what position is it possible to perceive the phenomenon here described? What attitude (posture, stance, orientation) brought about the phenomenon in this particular way? So I attempt here to delineate the
attitudes that brought about the current findings, these reflections being themselves among the results of the study.

In an earlier section I described the Dallas reading group as antecedent to the current project. There I partially answered the question “why literature?” but this question wants further treatment here. More specifically, the reflexive question is something like this: why are literature and psychology inextricably linked for me? Two anecdotes from my own experience will help to answer. The first takes me back to the first day of a high school literature class when Mrs. Shoffner leapt atop her desk and banged thunder on its metal sides while she recited the weird sisters’ incantations from the first scene of Macbeth. She was, needless to say, an enthusiastic (and eccentric) teacher of literature who had my attention from that first day. With her I read Faulkner and Dostoevsky in addition to Shakespeare and others. She also gave me my first introduction to psychology, introducing Jung’s collective unconscious as an argument for the broad significance of literary study across cultures. It was my first formal exposure to psychological theory of any kind, and her explanation of myth—culturally significant storytelling—seemed to me an immediately intuitive proof (or at least a demonstration) for the notion that there are both (unique) individual and (shared) collective dimensions of human experience. Although individual human beings partake in entirely unique life circumstances and perspectives (points of view), there are significant dimensions of life that we share—that we can recognize in each other's experience and share through our stories. That stories are shared and sharable is acknowledgment of the basic human paradox of simultaneous individuality (uniqueness) and collectivity (similarity). The study of literature through this psychological lens became for me, then, a way of working
at the threshold of this basic paradox. Canonical literature is—at one level—simply an acknowledgment of (some of) the stories that “work” in this regard—that work at this threshold. What we regard as a “classic” (or perhaps even as a work of “literature”) is what 'stands the tests of time,' what transcends idiographic place and time to participate recognizably in common or widely shared experiences.

Obviously, canonical boundary lines (inclusion and exclusion) depend on a great many economic, political and cultural factors. The historical winners write not only the history books, but also the fictional works that populate the shelves of power. Disputes over the Western literary canon have raged in academic theaters of the culture wars for decades. One result of the postmodern de-centering of traditional power and influence has been the inclusion of previously marginalized artists and voices that certainly “work” at the threshold of individual and collective experience. I view this democratizing trend as a necessary corrective to a myopic and hegemonic worldview that stunted our collective imagination. Literature, that is, does not function as a thresholding mechanism if certain voices and perspectives are systematically excluded from the multivoiced dialog of Bakhtin’s heteroglossia. The goal is not then a universal perspective (the "Truth"—which would demolish the threshold), but the richest possible collection of perspectives that cluster fittingly around the vast possibilities for perspective.

Still, difficulties persist. Not all stories are equal. That is not to say that all stories are not important. I am a student of psychology precisely because I am convinced that every story matters. But I am also convinced that not all stories are equivalent. Fictional, literary stories and poems are carefully crafted, well-made things. We are all tellers of stories (Freeman, 2004; Murray M., 2003), but we reserve the name “storyteller” for
those who mesmerize us with gripping, well-told tales (or else for naughty children who tell us lies). As novelist and cultural critic Albert Murray noted,

A narrative seems realistic because it was designed (and polished!) to create that effect....When he creates short stories and novels, the writer no less than [the American blues singer] or the ancient Greek playwrights is composing and choreographing song and dance imitations of experience. It is by means of such imitations that he evokes the dynamic image which embodies and expresses his conception of human nature and of the meaning and purpose of human conduct.

(1973, pp. 20-22)

Fictional literature is an artful imitation of life that invites us into the (threshold) experience of simultaneous individuality and collectivity. We learn what is acceptable and normal as well as about transgressive prohibitions and possibilities through stories. We learn to negotiate differences of opinion and perspective through discussion of the episodes, circumstances and actions negotiated and undertaken by fictional characters.

I take broadening, enriching and multiplying perspectives to be basically valuable. Developmentally, increasing perspective taking ability is considered a matter of cognitive and socioemotional maturation. But my concern is probably because I want to be better understood myself. It may be truer to say that I have a horror of being misunderstood. My second anecdote fits in here and takes us back even farther in time, to my third year when I lived for a short time in Manhattan with my mother and father. My folks secured a spot for their precocious toddler on a children’s television program, Romper Room, filming at that time in New York City. The show’s hostess, Miss Sherry, sang songs, played games
and engaged in imaginative play with a different group of about ten preschoolers during each show. During my show, Sherry engaged the children in stretching exercises.

Sherry: “Stretch down and touch your toes. That’s right boys and girls. Now stretch up as tall as you can stretch. Stretch up to the sky and see what you can grab onto. Suzy, did you grab hold of something? What did you pull down?”

Suzy: “I pulled down the sun!”

Sherry: (brightly) “Oh, that’s fantastic, Suzy! William, what did you pull down?”

William: “I pulled down the moon!”

Sherry: (brightly) “O, wonderful, William, you pulled down the moon! And, little Rodney, what did you pull down?”

Rodney: “I got a tree frog!”

There was a pause, and then laughter from Miss Sherry and the other children and, I learned later, from some of the parents watching via closed circuit in another room where my mother—no longer for that moment a soft-spoken Midwesterner—had words with a few of those who were mocking her baby boy. Mocking for what? To be honest, I still don’t understand. Sure, I get that it was an imaginative exercise. But, really? The others pulled down the sun, moon and stars and then laughed at my tree frog? It wasn’t standard enough imaginative “storybook” material, perhaps? I felt like I had walked into a trap. My answer failed to match storyline expectations of which I was unaware. Later I reasoned to myself that I hadn’t balked at the other children’s answers but had simply thought the tree frog a more satisfying and realistic solution (it's possible that I was an overly serious child, but that's hardly the point).
Of course, as far as I know I was unaffected at the time by this episode—now a somewhat apocryphal favorite funny story in my family’s canon. My version relies mostly on my mother’s (frequent) retellings which still include some harrumphing about those other parents. But as I have reflected on the story it has become emblematic for me of the risks and rewards associated with the imaginative co-construction (constitution) of reality that rests on the uneasy threshold of individual and collective experience—the same threshold that is worked in literary fiction.

*A Paris Review* interviewer asked novelist Andrea Barrett whether a feeling of "not being at home" was important to her writing. Barrett's reply:

Sure. I've never known a writer who didn't feel ill at ease with the world. Have you? We all feel unhoused in some sense. That's part of why we write. We feel we don't fit in, that this world is not our world, that though we move in it, we're not of it. You don't need to write a novel if you feel at home in the world. We write about the world because it doesn't make sense to us. Through writing, maybe we can penetrate it, elucidate it, somehow make it comprehensible.

(Gaffney, 2003)

I am convinced that we *read* what these authors write for much the same reason. There is such incredible variety in the ways that we human beings can experience isolation, alienation, the uncanniness of a once-known world that looms, suddenly unfamiliar like the houses that menace JH Van den Berg's unhappy client in his *A different existence* (1972). We press our noses against frosted windowpanes, longing for warmth and welcome.
So what's the point of the tree frog story? It was startling to find myself in violation of some norm of which I had been unaware and which, even afterward, I did not understand. Differences of perspective are, of course, ubiquitous, but I wish to point out that the stakes are high. In order to be normal and reasonably happy, functioning members of a society, we must continually manage our position (see later discussion of "attitude" regarding this human balancing act) with respect to innumerable guidelines and expectations the precise boundaries of which are seldom explicit. They are, rather, matters of unspoken determination, agreement and interpretation.

Mental illness is certainly a multifarious and multivalenced cluster of phenomena, but I am certain that one of its significant dimensions is, almost invariably, one's failure to maintain a kind of good standing with respect to the sometimes bewildering array of expectations faced by each of us. It is a failure to establish and maintain an attitude with respect to the world that accords well enough with others' perspectives. It is to deviate too much from innumerable norms to be able to get along in the world. I remember here that van den Berg's conclusion to the case study mentioned above includes the statement that "loneliness is the nucleus of psychiatry" (p. 105).

Fiction reading is not escape from "the" "real" world. Rather it is, at its best, the mortification of a false positivist view of the world. It is the multiple partition (multiplication of perspectives) of a world that pretends to present a unified front, and for many, a seemingly endless stream of disapproving faces. Of spoken and unspoken reproaches. Of furrowed brows and clucking tongues and shaking heads and wringing hands and well-meaning concern and certainty about the appropriate course of action "in her case," in the case of the one who simply doesn't fit in.
Fiction reading is at once salve for the painful isolation of outcast status and is also practice in the imprecise arts of interpreting and negotiating complex real-life difficulties and relationships. It is practice interpreting "what exactly is going on here," practice dealing with disagreements about what is going on here, and practice in molding one's interpretations to one's worldview so as to make the resulting world a more comfortable place to live.

I suppose that I am trying in this project generally and through my group facilitation (or interventions) specifically, to chart a moderating and politically moderate course between my own unique perspectives based on personal history on one hand, and the vast array of perspectives of which I may become aware as well as those of which I am not yet aware, nor may ever be aware. I say that this is a politically moderate approach because while I adhere to the democratic (and poststructuralist) assumptions of narrative therapy (White & Epston, 1990), I also defer to the authority of the (literary) text. The radical assumption of narrative therapy is that individuals may be encouraged to find alternative and preferable stories to the oppressive ones which no longer function to the benefit of the individual. I am in favor of this direction, but it is important to acknowledge that some of us are better storytellers than others--again, not all stories are equal. If we are going to be in the business of encouraging revisions of personal stories and narrative identities, why not learn from the experts how to write and tell the best stories we are able? Remember, from Bachelard, that it is not a matter of transmitting and imitating content. Rather it is about transmitting inspiration toward self-authorship; toward telling one’s own story and the possibilities of telling it differently.
Research Context

I strongly value both community and individual self-determination but with careful attention to the constraints imposed on self-determination by the complicated interplay between collective and individual experience. As it concerns the design of the present study, I wanted the group to be as collaborative and inclusive as possible, and I left matters of its composition, meeting times and duration, and focal texts for discussion during the first meeting of participants.

The decision to read our texts aloud stemmed primarily from my wish not to exclude potential participants based on differing levels of literacy, education, etc. Group participants readily agreed to this procedure after I assured them that the choice to read aloud would always be voluntary. I believe we experienced a greater sense of group cohesion as a result of this format than if we had read separately, and then come back together for discussion only. As it was, we were literally in it together--struggling to read or listen to the same difficult dialect or puzzle through some strange construction. This procedure also eliminated the pressure and potential resentment of a reading "assignment" to be completed prior to each session. Finally, beyond group cohesion, the read-aloud format created a profoundly different oral and aural experience than had we read silently and individually. The effects of this oral aspect of the group may bear further exploration and reflection, particularly in relation to oral storytelling traditions and the jazz/blues idiom in relation to African American communities (Murray A., 1973). One result on which I will speculate here is that the oral format contributed to a proliferation of potential meanings and interpretations available to and for our assemblages and transformations. Yes, we all read from identical printed texts, but the
transcript-text reproduced here as Appendices include full versions of each story we read, not in their pristine printed form, but complete with all of our misreadings, mispronunciations and omissions, along with our comments and questions, all of which were fair game for the becomings that drove the action of the group sessions. This dimension of the interactions further exemplified the mutability of narrative expression. Mistakes, contradictions and uncertainties are part of the game. They are grist for the narrative identity mill, getting rolled right up into the stories being created and told.

I endeavored to be generally nondirective in facilitating the group so as to allow the generation of opinions and discussion among participants. However, I found myself talking a lot during the sessions (it seemed like even more during transcription), so I tried to ask questions rather than to make statements that would directly impose my opinions on our discussions. Of course, my questions and statements influenced the direction of discussions, but I believe that my strategy mitigated somewhat the extent to which I was perceived as an expert or authority regarding particulars of the stories we read. In many ways, of course, I was the "expert" or "authority" in the room. I was the researcher and the group's originator and facilitator as a result of extensive, advanced education. I was the person with the greatest reading experience generally and was able to familiarize myself ahead of time with the short stories we read and with their authors and the contexts of their writing. I tried to share this breadth of experience in a helpful way, so as to assist us in working through the questions that arose in our reading and discussions. But I also used this experience to try to remain faithful to the texts as authoritative "equal partners," along with participants, in the sessions.
Several instances appear in the commentary and analysis sections that show me strongly insinuated in the conversation, usually in disagreement with one or more participants about some point of discussion. These are instances that, I feel, highlight my intended approach as facilitator, particularly as an advocate for textual faithfulness, even in cases where the specific instances reported represent relative failures of my stated and intended nondirective attitude. These instances receive some specific treatment in the following commentary.

**Setting and Dramatis Personae**

Our group convened once weekly in late summer in the free-standing, one story community mental health clinic in a small town in (mostly rural) Macon County, Alabama. We gathered around a small conference table in a room adjacent to the general clinic waiting room from which morning talk and game shows blared from the television whenever someone opened the door. Attendance was generally consistent; there were never fewer than six of us in a session. All participants reported limited previous reading experience.

Participants were eight clinic clients, six who participated in day treatment on most week days. Five were women and three men. All participants were Black or African American and they ranged in age from thirty-eight to sixty-one. Following is a brief introduction to participants who become characters in the transcript-text. With the exception of my own, the names given are pseudonyms.

**Virgil** - The protagonist of the group in many ways. He is outspoken and self-assured, cool, even tempered and good-humored. Much of the
commentary and analysis involves Virgil because he is by far the most vocal. Among group members, he is the leader. Virgil did not attend the final two meetings of the group. He told me later that he felt "conflict" developing in the group and he chose to remove rather than involve himself.

**Connie** - She and Virgil are close friends. They help and look out for one another. Generally I find this to be true of group members and Connie is frequently involved in caretaking activities with other members—anything from helping with pronunciation to getting a tissue. She is strongly religious and she appears to suffer physiological effects—stammering and tremor— which are consistent with long-term antipsychotic medication (extrapyramidal side effects, parkinsonism).

**Randy** - His interest in the group stems from his acting hobby—Randy has been active with the local repertory theater. He is friendly and buoyant in manner and carriage. Randy took over the unofficial role of outspoken group leader in Virgil's absence during the final two sessions.

**Betty** - Because of emergent family circumstances that put her in charge of caring for her young grandchild, she missed several sessions. I missed her because of her easy, inviting smile and the world wisdom she carried in her weary-seeming shoulders.
Sandra - One of the youngest members of the group, Sandra claimed to be a fairly frequent reader—more so than other group members. Sandra made infrequent but interesting and insightful comments during our sessions. She seemed occasionally bored and she fell asleep a few times.

Ben - Ben is ample and bald with a friendly but mostly serious temperament. He reported during our first session that he is currently studying at Harvard Medical School and he brought with him to most of our sessions a thick, hardbound medical dictionary or encyclopedia. He told me separately that he wants to work in mental health treatment. His productions during our sessions were measured and thoughtful.

Sophie - Sister to Daphne and her opposite in appearance, Sophie is tall, slender and slightly severe. She is quiet and sweet in demeanor and was studying for her high school equivalency exam. Sophie lives with her sister and the two are very close. Sophie missed two sessions for her GED class.

Daphne - A jolly foil for her sister, Sophie. Daphne is quick to laugh and was socially engaged in our group. She told me repeatedly that she enjoyed participating and she took her turns reading aloud, though she hardly ever commented on what she (or the others) read. Daphne suffered with a hacking cough that frequently interrupted
the group for brief intervals. She said she was concerned she might have bronchitis.

Rod - This is me, in my role as facilitator and participant.
Method

Qualitative research methods have sought to overcome the difficulties of external validity (generalizability and applicability to “actual” situations) found in quantitative, experimental research by remaining close to phenomena of research interest as they are experienced by persons involved in them. They trade so-called internal validity that comes through strict experimental controls for “real life” and experience-near accounts of phenomena.

First-person ethnographic or auto-ethnographic accounts, interview transcripts, and solicited protocols have served as data for qualitative analyses. Still, none of these data-productions are identical with the objects or phenomena of interest of their researchers. For instance, a narrative reply to interview questions about the experience of beginning psychotherapy is not the same as the experience of beginning psychotherapy. We should not assume that by analyzing such data, we are studying the phenomenon of beginning psychotherapy. Problems of representation and representability inform my thinking about method. An exploration of the interactions of readers with literary texts cannot be accomplished through protocol analysis. For example, Cohen (1994) found recognition of self-change in both affective and cognitive domains in the self-reports of therapeutic reading participants. While these are valuable findings for the therapeutic uses of literature, they are several steps removed from the action, from the dynamic thresholding activity of poetic language.

Instead, I have undertaken a critical, narrative analysis of reading group sessions, with the transcriptions of those sessions along with video recordings taken as the text for analysis. This transcript-text includes the read-aloud stories engaged as part of the group
as well as our discussions around these stories. This has allowed me to get as close as possible, I feel, to the phenomena of interest in this study.

The method relies largely on a critical perspective, elucidated in the foregoing theoretical introduction, and proceeds through analysis of imaginative processes in the language and interactions of an assemblage of readers, text, author, setting, facilitator, etc. It is a perspective that attempts to hold the point of view of literary and poetic imagination acting through its language as an active threshold for exploration and innovation.

Mark Freeman (2004) describes his narrative inquiry as a kind of literary criticism defined as "a broad interpretive understanding that seeks to unpack literary texts for their meaning and significance" (p. 70). Its specific perspective at a given moment is determined not by a set of techniques, but "by the nature of the phenomenon, what's interesting about it, and what's worth saying" (p. 71). He suggests that narrative inquiry is appropriate to data that extend "beyond the psychological plane," and that, as argued by Ricoeur, actions and texts are simultaneously connected with and separate from their actors and authors. A critical narrative analysis, then, while attending to actors and authors, trains its particular attention on the text itself. This move from individually localized subjective meanings to texts (understood, remember, as assemblages) expands the range and power of the method to the "social realities" constitutive of individual actions (p. 69). Similarly, the work of literary criticism, according to Cowan (1972), is not about a poem or a work of fiction alone. Rather, it is always also an activity of social criticism, penetrating the technique of art as well as the psyche of society (p. vii). My approach, then, is from the perspective of literary critic and taking for my text the text of
fictional stories as they interact with the "critical appropriation" (Ricoeur, 2005) of other readers.

**Participants and procedures**

I secured permission to recruit participants for this study from the Clinical Director of a community mental health center in small city in east-central Alabama. I then approached clinical staff members at the facility to describe the project and to enlist their assistance in recruitment, as requested by Duquesne University's Human Subjects Review Board. Prior to meeting in person, I supplied each staff member with written instructions—in letter format—regarding recruitment and participation in the study (Appendix A). When we met in person, each agreed to consider clients who they deemed appropriate for the reading group and to invite those clients to participate. Shortly thereafter, each staff member provided me with names and contact information for clients who had accepted the invitation to participate. I contacted each and set up a collective first meeting. During that meeting, I again described the research project, including its origin in the Dallas "Windows" program, and read aloud along with prospective participants the Informed Consent document for the research study (Appendix B). All eight of the clients invited by clinical staff members signed consent forms and we agreed together on a time, date and duration for our first session and a regular schedule for subsequent sessions. I asked for suggestions for group members as to what we should read and none were offered. Participants agreed instead that I should choose some stories for us to begin with, understanding that participants might make suggestions for future readings though none were forthcoming.
I chose two stories by Zora Neale Hurston, "John Redding Goes to Sea" and "Escape from Pharaoh;" two stories by Ralph Ellison, "Boy on a Train" and "Flying Home;" one story by Eudora Welty, "A Worn Path," and one, "Rikki Tikki Tavi," by Rudyard Kipling. I made these choices based on my own interest and, with one exception, a local connection with the authors. I intentionally avoided selecting works with particular topics or themes because, while it is certainly not the case that all stories or fictional works are equal (that would pretty much be the end of a literary critical enterprise), I believe that I can demonstrate the workings of literary language (as theorized earlier) with any literary works. I chose works with well-known authors whose work has been anthologized and has amassed a body of criticism around it. But primarily I was excited to tell group participants that Ralph Ellison had been a student at the nearby University (and that he and I share Oklahoma City as our hometown) and that Zora Neale Hurston had spent the first part of her life in the next tiny town down the highway from where we held our sessions in the town of my current home address. Eudora Welty is, of course, a well-known Mississippi writer and Kipling is the odd man out. I chose his story from *Jungle Book* mostly for contrast. It is a children's story (though I still enjoy it greatly) peopled by animals locked in idealized life and death struggles while the hapless human beings—secondary characters—stand by and watch. I wanted to see how it would work in comparison with the others.⁴

Our group met for seven non-consecutive weeks (due to an intervening holiday and a personal conflict in my schedule) during the same ninety-minute period in the

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⁴ Rikki Tikki does not figure in the analysis of this research so for the sake of interest I will report here that it did not work. It was unanimously the least favorite among group participants—a subject for brief commentary in the Discussion.
morning on the same day of the week. Sessions were video and sound recorded from a single camera positioned so as to capture the best view of most of the participants (this meant that my back was usually to the camera).

Transcripts of six group sessions (one session was not recorded due to a technical error)\(^5\) were produced with the assistance of two undergraduate students enrolled in a research practicum course. Each research assistant signed a Confidentiality Pledges (Appendix C) that was maintained along with Informed Consent forms and video/audio recordings (burned to digital video discs), and in accordance with confidentiality provisions of the Informed Consent document, in a locked file in my home. Research assistants produced three session transcripts between them and I produced three. A transcription guide (Appendix D) and class discussions served to guide the transcription process. I reviewed and edited transcripts produced by assistants and then proceeded to analysis of all session transcripts through multiple, sequential reviews of each. Six session transcripts are presented as Appendix E.

My criteria for selecting and defining data-moments for analysis was based on two questions: first, when and where are there indicators of mental health talk (discourse) and what happens when they appear? Second, when and where are there indicators of literary talk (discourse) and what happens when they appear? Keywords, I assumed, would signal the advent of mental health talk (e.g. talk about one’s diagnosis) or literary talk (e.g. mention of a character or theme). However, mental health discourse and literary or poetic discourse did not turn out to be broadly parallel elements battling against a

\(^5\) Discussion of Welty’s "A Worn Path" was almost entirely contained in the lost session, so that story does not figure in the analysis. After the recording blunder, I made a redundant audio recording of each session, though subsequent video recordings were successful.
neutral linguistic background as my original question-formulation seems to suggest. Instead, our discussions so seamlessly adopted the story-world's reality that it became the backdrop for the sessions. My (implicit) assumption may have been that discussions would look like something like advanced seminars in literary studies in which students talk about plot devices, characterization, voice, etc, in the jargon of a literary discipline. That would have counted for "literary discourse," but what I found did not. Thus it became expedient to identify elements of participation and engagement within our fairly natural and plain-spoken discussions of the stories. Particularly, my analysis proceeded through identification of instances of mental health talk and analysis of their operation and importance vis-à-vis in the discussion of our stories.

The following Findings section does not present an exhaustive analysis of all of the group sessions, nor even of the stories addressed in them. Rather, these results are intended to demonstrate some of the operations of poetic language in action, with particular focus on its encounters with mental health talk (discourse). The results demonstrate how productive and illuminating such a method/perspective can be, generating a significant amount of analysis from a limited selection of the overall transcript-text.

6 Determination of beginning and ending point for data-segments did rely, as I assumed, on a kind of rhizopoietic attention to elements of the assemblages in play, and based on my earlier discussion of the work of Deleuze and Guattari. Questions in this vein include "When did the conversation turn in this direction?" "Does it interrupt some other topic?" "How do I know these things have occurred?" "What movements, accelerations or decelerations, and intensifications appear?" Attention to these questions helped me to extract segments from the transcript-text for analysis.
Findings

A Roadmap for the Analysis of Findings

Following is a roughly chronological interpretive commentary based on close reading of the transcript-text for two of the five stories we read and discussed during four sessions. Passages have been selected which demonstrate the attributes and activities of poetic texts-in-action according to the theoretical assumptions I have outlined in the Introduction. I have paid particular attention to passages that include productions of mental health talk, in accordance with the primary research question of this study. Story summaries precede each section of commentary to orient the reader (and initiate him or her into our assemblage). Excerpts from the transcript-text are set off from the text and italicized. In the commentary, fictional character names are italicized for clarity.

The initial commentary lays the groundwork for and is followed by specific and detailed Theoretical Analysis of three primary themes as they appear in and are elucidated by transcript data and interpretive commentary. The first of these, Assemblage, details the ways that participants engage in and with fictional story-worlds. This engagement is such that, as suggested by Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2005), text, readers, author, and other elements of context join together in chains or blocks of becoming. Becomings rely on the particular mimetic structure of the fictional text that produces experiences that simulate 'real life' experiences. The special kind of engagement occasioned by fictional texts leads to transformations of linguistic forms and concepts.

Transformations addressed in the next segment, De-formations, include analysis of the behavior of mental health talk in our sessions as it encounters the poetic story world. One demonstrable result of this encounter is a vernacularization of mental health
talk. Elements of clinical, usually diagnostic, language introduced in our sessions are transformed in the direction of more colloquial and 'plain-language' use. Preliminary suggestions regarding the implications of this finding are introduced here and followed up in the Discussion.

The final section, Re-narration, examines some of the subtle and powerful ways that, just during the conversations of our group, individual members' narrative identities shifted. These changes suggest some of the concrete ways that persons may alter their narrative identities (Ricoeur, 2005) through assemblage with fictional texts and what they may take with them into their other, various assemblages and involvements. This section acknowledges the interplay of emphasis between individual and group, assemblage and subjectivity that are at issue and in play in this research.

The Discussion section summarizes findings, elaborating on the vernacularizing shift in mental health talk and on the reading group as community-fostering practice. Finally, it points to limitations of the present study and suggests directions for future investigation and community therapeutic involvement.

**John Redding Goes to Sea**

**Story summary.**

Our first story was Zora Neale Hurston's "John Redding Goes to Sea," first published in 1921. Set in the rural Florida of Hurston's childhood, the story relies on an omniscient narrator and dialog that alternates between protagonist John's elevated-educated diction and his parents' thick and difficultly rendered southern rural dialect. As the story begins John is a "queer child" given to moony curiosity and daydreams and possessed of an early and powerful desire to see the world. This put him at odds with his
homebody mother, *Matty*, and most of the residents of his rural community. *Matty* remains convinced that her son's oddities are the result of a curse placed on him by a witchy village woman exacting revenge for some past injury. Her superstitious talk is a point of contention for *John's* father, *Alf*, the only one who seems to understand his boy's longings. We learn that *Alf*, too, had as a young man determined to see the world, only to find himself caught up in the domestication of family life.

As a boy of ten, *John* frequents the bank of the St. John river running near his home. There he sits for hours setting twigs and bamboo bits—his ships he calls them—adrift in the current to "sail away down stream to Jacksonville, the sea, the wide world and John Redding wanted to follow them" (Hurston, 2008, p. 1). Saddened to find some of his ships caught up in the weeds along the bank, *John* scolds the weeds but receives a wistful, portentous warning from his father that not only twigs and ships but sometimes people too, get caught up before they can make their way downstream.

Years pass and the young adult *John*, having availed himself of all available opportunities for schooling, has become the town educator. He still yearns to travel, but each time he breaches the topic, his mother goes into crying fits, refusing her blessing and begging *John* to stay at least a little while longer. We hear *John* boldly repeat his determination to leave and his father voice support, but at each turn, the boy remains home-tied. Years later, by now married to a simple, local girl, *Stella*, *John* again gets the travel bug and determines to join the Navy and sail away to sea. The dithering *John* believes he can keep his wife and go away too. *Stella* and *Matty* "take up arms" against *John*, with *Matty* proclaiming that should he leave, he would be dead to her—welcome not even to visit her grave.
As the story nears conclusion and the villagers prepare for the summer rainy season, the Reddings are visited by a Mister Hill, man building a new river bridge. The weather report calls for heavy storms earlier than expected. Extra hands are needed to secure the bridge. John agrees to go and, speaking resolutely for the first time, tells his wife and mother he is going. The women and John's father pass the stormy night in uneasy watchfulness, bedeviled by signs and omens of death (a screech-owl lighting on the rooftop). At first light all rush to the bridge site to find the works have been washed away in the flood. All the men but one are accounted for and, straining his eyes, John's father can just make out his son, floating outstretched and prone on a piece of timber, abdomen gashed from some collision in the flood. One last time, his mother tried to keep him, ordering Alf to retrieve her son. But this time Alf speaks resolutely, saying "Leave him g'wan...Ah'm happy 'cause dis mawnin' mah boy is goin' tuh sea" (Hurston, 2008, p. 16).

A queer child (commentary).

Our reading and discussion begins with the difficulty of Hurston's dialect and some self-recognition from participants:

Ben
John Redding Goes to Sea. The villagers said that John Redding was a queer child. His mother thought he was too. She would shake her head sadly and observe to John’s father: Alf, it’s too bad our boy’s got a spell on him. The father always met this lament with indifference if not impatience. Aw woman, stop that talk bout conjure. That aint so no how. All done wat john to get that foolish in him. (...) 

Rod
that's kindof hard to read right there isn't [it ben?] 

Ben
{nodding}
Sandra
[it is, it is]

Rod
[right, I mean you did great] with it, but

Sandra
[(it is hard to read)]

Rod
what’s she doin there? Why’s that hard to read right there?

Sandra
(it’s…)

Ben
broken English

Rod
its its broken. She’s writing in a kind of dialect in a kind of broken English that’s exactly right so it’s kind of difficult on purpose. So what kind of dialect is that? What does that look like to you what does that seem like?

Connie
broken down English.

Rod
yeah.

Ben
it’s kind of southern like.

Rod
yeah, exactly, exactly.

Ben
it;ls like

Sandra
its like phonics

Betty
it’s southern

Rod
yeah, that’s exactly right. So that’s part of hat she’s doin. So that’s part of what she’s doin. So it kindof looks funny and it’s like, what is that word? And sometimes I [have to I’m not even sure.]
Betty—gently, self-deprecatingly—identifies with the story through country dialect, insinuating herself into our attention and into the new text. This very much fits her style—laid back, not insisting on herself, but neither hanging back. Participants simultaneously assert their individuality (style) and participate in the assemblage of text-author-readers-setting. Betty's self-insinuation is an alliance with the story. "I am like this story because I am a country girl," she implies. Participants' productions can (must) be viewed simultaneously as individual assertions and dissolutions. The difficulty of the dialect will reappear in discussion shortly.

In the following passage, only moments removed from the first, Ben provides an accurate but concrete summary of the story's opening argument between John's mother and father about the spell that may or may not have been placed on him. I asked, "what's she talking about "conjuration?" Ben's reply follows:
Ben
it seems as though that... the family is in some kind of cult tryin to conjure spirits
and their sayin that the boy he’s not in it and they’s tryin to say that he’s gay (..)

Rod
[well that’s]

Ben
[that’s what I’m gettin out of it]

Rod
okay, alright, so that “queer” makes you think that right? [Where it says] he was
a queer child

Ben
[yeah]

Rod
[I think and (...) I’m glad you bro’ that up. I think when she was writing this, was
before that word had anything before that word had anything to do with gay=

Betty
Mmhmm

Rod
= So what does it mean? Aside from gay cause we know that meaning of it. ( ) if
we describe somebody as queer, we’re describing a sexual orientation. But it it
aside from that, what does queer mean? Does that...

Ben
[would a wul...]

Betty
different

Connie
[differnt!]

Rod
[jest different(/)]

(other inaud.)

Ben
[homosexual]-i’m not gonna say gay cause gay is bein happy; hap gay is bein
happy. That jus. That means happy. sayin uh homosexual that’s what queer she’s
[sayin.]
Virgil
[(a fa:ag)]

Rod
[I don’t think so] cause in the same way that gay means happy, queer just means different. Queer means weird.

Betty
Mmhhmm

Rod
so I don’t think she’s talkin about him—cause he’s a kid—so he’s not he’s not homosexual, he’s just different. So that everybody sez man the kid is different. What is it about im? That’s a weird kid. Right? And his mom sed I think he’s got a spell on im. Somebody put a spell on im. And his dad sez nah, he’s just weird. He’s just a weird kid. So I think that’s where we are to begin with to begin the story. But im glad you bro’t that up.Cause when we see that “queer” in there, we’ we got to figure out what she’s talkin about [(..)]

Ben
[I concur]

Rod
okay. Ben, you want to keep on reading? Keep goin?

Ben
I’ll pass (somebody else)
[session 1, 459-510]

This passage demonstrates the polyvalence of poetic or language as well as a few things about the operation of the group. The controversy here focuses on use of the term "queer" to describe young John Redding. Ben’s summary of the story's opening is straightforward and literal, concrete. He infers the family's involvement with occult activity from talk about "conjuration" and the common, current, colloquial use of "queer" as a reference to sexual orientation. The use of that term means something categorical about John according to this formulation. John is gay. My response is equally categorical in its
reaction. No, that's not what it means—*John* is not gay. The text itself corrects this categorical interpretation later in the story:

*Bettty*

*Life was simple indeed with these folk. John was the subject of much discussion among the county folks. Why didn’t he teach school instead of thinking about strange people and places? Did he think himself better than the gals theresabout that he would not go a courtin any ()? He must be fixed as his mother claimed. Else where did his queer notions come from? Well he was always queer and one could not expect a man to be different from the child. They never failed to stop work at the approach of Alfred and inquire after John’s health and ask when he expected to leave.*

*Rod*

*okay, one second Betty. Thank you. Just a real quick pause here. Um, so what’s happened here? A lot has happened in this just two paragraphs here.*

*Bettty*

[mmhmm (he ...)]

*Rod*

[he’s grown] up, right

*Group*

*mmhm*

*Rod*

*he’s gone to school he’s grown up he’s not ten years old anymore, we figure eight years have gone by—he’s kinda grown. And Ben, look what’s happened in here we’ve gotten back to, she uses that word again two times in this paragraph, “queer,” and it’s right after she’s talkin about how he won’t go courtin these ladies.*

*Sandra*

[mmhmm]

*Rod*

*All these gals like him all these girls like him but he wont go he wont go after em. So i think maybe people around the town are saying there’s something wrong with [that boy]*

_________

7 It turns out that I was wrong about the word. The Oxford English Dictionary reports that "queer" was employed as a pejorative term for "homosexual" as early as 1914. It seems likely, then, that Hurston's use of the term is intentionally ambiguous.
Queer means "different," yes, but that sense of specifically sexual difference and, among the "simple" country folk, sexual deviance cannot be excluded from the meanings that are in play in questions surrounding John. No, he's not simply "gay," but neither is he simply "not gay." All possible meanings are in play.

I also note here the formalism of Ben's response, "I concur," to my argument. The exchange, aside from its demonstration the pliability of poetic language, shows something about the power dynamics in the group. Reading the transcript, my disagreement with Ben on this point feels like a (sharp) correction, and it seems clear that he defers to my authority on the matter. He answers as a participant in a graduate seminar, perhaps at Harvard's medical school. Even though I thought of myself as a participant, I did not avoid being the expert in the room--the one with the correct answers. Here is a place where, as suggested in the earlier section on critical perspective, I insinuated myself more stringently into the discussion that I intended. In this case I was reacting to the possibility that we readers might recapitulate the particular (heteronormative) ostracism visited upon John by the villagers by reifying the categorical description ("John is gay"). In hindsight, this was an overreaction and a failure to trust the mimetic function of the text. I could have avoided such stark power-assertion had I trusted the text and its assemblage to "self-correct," as happened only a few paragraphs hence. A simple and casual mention of the nuanced evolution of the word "queer" would have been in keeping with my intended, moderate stance and would still have maintained fidelity with the text.
John's stick-ships caught in the weeds along the riverbank became an important image for our discussions. When we first see young John setting his sticks loose in the stream of the St. John, imagining them sailing on to the open ocean and becoming inconsolable when they get caught up at water's edge, Sandra notes the analogy between John and his stick-ships as well as the story's controlling metaphor of finding freedom flowing to the horizon.

"he doin para/graph\, but he fillin his speech is in po::ems..bout the ships...he still imaginin things."
[session 1, lines 645-6]

She differentiates the declarative, literal level of storytelling from the figurative, metaphorical level. He is filling his speech with poems or he is feeling his speech poetically. Both possible meanings are allowed. John's felt poetic experience of becoming his ships as they flow and as they falter in the weeds is felt by Sandra as she reads. Or rather John's felt experience is hers. She lends her body and voice to this character so that he can have an emotional-poetic experience that is her own and that we share with her. She is clearly affected by this image, she nods and gestures and produces guttural moans and a few undecipherable words before uttering the above phrase which seemed to make its way thickly to her surface. She enacts the child's affectedness and longing.

Later on, when the grown-up John and his father discus their common domestic plight, Virgil notes the grown-up status of the analogy:

virgil
in other words he tryin ta tell im some things are like this=
sandra
=mm:hh:mm=
virgil
=you know, some things in life get hard too when you (jes cant) cant make a
accurate path, carry on like some () o the little sticks you know got tangled goin
down the stream, his life gettin tangled up now=

...

virgil
[(..life gettin harder now)] .... aint like the little boy who could just wander off an
go play with the little sticks an imagin em goin downstream. now they gettin
tangled up.
[session 1, lines 1649-1674]

Virgil clarifies the metaphorical dimension for us. It is John's life that is getting tangled
up. Not until after some discussion about John's mother (a little bit later) will Betty and
then Randy make explicit the connection to their own lives.

**Troubling behavior (commentary).**

Our reading of this Hurston story yielded two instances of mental health talk. In
the first of these, Virgil's choice of the terms "behavior" suggests a particular perspective
on the story world. He has just read a passage in which Alf and Matty argue about the
"travelin dust " spell she believes has been placed on her son. Alf chastises her
superstitious talk and instead explains John's temperament in terms of natural male
proclivities.

Virgil
Matty, Alf began as he look as he took his place at the table, dontcha know our
John is different from all other childs round? He (may may) (lows) he's goin to
the sea with his when he gets ris. When he gets grown. (and I reckon all of them
im.) The woman turned from the stove, skillet in hand, Alf, (you aint gonna tell is
you). John cant help wontin to stray off cause he got a spell on im. But you otter
be ashamed to be in-coura[gin] him. Aint ah done tol you forty times not tuh talk
that lowlife mess in front of mah boy? Well, if th' aint no conjure in tha world,
how come mitch potts been layin on the back six months and the doctor cant do (.)
no good. Answer (?) that. The very night John was done born, Granny saw old
witch Judy Davis creepin outta duh yawd. You know she swor the fix me fuh
marryin you way from her daughter, Edna. She put a travel dust frm dust down
fuh mah child. That’s what she done. Thus make him walk wy from me and even since he been able ta crawl, he been tryin tuh go. Matty, a man done never no travel dust tuh make it wanter hit de road. It just comes naturally fur a man tuh travel. They all want to go at some time or other, but they cant all get away. ah wunt mah John tuh go and see cuz ah want to go mahself. When he cum back ah can see them furen places wit his eyes. He cant help wanting (...) to go cuz he a man child.

Rod
should we stop there and see where we are? Again, it’s easy to get caught up in this. Especially in her, in the when the mother’s talkin when Matty’s talkin, um its its hard to get. So they’re arguin about spells again, right?

Virgil
talkin bout his son and stuff, he he dont want nobody to talk about his son cause you know feelin down about the way everbody keep talkin about him how how his behavior is goin
[session1, lines 695-719]

Virgil invokes a potential exemplar of mental health talk, "behavior" to describe the boy. In doing so he highlights an important difference in characterization between fiction and mental ("behavioral") health. Virgil says that others in the town talk about the boy's behavior and, indeed, the story's first line tells us that "The Villagers said that John Redding was a queer child." But this characterization is global. John is a queer child. They do not identify and analyze particular behaviors. Now Alf and Matty do seem to engage in this kind of analysis insofar as they argue as to the cause of his oddity. Matty argues for an external, supernatural cause (conjure) and Alf for difference germane to his nature as a male child.

Virgil's translation of the global characterization of the problem child into "behavior," does a few things. First, it identifies an individual actor to whom specific behaviors are attributed. Behavior focuses analytical attention on specific actions divorced from their broader circumstances and from a larger community of actors--the simple folk of the Florida woods who are puzzled by the boy. "Behavior" is
individualistic. The problem is focused on John, and at the same time externalized from him. It, his queer behavior, is John's problem. Behavior is observable, as opposed to the volitional or natural attributions applied by both mother (external locus) and father (internal locus). Virgil's "behavior" implies neither of these. Instead, it suggests that the behavior should be thought of and dealt with in isolation. Alf, according to Virgil, is upset that people are treating his son as though he has a problem (behavior) when he, Alf, believes he's just being a man-child.

Next, however, Virgil moves us from a reductive focus on behavior into the richly contextual world of the created story.

\textit{Virgil}
\begin{quote}
and then you gettin deeper and deeper into it like he got spells and witches and people leavin out the yard. \\
[session 1, lines 723-4]
\end{quote}

It gets deeper, or, rather, "then you gettin deeper" which may also read "you get in deeper." Now we're in deeper than the analysis of behavior. Now we're confronted with spells and witches and memories of past intrigue. These are the material substrate of entanglement and context. The clinical language of behavioral science intentionally keeps things clean. But it's deeper now and we're in it because whether or not we believe Matty or Alf, the mother's invocation of spells and witches and the rest leaves them with us.

We're in that world now.\textsuperscript{8} Perhaps we are allied with Alf in wishing that she would leave off speaking of these things in the child's home. Clinical analysis endeavors to rescue us

\textsuperscript{8} We can't un-experience the story world once we're in it. This consideration is addressed in the discussion.
from superstition—from spells and witches. But in so doing it may also "rescue" us from the richness of the rest of the story.

**Diagnosis and emotional manipulation (commentary).**

Later, after reading that *John* has once again kowtowed to his mother's wishes, Ben invokes depression—a clear exemplar of mental health talk—to explain both *Matty's* character and *John's* reluctance to leave home.

*Rod*

*One question i had is that i know that he wanted her blessing, you know i know that he wanted her consent and that he respected his mother and that's, we can we can understand that, but if he wanted to go so badly and explore the world, why didn't he go anyway, why didn't he just go? why couldn't he just make the decision to go?*

...

*Ben*

*sometime it can cause, maybe he had it in hi mind that it can cause his parents maybe his mother some kind of severe depression or somethin like that. an maybe he don't want to see huh sick like that [session2, lines 444-494]*

In response to my question—why didn't *John* just go ahead if he was determined to leave? Ben waits, formulates his answer and delivers after an interval and a pause.

And, it is not surprising that his answer is in terms of diagnosis and sickness. But Ben's use of diagnostic language here is only nominally related to an entry in his medical encyclopedia. Instead, it may reveal something about colloquial experiences and meanings of mental illness. Omens of death menace all of the characters and, of course, we know the ironic resolution in which *John* 'leaves home' dead on a raft rather than by his own volition. His mother proclaimed that if he should leave he wouldn't be welcomed
back even to her grave, which he would likely drive her early into ("John, mah baby! You wouldn't kill yo' po' ole mamma, would you?") These statements, particularly Matty's threat of her own death prime Ben's response in terms of concern for her health. For Ben, physical, bodily sickness and death becomes mental illness—they are easy analogs—in this case, severe depression (which does, after all, carry a significant mortality rate).

Ben's sense of this scene suggests a link between depression and manipulation on the part of a parent or loved one and complementary guilt on the part of a child. The text gives us a version of a family scene that must be replayed over and over in (real) families everywhere. "It would just kill your mother if you ______." It's a short step to the (clinically ratified) "Your mother is depressed! You know she can't handle your ______." Hurston's Matty is fragile by way of weepiness. Ben's version, by way of depression. But his attribution focuses on the son's guilt. In John's mind, his actions might cause, not distress, but severe depression, a medically ratified condition far more grave than simply "Mom's upset and weeping again." It is grave enough to make John stay. Subsequent discussion picks up Matty's emotional manipulation of her family through her weepy emotional fragility. Other participants agree that they recognize her manipulation from their own experiences with family members.

Later in the same session, Ben revises his characterization of John's mother with another technical diagnostic label applied colloquially.

Rod
in that [too]...but you know one of the things i was thinkin about this week when i was thinkin about john is that...one of the problems for him is that he seemed to be in between. he didnt make a decision to just go, which he could have, which he could have. he could ve said well, i wished, i'd like to have my mother's blessing, that would be ideal, i dont want to hurt her, but this is what i have to do for myself, and he couldve just gone on. OR HE could have made the decision to make a life for himself there, right/=
... 
*Ben*

*see it was it was like that--his mother was tryin to live live his [life]*

*Betty*

*his life*

*Ben*

*like sh like sh like sh::e (wanted to want) to be him, thats like bipolar, you know, cuz she she wand da portray him be him, an it got so bad that she didn even want him ta go help ta fix tha dam fo the..um when the [storm came]*

*Rod*

*[she wanted ta hold onto im right/]*

*Ben*

*[mmhhmm]*

*[session 2, 711-751]*

Is this a continuation from Ben's earlier talk about the mother's depression and John not wanting to cause her illness? Or is this different? He says that she wants to *be* him, wants to live his life. His earlier production seems to associate depression with manipulative nagging. Now, 'bipolar' means active meddling? I imagine an exchange, perhaps between a son and his mother as in, "Stop actin all bipolar an tryin tuh live my life! I'm a grown man!" Apart from this kind of colloquial use, it is hard to understand what may be meant by bipolar as applied here—perhaps a (delusional) merger in which the mother believes she is her son—but I do not believe this is what Ben intends here.

She "wanted to be him" or "wanted to want to be him?" The construction could point to some resentment on the part of the mother who, on some level, wants to go away and have adventures, or who wanted at some time to do so, or who wants even to experience those kinds of longings. In this case, what Ben calls "bipolar" is her ambivalence vis-à-vis her own desires and her overt condemnation of John's desires as a (passive-aggressive) means of participating in them.
Ben's production feels reflexive. It is as though he's reaching descriptively for something and then, struggling, comes back to his default—a psychiatric label for the family circumstance he somehow recognizes. But the conversation that follows is joined by other participants who recognize a familiar dimension of human familial relatedness—tension between overbearing / overprotective emotional attachment and secure attachment that allows the loved one (child or other) space to explore and to develop. The label, "bipolar," fades quickly in favor of the struggled-after description of events, actions and relationships that make up the problem at hand. The details of this context lead us to recognizable, experience-near terrain. Discussion could have gone in many directions and the direction it did take may or may not have matched, but certainly did not exhaust, the sense of Ben's characterization. We did not arrive at the answer but an answer that further frames questions important to understanding the story. Part of "John's problem" has to do with his relationship with an at least occasionally overbearing mother and that tension of holding close and letting loved ones go.

**Caught in the weeds (commentary).**

The long discussion following Ben's production has participants addressing the above-mentioned tension in relationships and it revisits the trope of ships getting caught up. Betty expresses frustration at being held fast by family circumstances. Both she and Randy express desire to "just go!" to fly away to freedom.

*betty* [grinning; looks down, crosses arms, purses lips]  
[live] their lives. ooh, i know how hat feels [is, MH MH MH]

*rod*  
[thats a good point] thats a good point, ben.. did you say somethin betty?

*Betty*  
well i say i know how that dat feel
Rod
does that feel?

Betty
d like that

Rod
between holdin on and letting go—holding then letting go?]

Betty
letting go, they wont let me go you know {repeats gesture more broadly}

Rod
(hh) oohh, yeah

Betty
letting go a they wont let me go

Rod
they wanna hold on [an]

Betty
[wanna hold on]

Rod
[keep you doing what yer doin]

Betty
[wont let me go

Randy
[(my life) same] fill same way too

Rod
do you?

Randy
[i feel wanna] let it go

Betty
[yeah I can] mmmm. wanna run away= {open armed gesture, palms angled upward}

Randy
=run away, [let it go]
Betty
=[GIT away]

Randy
[let] it go and git away from it all

Betty
MMMM/ thas tha way I feel

Randy
'clocked i wannoo get outta {town} fo awhile

Rod
yeah/

Betty
just wanna GO, jes, Im FREE/ I just wanna go/

Rod
mmhh/

Betty
jus keep holdin me back
[session 2, lines 792-868]

Something has broken free here, even amidst this talk of feeling held back, Betty and Randy have managed, in the rhythm and the content (signification) of their dialog, to escape the weeds at river's edge. Betty joins excitedly with John ("ooh, I know how that feels") and joins his predicament to hers. The gestures are expansive, the pace of discourse swift as Randy joins her. The two of them carry John and his boats along with them as they describe the specific, personal family circumstances that they recognize in the story. The pace stalls again as John's stuckness has really become their (our) own.

Rod
kay, uh so we can we can kind of. [see what it's]

Betty
[relate to im]
Rod
ye[ah wh]at it feels like to get stuck in the weeds [so to speak] to have our ships get tangled in the weeds at the edge of the river

Betty
[mmhhmm] {whispers} right

Rod
a little bit...

{8-second pause}

Randy
{softly} its crazy, i never read the story (but _ _ _) I feel like I jus need to let it go release it

Betty
mmm

Randy
let that let it release and let the fillins come out.

Betty
we cant. mah fililns wont come out

Randy
somehow we're gonna have to break that mold

Betty
it be anger when i bring it out and i dont like that so i just keep it within me.. and i (kindof boil with anger, come im full of anger

{increasingly loud mechanical noise from outside the window during this talking about anger...}

Rod
that can be kindof scary=

Betty
=yeah i be (...) angry, so much been held in .. i jus don know how to let it go. let it out. can't let it go.
[session 2, lines 962-1007]

Randy's prescription for the problem here described—his own, Betty's, and John's—namely release, is preceded and occasioned by a sequence of dialog which enabled participants to practice exactly that. No, the problems aren't resolved, but they
are "out there" flowing with the movement of the group rather than, as Betty puts it, stuck inside. Randy's statement prompts Betty to deepen her statement of the predicament. Not only does she recognize that stuck feeling, but also that her feelings, her anger, are stuck inside. Again, there is no ultimate resolution to this problem in this sequence, but to some small extent, she does "get it out" even as she explains her frustration at not being to get it out. The (original) transcriber's note about the increasingly loud mechanical noise outside the window provides a note of environmental isomorphism or synchronicity with the content of the discussion. Participants (and transcribers) are distracted by the sound of the heavy machine crescendo that urges Betty's usually hushed tones louder and louder until she is practically shouting about getting her anger out. A serendipitous catharsis, this. Accident? Coincidence? Fine. But the street construction joined our assemblage for that moment. Everything counts. The group discussed anger briefly after that. A few suggestions were offered. And soon after, our discussion of "John Redding" ended.
"Flying Home"

**Story summary.**

We spent the better part of three sessions working with Ralph Ellison's short story, *Flying Home*. Written in 1944, Ellison's story tells of a young, northern Black man in advanced pilot training with the group that would come to be known as the Tuskegee Airmen. The young pilot, Todd, finds himself in a frustrating holding pattern as Black pilots have not yet been approved for overseas combat. While flying yet another solo training mission over Macon County, Alabama, Todd's plane collides with a buzzard, and spins to crash landing in a field. Todd wakes on the ground blinded with the Alabama sun and with the pain of a badly broken ankle. There he is confronted with two Black faces belonging to Jefferson, the old sharecropper, and his young son (or grandson), Teddy. Startled by the spectacle of the crash, Jefferson's concern is initially with Todd's safety and comfort while Todd's thoughts—even while he struggles to orient himself—turn to the implications of the incident for his training; the "one important thing in the world" was to return his plane to the airfield "before his [White] officers were displeased" (p.148). Unable to stand, and loathe to endure the humiliation of "riding an ox through the town, past streets full of white faces, down the concrete runways of the airfield," he is resigned to wait with his plane while Teddy goes for help (p.149-50).

The two, now left alone, present Ellison the opportunity for tense juxtaposition regarding the status of Blacks in the America of his time. Todd's contempt for what he sees as an ignorant old peasant builds as Jefferson's questions and (mocking?) stories threaten the younger man's fragile sense of himself. Even while heaping derision on the old man, Todd admits that the now crumpled vessel represents his only dignity. He is
naked before the airplane that has become "like the abandoned shell of a locust...Not a machine, a suit of clothes you wear" (p.151). Jefferson's childlike curiosities about the plane and his inquiries about Todd's training highlight the impossible tension that has caught the young pilot "between ignorant black men and condescending whites" (p.152). The old man's stories—one of having seen buzzards or "jimcrows," as Teddy calls them, eating the innards of a dead horse and coming up greasy as "if they'd been eating barbeque," and another, a 'tall tale' of his expulsion from heaven after repeatedly running afoul of St. Peter's attempts to curtail his (and other Black angels') flying prowess—signify Jefferson's symbolic representation of the Black "folk," still rooted to the enslaving ground of the American South (Lucy, 2007). Jefferson tells the stories ostensibly to pass the time and to keep Todd's mind from his pain while they wait. But Todd in his psychic turmoil sees only himself in the image of "buzzards feeding on a dead horse" and in Jefferson's clip-winged heavenly jester plummeting back to the earth of Macon County and he, Todd, is infuriated at this mockery. The wise and gentle old trickster becomes a bedeviling clown in Todd's increasingly agitated perception. Todd rails at the incredulous old man to "Go away. Go tell your tales to the white folks" (p.161).

Counterpoised with Jefferson's ribald tales are two italicized memories from Todd's childhood. The first, a long account of the origin of his boyhood obsession with airplanes, plays on the child-Todd's confusion of a toy plane encountered at a fair with the first real airplane he would see flying over his house some months later. "Some little white boy's plane's done flew away and all I got to do is stretch out my hands and it'll be mine!" (p.164). The child's disappointment had been bitter and his mother had abused
him for his foolishness. Though the fall resulting from his attempt to snatch the high-flying airplane resulted in no permanent injury, the boy was bedridden with a fever for a week during which he dreamed restlessly of the airplane and of his grandmother's words: "young man, Yo arm's too short to box with God..." (p.166). We are unsure whether his fever pre-existed this episode. We are also unsure what kind of error he has made—perceptual? Logical? Appropriate to his age or not? His mother's concern, voiced to the boy's doctor, over whether or not there was anything wrong with his mind lingers with the reader, carried into the present of the plane crash and the grown man's struggles to situate himself in the reality of his circumstance.

The second of Todd's memories—this one not italicized in Ellison's text—has the boy on the street with his mother hurrying him from where he lingers to watch the silver cross of an airplane float across the sky. There was a burst, and "the air filled with a flurry of white pinwheeling cards that caught in the wind and scattered over the rooftops and into the gutters" and that warned "Niggers Stay from the Polls," and that carried the image of the "eyeless sockets of a white hood" (p.169). The technological marvel of the boy's fascination cruelly transformed into a devilish tool for racial violence and intimidation. The memory suggests that young Todd's fascination with airplanes and flying was from the beginning inextricable from threats associated with racial prejudice.

When help finally reaches Todd in the field, his worst fears are realized. Graves, the murderous white man who owns the field into which the plane has crashed, arrives with Teddy and two orderlies from the local insane asylum (who had earlier been searching for Graves' deranged and murderous cousin). Graves orders that the young flyer be straight-jacketed for having the audacity to train as a pilot. That, and because
"the nigguh brain ain't built right for high altitudes..." (p.171). *Graves'* verbal and physical abuse seemed to break something loose in *Todd* who seems to explode in "blasts of hot, hysterical laughter." In the end, *Jefferson* convinces *Graves* to let him and *Teddy* escort *Todd* back to his airbase. "Lifted out of his isolation, back into the world of men," *Todd* joins in communion with his erstwhile tormentor. The story's final image is of one of *Teddy's* jimcrows silhouetted against the horizon, transmuted in flight to a glorious "bird of flaming gold" (p.173).

The story is complex, compelling and difficult—becoming downright brutal toward the end. Ellison ventures past the well-known front story of the difficulties encountered by black pilot trainees—resistance from bigoted elements of white America, both in the public and within the military establishment—to an imaginative interrogation of the internal (?) struggles further complicating circumstances for one pilot. It is undoubtedly a story about race—about evolving personal and collective racial identities, about prejudice and bigotry and the struggle to overcome these.

We might say that is a profoundly psychological (even psychoanalytic) story, with its treatment of internal struggles, motivations and conflicts, paranoias and neuroticisms. But its work is accomplished through rich symbols, polyvalences and ironies. Fragmented storytelling with its flashback memories and frame stories mirror the pilot's fractured self-identity and serve as commentary on the modern human condition. It is also a story about thresholds of personal and collective importance, and the tensions between the promises and illusions of modernity and the terrors of premodern American life.
The judgments of others (commentary).

The longest and most complex of the stories we read, it is not surprising that this was the story on which we spent the most time. With the story's multiple flashbacks and internal dialog competing with spoken dialog, a lot of discussion focused on clarifying the plot. Also, from the outset, Todd's agitation presents a problem for us. Just why is he so agitated and why does he behave as he does toward old Jefferson? Race and mental health figure prominently in the story and so in our discussions. Revisiting the transcripts after the conclusion of the group, it appears that I am generally more interested in addressing the racial dimensions of the story than is the group as a whole. Specifically, one participant, Virgil, seems to repeatedly minimize and deny the importance of race in the story. At times the transcripts reveal conflict between the two of us about whether or not race is important. Attributions regarding mental health are entangled with race and social status in the transcript, so I have included in this analysis discussions of race as well as instances of mental health talk. In the following passage, Ben provides a serviceable synopsis of the early part of the story and he adds his commentary on race.

Ben
The guy I think I don’t know if he’s Tuskegee Airmen or what uh...but he’s trying uh to fly...Pass an exam so he could go fly into uh...the war so they can uh...be in the war anyway he crashed his plane and this older guy and this young boy they found him and his ankle was broke and he was kinda embarrassed that he crashed the plane. And he was also...I think he was kinda embarrassed by his race for the some reason. I don’t: I don’t know why would somebody be embarrassed by their race because race to me is just...we all the same color underneath the skin we just...its only skin and he sent the little boy back into::: into town back to the airfield to tell that he crashed the plane and the older guy was there telling him stories he was trying to comfort him but he was kinda embarrassed about the older guy, and about his race. I don’t: I don’t understand why::: why was he embarrassed about his race.
[session 3, lines 437-447]
Ben identifies race as a central issue for *Todd* and quickly declaims its importance for him personally. He de-identifies himself with the character while clarifying his own identifying characteristics either for his own sake or for the sake of fellow participants. "This guy Todd," Ben seems to say, "is embarrassed by his race but I am not like that. Race doesn't matter to me because it's only skin deep." There is little reaction from other participants to Ben's comment. He appears to speak directly to me and it may be that he is particularly interested in letting me, the group facilitator and the only White person in the room, know that race is not an issue for him. His choice of "embarrassed" may be instructive as to the general hesitance among group members to talk about race. It is somehow embarrassing to discuss; difficult to broach, a forbidden topic of conversation. Ben is not too embarrassed to broach it here, but he does so with an apologetic wince.

My own hesitance around this conversation is soon after revealed in a brief passage focused on the historical context around race in the story.

*Rod*
well this is in nineteen yeah nineteen forty-four so uh right around the time of World War II uh but uh still a while ago o how are things different would you say..if at all

*Connie*
blacks had to be in one section and (white people was doing they thing) in another section

*Rod*
ok, so segrega[tion]=

*Connie*
=[segregation], right

*Rod*
was definitely.. uh. in effect. where do you think the pilot was from maybe what we should do is start again reading and then get to where we came from or get to where we stopped last time would that be smart...

[session3, lines 532-538]
The interaction is sharper, starker, in text than in the video/audio recording. Here, it appears to be a correction by me, as the group facilitator, of Connie's production. It sounds like "ok, so what you mean is segregation." This labeling serves to capture context and to distill complexity into a single word. It jargonizes segregation rather than allowing the context-conversation to unfold. It seems as though I am hurrying through this topic, rushing toward an answer—"It's segregation. Let's move on." This seems to work against the opening, divergent mode of fiction reading that is an important topic of this research. I seem to be starting with some assumptions about racism, segregation, the history of the South, etc., rather than allowing the meanings of these things to unfold within our sessions, rather than allowing Connie to teach me. Her construction carries the sense of inequality that my one word does not. Blacks, she says, had to be in one section while the whites were doing their thing elsewhere. The races were not simply "segregated," rather blacks were alienated and denied opportunities to do their thing that were easily afforded and even taken for granted by Whites. "Segregation" is euphemistic. I then quickly move to another topic, asking the group about Todd's Northern origins.

Shortly thereafter, Virgil describes Todd's predicament in terms of achievement and failure, noting the importance of others' estimation, and he does acknowledge the role of race in Todd's concern.

*Rod*
*So what's this what's this humiliation that he's talking about? He's imagining what?*

*Virgil*
*what is all about (tha concep i believe he's tryin uh tuh use is) he wanna achieve something in life and not be a failure by wrecking that plane gonna put or put a minimize thinking thinkin of him you know people might say you not good enough to fly*
Rod
right

Virgil
and then you know [he] just because it was an accident that people sometimes
people don’t look at it that way
...

Rod
instead what’s he afraid people might say about him instead?

Virgil
that::: that I didn’t read the part but I I jus I jus think that uh he gone be humili:::
humiliated you know tuh that he’s black

Rod
right

Virgil
An at that day and time you don’t get but a couple of chances

Rod
right right I think that’s a good that’s exactly the point is that he thinks I got one
shot here
[session3, lines 653-687]

The crash, generously confirmed as an accident (in the sense that it could have happened
to anyone) in Virgil's production, has imperiled Todd's pilot-training ambition, the only
possibly meaningful achievement to him. Virgil acknowledges that Todd's success or
failure will depend not only on what happened (an accident), but on others' judgments of
him. Others may not look at it in the same way. And though he doesn't give much detail,
Virgil allows that Todd's blackness has something to do with his fear of humiliation, with
how those nameless others might look at things differently. Specifically, his race might
mean that he doesn't get the benefit of the doubt or multiple "chances."

This is the first of numerous mentions Virgil will make of second chances in
reference to Todd's situation. It is a point of disagreement between him and me, as
evidenced in the last lines of this excerpt. Virgil says "you don't get but a couple of
chances," and I agree, but change the number of chances: "he thinks 'I got one shot here'."

In the next passage, Virgil repeats this theme of second chances, suggesting that Todd's concerns are exaggerated. Things aren't as bad as he assumes. He elaborates with a metaphor.

Virgil
and he wanted to become a pilot so bad and he jus you know he fantasized about::: about all the little bad details but he never know... in the story we'll see but you never know how it might come out. They might just say you know you get a second chance or whatever

Rod
yea I::: I think your right but I think you've got it but I think you got it but that's what he's concerned about right cause were getting a look sort of inside his head so to speak you know what I mean uh. Getting to know what he's thinking what he's worrying about... Because what do you have to be to be a pilot? How would you describe a pilot?

Virgil
you have to be you have to be sharp

Rod
you gotta be sharp right?

Virgil
because it's just like [barry] borrowing your parents car and you wreck it

Rod
(laughing)

Virgil
you'll never borrow it again for a while or maybe you'll never borrow it again until you get your own

Rod
yea and they say well well you weren't you weren't old enough to drive you weren't mature enough to drive or some'mm [like that]

Virgil
[some'mm] lak that
[session3, lines 696-731]
Virgil's comparison of Todd's circumstance to adolescent hijinx serves to minimize the importance of the incident. It also infantilizes the pilot and subordinates him to the parent-like authority of his (White) officers—the "others" ("they") who will adjudicate his ambition. Virgil separates himself from Todd's pessimism, saying "you don't know how it will turn out" and he reaffirms a trusting and generous worldview by suggesting that there will always be a second chance. Virgil's metaphor suggests that there are authoritative parents out there who provide an umbrella of security for the child until he is grown (and can get his own car, airplane, ambition/achievement).

While Virgil would go on to acknowledge a (rather abstracted) role for racism in the circumstances surrounding the story, other participants were more vocal regarding the specific impact of race (racism) on the action of the story and on the relationship between Todd and Jefferson. In the following passage, Connie's comments on Todd's attitude toward Jefferson imply difficult and conflicted racial attitudes on the part of the young pilot.

Rod
And he says humiliation was when you could never be simply yourself when you were always a part of this black old ignorant man. What’s his attitude about that old man?

Connie
(he a little) he won’t be able to accomplish: accomplish thangs in life. Um he felt that (because) of his color he won’t be able to do things. Um... white people probly could.

Rod
Yea and what if he what if he gets carried to town on an ox cart uh driven by this old as he called him ignorant old you know farmer man and he’s gonna be looked at as

Betty
Failure=
Connie
failure

...  

Rod
feeling the lump form in his throat that was always there when he thought of flight. It’s crouched there, he thought, like the abandoned shell of locust. I’m naked without it. Not a machine, a suit of clothes you wear. And with a sudden embarrassment and wonder he whispered, “It’s the only dignity I have...” What’s he:::he refers to the {what} he says...” with all I’ve learned I’m dependent on this peasant's sense of time and space”. What does that make you think of?

Connie
that um he feel like he may not accomplish what he started out to do
[session3, lines 830-877]

She seems to say that, in Jefferson's presence, Todd questions his own abilities because of his race. Stripped of his mechanical "suit of clothes," the young man has come face to face with his own self-loathing, his own racial prejudice. The buzzard that "knocked [him] back a hundred years" dropped him squarely into his worst fear and hatred: nothing now separates him from the old "peasant." Save for his flight suit and his dramatic entry on the scene, he could have been mistaken for one of them, a peasant himself. In his flight suit, however, he finds himself in the worst possible in-between position. An enigma to the Black sharecroppers and a pariah to dangerous southern Whites like Graves, his seems a permanent and irreconcilable alienation. Jefferson's questions, his stories, his very image, sap Todd's confidence and courage.

Todd's reaction to this confrontation with a Blackness still rooted to the "common ground" of southern enslavement (Lucy, 2007) is reactionary and defensive. His attacks on Jefferson spurred sharp criticism from the group, particularly from Virgil, who explicitly and spontaneously links the Todd's attacks to mental health diagnosis and stigmatization.
Rod
and he’s comparing himself a little bit with the old man and referring to the old man as a peasant a peasant is what?

Connie
somebody you don don't want to be around

Virgil
a bum uhm, a beggar

Rod
kinda like kinda like a beggar or a slave even a little bit someone who works the (land) like the lowest class right? It takes us back to a time of kings and queens right and peasants were the lowest

Connie
of the lowest

Rod
of the lowest of the lowest people who worked and who were extremely poor and relied on the kindness of the king right or of the royalty or whatever. So he refers to this old man as a peasant. Does he does he feel like he’s better than?

Connie
=yes

Rod
=than that old man? that’s what it seems like

Virgil
What it seems to me like it’s:::it’s intentionally uh he’s:::he’s like up on himself to too much. like he he better than everybody cause he flies a plane

Rod
ok

Virgil
the man don’t meet his standards cause he work... everybody have to labeled with a job which is a trash man all the way to the president somebody gotta do it some type of job

Rod
right

Virgil
so you know like, people categorize you today because if you have a mental illness=
Virgil
=to:::to:::to regular people, peoples wif a mental illness is BUs all the way from crack heads .. everybody get la'beled with a LAbel all the way to the day (to tohday?). And he labeled this man right here as being a peasant ..somebody that’s worthless and this man actually giving him a lending hand and trying to help him off a a mission he wasn’t able ta that he could:::couldn’t complete cause HE crashed the plane
Rod
right

Rod
=mmhhmm=

Rod
Virgil
=to:::to:::to

Rod
right

Virgil
and then you know why by him crashing the plane the man has offered his help cause he was hurt

Rod
right

Virgil
see what I’m saying/

Rod
yea I:::I do sounds like you’re not too crazy about the way he’s about Todd’s attitude, [right]

Virgil
[he got a] he got a real he got a real bad attitude

Rod
you said he’s kinda egotistical he's up on himself

Virgil
right

Rod
now this is kinda tough at this point cause, I mean I see whatcha mean and I agree with you.. Does Todd...now think about it remember back to the time here...Does Todd have a right to be proud of what he’s accomplished? And what he’s trying to do

Virgil
[right]

Group (chorus)
[right, yes]
Virgil

but at the same time a stumbling block came in his path [by wrecking] the plane

Rod
[ye::ah] right

Virgil
so now he's thinking all crazy and wild; what they go[ne thi]nk and say

Rod
[mmhm] right

Virgil
he said was it a white man you going to get tuh help im ah ah up on the ox cart so whoever you know ifh if he fail himself you got to think about how to accomplish again=

Rod
=mm-m[hm]

Virgil
[but] he going about it the wrong way he:::he downing people already
[session3, lines 879-992]

The young, educated, northern and upwardly mobile Todd drew ire from Virgil for being "up on himself," feeling better than others just because he flies a plane. Todd silently, mentally reviles Jefferson, totalizing the old man with the pejorative "peasant."

Virgil's attack is on Todd's actions and character, but also in defense of Jefferson and all who find themselves on the losing (one-down) end of labeling and prejudice based on social status. Virgil aligns himself with Jefferson and against the young pilot. He then makes an important analogy to rampant stigmatization associated with mental illness. This comparison brings the story-circumstance home, makes it personal, for Virgil and, it seemed, for all the participants.
Virgil's productions in this passage are dense enough to warrant closer analysis. He identifies Todd's primary flaw as pride. The young pilot is "up on himself" because he flies planes.

Virgil, the man don’t meet his standards cause he work... everybody have to labeled with a job which is a trash man all the way to the president somebody gotta do it some type of job

Virgil's criticism of Todd expands to include the judgments and standards of haughty others and the ubiquity of social status (read: class) labeling. Virgil offers an ecological critique of such labeling; after all, everybody has a role to play. We need trash men as much as we need presidents. We should be grateful for their willingness to perform undesirable jobs or occupy undesirable stations rather than reviling them. A longstanding incommensurability of perspective between (so called) working people and (so called) educated people is reprised in the story text and highlighted in Virgil's statement. Todd thinks but does not say "peasant" while Jefferson jeers the young man with an innocent-seeming question: "how come you want to fly way up there in the air?" (p.153).

As Virgil continues, "labeling" changes in the next line to "categorization:"

Virgil, so you know like, people categorize you today because if you have a mental illness=

The tone of the slight sharpens subtly with this shift. Everybody gets labeled according to station but people categorize you if you have mental illness. Labeling happens passively. Standards for propriety and station (class) are built into our socialization process. Categorization, however, carries an active voice in Virgil's statement along with more active connotation and etymology. People are labeled according to pre-existing
categories. Who designates the categories? The term’s Greek root carries the sense of proclamation and accusation, of predication and even of prediction. The categorizer arbitrates and publicly proclaims the qualities that are assigned to a subject. Virgil's use of both terms (label and categorize) invokes a double- or multiple-stigmatization of mental illness. If you have a mental illness then you have been designated according to a medical nosology (catalog) of illness that attaches certain attributes to you and partially delimits your subjectivity (subjecthood). Furthermore, psychiatric categorization (diagnosis) carries specific predictions (prognoses) for future behaviors and symptoms likely to delimit characterizations of your future subjecthood (personhood, identity). This is the preliminary level of stigmatization. Having been assigned to one or another category of mental illness (read: "abnormality"), you become subject to another level of labeling subsequent to and simultaneous to the first. [Self-identification changes to include one's diagnosis. Whatever else I am, I am also now a (schizophrenic, manic depressive, etc.).]

Other people, regular people (who have the default label, "normal"), now have a (medically ratified) basis on which to alter (downgrade) their judgments and their labels.

Virgil
\[\text{to regular people then, peoples (wif) a mental illness is BUs all the way from crack heads .. everybody get la'beled with a LAbel all the way to the day (to tuhday?). And he labeled this man right here as being a peasant ..somebody that's worthless and this man actually giving him a lending hand and trying to help him off a a mission he wasn't able ta that he could: couldn't complete cause HE crashed the plane}\]

\[\text{9 proliferating numbers of diagnostic categories, comorbidities, and differential diagnostic criteria have increased general confusion: "I am a schizoaffective disorder, bipolar type??"}\]
Mentally ill persons are on a par with "crack heads," an updated analog for peasant, a colloquial lowest of the low. Like Jefferson in Todd's eyes, so are people with mental illness in the eyes of the world. Virgil's construction here—*bums all the way to crackheads*—complements his earlier bottom to top hierarchy: "*trash man all the way to the president,*" but this time, with the addition of the mental illness category, one's potential for movement is restricted to the horizontal plane--the lowest of the low.

Finally in this passage Virgil notes the compounded unfairness of Todd's insult. Not only is his contumely unfounded (after all, every job is worthwhile), but it is also aimed at the only person in the world who can and has helped him in his current predicament. *Todd* is so blinded by his social and racial prejudice that he considers as "worthless" the only person who is literally of use to him. The preceding passages reveal rhetorical and semantic alignment between Virgil and Jefferson. The tacit agreement of other group members suggests that Virgil speaks largely for the group. As a rule, we are allied with *Jefferson* 10

In the last few lines of the excerpt under consideration, Virgil agrees with my suggestion that *Todd* has reason for pride based on his accomplishments so far. However, says Virgil, *Todd's reaction* to the setback—"stumbling block"—of the plane crash is the appropriate basis for our judgment of him. Rather than thinking about how to move on from here, he seems to have spun off of his axis. He is "*thinkin all crazy and wild* about what they're gonna think and say, about what the white man's gonna do. Instead of considering how best to move forward—how to re-accomplish his goals—*Todd* has

10 Here, as elsewhere I rely on Sarbin's (2004) contention that for the engaged reader of fiction, imagining entails belief as the default state of affairs. Story elements and arguments about them are given credibility unless effort is made to disbelieve (p. 18).
turned negative energies outward. At the first experience of hardship, Virgil intimates, the young man has abandoned hope, has turned to *downing* others instead of righting his own ship. Notice, here too, the allusion to second chances in Virgil's 'try, try again' message. He, like *Jefferson*, fails to understand what *Todd* is making such a fuss about.

**Something wrong with his mind (commentary).**

The connection Virgil has made between mental health and labeling / prejudice gains a complicating complicity from the story-text itself when *Todd's* mother questions the boy's mental health. Having failed to pluck the mistaken-for-a-toy *real* airplane from the sky and having fallen to earth in a sobbing heap, the child is examined by a physician on house call. Asked "if anything was wrong with [Todd's] mind," the doctor explains to the boy's mother that he had had a fever for several hours. The boy is confined to bed for a week during which time he continually sees the plane just out of his reach and hears his grandmother's admonition: "young man, yo arm's too short to box with God" (Ellison, 1996, p. 166). Though the doctor's explanation is in terms of physical illness—a fever—group members seem to key on the mother's question regarding *Todd's* mind:

*Virgil*

*[he seen tha doctuh]*

*Rod*

...*he was embarrassed, his mothuh sed, boy you you a fool.*

*Virgil*

*his mother asks was something wrong with his head he had a fever for two days,*

*[but]*...

*Rod*

*[ri::ight]*

*Virgil*

*[he coulda/] hadda a metal/ illness/*
Rod
aaayea:::yea who knows... what do you mean by that? What do you think?

Virgil
I::I’m saying could have been .. bi ..coulda been mana depressed bipolar : jes obsessed (teligent,) you [know]

Rod
Hmm mmhhm.. u:um=

Virgil
=had a mental illness {quickly and quietly}, I’m just sayin for example, that’s not rilly=

Rod
=yeah, [right]

Virgil
[but] that’s not really that’s not really it but I’m saying the doctor came in and said he had a fever the mother asked wu:uz anything was wrong with his [head]

Rod
[wrong] with his mind, yea [right]

Virgil
[ri:ght](..)
[session 3, lines 2491-2525]

Notice that Virgil's commentary shifts from "mind" (in the story text) to "head," but remains within the sphere of the mental rather than the physical. He does not suggest a skull injury, rather that Todd may not be 'right in the head'. The shift in terminology serves to paradoxically (ironically) reinforce one subtlety of the story we're told. His mother's concern is not about injuries sustained in her son's fall. Hers is a formless dread about his capacity to get along in the world. Is he going to be alright? To be able to take care of himself. Her unease contributes to our sense that something is not right with Todd. She receives, however patiently it is delivered, an instrumental answer from the doctor. The boy had a fever. He should rest. We cannot say whether this explanation assuaged her fears. Nor can we feel certain that the precipitating episode is satisfactorily
explained by this ambiguous diagnosis. It puts one in mind of references to 'brain fever' in Victorian-era fiction in which the disease was frequently contracted as a result of intense preoccupation, emotional shock or abject disappointment. Though the term today refers to encephalitis of unknown origin and is scarce in medical use, into the twentieth century, brain fever was a scientifically acknowledged medical condition unique in that "it assigns emotional causes to a disease which then follows a prescribed physiological course like that of other recognized diseases" (Peterson, 1976, p. 464). The doctor's explanation, then, does little to unmuddy our question about Todd. The Victorian reference (intentional or unintentional as it may be) does contribute to a sense of precious fragility in the constitution of the boy. It also reverses the current medical psychiatric tendency to posit physical (biological) etiologies for emotional disorders. The signs are reversed, but in both cases, a mind/body split is reified by proposal of a linear causal chain between them. Mind affects body or body affects mind.

Virgil acknowledges the doctor's diagnosis, but verges toward the mother's suggestion that something is wrong with the boy's mind (rather than with his brain). Restating the facts of the case (he had a fever for two days [sic] and his mother thinks there's something wrong with his head), it suddenly occurs to Virgil that "he coulda had a mental illness." Maybe that's what his mother had in mind. But what is the nature of this mental problem? Pressed, Virgil answers tentatively (I'm jus sayin it coulda been...) with a curious list of diagnostic and nondiagnostic terms. First comes manic depressed bipolar, the construction of which follows a tendency in colloquial (nonprofessional) mental health talk to employ "bipolar," not as a replacement for the older diagnostic term, "manic depression," but as a modifier indicating severity or chronicity. Hence "not just
manic depressed, but *bipolar* manic depressed" (which means really, really crazy). Next, Virgil adds, he's 'just obsessed' and finally, cryptically, "*telligent." The first term indicates (severe) clinical (psychiatric) distress—both iterations of the disease (manic depression and bipolar disorder) have been invented (coined) by medial (psychiatric science). The second term occupies a gray area between medical and popular use. It has been appropriated by medicine (psychiatry), as in Obsessive-Compulsive Anxiety Disorder\textsuperscript{11}, but its birth is vernacular. This characteristic gives it a different status among mental health terms, I think. It is less stridently categorizing and othering, perhaps. Here, "obsessed" both is and is not mental health talk. Anyone is likely to agree with the casual assessment that young Todd is obsessed with airplanes. At the same time, a clinician might use the term diagnostically to describe him. He is "obsessed" colloquially and he may be "obsessed" clinically. Virgil's modifier, "just," for obsessed may nudge his meaning in the direction of the colloquial or it might refer to the fact that he is nothing but obsessed with airplanes.

The third term of Virgil's statement, "*telligent," may be illuminated by his later statement relating intelligence and mental illness:

\begin{quote}
Virgil  
[most] people in this world (that are advanced) is mostly manic depressed bipolar people on high.. advancement in tha mind. He wuz, you gotta be you know you gotta be more intelligent than anything ta fly a plane cuz you got ta have accurate skills and all, elevation of tha mind, tha's why i knew that he wus either goin manic a little bit over to the insanity part when he crashed that plane, cu he wahavint too many delusional=
[session 4, lines 2099-2104]
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{11} a diagnosis popularized by recent reality television programs about hording behavior
Virgil seems to suggest here that intelligence and mental illness are two sides of a coin. Virgil's language is continuous with his general critique of Todd's behavior toward Jefferson. People with "high advancement" and "elevation" of the mind are likely to be "up on" themselves and they might resort to "downing" other people if they ever stumble and fall back to earth.

Virgil's tentative inclusion of the partial "telligent" in his litany of diagnostic referring to young Todd is an astute, non-medical comment on Todd's predicament. It refers back to the mind-body (brain) dilemma contained in the doctor's "fever" diagnosis as well as the location of the problem in the head and mind alternatively. In his childhood, Todd's curiosity (obsession) had been total—encompassing body and mind—so much so that he was bedridden with fever. But something happened in the intervening years, we must presume, that drew the young man's desires further and further into the ethers, leaving behind the "small world" of his humble childhood and untethering him from any ground. By the time we meet Todd, he has withdrawn into prideful reliance on the elevation of his own mind, learning, and the dubious promise of bourgeois mobility and of modern technology. These have, he believes, enabled him to leave behind the dross of his personal and ancestral past. In his visual encounter with a kite-flying child immediately before the crash, his exuberance is revived, but he fails to heed the warning of the string that connects that child's flight dreams to solid ground. Then comes that buzzard's sanguine interruption to Todd's disembodied, angelic climb. Suddenly downed to earth, he is confronted with his ancient, abandoned embodiment symbolized by the weird prehistoric shadows cast by oxen and by Jefferson's gnarled fingers. It is his intelligence, or rather his over valuation of intellect that leads to Todd's downfall. The
movement of Virgil's statement is from technical diagnostic language (bipolar), through the dual-use colloquial and clinical (obsession), to a one-word (partial word) suggesting a plainspoken commentary not only on Todd's character and predicament, but also on the symbolic arc of the story-myth.

In the remainder of the previous passage, Virgil further distances himself from his diagnosis, saying "that's not really it." He has merely been giving examples of the mother's concern voiced over Todd's mind. In the continuation, however, the group appears to have settled on the middle ground of obsession.

Rod
...So what did she think was wrong with his mind? You know, that's [what I'm tryin ta]

Ben
[he have obsession..with planes airplanes]

Betty
[obsessed]

Rod
[ok, he wus obsessed, right ] yea that's right but then she/ she felt like he should have known that the plane was really you know it was really flying way up high in the sky and he wouldn’t been able to reach it or something

Kim
[ri:ight]

Betty
he wuz fantasizin so much about it

Rod
right/ like he was SO [obsessed with]

Betty
[so obsessed with airplanes]

Rod
yea that it overwhelmed his young reason or something like that right?...huh...
Ben
he puttin he was he’s putting airplanes over people’s fillings ... uh... he’s putting
it over race and culture and he’s...he’s putting airplanes like...like it’s some kind
of god or something tuh him

Rod
ah, that’s int[eresting]

Ben
[yeah]
[session 3, lines 2529-2566]

Obsession rhetorically matches the polyvalence of the text and the full context of
characterization we are given of Todd. It is the preferred term. But Virgil returns to the
mental health explanation below in an interesting & illustrative interruption of a fellow
participant's production.

Rod
you think that his obsession carried on yea he’s still obsessed with air[planes]

Ben
[he said] that he only dignity was to fly plane was airplanes

Ben
he crashed the plane so..=

Virgil
=i think he got a mental illness

Group (chorus)
/laughter/

Rod
what do you think about that, what kind what what would you say about that?

Virgil
like manic, a little manic. grandiose thoughts

Rod
ok kind of grandiose

Virgil
somewhere in that category
Rod

yea

Virgil

seem to be that way cau the way he treating that man the way that little story he told all along wuz obsessed with planes and trying something trying to accomplish something that he always wanted to do...

[session 3, lines 2566-2598]

Ben's comments on Todd's idolatry of the airplane complement Virgil's commentary about Todd's haughty intellectualizing. But Ben is working something different out here—Todd's obsession persisted into his young adulthood to the extent that his dignity came to be bound up with piloting the plane. In line with earlier discussion, we could say that Todd has left the solidity of earth and body behind in favor of the angelic promise of technological transfiguration. Now that he has crashed the plane, however...what? Virgil's utterance interrupts and truncates this line of speculation. What production is prevented? What might Ben or others have said along this line? That Todd is a man with no dignity? That he is not even an individual man but a man only in racial abstraction (a "Black man"). That he is now disgraced by a new status as a failed Black pilot? That he couldn't handle the pressure of the task. That for whatever reason, he really wasn't good enough to be a pilot? That he failed? That he was a failure? All of this is too difficult perhaps? It is easier to interrupt this line of thinking with a flippant return to what was a moment ago a tentative hypothesis: "He got a mental illness." It is now a bad, sick, joke—like the straitjacket at this story's end. But it gets a laugh. When asked, Virgil answers, with seriousness, that Todd seems a little manic, grandiose. With those weighty technical words, casually spoken, the session ends.
Attitude problem (commentary).

Three things are happening in the following passage from the following week's session with respect to the present analysis. First, Virgil continues his condemnation of Todd's character and treatment of Jefferson, but, whereas Virgil previously equated Todd's derisive labeling of the old man with stigmatization of mental ill persons and other social undesirables, here he assigns a label of mental illness to the pilot at least partially on the basis of the pilot's judgmental attitude toward Jefferson. The second activity to note is the dispute between Virgil and me over the importance of race and role of racism in Todd's actions and the relations between characters, with Virgil continuing to downplay both. Third, Virgil takes up a second attribution regarding Todd's behavior—this one in terms of "attitude"—that parallels the mental illness attribution and label. Eventually, receiving little support from the group for his mental illness hypothesis, Virgil seems to back off of that one and settle instead on the nontechnical term based on "attitude," as something "we can all agree on." The group's tacit approval at the time seems to bear this out, and further consideration of this section of transcript-text has convinced me that Virgil's rhetorical move here, whatever its motivation, has produced a serendipitous mot juste to describe that sense, described earlier, of the problem with Todd—our unsettling sense that something is wrong... Virgil's application of the nontechnical term "attitude" is an example of the polyvalence and the centrifugalizing function of poetic language and imagination. Clinical language is here de-formed through poetic imagination and nudged toward re-formation in a more colloquial (vernacular) iteration that is at once vague yet rigorous and that matches with greater precision the
contours of the fictional-yet-real predicament with which the reading group assemblage struggles.

Rod
Well what happens then? So he crash lands in and so what happens next?
What’s the [conflict in the story?]

Virgil
[he was] he was going despair able, confusion about hisself, I can’t say it was racist thing, I would say it’s more like, he was being foolish about his occupation of being a ha havin a having a pilot job that he was u::um... ya know be mo be more than what he was, but he had just wrecked tha, it was just a plane ya know, it was just a common accident, so he took it irrational, the wrong way, he was fantasizin in his own mind that uh, how people would respond to the, [to the ac]cident.

Connie
[tha acc]ident

Rod
Yea...

Virgil
So...

Rod
And how did he think people were gonna, what was he worried about? What was he concerned about?

Virgil
His umm. His umm...

Rod
How did he think people were [gonna react?]

Virgil
His [self-con]fidence. His confidence because he said that you only ya know you only get one chance to fly.

Rod
Right...Right {nods head}

Virgil
Back then ya know, you probably wreck a plane. They probably put you on the sideline, so he wrecked a plane.
Rod
{Shakes head in agreement} So he felt like, now you started to say it wasn’t necessarily a race thing or maybe it was what was the thing about race with it?

Virgil
It wasn’t no race; it wasn’t no racism in there because he was just talking to...

{Knock at the door}

...

Virgil
He was only talking to the two black people see.

Rod
And then we’ll get back to it, so virgil you were saying that he was talking to two black people in the field, an old man.

Virgil
[One and the boy.]

Rod
[And the son.] yea...

Virgil
And I don’t believe no racism with that, (it was all uh consum what they was) interpret(ive) by themselves so ya know. It [wasn’t...]

Rod
[So he.] so those two men weren’t saying oh well ya know you weren’t good enough to fly that plane, they weren’t saying anything like that.
[session 4, lines 396-512]

Virgil refuses race and racism in this passage because there are only Black characters in the story so far. The implication is that there is no threat or impact of racism without a literal, White body present. He declines to acknowledge the special burden of representing "your whole race" which Todd attributes to himself as well as the racial prejudice implicit in Todd's denigration of Jefferson ("humiliation was when you could never be yourself; when you were always a part of this old black ignorant man") (p.150). Virgil's refusals strike me as an attempt to ward off, to keep at bay the specter of racism that hangs over and permeates the story. Particularly troubling, perhaps, is the device by
which Ellison makes the Black pilot both a victim of and mouthpiece for a pervasive societal prejudice. Virgil's solution is to make Todd's prejudicial thoughts and statements a result of poor upbringing and flawed character. They are personal, characterological and even psychiatric problems located within Todd. Discussion continues:

Virgil
Because old man Jefferson was giving him a story about you know how he was flying in Heaven.

Rod
{Nods head} right....

Virgil
And trying to enlighten him that it was okay, (look he) Jefferson was telling him, he was telling him a story to make him feel more comfortable about wrecking the plane and you will have another opportunity to fly no matter what, now just flying a plane or whatever, you gotta soar in life [you gotta] reach another accomplishment..

Rod
Oh that’s nice.

Virgil
He gotta reach another accomplishment because if you just keep at this one thing, at it just a plane ya know, you get to old you might not could fly a plane and the war over and what you still ain’t gonna fly no more or know you still aint gonna fly no mo. so he was trying to teach him ya know, you gotta fly in life. That what he was telling him in that story.
[session 4, lines 514-535]

Jefferson's story is a version of an old folk (tall) tale about the pervasiveness of institutionalized racism (it goes all the way to heaven) in the wake of Emancipation and the dashed hopes of Reconstruction and about the Black person's capacity to "carve out a survival strategy in a racist world" through a strategy of simultaneous affirmation and rejection of dominance (Ostendorf, 1976, p. 193). For Virgil, however, Jefferson's tale is not about race at all, rather it's a pep talk—don't worry what will happen with the plane,
the Army, white folk; "you gotta soar in life"—and you will always have other opportunities (second chances) to do so.

Rod

*ummm, that’s nice and that’s uh that’s uh a very different kind of interpretation, a very different way of understanding old Jefferson's story. How did Todd take it?*

Virgil

*Todd took it & thought he was being sarcastic.*

Rod

*thought he was.*

Virgil

*Thought he was being funny.*

Rod

*Thought he was making fun of him RIGHT?*

Virgil

*He wanted to, he wanted to hit the old man if he could have gotten up on his feet but see I seen like, he had a mental (il) a mental problem from tha start because of the way he was, ya know calling him an idiot and what else he called him?*

Rod

*A peasant right?*

Virgil

*Yea a peasant...*

Rod

*{Nods head} yea.*

Virgil

*And he was doing the old black man, saying I don’t wanna be something like, I don’t wanna be nothing like you, if not the same words but he was telling his self to his self i don’t wanna be nothing like you, if you don’t wanna be nothing like him, everybody got like i said last time, everybody got a job (prevasist), from a janitor all the way up to the president, somebody gotta do some type of job to keep the world revolvin*

Rod

*ummm hmm. {Nods head}*

Virgil

*So he was downing Jefferson and that led to make me think he want to hit the man*
that led me to think he got a mental illness, man.
[session 4, lines 537-579]

For Virgil, the tall tale is only Jefferson's attempt to encourage the younger man while taking his mind off of the pain of his broken ankle. Todd's reaction represents a gross misapprehension of the situation, and the degree of his anger suggests mental illness—a disconnection with reality and a problem of emotional stability (anger).

Rod
umm hmm. {Looks over paper}

Virgil
Cause he, He got an attitude problem.

Rod
That's interesting, what do you mean you think he has a mental illness? What's the difference between that and an attitude problem?

Virgil
I think he got a mental illness.

Rod
Like what? Like...

Virgil
Like the way he acting ya know, he came in age; i mean a rage of anger.

Rod
Umm hmm, he's got some anger.

Virgil
He was already hurt with a broken ankle, and he just telling you a story just a story about, about an angel flying through heaven and you think he being sarcastic and funny. That, that's a, that's a, that's a, that's a, that's a sign of mental illness to me.

Rod
yea...

Virgil
And plus ya know, people that fly planes are more from a like borderline genius to insanity, it seem like he was very high intelligence but at the same time he was in a manic mode.
[session 4, lines 581-613]
Note here Virgil's return to an association of intellect with madness. This return connects his present attribution of mental illness to his earlier attribution following on the boy-
Todd's reaching, falling, fever and convalescence. Remember that then, Todd was described as "manic depressed bipolar, obsessed and 'telligent." His intellect (and/or level of education—here, as in sociological research findings, intelligence and class are correlated) lends to Todd a kind of fragility, vulnerability to mental and emotional instability.

Rod
hmm. He was in a, he was kind of uh, whaddaya [mean?]

Virgil
[hyped up]

Rod
Hyped up

Virgil
Hyped up. He was very hyped up after that story.
[session 4, lines 615-625]

Virgil has adopted "attitude" as a parallel description (alongside mental illness) and then, pressed by me to differentiate the two, specifically by designating "what kind" of mental illness, Virgil specifies anger (rage) and mania (he is "hyped up"). He does not, however, seem committed to these specificities, preferring the general "mental illness."

Earlier, Virgil connected mental health categorization and social status labeling in a way that seemed to be based on his personal experience. Virgil recognized the story-circumstance as similar to something in his general experience and introduced the analogy to our text. In the above passage, Virgil suggests that Todd's treatment of Jefferson—labeling him a "peasant"—indicates or even constitutes mental illness on Todd's part. The question of what is revealed or suggested about mental illness and social
status labeling by Virgil's judgment as well as how the fictional text operates to bring about these transformations is addressed in the following section of theoretical analysis. Virgil's analogy implies, as noted previously, his identification with Jefferson: I am like Jefferson in that we are both unfairly labeled, he because of social status and me because of mental illness (which is now an analog for social status). Virgil now re-inserts something he found or extracted from the text—mental illness labeling—back into the story through his application of the label to Todd. The move is, from this perspective, retaliatory—Virgil acts on Jefferson's behalf, as his ally, to defend an attack felt personally by Virgil when Todd attacked Jefferson. Virgil is strongly "plugged into" the text assemblage through this alliance, becoming, metaphorically, the character of Jefferson and lending himself to the old man. Virgil behaves "as if" (Sarbin, 2004) he is Jefferson when he returns the insult he feels personally from the young man.

Jefferson's very presence is for Todd a painful reminder of a shared racial past he has struggled to efface through the Sisyphean struggle of combat flight training. Jefferson's antipathy for Todd's education and ambitions is voiced in Virgil's analogy between intellect and mental illness. "You'd have to be crazy to want to fly way up there in the air—especially with all those white folks gunning for you," Jefferson seems to say. That Virgil does not find irony in Jefferson's approach to Todd may explain the force of his reaction / retaliation. Jefferson never affords Todd or his circumstance the gravity the pilot believes it warrants. Jefferson's antipathy is discharged through flippant humor rather than indignant reaction to injury. He simultaneously affirms and denies Todd's lofty ambitions and accomplishments with bemused equanimity.
Acts of insult and retaliation are exchanged across levels of "hypotheticalness" (Sarbin, 2004, p. 11) that depend on poetic uses of metaphor and analogy. Ransom writes that in the apprehension of poetry we must allow "for all appropriate emotions and attitudes...that can find their excuse, or their chance in the text" (1941, p. 25). All possible terms (i.e. both words and aspects of assemblage) are in play and are subject to loosened rules as to their combinability. Inversions and combinations occur across levels of possibility and consequence. It is not quite the case that 'anything goes' but regulation depends on the text and one's fidelity to it as well as the group's tolerance for imagination and belief (Sarbin, 2004).

Virgil becomes Jefferson but also Todd. All are variously socially undesirable and mentally ill. It is the play among levels of hypotheticalness of the story-world that lends its potent status as quasi-real playground for mimetic action. It is a space of unnatural becomings and unexpected arisings. Its status as real-but-differently-consequential invites readers' (relatively) unreserved engagement with story themes and characters. We are free to say and think things and to try out possibilities that would be impossible otherwise. Who knows what scenes from Virgil's life take their part in this present exchange—what old battles echo.

The discussion concludes as follows:

_Rod_
He was very hyped up...okay. Uh, what do the rest of you think? What do you think about old Todd here? And old Jefferson? What do you think about Virgil was saying about his umm anger, his mental illness, his attitude problem, or however it is.

...{eight second silence}
Virgil
I think we can all agree he had an attitude problem. If it not if don’t really rationalize back to him having a mental illness.

Rod
Yea, he's definitely got, he's got a conflicted attitude I’d say.

Ben
He's afraid of failure too. It's something like a phobia too, afraid of failure, we all fail but try to get back up and dust yourself off and go again at something else or at the same thing.

[session 4, lines 629-643]

Virgil backs off of his mental health diagnosis, perhaps out of concern with overall agreement, and, though he waits a few seconds for others to respond, he preempts others' contributions and potential disagreements on this topic. The mental health diagnosis simply fails account satisfactorily for the story-circumstance. We cannot dismiss, dispose of this character, this man, these men and their circumstances (which have become our circumstances) through the deployment of a simple diagnostic label. What we can do is agree that "he's got an attitude problem." That he, Todd, and we are faced with a problem that has to do with attitude. This term that starts out as flippant, idiomatic dismissal of the young man but sustained attention to its aspects and senses reveals an illuminating polyvalence involving disposition, posture, perspective (action impulse) and orientation. In the forthcoming theoretical analysis, the appearance of this term is developed as an example of the resonant explosion of significance resulting from engagement with the deformational forces of poetic fiction.

("attitude", n., n.d.)

Dissent and recusal (commentary).

Later in the same session, we read the second of Todd's flashback memories in which intimidating Ku Klux Klan leaflets were dropped from an airplane onto Todd's
boyhood neighborhood. The memory occurs toward the end of the story when Todd is seemingly in and out of consciousness. Discussion rests in part on what is actually happening and there is some speculation that rather than being a memory, the episode is the product of Todd's delusional state, perhaps brought on by dehydration, pain, etc. Virgil is a strident proponent of this theory, employing several strategies to maintain his refusal; Todd is delusional, he has a mental illness (like we said before), he is fantasizing, his mother wrote the cards, and it didn't have anything to do with race anyway. More participants eventually come to agree with Connie, who states that Todd's memory of the plane as a fiery sword and the detail of the hollow eyes under that white hood are things that "he wouldn't make up," so they probably happened. Specific elements of the text determined a general structure of events that was, beyond a certain point, no longer subject to the malleability we have previously seen. Fidelity to the text provides a kind of self-correction to any threat of chaos in poetic engagement. This exemplifies Deleuze and Guattari's (1980/2005) contention that the text straddles a threshold of order and chaos, providing a platform for innovation without losing contact with the stratified ground of consensual reality.

Virgil declined to attend the final two sessions following this session. He told me privately later that he felt growing conflict in the group and that he decided it was best for him to sit out, so as to avoid the stress involved in conflictual situations. He said that he wasn't having problems with any particular group members or with me as facilitator. He said that he enjoyed the stories and discussion and that he would consider participating in future reading groups. Virgil's recusal bears exploration as a dimension of the activities of our assemblage. His self report as to his motivation—a strategy of conflict
avoidance—is unimpugnable. That is undoubtedly why he withdrew. But in the spirit of an analysis that puts all possible terms in play, Further speculation is warranted. Generally, I consider Virgil's departure to be a matter of overt self-re-narration, and I consider it at some length in theoretical analytic section pertaining to this particularity.
Theoretical Analysis

In what follows I have drawn specific links between interpretive commentary on the transcript-text and several guiding theoretical frameworks to demonstrate an overarching progression toward innovation through the poetic engagement. Most of this analysis refers back to excerpts and commentary already presented. Other examples are drawn from sessions and stories not yet discussed in the Findings section. For these, the briefer excerpts and story summaries presented here should suffice to orient the reader.

This section presents a specific analysis of three separate but complementary operations that I find in the transcript-text. The first, Assemblage, addresses the ways that we come to be involved in the story world, to engage with literary language and imagination. Fictional and poetic texts are characterized by a particular kind of likeness to "real life" while remaining distinct from "real life." This artistic, mimetic function (Murray A., 1973) offers unique opportunities for the formation of alliances between and among terms (persons or aspects of persons, elements of texts, elements of setting, personal or collective histories, authorial intention, etc.) that, outside of the literary imagination, would have little or no correspondence. Within the poetic assemblage however, boundary lines loosen and the terms change places across numerous thresholds that become "unceasingly active in [their] inversions" (Bachelard G., 1958/1994, p. xix).

The becomings that form assemblages already imply the second level of analysis, De-formations. This section examines the ways that the terms of poetic assemblages are altered through their engagements. The name, de-formations, recalls Bachelard's claim (1943/2002) that the action of poetic imagination is always ahead of itself, never residing
in a static or fully formed image. Instead, it functions to break down our pre-existing images and notions and to prepare the way for something new. As the terms of assemblage enter into alliance with other terms—other real people, other fictional characters, other real or fictional settings or situations, etc—they form unnatural becomings by which, each term is simultaneously deterritorialized and reterritorialized by the others (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2005). Each is broken down, or de-formed, in its pre-existing state, and, to one extent or another rebuilt or re-formed in the image of the other terms of the alliance. In this section we will see mental health talk encounter the poetic language of the story-world. These encounters with the mimetic world of fiction offer some lessons about how mental health talk operates in the actual world. We will see occasions when mental health talk is inadequate to the rich, contextual world of the literary imagination and will witness its tendency to shift in the direction of an exact, colloquial and vernacular language (or to be replaced by terms with these characteristics).

Finally, Re-narration recalls Ricoeur's argument (2005) for learning to understand and revise one's narrative identity through literary engagement. The analysis picks up the transformations that are noted in the progression of involvement through becoming and de-formation/re-formation, highlighting movements toward re-narration demonstrated in the transcript-text and opportunities for potential movements to come. I am not presenting dramatic anecdotes of life-altering encounters with the stories here. Nor are participants followed in any kind of outcome study. Rather, I point to opportunities, openings for potential movement in a variety of directions that appear in the transcript-text as clear correlates of the assemblages and transformations addressed earlier. This is

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12 "the exact passage of that which is underway" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2005, p. 20).
not a narrative therapy group, a purpose of which would be to identify and cultivate preferred alternative narrative paths for clients. However, the present analysis does identify openings for supporting that type of re-narrating work in a complementary narrative group. This potential future direction is addressed in Discussion.

**Assemblage**

It is idiomatic to say that we "get involved" in a story (or movie, TV program, etc), but what does that mean? Participants demonstrate numerous ways of engaging in and with the stories we read, and I have chosen to understand this engagement through the concept of assemblage (which avoids some of the problems with "engrossment," "transportation" or "suspension of disbelief" as concepts for what people do when they get involved in a story). Assemblages involve mutual becomings through alliances among aspects of a circumstance. Deleuze & Guattari use the term "haecceities" to refer to these singular collections of aspects allied in mutual becomings (1980/2005, pp. 261, 507). The unit of measure or the focus of attention becomes the haecceity (rather than an individual subject or group of subjects) in all of its contextual particularity, including its perpetually emergent status. These "blocks of becoming" loosen the boundary lines of static identification ("I am me" "that is a book") and allow those lines to be redrawn. Texts, remember, straddle a divide between form (stratification) and disorder (plane of consistency) that invites readers (or "parts" of readers) to plug into them in a variety of ways. Parts of readers ally with parts of texts along with other terms including authorship, other participants, setting, and time of day, etc. These formations operate throughout the transcript-text, but here we will look at a few examples in detail. Note that the examples presented here are not the only instances of the operations of assemblage and becoming,
rather they are *demonstrable* instances that allow the reader to infer the general and ongoing operation of these forces throughout our engagements.

The text-as-assemblage is demonstrated initially by the simple expedience of italicizing fictional character names in the commentary and analysis to enable readers to differentiate fictional characters from group participant-characters. The two groups of persons (with their different ontological statuses) have become so closely associated in the transcript-text as to be indistinguishable. To say that Virgil retaliated against Todd for the latter's insults to *Jefferson* is to set three characters (with different ontological statuses) in an equivalent plane of action and involvement. Each character is changed by taking on interaction with the others. The story-text is changed at this specific plug-in point with Virgil such that he becomes one of its characters just as the pilot and the old man become parts of his world and part of the story of his life and experience. The italics serve to remind one of the levels of hypotheticalness and reality that become so quickly and easily blended in the literary engagement. The notion of *blending* is important here since the movement is not unidirectional. It is therefore insufficient to say that we (real people) "suspend our disbelief" with respect to the fictional or imaginal. Rather, our engagement with the latter puts our "real" status into a kind of suspension. Blocks of mutual becomings and alliances are formed which potentiate all manner of exchanges and transformations.

*The judgments of others (analysis, assemblage).*

The identification of actual characters with fictional characters is a significant and recognizable category or mode of literary becoming (assemblage). We identify with characters who are like us and de-identify with those we consider to be unlike us. In
either case, something is changed or learned about both terms of the association. Earlier I called Virgil's identification and alliance with Jefferson a "strong" plug-in to the text assemblage. In part it is so because he simultaneously identifies with Jefferson and de-identifies with Todd, siding with the older man and taking (verbal) action against the younger. Virgil rails against Todd's elitism and the insults and labels with which he denigrates the old sharecropper. Virgil characterizes Jefferson, on the other hand, as wise, helpful, and understanding. Virgil makes explicit some of the parts of his own experience that get caught up or plugged into the story and the dispute between its characters when he picks up on Todd's labeling of Jefferson based on social status and then quickly compares social status labeling with mental illness stigmatization.

Virgil
the man don't meet his standards cause he work... everybody have to labeled with a job which is a trash man all the way to the president somebody gotta do it some type of job

Rod
right

Virgil
so you know like, people categorize you today because if you have a mental illness=

Rod
=mmhhmm=

Virgil
=to:::to regular people, peoples wif a mental illness is Bums all the way from crack heads .. everybody get la'd beled with a Label all the way to the day (to tuhday?). And he labeled this man right here as being a peasant ..somebody that's worthless and this man actually giving him a lending hand and trying to help him off a a mission he wasn't able ta that he could:::couldn't complete cause HE crashed the plane

The analogy serves to associate Virgil (and the rest of the participants) with Jefferson as recipients of insult at the hands of snobbish regular people like Todd. Virgil is not
casually interested either—he is hotly emotionally invested in the Ellison story which has
through his analogy just become the story of his life. The story characters do not literally
come to life to become acquaintances of Virgil's. Neither is he, Virgil, magically
transported into the storybook world to interact with its characters. Rather it is the
becoming-Jefferson of Virgil that retaliates against Todd's misdeeds and it is the
becoming-Virgil of Jefferson that feels the sting of the modernized version of the
"peasant" epithet fairly hissed by some "normal" person on the street: "get away from me
you crackhead!" The unnatural participation of real and fictional persons and their
aspects allows for the inversions and transformations that we saw in the close reading of
this segment of transcript-text. Mental illness and social status are inverted and become
analsogs. Todd receives a mental illness label from the becoming-Virgil of Jefferson,
which, by virtue of the analogy established between mental illness categorization and
social status labeling, may also be described as a becoming-Todd of Jefferson (Virgil)
and a becoming-Jefferson of Todd. It is the mutual becomings, the interplay of all terms
of the equation, that makes possible the transformation of mental health labeling that
takes place here (addressed in greater detail in the De-formation section).

**Life on a train (analysis, assemblage).**

Other participants also engage or plug in by identifying with characters. Sandra
empathizes with the mother in the other Ellison story we read, "Boy on a Train" (which
does not appear in the commentary). This story is a semi-autobiographical account of two
brothers and their mother relocating to another city by rail. We learn that the boys' father
has recently passed away and that the mother has been offered work in a nearby town.
The story's centerpiece is the mother's remembrance of her and her husband's trip
fourteen years earlier along the same route but in the other direction as they migrated west from Georgia seeking a better life and a place to start a family. Her tearful admonition for her eldest son to remember the journey and its meaning for their family moved Sandra to empathy. She marked the woman's tears and commented that she now has "got so much to do since she got them boys" and would now be without the help and support of her husband [session 2, lines 1613ff]. She cried because she knew she would have to work so hard to provide for and protect those boys. The women in particular and the group as a whole identified empathetically with the mother in this story.

This kind of empathetic identification with a fictional character has, I think, a special status relative to experiences of empathy with "real" people. In both cases we enter into becomings with the empathetic-other. However, in those encounters with actual others, our experience of becoming is often blocked by our conceptual attachments to (binary) self/other identifications and oppositions. The level of hypotheticalness in fiction bypasses, to an extent, this problem. Becoming is automatically entailed with fictional characters because we do not so staunchly guard against transgression at the borderlands of individuality. This helps to explain why literary encounter and imagination provides an effective 'playground' or workshop, a training ground, in this case, for empathy and for perspective-taking in general.

The combination of empathetic character identification and a more general identification with the story circumstance marks another effective block of becoming. Asked why the author may have written this story, what is its action or drama, Virgil answered by saying "life" [session 2, lines 2023ff]. The story is simply about life and about "remembrance of the father that passed and (torment) turmoil and grief about how
life can take a toll on you cuz she tellin huh son to be aware of life." Here Virgil gives an excellent précis on the mimetic nature of literary fiction. It is the mimetic function of poetry, according to Albert Murray (1973), that gives it its transformational power. Literary fiction is an artfully crafted imitation of real life, distinct from a recording of actual real life that would, he argues, have the feel of "tedious unreality" rather than the "slice of life' realism" of the fictional text (p. 20). Instead, fictional "song and dance imitations of experience" form the workshop or studio in which, as we have already discussed, readers adopt and try out the postures (attitudes) suggested by the fictions they engage. The mimetic function draws its readers into their own imitative experience—a reenactment of a reenactment:

Even as the short story and the novel embody and thus describe and define the world as the writer perceives it, they also serve to initiate the reader into it. When the writer relates a story to the reader, he literally connects him with what the story is about (p. 22).

The story is about life, Virgil says. "At the same time," however, "its just a travelin jes remembrance (s'like) you jes get in tha car like go up the interstate maybe travel t'oklahoma ourself." We all recognize and can relate to traveling stories and to the losses suffered by this family as well as the nostalgia that accompanies traveling, especially to relocate. But Virgil also verbalizes the becoming-story of this moment (haecceity) perfectly. We could after all, he says, be travelin' up to Oklahoma altogether ourselves. We are becoming-travelers to Oklahoma. The mimetic action of the story's characters and actions that 'could be us' corresponds to the markings on Deleuze and Guattari's orchid that mimic and attract the wasp which it needs to reproduce (1980/2005). The unnatural
becoming-orchid of the wasp and the becoming-wasp of the orchid form a block of becoming by which the wasp is deterritorialized as wasp and simultaneously reterritorialized as becoming-orchid. The converse is true for the orchid. Neither will finally become the other (as in a finished product), rather becoming is considered, from the perspective of the assemblage, an irreducible end in itself. The recognizable markings of Ellison's crafted story-orchid are family, grief, traveling and relocating. These deterritorialize individual reader-wasps and readers as a group (assemblage), connecting us or plugging us in to the story's action. We are reterritorialized in that our personal experiences and remembrances of similar events now belong in a sense to the events of the story. They are forever associated with these story events. We can no more un-experience the story than we can any of our actual experiences (and of course, our experience of (reading) the story is an actual experience). The mutual becoming is the fertile ground for multiple interpretations of a given story as well as the loosening (deterritorialization) of our own sedimented self-understandings which may then be re-understood in light of new interpretations.

Murray claims that the mimetic assemblage of experience, poet (creator), and participating audience is the "fundamental vehicle of information, instruction, wisdom, and moral guidance" that is basis of the human educative process proceeding from the time of the ancient Greek molpés (song and dance ballads) through to drama, poem, hymn, folk tale, novel or blues riff (1973, pp. 22-3). That last part, the blues riff, involves improvisation by an apprentice—an audience member / workshop participant who tries out a posture (attitude) and then another and another. Virgil perfectly embodies and verbalizes this activity in his placement of the whole group assemblage on the interstate,
travelin' up to Oklahoma ourselves. Moments later, he described the story as "a big scenery" in which we saw and experienced what that (fictional) family saw on their journey. A big scenery and a big canvas with respect to which we are all simultaneously artistic subjects, patrons, artists, and more.

**Caught in the weeds (analysis, assemblage).**

Demonstrations of becoming-assemblages abound through the text-transcript. The absence of a readily identifiable literary or poetic discourse in the transcripts points to this process. We seamlessly adopt the story worlds and their participants as our own. We speak not of this or that "character," but of John and Teddy, and a mother and a father as if they were our neighbors or distant acquaintances or members of our own family. Thanks to the becoming nature of the engagements, we also talk about these characters as if they were ourselves.

These identifications and incipient actions recall Sarbin's (2004) notion of imagining as "as if" behavior. Engagement with poetic imagination in fictional texts affords readers the opportunity to enter into an infinite variety of circumstances rendered with mimetic artistry and to imaginally "try out" reactions and responses to each at varying levels of hypotheticalness. This is the emotional "work-out" to which Ransom refers (1941), and Richards' "thousand tendencies to action" in the imaginal and attitudinal response of reader to poetic text (1926).

Participants engage similarly with other aspects of a story—its action or its formal elements. For example, Betty identified quickly with the dialect in "John Redding," stating,
Betty insinuates herself into the story assemblage by asserting her individual style. I am like this and it is like me. The country girl part of Betty plugs into the "broken down" southern dialect employed by Zora Neale Hurston in the story. Betty establishes an intentional alliance with the story, thus becoming part of the text-assemblage. In so doing, she appropriates (reterritorializes an aspect of the story, remaking it in her image. The story is like me.

Betty, Randy and others also identified with John Redding's caught-ness of at the hands of his mother and wife (as well as his own irresoluteness). John's circumstance provides the mimetic lure that catches Betty's and Randy's recognition ("ooh, I know how that feels!"), sweeping them, and the rest of us, into its scope. But this relation also demonstrates the polyvalent and overdetermined nature of the poetic-text-assemblage. It is not only the recognizable family tension between attachment and freedom in John's story that catches us up and plugs us in. We enact caught-ness in our struggles to read, understand and navigate the difficult southern dialect in which the story is conveyed. We literally get stuck and stumble over Hurston's language, failing to establish consistent rhythm and flow between Matty's broken down English and John's overblown, highbrow speech. This correspondence of formal and semantic elements, poetry's magic moment (Cowan, 1972), belongs both to the action of becoming-assemblage and to that of deformation and transformation. I have chosen to discuss it at greater length in that following section. As in this example, we will continue to see the formation and action of becoming-assemblage throughout the progression of this analysis.
De-formation

Becomings imply (entail) transformation. So the changes we expect to see in this section are prefigured in levels of engagement already discussed. The kind of becomings discussed imply de-formations as well. De-formations form a bridge between becomings (engagement) and re-narrations, or the changes in the world that result from those becomings. They are its operations. The becoming-Jefferson of Virgil implies that the pre-existing version of Virgil has come unhinged as it moves toward alliance with Jefferson. The deterritorialization will never be completed—he will not become Jefferson and cease to be Virgil. But the meaning of Virgil has already changed in its emergent form as becoming-Jefferson. I hope the reader will forgive the clunky-ness of this language in order to gain additional purchase on the notion of the deformations of the poetic imagination.

The imaginary mode, writes Bachelard, "is essentially open and elusive. It is the human psyche's experience of openness and novelty" (1943/2002, p. 1). Its language, contrary to that of science, seeks not to "bar out all possibilities but one" (Richards, 1926, p. 33), to settle, that is, on the one correct answer, but to follow emergences and becomings of the kind described in this study. Whatever is presented to imagination is immediately thrown beyond itself in anticipation of what it is not yet. All possible meanings, interpretations and combinations are in play. This polyvalence of terms and images, this centrifugalizing force (Bakhtin, 2006) of language in literature determines "an abundance—an explosion—of unusual images" (Bachelard G., 1943/2002, p. 1). Language is placed in a state of continuous variation and launched toward innovation and novelty. This operation presents a unique opportunity to examine instances of mental
health talk, demonstrating its typical functions in mimetic versions of everyday experience as well as its potential permutations.

*A queer child (analysis, de-formation).*

Hurston's description of the young *John Redding* as a queer child at the beginning of our first story provides an early example of the polyvalence at play in poetic fiction. Ben's pronouncement that *John* is gay was not borne out by the story, but neither was my categorical refusal of the possibility that *John* is gay. Multiple appearances of the term "queer" in the story-text to describe *John's* difference from the other (normal) townsfolk seems specifically valenced toward suspicion of sexual difference: *John* fails to conform to the townsfolk's expectations of an eligible (heterosexual) bachelor. *John* is not gay, but neither is it true to say that "queer" here has nothing to do with being gay. The imprecision of the term, its anexactness, is its accuracy and appropriateness to the story-circumstance. This is characteristic of Deleuze and Guattari's (1980/2005) assemblages and the continuous variation of their terms: not "either-or" (gay or not gay), but "yes, and" (ineffable, sexually and otherwise).

*Caught in the weeds (analysis, de-formation).*

Poetic polyvalence is not restricted to the semantic meaning of the terms employed. Participants noted the difficulty of Hurston's southern country dialect in "John Redding" (and later in "Escape from Pharaoh") and we all stumbled through reading it aloud. Particularly difficult is *Matty's* thickly "broken down" speech when placed alongside *John's* educated and often overblown speech. An example taken directly from the story-text will illustrate:
"Lawd knows," she would sigh, "Ah nevah wuz happy an' nevah specks tuh be."

"An' from yo' actions," put in Alfred hotly, "you's determined not to be."

"Thas right, Alfred, go on an' 'buse me. You allus does. Ah knows Ah'm ign'rant an all dat, but dis is mah son. Ah bred an' born 'im. He kain't help from wantin' to go rovin' cause travel dust been put down fuh him. But mebbe we kin cure 'im by disincouragin' the idee."

"Well, Ah wants mah son tuh go; an' he wants tuh go too. He's a man now, Matty, An' we mus 'let John hoe his own row. If it's travelin' twon't be foh long. He'll come back to us bettah than when he went off. What do you say, son?"

"Mamma," John began slowly, "it hurts me to see you so troubled over my goin away; but I feel that I must go. I'm stagnating here. This indolent atmosphere will stifle every bit of ambition that's in me. Let me go mamma, please (p. 5)"

And the same passage in the transcript-text:

Betty
lawd knows she wuld sigh, I nevuh wuz happy and nevah spect to be. ah from yo action, put in Alfred hoatly, you determined not to be. right, tha's right, al fred, go on an abuse me... you al..

Rod
you allus does (laughing) [that's hard...]

Betty
you allus does. I knows ahm (...)

Virgil
(softly) I'I'gnant

Betty
mah ignarant and all dah, but this is mah son. I've rared and bored him. he ant help from wontin to grow roving cause travel dust beeen put down fuh him but maybe he can cur him by dis couragin the idea the idea. Well hah wont mah son
duh go and he wont duh go too. he's a man now, Matty, an was mus let John row his own row. If is travelin, twon be for long. He'll a come back to us .. betta than when he went off. what do you say son? mama, John began slowly, it hurts me to see you so troubled over my goin away but I feel that I mus go. I was s:s stregenatin(?)=

Rod

stag'nating=

Betty

stagnating here...This ins inda um...=

Virgil

indalent=

Betty

indalasin atmosphere...will str:iive..

Rod

stifle

Betty

will stifle every bit of ambition that in me. let me go mama, please. what is there here for me? Ah sometime ah get the feelin just like a lump of dirt turned over by by the plow. jus where it falls there ewhere it lies. no thoughts of movin or nothin. i wanna make myself sumthin, not jus be where ah wuz born. now John, it's betta fuh you to stay here and take over the school. Why don't you marry and settle down? Well missus Redding said, pursing her mouth

Rod

oh, we missed, we missed one line in there I think.. why [don't you marry] and settle down
[session 1, lines 840-874]

We get "caught up" in the dialog like John's reed boats get caught up in the weeds. More specifically we are caught in the mother's dialect like he is caught in her overbearing pronouncements and her stifling provincialism. The textual device and the imagery set up new blocks of becoming:

we (readers) = John = reed boats getting caught =Alf

which relates to

southern country dialect =author (Hurston) = mother's (overbearing) love = weeds
These new equivalences form temporary assemblages or blocks in which we become allied to other members of the block. We take on John and enact his plight as we struggle with his mother's speech.

As previously noted, this assemblage exemplifies poetry's mysterious magic moments (Cowan, 1972; Ransom, 1941) when levels of experience (form and content) that share no logical connection inexplicably and synergistically coincide. Sandra noticed the connection when she stated that John was "doing a paragraph" but that he was "fillin his speech in poems." Does she mean filling or feeling or neither or both? Either way, she recognizes the imaginative, poetic activity that's going on concurrently with the declarative, literal action of the story. What she points to in this production is the imaginative equivalence of John and ships which we have now joined by enacting getting caught up. He is talking about ships but "thinkin about himself going off to the sea."

Betty's and Randy's subsequent participation in and performance of "I am stuck (like John)" by family entanglements participates in the equivalence "I am a ship getting caught." But, importantly, even though we all stumbled and stuttered, we eventually got through the dialect that caught us up. Even John eventually made it downstream to the ocean, albeit in dramatically morbid fashion. Even there, however, the group agreed vocally with Virgil's assessment that John finally met with peace and blessing. More concretely relevant to Betty's circumstance, the becoming block that we have described allowed her to verbalize feelings that had been caught "inside." The telling of this self-story belies Betty's self-description as someone who cannot "let it out." The dialog between she and Randy breaks free of the weeds at the water's edge and merges with swifter, flowing currents.
Randy

[(i feel wanna)] let it go

Betty

[yeah I can] mmmm. wanna run away= {gesture}

Randy

=run away, [let it go]

Betty

=[GIT away]

Randy

[let] it go and git away from it all

Betty

thas tha way I feel

Randy

'cided i wannoo get outta {town} fo awhile

Rod

yeah/

Betty

just wanna go, Im free i just wanna go

The description is to some extent the cure. The becoming-ship of Betty is sometimes stuck in the weeds and sometimes gets unstuck. This is the de-formational power of images to which Bachelard (1943/2002, p. 1) refers when he writes that imagining is always imagining something that isn't (yet). The equivalence set up in engagement with John's story brings to light and to voice her predicament—"they won't let me go." She is a ship, stuck in the weeds. But ships have the possibility of getting free. In fact, freedom and flow is their default activity. Even her language points to possibilities for imagining and eventually telling a different story (re-narrating á la Ricoeur). The combination of deformational imagery and deformational language—the atypical expression of Hurston's difficult dialect—combine to potentiate new lines of flight or flow in Randy and Betty's dialog. She excitably describes feeling stuck but also utters this last line: I just wanna go,
I'm free. The highly affective charge to this utterance suggests a fruitful possibility at least for revising her typical way of narrating her own stuckness. Becomings entail de-
formation and transformation which in turn yield opportunities for re-narration.

What gets deterritorialized and de-formed here are typical ways of thinking (self-
concepts) and speaking. The combination of modes (formal linguistic and conceptual),
this compounded uncanniness, is itself a line of flight away from the stifling ground of
sameness and stuckness. It is particularly interesting that Betty, who initially commented
on the dialect's similarity to her own "country girl" talk, is the one who is particularly
affected by these deforming elements. D&G suggest that linguistic lines of flight are
operative when one finds oneself a foreigner in one's own tongue (1980/2005, p. 98).

**Becoming-vernacular (analysis, de-formation).**

A particular focus of this study has been to examine the behavior of mental health
talk as it occurs in our sessions and particularly as it interacts with the language of
literary fiction. What happens when these occurrences of mental health talk are subjected
to the de-formational forces under consideration here? Two trends are demonstrated in
answer to this question. First, instances of mental health talk—usually diagnosis—seem
to be held up and suspended for examination of how they are used and how they function
in the circumstances in which they appear. This is certainly a function of the analysis
which takes specific interest in these kinds of contributions, but the stark relief in which
mental health language appears also results from fundamental differences between the
worlds gathered by clinical and poetic language and engagement. The purposes of
diagnostic language seem to run counter to the centrifugal movement of the literary text.
Diagnostic terms appear when participants attempt to pin down, define and foreclose a
situation or character. As a clinician, I find it useful and instructive to see the specific kinds of purposes to which diagnostic terms are put. What is more interesting though, is the second trend by which, when subjected to the centrifugalizing hypotheticalness of the poetic text—when placed in continuous variation—the diagnostic terms appear weightless, or perhaps mass-less. They are without gravity, drawing little to themselves of the richness of the story worlds. Instead, continuous variation seems often to mean finding other, more descriptive terms. Instances of diagnostic and mental health function in the examples that follow as markers invoking a powerful discursive strain—that of mental health institutions—but that signal a broader contextual reality. They tend to suggest a contingency beyond themselves, and then to fall away. Here, it seems, Merleau-Ponty's dictum holds: a word (a diagnostic label in this case) is a gesture and its meaning is a world (1945/2004).

*Troubling behavior (analysis, de-formation).*

Virgil's move, when describing *Alf* and *Matty's* early dispute about their son, from "behavior" to "you gettin deeper" is the first of multiple instances of a trial and error use of language to find what best fits. I described "behavior" as a quasi-clinical (mental health) term and discussed its de-contextualizing and subjectifying implications for the boy (the "problem" has to do with specific, identifiable activities that belong individually to the boy). If we describe *John's* behavior clinically--absent-minded and disoriented wandering, distractibility, episodes of vacuous staring, bizarre verbal productions (talks to himself--perhaps suffering hallucinations)—we might just find a DSM diagnosis for him. A more generous reading might suggest that he simply is temperamentally inclined
for broader horizons—but then we have verged from behavior into characterization of the boy based on the whole context and action of the story.

Virgil's construction gives us the whole heart of the matter--beginning with behavior gets us nowhere. We get little from learning about John as divorced from the rest of the story. Virgil immediately notices that it's gettin deeper, thicker and messier, and the change is reflected in his language. He proceeds however to tell us that we are "gettin deeper and deeper into it like he got spells and witches and people leavin out the yard." We are confronted in Virgil's indeterminate statement with the messy and potentially threatening context of the story-world. It is read both as "it's getting deeper" and as "we're getting deeper" into the entanglements of the story. This "atypical expression" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2005, p. 99) functions as the cutting edge of the deterritorialization of meaning as we enter the story. Notice is served that there is more here than meets the eye or the ear.

The story-world with its varying levels of "hypotheticalness" (Sarbin, 2004) is precisely the right place for conjuration and omens and the skeleton-tree spirits that menace the boy. Group participants honor their presences and powers in the story. One participant remarked of ominous appearances during the story that "nature is startin' to happen" and that the characters had better take notice and be warned. In the story-world, the characters and spirits alike are taken metaphorically "as though" they are real people. At this level of hypotheticalness, they are, Hillman (1983) tells us, "neither literally real (hallucinations or people in the street) nor irreal/unreal ('mere' fictions...)." They are the teachers from whom we learn in literary encounter and education. They present us with opportunities to encounter the array of possibilities and impossibilities in the world. We
have lessons to learn from them. In the story-world, we can disdain *Matty* as a smothering and overbearing mother, but we would do well, as participants have done, to recognize the warnings she both sees and represents.

**Diagnosis and emotional manipulation (analysis, de-formation).**

The reader will remember that Ben gave us two examples, in discussion of the same story, "John Redding," of diagnostic references to mental illness in the context of family dispute and manipulation. The first was an explanation for *John's* hesitance to leave his mother:

*Ben*

* sometime it can cause, maybe he had it in hi mind that it can cause his parents maybe his mother some kind of severe depression or somethin like that. an maybe he dont want to see huh sick like that.*

[session2, lines 444-494]

I argued that Ben's interpretation ups the ante of the pressure put on *John* by *Matty* to stay in a way that must be replayed over and over in *Prozac Nation*-era families: "Mom's depressed! She doesn't need you _______!" or "You know I have depression, how could you ______ now?" The invocation of medical/psychiatric discourse—the weight of the mental health establishment—renders the argument unassailable to the average son or daughter. Ben even adds the clinical qualifier, "severe," which could be appended to either above script for added effect.

This is in no way intended to deny the existence of depression as a clinical condition or the real suffering of those to whom the label is clinically applied. However, this analysis suggests the importance of investigating not only the uses of mental health language by and in the institutions of its production, but also its lay or common usages. We have already seen that clinical language may not be up to the task of adequately
describing fully contextual (round rather than flat) fictional characters. We may learn from its attempted application in these situations something about the fullness of the experiences suggested, pointed to, by their use. Ben's example of depression used as a tool of emotional manipulation suggests a complicated household (and perhaps community) dynamic that may be distilled in the reductive diagnostic label "depression," beyond which the real story lies. The depression label would not return in our discussions, but shortly thereafter Ben applied another diagnostic label, bipolar this time, to Matty.

Ben
see it was it was like that--his mother was tryin to live live his [life]
...
like sh like sh like sh::e (wanted to want) to be him, thats like bipolar, you know, cuz she she wand da portray him be him, an it got so bad that she didn even want him ta go help ta fix tha dam fo the..um when the [storm came]

[session 2, 711-751]

I described Ben's production of this label as reflexive. He is trying to figure something out as he speaks, searching for the appropriate terms to describe and explain a family circumstance that seems familiar and simultaneously inscrutable to him. "that's like, bipolar, you know," strikes me as Ben grasping for familiar, powerful and clinically sterile language for what otherwise appears to be a messy maternal entanglement. The diagnostic labels, depression and now bipolar, are produced in an attempt to come to a definitive answer or solution. What is needed, however uncomfortable it may be, and what comes of further discussion, is elaboration of contexts and discovery (illumination) of some points of common tension among group participants. We do not find resolution, per se, but we do find recognition. The labels fall away in favor of continued struggle to
appropriately describe and understand the messy circumstances in the Redding household as well as in our own.

**The judgments of others (analysis, de-formation).**

Images of and language related to mental illness figures prominently in Ellison's "Flying Home" and in our discussions around it. The general trend of those discussions became attempting to figure out just what was the problem with *Todd*. Attributions of mental illness to *Todd* have been discussed at length throughout this findings section.

We saw the formation of a Virgil-Jefferson-Todd block of becoming—particularly Virgil's alliance with *Jefferson*—and from that block we can derive a transformation of mental health diagnosis (labeling and categorization) from clinical description to a weapon of rhetorical alienation and denigration. *Todd* cruelly labels the old man who doesn't rise to his social standards and who reminds him of his own heritage of subjugation. In this fictional insult, Virgil hears his own experiences of insulting labels and categorizations from people who think they're better than him for whatever reason and who make themselves (feel) better by downing others based on the categories and labels of social status and normalcy (mental health). Partly in retaliation for *Todd's* slight ("Oh yeah? I'm a peasant am I? Well you're crazy! How do you like that?") and partly as a commentary on a larger dilemma around the judgments of others, he applies the mental illness label, bipolar, to *Todd*. The implied commentary is in three parts. First, that mental health labeling is employed as a consequence (punishment) for bad behavior. *Todd* has acted badly and therefore deserves the punishing label. Second, he, *Todd*, must be crazy to denigrate and insult the old man based on ridiculous social standards. After all, we need garbage men as well as presidents. Finally, there is a commentary in Virgil's
retaliation about retaliation through the use of labels and categorization. The insulting terms that Todd uses to describe Jefferson—peasant, ignorant, clown—are all things that he is afraid of being or ways that he is afraid of being perceived. His insults are defensive and as such they apply to himself as well as to Jefferson. Virgil highlights this equivalence: in order to call Jefferson low-down or crazy, Todd must be low-down and crazy too. Mental illness labeling has become a dimension of the relations among Virgil and the story characters, the becoming-Jefferson of Todd and the becoming-Todd of Virgil. Todd. The equivalence set up between mental illness categorization and social status labeling, particularly the classist and elitist derision exhibited by Todd, in Virgil's relation to the story's characters is an important instance of a transformation of mental health talk. It highlights the common, implicit equivalence of mental health status with social status that is not given a lot of attention or traction in clinical circles. A wealthy madman is "eccentric" while a crazy poor man is the lowest of the low, frequently Virgil's "crackhead." The polyvalence of Virgil's construction, mental illness in continuous variation here emphasizes its relationship to social status (and to social justice). It is a mistake, an ethical failing, to consider one term of the equivalence without the other.

**Something wrong with his mind (analysis, de-formation).**

The reader will also remember another of Virgil's diagnostic formulations, "manic depressed, obsessed, intelligent," following discussion of Todd's boyhood folly with the toy / real airplane. The de-formational movement in this construction is from the strictly clinical term (manic depressed bipolar) through the dual-use vernacular and clinical term (obsessed) to the polyvalent "intelligent" which, I argued, suggests Todd's over-
intellectualized and precious fragility. He is unstable, ungrounded in his body or, for that
matter, to the body of the earth. He is subject to 'losing his nerve.' Virgil's tentative, "I'm
just sayin it could have been," suggests that the bipolar label serves mostly as a
placeholder for mental illness in general, though the specific label does reappear later on.
There is some general agreement about obsession among the group. After all, most
people would likely agree that Todd is obsessed with airplanes and flying. Yet the most
cryptic part of the formulation, "intelligent," has significant staying power in our
discussions. Virgil associates "high advancement of the mind" with mental illness—
invoking a kind of maniacal genius—but also with snobbishness and elitism of the kind
exhibited in Todd's treatment of Jefferson, which is the other occasion for Virgil's
attribution of mental illness to the pilot.

Todd's intellectual elitism leads him, in Virgil's (and in Jefferson's) opinion, to
over-analyze his circumstances and come to overly pessimistic conclusions and
predictions. Virgil and other participants criticize Todd for his attitude (in its
psychological sense) and reaction to his situation. In other words, whereas Todd looks
elsewhere for someone or something to blame, the group seems to put the responsibility
squarely on him. His failure to adopt a more positive, can-do attitude earns Todd the
group's disrespect and their attribution of mental illness as well as bad attitude. These
perspectives suggest a largely individualist perspective on subjectivity among the group
that may bear on mental health talk's uses and understandings. It is primarily Todd's
failure to 'pull himself up by the bootstraps' that results in attribution of mental illness to
him. The fact that he adopts a dramatic posture in measured response to the impossibility
of his (perceived) circumstances seems lost on group members and may indeed be lost on
many mental health diagnosticians and practitioners. It is common parlance among practitioners of cognitive and behavioral therapies to say that what happens to us doesn't determine our outcomes, rather our response to what happens determines our outcomes. The push for agency and personal responsibility is understood and is a vital dimension of mature self-determination, but such statements risk de-contextualizing the roles in which individuals find themselves positioned by systems larger than their individual powers to control—even by the sunshiniest of dispositions. I wonder if group members' attribution of mental illness to Todd matches their own experience of diagnosis. Perhaps their response to difficult circumstances was deemed inadequate to successfully negotiate those circumstances and the result is a diagnosis of Schizoaffective Disorder (bipolar type), and a month long institutionalization followed by day treatment and quarterly med checks with the psychiatrist. The individualist tenor of the group's interpretations regarding Todd reflect an unintended consequence or sequela of subjectivizing diagnostic practices that locate problems within the brains or behavior of individual human beings or selves without considering the broader contexts in which those problems arise and are sustained.

Virgil's mental illness label makes a final appearance before it disappears, but by the time Virgil interrupts Ben's discussion of Todd's failure of dignity to say "I think he got a mental illness," it has become a joke. It is quipped to produce the laughs it receives and, it seems, to truncate a line of thoughtful discussion. I speculated earlier that Ben's ______

13 Correction of this individualist tendency is a goal of poststructuralist narrative therapies, enacted by identifying (outing) the various controlling storylines or narratives involved in the maintenance of whatever problem has led to therapy initiation along with alternative narratives that refute the problem-maintaining storylines. Work is then pursued through letter writing, family work and other means to nurture those alternative narratives and their concomitant practices with potential to dislodge the individual and family from problematic circumstances (Madigan, 2011; White & Epston, 1990).
comments were heading in a direction that diverged too far from Virgil's optimism about his case, one that did not necessarily point to second or third chances. The bad joke of mental illness was an expedient brake on that conversational flow.

*Attitude problem (analysis, de-formation).*

After that interruption, the diagnostic label, bipolar, once again falls away in favor of the anexact mot juste, "attitude." This movement stands as an example of diagnostic language which fails to account for the rondure and complexity of persons (virtual or actual) apprehended in the fullness of their lived contexts, and of the transformation of clinical language into vernacular language. The problem with Todd, the problems with which we have struggled around this story, are problems of attitude. The simple term explodes in many-faceted valence about the problem. Illuminations emerge around disposition, posture, perspective (action impulse) and orientation.

The common or colloquial meaning and intention of the phrase here is plain. We do not like the way the young pilot acts toward the kindly old man who helps him, and the phrase ("bad attitude" or an "attitude problem") is meant to censure and admonish the young man. The accusation itself is spoken with a certain, peppery *attitude*. Apart, though, from the idiomatic sense, it is Todd's taciturn disposition toward the old man and his general pessimism and ill humor we find troubling and unpleasant. From a psychological perspective, we might call the latter a neurotic temperament or refer to negative or pessimistic habits of mind or thought, depending on our orientation. Each of these senses of the word *attitude* match in some way the group's sense of the young man.

But because, as previously noted, all of the terms and all of their senses are in play in the poetic deformation of the story-world-assemblage, other significances arise.
Attitude refers in another of its iterations to the disposition or posture given to a figure in a sculpture or painting. Think of the tiny proneness of Icaraus splashing down relative to a leaning shepherd and the inclination of a ploughman in Breughel's *Icarus*—turning leisurely from disaster. This sense of the word brings an artist's intentions and deliberate manipulations of his subjects into play. How has Ellison positioned his protagonist, *Todd*? He is written into a posture of impossibility and failure, having already crash-landed when the story began. Icarus after the fall, only Black, injured and stranded in Jim-crow-era rural Alabama. Our sympathies are aroused by this recognition of what we might call *Todd's* radical and desperate thrownness. If the story were rendered as a frieze, *Todd* would never leave that field—the story begins and ends there. Even if the weird parade conveying *Todd* on his litter seems to be on its way (toward salvation?), we'll never see it leave, only the final glimpse of a large, shiny black buzzard silhouetted on the horizon. We see the aspirational heights, we see the lowest of the low, and we are left with an unresolved, impossible in-between.

But stopping here we would miss the interior posture of the pilot—his self-doubt, his naive, modern, bourgeois aspirations crashing against one hundred plus years of history written into the lines of *Jefferson's* face and hands. *Todd's* history and conflicts are dramatically rendered through memory and flashback according to another sense of "attitude." Here the word refers to the theatrical assumption of a posture. This sense suspends our concern with the author's perspective and brings us back to *Todd*—the living, breathing, bad-attitude-having dramatis persona we have been talking about for three weeks now. He is animated now, no longer carved in plaster, yet this sense of attitude highlights the adoption of posture as the fulfillment of a role; in response to
dramatic circumstances. This sense also emphasizes Todd's thrownness, but now we're also interested in his response. He is written, born, scripted into this scene, now what's he gonna do? This is where the group's criticism begins. Virgil and others recognize the crash as an "accident" and as a "stumbling block," even as a "failure," but they will not condone what they view as his paranoia, pessimism and his derisive, elitist treatment of Jefferson. He should focus on re-accomplishing his goals, says Virgil; "turn his stumbling blocks into stepping stones," quips Randy. Jefferson's tall tale offers Todd the encouragement of knowing that he has done his best and that regardless of accomplishment or failure of particular goals, the ultimate goal is to "soar at life."

I wonder how else he could have played the hand dealt him That's the sense of Ricoeour's (2005) suggestion about learning, by engaging with others' (fictional) stories, to self-narrate—to author our lives within constraints with which we are faced or to learn to do so differently, with more satisfactory outcomes or with greater self-coherence (integrity). The question is not simply academic, for in Ricoeur's formulation we learn to self-narrate by working to apprehend the resolution of conflicts in stories we engage. Albert Murray makes specific reference to posture in describing the reader's role as a "dance apprentice" in a workshop or studio who takes a position based on the text's imitation of real-life circumstance. The "landscape" created by the reader's posturing creates the ground for possible future actions (Murray A., 1973, pp. 23-4). For re-narration and re-creation.

The psychological sense of "attitude" is dramatically revived and revised by noted literary critic and "father of the New Criticism," I.A. Richards (Elton, 1948, p. 153). In his Glossary of New Criticism, Elton attributes the following definition of "attitude" to
Richards: "the non-overt impulse to action involved in the poetic response of the reader" (p. 156). This use of the term was unknown to me prior to this investigation and I consider its appearance a gift. It is an instance of what Bachelard calls "pure sublimation," the serendipitous transmutation of mysteries into visible form through poetic imagination and language. Richards' own differentiation between the rhetorical modes of poetry and science provides a kind of explanation for this poetic process.

In its use of words poetry is just the reverse of science. Very definite thoughts do occur, but not because the words are so chosen as logically to bar out all possibilities but one. No. But because the manner, the tone of voice, the cadence and the rhythm play upon our interests and make them pick out from among an indefinite number of possibilities the precise particular thought which they need. This is why poetical descriptions often seem so much more accurate than prose descriptions (1926, p. 33).

The poetic sense of the image selects or allows for selection of appropriate descriptors from an indefinite number of possibilities.

John Crowe Ransom devotes the first chapter of The New Criticism (1941) to Richards, who he calls "Psychological Critic,"14 describing his Richards' abiding concern with the response of readers to poetry and, particularly, the precise mechanisms of emotional arousal in the experience. His sense of "attitude," then, leads us to reflexively consider our part in the predicaments of the text-assemblage. All of the analyzed (and analyzable) utterances of such a group can be considered to be partial-

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14 Ransom smugly describes the psychological thinker as one "who invades our discussions by telling us that what we think is knowledge testifies less to any objective referent than to our own subjective emotions and desires" (p.11).
potential responses to poetic calls for action in the sense Richards gives to attitude(s). But these are only bare representation of the possibilities for action that are potentiated but not overtly taken. Ransom (1941) acknowledges the usefulness of scientific discourse in its proper place, but he insists that poetic encounter is needed to exercise the attitudes:

   Poetry is needed as a complement to science because it is prepared to give the emotions and through them to the attitudes, their daily work-out; science intends to suppress them in order to map the objective world without distraction. Science is for use in our overt or gross practical enterprises, but poetry ministers directly to the delicate needs of the organism (p. 23).

Just as all possibilities of term and sense are in play in the story-world, so all of its possibilities for action and reaction are available to its readers. Retaliation, indifference, indignance, exuberance, anger, withdrawal.

   Virgil leads a group response toward softening diagnostic pronouncement on Todd and toward a multilayered, anexact yet precise description of the problem of attitude in the text-circumstance. Ben identifies fears that motivate the pilot. A little later in the same session, Constance, eschewing others' descriptions of Todd as "delusional," notes that Todd seems "puzzled." Later still she softly speaks the same word to assess the state of things—of our assemblage—in the story's wake, "puzzling, puzzling." Randy's indignation at the story's end is distilled in the single, sternly repeated word, "insulting." He dismisses both Todd and Graves as "bipolar" by the story's end. Each of these are or suggest overt attitudes (quasi-actions) of participants at this point in the story. They say nothing of the myriad roads not taken.
The final sense of "attitude" comes from technical aeronautical terminology describing the orientation of an aircraft with respect to the horizon or another frame of reference. It is also used to describe the more complex relationship of an aircraft to its surroundings, particularly airflow and gravity. "Climb attitude" or "spin attitude" are examples of specific uses that imply more than simply nose up or nose down orientation ("attitude", n., n.d.). The implication is that at any given position, orientation and perspective vary along multiple axes. This sense highlights the levels of complexity with which we are grappling. The levels of metaphorical and literal relevance to our story are immediately apparent. "Attitude problem" here takes on the shimmering reverberation of Bachelard's poetic image. I see a wildly pitching gyroscope and spinning altimeter accompanying this phrase when applied to Todd the pilot's disorientation with respect first to the (literal-fictional) horizon and then with respect to his axis of spin ahead of his fall from the (literal-fictional) heavens. But Todd's orientation was, from the story perspective, skewed with respect to the horizon of race relations and personal aspirations in America's dawning modernity. We see this in his disdain for Jefferson and in his disorientation when torn from his protective mechanical shell with its instruments on which he relied to maintain his appropriate orientation—to tell him, literally, which way was up. And what about Jefferson? What about his orientation and perspective? Is he as "backward" and "ignorance" as we hear from Todd? Certainly he is with respect to a certain modern sensibility. Why would he stay there, 'in his place'? What about his exhortation to Todd that "you got to come by the white folks too?" Does he have the proper orientation with respect to the cultural horizon?
And the complications compound when we include ourselves in the equation. For we are each airplanes in flight and crashing, Todd in his various ages and iterations, Jefferson, Graves and the rest. And we are in position(s) relative to each of these as we consider the story. What is our position, our orientation with respect to these characters, their relations and their images? In the broadest sense, the better grasp we have on the variety of perspectives and orientations we occupy with respect to the myriad of possible horizons with which we are presented, the greater our opportunities for imaginal experimentation and re-narration of ourselves. Arbitration of what is the best or the right perspective or orientation is a matter of negotiation between individual and group sensibilities with the mediation of the text.

It seems there has been an explosion of significances, valences, and lines of nuance occasioned by the selection of a precise yet anexact thought from among indefinite possibilities generated within the text-assemblage. What's the story about? It's about a problem of attitude. In a sense, all stories pose problems of attitude. These puzzle our engagement—offer emotional workouts and stretch our perspective-taking capacities.

**Insulting buzzards (analysis, de-formation).**

The final example of poetic de-formation I wish to highlight here concerns Randy's struggle with Ellison's morbid joke about buzzards in "Flying Home." The reader will remember the significant presence of buzzards in "Flying Home." A buzzard was the efficient cause of Todd's crash. One of Jefferson's tales was of buzzards that glistening in the sunlight after feasting on the inside of a dead horse, and the final image given in the story text is of a buzzard flying into the sunset, transformed into a "bird of flaming gold"
Randy had a strong reaction to the joke:

_Rod_

_{but the one about the buzzards was gross, it was um, They the damndest birds, once I seen a horse all stretched out like it was sick so I hollered get up from there just to make sure and dog on if I don’t see two Jim crows, Teddy he calls those buzzards Jim Crows and we wondered if that was funny or not._

_{Randy shakes head, "no"}_

_Rod_  

_Not funny, Randy thinks that is not funny at all._

_Randy_  

_{Because you don’t wanna be called the Jim Crow._

_Rod_  

_{well he’s calling buzzards Jim Crow_}

_Randy_  

_{He’s calling buzzards Jim Crow, ya know if you think about that, the person Jim Crow and we don’t wanna be called Uncle Tom._

_Rod_  

_{That’s right, that’s right so you think it would be insulting to the buzzards to be called Jim Crow or...}_

_Randy_  

_{I don’t know, I'm not too sure. But it would probably be insulting._

[session 4, lines 833-856]

As in other examples of de-formations, this one entails becoming-assemblage. Randy joins in an unnatural participation with the buzzards, a becoming-buzzard in which he takes their part against the insult of being referred to as Jim Crows. This block also entails and establishes an equivalence among racial epithets: "Jim Crow," "Uncle Tom," and, arguably, Dabney Graves' "Nigguh," that will appear later in the story. Randy's becoming-buzzard is also a becoming- _Todd_, since the pilot is so closely associated with the Jim Crows' symbolism throughout the story. _Todd_ admires and is reviled by them
and, when he can endure no more of *Jefferson's* (presumed) mocking, he shouts, "Why do you laugh at me this way?.. Can I help it because they won't let us actually fly? Maybe we are a bunch of buzzards feeding on a dead horse, but we can hope to be eagles, can't we? *Can't we?*" (pp. 160-1).

The de-formation here has to do with the ubiquity of insult around racial bigotry. The buzzards are vile and disgusting death-eaters and death-dealers in this story, nearly "making a meal" out of pilot *Todd*. Their very presence is insulting. But even they do not deserve the insulting Jim Crow appellation. Insulters and insulted change places. No one escapes the tincture of this insult. Randy is not particularly strident in his refusal of the joke but here, as he is at the story's end, he is thoughtful and grave as he considers and repeats the word, "insulting." We will see in the following section Randy's response, primed by his association to the image of those insulting birds.
**Re-narration**

We don't have to hear dramatic life changes or talk in terms of liberation or personal empowerment to see the potential benefits of the movements and transformations that have been described. The becoming-vernacular of mental health talk potentially bridges a widely acknowledged divide between providers and clients (Charon, 2006) and establishes common ground (rapport) through common language (Cowan, 1993). As a mental health practitioner I appreciate what I have learned about common usage of mental health jargon and its functions in conversation and in (virtual) real life family circumstances. It may be a tool for manipulation and coercion. It sometimes stifles innovation by stopping conversation and debate as it did or threatened to do in our conversations. It tends to insist that it knows precisely what is going on and that the discussion need not proceed. It flattens character(s). It cannot, in these cases, open possibilities for the kind of critical appropriation of context and subsequent self-re-narration suggested by Ricoeur and demonstrated here. However, as mental health talk is subjected to the novelizing forces (Bakhtin, 2006) of poetic fiction it is swept up in centrifugalizing heteroglossia. It retains its connection to mental health establishment and its treatment modalities, but gains valence with the colloquial, experience-near understandings of everyday struggles. In the very process of this becoming-vernacular, that possibilities are opened for re-imagining and re-narration.

These are the things I can demonstrate: an emotional workout, innumerable opportunities for considered (virtual or potential) activity, changing valences or points of contact and plug-in to the assemblages at work in this study and speculations about their impact elsewhere in participants' lives now and in the future. Although I have referred to
individual participants by name throughout the presentation of these findings, my comments here about individual participants represent a departure from my previous ways of referring to them. Here, in addition to considering aspects of participants in becoming-assemblage(s) with me, other participants, our story-texts, etc, I am considering participants as individuals separate from those assemblages who have moved away into different aspects of their lives, plugging into all manner of other kinds of assemblages and becomings. I am thrown into the tension of (provisionally) assigning narrative identity, at once commenting on a singular activity germane to an extended moment of assemblage belonging not just to each individual but equally to me, while simultaneously speculating as to a continuous characterization of each individual subjectivity, coherent across multiple emergent assemblages (which is to say not at all belonging to me).

I feel in this section I am stepping across a threshold from collective to individual (though not in any absolute sense). That is, whereas I have felt as though I am speaking from the inside of a phenomenon (assemblage) I now feel as though I am speaking about individual participants from the outside. More than questioning the 'take home' message or the moral of the story, this question of re-narration is a matter of deepening the thresholding tensions, discussed in my statement of critical perspective, between individual and collective as well as between individual as continuous and individual as situated. We are individuals that participate in collectivities, yes, but even our individualities are called into question. (Remember, we are all little groups, after all.) In this sense, the individuality/collectivity threshold is subsumed by the continuity/particularity threshold. Narrative identity is the tension of personal coherence.
and integrity in the midst of the turbulence of shifting multiplicities, assemblage-affiliations and (unnatural) machinic becomings that comprise our experience. Literary fiction gives us opportunities to practice our thresholding skills. But my reticence to pronounce or confer narrative identity on others is overblown. It is enough to acknowledge that my pronouncements as researcher/critic are no more and no less provisional and partial than my self-pronouncements and self-understandings. Our judgments and evaluations always require poetic license. They are imaginative acts. We just have to remember not to take them too literally.

Peoples' exodus (analysis, re-narration).

As with the other sections of this analysis and this progression of becoming-deformation-re-narration, this section is interpenetrated by the others, and so this section on re-narration begins with a de-formation. Similar to one we have already seen, this de-formation relates to the difficult dialect in a Zora Neale Hurston story, this time "Escape from Pharaoh." Hurston's fictionalized account of the Biblical Exodus story focuses on Moses' struggles against the Egyptian ruler but also his struggles to win the confidence of the Hebrew people. The story presents a kind of peoples' history of the Exodus in which ordinary (Hebrew) folks complain that, among other things, if they've been freed, they should be able to go fishing tomorrow rather than pack up all of their earthly belongings and prepare to walk into the desert. The dialog is not as difficult as that we found in "John Redding," but it employs Hurston's plainspoken and occasionally broken, southern dialect. This was a striking discovery for Sophie:

Rod
and then they're sayin theyre not sure they have too much confidence in him. its interesting to see what the author, cuz obviously we dont find these things in the
old testament story right of the exodus. we dont find people complaining to moses that they want to go fishing the next day, or they dont want to pack up and leave, right. so this is her version of the story. this is her fictional account of what people might have sed or thought and we get a little bit different version of moses than we usually do, right?

Sophie
why do people talk like they did back then?

Rod
why did?

Sophie
why did they talk, ya know,

Rod
like [how]

Sophie
[they] accent (_ _) they talk. they [inherited that] or what?

Rod
[how did they talk?] Um, which accents? whadda you mean, the way she's writing?

Sophie
tha way they're talkin

Rod
the way they're talking in the in her stories?

Sophie
uh huh

This sequence demonstrates Sophie's initial involvement in the story at a different level of hypotheticalness than mine. When she asks why they're talking like that, I am initially confused and I answer in terms of the author's creative device: "the way she's writing?"

No, Sophie answers, "the way they're talking." Of course neither are literally true, but both are virtually true and operative in our assemblage.15

15 Sophie's version is more virtually true while my version is more literally true.
Rod
why do you think? why do you think? she, well, um, she writes, and remember in some of her earlier stories we had a hard time reading some of her dialect, its a very, we sed that she wrote the conversations of i think country people like where she wuz from like from

Sophie
oh, [they were country?]

Rod
[her rural home.] well thats whats interesting, shes writing um the the dialog in this story the same as she writes it in other stories that are about the rural south in the twentieth century

Sophie
probly (_) from slavery huh?

Rod
uh huh

Sophie
probly they (didnt learn to read back there [in slavery])

rod
i think thats right i think thats right, so shes again shes making a connection between her own people and the hebrew people way back when, so she writes the same dialog=

Rod
=in the same accents even though we know the hebrews would have been speaking a different language and we dont know what their speech woulda sounded like cuz nobody nobody wuz around back then. so shes again she using her imagination. this is how she imagines it to be. thats a good question, you know, why is she writing you know the speech like that? uhm.. do you think that shes even making a statement about people of her time, you know, and their reactions to bein free and wondrin what does it mean to be free. i mean, swappin one bossman for another? whadoes at make you think of, anything?

Sophie
in moses moses an ems days, i didnt know they you know talked in nat kinda speech.

Rod
right, and i think they probably didnt. i think they probably didnt but when she's writing this story, she chooses to have them speaking like that. yeah, i agree its a
funny its a funny thing, it doesnt. i mean this is not we dont read this in the king james bible, right? it dudnt sound [anything like that]

group {chorus}
[no, no]

rod
in the bible. so she's trying to make the story more familiar i think to try and get us in mind of the well, what [might it have been like]

sophie
[she did a good job in writing the story though]

rod
i think so too, its, i think so too, it really does give us a different feeling about it. um, i think shes asking what might it have been like to actually be there. what would it have been like if moses came to you and sed okay, you know, we've been here for three generations now, it's time for us to leave. might we go, what? i dont know. i dont know if i want to follow this guy. um.

Sophie
i would want to know where we wuh goin.
[session 6, lines 1294-1390]

Sophie started out pretty engaged with this story, as did most participants. It was familiar to all of them and some said they had recently studied it in Bible School. Randy reminded us of the famous performances by Charlton Heston and Yul Brynner in the classic movie version. But Sophie's involvement takes on a different animation from this point in discussion. She is drawn into engagement by a noted self-similarity in the story dialect, not unlike Betty's recognition of herself ("country girl") in the "John Redding" dialog. Like Betty, she finds herself a foreigner in her native tongue, but here the de-formation has an added dimension because it is a deterritorialization of her expectations about Biblical language. Never before has she heard the complaints of ordinary people (or perhaps given a thought to the presence of "ordinary people" in Bible stories) on that day of departure or heard their entreaties in a language so similar to her own. She repeats a variation of the revelation four times in the session, "I didn't know they talked like that,"
with its implication "I didn't know they talked like me." She adds at one point that the characters "got out what they really wanted to get across—they got it out," suggesting that not only were ordinary people actually involved in this momentous, mythical-historical event, but that in Hurston's version they were capable of making themselves heard. On her final repetition of the revelatory phrase, she indicates her flexibility regarding levels of hypotheticalness, rephrasing her statement in an acknowledgment of metaphorical understanding and flexibility:

 Grove

 Sophie
 [i didn't] know if they [talked] that way.

 Rod
 [yeah they]

 Sophie
 they mightve talked that way
 [session 6, lines 2007-2014]

 Sophie's surprise at discovering that these Biblical figures "talk like me" demonstrates all three principles explored in this analysis (becoming-assemblage, deformation, re-narration) and their progression. Sophie is engaged in the text-story-author-setting assemblage when the 'way I talk' part of her plugs into 'they talk like that too?' part of the story-text. Her surprise suggests that her previous beliefs about Biblical figures (and about Biblical, Ecumenical authority?) is de-formed by this device, though we do not know to what degree. How might Sophie's relationship to Biblical history change as a result of her encounter? Might this experience nudge her in the direction of a greater degree of personal participation in her religious and faith practices? Of course I cannot say. Even without speculating as to the degree or direction of the change however, to the extent that her presumptions and expectations regarding Biblical history have been
changed in a truly surprising way, her relationship to Biblical truth must have changed as well. And that change surely portends and even entails a change in her own story—her self-narration or narrative identity.

Ricoeur suggests that literary engagement affords readers experiences with the intersections of the continuous self and the contingent self. Recognition of ourselves in the conflicts and dilemmas experienced by fictional characters or real-life others is a step toward refining what Paul Ricoeur terms *narrative identity* (2005, p. 101). "Learning to narrate oneself is also learning how to narrate oneself in other ways," by encountering and negotiating the dialectic of the enduring, immutable dimension of self (*idem*) and the changing, particular, historical self (*ipse*). It is the "intersection of coherence conferred by emplotment and the discordance arising from the peripeteia within the narrated action" that defines personal identity as narrative identity. The engagement with poetic texts becomes a crucible for working out this profound mystery of self-understanding and self-creation—how will I go on in the face of inevitable crises and day to day challenges that threaten the coherence of my story? My very sense of myself?

Narrative identity and re-narration have to do with developing coherent yet flexible self-understandings in the face of innumerable contextual complexities and contingencies. They have to do with writing one's own story and nimbly re-writing it when the world changes again and again and again. This is the experience of literary engagement, Ransom's emotional workout and the dance workshop described by Murray. It is what happened to Sophie. Her understanding of Biblical history—a significant dimension of her overall worldview—shifted surprisingly through her reading and our discussion of Hurston's story. As the world changes, we change. Through my literary
engagements I become multiple—hypothetically, virtually, but in full participation. I multiply my valences. Re-narration means changing the world and my place(s) in it. It is about how I continue to plug into all of the other assemblages and moments (haecceities) of which I am and will be part and which comprise the me I understand me to be. This is individuation with a different unit of measurement—not of the "self" but of self-in-context. The paradox of self-continuity and self-contingency. This is the task of re-narration.

**Insulting buzzards (analysis, re-narration).**

Other examples of movements and potential re-narrations are entailed in the becomings and transformations we have already seen in the transcript-text. Randy's previously outlined de-formational encounter with insulting buzzards is already transformational in that it deepened the experience of the insult of racial bigotry, prejudice and hatred. No one, not even those disgusting, bloody, scavenging vultures deserves to be referred to that way—as Jim Crows or as Uncle Toms. The magnitude of his indignation at the violence of the story's ending seems primed by his refusal of the jimcrow joke—Jefferson's joke, Ellison's joke—earlier on. It's simply not funny. By the story's end, he has a ready response to all this hatred, forcefully bringing to bear the pride of the Tuskegee Airmen and other heavy hitters of African American history and the Civil Rights Movement including CJ Walker, Booker Washington, GW Carver and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., right up through the election and presidency of Barack Obama. The (failed) joke turned insult directed against the buzzards enacts a becoming-buzzard of Randy who feels the racial epithets of the story personally but also hypothetically through the image of the birds. The transformation, in the story's final scene, of the
buzzard to a bird of flaming gold is recapitulated in Randy's stirring, sweeping and prideful monologue. The insult is real, it is serious and tarnishing, but there are a lot of resources to bring to bear in its contradiction. Here, the world has changed due to a shift in Randy's perspective. Engagement with the story and its insulting, insulted buzzards has enforced an unwanted, insulted perspective on Randy and has prompted a response. Now, one might argue that there's nothing new in the content—the historical knowledge—of Randy's response. But its deployment in the face of a personal insult potentiated by the story's imagery and action may be something new. At least it seems to present a newly aspected relationship to issues of racism and insult. It is a statement of collective and personal pride he punctuates by stating,

\textit{Randy}
\textit{an i realize there aint- nothin wrong with [this town].}

\textit{Rod}
{nodding}

\textit{Randy}
\textit{nothin wrong with [this town]. i lak tha town, so there you go. [session 4, lines 2425-2432]}

I have no doubt that Randy has here rewritten himself and his story in the face of his experience of the story.

\textit{Caught in the weeds (analysis, re-narration).}

We saw the becoming-ships of Betty and also her becoming stuck and then becoming unstuck through free flowing dialog with randy and others. Her experience of self-recognition in the story as well as in the experiences of fellow participants and then her experience of herself speaking aloud about what had previously been caught "inside," are already a re-narrating experience and point to possibilities for further revisions of her
typical ways of understanding herself and her stuckness. How will she carry forward her
ship-ness with its possibilities of (conversational) free flow? How might her laid back "country girl" raise its voice to hearing above the din at the water's edge? Again, these questions point to potentialities demonstrably enacted in our transcript-text.

*Loosening up (analysis, re-narration).*

Transcript-text segments demonstrate a movement in the direction of loosening-up on Ben's part. He came into our sessions as the strict and serious diagnostician, gravely delivering formal and concrete interpretations as in that early one about *John Redding's* family being in a cult and trying to say that he was gay (and remember the formal reply, "I concur," after I disagreed with him). It seemed that practice and exposure within the group to multiple perspectives shifted Ben's own perspective. We saw earlier how he seemed to struggle to describe a messy family circumstance. There I said that he seemed to fall back on clinical language as a kind of comfort. Still, he demonstrated a willingness to get into the fully contextual mess with the rest of us and try to figure it out. Several sessions later, Ben offered a thoughtful and *abstract* explanation of the Todd's grandmother's (dreamed) idiomatic expression, 'young man, yo arm's too short to box with God,' stating that "God gotta lot planned fa him ta be somethin else instead of a pilot. she sayin that you fightin with God when tha real plan is fa you ta be somethin else." If it does not represent a re-narration in itself, this movement into and across levels of hypotheticalness and metaphor within our transcript-text suggests possibilities of re-narration for Ben based on the operations of de-formation described here.
**Dissent and recusal (analysis, re-narration).**

The most blatant and overt action demonstrably undertaken by a participant must be Virgil's recusal from the final two sessions. Although some re-narration is, I think, clearly implied, its nature remains a matter of speculation. As I stated previously, I must take Virgil at his word: he left the group because he felt undefined tension and conflict building and did not wish to subject himself to their influence. Still, in the spirit of this investigation, all aspects and possible iterations of this action are fair game for consideration. All are in play. Among the most obvious possibilities is that his action represents the clearest of flight-lines, perhaps. A simple refusal of all stratification and territorialization. A protest against the historical racism and racial violence in the Ellison story. Against, perhaps, the White antagonist or the author or against me (another White antagonist?) for foisting it upon the group. Or, perhaps against what he perceived as my overly controlling facilitation and insistence regarding certain interpretations of the text.

Aside from obvious possibilities, two are most salient for me. One is that Virgil steadfastly refuses to "play the race card" on Todd's behalf. His refusal of race and our dispute and Virgil's eventual decision to leave represent an admirable defense of personal responsibility on Virgil's part. Second is the possibility that the inversions and proliferation of perspectives in Virgil's relationship to story characters and actions and the attendant implications for self-understanding may have become untenable for him.

As to the first possibility, my insistence on talking about certain elements of racism in the story may amount to attempting to make the story too much about race in an overarching sense. Virgil's resistance to this effort is a steadfast affirmation of personal responsibility and a refusal to resort to race as an excuse—refusal to "play the race card."
It may even be that my insistence has the obverse effect of critical practices and language in (White) literary criticism that obscures race—or the "Africanist presence"—in White literature, as Toni Morrison argues, robbing us of the opportunity of discovering "the nature—even the cause—of literary 'whiteness'" and the role it plays in the "construction of what is loosely described as 'American'" (1992). Perhaps it wasn't mine to talk about. Decrying the racism safely (hypothetically) contained in the story, I somehow made it alright for me to be there talking about somebody else's racism. It is an appropriation and cooption of discourse and an inadvertent power move. The White group facilitator in the absurd position of arguing to a group of Black participants that racism is really, really bad.

The story is not all about race and racism, but prejudice and the threat of racist violence permeates the action. Graves' appearance at the story's denouement seems to confirm the opposite conclusion—that it really is all about racism. His brutal fulfillment of Todd's worst fears suggests racial violence as an existential threat so great as to trump all other concerns. Issues of individual and relational psychology are muted, truncated by its activity. Todd's desperate wish to be considered an individual, apart from his race, is ultimately impossible, as is, then, Virgil's desire to consider nonracial aspects of Todd's predicament. Not only will the sharecropper, the white officer, and the southern bigot all consider him only as a representative of his race, ultimately we, his observers, even in the luxury of our unsolicited and unforced arbitration will judge him as the victim of racist violence. He will not get a fair hearing. His real errors and flaws forgotten or unacknowledged, the demons of his self-doubt unexorcised.
The second possibility is that the inversions that were in play within the becoming-blocks of which Virgil was part became too uncomfortable. After all, he was aligned with Jefferson but also with Todd. Jefferson was a man of wisdom, knowledge and understanding but he was also an "ass-kisser" and an "Uncle Tom" [session 3, lines 1645-1655]. In the same way that Todd's insults entailed the unflattering dimensions of becoming-Jefferson, Virgil's alliance with the old sharecropper is sure to be a mixed bag. In this inversion, in the multifarious nature of his affiliation with Jefferson, we see a similar general strategy: simultaneous affirmation and rejection of dominance that we saw in the old sharecropper's tall tale about flying in Heaven (Ostendorf, 1976) and in his strategies for 'coming by the white folks'. Something may have shaken loose in the midst of all those inversions that felt uncomfortable about Virgil's relationship to me as facilitator, as mental health authority, or to the clinic as a whole. Either way, the only possibility was to leave. The world has changed and the (narrative) self—and its actions—along with it.

**Self-re-narration (analysis, re-narration).**

I suppose that I am the one participant for whom I can speak with certainty as to particular re-narrations resulting from this study. And still, their ultimate trajectory and resulting attitudes remain uncertain. In the course of this document I have written myself into a new personal history and have mapped, tentatively, new territory based on changing conceptualizations of myself as clinician, researcher, and reader.

Specifically and most striking to me, the vernacularization of mental health talk, particularly in Ben's responses to "John Redding," has meant revisiting and confronting, in my own family history (Grandfather, bipolar), the vast difference between the
diagnostic label—its declarative, clinical significance—and the increasingly bizarre and confusing family circumstances it came to euphemize. It was a relief, a godsend really, to be able to pin all of the confusion and badness on that powerful little word. But the conceptual fix was temporary. The slippage between the label and the actuality it tried to represent was just too great. Too great to ignore and too great to adequately address for me and for everyone else it seemed. I might trace the beginning of my clinical career to that slippery metonymy. To a world that changed completely and to competing strategies for restoring order, coherence.
Discussion

Summary of Findings

The Findings have presented a close reading and interpretive commentary on the transcript-text, laying the groundwork for an Analysis section connecting the interpretations to organizing theoretical constructs. This structure of progressive distillation yields, I believe, a coherent rationale for the initial interpretive strategy and for the employment of literary fiction in mental health settings. Here, I summarize findings particular to the sessions and stories of this study as well as findings that may be generalizable to future research and clinical and community practice.

Particular findings.

*Ease of engagement.*

I was struck by how easily, seamlessly we "entered into" the fictional worlds of the stories we engaged. I suppose that I prepared to answer a lot of questions about why we should be reading this or that. This finding can be attributed to the voluntary nature of the group. Participants really wanted to be there and their actions supported their verbal reports that they enjoyed the group.

I noted earlier the lack of something easily identified as literary discourse related to this point. It has to do with enjoyment and with the inviting nature of literary texts. We get easily drawn into stories. We become them or become allied with them in the language of this study.
**Story selection.**

These analyses take note only of those activations that have passed a threshold of liminality, surfacing in language or affectation, thereby subjecting themselves to the short-handled dip net of exploration. Countless unseen activations, as suggested by Sarbin (2004) and Richards (Ransom, 1941) are inspired by poetic, imaginative engagement. No two reading groups would yield similar results—even given identical texts.

The selection of stories for this study presented the group with a good variety of potential loci of engagement or plugging in points. Local authors wrote in (mostly) familiar language about familiar settings and themes including everyday family life with its banalities and its struggles as well as familiar historical circumstances. That initial familiarity facilitated, I think, our relatively seamless engagements. No one seemed entirely left out or alienated by the stories, with the exception of Kipling's Rikki Tikki Tavi. Again, it was on our list by way of contrast, and it succeeded as such. A foreign author (authorial (imperial) voice or tone), setting, and world-presentation (the magical realism of talking animal characters) seemed enough to distance the group from significant engagement.

It is not surprising that the most and richest engagements corresponded to the stories with the greatest tension and most difficulty. My sense is that these stories, "John Redding" and "Flying Home," in our case, provided the greatest emotional workout for all of us. Recall the transcriber's note at the final end of our discussions of Ellison's story: "group seems weary of such serious talk." She was certainly right. This issue will reappear in Limitations and Future Directions, but it bears mention here: my awareness
heightened during the sessions of the degree to which our experiences with literary fiction are real experiences. That the family dramas and racial hatred and violence and threats of violence, because of the successful mimetic operation, act as powerful evocations of participants' past experiences and as present-tense experiences in their own right. That does not mean that I would shy away from difficult stories in the future, but it does bear constant awareness and care regarding participants' wellbeing. In the future I may elect to preview difficult stories for participants so that no one is entirely blindsided by such difficult material.

Attitude.

Todd's "Attitude problem," for me, arises from this study as a reverberating, illuminating literary image "alive with the life of living language" (Bachelard G., 1943/2002, pp. 2-3). Simultaneously, it is a particularized exemplar of vernacular language which proves to be far superior in its capacity for polyvalent description of complex, multilayered and heterogeneous circumstances than clinical, diagnostic language. I don't wish to overstate the importance of this particular finding, but I will never again hear the word in the same way. In future engagements with this story it will certainly arise, as it may in other literary and nonliterary therapeutic circumstances owing to the flexibility and breadth of its descriptive scope. But also in ordinary, idiomatic use, its aspects have much to say or question about point of view and about what it means to have a bad attitude or an attitude problem.\[^{16}\] As surprised as I was by the polyvalent fitness of the term attitude to the problem of Todd in the text-assemblage, I was struck by

\[^{16}\] I am thinking here as a teacher of undergraduate college students who hears this phrase frequently from students and colleagues alike.
the slow, continuous process of the emergence of that fit. I was actually the first one to utter the word attitude in the transcript, but the breadth of its application did not unfold until it had been worked through the text and through multiple participants' working over the text.

In the resonance we hear the poem, in the reverberations we speak it, it is our own. The reverberations bring about a change of being....It is as though the poem, through its exuberance, awakened new depths in us....The reverberation...involves bringing about a veritable awakening of poetic creation, even in the soul of the reader, through the reverberations of a single poetic image. By its novelty, a poetic image sets in motion the entire linguistic mechanism. The poetic image places us at the origin of the speaking being (Bachelard G., 1958/1994, pp. xxii-xxiii).

**General findings.**

*A three-part movement of literary imagination.*

Specific examples drawn from the transcript-text and explicated in the Theoretical Analysis repeatedly demonstrate a common trajectory in participants' engagements. Their engagements are productively described from the perspective of becoming and assemblage, transformations and, more specifically, poetic or linguistic de-formations are demonstrated to be entailed in their becomings, and finally, alterations in participants' ongoing relationships to contingencies of the broader world (with its multiplicity of assemblages) are described as re-narrations or proliferations of valence which participants will carry forward in indeterminate ways.
Broadly, there is a twofold justification for the assemblage-becoming perspective adopted in the study and in the analysis. First, it is a helpful language for describing what happens in the literary engagement which also entails valuation of creativity and innovation that matches my own sense of what is therapeutic—of what clinical psychology should be aiming for. Second (and related to the first), the very language of becoming and assemblage avoids the kind of objectifying subjectification that Foucault discovered in the medicalization of madness (Madigan, 2011). Attention to the uniqueness of moments and movements of assemblage (haecceities)—in this case, the movements of and within the transcript-text—removes the temptation and necessity of treating—describing and thereby constructing—individual, mentally ill subjects. Notice that the only diagnoses in this study are fictional ones. There are individuals, yes, with their own trajectories beyond the present study. The emphasis on assemblage, however, lends a balance in the direction of co-existence, collectivity, and emergence to the understanding of what it is to be a patient and a person.

**Vernacularization of mental health talk.**

We have seen the twofold de-formation of occurrences of mental health talk in our sessions. Diagnostic terms are held up in suspension so that we can better understand some of the ways they are used colloquially. Then, owing to the levels of mimetic hypotheticalness in the virtual playground of the fictional/poetic world, the terms are transformed radically enough so as to disappear altogether, replaced by rich and messy descriptions and polyvalent, anexact (poetical) language that nonetheless seems more accurate than clinical descriptors.
Mental health terminology exists, ostensibly, to lend a common language to mental health practitioners and a systematic classification for sufferers so as to facilitate the alleviation of their suffering. As such, mental health discourse has an important place and important tasks to perform. But we also know, thanks to Foucault and others (Foucault, 1961/1988; 1971/1972; Parker, et. al., 1995), that mental health discourses participate in the construction and maintenance of the objects they purport to describe and classify. They reify the processes of dis-ease that they wish to cure. And, from the present study, we know that they are frequently inadequate to the description and understanding of complex, radically contextualized, real-life circumstances that are mimaetically represented in literary fiction. Instances of mental health discourse in our sessions appeared to stop conversation and debate, flatten character(s), centripetalize the constellation of their assemblages, and territorialize complex circumstances according to their reductive nosologies. These instances and uses of mental health talk cannot, then, open possibilities for heterogeneous encounters of the kind that encourage self-re-narration in Ricoeur's sense. Diagnostic language relies on routinization and standardization for its usefulness. But it leaves us stuck retracing our discursive steps, pacing the same worn and problem-saturated ground. However, we have also seen that as mental health discourse encounters the de-formations of literary imagination, it tends toward colloquial uses that encourage precisely these kinds of experiences of renewal. In the process of the becoming-vernacular of mental health discourse, possibilities are opened for re-imagining and re-narration. Stories move us. Even if they move us in unpleasant or difficult directions, we move through those difficulties and move on (the cathartic function of Tragedy relies in part on this narrative feature).
I find Ricoeur’s work, cited in the Introduction, is in keeping with the value of novelization and multiplying perspectives. He argues for enhancement of narrative identity through critical consideration of the fictional character’s situation at a threshold between continuity and historical specificity. This is a movement toward a kind of narrative or imaginative flexibility in fiction readers. The result is not simply to make us better readers of fiction, but to potentially alter individuals’ perceptions of and therefore their co-constitutional decisions and practices regarding the realities they live each day. Imaginative flexibility is implied in Deleuze & Guattari’s serial worldview symbolized by the “and…and…and” that replaces the categorical worldview of “either…or…” (1980/2005). It is the difference between inclusion of a variety of perspectives by asking about the conditions of possibility for each (how is this possible and what are its implications for the world?) and exclusion based on inflexible categorical and often binary thinking and discourse. Medicalized mental health and diagnostic discourse usually corresponds to the latter, less flexible, worldview.

Vernacularization is a democratic movement or power shift, restoring authorship—the authority necessary for the (re)creation of narrative identity—to the person. It wrests authority, in part, from the typical power-holders: institutions and their practices and discourses that do not necessarily want the power and control that they wield by default. Responsibility for selfhood / subjectivity is too great a burden for our helping professionals and institutions. They are already burdened beyond their ability and beyond reasonable expectations for what they should be able to do. Assigning identities is an activity beyond their scope. Fiction reading and discussion groups return authority as well as responsibility for this task to consumers (clients). The kind of critical
consideration of the vicissitudes of emplotment described by Ricoeur cannot be imparted by a therapist as part of a psychoeducational group session; this work is un-manualizable. The work must be done by and through individuals and groups, its outcome always unpredictable. It fosters self-efficacy as it builds a body of community-sponsored and client-centered knowledge and self-identification. Rather than creating and reifying its own wisdom, in this kind of activity the community mental health institution supports and ratifies its clients' capacities to understand and create meanings for themselves.

**Building communitas.**

Another finding not specifically investigated in this analysis, but indubitably present in the study's execution, involves my sense of the reading group as appropriate to a philosophy of community mental health that emphasizes cultivation of healthy and vital community. Ritual elements of our gathering, like the regular time and place of our gatherings and the food (not meals, but tasty breakfast treats) we shared, that are common to other kinds of group activities are part of this sense. But other elements seem more specific to fictional engagement. These more specific elements include the shared becomings through identification with story elements and characters as well as the sharing of personal associations and experiences that followed on these textual engagements. Assemblage is, perhaps, a colder word for community.

Reading together is a particularly community-building experience, as described by Cowan: "in contrast to the ordinary, hierarchical, standardized, and competitive operations of society, governed by what [Victor] Turner calls Structure, *communitas* provides an intense experience of the equalitarian, diverse, and cooperative mode of Anti-Structure" (1993, p. 14). Communitas is cultivated when groups—temporary unities
assembled for creative purpose—follow their own inner direction, while at the same time they are guided and grounded by the texts under their consideration. Anti-Structure forms culture and provides the "rich and multifarious" life of a society by providing non-deterministic spaces and opportunities in which participants are free to redefine themselves in an expanded "moral cosmos." The analogical and dialogical engagement of individuals within the author-text-reader assemblage recapitulates the radically contextual nature of the fictional story world—rich in the incessant, fresh particularity that enlists emotion and attitude. The individual becomes part of a larger world, the communitas of puzzling together over uncertainties of great importance to ourselves and others who have become our fellows through the endeavor.

Hospitality seems natural to these gatherings. Maybe this has to do with the inversions and multiple (hypothetical) roles, including multiple iterations of hosting and being hosted (guesting?)—and reversals across threshold between these two—involving in becoming-other in the text assemblages. We puzzle over dimensions of the text. We negotiate disagreements and their resolutions or lack thereof. We practice living with certain tensions and disagreements. And we also struggle with getting, literally, on the same page with one other.

Implied in Ricoeur's possibility of self-re-narration is understanding that others can tell their stories and re-tell and revise them too. And that we do this all of the time. This is akin to the experience and development of empathy. Fiction reading is practicing with the mutability and co-constitution of everyday experience. Current and ongoing neuroimaging research (Mar, Oatley, Djikic, & Mullin, 2011; Mar, Oatley, Hirsh, dela Paz, & Peterson, 2006) suggests that fiction reading stimulates mirror neurons in parts of
the brain implicated in human empathetic responses. The present study finds concordant evidence in the language of reading and discussion participants. Becoming, transformation and re-narration are empathetic movements. Part of what participants are doing is "becoming" each other, becoming the characters they read about, becoming, in a larger sense, the world. Becoming is also belonging; coming to be housed in a world that is, in part, of our own making. It is shaping and forming the world in our own image, reducing, perhaps, our own alienation. You can have your moon. I’m sticking with my tree frog.

Limitations of the Present Study

Story selection.

As noted above, the story selection had its intended effect, streamlining engagement among participants with the noted exception of the Kipling story. That said, story selection was haphazard except for the local connections. In the future, I will experiment with selections differentiated by thematic content and genre at least. I wouldn't shy away from difficult stories but I might provide some warning in the spirit of a specific continuation of informed consent so that participants have a better sense of what's coming. I feel participants were a little blindsided by the difficulties of the Ellison story.

Facilitation.

Re-reading the transcript-text, I found myself critical of a lack of focus and consistent point of view in my facilitation of the group. Through the present study and analysis, however, I can envision the kind of perspective I would like to develop as both
facilitator and critical commentator. Broadly, this perspective will attempt to adopt an optimal hold on the tension between fidelity to text-assemblage and to the possible perspectives (valences) related to it.

**Analysis.**

Similarly to the noted limitation regarding facilitation, the analysis lacked focus, certainly in the beginning. Again, the findings of this study provide coherent rationale for the method and interpretive strategy eventually adopted. This rationale will guide future research and practice and will certainly continue to be refined.

**Recommendations for researchers.**

Each statement of limitations is its own recommendation for how to do something differently the next time. Specifically I would make three recommendations at three levels of abstractness. First and most abstract, it may only be possible to identify one's critical perspective in retrospect, with the coming-into-view of the phenomena of interest. Still, I will plan to build that reflection more intentionally into the research process at earlier steps, so as to work (facilitate, analyze) more intentionally from that process and to be able to revise that process along the way. I think this would partly alleviate my sense of having intervened somewhat haphazardly and then having to reflectively interpret those interventions entirely in hindsight.

Second, at a moderate level of abstraction, I would streamline the data collection and analysis process as much as possible to allow analyses to inform the group process. Rather than collecting an entire body of recordings for transcription and analysis after the conclusion of the group, I would develop specific but not deterministic criteria for
selecting data segments from the videorecording viewed in the days immediately following each session. Then only those segments could be transcribed and analyzed in detail. While there is a satisfying sense of completeness in the transcripts included here, I am not convinced of their usefulness for research or therapeutic purposes. Undoubtedly, given this procedure, one might miss significant sections of text and what happens in the reading of text that cannot be or is unlikely to be noticed without close reading of complete transcriptions. One possible solution to this problem would involve in-session preparation for initial analysis. The facilitator would, during sessions, as we read, mark passages to return to for analysis. Therapeutic listening is wanted here. Significant pauses and interruptions, errors, etc. all get noted in the margins of the original text during sessions and these notations serve as the initial guide to analysis and data selection once the researcher returns to the recording to select segments. This activity has to be natural and simple enough not to distract from the facilitator role. Perhaps a confederate, collaborating participant or co-facilitator would be helpful here.

Finally, concretely, higher quality audio and video recordings from at least two camera positions might greatly enhance analysis of verbal and nonverbal dimensions of group interactions. This is particularly important for the rhizomatic perspective adopted here. After all, everything counts--every smirk, stutter and nod contributes to our assemblages and may become relevant data for analysis.
Future Directions

Future data collection will include participant productions in the form of interview transcripts, written commentary, personal story, and/or guide questions generated in part from current and future transcript data. This will facilitate expanded evaluation of the re-narration aspect of the movement of literary imagination reported here. In a similar vein, it may be possible to evaluate self-story productions from mental health clients for specific narrative and poetic elements that suggest movement (change) of the type sought in narrative therapies, i.e. Ricoeur's self-narration in other ways (re-narration). The next step, then would be experimenting with various aspects of fictional texts to determine what aspects of reading group assemblages foster development of effective self-re-narration strategies.

It may be possible to apply this kind of work to specific (diagnostic) populations. For example, I envision evaluating combat trauma narratives produced by veterans who do and do not (or no longer) suffer symptoms of PTSD to determine whether there are systematic narrative differences between them. Again, the next step would be to experiment with literary engagements that foster those particular narrative elements found in non-PTSD narratives.

Bibliotherapy.

I have resisted application of the term bibliotherapy to this project for two reasons. First, the breadth of its application renders the term imprecise beyond helpfulness. It is used to refer to any use in a clinical (or educational) setting of any printed material, and some include songs and film in this category as well (Duffy, 2010; Cohen, 1994). Second, specific therapeutic outcomes are explicit in reading prescriptions
(McArdle, 2001), even if some of those outcomes are broadly conceived in terms of personal growth. An instrumental approach to literature is not in keeping with my perspective here. I have described the open-ended and unpredictable nature of the narrative transformations that may be seen in reading and discussion, and so I am reticent to identify particular therapeutic outcomes for such a group. However, the current project is obviously germane to bibliotherapy, and the current research may fruitfully dialog with other empirical and theoretical work in this field, particularly the relatively smaller branch of the practice that employs works of fiction.

Bibliotherapy with fictional texts has been informed primarily by psychoanalytic theory (Cohen, 1994). The difference between a psychoanalytic perspective on literature and the rhizomic, Deleuzian point of view presented here presents ground for potentially fruitful friction regarding literary interpretation and therapeutic use. It seems to me that the psychoanalytic focus on the constructs of individual psyches (intrapsychic dynamics) necessarily occludes dynamic transformations (becomings) happening (among diverse components of a reading assemblage) in real time, so to speak, during the reading and discussion of fictional works. Bachelard decried the instrumentalism of a psychoanalytic approach to poetics and literary imagination, writing that the psychoanalyst, whom he called a victim of his own method,

inevitably intellectualizes the image, losing the reverberations in his effort to untangle the skein of his interpretations.... For the psychoanalyst, the poetic image always has a context. When he interprets it, however, he translates it into a language that is different from the poetic logos. (Bachelard, 1958/1994, p. xxiv)

Rather than attending to the transsubjective, "pure sublimation" of the productive
imagination, the ego psychologist seeks antecedents in the poet's history that explain her productions or else in the reader's history that explain his reactions in terms of ego defenses, in either case, according to Bachelard, explaining "the flower by the fertilizer" (p. xxx). The image and the text are merely tools for the discovery of unconscious conflict on the part of writer or reader. They are afforded little merit of their own. The Deleuzian (and Bachelardian) perspective offered here places the text and its images, characters and themes on equal, if virtual, footing with readers and authors and attends to the reading assemblage as a playground for unpredictable becomings and transformations, the likes of which we have seen in this study. This perspective on textual assemblages may offer a fresh direction for practice and research in the field of fictional bibliotherapy. All that said, the bibliotherapeutic works cited here present thoughtful, insightful approaches to clinical uses of fiction and to its investigation--Cohen from a phenomenological and Duffy from a Jungian perspective. I am hopeful that my work will enter into dialog with theirs and with other representatives of the best work in bibliotherapy.

**Narrative therapy.**

I have made numerous references throughout this report to the theoretical underpinnings and the goals and techniques of narrative therapies of the type advanced by White and Epston (1990). I envision enacting further research and practice in the literary mode reported here in concert with narrative therapy practices because I perceive the two to have compatible goals. The aim of the therapeutic tools that comprise narrative therapy is to assist persons in identifying various narratives or storylines in their lives—the heretofore dominant ones that contribute to the formation and maintenance of
problems as well as alternative and subjugated ones that present possibilities for alternative and preferable ways of living (White & Epston, 1990; Madigan, 2011). This therapeutic aim accords with mine in this project—enhanced capacity for re-imagining and re-narrating oneself and one's circumstances through engagement with poetic texts.

I share an affinity for the narrative and textual metaphor that White and Epston chose for their controlling metaphor for human experience. My emphasis leans more heavily to the literary and imaginal, but White and Epston relied on literary theory along with poststructural and other theoretical backgrounds in advancing their theory and practices, which include a vital role for imaginative work on the part of the narrative therapist (1990, p. 16). Madigan (2011) notes that the original title for Narrative means to therapeutic ends was to be Literary means... and Michael White has described his practices as working toward "therapies of literary merit" (1990, p. 17). White and Epston close their book with a quote from Bruner extolling the virtue and power of literature to open us to the range of possible worlds, and as an instrument of freedom, lightness, and imagination (p. 217). Madigan even uses the term "literary critic" to describe the role of one who would integrate narrative theory, research and practice, though he designates cultural behavior as the text to be analyzed (p. 140) (which opens my project to the accusation that it is an ironically literal-minded answer to his call).

Narrative therapy is presented as set of corrective therapeutic tools against a background of unsatisfactory mental health assumptions and practices. Chief among these are the formalization and categorization of persons through clinical language and writing and the construction of persons as atomistic individuals subject to the authoritative master discourses including those of mental health and illness (White &
Epston, 1990; Madigan, 2011). My analysis has demonstrated that literary engagement undercuts these very elements of mental health discourse through the novelizing (vernacularizing) influences of literary imagination and language.

From the preceding discussion it is clear that I envision incorporating the kind of imaginal, literature based work of this study into future research and clinical work in conjunction with more traditional narrative therapy aims. The anti-individualistic perspective espoused by narrative therapy practitioners informs their efforts to cultivate "communities of concern" that offer persons a relational and multiperspectival context within which to re-understand and re-story problems (Madigan, 2011, p. 70). Reading groups also support the goal of community building and they do so in a way that subverts the well-accepted but problematic dictum within psychotherapy that interventions are always for the sake of the patient. This seeming truism has been called into question in ongoing disputes over what to call recipient of services—patient, client, consumer, etc—the ones for whose sake we act as therapists. The therapist as reading group facilitator is not one who is responsible for curing or healing a sick patient. Rather the mental health practitioner is a community story-gatherer and story teller whose value to the community has more to do with perspective and attitude, than with theory or technique.

Perhaps this is just another among many (many) metaphors for the therapist. This one certainly challenges established theoretical understandings and presents a potential upending of traditional dominance hierarchies and power relations among patients and practitioners. It will appear threatening to some traditional practitioners because it deflates the power and importance of therapist by elevating other voices to authoritative status. And, the therapist-as-critic still adopts a privileged vantage point (point of view)—
in a sense he is a professional point-of-view-taker—but the power differential is substantially different because authority is exercised on different planes. The therapist-as-critic comments not on individual "clients" but on assemblages and becomings.

Reading groups may be thought of as a part of or adjacent to individual or group narrative therapy designed specifically to aid in the production of preferable self-stories. But the groups do not have this as their primary purpose or aim. Their primary function is learning of the type fostered by poetic imagination and the cultivation of communitas through mutual endeavor. This research has been for my sake every bit as much as for the sake of other group participants (and not just in the production of a doctoral dissertation). I have gained from new perspectives on mental illness and its operation in families and communities, social stigmatization, race, racism and personal responsibility, among other topics. I have learned through my participation with the group and the stories we read.

The present study represents the early collection a body of local literary criticism—mythology—that will be of direct use to present and future community members. I imagine future participants producing their own texts—commentary on read stories as well as stories of their own lives that will form a local canon for future poetic engagement. As readers we are, as Murray tells it, apprenticed in a workshop produced by and whose products include "the whole range of human possibility and endeavor," and whose products are given ultimately back to the world as boons that will, hopefully, "enable [us] to avoid confusion and destruction, but also will enhance [our] own existence as well as that of human beings everywhere" (1973, pp. 22-3). Thus we act from and for the sake of the world.
Works Cited


Appendix A

Recruitment Instructions

Instructions to Treatment Team members regarding subject recruitment and participation in research study, Gathering around the text, principal researcher, Rodney Teague, MA

Dear Mental Health Treatment Team members,

Please consider recommending that your clients, as you deem appropriate, participate in a new reading group and research study forming soon here at the Clinic Central Mental Health. I hope the group will be a good recreation and socialization opportunity for mental health consumers, and the research project will provide data for the completion of my doctoral dissertation.

Appropriate participants will be MH clients (consumers) who want to participate and whose level of cognitive and social functioning would, in your professional opinion, allow them to participate in a reading and discussion group. Diagnosis is less important than level of impairment here. Serious mental illness should not exclude a client from consideration, although cognitively disabled consumers who are unable to give appropriate consent for the study should not be invited or recommended for participation.

The following is a suggested transcript for describing the project to potential participants:

“Would you like to participate in a reading group and research project that will be starting soon in our clinic? The point of the research is to find out what, if any, benefit people may gain by reading together and talking about what they have read. The group will decide together what to read—probably short stories or plays. You may have the opportunity to read aloud in the group but you will not be required to do so. If you are interested, let me know and I will put you in contact with the person who will facilitate the groups. You will have an opportunity to learn more about the project, ask questions, and then to decide whether or not to participate. If you do decide to participate, you will be asked to sign a consent form. At no time will you ever be forced to participate in the project. Even should you give consent to participate, you will have the option to withdraw that consent and quit the group at any time without penalty.”

Please note that participants will be asked to sign a document giving their informed consent to participate in the study. The consent form (attached for your information) indicates that participation in the study will not involve risks greater than those present in their everyday lives. However, the form does note that something they read or hear discussed in the group could be disturbing and that if participants find themselves so troubled, they should consult with their regular therapist or with MH Clinical Director, Name. The consent form also indicates that, even after having given consent, participants may withdraw from the study at any time and without penalty. If you feel that a participant is experiencing undue emotional distress as a result of participation in the study, please bring your concern to the attention to myself and to MH Clinical Director, Carol Booker.

Thanks very much for your assistance and support in initiating this project!

Warmly,
Rodney C. Teague, MA
Doctoral Candidate in Clinical Psychology
Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, PA
Psychology Faculty, Tuskegee University
Office phone: 334-727-8136, Cell: 412-657-7504
email: teaguer@DUQ.edu or teaguer@tuskegee.edu
Appendix B

Consent Form

DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY
600 FORBES AVENUE ♦ PITTSBURGH, PA 15282
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

TITLE: Gathering around the text: Therapeutic elements in a nontherapeutic group setting

INVESTIGATOR: Rodney C. Teague, M.A.
Duquesne University Department of Psychology
600 Forbes Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15282
412-657-7504, cell

ADVISOR: Eva-Marie Simms, Ph.D.
Professor, Psychology Department
412-396-6515

SOURCE OF SUPPORT: This study is being performed as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the doctoral degree in Clinical Psychology at Duquesne University

PURPOSE: You are invited to participate in a research project that seeks to determine what, if any, benefit may come from participation in a small literature reading and discussion group (6-12 participants) to meet once weekly for a total of six 90 minute sessions. Specifically I want to compare the ways we will talk about mental health and illness with the ways we will talk about the stories we read and discuss together. Once the group begins to meet, we will decide together what to read and exactly how to proceed. In addition, I will ask to interview you at the conclusion of the study about your experience of the group. Reading group sessions and interviews will be videotaped and transcribed, then analyzed. Finally, I will ask to share study results with you after its completion. This session will not be recorded.

These are the only requests that will be made of you.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: The risks of participation are generally no greater than those encountered in your everyday life. However, you may read, hear, or discuss some things that upset you. If you become upset, please talk to Clinical Director Carol Booker, your regular therapist or another Treatment Team member. Also, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Benefits of participation include opportunities to socialize with community members. In addition, I believe that
as we get involved in other people’s stories we improve our abilities to tell and retell our own.

**COMPENSATION:**
Participants will not be monetarily compensated. However, participation in the project will require no monetary cost to you. An envelope is provided for return of your response to the investigator.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:**
I am requesting your permission to access your institutional records regarding demographic and diagnostic information. No identifying information will be used in reporting the results of this research. Only de-identified data will be reported, and only for the purposes described in this consent form. All written materials, consent forms, and video tapes/files will be stored in a locked file in the principal researcher's home, accessible only to the principal researcher and dissertation advisor. Participant records will be maintained as such for up to two years after the completion of the research and will then be destroyed by fire.

**RIGHT TO WITHDRAW:**
You are under no obligation to participate in this study. You are free, at any time, to withdraw your consent to participate as well as any data you have provided. There will be no penalty for withdrawal from the research study.

**SUMMARY OF RESULTS:**
A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to you, at no cost, upon request.

**VOLUNTARY CONSENT:**
I have read the above statements and understand what is being requested of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that should I have any further questions about my participation in this study, I may call Rodney Teague (412-657-7504), Eva-Marie Simms (412-396-6505), and/or Dr. Paul Richer, Chair of the Duquesne University Institutional Review Board 412-396-6326.

___________________________________  __________________
Participant's Signature             Date

___________________________________  __________________
Researcher's Signature              Date

Appendix C
Research/Transcription Assistant Confidentiality Pledge

I, __________________________________, pledge that in my capacities as a research/transcription assistant for the qualitative research project, Gathering around the text: Therapeutic elements in a nontherapeutic group setting, principal researcher, Rodney Teague, M.A., I will adhere to all institutional guidelines and good faith principles regarding privacy of research participants and confidentiality of research data. I will not reveal any information regarding research participants to anyone outside of the research team. This pledge pertains to the time I am involved in the project and extends beyond that involvement in perpetuity.

__________________________________________  __________
Research/Transcription Assistant Signature  Date

__________________________________________  __________
Rodney C. Teague, M.A., Principal Researcher  Date
Appendix D

Transcription Guide

Transcription Guide:
- Document & page heading:
  rtgathering:session#:yourinitials:dd.mm.2011
  page # of #
- Refer to R Teague as “Int” (interviewer)
- Group members referred to by first initial
- Use following transcription conventions (Drew 2004):
  - Pause
    - (. ) too short to time
    - ( ..) less than 5 seconds
    - ( ... ) more than 5 seconds
  - Overlapping utterances enclosed in square brackets [like this]
  - Period indicates full stop with falling intonation “." 
  - Question mark indicates rising inflection (not necessarily a question) “?”
  - Stretched-out words or sounds indicated by colons (“:”) with the number of colons indicating the degree of stretching
  - Breathing
    - Inhalation = “. h” Length indicated by number of h’s
    - Exhalation = “h.” length indicated by number of h’s
    - Audible aspiration indicated by “(hh)” within the speech in which they occur
  - Degree symbols (“°”) for softly or quietly spoken speech
  - Sound stress indicated by underlining stressed portions
  - Heavy emphasis indicated by CAPITALIZING
  - Marked pitch changes indicated by slashes as follows:
    / - forward slash = rising intonation
    \ - backward slash = falling intonation
  - Unclear speech placed (in parentheses). If speech cannot be made out at all, indicate by “(unclear mm:ss)” where “mm:ss” reflects duration of indiscernible speech.
  - Your observations & notes in {squiggly brackets}

Brief example:
00:01:00
Int
(2) WELCOME, everyone, to our first reading group session. (.05) Did everyone get a muffin [who wanted] one?
G
[I didn’t see muffins.] I’M HU::NGRY. {smiling, laughing from other group members}
Appendix E
Session Transcripts

Session One

00:00:00

{Daphne, Sophie, Rod; television (“Price is Right”) playing in background (waiting room) audible through open door of conference room. This room is for staff meetings and psychiatry conferences scheduled every few months. These conferences are likely the only times participants have gathered in this room until now. }

Int- make sure this is workin (...) tryin to make sure all this technology is workin out [for us]

Daphne & Sophie- {[tentative laughter]}

Int- still got this microphone cord in the way...but we’ll deal with that. {sits} So, ah guess Jackie went to [get some of the others from the back.]

Daphne & Sophie- [mmhm]

Rod- Oh, please, help yourself, there are some blueberry muffins my wife made last [night] and sent with [me], so please help yourself.

Daphne- [huh!]

Rod- I didn’t manage to make it in with a cup a pot of coffee this mornin, but, uh, got some muffins anyway.

(...)

Sophie- thank you

Rod- you’re we’-come

{Ben enters}

Rod- hey Ben, how are ya? Good to see you. Good mornin.

(...)

Rod- come on in

Daphne- good morning

Ben- (inaud)

Rod- { to Connie} c’mon in. have a seat, have a seat. Help youself to a grab a muffin over here if you wish. Blueberry muffins

Connie- (inaud)

Rod- little mornin snack
Sandra-hai hai

Rod- good mornin
good mornin

Sandra- good mornin

Rod-how’s
everybody?(/)

Sandra- alright (/)

Rod- good?

Sandra- mmhmm

Rod- good. Please have a seat around the table this way. Um. yeah, watch that microphone cord. I hope that won’t get in your way too much.

Sandra- (inaud.)

Rod- okay

Sandra- {sits and grunts}

Rod- Betty, how are ya this mornin?

Betty- (..) I’m doin’ fine. How’re you doin’?

Rod- doin [fine thanks]

Betty- [that’s good]

Rod- did you get you a muffin? Please help yourself. Grab a blueberry muffins over there.

Betty-you know I ha some fresh blueberries at home.

Rod- oh yeah? We got some from, well, kind of a neighbor—somebody that lives down the road from us there [in near] Notasulga.

Betty- [yeah?] I put em in my freez in my fridgerator

Rod-[that’s] what we did. [Yeah we]

Betty- [I love em.] [I got a (gallon) bag]

Rod- [yeah I love bein able to just pull em outa there]. We gt a big ol gallon bag of em too. It’s great. Especially when you go but them in the store and they’re so expensive [there.] I felt good havin em in the freezer.

Betty- [yeah yeah, right!]

Connie-{to Daphne} [there’s a crumb on your mouth] {gestures}

Daphne- {wipes mouth}

Rod- you get it? Okay.

(...)
107  Sandra- awright!
108
109  Rod-is that gonna be very much in your way? That cord?
110
111  Sandra-sir?
112
113  Rod-the cord?
114
115  Sandra-{looking around} is the cord? Lemee see. Um, no sir, unless it...
116
117  Rod-as long as it’s not in your way its fine.
118
119  Sandra-okay
120
121  Rod-as long as its not in your way.
122
123  Rod-well, let’s see, who else? I know randy’s not gonna be with us today. And did, ok, I guess we
124  should, [Everybody, everybody signed a consent form, right? Everybody]...has a copy of that
125  form, right?
126
127  [{confirming nods and vocalizations from group}]
128
129  Rod-everybody has a copy of that form, right?
130
131  Betty- {to sandra} Sandra, did you sign this?
132
133  Sandra-oh...
134
135  Rod- you don’t need to have it, you don’t need to have it with you. Did you do one with me?(//)
136
137  Sandra-umm.. not her, she wasn’t with us that day.
138
139  Betty- I ff, I ff, but I did one. I filled it out.
140
141  Rod-yeah, you got it.
142
143  Sandra- ok she did hurs
144
145  Rod-yeah, there’s Sandra’s
146
147  Sandra-[okay, okay there] she is
148
149  Rod- [okay good] (...) okay. So um, [Hey Virgil]. What’s goin on?
150
151  Virgil-(hey not much)
152
153  Rod- okay I guess this is us. I think Randy was gonna be out...
154
155  Betty (oh I found my) papers
156
157  Sandra-(you signed your papers? You signed your papers?)
158
159  Rod- yeah everybody, I think everybody did. So welcome!
160
161  Sandra- we’come [we’come we’come!]
Rod- [I’m excited to get started] {to Virgil} didja getcha a muffin?

Virgil- no, I don’t want one

Rod-oh, okay. Well, you guys help yourself.

Sandra- you didn’t come last week didja?

Rod-nope, nope, this is this is a [this is number one.]

Sandra- [oh, okay, oh okay]

Rod cause last Monday was, um, the 5th, kindof the Fourth of July Holiday.

Group- uhmmhm

Rod- so uh, yall kinda know eho I am, but I’d kinda like to start by in, in introducing ourselves

would that be okay? Just to sorta make sure we all know who we are just os because we’re gonna be workin together a little bit and havin some conversations. You know my name’s Rodney and uh

I work at Tuskegee University currently and I live in Notasulga where those blueberries came

from uh for about the last two years and uh I live there with my wife and two little boys. One five years old—he’s gettin ready to start kindergarten in about two and a half weeks. Whihc is comin up pretty quick. {to betty} I was tellin you about that the other day.

Betty- yeah

Rod- and, uh. And the other one’s two years old and we’ve got a little um little girl on the way [um...in November, yep yep yep] so we’re excited.

Group members- [aww]

Rod- and let’s see, what else do I need to tell you? When uh, some years ago when I was livin and workin in Dallas...workin for my father in law actually at a nonprofit educational institute...uh a place...it was like school, but not like a; a college. It was for schoolteachers and business people and just people from the community to come in and read together, poetry, philosophy, whatever.

So it wasn’t like a university, it was a place in the city where people came together. And we did some work with a, a community mental health institution very nearby there where we read together, just inda like we’re [gonna do now.]

Sandra- [okay]

Rod- and a lot of the participants—it was just voluntary, it was just something that they did if they wanted to on a Friday and we all read together and visited and many of them said at the end of their program there... that that was really... that was something they really enjoyed doin-they really liked doin. And so this research project is a an attempt to say why? It it if that’s beneficial, if that’s helpful in some way, or if that’s at least enjoyable, how come? So that’s what I’m lookin at in doin this research. And uh, I think I mentioned to most of you that I’m tryin to finish up a clinical psychology degree which means that I’m a therapist or a clinician and that’s my training anyway. But I also came to psychology because i like literature because i like to read. And i find a lot of interest and enjoyment in that (and I think and I hope) I hope maybe [we will too.]

Sandra- [mmhmm]

Rod-okay, well, that’s more than you need to know really about me, and you’ll learn more as [we go along.]
Sandra - [mmhmm]

Rod - well, would yall mind introducing yourslef? And just say anything you want to about
yourself, you don’t have to tell a story, but you could if you’d like. {to Connie} would you mind
startin’?

Connie - alright. Well my name’s Conniebery ______

Sandra - Sandra ______

Rod - did you want to say anything else, [Connie?]

Connie - {laughing} [oh, no.]

Rod - {laughing} okay. Awight, awight. Sandra, thank you. Alright

Ben - Hi I’m Ben ________ (my home, ah) is confidential. Um and I’m attending Harvard
Medical School, continuing medical education right now.

Rod - I see [you’ve got]

Ben - [yes]

Rod - that um, medical encyclopedia. That is a very daunting looking book. That is a big book,
right there.

Ben - [yes]

Rod - alright.

Ben - it’s tough

Rod - yeah, that’s tough stuff. Okay, alright Ben.

Virgil - my name is Virgil ____.

Rod - okay, thanks

Betty - my name is Betty ________

Daphne - my name is Daphne ________, and I’m a secretary.

Rod - alright

Sophie - my name is Sophie ________ and I’m attending King James School... GED.

Rod - oh, that’s great, okay, that’s great that’s great. Is that here locally? Here in town?

Sophie - yes.

Rod - what’s your...uh when will you complete that GED?

Sophie - possibly... I don’t know.

Rod - okay. How long you been workin on it?
Sophie — since last year
Rod — since last year — okay, alright, great.
Sophie — now it’s going into a new year.
Rod — yeah, alright. Well, so far as... we kinda said Monday would work for us — Monday mornin. We’ll try this for now, see how it goes. We’ll meet for about 90 minutes, about half an hour. The other question is then, then what should we read? And since this is our first meeting, I selected a couple of stories that we can get started with anyway. Um, and I’ll tell you how I selected them in a minute. But what I want to say is that if you have some suggestion, if you have some authors that you like or a short story that you remember that you want to find or get me to find, I’m perfectly open to that. I don’t have an agenda so far as what we read.

Betty — pointing to Sandra — she reads a lot
Sandra — nods
Rod — yeah, okay, well Sandra if you want to suggest a story or an author or whatever, um, we can sure talk about that...
Sandra — what I been readin? [The stuff that I been readin?]
Rod — [well, think about it and...]
Sandra — i readin about this doctor he’s uh hes a doctor and hes a married to this lady but he has a he has plenty of patients and he said he really like on this on his family hes kinda like slowly he dont know he confused. He likes the patients then he married but he really likes the patients and [he]
Rod — [uh oh]
Sandra — he done already done kissed the patients [already] {laughing}.
Rod — uh oh, uh oh, I see big trouble comin... {laughing}
Sandra — in the book he say he just lookin for love. He tryin to find love somewhere. I didn’t finish all that. He say he lookin for love (...) but by her bein so by her bein a patient you know he kinda scared to be really in love with her cause you know she’s she’s a patient and he’s thinkin about her feelsin cause she’s sick you know really a sick person.
Rod — okay, right
Sandra — but he just lookin for some love (/) He just lookin fa somethin someone ta love (/)
Rod — well, okay, if you think about it and you want to look for some particular story, that’s fine. I picked a couple of short stories I figured short stories might be good for us to start with instead of something really long that we’d have to pick up from week to week and we might not even be able to finish. These stories, I’ll go ahead and pass pass these out here. {passing} take one and pass. This one was written by Zora Neal Hurston and the reason I picked this one is she was born in Notasulga.
Betty — oh
Rod — she’s an author who wrote in the middle of the last century in the 1900’s and she was born in Notasulga so she lived in this area for a little while and then she was part of she went up to New York and was part of what was called the Harlem Renaissance
Rod—you know, African American authors and artists and musicians...and so she was part of that. And then she came back she lived in Florida lived I think and then died in Florida in the Florida panhandle. So she wrote about the South and so I thought that was a good connection for us. The other one which we may or may not get to today, was written by Ralph Ellison—Is that name familiar to [you? Do] you know that author?

Rod—Ralph Ellison wrote The Invisible Man and wrote about that same time uh and he was born in Oklahoma which is where I’m from. I grew up in Oklahoma City and that’s where Ralph Ellison was born. But then Ralph Ellison came to school at Tuskegee so he was here for a little while before he went to New York and wrote as part of the same...uh... movement. So I thought that would be a...connection, one way to get started. ...um, well whatdo you say? Should we get started with that John Redding Goes to Sea? And and we can start a couple different ways. I’d like for us just to read aloud (/), read out loud (/), ad we can kind of volunteer. Does anybody feel like they might want to read out loud today. I mean I’ll start or you can start if you wanted to Ben. Do you want to do that?

Ben—ok

Rod—And what we can do is just read a few paragraphs maybe or read a little bit and then talk [about it]

Ben—[ok]

Rod—and see what we get from it and then go from there. Okay?

Ben—John Redding Goes to Sea. The villagers said that John Redding was a queer child. His mother thought he was too. She would shake her head sadly and observe to John’s father: Alf, it’s too bad our boy’s got a spell on him. The father always met this lament with indifference if not impatience. Aw woman, stop that talk bout conjure. That aint so no how. All done wat john to get that foolish in him. (...) Rod—that’s kindof hard to read right there isn’t [it ben?] Ben—{nodding}

Sandra—[it is, it is]

Rod—[right, I mean you did great] with it, but

Sandra—[(it is hard to read)]

Rod—what’s she doin there? Why’s that hard to read right there?

Sandra—(it’s...)

Ben—broken English

Rod—it’s broken. She’s writing in a kind of dialect in a kind of broken English that’s exactly right so it’s kind of difficult on purpose. So what kind of dialect is that? What does that look like to you what does that seem like?

Connie—broken down English.
Rod—yeah.

Ben—it’s kind of southern like.

Rod—yeah, exactly, exactly.

Ben—it’s like

Sandra—its like phonics

Betty—it’s southern

Rod yeah, that’s exactly right. So that’s part of hat she’s doin. So that’s part of what she’s doin. So it kindof looks funny and it’s like, what is that word? And sometimes I [have to I’m not even sure.]

Sandra—[mmhmm]

Rod—but we’ll just we can kind of work through it and see what we [what we get from it]

Betty—(i catch myself) sometime talkin like that cause I was [born in the country]

Rod—[sure], sure

Betty—... country girl

Sandra—(..)

Rod—ok, good, Do you want to keep goin, Ben? Are you good to keep goin?

Ben— uh, yes.

Rod—okay.

Ben—Caws you allus try to know mo than me. I aint so ignnorant. I knows a heap mawself. Many and many people been drove outta they sense by conjuration of rid ta beat by witches. Aawll keep on tellin ya woman it taint so. Blieve it all ya wantto but dontcha tell maw son none of it.

Rod— what is she talkin about conjuration? What’s whats she talkin about?

Connie— (inaud)

Virgil— act that occurs that a person things come about like spells or whatever and things like that in they mi::ind or whatever. What they summoned up or whatever.

Rod—right right yeah I think so and so they start out saying that John Redding is a queer child, weird kid, he’s this weird little boy. Somethins weird about im. His mom sez to his dad, he’s got a spell on im. Ad he’s sayin to her... dont talk to me about spells that’s nonsense—dont get that nonsense in his head. That’s pretty much [...]

Sandra—it aint violent is it? []

Betty—[uh huh]

Sandra—[okay]
Rod- The story?

Sandra-uh, um, the...

Rod- The spells?

Sandra- con conj

Rod- conjuration?

Sandra- yeah

Rod- conjuration can be kind can be kinda some scary stuff. Yeah I think that’s part of why his father doesn’t want any of that talk around. Don’t talk don’t talk that nonsense that’s what he’s sayin.

... 

Derk- it seems as though that... the family is in some kind of cult tryin to conjure spirits and their sayin that the boy he’s not in it and they’s tryin to say that he’s gay (..)

Rod-[well that’s]

Ben[that’s what I’m gettin out of it]

Rod-okay, alright, so that “queer” makes you think that right? [Where it says] he was a queer Child

Ben- [yeah]

Rod-[I think and (...) I’m glad you bro’t that up. I think when she was writing this, was before that word had anything before that word had anything to do with gay. So what does it mean?

Mmhmm

Rod- aside from cause we know that meaning of it. ( ) if we describe somebody as queer, we’re describing a sexual orientation. But it it aside from that, what does queer mean? Does that...

Ben- [would a wuld a...]

Betty-different

Connie-[differnt!]

Rod-[jest different(/)]

(other inaud.)

Ben- [homosexual]-i’m not gonna say gay cause gay is bein happy; hap gay is bein happy. That jus. That means happy. Sayin uh homosexual that’s what queer she’s [sayin.]

Virgil-[(a fa:ag)]

Rod-[I don’t think so] cause in the same way that gay means happy, queer just means different.

Queer means weird.

Mmhmmm
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Rod-so I don’t think she’s talkin about him—cause he’s a kid—so he’s not he’s not homosexual, he’s just different. So that everybody sez man the kid is different. What is it about im? That’s a weird kid. Right? And his mom sed I think he’s got a spell on im. Somebody put a spell on im. And his dad sez nah, he’s just weird. He’s just a weird kid. So I think that’s where we are to begin with to begin the story. But im glad you bro’t that up. Cause when we see that “queer” in there, we got to figure out what she’s talkin about [(..)]

Ben- [I concur]

Rod-okay. Ben, you want to keep on reading? Keep goin?

Ben-I’ll pass (somebody else)

Rod-that’s fine. Anybody else want to volunteer?

Virgil-I’ll read. Uh, you keep on tellin me. Believe all you want to but don’t tell my son none of it. Perhaps John was puzzling to the simple folk there in the Florida woods for he was an (imigrant)

Connie-[imagina, imag]

Others-[imaginative]

Virgil-imaginative child and fond on daydreams. The saint john river flow a scarce 300 feet from him back door and at its banks at this point grew numerous palms that luxerate

Rod-luxuriant

Virgil-luxuriant mangolians

Rod- magnolia trees

Virgil- magnolia trees, and bay trees with a dense undergrowth fern cat tails and rope grass. On the block boossum of the stream flowed millions of delicate colored (h:::hanakins)

Rod-hyacinths...flowers

Virgil-okay. The little brown boy loved to wander down the water edge and castin his try twigs watchin them sail away down the stream to Jackson Jacksonville and the sea. The wide world of John Redding wanted to follow them.

Rod-so, she says there than ten so we know john is ten years old john redding is ten years old and she says that he is puzzling to the people there in the woods.

Daphne-can I get some water?

Rod-sure please. Is there a cup or something out there that you can get some water in?

{Daphne leaves to get water}

Rod-okay. So he was strange because he was kind of this daydreaming kind of child. And thats I think what she starts out when she says he was a queer boy? I think that’s what she meant just that he’s kinda in his own world. He [lives in his head]

Virgil-[unfamiliar]
Rod-huh? Yeah, unfamiliar to the rest of them. Yah. He’s just daydreamin. He likes to go off to
the river and play in the sticks and particularly what he likes to do is float these sticks down the
stream and watch em sail off and he imagines them goin all the way to the ocean, right? (...) I
think that’s what we got. Alright Virgil, good job readin. You want to keep goin’?

Virgil-yeah.

Rod-awight

Virgil-sometime in his dreams he was a prince ridin away in a ...g::g

Connie-gorge[ous]

Virgil-[gorgeous] carriage. Often he was a knight astride a feery charger prancing down a white
shelley road that led to a distant land. Other times he was a steamboat captain, piloting his craft
down the st john river to where the sky seemed to touch the water. No matter what he dreamed, or
what he fantasss

Betty-{whisers} fantasised

Virgil-fantasized, himslef to be, he always ended by riding away to the horizon for in his childish
ignorancy, he thought this to be the farthest land. But things twigs John called his ships did not
always sail away. Sometimes they would be swept in among reeds growin in the shallow water
and be held there. On on, one day, his father came upon him scolding the weeds for stop his
seagoing vessels. I’ll stop right there.

Rod- okay, awright, anybody else who wants to go?

Daphne-I’ll go.

Rod- okay, please.

Daphne-let go ma ships, you old mean wud, weeds, (john screamed and stamped impotently) they
wants to go away, go away. Let em go on. Alfred lay his hand on his son’s head (.) lovingly.
What’s matter son? Ma ships pa, the chile answered weeping. I wants em to go away off and them
old weeds wont let them... well, well, do’n cry I dun tho’t you wuz a grown man. Men don don
don cry like babies. You mustn take it too hard bout you ships. You gotta get ister things getting
tied up. Thes lotsa folk that (fl) something that didn’t cetch them up and hold them. Alfred’s
brown face grew wistfulfor a moment and the child noticing it asked do weeds tangle up folks too
pa? nah nah nah nah child, (ooo) child don be takin too much stock of what ah say. I talk in
parables sometimes. Let’s go on tuh supper. Alf took his son’s hand and started toward the house.
Soon, John broke the silence. Pa, when I gets as big as you a
re I’m goin farther than them ships.
I’m goin to where the sky touches the ground.

23:39

Daphne-Well son when I was a boy, I wuz goin too, but here ah am. Ah hopes you have bettah
luck than me.

Rod-it’s its kinda easy to get caught up in her dialect there, right isnt it? Well, So should we stop
there and say awright what’s happened so far what have we got here. Good job, good readin.
What’s goin [on in this]

Daphne- [thank you]

Rod- little part ... that we just [read?]
Daphne-the little boy (talkin bout) his ships.
Rod- yeah, those little sticks that he floats off down the stream?
Daphne-yeah
Rod-ad some of em what happens to em?
Betty- get stuck
Rod-they get caught up in the weeds, right?
Ben-yeah
Rod-and he’s kinda cryin about it right. Those mean old weeds they caught my ships up...
{Group laughing}
Rod- and his daddy’s talking to him I tho’t you wuz a man what’re you cryin about? Little weirdo boy—right? is what he’s sayin. And he says i i wanted [them to go away all the way to the sea.]
Sandra- mm:::mmhhmm::mm
Rod- I wanted them to go away. and his father said well son, sometimes it gets caught up like that.
Sandra- that old ship
Rod-yeah. And he and e says and John Redding sez to his father when I get big like you, daddy, I’m gonna go away. I’m goin all the way to the horizon, right?. Like in his [dreams, right.]
Sandra- [he seem] like he may go, really, he he (inaud...doin the paragraph but he fillin the speeches and poems) bout the ships
[He seem] lak he makin um rilly, he see he he doin para/graphut he fillin his speech is in po::ems...bout tha ships
Rod- I think so too [right]
Sandra- [uh:huh (V)]
Rod- he’s thinkin about himself goin off [to the sea]
Sandra- [uh::huh(V)]
Rod-and then he sez to his [daddy]
Sandra- [yeah]
Rod- now wait a minute, do those weeds catch people up in em too? Do people get caught too?
Sandra- [uh::huh(V)]
Rod-so we’ll see what we’ll see what [where that’s goin]
Sandra- [he’s still] imaginin [things]
Rod- yeah, right
Sandra- In [that imagination]
Virgil- {quietly} [can I read?]
Sandra- [paragraph]
Rod- [you want to?]
Virgil- yeah
Rod-go for it

Virgil- pa, I betcha ah seen somethin in the woodlot ha aint seen. See that tallest pine tree over there, how it looks like a skull with a crown on top? Yes indeed, said the father looking toward the tree, it do look like a skull since you call ma tension to it. You imagine (loosier) things nobody else ever did, son. Sometimes, pa, (...) that old tree waves at me right after the sun goes down and makes me sad, scared too. Ah pec speck yall scared of the dark, (tha tha som som) sonny. When you git bigger you won't be sic of sic. Hand in hand, the two trudged across the plowed land and up to the house. The child dreamed of the day he should wander far country and the man of the days when his might have. Thus they entered the kitchen. Matty Redding, john's mother, was settin at the table for supper. She was a small weary woman with large eyes that may have been beautiful when she was a young, but too much weeping had left them watery and weak.

Virgil-Matty, Alf began as he look as he took his place at the table, dontcha know our John is different from all other childs round? He (may may) (loos) he's goin to the sea with his when he gets ris. When he gets grown. (and I reckon all of them im.) The woman turned from the stove, skillet in hand, Alf, (you aint gonna tell is you). John cant help wontin to stray off cause he got a spell on im. But you otter be ashamed to be in-coura[gin]
Connie- [encourage]
Virgil-encouragin encouragin him. Aint ah done tol you forty times not tuh talk that lowlife mess in front of mah boy? Well, if th' aint no conjure in tha world, how come mitch potts been layin on the back six months and the doctor cant do ( .) no good. Answer ( ?) that. The very night John was done born, Granny saw old witch Judy Davis creepin outta duh yawd. You know she swor the fix me fuh marryin you way from her daughter, Edna. She put a travel dust frm dust down fuh mah child. That's what she done. Thus make him walk wy from me and even since he been able ta crawl, he been tryin tuh go. Matty, a man done never no travel dust tuh make it wanter hit de road. It just comes naturally fur a man tuh travel. They all want to go at some time or other, but they cant all get away. ah wunt mah John tuh go and see cuz ah want to go mahself. When he cum back ah can see them furen places wit his eyes. He cant help wanting (...) to go cuz he a man child.
Rod-should we stop there and see where we are? Again, it's easy to get caught up in this. Especially in her, in the when the mother's talkin when Matty's talkin, um its hard to get. So they're arguin about spells again, right?
Virgil-talkin bout his son and stuff, he he dont want nobody to talk about his son cause you know feelin down about the way everbody keep talkin about him how how his behavior is [goin]
Rod- [right]
Virgil—and then you gettin deeper and deeper into it like he got spells and witches and people leavin out the yard.

Rod-ye:ah, and what specifically is the spell his mom thinks is on him and his dad says nah, its just cause he’s a man-child; just cause he’s a boy. Men want to travel, right? That’s what Matty sez is that he got this travelin dust that’s what makes him want to [uh]

Betty-[to leave]

Others-(inaud)

Rod-ye::ah (/) sez when he gets big hes gonna go away. he’s gonna go off to the horizon and out to the sea, see these foreign places and his mom thinks that’s a curse that was put on him by the old witch—what’s her name—that wuz creepin out of the yard the same night he was born, right?

Group-mmhhmm

Rod- and his daddy sez na::aa(), come on Matty, that’s just because he’s a man(/). Men sometimes want to [travel.]

Sandra-[mmhhm]

Virgil- [(name)]

Rod- he sez uh he sez I wanted to go when I wuz a young man too.

Sandra-that’s right

Rod-and he sez when he come back here I’ll be able to see those foreign places through his eyes. I’ll be able to kind of live through him, whatever he’s sees. Yeah, whatever he sees.

Virgil- Edna?

Rod-is that the witch? old witch...? {lookin at text}

Virgil-I think so.

Rod-think... oh no, Old witch Judy Davis.

Virgil- Judy Davis

Rod-ye::ah um, she swore to fix me fur marryin you way from her daughter Edna. Cuz thaht old witch Judy Davis wanted Alfred to marry her daughter, Edna, but Matty married him away from her so she put a curse on her baby is what she was sayin. S’what Matty was sayin... okay, good, Lijah, you wanta keep goin or you want [to let somebody else go?]

Betty-{raises hand}

Rod-you wan to go Betty?

Betty- {to Virgil} can I read?

Eliajh- go ahead!

Betty-Okay, right here (beside) Mrs. Redding?
Betty—Mr. Redding promptly went off into a fit of weeping. But the man and boy ate supper unmoved. Twelve years of married life had taught Alfred that, far from being miserable when he swept, his wife was enjoying a bit of self-pity. Thus John Redding grew to be. To a manhood, playin, studying and dreamin. He attended the village school as did most of the youth about him, but he also went to high school at the county seat where none of the villagers went. His father shared his dreams and ambition but his mother could not understand why he should wish to go strange places where neither she nor his father had been. No one of their community had ever been farther away than Jacksonville. Few indeed had ever been there. There own gardens, general store, and occasional trips to the county seat, 7 miles away, suffected for all their needs. Life was simple indeed with these folk. John was the subject of much discussion among the county folks. Why didn’t he teach school instead of thinking about strange people and places? Did he think himself better than the gals therabouts that he would not go a courtin any()? He must be fixed as his mother claimed. Else where did his queer notions come from? Well he was always queer and one could not expect a man to be different from the child. They never stopped to stop work at the approach of Alfred and inquire after John’s health and ask when he expected to leave.

Rod—okay, one second Betty. Thank you. Just a real quick pause here. Um, so what’s happened here? A lot has happened in this just two paragraphs here.

Betty—[mmhm (he ...)]

Rod—[he’s grown] up, right

Sandra—[mmhmm]

Rod— All these gals like him all these girls like him but he wont go he wont go after em. So i think maybe people around the town are saying there’s something wrong with [that boy]

Betty—[mmhmm]

Rod— He’s different and it continues on he continues to be a different sort of child than everyone expects to see. ... And you know also I’d say this, maybe one way we could proceed is whenever we’re reading, if anybody wants to say okay, I don’t understand what’s goin on or comment or somethin just go ahead and do that. We can stop at any point and say I didn’t get that sentence or what does she mean by that or anything else. But I’m sorry to interrupt, Betty, if you want to go ahead, please...

35:54:2

Betty—ok. Oh, Alfred would answer, jus as soon as his maw gets reconcilled reconciled to the notion. He mi:ghty du:ful. (.)
Rod—he's a mighty (/) dutiful boy().

Betty—he's a mighty dutiful boy, maw john is. he done wan hut her fillin. the boy had on several occasions tried to reconcile his mothuh to the notion, but found it's a difficult task. Mattie alus took refuge in self-pity and tears. Her son's desires were incomprehensible to her, that was all. she did not want to hurt him. It was love, mother love, that made her cling so desperate to John. lawd knows she wuld sigh, I nevuh wuz happy and nevah spect to be. ah from yo action, put in alfred hoatly, you determined not to be. right, tha's right, alfred, go on an abuse me... you al...

Rod-you allus does (laughing) [that's hard...]

Betty-you allus does. I knows ahm (...)

Virgil-(softly) I'l:gnant

Betty—mah ignorant and all dah, but this is mah son. Ive rared and bored him. he ant help from wontin to grow roving cause travel dust beeen put down fuh him but maybe he can cur him by discouragin the idea the idea. Well hah wont mah son duh go and he wont duh go too. he's a man now, Matty, an wus mus let John row his own row. If is travelin, twon be for long. He'll a come back to us .. bettahn than when he went off. what do you say son? mama, john began slowly, it hurts me to see you so troubled over my goin away but I feel that I mus go. I was s:s stregenatin(?)=

Rod-stag'nating=

Betty-stagnating here...This ins inda um...=

Virgil-indalent=

Betty-indalasin atmosphere...will str:iive..

Rod-stifle

Betty-will stifle every bit of ambition that in me. let me go mama, please. what is there here for me? Ah sometime ah get the feelin just like a lump of dirt turned over by by the plow. jus where it falls there ewhere it lies. no thoughts of movin or nothin. i wanna make myself sumthin, not jus be where ah wuz born. now john, it's bettahn fuh you to stay here and take over the school. Why don't you marry and settle down? Well missus Redding said, pursing her mouth

Rod—oh, we missed, we missed one line in there I think.. why [don't you marry] and settle down

Betty-[oh, oh] okay, I dont wunt(/) to mama(), I want to go away. well, said miss reddin, pursing her mouth tightly, you ainta goin with my consent... i'm aorry mama, that you wont consent= I am goin nevertheless. Jawn, Jawn, ma ma baby, you wuld(n't) kki:ill you po: mama...wuld you(?)

come kiss me sone. The boy flung his arm around his muthuh and held huh closely (all turning pages) closely while she sobbin on his breast. To all her pleas, however, he answered that he must go. ... Ah'll stay at home this year mama, then ah'll go fuh a while but I wont be long it wont be long. ah'll come back and make you and papa oh so happy. do you agree mama dear? ah reckon tchu ah reckon tain muthin ta fuh me to do else. things went on very well around the reddin home for some time. durin the day John helped his father around the farm and did a great deal of reading at night ... then the unspected happened. John maried stella canty, a neighbor's daughter. the courtship was ardent on jahns part at lest. he danced with stella at the candy pullin, walked with her gone and in three weeks he declared himself. Mr {mrs} reddin declared that she was happier than she has ever been... in huuh life. She therenfore indulged in a whole afternoon of weepin.

John's change wuz ocassioned by by the fact that he that stella wuz really beautiful. He was young and red-blooded and the time wuz spring.
Rod - what happened there?

Virgil - he changed dramatically...[.]

Rod - [it changed dramatically], right(?) {laughing}

Sandra - [uh:huh] (/)

Virgil - he started workin around the house workin wit his fa:thuh read, readin at night an 'en ee also wen stuck went in courtship wit dis girl named...

Connie - [Stella]

Betty - [stella]

Rod - [Stella]

Sandra-Stella

Virgil-Stella Canty. step married=

Rod - mhm:hmm(/)

Virgil - so for ya know everythins goin good cause his mama say you know hay can't have her consent tuh tuh tuh get huh consent tuh le:eave

Sandra - [mhm:hmm] (/)

Virgil - so she sed=

Virgil - he sed he would [stay] den

Rod - [right]

Sandra - [mhm:hmm (/)]

Rod-right, cuz he kep sayin no mama I got to go I got to go, and then in the next breath he sed, well alright I'll stay around here this year and maybe I'll go after that. Then the next thing you know, he's workin round the house and then he gets married..what's ha:ppenin here? {laughing} he's changin his tune a little bit, huh(?)

mmmhhmmm

Rod - but o'course mama's happy, right? he got married, he's doin what she sed shea wanted him to do, uhm, settlin down... a little bit. Uhm, she's funny, right?

Betty - mhm

Rod - seems like whenever she's happy she goes ta weepin.

Betty - mhm

Virgil - ri:ight
Rod-(..) okay Betty, you want to [keep readin] or you want sombody else ta
Virgil-(??) {hold up finger}
Betty-let sombody else
Virgil-[I'll read]
Rod [it gets a] little tiring after a while didnt it?
Betty-he'll read {indicates Virgil}
Rod-anybosity else who hadnt read yet? no? okay go ahead Virgil.
0:43:01.6
Virgil-okay, springtime in Florida is not a matter of peepin violet or burstin bulbs merely. it is a riot
of coluhs and natural blistering (green) leaves pink blue purple yellow blossoms that fairly
(stagger) in the the the visitor front frm the north. the miles of the (hyacinths) lies in a .. what's
that?
Rod-undulating carpet
Virgil-undulating carpet surfacin the river dividing (reluctantly...) The night and white night white
night for the moon shine down in splendor or in the absebse of the godliness the sole darkness
creepin down the ladder in normal sense the heavy fragrance of magnolia mingled with the
delicate sweetness of jasmine and wild roses.
Rod-what's she what's that paragraph we just read that starts springtime in Florida? what's she doin
there do you think?
Virgil-uh, per, preparin for like the seasons ta change
Rod-descri::bing [the natural world]; right
Virgil-[how the seasons change]
Rod- [right talkin about all the diferent flowers] the riot of different colors yeah [the season
changing to spring]
Virgil-[the seasons change]
Rod-it's such a thick description [that you can almost [smell] it} {gestures
virgil-[you know how you start you start [smell]}0:44:27.3 {gestueres} you know i say roun you
got a lot of roses come round yoh house you start smellin yoh rose yoh bush yoh flowers, you
know start smellin the green you know all the trees come to life in the spring.
Rod-right right right, okay good thanks.
Virgil-keep goin?
rod—please! yeah

virgil—if the time or pro...

rod—propinquity

virgil—propinquity con...

rod—conquered john

virgil—conquered john, what then? these forces have overcome older men. the rapture of the first few weeks over, john began to santer on the grate greta gaze wistfully down the white dusty road or wanader again to the river as he had done in childhood. to be sure, he did not send forth twig ships any longer, but his thoughts would in spite of hisself, stray down the river to Jacksonville, the sea, the wor wor wide world of poor home-tied john redding wanted tro follow them. he grew silent and p p pentense, hmm peses

rod—pensive... means [thoughtful]

virgil—pensive, mattie accounted for this by her ever-reedy explanation in conjure. alfred sed nothin but smoked and puttered about the barn more than evuh. stella accused her husband of indifference and made his life miserable with tears of...

connie—cusination

virgil—cusination of and howling and at last john decided to bring matters to the head of the broach and broached the subject to his wife. stella dear, i want to go roving about the world for a spell. would you stay here wit paw and maw and wait for me to come back? john, is you crazy sho'nuff? if you don't want me, say so and I can go home to mah folks. stella darling, I don't want you=

rod—i DO want you

virgil—i do want you but i do but i want to go away too. i cant i can ..have..both if you let me. you let me. well, beets, we'll be so happy when I return. nah john, you cant rush me off on one side like that. you did not haff marry me. they plenty of (others) that's wuld have been glad enuff ta get me. you knowed i wasnt educated before before what that is before what?

rod—uh, i you know i wansnt educated befo'han...[its beFO'han]

virgil—beforhand [] do not make me too conscious of my weakness. stella, i know I should never have married with my inclination, but it is done now. no use no use talk about what is the past I love you and I want to keep you but i cant stifle

rod—stifle

virgil—stifle okay stifle thats long thats long for the open road rolling seas for people and countries i have never seen. i am suffering too. i am paying for my rashness in my marriage marryin before i was ready. im not trying to shirk my duties. you'll be well-fed and cared for in the meanwhile.

0:48:41.8

rod—what is he tryin to do now?

0:48:45.3

Virgil—he sayin he want to [leave & travel]
Sandra- [mm:hh:mm]

Virgil- the world. she sayin she sayin she [want]

Sandra-[cause] {expansive stretching gesture}

Virgil-she sayin if he wanna leave then she go [back to huh folks.]

Sandra-[ {begin similar expansive stretching gesture}] 

Rod-right, [right]

Sandra- [yeah!]

Rod-why'd you mary me in the first [place...(if you're just gonna take off like that)]

Sandra-[yeah!!] cause he still magination bout them ships...[..he still] {end stretch}

Rod-[right, right] it's funny too, that that little passage about the springtime where she describes
the spring its like the first few weeks of their [marriage]

Rod-everything's just beautiful [and and you can]

Sandra-[mmh::hmm]

Rod- imagine they spent a lot of time in their marriage bed [maybe]

Sandra-[mmhh:mm]

Rod- and everythings just great and then all, in not too::oo(/) long(\)...old John gets a little restless
again, right and he starts to think about traveling. gets that kind of travelin itch, he said I cant stifle
that longing for the open road, the rolling seas [fur people]

Sandra-[mmhhmm(\)]

Rod-and countries I've never seen, you know, so now he's thinkin maybe he wants to travel and he
says well now if you'll let me I can have it both ways.

Virgil-yeah.

Rod- {laughing} yeah, good luck with that one, right? [good luck john]

Virgil- [he was sayin] (he also was sayin) he was tryin to shirk his du' ties [..like]

Rod- [right]

Virgil- put em asi::ide, youknow he's married, obligated to [her]

Rod- [right]

Virgil-at the same time but he wuz doin have some ple:e'sure ti:me

Rod- right right, just sum time to im[self](\)
Virgil-yee:ah

Rod-she kinda seems ta say uh:uh, jon i dun think u can have it both ways. you you you got me
now, you made ur decision=

Virgil-right=

Rod-right [ 'n ahm not] gonna let u just go an have ur cake an eat it too=

Virgil-[see day] cee lyk bak in nem dayz day nnt just ..d-part from one another they mostly stayed
with each other the.. full time they did travel they travel together=

Rod-mmhhm=

Virgil-the whole family went ( places) t'gether.. like day:n't go just go taw:n b'o:ut sooin world
like on .. whatchacall dat.. comin to america, "gotta go so ma ro:al o:oats" {laughs}

Connie- {laughter}

Rod-{laughs} exactly, exactly soin oats thats right... you do that bfore you get married, [right], is
kinda the idea, yeah.

Virgil- {laughs} [RIGHT, right]

Rod-what about? did anyb anybody ever, a:anybody anybody have a longing for the open road
sometimes? (..) [kinda want to travel?]?

Connie-[smiling & nodding vigorously]

Betty-{raises hand} [mmhmm, I did.] If ah culd drive, ah wuld jus go.=

Connie- we' he(/) sed(\) dat she(/) uh makin him MIS'rble. nn heez, sheez mak him MIS'rble 'do.

Rod-yeah, he's feelin styfled n stagnant agin=

Sandra-yeah=ya no wut h wut wut he mean by, he mint by sayin he was stagnant bfore like a like a
still pool o water [that doesn't] flow anywhere. right, that's stagnant water n'you know wut
stagnant water's [like], right.

unknown-[mm::hh::mm]

Virgil- [sti::ill()] wuhter

Rod- reel still, what duz it git like?

Virgil-roten [n 'n..]

rod- {laughs} [yeah,] 'n mosquitos breed in that stagnant water and like..swamp water right? not
like flowing [water], which is what he loved that St. John River=

Virgil-rig[ht]

Rod-[right] where he liked to let the ships sail off all the way to the sea, 'n he feels like he's
stagnant there in his marriage. why did he decide to get married then? [why did] he do that?

Virgil-[cu'] see, cuz see, what it is [wuz]
Betty- satisfy his mutha {softly}

Connie- [SATISFY HIS MUTHA]

Rod- satisfy his muther I think=

Virgil- dat wudn't tha reeson./=

Rod- why? (why do yu think)

Virgil-(..) reason wuz he jst stuck arou the story sed he stuck around the house n deci:ided to get marrid=

Rod- mmkay, yeah, so..?

Virgil- he diin he diin his muther didnt influence him to get marrid, she tried to influence him to stay at th' hou oh ah from leavin=

Rod- right=

Virgil- then he just came about to get marrid.

Rod- the longer he stayed, then that just seemed like the [thing to do?]

Virgil- [yeah, decid to get married]

Rod- and he rilly it seemed like maybe he rilly fell for that girl, stella, right, he rilly liked her. it sed that he wuz pritty passionate when cort'n her. you know. he danced with er he walked er home and [just thre w] at the candy pull, yeah, and in just three weeks he he sed ee wuz in luv with er, yaknow. so ee so ee rilly fell for er, but then after ee got er just a little bit o time goes by and ee gets that--you ever herd that term 'wander lust'?=

Connie- yeah=

Rod- herd that kinda wander lust, he gets that wander lust agin with the roads callin him and he wants [to go off...]

Virgil-[he gets da notion to do other [things] in his mind and ponder off [again].

Rod- [right] [right] I think so.=

Virgil-kin I keep goin?

Rod- YES, please, any, er anybody else, anybody else with ah question right now er comment. [go ahead Virgil]

Virgil- [John] John...

0:52:24.1

Virgil- john, folks allus sed you wuz queer an tol me not tuh marry you. but i jus luv you so i culdn't hep it and now ta think you wunt ta sneek off an leave me?! but i'm comin back, dahlin, listen stella. but tha girl wond not wuld not. mattie come came... lets see. but the girl wuld [not]
wuld not, wuld not listen to him, i think.

virgil

wuld not. mattie came in st an stella fell into ha arms weepin. john's mother immediately took up
arms against him. the two women kep up sech an ff=

connie
effective=

virgil

fective wah gainst him for the next few days. finally alf was forced to take his son's part... page 4?

rod

data page 8...

virgil

matty let dat ar boy alone an ah tells you.. eef he wuz a ho homebuddy he be drove way by you all
racket. well, alf, dat all we po womenkind do. what wont owah husband, owah sons, john. you
wife know aint he aint aint go go i mean got no business to be talkin bout goin no nowhere. i
lowed that marryin stell wuld settle him. yazzah yazzah, dat's all wimmen study bout settlin some
man. you take all the git up outta him. just let us fellas make a motion tuh gettin somewhare and
some oh man begin ta uh ho.. hollluh. stop there. where you goin? dont fuhget you belong tuh me,
my ... gawa, gawa=

rod

ma GAWD, [i think she] sed. ma GAWD, Alf.

virgil

[ma gawd] Ma GAWD, Alf, what you reckon stella gwine do? let john walk off an leave huh?
naw, git out a huh fool foolishness, and go long wit him. he'd take huh. stella aint goin. stella stella
aint got no callin ta go crazy cuz john is. she aint no woman ta be floppin round from place ta
place lak some of (?)

connie
[(these?)]

rod

[(these?)]
lak some o these=

virgil

lak some o these (reps follerin' a section gang)...

0:56:00.4

rod

d..the..., what's this war about? right now, john's mother and father are havin this was, this battle,
she describes it as a war. and its back its back to the same old battle. what's it about?

virgil

leavin

0:56:11.4

rod
[yeah, about] leavin or stayin right? [(...)]

DIS

virgil

[...(]) and he sayin, he sayin dat uh let tha fellahs be tha fellas

sandra

[mm:hh:mm (/\)

rod

{laughing} ri:ght.

virgil

and nen she sayin..uh she sayin I think he sayin he wunt stella ta go wid him

rod

yeah he suggests that stella should go wid hi[m]

virgil

an she sayin she dont wanna be floppin around...[(...)]

rod

right

virgil

leemee see wher it say that

rod

yeah, floppin round from place to [place?]

virgil

[floppin] around from place to place

rod

right(\') exactly. so its kind like, its a little of this battle o the sexes thing, right? {gestures} you and

John's father sez 'you women always wanna make a man stay put'. and she sez you men always

wanna run off and leave us and uh leave your obligations. its that kind o battle they're havin back

an forth...

virgil

keep goin?

rod

yeh, unless anybody else wants...

connie

yeah, [i'll try an (.)]

rod

[wanna pick it up?]

connie

the man turned ab'ruptly from his wife and stood in the kitchen door. a blue haze hang over tha

river and alfred alfred's attention seems fixed upon this. in reality, his thots were turned inward. he

was thinkin of numerous occasion when he and his son had sit on a fallen log on the edge of the
water and talked of John's proposed travel. He had encouraged his son and given him every
advantage his own poor circumstance would permit and now John was home tied. The young
man suddenly turned the corner of the house and approached his father. "Low papa,
0:58:00.6
connie
'low son. Where Mama and Stella? The older man merely jerked his thumb toward the interior of the
house and once more gazed pensively ... toward the river. John entered the kitchen and kissed
his mother fondly.
0:58:00.6
virgil
fondly. "Great news Mama. What now? Got a chance to join the navy Mama and go all around
the world. Ain't that grand? John, you shurnly aint goin uh leave me an Stella is yeh? Yes I think I am. I
know how both you feel but I know how I feel also. You preach to me the gospel of the self-
sacrifice for uh...uh...
0:58:00.6
virgil
Tha happiness
for the happiness of others but you are a unwilling to practice any of it yourself. Stella can stay here,
i am going to support her and spend all the time I can wid her. I'm going. That's settled. But spend all
the time I can wid her I am going that's settled. I'm going. I want to go with your goodwill. I want to
do something worthy of a strong man. I have done w nothing so far but look to you and Papa for
everything. Let me learn to strive and think—In short, be a man.
1:00:00.4
connie
naw, mm jawn, awl nevuh...
rod
awl nevuh
connie
awl nevuh
virgil
give
connie
give mah... [consent]
virgil
[consent]
connie
our na, ah knows youse hard headed jus lak ya yo paw, but ef you leave this place ovuh mah ma
head, ah nevuh nevuh wants you ta come back heah ... no mo. ef ah wuz led on the coolin board
(ah don') wun you standin ovuh me young man. Don even come near... come never {SNEEZE} ma
grave you you on grateful wretch. [uh]
rod
[wow, so what's] what's she sayin there? im sorry connie. what's she sayin there?
sandra
[mmhhmm/]
connie
ok
sandra
[mmhhmm/]
virgil
ah, i ah picked up on som stuff. [on point] one,
connie
[ungrate, he's ungrateful]
virgil
at first, she wuz sayin he wuz a queer, now..he tha ta tha breech o the point, now she dont wunt
him ta leave /
rod
mmhhmm
virgil
sayin he wuldnt date women an all now she sayin she dont wunt him ta leave period..
rod
yeah, she dudnt wunt him ta go [she wunts him ta (..)]
virgil
[like she dudnt wunt him ta leave period] like she attached ta him wunt ta keep him around that
house dont wunt him ta grow up ta be what he his fantasy is=
rod
right=
virgil
what his desires are=
rod
mmm
virgil
she dont want him ta approach them in LIFE so .. now to an got to the point she tellin us she don
even wan his at his grave at huh grave.
rod
right right she sez that what wuh you gonna say Connieberly? she sez if you go now, i dont even
want you standin over me when i die. youre dead to me. I dont want you comin back round here
any more. I dont even want you around my grave, if you go. thats pretty strong language for him
to hear
from his mother, isn't it? she's really, kinda turned up the pressure. she kinda ramped up the pressure a little bit, you think sandra?

sandra

mmhmmm, yeahup/... but he said they preach the gospel bout doin thangs but they don't show show up thangs he say he but he want uh make better fuh himself

rod

he sez you mama you been he sez you you been preachin the gospel of [self-sacrifice]

sandra

[mmhmmm/. ye:ah]

rod

for the happiness of others but you won't sacrifice for [mine]

sandra

[mmhhmm]

virgil

[ye:hap]

rod

and give me your consent... but why does he need her consent?=

virgil

back in them days you (?) you know you turning loose from ya parents

rod

uh huh

virgil

you know like it aint like you just get um get nineteen and jus move out the house or whatevuh.. or twenty, what eighteen when you get grown nineteen somepin, movin out, you know but you know back in them days there wuz a bond and a trust that wuz part of the culture.

rod

an so he didn't want to go against her, he wants to get [her]

virgil

[right]

rod

her goodwill as [he sez]

virgil

[her consent]

rod

right yeah, he wants to get her blessing so [to speak]

virgil

ye:ah

sandra
ye:ah {nodding}

virgil

[(..?)]

sandra

he probly tired of bein round the ladies [{laughs}] yea:h

rod

[yeah right]

virgil

[but sometimes you got you have to be a certain age] when yo mama o yo daddy realiz you can fend fo yoself, [can] can take care of yoself.

rod

[okay, right] but it's funny too though, right, he's um, he sez alright, good news mama Im gonna go join the Navy ; she sez no ya arent, yer not goin anywhere. he sez but c'mon mama I gotta go be a man. well what well why dudnt he jus go?

virgil

cuz he wanna get that [consent]

rod

[I guess so.] yeah.

virgil

still ha dat consent (...dat [consent])

rod

[yeah]

virgil

need huh permission ta do somethin .. with huh will that he culd be blussed by it uh whateveuh.

rod

yeah, right, okay... ok you want to keep goin connieberly?

connie

[uhh]

rod

[or you wan to] pass it off tuh somebody else?

connie

...yeah ill pass off [somebody else]

virgil

[wheya we at?]

betty

(inaud)
betty (inaud) go ahead sandra. (inaud) sandra

virgil
mi..=

sandra
ms reddin arose

1:04:00.3

sandra and flurried out of the room. for once she wuz too incence insense insess [to cry]

rod [too incensed to cry] yeah

Sandra

john stood in his track gone cold and numb at his mother's pronouncement. al fred, AL'fred alfred too wuz move moved with ms reddin banged the bedroom door violent and started [john]

ben [(door)]

sandra slightly. alfred looked his son arm saying sofly come son son le's go down to thuh river. at the water edge they (halted) fo a short space before see setting themselves on the log before setting themselves on the log. the sun wuz setting in a purple cloud and hundreds of mosquito hawks darted here and there catching gats [(and then)]

ben [gnats]=

connie =gnats

sandra gnats and then themselves being caught by the lightning fast bu bullhats. john absrac abstractly snapped in two the stalks of a slender young bon

virgil [bamboo]

betty [bamboo]

sandra baboo taking no notes of what he was doin. he broke it into short lenth and tossted them singly into the scream. the old man watched him silently for awhile but finally he sayed

1:06:00.3

sandra

oh yes mah boy, some ships get tangled in in the weeds. [{laughs}]

rod
[notice what] John's doin now?
Sandra: What he doin?
Rod:
[we well theyre] just kinda settin there after his mama has [made this pronouncement]
Sandra: [oh okay] [he uh] [oh okay]
Rod:
an theyre jus settin there and he jus absent mind hes not thinkin about it [and all of a sudden] hes makin those ships agin
Sandra: [oh okay, yes]
Rod:
an theyre jus settin there and he jus absent mind hes not thinkin about it [and all of a sudden] hes makin those ships agin
Sandra: [oh okay] [he uh] [oh okay]
Rod:
an puttin em in, puttin a little piece o bamboo in the water like ee used to do=
Sandra: =oh
Rod:
when he was a boy. and his daddy sed oh yes mah boy some ships do get tangled in the weeds
Sandra: uh:huh
Rod:
when he was a boy. and his daddy sed oh yes mah boy some ships do get tangled in the weeds
Sandra:
Rod:
and puttin em in, puttin a little piece o bamboo in the water like ee used to do=
Sandra: =oh
Rod:
when he was a boy. and his daddy sed oh yes mah boy some ships do get tangled in the weeds
Sandra: uh:huh
Rod:
when he was a boy. and his daddy sed oh yes mah boy some ships do get tangled in the weeds
Sandra: =oh
Rod:
when he was a boy. and his daddy sed oh yes mah boy some ships do get tangled in the weeds
Sandra: uh:huh
Rod:
when he was a boy. and his daddy sed oh yes mah boy some ships do get tangled in the weeds
Sandra: =oh
Rod:
when he was a boy. and his daddy sed oh yes mah boy some ships do get tangled in the weeds
Sandra: uh:huh
Rod:
when he was a boy. and his daddy sed oh yes mah boy some ships do get tangled in the weeds
Sandra: =oh
Rod:
when he was a boy. and his daddy sed oh yes mah boy some ships do get tangled in the weeds
Sandra: uh:huh
Rod:
when he was a boy. and his daddy sed oh yes mah boy some ships do get tangled in the weeds
Sandra: =oh
Rod:
when he was a boy. and his daddy sed oh yes mah boy some ships do get tangled in the weeds
rod

mmhhmm

sandra

mmhhmm

rod

you want to keep reading sandra?

sandra

yeah, somebody else can go. i'm onna pass.

rod

a:ight, ya did good.

daphne

{gesturing to sophie} (you can read)

sophie

where she stop at?

rod

[alright]

connie

[taking taking] no note

sandra

(nate)

roo

{pointing to the next line} yes papa they certainly do i guess.

betty

yes papa

sandra

(nate)

rod

oh im sorry right over here.. yes papa

sophie

yes papa, they certainly do. i guess i better might as well surrender. nevuh say die, yeah nevuh ken
tell what will happen--what ken happen. i have courage enuf to make things happen but what ken i
do agaist mama? what man wantsto go on a long journey with his mother's course ringing n his
ear? she doesnt understand she doesnt understand ah will wait anothuh yeah but i am going

1:08:00.1

sophie

becuz i must. alfred threw an arm across his sons neck and drew him near but quickly removed it,
both men instantly drew apart, ashamed for having been some so demonstrative. the father looked
off to the woodlot and asked with a (ransom) smile
rod
a reminiscent [smile]
sophie
[a reminiscent] smile. son do you remember showin me the tree (dat) dat looks like a skeleton head? yes i do. its there still. i looks at it sometimes when things have become too painful for me at the house and i ran down here .. to cool off and think an an every time i look at the .. pa papa it laughs at me like it has some grim joke up its sleeve. you wuz alays imaginin thangs john, things that nobody else ever thought on. you know powerful sometimes i reckon my longin to get away make me feel this way. i feel that i am just earth, soil layin helpless to move myself but thinking i seem to hear heard a big beast like horses and cows throwing over me and rain beating down and wind sweeping focibly over all (acting?) upon me. but me wuz just soil. feeling but not able to take part in it. then a soft wind

1:10:00.2

sophie
passed over and warms me and summer rain comes down like understanding a soft a soft in me. and i pushed a blade of grass or flowers or maybe a pine tree thats growin, thinkin. plants are growin thoughts because the soil cant move itself. whenever i see little whorls of dust whirling down the road i alays step to tha side, i dont want to stop there on theyre shining way moving oh yes im a dreamer. i have such wonderful complete dreams, papa, they never come true but even if my dreams (fade,) i have others. yes son, i have the same feeling exactly, but i cant find no words like you you lak you do. it seems like youre and me seen wide wide [(and sunny)]

rod
[see wid] the [same eyes]
sophie
[see] with the same eyes. hear wid the same ears, and even feel the same inside, only thangs you can talk it an i cant. but anyhow you speek for me so whas the difference? the man arose without more conversation. poss possibly they feared to trust themselves to speak. as they walked, (leisurely) toward the house alfred remarked the freshness of the breeze. i's about time the rain set in, added his son. the year is worin on. after a gloomy supper, john strolled out into the spacious front yard and set himself beneath a

1:12:00.1

sophie
chin china china.berry tree. the breeze had grown to a trif strong since sunset and continued from the southeast. matty and stella sat on the (big on the deep) front porch but alfred joined john under the tree. the family wuz divided in two armed camps and the [hos] rod
[hostilities]
sophie
[hostilities] had reached that stage where no quarter could be asked for and given asked for or given. about nine oclock, the automobile came flying down the dusty white road an held at the gate. a white man slammed the gate and hurried up the walk toward the house but stopped (adapt)..

connie
abruptly
sophie abruptly before the men beneath the china chinaberry. it wuz mister hawk, hill, the builder of
the new bridge that was to span the river. howdy john, howdy alf. i'm mighty glad i found you. im
in trouble. well now, mist hill hill hill, answered alfred slowly but pleasantly. wusn glad you
foun us too. what trouble culd you be having now? its the bridge. the weather bureau sez the rains
will be upon me in forty-eight hours. if it catches the bridge as it is now, im afrain all my work of
the past five months will be swept away... to say nothing

1:14:00.1

sophie of the quarter of a million dollars worth of labor and material ive got all my men at work
now and i thought to get as many extra hands as ai could to help out tonight and tomorrow. we can
make her weather tight in that time if i can get about twenty more. i'll go, master hill, said john
with a great deal of energy. i dont want papa out on that bridge. it too dangerous.

rod did you want to stop fer a second, sandra? {responds to large stretching gesture}

sandra oh, na:h... john wuz the chile wasnt he

rod uh, yes, thats the young man.

sandra oh, okay

virgil {raining had} i got somepin ta say.

rod yeah

virgil you see that part right here where he say on page ten hwere he say son do you remember showin
me the ss the tree that looked like a skeleton head?

rod mnhhmm

virgil thats the part where his mother warned him about he dont want him to leave an go because she see
death in his ey:es some kinda way. becasue evey time you talkin bout the blossom the spring an
all wa was goin on but that skeleton tree reminiscin back ta iss like like a ee:vil somthin lurkin in
him, [iss somethin]

rod [yeah]

virgil lurkin him evry time he think about dat an his mama tryin ta keep im from goin an she probly
know this already. cuz back in em days people wuz spiritually uplifted. you know like he say you
teach me the gospel [an all.]
so she wuz probly spiritually uplifted seein things in her eyesight, (per you know) a person who can see things.

she she wuz SCA'red [for him]

for him an he sed he always see a skeleton tree a skeleton is like a dead person

so he wuz seein visions of..i cant just say evil--something wuz warning him (ab)

right

right

(right) and like right now, he goin to the bridge to work

hes at that accurate point of the water again

sandra

(he tryin ta [get the crop]

[thats right]
uh (this) million dollah worth of crop whatevuh, what this.

rod

its the man whos buildin the new bridge, [right?]

virgil

[right]

rod

sayin the storms comin and its gonna knock out the [bridge] if we dont get you know get some

more work done on it

sandra

[yeah] so he so hes imaginin his father (.the story) but he say that he have dreams but his
dream doesnt come true so he does things in actions. but the father lives in his dreams.

rod

excellent. {to sophie} you wanna keep readin? you wanna pass it off?

sophie

i can continue

rod

okay

sophie

good for you john, cried the white man, now if i had a few more men of your brawn and brain i
could build an entirely new bridge in forty-eight hours. come on and jump in
the car, im takin the men on down as i find them...{turn page}

rod

page twelve, top o page twelve

sophie

wait a minute, i must put on my blue jeans. i wont be long. john arrived arose and strode at the
house. he knew that his mother and wife had overheard everything but he.. (paused) for a moment
to speak to them. mama, i am going to work all night on the bridge. There wuz no answer. he
turned

sophie

to his wife. stella don be loesome, i will be home at daybreak. at daybreak. his wife wuz as silent
as his mother. john stood for a moment on the steps then [RES'o]

rod

[resolutely]

sophie

resolutely strode past the women and into the house. a few minutes later, he emerged clad in his
blue overalls and and [bro]

rod

[brogans]
this time he said nothing to the silent figures rocking back and forth on the porch, but when he wuz a few feet from the steps he called back bye mama, bye stella and hurried on down the walk to where his father sat. so long pop, ill be home around seven. alfred roused himself and stood placing both hands upon his son's broad shoulders. he sed softly, please be careful care careful son, don fall or nuthin. i will papa. don you get into a quarrel on my account. john hurried on to the waiting car car and was whirled away. alfred set for a long time beneath the tree where his sone had left him and smoked. the women soon went indoors. on the night breeze (were born numerous ..[ scents])

were borne numerous scents

scents of jas jasmine and jasmine of rose, of deep earth and of deep earth

virgil
damp

earth of the river, of the pine forest near, of a solitary whip por whil, sent forth his plaintive call from the nearby shrubbery

rod

shrubbery

shrubbery. a great owl roared from the woodlot and (the calf confined in the barn would bleat and be answered by his mother's sympathetic moo from the pen.) moo from the pen. away down in lake howell, the baass

rod

the basso profundo

basso profundo of the alligator boomed and died, boomed and died.

have any of you ever lived near enough to where alligators lived to hear em at night? like big ol bullfrogs, they kinda they got this kinda roar {growls} I cant do it...

around ten o'clock the breeze freshened, growing stiffer and stiffer until midnight when it became a gale.
2011 sophie
2012 alfred
2013
2014
2015 rod
2016 oh, yeah, sorry {to virgil, raising his hand}
2017
2018 virgil
2019 right at these points right here, somethin spiritual is happenin see..
2020
2021 rod
2022 whatta ya mean? how do you mean?
2023
2024 virgil
2025 see right here you saw where (things how the) the wind is blowin. [(hiding forest trees)]
2026
2027 sandra
2028 [uu:huh/\, its true]
2029
2030 rod
2031 the animals are [talkin]
2032
2033 virgil
2034 [talkin]
2035
2036 rod
2037 right, yeah
2038
2039 virgil
2040 everythin goin on lak (uh) mothuh nature or spiritual, God or whatevuh's act taking place before
2041 after he left his father put his hands on his broad shoulders..tellin him and then he sed, tellin him ta
2042 be careful. you know, watch, in other words, watch yuhself, things might happen to him uh
2043 [whatevuh]
2044
2045 sandra
2046 [um:hmm/\]
2047
2048 virgil
2049 and then
2050
2051 1:22:00.1
2052
2053 virgil
2054 nature is taking place now
2055
2056 rod
2057 mmhhmm
2058
2059 virgil
2060 whatevuh fiddn ta take place in the rest of the story we'll see.
2061
2062 rod
2063 mmhhmm, [i think]
2064
2065 sandra
2066 [(he sed dont fall)]
rod
i think you're right. and we all know that animals know stuff before we can know it sometimes, right?

virgil
[right]
sandra
[careful]
rod
what were you gonna say connieberly?

connie
oh, nuthin, i's just listenin... yeah, somethin spiritual is gonna take place...

rod
should we go on? who wants to read? you want to keep goin or..

sophie
nah

rod
ten you want to read? you want to let you want me to read a little bit?

virgil
yeah, you read.

rod
i havent read yet. okay, i give it a shot. around ten o'clock

rod
around ten o'clock the breeze freshened , growing stiffer until midnight when it became a gale.

alfred fastened the doors and bolted the wooden shutters at the windows. the three three persons sat around about a round deal table in the kitchen upon which stood a bulky kerosene lamp, flickering and sputtering in the wind that came in through the numerous cracks in the walls. the wind rushed down the chimney blowing puf puffs of ashes around the room. it banged the coking utensils on the walls. the drinking gourd hanging outside by the door played a weird tattoo, hollow and unearthly, against the thin wooden wall. the man and the wooden women sat silently. even if there had been no storm they would not have talked. they could not go to bed because the women were afraid to retire during teh storm and the man wished to stay awake and think with his son. thus they sat. the women hot with resentment toward the man and terrified by teh storm. the man hardly mindful of the tempest but eating his heart out with pity for his boy. time wore heavily on. and now a new element of terror was added. a screech owl alighted on the roof and shivered forth his doleful cry. possibly he had been blown out of his nest by the wind.

matty started up at the sound but fell back in her chair, pale and trembling. ma GAWD, she grasped, that's sho a sign o death. stella hurriedly thrust her hand into the salt jar and threw some into the lamp. the color of the flame changed from yellow to blue green but this burning of salt did not have the desired effect, to drive the bird from the roof. Matty slipped out of her blue calico
wrapper and turned it wrong side out before replacing it. Even Alfred turned ne sock. Alf, said Matty, what do you reckon gonna happen from this? How do ah know Matty? Humph. Ah wish John hadn't went away from us here tonight. Humph. Outside the tempest raged. The palms rattled dryly and the great pines groaned inside in the grip of the wind. Flying leaves and pine mast filled the air. Now and then a flash of lightning disclosed a bird being blown here and there with the wind. The prodigious roar of the thunder seemed to rock the earth. Black clouds hung so low that the tops of the pines were among them moving slowly before the and made the darkness awful. The screech owl continued his tremulous cry. After three o'clock the wind ceased and the rain commenced.

Virgil

What page we at now?

Rod page fourteen. Huge drops clattered down upon the shingle roof like buckshot and ran from the eaves in torrents. It entered the house through cracks in the walls and under the doors. It was a deluge in volume and force but subsided before morning. The sun came up brightly on the havoc of the wind and the rain calling forth millions of feathered creatures. The white sand everywhere was full of tiny cups dug out by the force of the falling raindrops. The rims of the little depressions crunched noisily underfoot. At daybreak Mr. Redding set out for the bridge. He was uneasy. On arriving he found that the river had risen twelve feet during the cloudburst and was still rising. The slow St. John was swollen far beyond its banks and rushing on to sea like a mountain stream, sweeping away houses, great blocks of earth, cattle, trees, in short anything that came within its grasp. Even the steel framework of the new bridge was gone.

1:31:55.9 (end of reading the story)

Virgil

Oh I got it

Sandra

Okay

Virgil

You know what happened?

Rod

Whaddaya think? What happened?

Virgil

He died

{Other murmuring}

Rod

Yeah he did

Virgil

But at the same time, his mother was tryin to stop him from leavin and goin to the navy he wantin to be on a ship anyway so in the end he still floated away on his own ship.

Rod

It's it's very ironic the way he finally got his dream. His dream finally came true. He's finally [Floatin away to sea]

Virgil
[he was] he was saying that they sung and saying a prayer before that happened before a big uh

ro

so here we're right here at 11:30, so we've gone an hour and a half now i want to take a

couple minutes if we want to discuss this now a little bit but.. its really kinda quittin time so what

we can do is pick it up with discussing this story when we come back next monday and then start

on another one--how do you feel about that? and we'll just kinda work it like that.

{general agreement among the group}

ro

now i don't want to leave i don't want to leave if there's something we need to say about john

reading. cuz this is pretty dramatic, right?

sandra

yes it was

ro

i mean, how does this make you feel? whado you?

betty

good, good story, i felt good about it.

ro

is it sad? and its [also]

betty

[in a way,] but he also got his wish.

ro

yeah he did. its a strange kind of, i mean

sandra

he had to go through some things.

virgil

that's a natural way of life, you know some dreams you can reach only [some dreams you only can

reach by death and some dreams you can reach by natural works.]

{passing back packets}

betty

you keep that

ro

you can keep that, absolutely. yeah, tell you what, whyncha bring it back with you next week and

we'll start with this again you know cuz the way it works for me is that when i read and ill kinda

sit on it for a little while, and i'll think about it during the week and if you have a thought you want

to bring to discuss..

sandra

okay, we had a nice time

ro

hey, good, I really enjoyed it too.
virgil
you know what he got in the end?
rod
what did he get
virgil
peace and (feelins)
rod
he did finally get some peace didn't he--even in that violent storm. we'll take it up next time. thanks
a lot yall. see you next monday.

1:34:06.00
Session Two

{Randy sits reading silently from John Redding, occasionally trying out some of the lines, dialect...; the Price is Right blares from the TV in the waiting room; enter Virgil, Connie, Betty, Ben (with his Psychiatry book Medical Encyclopedia), Sandra...}

0:00:24.5

randy
its like country country

rod
yeah, her dialect is very country, [right?]

randy
[the dial]og itself?

rod
uh-huh, its very, RURAL, [right?]

randy
[%laughs loudly, dramatically%]

rod
yeah, we had fun with it last week, its kinda difficult to read it [aloud]

randy
[i see]

rod
yeah yeah ya ya, i'll be right back.

randy
well...

randy
{reading} BLack (.. ) all you wants to, but dont tell mah son none of it.

0:02:00.8

randy
{reading} son none of it. son none of it.

{the price is right is beginning in the waiting room. Randy appears unaffected. Virgil, Connie, Betty, & Ben enter}

rod
Alright, make yourself comfortable. there's some blueberry bannana zucchini bread over there on the table if you'd like.

betty
okay
randy
i gotta get somethin to wash it down.

rod
yeah, is there some water you can get? i didn't bring anything to drink.

betty
laughs

rod
yeah, getcha a cup o water if you want; now, ben, you're trying to take my seat there=

ben
oh, your space {gets up to move}

rod
its okay I can sit right here, you stay right where you are.

ben
okay

rod
your fine your fine.. yeah your fine. okay lets see, who's missin? the sisters, sophie & daphne=

virgil
=ill go get em=

rod
=oh are they [here?]}

virgil
ah, sandra (and em) back heah.

rod
ah, sandra's here too, great. thank ya lijah; good; found out a little bit about=

betty
OH I lef ma paper, can i use one of yours?

0:04:00.5

randy
(...)

rod
THAts the one from last time, it's okay cuz we'll spend some time talkin about it but i think i got
an extra one [if you want to look at it again]

betty
[okay cuz i lef my (.) at home]

rod
yeah, thas fine. in fact let me see what ive got from las week and hen weve got some new stories
and we'll and we'll read somethin new in a minute too but we can start with i wanted to see
if anybody wanted to say anything about the story from last week. there you go {passing out
stories} and there's an extra one down there for virgil or whoever. {to ben} and you brought yours
back, thank you. we'll wait for them to come back. and we'll shut the door so we dont have to
compete with the price is right {laugh}

betty
{laughs}

rod
..did anybody else go see family thie weekend? i heard betty did.

betty
yeah I had to get away. i didnt get much sleep...

rod
oh yeah? its funny idn it? when we go visit, we dont always get to rest

betty
i rested

rod
oh you did rest?

betty
oh yes. i went to see ma grandchildren and they surprised me, they didnt come home till today..

rod
well thats good you got some rest; {to virgil} did you find them?

virgil
yeah, sandra and them sposed to be comin

rod
okay

virgil
{looking at story} i thot we finished this one.

rod
we did, we were gonna look at it and see if anyone had anythin else to say uh about it. then weve
got weve got some new stories we'll look at. at least one...

rod
didja have any thots about ol john redding over the last week?

0:06:00.4

rod
oh, thats right the other thing we gotta do is since randy wadnt here, we gotta fill im in we gotta
fill im in on the story and let im know what what wuz happenin. here i'll [just shut the door]

randy
[(i know he was _ _ _ )]

betty
no, he wadnt. he wasn't
randy
he wasn't?
betty
hh-mhm... he was a queer chile, dreamin all the time bout goin to the sea ( _) with his own life
but his mama didn't want him goin
...
rod
{from outside room} very well thanks, come on in
sandra
awright
rod
awright, there's some uh breakfast bread over here on the table if y'all wanna get a bite to eat.
betty
[(i'll take a piece with me when I go)]
rod
[i'll open it up]
rod
whas that?
betty
i say i'll take me a slice when i go
rod
take some with ya, okay. should i jus put it over here in the middle of the table or you wanna wait
till later?
betty
hm-hmh. we'll wait.
rod
wait? awright that's fine. we'll just leave it wrapped up there [for now]. but help yourself if you
want
betty
[okay]
rod
um awright, so we were gonna fill in randy on john redding from last time ( wanted ) to see if we
had any thoughts. did we think about old john and his family and what happened? and we can let
randy know what happened in that story cuz he missed it last week. so who's gonna tell randy what
happened in this story.
ben
(i say i still member a lil bit)
rod
yeah.
John lived in a small quiet like country town, his parents bother were sayin that John wuz kinda queer cuz John stayed to his self a lot kinda like daydreamin to his self an alays had tis dream of like not really like a dream when youre asleep but like a daydream (he sit and )

0:08:00.0

Ben daydream like of leavin the town and becomin successful. so his family I believe in my opinion that there was in some kind of cult cuz they wuz tryin to summon some kind of spirit to i guess kindof change Johns mind about stayin in town and i guess about educatin the town or somethin like that. anyway, John wanted to leave town to go to anothuh anothuh town to to get a job, so anyway his parents they stopped him and he ended up getting married to a girl the girl and him were married for awhile and then they got into an argument. he said that he was going to John sed he was goin to the military, so his parents stopped him from goin in the military. a storm cam along in the town and John went out to like a dam or somethin or a bridge or somethin to try to stop the storm from floodin the town. anyway John came up missin and they thot he had died in the storm and i guess this is the way John escaped from the town cuz he got tied tired of his parents tellin him that he cant leave the town. they found him they found him on a raft he floated away. i dont know wuz he dead or not. on the raft.

Betty

Randy

Rod

I think he wa, yeah, i think he got killed=

Betty

=yeah he got killed, he died

Rod

(_ _) good, thanks, ben, I appreciate it. what else wuld you add to to fill in the story? what wuz the, what did you take from it? what wuz the point ya know? what wuz important to the plot you know the storyline? was goin on there? let's see you said that he wanted tu, he was kindof a weird kid. he called she sez a couple times he wuz a queer child. remember that [first line]

Betty

[mhhmm]

Connie

U:m sticks-

Betty

Sticks

Connie

John river when he wuz a little boy and he was always playin?
watah
rod
yeah, he put those little [sticks and reeds and things down in the watah.] and he called em his.
{{[betty and connie nod and join in (inaud)]}}
connie
u:m
rod
what did he ( ) pretend like they were
connie
(bounce)
betty
ships or boats
connie
ships
rod
that's right, his ships, they were goin off to sea he would pretent that they were his ships they were
go sail around the world and travel the world. and and he used to get sad when those ships, those
little sticks used to get caught up in the weeds at the edge of the river right? and how and this story
was about how he kinda got caught up in the weeds a little bit he got caught up in the town cuz his
mama wouldn't give him permission to leave and then he went ahead and got married anyway an
he wuz happy for a little while but then he felt stuck and like he wanted to go on an like he wasn't
really fulfilling his uh=
connie
=DREAMS=
betty
=dreams=
rod
=dreams, yeah, yeah thats right.. that whole part about summonin up the spirits and conjuration
that his mama used to was talkin about that wuz a funny part in this um. uh, his mama sed that he
wanted to leave town because he had a spell put on [him when he wuz born]
virgil, betty, connie
[right, right]
rod
that some like witch woman had sprinkled that travelin dust i think she sed right?
betty
(when) outside th window when he wuz born.
rod
[whe when he wuz born]
randy
yeah yeah some kinda it wuz some kinda witchcraft. its a lot of kindof superstition in the story I mean [we might call]

Rod

connie

[it is]

Rod

it superstition. (but if the) but virgil you were talkin last time about when the wind started to blow and the storm was comin and that screech owl lit on the roof of the house and everybody got kind of afraid. remember that part of it?

Virgil

{quietly} right

Rod

and you said NATure was happenin. right? and that somethin spiritual [wuz happenin]

Virgil

spirituality, yeah

Rod

(she_)

Virgil

sometimes there wuz some warning signs that

Rod

yeah, okay so there were some warnings. there was quite a bit of warnins in nature wasn't there?

Virgil

yea, like when he saw the skeleton face in the tree

Rod

in the tree, right right.

Connie

mmhhm

Rod

an that always seemed to be grinnin at him or laughin at him or somethin. aright aright. and then why do you think, what do you think it was warnin im about? imean what was that/.

Connie

of his life. of his life (_ _)what he thot would happen later on in his life (_ warnin _).

Rod

yeah i think it (was [about) a couple a different thangs

Virgil

[warnin im bout is life. is moms] and pops, his mom really knew that someethin wuz gonna happen to him. she wuz tryin ta protect im.
rod
mm mm mm mm by not lettin im leave=

virgil
[right]

rod
[cuz] thats part of the thing of she uz afraid of what might happen [ta him]

virgil
[(uh huh)]

connie
[uh huh]

rod
if she went if he went away from her=

virgil
=right, she was tryin ta protect him she sed she say im not gonna letcha leave with dis consent, he alays wantta tryin get huh conSENT' ta leave but id'd be like a blessin in the in the family back in the elderly days.

rod
right right right

rod
so he didnt wanna he he (couldn't) leave, so he still lef in another way

rod
right, yeah, he he he in a way he ended up gettin killed because he stayed, right?

betty
mmhhmm

rod
which is kind of. its kind of a twist=

virgil
but it wulda be vie-versa anyway cuz she (wulda) seen im die anyway you know even if he lef he probly wuz gonna die=

rod
or he'd be dead ta her anyway, he'd be gone from her, right?

virgil
right, right

betty
mmhhmm

rod
an remember she sed to im if you leave, i don even wunt you ta come back ta ma grave when ah die. you know, you'll be dead to me, if you leave me you'll be dead to me. so you're right, either way, s'like either way he us gonna be dead to his mama. That's funny\:. One question i had is that i
know that he wanted her blessing, you know i know that he wanted her consent and that he
respected his mother and that's, we can we can understand that, but if he wanted to go so badly and
explore the world, why didn't he go anyway, why didn't he just go? why couldn't he just make the
decision to go?

connie
he was [afraid] (that he\)

betty
[he wuz] afraid ta go

rod
like of what do you think\

connie
of [what might happen]

sandra
[i gue(s) caus they put em down (so much)]

betty
mmhhmm

rod
Huh, cuz they told im he couldn't go an they okay awright, that's interesting, like he needed [them
to say its]

connie
[(INAUD)]

sandra
[uh-huh\]

betty
[mmhmmm]

rod
okay in order for him to be confident enough or courageous enough to go on and do it himself=

ben
[some]

rod
[that's interesting]

ben
sometime it can cause, maybe he had it in hi mind that it can cause his parents maybe his mother
some kind of severe depression or somethin like that. an maybe he don't want to see huh sick like
that

sandra
[yeah]

rod
[awoh, like he]
{connie rises, watched by virgil 0:14:47.1}
cuz she wuz pretty good at that right? at [manipulatin]

betty
cryin and puttin pressure

rod

yeah, thats right she'd get weepy all the time you know yeah she'd just get real weepy you know whenever..uhm, thank you connie {has taken a paper towel to ben who accepts and uses}

yeah, she, whenever she got upset, whenever somebody did anythin she didnt like she'd go to weepin an carryin on a little bit. do we know any mamas or grandmommas like that? [who are] real good at manipulatin

betty

oh yeah

others

yes {general agreement, laughter}

rod

yeah, i guess so. and what wuz johns daddy like? what wuz what wuz his thing through the story

betty

he wuz more understanding to im than the mama was. he really wanted him to go.

rod

[he]

betty

[he wanted] his mama's consent

rod

i think he sed at one point his daddy did sed that john you an me see with the same kinda eyes [an hear]

betty

[mmmhmm]

rod

wit the same kinda ears, he sed when i wuz a young man i wanted to go see the [world too]

betty

[(he got to go to the world too)]

rod

but what did he do instead?

betty

stayed [there]

rod

[stayed there/, got married/, settled down/ had a baby/, [right/] john.
Betty
[mmhhmm]
Rod
John/= Betty
John and didn’t go=
Rod
=And didn’t go, right, so he wanted his son to go
Betty
=yah he wanted him to go=
Rod
Go in his place.. well what else you think? You wanna say, what else you think bout it? about the story, anything?
Randy
I think it’s really kinda depressing
Rod
You think it’s kinda depressing?
Randy
It’s very depressing very very sad what happened to John because he had come from a very country life as we’ve sed (but story wanna go away so bad he goin down ta the sea)
Rod
Yeah
Betty
Yeah
Randy
He wanna go away so bad, its a very sad story
Betty
Yeah it is
Randy
Very depressing, (its a) very depressing story
Betty
Mmhmm
Rod
Hey there! Good morning {to Daphne & Sophie}
Daphne and Sophie
Hello, good morning
Rod
Welcome welcome
both
thank you
rod
do you have enough room there, do we all need to scootch around a bit or are you gonna be able ta
find a spot?
sophie
i think we'll be awright
rod
good, okay thats fine; um grab yourself a bite of thats a blueberry bannana bread if you want some
over there. and we are just kind of recapping a little bit. we're talkin a little more about old john
redding from last week
sophie
uh huh
rod
and we're catching randy up on the story cuz he wadnt with us last week
sophie
huh
rod
so we're makin sure that he's up to making sure that he knows what we're doin, yeah speed. he was
sayin that it sounds like it wuz a kindof a sad and depressin story, but its funny too right?
betty
mmhhmm
rod
at the very end, at the very end, now johns already, yknow the bridge washed out. they seen im on
that that uh timber, he's floatin down the river and whats his mama say?..alf, thats his dad, thats
johns dad, go..
betty
time ta go
rod
go get im. go fish im out of the river an bring im back to me. an what does his daddy say?
0:17:54.2
rod
let im go
betty
let im go
rod
let im go, he's finally gettin ta go off to sea.
betty
finally free
rod
{pointing to virgil} and you remember what you said at the very end last time when we were just
walkin out the door about john redding? virgil do you remember last week?

virgil
yeah

rod
you member, i think you sed, you know what he found?

virgil
peace and blessings

betty
peace and [blessings]

rod
[he seemed] to finally find. some peace/

betty
[peace/]

rod
right?

virgil
yep

rod
yknow only in death {laugh} and floatin down the river. thats a very, thats a vey uhh odd message
it seems like, right,

betty
mmhhmm

rod
(it seems funny), so i think you're right, its a sad story in a way randy, but i think we also get a
sense of john finally finding some peace=

betty
=peace, [mmhhmm]

rod
in that [too]...but you know one of the things i was thinkin about this week when i was thinkin
about john is that .. one of the problems for him is that he seemed to be in between. he didnt make
a decision to just go, which he could have, which he could have. he could ve said well, i wished,
i'd like to have my mother's blessing, that would be ideal, i dont want to hurt her, but this is what i
have to do for myself, and he couldve just gone on. OR HE could have made the decision to make
a life for himself there, right=/

betty
=yeah

rod
remember he had that little girl Stella he was in love with, an he had a job, remember he was the
educator in the town and he could have made a life there in the town and been happy with it, but
he was kinda in between, [he waffled]

connie
{nodding} [mmhmm]

rod
he kept goin back and forth and um um maybe thats what thats what kind of led to his downfall, it
seems like you know? [looks at ben who has raised his hand] whatcho think?

ben
see it was it was like that--his mother was tryin to live live his [life]

betty
[his life]

ben
like sh like sh like sh::e (wanted to want) to be him, thats like bipolar, you know, cuz she she
wand da portray him be him, an it got so bad that she didn even want him ta go help ta fix tha dam
fo the..um when the [storm came]

rod
[she wanted ta hold onto im right/]

ben
[mmhmm]

rod
[mmhmm]

0:20:00.9

rod
yeah, she didnt even want him to go help out even just down the street in the same town, right,
yeah when that man came and sed please come help me with my bridge. yeah she wuz scared for
him to go. hmm, hmm hmm hmm, thats um that can be uhm hard when we have people that we
love=

betty
={softly} to leave=

0:20:20.7

rod
we wanna hold onto em right? but in order for them to, whats that expression? if you love
somethin...

connie
um

virgil
you let it go
rod

{laughs} you let it go, right

betty

let it go, [let it go]

others {Group (chorus)}

[expression of general agreement]

rod

[do we think that's true?] i mean how do we its kinda its kinda hard we gotta we wanna hold on

and protect the people that we lo:ve but but we also gotta let em live their [lives]

betty {grinning, gesturig}

[live] their lives. ooh, i know how hat feels [is, MH MH MH]

rod

[thats a good point] thats a good point, ben.. did you say somethin betty?

betty

well i say i know how that dat feel

rod

how does that how what feel?

betty

my life somekinda like that

rod

about between holdin on and [lettin go {gesture} ?]

betty

{gestures} lettin go, they wont let me go you know

rod

(hh) oohh, yeah

betty

letting go a they wont let me go

rod

mnhmm. they wanna hold on [an]

betty

[wanna hold on]

rod

keep keep you keep you doin what yer doin

betty

mnhhmm [wont] let me go

randy

[(my life) same] fill same way too

rod
do you?
randy
[(i feel wanna)] let it go
betty
[yeah I can] mmmm. wanna run away= {gesture}
randy
=run away, [let it go]
betty
=[GIT away]
randy
[let] it go and git away from it all
betty
thas tha way I feel
randy
'cided i wannoo get outta {town} fo awhile
rod
yeah/
betty
just wanna go, Im free i just wanna go
rod
mmhh/
betty
jus keep holdin me back
rod
hmm\
rod
[whas]
randy
[iss called] setback
rod
setback
randy
setback
rod
whas that mean?
randy iss when (somethin thats holding you back) its something that keeps holding you back its keeping you uh=
keepin you on g, [keepin you (on God's back)]

keepin you (on God's back)]

[(tossin to and fro)] keep tossin [to and fro]

[betty]

[betty]

[betty]

[betty]

[betty]

[betty]

[betty]

[betty]

[betty]

[betty]

[betty]

[betty]

[betty]

[betty]

[betty]

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[betty]

[betty]

[betty]

[betty]

[betty]

[betty]

[betty]

[betty]

[betty]

[betty]

[betty]

[betty]

[betty]
[startin all over agin]
rod
its a LOVED one
betty
yeah
rod
its a loved one that you want to protect and want to help, right, but it but it keeps you from.. doin
from movin on maybe, doin somethin that you would like to do otherwise
betty
yeah
rod
kay, uh so we can we can kind of.. [see what it's]
betty
[relate to im]
rod
ye[ah wh]at it feels like to get stuck in the weeds [so to speak] to have our ships get tangled in the
weeds at the edge of the river
betty
[mmhhmm] {whispers} right
rod
a little bit...
0:22:52.6
randy
its crazy, i never read the story (but _ _) I feel like I jus need to let it go release it
betty
mmm
randy
let that let it release and let the fillins come out.
randy
we cant. mah fililns wont come out
randy
somehow we're gonna have to break that mold
betty
it be anger when i bring it out and i dont like that so i just keep it within me.. and i (kindof boil
whit anger, come im full of anger??) {increasingly loud mechanical noise from outside the
window during this talking about anger...}
rod
that can be kindof scary=
=yeah i be (..) angry, so much been held in .. i jus don know how to let it go. let it out. (been
places fuh that). can't let it go.

randy
(ah always say that _) iss lak a big giant bubble (on the balloon sometimes _) if you stay in the
air too long you be stranded in the balloon but if you hold it in too long its gonna i had to learn ta
jus learn to just take a good big big good cry out=

betty

mmh[mm]

randy
an sometimes i had when i had let things get the best of me lak fuh instance lak you carryin a big
giant [weight up on yuh a]

betty
[oh yeah, mmhmm]

randy
big giant weight on mah shoulders. an that tha's whas thats what my troubles carryin that big giant
weight, (_) carrying that heavy load=

rod
=mmhmm

randy
but somehow if you learn to just learn to release um (i don wan to talk about the {off the?} wall
but) uh learn to release it and let it go=

betty
=mmm=

rod
=mm. [but that's the] trick idnit, learnin how to do that=

randy
[(thats the beautiful thing)]

betty
=(yeah i do that)

randy
sometimes i be in the woods i be like to do some chanting for a while=

rod
=mhm=

randy
=you know, you evuh do that sometimes?
rod
mhm yeah i have=
randy
=is jus sing chant "Let It Go. Let It Go. Let It Go. Let It Go" {CHANTS RHYTHMICALLY, WHILE GESTURING WITH HIS FIST}
betty
mmhhmm
rod
mmhhmm
randy
{BUMPS TABLE WITH FIST} hh. {inhales} whew! see? thats how i felt better when i sed that.
betty
mm, okay
rod
you ken give yaself a pep talk [(_ _)]
virgil
bes thing da do is say ya little prayuh an be thew.
rod
mm..mm. y'know i think there are a lot of different ways to do it=
betty
=mmhhmm
rod
different ways that work for different folks, fur shur.
randy
there something rilly feelin better after i go, go to the woods, let it go.
rod
mmhhmm
randy
i don care if you skip all over {TOWN} {LAUGHING}
betty
mm
rod
[({LAUGHS})]
randy
[CALL THE POLICE] (_ _ locked up _ crazy)
betty
yeah
rod
well ya know one way...i i think thats one thing that stories are for. iz um like you sed betty, if we

can relate

betty

mmhhmm

rod

if we can find these stories that we can re[late to]

betty

[relate] to

rod

ss a little bit of that burden thats mine can get released thro:ugh my readin somebody else's story

or talkin about somebody elses story. lak, i ken be sad for john and sad fur john's family, and

theres some of that feel, some of thats my sadness=

betty

{nodding} =at's right

rod

[some of thats mine] cuz its funny cuz these are just words on tha page=

0:25:46.7

betty

=mmhhmm=

rod

=but these peeples are very real ta me now, i feel lak ah know john redding a little bit anyway and

ah know is mama and daddy you know i know somethin about that situation. yeah ive felt that way

too" about feelin held back by family by held back by by hose bonds those loving bonds right by

both wanting to be close to my loved ones but also wanting ta be my own.. person.

betty

mmhhmm

rod

an so an so that feels like a little bit of a release ta ME, ya know jus ta feel that way to feel that

connection to the.. the peeples.

randy

i think i felt very bad when mah grandma had it out. i felt very very very bad. becasue I dont know

why didnt she want to leave but she did want to leave but she didnt want to leave but

she just cried all the way up theyuh to uh.. i don wanna bring tha story but i know that i wuz very

close to mah grandma and she raised me very well and mah mom shes gonna be tha one thas

gonna be gone and i dunno how im gonna do this. "oh god, now what the heck am i gonna do?" i

asked myself "whoa, what did i do myself that wuz so wrong?"

rod

mmhhmm

randy

did i do somethin wrong im not sposed ta be doin? what is it whats goin on?

rod
sayin kinda why me? why is this happenin ta me?
randy
why is this happenin? why me? why it hafta be me? i think its because what?...
0:27:07.5
rod
right. tha's a a a a an ongoing questnions idnit? we all ask [ourselves that (from time to time)]
randy
[i wanna ask tha question] why, whad i do that was so wrong? why? why?
rod
well you know i don think we can answer that right here.
randy
only god knows
bettv
yeah
rod
s'right.. but we ken figure some things out. [well whadaya think?]
randy
[but he hs a reason for everything]
rod
you wanna you wanna say more about this story or should we start another one?
connie
another one
randy
another one
rod
you wanna start a new one? alright, uhm well, lets see. theres one that uh and yall hang on to those
if you wish. you may wanna come back to it at some point. um how bout this one? {passing out
sheets} it was written by.. oh you've got it. will yall pass those along for me please? uh Ralph
Ellison.. wrote a novel called Invisible Man, anybody heard of that? Invisible Man? and he, like I
told ya there wuz kind of a local connection with the author of that last story, Zora Neal Hurston
wuz born in Notasulga and lived there for a while just up the road from us, 'fact if you go out on
14 theres a sign one of those historical markers about where she wuz born and where she hgw
up. well, ralph ellison wuz born in oklahoma where i grew up and uh he came here to go to school
at one point before he went to new york and uh wrote a lot uh up there. this one's called Boy on a
Train, lets see what we think. .. do we wanna do the same way and take turns reading again?
Group (chorus)
yes, yeah.
rod
okay who wants to start? randy you want to since you didnt get to last time?
randy

ha! {laughs} I guess so. [(_ _)]

rod

[okay, if you wish]. nobody has to, but we'll just kind of volunteer and go around if we wish

randy

the train give a long, Boy on a Train. the train give a long shrill (lonely) whistle and seemed to

gain speed as she rushed down the downgrade between two hills covered with trees. the trees

were covered in deep red brown and yellow leaves. the leaves fell on the side of the hill hill and

scattered scattered down to the gray rocks along the (opposite) tracks. when the wind blew

off steam the little boys could see white clouds scattered the (leaves) against the side of the hill.

the engine hissed and the leaves danced in the steam like leaves in a white wind. see lewaid, jack

frostmade the pretty leaves. jack rost paints the leaves paints the leaves all the pretty colors. see

lewis, brown and purple and orange and yellow. the little boy pointed and paused after each

naming each color. his finger bent against the glass of the train window. the baby repea, the baby

repea, the baby repeated the colors of the of after him, look intently for jack frost. it wuz hot in the

train and the car wuz too close to the engine making it impossible to open he window. more than

once cinders had flown into the car and into the baby's eyes. the woman raised her eyes (_ _)

from time to time to watch the boys. the car was filthy and part of it was used for baggage. up

front, the pine shipping box of a casket stood in the corner. wonder whut poor soul that is in there

the woman thought. bags and bags and trunks covered the covered the floor up front and now that

now and then the butcher came in to pick up the candy or fruit or magazines to sell in the white

white car_s. he would come in he would come in and a basket pick up a basket with candy go out

come back pick up a basket of fruit go out back until all everything had been carried

out. then he would start all over again. he was a big fat white man with a red face and the little boy

hoped he would give them a piece of candy. after all, he had so much and mama didn't have

any nickles to give them. but he never did. there the mother intentionally holdin the page in her

hand and scanned as she scanned then turned slowly. there were all the passengers in the section of

seats reserved for colored... she she turned her head looking back toward the door into

the other car. the time was for the butcher for him butcher for the butcher to return. her (brow

wrinkled annoyedly). the butcher tried to cope, cup, touch the bre, touch her brea, whOA/ touch

her breast when she and her boys first came into the car. she spat she spat in his face and tol im to

keep his dirty ... {turning page} keep his dirty

rod

page 14.. yeah, (jes flip that) [page]

randy

dirty hands where they (_ _) belong.the butcher has turned red (and gone hurriedly) out of the car

out of the car. (his baskets swinging violently on his arms), she hated him. why couldn't a negro

woman travel with two boys without being molested?.. the train was (past the hills now and into

fields that were divided by crooked wooden fences and that spread rolling and brown with stacks

of corn as far as the blue horizon fringed with trees. the fences reminded the boy of the crooked

man who walked a crooked mile. red birds darted swiftly past the car, ducking down into the field

then shooting up again when you looked back see the telephone poles and fields turning, and

sliding fast way from the train. the boys were having a good time of it. it was their first trip. the

countryside was bright gold with indian indian summer. way across the field a boy was leading a

cow by the rope and the dog barkin at he cow's feet. it was a nice dog. the boy on the train thought

a collie, yes that was the kind of the dog kind of dog wuz a collie.

0:34:24.3

rod

yunna pause there fur a minute and les jes make sure we're we're we'e what's goin on here. see

where we are. what's happenin. we started the story and what's goin on wit this story? ...
ben
a little boy and his mother they had uh. the little boy and his mother they on the train an travlin
goin to another town i think his muthuh has [anothah job (in anothur town).]

[cell phone rings loudly in the room]

'kay, maybe we'll see we don know jus yet why they're travelin, right right.] okay so little boy and
his mother and another little boy, right? uh, do two brothers, right

yea

on a train and um whats. what else do we know what else is goin on?

bout man on na train a whi white guy on na train gettin fruit and candy baskets passin to the other
people on the train, the other passengers, uh he came back there and the little boy wanted a piece
of candy but he nevuh did ask for it but he was spuposin that the guy would be a gentleman and
give im a [piece].

Im sorry? d'you need ta step out? yeah, thats fine thats fine.

then his um his moth his uh he wuz with two uh little boys one boy a little little little boy and the
man touch her on the breast and she [spit in his face.]

[(excuse me for a minute)] {gesturing to his phone}

{staff person exits}

um, uh right yeah he she its a kind of dramatic part here. he kinda got fresh with her really
inappropriately tried to touch her and and what did she do?

{staff person exits}

Group (chorus) {virgil, betty, connie}

spit in his face
rod she spat in his face and told im to keep his dirty hands where they belonged, right.

{randy re-enters}

randy
i'm sorry i (had to step out) I have to go home becasue my mom needs some help. I hate to interrupt you.

rod
oh oh okay. I'm sorry you need to go I hope everything's okay.

randy
yeah, well, my mom is in trouble so i wont sit down.

rod
yeah, please do, of course of course

randy
i will take some bannana bread along

rod
sure. do that.

rod
why um\ he sez the car wuz too close to the engine and they couldnt open the windows cause..

why couldnt they open their windows? with the car right up next to the engine?

betty
too close to the engine.

rod
[cuz it wud be]

randy
[i'll read this when i get home] sorry

rod
yeah okay/ and we'll see ya next week okay?

Group (chorus)
bye

randy
bye

rod
awright, bye. good luck, buddy.

{randy exits and staff member re-enters, retrieves another item and leaves}

rod
okay. so this car's up close to the engine and they couldnt open the windows because of the smoke from the smokestack i a i assume, but even as it was, embers and little burning pieces would come flying back into the car.
virgil
was kinda the coluh of the leaves (he saw) [outside]
daphne
[excuse me] can i please use the restroom?
rod
of course of course / please \

virgil
coluh of the leaves ee passed by, you know he wuz puttin his finger on on the window but he
could(nt) see cuz o the smoke and all the (_ _ _)

betty
mmhhmm

rod
yeah, right .. an theyre up in this baggage car up with the bags and the this candy and fruit an
different things like that and then theres even a a casket up there with them. why are they in this
car?

virgil
thas how they traveled back [then.]

connie
[thas how they] traveled

betty
[only for] colords

rod
yea:h thas right this is so that tells ya somethin about the time period, doesn't it?

betty
mmhhmm, time period (_)

rod
tells us about that were talkin about some time in the early twentieth century probly early nineteen
hundreds probably uh when the trains were segregated and there were areas for whites and areas
[for, uh.]

betty
[fuh colords]

rod
yeah, colored section, so to speak. and so these this family's traveling in that section. okay good
and yeah the little boys are doin what little boys do: lookin out the windows of the train..lookin at
the colors of the leaves

virgil
an ee saw a uh guy with a dog.

rod
[righ]t

virgil
[a boy with] a dog

rod
geright

virgil

a cow (_ _ _ _)

rod

and ee thinks thats a nice dog. i think its a collie, yeah okay. okay is that good we wanna keep on?.

who wants to read next?

betty

i'll read.

good.

betty

okay. a freight was passing, going in the direction of oklahoma city passin so swiftly that its orange and red cars seemed to streak a watercollor with gray spaces punched through. the boy felt funny whenever he thought of oklahoma city, like he wanted to cry. perhaps they would never go back. he wondered what frank and rc and petey were doin now. picking peaches for mr. (stewart).

a lump rose in his throat too, too bad they had to leave just when mr stewart had promised him half of all the peaches they could pick. he sighed. the train whistle sounded very sad and lonesome. well now they was goin to ms to m.

mcalester

mcalester where mama would have a nice job and enough money to pay the bills. gee mama, mus have been a good worker for mist bollinger to send all the way to oklahoma city for her to come work for him. mama wuz happy to go and he wuz glad fo mama to be hap.

now that daddy wuz gone. he closed his eyes tight trying to see the picture of daddy he must never foget how daddy looked. he would look like that himself when he grew up. tall and kind and always joking and reading books. well, jus wait, when he got big and carried mama and lewis back to oklahoma city everbody would see how well he took care of mama and she would say "see these are my two boys" and would be very proud and everybody would say see arent mrs weaver's boys two fine mens. that was the way it would be. the thought made him lose some of the lump that came into his throat when he thought of nevuh evuh goin back and to turned to see who it wuz goin through the door. a white man and a little boy came into the car and walked up front.

0:41:05.3

{daphne returns}

betty

his mother looked up then lowered her eyes to her book again. he stood up and looked over the back of the chair trying to see what the man and boy were doin. the white boy held a tiny dog in his arms, stroking its head. the little white boy asked the man to let him take the dog out but the man sed no and they went rocking from side to side out of the car. the dog must have been asleep because all the time he had made (no) sound. the little white boy dressed like a kid you see in movies picture. did he have a bike the boy wondered. he looked out the window. there were horses
now, a herds of them runnin and tossin their manes and tails and poundin the ground all (wild
when the whistle blew.) he saw himself on a white horse winging laredo, is that right? [over the]

ro\d
[swinging] a lariat

[over the]

betty

swinging [a lariat] over the

[over the]

rod

[i dunno why] its spelled like that with the dashes in between. its almost like he wants us to say L-
A-R-I-A-T [over the bronco's head]

rod

but you know what a lariat is, right? or do i jus know that cuz i grew up in oklahoma goin to
rodeo's? a lariat's one a those ropes the cowboys use to rope cattle and rope horses=

rotary

[over the]

=yeah

rod

yeah. so he saw himself on a white horse swinging a lariat over the broncos head. so we're on 16,
[ttop of 16.]

[over the]

betty

[okay] lariat bronc co's heads and yelling yippee yippee yippee like hoot gibson in the movies. the
horses excited lewis and he beat his hand against the window and cried .. is that giddup?

rotary

giddyup giddyup

[over the]

betty

giddyup giddyup. the boy smiled and looked at his mothuh. she was looking up from her page and
smiling too. lewis was cute, he thought. they stopped at a country store. mens were standing in
front of the station watching the porter throw off a bunch of newspaper. then several white mens
came into the car and one sed this must be it and pointed to the big box and the porter sed yeah
this it awright, this is it awright, iss the only one we got this trip so this must be the one. then the
porter jumped out of the car and went into the station. the men were dressed in black suits and
white shirts. they seemed very (un)comfortable in their high collars and act very solemn. They
pushed the box over gently and lift it out of side the door of the car. white men in overalls watched
them from the platform. they put the box in a wagon and the man sed giddyup to the horse horses
and they drove away. the mens in the back looking very straight and stiff. one of the mens on the
platform was pickin his teeth and spitting tobacco juice on the ground. the station wuz painted
green and a sine on the side read tube rose snuff and showed a big white flower. it didnt look like
a rose though. it wuz hot and the mens had their shirts open at the collah and wore red bandanas
around their necks. they were standing in the same position when the train pulled out starin. why,
he wondered, did white folks stare at you that way. outside of town he saw big red barn standing
red barn standing. (behind some trees). beside stood somethin he had nevuh seen before. it wuz
high and round and made out of the same kind of rock as the barn. he climbed into his seat and
pointed. what is that tall thing, mama? he sed. iss a silo, son, she sed. thass where the corn is
stored. her eyes were (strange) and distant when she turned her face back to him. the sun slanted
across her eyes and her skin was brown and clear. he eased down into his seat. silo silo almost as
tall as the colcord building in oklahoma city that daddy helped buid.
can i pause there for just a minute? lets make sure we lets see what we what we learned. what we
know now. one thing like you sed ben, they're goin to this other town for a job=

rod

right? mama's got a new job, and you were gonna say somethin connie

connie

um, de the soun like he wuz scared, scared o the people, [of the]

rod

[better bit]

connie

lets see, (bout) somethin {scanning the text} colored person he wuz scared to say anything

rod

mnhhm mnhmm. an he wuz talkin bout how how white people seem to stare at him a lot

Group (chorus)

mmnhmm

rod

yeah, why do you think?

connie

he kinda daydreamin too bout what..

rod

right, how bout, why is it mama and the two little boys? wheres daddy?

connie

he's . he aint alive

connie

he's dead

connie

he's dead

connie

he's dead

rod

it seems ( _ ) that he passed, uhhuh, yep. [but we don know what happened to im]

sandra

[(she got so much] to do since she got those boys)

rod

whats that?

sandra
seems like she's got so much to do cuz she got them boys.

and she's got those boys and she's got to work hard.

sandra [since daddy's gone]

yep, yep that's right, and she's goin to a new town and uh hes [and he]

rod

he's kinda sad cuz he's wondrin, he sez i wunder whut what're frank and RC and petey doin right now? who ya figure they are?=

connie =his friends

right, his buddies back home in oklahoma city where he grew up and now he figures he may never get back there agin. yeah, wondrin whut theyre doin. hes feelin kinda lonesome. okay good good.

you wanna keep goin betty, or you wanna give it over to somebody [else]

betty

[any]body else want to read?

rod

who wants to take over? .. anybody

daphne (i will)

rod

yeah? please.

daphne

he jumped, startled, mama wuz callin his name with tears in her voice. he turned round to see the look on her face. come around here james, bring lewis. he took lewis by the had and moved him to the seat beside her. what had they done? james, son, she said, that old silo back there there's been here a long time. it made me remember when years ago me an yuh daddy came ovuh this same ol' rock island line on owuh way tuh oklahoma city. we had we had jus been married an were very happy goin west becasue we had heard that colored people had a chance out here. james smiled, listening, he loved to hear mama tell bout when she an daddy were young an about what they used to do down south. yet he felt this wuz to be somethin diferent, somethin [(in mama's voice)]
wuz vast and high like a rainbow, yet somethin sad and deep like when the organ played in church
wuz around mama's words. son, au wunt you tuh remember this trip, she sed. you...{all turning
page} understood son? i wunt you tuh remember. you must you, you must you got to understand.

james sens sensed [(something)]

betty

[(cough)]

daphne

tried hard to understand. he follwed and to stared into her face. tears were glis glistening in her
eyes and he felt he would cry himself. he bit his lip. no, he wuz the man of the family and he
couldnt act like a baby. he swallowed, listening. you remember this james, she sed. we came all
the way from georgia on the same railroad line fourteen years ago so things would be better for
you chidren. when you came. you must remember this james, we traveled far looking for a better
world where things wouldn't be so hard lak they were down south. tha's what wuz, that wuz
fourteen years ago james. now your father father's gone from us and your tha man. things are hard
for us colored folks son and is just is jest us three alone and we have to stick together. things is
hard and we have to fight. oh lord we have to fight. she stopped her lips pressed tight together and
she shook her head overcome with motion emotion. james placed his arm around her neck and
caressed her cheek. yes mama, he sed, he could not get it all, yet he understood. it was like
understanding what music without words sed. he felt very full inside. now mama wuz pulling him
close to her the baby rested against her other side. this wuz familiar. since daddy died, mama
prayed with them and now she wuz beginning to pray. he bowed his head. i'll stop right there.
uh and sez you better keep it goin, yknow, its a fight here, keep things tugether. whadoes he mean
the little boy sayin he couldnt get it all but he sed it wuz like understandin what music wothout
words sed?

Group (chorus)
mhhmm

rod
whatuzzat mean? like understandin what music without words sed?

virgil
what it meant wuz you know south in that periodic time you know racism wuz in and they were
workin hard. you know his father had passed and his mothuh wuz workin hard sh passed that silo
goin down route fourteen goin ta uh:uh oklahoma city agin, they passed in the in the in the past
once. and she wuz tellin the son you know things will be hard and ruff you know. summin it up.
it'll be ruff but you know things in life you gotta work for.=

rod
=mmhhmmm mhhmm. yeah, I think so.

Group (chorus)
{nodding}

virgil
yeah theyare things in life gotta work fo. thas all thas all em base-ly tellin him. you know. like
music to im an he unnerstan the music but=

rod
=yeah

virgil
at the same time, playin a different tune though.=

rod
=yeah

virgil
life plays a different tune.

rod
yeah an even if it doesnt tell you even if it doesnt have words (if it) dudnt have lyrics we can
understand the tone of the music=

virgil
=[right]

rod
[and] understand the mood of the music.=

virgil
=right. if you play piana music fuh a church room for for a funeral then you play one for a
wed'/din\=

rod
=thas RIGHT/
virgil
{gesturing} = [you (gonna) differnt typa tunes.]
rod
[its got different] that right its got a different FEEL to it=

virgil
right [right]

rod
[an he could] an he could feel the he didnt understand everything his mom had told him but he
could feel that it wuz important, right?=

virgil
=right

rod
[it had] a weight to it he sed it sed right after that it sez that he felt very fu:ull insi:ide

virgil
(she wuz jus) she jus wuz esplainin tuh (one wuh name), what wuh tha other li'l boy name?
[james]

rod
[lewis] is [the]

virgil
[james and lewis]

rod
the little baby I think.

virgil
right he wuh esplainin ta [james]

rod
[wuh esplainin ta [james]

virgil
[an james]

virgil
and james didnt want tuh cry=

rod
=right

virgil
an bit is lip, you know sin he say he gotta be tha man of the families, butchoo know, thas how.

rod
yeah, thas tuff too right, how old is he?

virgil
[little kid]

rod
[how old do we think he is?] how old wouldja say you think he probly is?
virgil
bout fourteen or fifteen=
rod
=man, ahd think even younger than that./
betty
[mhhmm]
rod
[i dunno], i may be wrong but
grow up ta be a (real) man lak his father wuz
rod
anyway a young=
connie
fourteen wuz bout tha um that um route they took.. the route
virgil
yeah fouteen, fourteen years ago (him and james the father)
connie
yeah fourteen
yeah fourteen
rod
oo::hh, is that right, thats good thats good to pick that out.
virgil
say they been workin in georgia fo awhile
rod
{reading} on the same railroad line fourteen years ago
ben
he wuz six when (he died lef)
0:55:07.8
rod
...bet he wuz born not too long after that probably right. they had just been married?
betty
mmhhmm
rod
right, so you're probably right he's probably close to fourteen, could be. hmm okay, alright. alright,
so she's gonna shes gonna say this prayer that who wants to read now?... thank you [daphne]
Oh! go with us and keep us Lord. Then it wuz me an him, now iss me and his children and I'm thankful Lord, you saw fit to take him Lord and its well with ma soul in thy name. I wuz happy Lord, life wuz like a mockingbird. it seem/ an all i ask now is to stay with these children to raise them and protect them. Lord till till that they old enuff to go theyah way. make them str(o)ng and unafraid. give them strength to meet the world. make them brave where where things is bettuh for our people Lord. James sat with his head bowed. always when Mama prayed, he felt tight and soma som.

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and then questioningly bow wow? is this a dog?

Group (chorus)

{laughing}

rod

no lewis, its a cow {laughing}...sorry, go head lijah

virgil

no lewis, its a cow, james sed. moo. he is the cow. the baby laughed delightedly. hes wuz very

interested. james watched the water. the train wuz movin agin and james wondered why his

mother cried. it wasnt just that daddy wuz gone it did not sound jus that way it wuz somethin else.

I'll kill it when I get big he thought i'll make it cry like it makin mama cry. the train wuz passin a

on an oil field (at wuz) there were many wells in the field and the big, round tank gleemed like

silver in the sun. one well wuz covered with boards and looked up looked like a huge indian wig

wam against the sky:y. the wells all pointed straight up at the sky. yes I'll kill it i'll make it cry eve

if its god i'll make god cry he thought. i'll kill him i'll kill him god and not be sorry. the train jerked

and gained speed and the wheels began to click an ragglin rhythm to chis ears. there were many

adversities sighs in the fields. they were rolling past all teh signs told about the same things for

sale. one sign showed a big red bull an red bull drummer. Moo, the baby sed, james looked at her

mother. she wuz through cryin no an an she smiled. he felt some of the tightness ebb away from

he lemmee see he felt some of the tightness ebb away. he grinned. he wanted he wanted very much

to kiss her but he must show proper reserve of a man now. he grinned. mama was a beautiful when

she smiled. he made a wish nevuh tuh forget what she had sed. this was nine this wu this is

nineteen twenty-four and i'll never forget it. a whisper to him then he looked out of the window

restin his chin on the palm of his hands wondrin how much farther they would have to ride

{cough} how much further they would have to ride and if they were be would be any boys to play

football in mc mcalester. that's it aint it?

rod

yep, yep thats the end of that story. so what else [(_) ]?

virgil

they wuh jes travelin jes travelin goin from a place from georgia to oklahoma.

rod

well in this one now, they're goin a shorter distance, theyre jes goin from oklahoma city to

[mcalester]

connie

[(_ _)]

rod

jes from one town to another in oklahoma. imonna gu:ess that that would probly be a two hour car

ride now so maybe a three or [four or maybe a five hour train] ride back then I would guess.

sandra

[ {yawn} ]

virgil

but noo, day nevuh did git on tha train ta go anywhere they wuh still travelin.

rod

yeah they still oni the [train on their]

virgil
[they still travelin]
rod
way to mcalester to this new town they're movin from oklahoma city to mcalester so there at the
date has gone back to thinkin about his old friends and wondrin if he's gonna make new friends if
hes gonna have (any) boys to play football with where he's goin in mcalester. so, its interesting, the
last story we read ahh, was pretty dramatic right at least in parts, there at the end (ya get) a huge
storm trees rushin down th' river blow out the bridge you know john redding ends up with a huge
gash in his side bleedin you know dead floatin out ta sea. here, we get a family you know mama
and two boys on a train ride and we jes get a little bit of their travelin and then talkin to each other.
so, what's the drama here!? i mean what makes this a story, why would he write this story [i
wonder]
virgil
[life]
rod
connie
[everybody's life]
virgil
[is based on a story where da family's travelin, movin from one place [to another]
Group (chorus)
[to another]
virgil
in remembrance of the father that passed and (torment) turmoil and grief about how life can take a
toll on you cuz she tellin huh son to wor to be aware of life.
rod
mmhhmm
rod
virgil
an then at the same time, hes spotted shes spotted things from the past to remind huh of her and
her husband.
rod
right
virgil
so at the same time, its just a travelin jes remembrance (s'like) you jes get in tha car like go up the
interstate maybe travel t'oklahoma ourself.
rod
mmhhmm
virgil
talkin ta ya wife uh yuh son or whatever. they wuz travel an essperiencin thangs.
rod
mmhhmm=
betty
lookin at the scenery=

virgil

=it wuz jes a ride tha baby lookin at the cows, [countin leaves]

rod

[(laughs) mmhhmm. right]

virgil

look at the dawgs, look at the white little boy. they took the coffin off the train. know they wuz
carryin it out carefully. the the ush undertakers or whatever you know, it wuz jes a big scenery

rod

do yall when yall travel if if even if its jes driving in tha car or ridin in the car er er whatever when
you travel, is that a time when you think about things? when you think about your life or think
about the past or think about (uh uh) I think travelin is a time when we sometimes do that um um
we might we might pass somethin like she did passed that silo and it brought back memories or
sometime you pass the church and ya think about the time you spent there or you pass the the you
know park and you think about a picnic or a reunion that was there or something like that uhm so
travelin can be a time when we bring back some memories we kind of REVISIT those times in the
past=

virgil

=or sometimes when you travel if its for a pleasurable reason you know you think have fun and
enjoyment (but) if its a sad occasion you know you gonna (reminisce--reallymiss) [you know]

Group (chorus)

[mmhhmm]

virgil

(think about) sad moments uh whadevuh, missin tha person. goin to a funeral=

rod

=right

goin to a weddin=

rod

=right=

 rod

goin to a party or a football game.

well what about for this reason, now we've probably all had this experience have you evuh moved
from one house to anothuh whethuh you move from one town to anothuh across town, across the
country whateveuh. it could be either a short ora long move, that's really a time when we start
thinkin about where you've been and [where you're goin right?]

virgil

[yeah leave behind yeah] that that ive experienced that cu I thought about some'a my classmates

rod

yeah/ [right?]
virgil
[when] when I wuz leavin one town and goin tuh tha nex when I wuz little ya know

rod
yeah yeah

virgil
[so that wuz]

rod
yeah right, so we've all had the experience of leavin people leavin friends behind, leavin places
behind, you get that kindof theres bitter and sweet. theres some kinda happy and sad. he starts out
kinda feelin that tight feelin in here {gesture to chest} like I'm never goin back I may never go
back to my home again I may never get ta see frank and RC and whatevuh the other names of the
other little boy's his friends back there, but he ends up the story at the very very end sayin what? i
wonder if there's gonna be some new boys in this new [town fuh me ta play football with]

virgil
[(fuh him ta play) fotball with]

rod
yeah yeah, so he's thinkin uh that. so we we we miss what's behind us but we look forward to
what's ahead [of us?]

virgil
[(you could also grasp)]

connie
[yes, yes]

Group (chorus)
{nodding}

rod
so its [kindof a mix]

virgil
[you could also] grasp his age. he wanna play football so (probly) about thwelve thirteen fourteen
[somethin lak that]

rod
[yeah I bet he's in there]

virgil
he still wanna play around

rod
yeah yeah yeah thats right he still wants to play thats right

virgil
football

rod
that's right.
um i i wonder about mama has this long prayer she's askin for the lords protection for them an ta
help her raise those boys and make them unafraid and give them strength and.. james wuz really
upset thaht his mama wuz upset and angry right?

sandra
probly thinkin bout his father.

rod
yeah he wuz thinkin about his father I think thats right and then he wuz thinkin about her too bout
whatever it was that made mama cry

Group (chorus)
mmhhmm, [right]

rod
[(felt)] something cruel has made her cry. felt tightness in his [throat]

sandra
[throat] [that oldest one]

rod
[becoming anger]

virgil
in life (you know people sont f) you know like when you a child you dont have fully understandin
of what make an adult cry

rod
{gesture of agreement toward virgil}

virgil
pressure of the world, pressure of society, you know jus common pressure. (ya knuh cuh lak) she
gotta take care uh de children, fightin ta have uhnhuff money but mama ain gonna tell ya that=

rod
=right right

virgil
mama might not have enough for tha room an board uh whatevuh [whe they wuh stayin]

sandra
[she cried]

virgil
she cried and asked fuh the children ta be protected in the future wher (they could have further
preparations)=

connie
=bettuh life
right. di di 'you an then i i love how what the child does cuz you're right you're exactly right
he doesn't understand those pressures he didn't understand what it is that's upsetting mama so he
sez well what IS IT? who made her cry who's making her angry? if i jus knew what it wuz, i
would fix it. [and]

[i'd] kill it too
i'd k i'll even kill it, right. is it god even, he goes that far, it is good makin mama cry, i'll even get
after god y'know
connie
{shakin head} no oh no.
rod
right well, y'know he's got that immature [understanding]
connie
{smiling} [right]
rod
but i tell ya, do we ever act lak that? not ta say, not ta go that far maybe but ta say man, whatevuh
this is that's makin me upset or upsetting my family if i jus knew whut it wuz i'd go fix it.
Group (chorus)
right right
rod
i wanna i wanna ACT
virgil
right right
rod
i wanna go fix it, when maybe its not as simple as that. right ans [its]

[sometime] you know like sometime in the world ya sistuh might be wid a boy huh boyfriend or
meet uh whateveuh she might be upset and you ask that question "whats wrong with you" an she
tell you you know blazay blazay you know he made me mad you might go talk to him have a
approach wit the boyfriend or whatevuh. you might (i'm jus sayin for example).

yeah

thats tha way it go down. but that wuz makin her upset, somethin wuz makin her upset in life and
her son didn't understand
virgil
he wuz at a age that he wanted ta try ta fix it. stop that mom from [cryin]
rod
[but] wuz there anything that he could fix wuz there anybody he could go talk to about it?
Group (chorus)
no
virgil
[she had ta ask]
rod
[not really]
virgil
the question he coulda asked mama whatchoo cryin fuh?
betty
he wanted tuh be more respectful like a man, he didnt want ta aks huh.
virgil
he didnt wanta tuh kiss huh on tha cheek uh whatevuh
betty
mmhhmm (_ _) back in tha day.
rod
yeah he sed he wanted to show tha proper reserve of a man at that time, righ yeah. thats right. he
wanted he wished there wuz somebody he could go talk to or go get. but there it was. do you think
he'll understand? [you think]
virgil
[he'll understand]
rod
he'll understand when he gets older?
virgil
he'll understand [(once you)]
betty
[when he's okder]
virgil
(somethin bring that pride up if it havent been strong, that fight ) fight tha pressures of the world.
rod
right
virgil
but you know, so much pressure put on you you can become weaker or you can become stronger
aftuh dat. [so]
rod
mmhhmm its

virgil
[_(._)_]

rod

funny too that we got her prayer is for them tuh be strong tuh be fighters=

Group (chorus)

{mmhhmm}

rod

maybe tuh that little boy that sounded like to be fighters like this {holds fists in boxing posture}

right, were gonna fight somebody

Group (chorus)

{right}

rod

but really what does [she mean?]

virgil

{tapping on his temple} [fight (thinking) in tha mind]

rod

{points in agreement to virgil} she meant bein strong minded=

virgil

=right

rod

=bein strong spirited=

Group (chorus)

=right

rod

and courageous enuff ta ta handle those stomrs and [struggles]

connie

[obstacles]

rod

that life will send and obstacles, precisely, i think thats right i think thats right.. h I think i

remember reading and its .. i dont really know whether it matters one way or another i think i

remember reading that this wuz based on

daphne

{coughing} can i go get some water?

rod

of course of course do what you need to do.. uh wuz uh based on ralph ellison's own experience of

moving when he wuz a boy, of losing his father and then moving to a new town. weve all had a

similar experience to that huh? moving away anyway. well, you wanna say anything else about

that one?
sandra
iss iss
rod
whaddaya think uh that one sandra, you like that?
sandra
that wuh yeah yeah. he wuz doin his duties, his duties (_ been back)
rod
so whaddaya think should we start on another one and then we can take it up next time?
sandra
{standing up} mmhhmm
connie
yes
rod
so lets start on another one and then we can finish it up next time, can we do that?
sandra
yeah, we can do that.
rod
okay, alright, lets do that
1:12:44.5
rod
{passing out papers} pass those down there for me? heres a couple more for sophie and you and
your sister. aright and this is from another writer still. Eudora Welty. anybody heard of her? she's a
southern writer but I think she us from mississippi. she wrote a lot about the Natchez Trace. yall
know natchez, mississippi? not that far from here in natchez, mississippi. uhm. who wants to start?
this is called "a worn path".
virgil
i'll read
rod
you wanna go on or you wanna let somebody who hadnt read [yet?]
virgil
[yeah let somebody else read]
rod
lets see, anybody want to? if not thats f.
ben
{lifiting one finger} I will {quietly}
rod
you want to? thats fine, go head ben, why dontchoo
it was december, a bright frozen day in the early mornin. far out in the country there was a old little old woman with her head tied in red rags. coming along a path through the pine woods. her name was phoenix jackson. she was very old, small and walked slowly in the dark pine shadows, moving a little from side to side in her steps with the balanced heaviness and lightness of pedilium in a grandfather clock. she carried a thin, small cane made from a umbrella and with this she kept tapping the frozen earth in front of her. this made a grave and persistent noise in the still air that seemed meditive like the chirping of a solitary...little bird. she wore a dark striped dress reaching down to her shoes tops and an equally long apron of bleached sugar sacks with a full pocket all neat and tidy, but every time she took a step she might have fallen over her shoelaces which dragged from her unlaced shoes. she looked straight ahead, her eyes were blue with age, her skin a pattern all uh is its own of numberless branch'ed wrinkles an though a whole little tree stood in the middle of her forhead. but a golden coluh ran underneath the two knobs of her cheeks were illumined by a yellow burning under the dark. From the red rag her hair came down on her neck in the frailest of ringlets still bla black an the odor like copper. now and then there was a kwer, quivering in the thicket. old phoenix se out of mene out of my way all you foxes, owl, beetles, jack rabbits, coons and wild animals. keep out from unner these feet. little bobwhites keep the big wild hawk outta my path. dont let none of them those come runnin mah direction. i go a longg way. under her small black (freckled) hand her cane limber as a buggy whip would switch at the brush as if no rouse up any hiding type things. on she went the woods were deep and still. the sun made the pine needles almost too bright to look at. up where the wind rocked the cones dropped as light as feathers down in teh hollow was the mourning dove it was not too late fuh him. the path ran up a hill. seem like there were chains about mah feet. time (ah get) this fah, she said in a voice old people kep to use with themsleves. something always take ahold a me on this hill. pleads I should stay...

"you wanna pause a minute?"

"yeah"

so whats goin on so far? know whats happenin here

"yeah"

"how she looks"

yeah yeah, what does she look like who (_ _) what did describe this lady

she short skinny, dark skinn[ded]
[yeah]

virgil
wrinkles. she wearin um, sh'got some tennis shoes on but tha laces untied
rod
[some kinda shoes anyway, yeah]

virgil
[her dress] she got a dress on with a umbrella, some(made it like a) form a umbrella.

rod
[her dress] she got a dress on with a umbrella, some(made it like a) form a umbrella.
yeah a [cane]

virgil
dark striped] dress reached down to the top of her shoes a bleached shuguh sack full pocket neatly
tied up you know she had all

rod
wearin an apron made of bleached shugar sacks so what does [that]

connie
[{groans}]

rod
who would wear that?

connie
no one

rod
ha! not anymore, right?

Group (chorus)
{laughter} back in the day

rod
not anynmore, right, back in the day, sometime ago so this is probably somebody that lives in the
country, right?

Group (chorus)

yeah

rod
n she we think she probly pretty old. old phoenix jackson. cuz she wrinkled right, sed she jes

wrinkled, almos look like she sed she looked like shes got a tree right in the middle of her

rod

betty

=forehead

rod

right, yeah. an her eyes her eyes blue with age.
you ever seen that when when people get real old the whites of their eyes almost take on a kindova blueish

you know what

betty

with age

rod

betty

[(_ _) coluh]

rod

tint to em jes a little bit. she's pretty old. [she's]

connie

[ri:ght]

rod

old. a little old lady.. okay.. do you wanna uhm do you wanna keep goin ben or do you want

ben

yeah I do (one more little bit _ path and then after she got) After she got to the top she turned and gave a full severe look behind her where she had come up through pines. she sed at length. now down through oaks. her eyes opened their widest and she stared down [gently]

ben

[started down gently]

ben

started down gently. but before she got to the bottom of the hill a bush caught the bottom of her dress. her finger were busy and intent her skirts were full and long so that before she could pull them free in one place they were caught in another. it was not possible to allow the dress to tear. i in the thorny. i in the thorny bush she sed. thorns you doin your appointed work. nevuh wunt to let folk pass, no sir. oh i thought you wuz a pretty little green bush. finally tremblin all over se stood free and after a moment dared to stoop for her cane. sun so high she cried leaning back and looking while the thick tears went over her eyes. the time gettin all gone her

ben

i wusnt as old as ah thought she sed but she sat down to rest. spread her skirt on teh bank around her and folded her hands over her knees. up above her wuz a tree in a pearly cloud of mistletoe. she did not dare to close her eyes and when a little boy brought her a plate with a slice of marble cake on it she spoke to him. that would be acceptable she sed but when she went to take it there wuz jes her own hand in the air=

rod

=whats what what?
[mmmm]

[what jes] happened here? {laughs} what just happened here?

uh, what sh, what it wuz, she wuz talkin to nature, she like talkin to the bushes to trees [(say)]

[okay] yeah

she say youz a little smiley green bush but she (_) it wasn't [(_ _)]

[mmhhmm]

she talked to nature as she walked along the path

thats right she definitely did and then she came to a place where there wuz a log laid across the
creek and what does she do?

closed [huh [eyes]]

betty [closed huh eyes]

[laughing] she just closed her eyes] and went

[laughs] she just closed her eyes] and went

an when she made it across she sed I realize i'm not as old as i though she thought she wuz gonna [fall in]

{singsongy} oh', I/ wasn't/ as old/ as I though i wuz/. an then she sat down to rest for a minute on
the banks of that creek... and she sat down there and she kinda closed her eyes and then what what
does it what does it mean all of a sudden=

[a piece a marble cake]

[a little boy] brought her a piece of.=

uh! {laughs}

=cake
virgil
she probly wuz hungry an she wuz fantasizin=

betty
=imaginin one

virgil
[laughing] she wanted somethin to eat

rod
[laughing] I think so [I think youre right]

connie
[laughing]

virgil
{laughing}

connie

rod

virgil

or a mirage, one.

connie

rod

virgil

connie

rod

connie

so

sophie

[okay]

rod

connie

so

1:22:17.6

sophie

so late in the day and she could not pay for havin huh arm or her leg sewn off

daphne

sawed

sophie sawed off off if she got caught fast where she wuz. at last she wuz safe the fence an
through the fence and raised up out in {turns page} ... clearing clearing clearing big dead trees like
black men with one arm were standing in the purple thick

betty

stalls

sophie

stalks of tha white whethered with

betty

withered

sophie

withered cotton field. there sat a breeze who

rod

tall

there sat a buzzard

sophie

tall

there sat a buzzard. who you watchin? who you watchin? in the ferr she made her way along. glad
this not the season fuh bulls, she sed looking sideways and the good lord made his snakes to curl
up and sleep in the winter a pleasure i don see no headed sakes comin around that tree where its
come once where it comes once it took a while to get by him back in summer she passed through
her old cotton went into a field of dead corn what dead corn. it whispered and shook and was taller
taller than her head. than her head.

connie

through the...

sophie

through the maze now she sed but there wuz no path then there wuz somethin tall black and
skinny there moving before her. at first she took it fuh a man. it could have been a man dancing in
the field but she stood still and listened and it did not make a sound. it was as silent as a ghost.
ghost she sed sharply who be you the ghost of for I have heard of narry death death close by. but
there wuz no answer only the regu reg ragged dancing in the wind. she shut her eyes and reached
out her hand and touched its sleve. she found a coat and inside that ..

emptiness cold as ice. you scarecrow she sed here face lightening. her face lightening. i ought to
be shut up fuh good she sed with laughter. my sense is gone. i too old. i the oldest people i e ev
eyuh known. dance only scarecrow she sed while i dancing with you. she kicked her foot over the
furry the furry

rod

the furrows

sophie

the furrow and with mouth drawn down, with mouth drawn down shook her head once or twice in
a little (shadowing)
daphne
strutting

sophie
strutting way. some husky blew down and whirled in streams about the her skirts then she went on
parting her way from side to side wite with the cane through the whispering fields. at last she came
to the end to a wagon trauck where the silver grass grew between the red ruts. the qual were
walking around like pullets seeming all dainty and unseen. walk pretty she sed this the easy place.
this the easy goin. she followed the truck and swaying through the quiet bare fields through the
little strings of trees silver in their dead leaves, past cabins silver from weather, with the doors and
windows boarded shut all like old women under a spell sittin there. i walkin in their sleep she sed
nooding her head vig vigorously. in a in a r

rod
ravine
ravine

sophie
in a ravine, she went where a spring wuz slightly flowing through a hollow log. old phoenix bent
and drink. sweet gum makes the water sweet she sed and drank more. nobody kknows who
made this well for it wuz her when I wuz born. the truck crossed a swampy part where he moss
hung as white as lace from every limb. sleeping sleepy on aligators and blow your bubbles. then
the truck went

rod
track

sophie
then the track went into the road. the the road went down between the high green colored banks.
overhead the leave leave oaks

rod
the live oaks

sophie
the live oaks met and it was a dark as a cave. a black dog with a loling tongue came up out of the
woods [by the ditch by the ditch

Group (chorus)
[laughing]

rod
[what's funny?]
sophie

she wuz meditating and not ready and when he came at her she only hit him a little with her cane.
over she went in the ditch like a little puff of milk[weed.]

rod
[what] happened right there? just right there what sophie just read what happened?

connie
chased it. it chased it.
yeah, that dog like knocked her she fell over in the ditch. that dog came up out of the side of the road and knocked her it surprised her and she fell over into the ditch. poor little old phoenix. I tell you what we should wind we'll stop there and we'll pick it up there when we come back next [monday] betty {to virgil} [(_ _ _ good)]

rod if you want\ to read ahead of course you sure can but you dont have to betty yeah, I wanna read ahead rod yeah we'll see what happens ta old phoenix when we when we come back. thanks yall i enjoyed it again. take some bread with you if you wish. we'll be back here again at the same time and the same place next monday...
Session Three

{Rod is setting up the room preparing for the session and one of the participants enters}

(00:01:00)

Randy
Good Morning
Rod
Hey what’s happening?
Randy
I thought you was havin a meetin? (0.5) but um…
Rod
you thought what?
Randy - I thought you was havin a meeting [when I said what] I didn’t know we was havin a meeting in here
Rod
Yea the other room is um occupied right now
Participant- I’m in serious trouble man I’m in totally in big trouble big financial trouble I need prayer and I NEED HELP
Rod
Alright
Participant
So what happened is…Uh I don’t wanna tell nobody…I put a offering into one of those churches
Rod
“O” the one that emailed you?
Participant
the one that uh…sent me mail
Rod
YEA
Participant
but you know what God’s gonna make a way out of no way I know dat God will make a way…You know what I say I know what I done…I scuggle I didn’t mean to scuggle all my money away. But what it is is FAST FOOD, I suppose to pay my rent money, so I say LORD JESUS PLEASE HELP ME, I say wait a min here I need sum help and I need help FAST, I say God I need help, I know he won’t [leave me let this check bounce]
Rod
(0:03:00)
“O’…HMMM has anything come of it yet? Are you just worried about what might happen, what might come

Participant
I was kinda little little worried, but I try not to WORRY…cause all I needed was fifteen dollars.. I need fifteen dollars I need fifteen dollars I gotta come up wit fifteen dollars

Rod
dk

Participant
I was wonderin can you help me “.h” “.h” {laughing}

Rod
[uh I dunno]

Participant-[ I will pay you back next week]

Rod
I’m not gonna be able to, ummm, let me go gather up the rest of the troops…Yea uh uh I’m SORRY, [Randy] I’m not gonna be able to help you with that I apologize

{Rod leaves the room}

Participant
You know the thing call [knock three times]

{Participant is now sitting in the room eating a muffin and speaking to an unknown person behind the camera. Participant is moving around a lot in his chair, continuing to wipe crumbs from his face and playing with his right ear}

Randy
Im in trouble. Randy- why did I wrote that check ?…[sent back to churches…got no business]….What you think is going on?

(0:05:00)

{Participant still waiting for the Rod to return to the room. He continues to move around a lot, breathing heavily, and playing with his hat. He also begins to rub his forehead as if he’s puzzled and worried about something}

{Rod reenters the room followed by four other individuals. Three females and one male}

Rod
You hanging in?

Randy
{shrugs shoulders and nods yes}

Rod
ok good...Alright yea were::: were in this room today because they are using the conference room for [something]

Betty
[I need]…Anybody read?
Connie
I didn’t
Randy
I read sum of it last night
Betty
you did?
(0:07:00)
Rod
Alright …how’s everybody?
Group
[alright, ok, yea…ok]
Rod
Alright so Virgil will come in…he said ok..Betty that was a big sigh…that accompanied your ok
[laughing…Ok] alright well that’s good I’m glad you’re here…Uh let’s see…Virgil will be back
from the shop in a minute right? And Sophie and Daphne will come…uh [we should be back in the
same] usual room for next week. As far as I know, but I guess there doing conferences in there?
And that’s why its so crowded in here today is that right?
Randy
um hmm
Betty
yea they got to see the doctor=
Rod
=they got to see the doc today ok…alright yea that’s a big day… Umm alright[so will go on and
get started] …I gotta tell you, last week we had a great session I think and uh good discussion
..And I went to check the camera when it was over and what happened? ….Nothing
Betty
nothing was on there?
Rod
nothing on it nothing on it at all in fact I’m nervous about it now… {Walks towards the camera} I
gotta make sure it’s still on yea, yea it’s still on So I don’t know what happened… There was
nothing from last week so that was very disappointing you know for me so I’m gonna ask you all
[maybe we’ll have a next session after we get done] To um kinda make that one up just a little bit
if you all are willing? It would just be a continuation you know [just continue whatever story were
reading at the time] But that’s what device in the center of the table is for backup it’s just a little
voice recorder for in case we uh run into technical difficulties again….Um um last week very
disappointing …. Help yourself to some muffins theyre apple today.
Betty
ok
Connie
hmmm
Randy
there delicious
Rod
o you like them pretty good?
Randy
yes there delicious
Rod
alright I’ll tell here
Betty
I want one too but I’ll wait
Rod
she’s um::: Erin is um a little better than five months pregnant
Betty
O
Rod
and she’s um she’s baking
(0:09:00)
Betty
that’s good
Rod
she’s sort of um
Betty
keeping busy
Rod
yea (laughing) that’s right that’s right
Betty
{laughing} how many that make you?
Rod
what’s that?
Betty
how many kids?
In
that will be three
Betty
O three
Rod
God willing that will be three… It’s a little girl this time
Betty
O I know you happy with that two boys?

Rod
uh huh… yep that’s right

Betty
that’s right I had two of each

Rod
o yea

Betty
eight grand’s and}

Rod
a little variety

Betty
eight grand’s and one great grand and one on the way

Rod
o/k\

Betty
um hmm

Rod
alright…. Who’s got something they wanna tell us what do you wanna tell us. Anything happen this weekend? We got some rain

Betty
WE DIDN’T

Randy
I didn’t go nowhere much

Rod
you didn’t get out

Randy
Umm… nope

Rod
pretty [much in] it was storming

Randy
I know the dog track was closed and I said I was gonna go to the dog track [I said I don’t wanna go no more] So anyway I went to um went to um I shouldn’t spend any money buyin that (___), that (still didn’t cost me nothing) I stayed home watched TV watched John Wayne cowboys

Rod
I saw that… that was on I watched just a little bit of that too. That’s the one with the kids right the little kids

Randy
Yea

Rod

uh::: uh riding the trail… Ya’ll like westerns? (laugh) John Wayne movies… Yea that’s kind of fun

Randy

and I saw um Jim Carey the man that play that schizophrenic um man who always (along with) Rene Ze wella I think that movie [I don’t know]

Rod

o yea was that um was that twenty-three? Is that the one? Hey Virgil

Group

[inaudible]

Randy

I think Jim Carey is a funny man

Rod

yea… You saw that movie or you saw something about him?

Randy

the one with the band aid on it

Rod

I think I::: I don’t think I’ve seen it…You liked it?

Randy

it was alright

Rod

It was alright? well ok… What can you tell us Ben what’s going on?

Ben

uh [nothing] just trying to relax a little bit

randy

[(inaud )]

(0:11:00)

Rod

[to randy] [That is funny] {to ben} you did what?

Ben

kinda relaxed a little bit

Ben

tried to relax a little bit

Rod

yea

Ben

yea
Rod: Ok feeling a little (shrugs shoulders).

Ben: I’m feeling fine just trying to relax and all the work that I been doing its (trying to get ready fuh somethin).

Rod: how you doing Virgil?

Virgil: straight straight

Rod: were um theyre doing physicians conferences I guess in the other conference room where we normally are so will um be in here for this week and we’ll switch back as far as I know we’ll switch back next time. I was telling them last week after we had a good session I went to check the camera.. nothing on it technical difficulties no recording so uh I’ve got a little back up device this week the voice recorder [put] it in the middle of the table that’s all that is just in case the camera something happens to it again uh I was telling them that I hope we could kinda make up that session maybe after we get done with the regular ones maybe we could just keep meeting one more week and uh keep reading what were reading just to kind of make that up. Uh we can talk about it a little more when it comes close to the time. uh we were in the middle of… Flying Home right? Actually we were pretty close to the beginning we didn’t get to far in Flying Home let’s see Betty looks like you brought yours with you but, I know several of you left [gave]

Virgil: [I gave] mine back

Rod: you gave it back so I’d hold onto it for you … that’s right and you got yours… Ben will you pass one down to Virgil? Ummm let’s see I have yours too correct? And and no you weren’t here last week right alright…

Randy: I had a dream about my sister my late sister [June]

Rod: a dream?

Randy: I had a dream [my sister was laying on one of those things] on top of me

Rod: yea

Randy: that one she was laying::: laying down by me

Rod: yea

Randy
she said rest… my sister::: sister was killed in a car accident you know

Rod
Awwww\no I didn’t know… know that I’m sorry

Randy
she was she was laying beside me and I know that everything gone be alright. It just let me know that everything was gone be alright

Rod
well that sounds like a comforting dream was that a comforting dream or something else

Randy
it was comforting dream

Rod
it was comforting ? for you that’s good [that’s great]

Randy
she let me know that everything was gone be alright after while. It was um [I didn’t really think about the dream] [inaudible]

rod
how long ago did uh your sister pass?

Randy
about::: about twelve years ago

Rod
twelve years ago?

Randy
uh huh [inaudible]

Rod
don’t know where my copies are let me make sure I didn’t set one in here cause I thought I had I meant we had enough last week didn’\t we?…. um nope not here hmmm we may have to share again that will be alright? Alright let’s um lets remind ourselves what we’re looking at here what uh what did we get to? (Addressing Ben) Can I share with you? Can I look on with you there?

Ben
yes

Rod
ok uh what were we what’s this story about Flying Home this was Ralph Ellison we said uh Ralph Ellison wrote the Invisible Man novel and a lot of stories so.. As well what have we gotten to?

(0:15:00)

Ben
The guy I think I don’t know if he’s Tuskegee Airmen or what uh…but he’s trying uh to fly…Pass an exam so he could go fly into uh…the war so they can uh…be in the war anyway he crashed his plane and this older guy and this young::: young boy they found him and his ankle was broke and he was kinda embarrassed that he crashed the plane. And he was also…I think he was kinda embarrassed by his race for the some reason. I don’t::: I don’t know why would somebody be embarrassed by their race because race to me is just…we all the same color underneath the skin
we just…its only skin and he [snuck] the little boy back into::: into town back to the airfield to tell
that he crashed the plane and the older guy was there (telling him stories) he was trying to comfort
him but he was kinda embarrassed about the older guy and about his race. I don’t::: I don’t
understand why::: why was he embarrassed about his race

Rod
I think that’s a really good kinda synopsis of the story what do you think what what does
somebody else say. When Ben says he was kinda embarrassed about his race what would you say
about that? What do you remember about it I (knew or mean) the pilots name was Todd right?
He's tha pilot that's crash landed. What would you say about race in this story about why he’s
embarrassed? what was that about?

Randy
he knew the guy was black I think
Rod
which guy? The old man
Randy
the old man and the young man
Rod
which guy? The old man
Randy
tyhe old man and the young man
Rod
right see the pilot… What the pilot was black too right ? right he was one of the Tuskegee Airmen
Rod
right that’s exactly what you said he was training to be one of those Tuskegee Airmen so training
(0:17:00)
Rod
just down the road at Moton field [you know what we’re talking about]. The story takes place in
Macon County Alabama. Right?, so he took off from the airfield that’s just down the road from us
here. And um crash landed in what would have been a farm…field somewhere around here right?
Rod
And uh he got found by those two…the old man and either his son or grandson something like
that… What did they do? What:::what was their occupation? Why were they in the field?
Virgil
I think they were sharecroppers
Rod
something like that right yea they worked there they worked the field yea they were farmers or
sharecroppers and worked for the man who owned that land and whatever it was… he was right
yea were talking about nine-teen forty-four I think we said right right during World War II when
those pilots were training what about this issue of being embarrassed about race. Ben you said that
to you it seems like race isn’t all that important were all pretty much the same color underneath our skin. What about I mean is there a difference in time, y’know this wus

Connie

yes yes

Rod

however many years ago [fifty or sixty years] what do you think? You said yes

Connie

[yes it was eighteen century or sometime]

Rod

What wus that?

Connie

Eighteen, back in the eighteenth cen[tury]

Virgil

[nineteenth [century]

Rod

well this is in nineteen yeah nineteen forty-four so uh right around the time of World War II uh but uh still a while ago o how are things different would you say

Connie

[blacks had to be in one section] and white people [was doing they thing] in another section

Rod

ok so segregation=

connie

=segregation

Rod

Wus definitely in effect. where do you think the pilot was from maybe what we should do is start again reading and then get to where we carne from or get to where we stopped last time would that be smart

(0:19:00)

Rod

Would that be a good thing to do that would help them get you to catch up a little bit too Sandra that would give you a chance to get in on it what if we do that would it be alright if I started reading and then we could just go from there we’ll go back to the beginning and start… ok

Virgil

where we at?

Rod

well were gonna start at the beginning. that alright with you Virgil?

Virgil

yea
Rod
ok…. And we’ll see what we think about some of those questions think about race and figure out
where’s Todd from?

{Reading of the story}

Rod
When Todd came to he saw two faces suspended above him and the sun so hot blinding he could
not tell if they were black or white. He stirred feeling a pain that burned as though his whole body
had been laid opened to the sun that glared into his eyes for a moment an old fear of being touched
by white hands [ceased] him then the very sharpness of the pain began slowly to clear his head
sounds came to him dimly. He downed {to ben} sorry I took yours we can read together, then the
very sharpness of the pain b
egan to slowly clear his head. Sounds came to him dimly he done
come to who are they he thought. Who are they he thought? Naw he aint I could have swore he
was white. Then he heard clearly you hurt bad? something within him uncoiled. it was a negro
sound. he’s still out he heard. give him time. say son you hurt bad? Was he? What was that awful
pain\ he laid rigid hearing there breathing and trying to weave a meaning between them and him
being stretched painfully across the ground? He watched them wearily h
is mind traveling back
over a painful distance. Jagged scenes quickly unfolded as if in a movie trailer wheeled through
his mind as he saw himself piloting a tail spinning plane and landing and falling from the cockpit
an trying to stand.

(0:21:00)

Rod
then as in a great silence he remembered the sound of crunching bone now looking up into the
anxious faces of an old negro man and a boy from where he lay in the same field the memories
sickened him and he wanted to remember no more. How you feel son? Todd hesitated as though
the answer would be to admit an unacceptable weakness. then its my ankle he said. Which one?
The left. with a sense of remoteness he watched the old man bend and remove his boot feeling the
pressure ease. That any better? A lot, thank you. He had the sensation of discussing someone else
that his concern was with some far more important thing which for some reason escaped him. Ya
done broke it bad the old man said. We have to get you to a doctor. He felt that he’d been thrown
into a tail spin. He looked at his watch--how long had he been here? He knew there was but one
important thing in the world. To get the plane back to the field before his officers were displeased.
Help me up he said into the ship. but its broke to bad give me your a
rm, but son. Clutching the old
man’s arm he pulled himself up using his left leg clear thinking I’d never make him understand.
As the leather smooth face became parallel of his own. Now let’s see. he pushed the old man back
hearing the birds insistent shri
ll. He swayed giddily blackness washed over him like infinity you
best sit down. No I’m ok. But son your just gonna make it worse. It was a fact that everything in
him cried out to deny even against the flaming pain in his ankle he would have to try again. You
mess with that ankle theyre gonna have to cut your foot off he heard. Holding his breath he started
again the pain so badly he had to bite his lip to keep from crying out and he had to help him down
with a pang of despair. Its best you take it easy. we gone get you a doctor. Of all the luck he
thought of all the rotten luck now I have done it the fumes of high octane gasoline

(0:23:00)

Rod
clung in the heat taunting him we can ride him down ride him into town on old Ned the boy said.
Ned? he turned seeing the boy point out an ox team browsing where the buried mar of a blade
marked the end of the furrough. Thoughts of himself riding on an ox through the town pass streets
bold white faces down the concrete runways of the airfield made swift images of humiliation in
his mind.
now here’s part of that embarrassment, right Ben, that you were talking about. What’s he talking about happening here? We know what happened he crash landed in a field and they wanna take him to a doctor.

{daphne enters}

Rod hey there how are you?

Daphne I’m doing good

Rod good good please come in

Daphne my sister’s at GED school

Rod ok uh good for her well come on in and uh have a sit with us

Daphne where ya’ll reading at

Rod we are reading um were looking at the same story we ended with last week remember Flying Home remember

Daphne uh huh

Rod maybe you could sit there and look on with Virgil I don’t know where all my copies are but I’m a little short on copies so maybe Virgil will let you look on with him. Unless you brought yours with you?

Daphne I think I brought mine with me

Rod yes o great if you have it that’d be terrific… and were just um on the top of page one hundred fifty… let you get settled and find it… So what’s this what’s this humiliation that he’s talking about? He’s imagining what?

Virgil what is all about (tha concep i believe he's tryin uh tuh use is) he wanna achieve something in life and not be a failure by wrecking that plane gonna put or put a minimize thinking thinkin of him you know people might say you not good enough to fly

Rod right

Virgil and then you know [he] just because it was an accident that people sometimes people don’t look at it that way
Rod  
right  
(0:25:00)  
Rod  
instead what’s he afraid people might say about him instead?  
Virgil  
that::: that I didn’t read the part but I I jus I jus think that uh he gone be humili::: humiliated you  
know tuh that he’s black  
Rod  
right  
Virgil  
An at that day and time you don’t get but a couple of chances  
Rod  
right right I think that’s a good that’s exactly the point is that he thinks I got one shot here  
Daphne  
what page we on?  
Rod  
top of 150 we just kind of stopped at the very top of 150 there um I think you’re right he thinks I  
got one shot at this  
Virgil  
and he wanted to become a pilot so bad and he jus you know he fantasized about::: about all the  
little bad details but he never know… in the story we’ll see but you never know how it might  
come out. They might just say you know you get a second chance or whatever  
Rod  
yea I::: I think your right but I think you’ve got it but I think you got it but that’s what he’s  
concerned about  right cause were getting a look sort of inside his head so to speak you know what  
I mean uh. Getting to know what he’s thinking what he’s worrying about… Because what do you  
have to be to be a pilot? How would you describe a pilot?  
Virgil  
you have to be you have to be sharp  
Rod  
you gotta be sharp right?  
Virgil  
because it’s just like [barry] borrowing your parents car and you wreck it  
Rod  
(laughing)  
Virgil  
you’ll never borrow it again for a while or maybe you’ll never borrow it again until you get your  
own
Rod
yea and they say well well you weren’t you weren’t old enough to drive you weren’t mature
even enough to drive
Rod
or some’mm [like that]
virgil
[some’mm] lak that
Rod
yea and then we’ll see her lets read on just a little bit. Now Daphne did you find us? Did you did
where we are?
Daphne
150
Rod
150… It’s at its look like you got a folded news paper there like your trying to look for section e
page e 5 to find the uh (laughing) to find the article you want there (laughing) that’s a little bit of a
trick
(0:27:00)
Rod
perfect ok… with a pang he remembered his girls last letter… Todd she had written. I don’t need
the papers to tell me that you have to tell me you have the intelligence to fly. And I have always
known you to be as brave as anyone else. The papers annoy me. Don’t you be contented to prove
over and over again that you’re brave and skillful just because you’re black? Todd I think they
keep beating the dead horse because they don’t want to say why you boys are not yet fighting. I’m
really disappointed Todd anyone with brains can learn to fly. But, then what… what about using it
and who will you use it for? I wish dear you’d write about this. I sometimes think they're playing
a trick on us. its very humiliating. He wiped cold sweat from his face thinking what does she know
of humiliation? She’s never been down south. Now the humiliation would come when you must
have them judge you. Knowing that they::: that they’d never accept your mistakes as your own,
but hold it against your whole race. That was humiliation and humiliation was when you could
never be simply yourself when you’re always a part of this old black ignorant man. Sure he’s
alright nice and kind and helpful, but he’s not you. Well there’s one humiliation I can spare
myself: so what else what else did we learn here what’s that little section about? He’s thinking
about a letter that his girl wrote him right ? And she’s talking about
Virgil
they think they trick them wit humiliation because they not letting him fight in the war
Rod
yeah, so they’ve gone so far as to say o ok we can train black pilots right and we’ll see how if you
all remember some of the history of how that happened ok we can see cause:::cause what:::what
did white America think about black people training as pilots?...it was part of that racist um
attitude that you were talking about earlier Connie
(0:29:00)
Daphne
excuse me
282

Rod
283 uh huh
284
Daphne
285 can I get some water
286
Rod
287 of course please yes yes yes
288
Rod
289 so what did what did what was thought about black people training as pilots?
290
Virgil
291 they wasn’t good enough, (they didn’t have tha [(_)]
292
Rod
293 [yea they wadn’t] gonna be good enough or smart enough or anything like that. And so the whole,
294 much of what’s so important about the Tuskegee Airmen was... that they proved..
295
Connie
296 That they were wrong=
297
Rod
298 =that they’re wrong/ that they were completely wrong/ that there was absolutely no basis to that
299 idea right? That the these:::these pilots were just as good just as smart in fact they performed so
300 well they were commended and all that. So but she’s he’s talking about being right in the middle
301 of that time when there was still an awful lot of [people]
302
Virgil
303 [racism]
304
Rod
305 yea yea people in the country black and white who thought black people weren’t good enough to
306 be training as pilots. So he was feeling I think a lot of pressure Virgil like you said you know you
307 that you only get one chance to prove that you’re right. He says something in here about he says
308 something about she’s never been down south? What does that make you think?
309
Virgil
310 probably from up state some where
311
Rod
312 right probably:::probably is he where is he from?
313
Virgil
314 up state
315
Rod
316 probably up state somewhere probably up north somewhere right? So there’s a little bit of
317 something going on here between north and south right. And and even this part about the old man
318 who’s helping him right the old sharecropper who’s helping him. And he says humiliation was
319 when you could never be simply yourself when you were always a part of this black old ignorant
320 man. What’s his attitude about that old man?
321
Connie
he a little) he won’t be able to accomplish thangs in life. Um he felt that (because)
of his color he won’t be able to do things. Um… white people probly could.

(0:31:00)

Rod yea and what if he what if he gets carried to town on an ox cart uh driven by this old as he called
him ignorant old you know farmer man and he’s gonna be looked at as

Betty Failure=

Connie =failure

Rod as:::as ignorant too I think you know hey see o look at that isn’t that funny he tried he thought he
was good enough to learn how to be a pilot and here he comes teeter, creaking along on this old ox
cart with a broken foot with a broken ankle. That’s I think yea the humiliation that he’s that he’s
imagining in his mind and it’s just un bearable for him…No he said I’m not gonna go on that ox
cart I have orders not to leave the ship. Awwww the old man said turning to the boy Teddy now
you better hustle down to Mr. Graves and get him to come. No wait he protested before he was
fully aware Graves might be white. Just have him get word to the field please they’ll take care of
the rest. He saw the boy leave running how far does he have to go. might nigh a mile. he rested
looking at the dusty face of his watch by now they know something has happened he thought in
the ship there was a perfectly good radio but it was useless the old fella would never operate it .
That buzzard knocked me back 100 years he thought. Irony danced within them like gnats circling
the old man’s head with all I’ve learned I’m dependent upon this peasants sense of time and space.
His leg throbbed. In the plane, instead of time being measured by the rhythms of pain and a kid’s
legs, the instruments would have told him at a glance. Twisting upon his elbows he saw where
dust had powdered the plane’s fuselage

(0:33:00)

Rod feeling the lump form in his throat that was always there when he thought of flight. It’s crouched
there, he thought, like the abandoned shell of locust. I’m naked without it. Not a machine, a suit of
clothes you wear. And with a sudden embarrassment and wonder he whispered, “It’s the only
dignity I have…” What’s he:::he refers to the {what} he says…”with all I’ve learned I’m
dependent on this peasants sense of time and space”. What does that make you think of?

Connie

that um he feel like he may not accomplish what he started out to do

Rod- and he’s comparing himself a little bit with the old man and referring to the old man as a
peasant a peasant is what?

Connie somebody you don dont want to be around

Virgil a bum uhm, a beggar

Rod- kinda like kinda like a beggar or a slave even a little bit someone who works the (land) like
the lowest class right? It takes us back to a time of kings and queens right and peasants were the
lowest
Connie of the lowest Rod of the lowest of the lowest people who worked and who were extremely poor and relied on the kindness of the king right or of the royalty or whatever. So he refers to this old man as a peasant. Does he does he feel like he’s better than=

Connie =yes

Rod =than that old man? that’s what it seems like

Virgil What it seems to me like it’s:::it’s intentionally uh he’s:::he’s like up on himself to too much. like he he better than everybody cause he flies a plane

Rod ok

Virgil the man don’t meet his standards cause he work. everybody have to labeled with a job which is a trash man all the way to the president somebody gotta do it some type of job

Rod right

Virgil so you know like, people categorilize you today because if you have a mental illness

Rod yeah

(0:35:00)

Virgil to:::to regular people, peoples wif a mental illness is BUms all the way from crack heads .. everybody get la'beled with a LAbel all the way to the day. And he labeled this man right here as being a peasant ..somebody that’s worthless and this man actually giving him a lending hand and trying to help him off a a mission he wasn’t able ta that he could:::couldn’t complete cause he crashed the plane

Rod ight

Virgil and then you know why by him crashing the plane the man has offered his help cause he was hurt

Rod right

Virgil see what I’m saying
Rod: yeah I:::I do sounds like you’re not too crazy about the way he’s about Todd’s attitude [right]

Virgil: [he got a] he got a real bad attitude

Rod: ou said he’s kinda egotistical he’s up on himself

Virgil: right

Rod: now this is kinda tough at this point cause, I mean I see whatcha mean and I agree with you.. Does Todd…now think about it remember back to the time here…Does Todd have a right to be proud of what he’s accomplished? And what he’s trying to do

Virgil: [right]

{Group (chorus)} Group

Rod: ye::ah right

Virgil: but at the same time a stumbling block came in his path [by wrecking] the plane

Rod: [ye::ah] right

Virgil: so now he’s thinking all crazy and wild; what they go[ne thi]nk and say

Rod: [mmhm] right

Virgil: he said was it a white man you going to help um go get um put im on the ox cart so whoever you know if he fail himself you got to think about how to accomplish re-accomplish again

Rod: uh huh

Virgil: but he going about it the wrong way he:::he downing people already

Rod: you know and I think related to that the very last sentence that I read there the very last sentence of that paragraph his last thought there “it’s the only dignity I have” the airplane [is what he’s talking]

Betty: [mmhm]

Rod: 285
about is the only dignity I have=

Randy
=I started started wondering bout that stumbling block… its tellin me he’s gonna turn the stumblin block turn steppin stones (story) its telling me he’s gonna turn tha stumblin block turn ta steppin stones

Randy

ok/ alright/ what do you mean by that?

Randy

i always remember that stumblin block i sey to maself ah say that stumblin block wuz tha rent bill ah sed well=

Rod

=ah/

Rod

randy

=tha rent bill that’s a stumbling block but if I can overcome the stumbling block (ta get oveuh) the steppin stones

Rod

(0:37:00)

Randy

it gonna take some steppin stones to find a way to pay the rent

Rod

and:::and if you put if you put all of yourself worth on that RENT on being able to pay your rent and then something comes along and you stumble you know right and there’s a stumbling block

Randy

stumbling block

Rod

then everything can fall apart right? [everything could fall apart]

Rod

[but I:::I say] I know had the money but I got the money but I’m gone pay it

Rod

right

Randy

but I’mma gone pay it anyway so imma turn a stumbling ta stone block this time that’s why it’s very important that we need ta turn, I told Ms. Woods the other day, but I’m not talking off tha wall, but let (me) turn some stumbling blocks into stepping stones that’s what:::that’s what you know what I’m sayin? they’ll turn to stum:::stumbling blocks into stepping stones I say well I made a big mistake but I aint gone cut myself down because I’m well I’m I got somehow someway I’m gone get the money and God’s will provide my need
Rod 1059  um hmmm 1060 Randy 1061 it’s gone its gone turn into stepping stone you know he’s gonna proVIDE your needs 1062 Rod 1063 we:::we wonder about yea we wonder 1064 Randy 1065 I was wondering about that story (_) stumblin block he wreck tha plane. 1066 Rod 1067 it’s just like because he crashed the plane and he thought he didn’t have any more self worth he 1068 didn’t have any of his own dignity, [right?] 1069 Randy 1070 [yea/] it got something to do with racism 1071 Rod 1072 well I think he does have something to do with racism I think it has to do with uh 1073 Randy 1074 i dunno, well. 1075 Rod 1076 randy 1077 i dunno, well. 1078 Virgil 1079 [you saw tha part] right here where he say it’s the only dignity that I have 1080 Rod 1081 and his status [right?] 1082 Virgil 1083 the only dignity I have he letting materialistic (idobl worshippin foul up) his own mind 1084 Rod 1085 and his status [right?] 1086 Virgil 1087 and his status [(_ _) 1088 Rod 1089 [his status…his status as a pilot] 1090 Virgil 1091 [you think like old] back then probably if you were a pilot you were probably living on the base 1092 you got money you know probably got a car whatever you know back in 1940 that was that a 1093 quarter or a dollar or ten dollars was richer than everybody you know so you know so you know 1094 people were living pretty good and he says it’s the only dignity I have it’s the only means he had 1095 to make his self feel s uh secure in his life but he was letting the small but it show you at the same 1096 time he done wrecked and fell 1097 (0:39:00)
Virgil
so he gotta still pick himself up no matter what
Rod
um hmm
Virgil
he gotta pick his self up no matter what
Rod
um hmm…there’s so many I think there are a lot of different levels here and ya’ll are getting at uh
the different levels here because part of what he’s frustrated about remember in that last paragraph
it says…I can’t just be myself he feels the pressure of representing his race…right so you say it
has something to do with racism I think it does I think that part of this is…
Virgil
[I don’t think]
Rod
[he lives] in a world he lives in a society that says black men are not as good as white men…right
and that’s what the racist society has said but he’s trying to argue against that by going to be a
pilot but then he gets over invested in that so that’s it his only dignity you see what I mean?
Virgil
well how how I feel I don’t think he trying to represent his own race cause he downing the man
the sharecropper if he if you, you suppose to uplift everybody and make a way make a way for
everybody to see better days for everybody he downing this man saying he’s ignorant or what
getting along in the story we read last time he was calling them more names than that.
Rod
yea right right [got so frustrated with him]
Virgil
[so uh he] taking his frustration and problems out on [somebody else]
Randy
[better days] is coming better days is coming for us
Rod
well what’s interesting too is cause were looking at this story from the perspective that we have in
the 21st century now we know that the work that the Tuskegee Airmen did…right…and along
with ya know the whole civil rights movement that came later on and the work that so many
people did have made things better right? I mean that’s one of the things that’s one of the points
that you made…last week [right]
Randy
[mmm]
Rod
cause there’s still a lot of work to do when you talk about race
Randy
yea!
Rod
but things are different or are better are they? Do you think?

Group (chorus)
[yea…yes]

Connie
[o yes its gotten] better

Rod
some better?

Randy
some better but it’s gonna need some improvement

Rod
needs improvement I think you’re right. but we can look back and say that well let me ask this let me ask this what you think? Did the work that these pilots did not the fictional pilots that were reading about…

(0:41:00)

Rod
but the actual pilots right the Tuskegee Airmen…did the work that they that they did did that improve things=

Connie
[oh yes]

Rod
[for their] entire race ?

Connie
Oh yes

betty
oh yes

Connie
Oh yes

Rod
so in a way if that’s right in a way what::: what Todd is thinking about here has some basis

Rod
where he’s thinking that he’s representing his whole race whether or not he’s going about it the right way but I think you’re right he’s [downgrading you know he’s downing this old man as a peasant]

Sandra
{quietly} [(restroom.. got ta use tha restroom)] {leaves}

Rod
as ignorant while he’s trying to
Virgil accomplish somein
Rod accomplish something for himself and also for his sons maybe [you know fer his whole race]
Virgil [but he steppin] on people
rod but he does seem to be steppin on people a little bit you’re right
Randy he stepping on some toes
Rod stepping on some toes stepping on other peoples backs uh whatevuh
Randy stepping on some toes stepping on other peoples backs uh whatevuh
Randy but:::but I believe that my my stumblin blocks has something to do with the past, everything that happened in the past is (becomin) a stumbling block…so I mean had to learn to overcome the stumbling blocks is to get over it
Rod and make those stepping stones like you said
Randy yea make tha steppin stones, say well, i jes have to learn to say well, maybe i hafter learn to forgive the people who I:::I done wrong and then maybe they forgive me what I done wrong so we made some mistakes in the past but guess what? it don’t matter to me though no more though so I say well well here we go! {expansive gesture--laying burden on the table in front of him?} Move on!
Rod keep moving on, right?
{virgil and Betty talking privately at other end of the table. Randy notices.}
Randy I’m not talking off [tha wall]
betty & virgil [{laughing}]
Rod ok no no that’s ok one of those things
Randy I was saying I [learned to cope]
virgil betty & connie [{private conversation;} virgil gets up
randy
because I tell the people what I did, because that became a big help ta me, imean y'know
Rod
yea yea well one of the reasons that we read is that we can we can relate what we read about to the
stories in our own lives right so that’s I think that’s fine {that’s a fine idea}
Rod
well should we should we keep going on a little bit?
Group
yes…yea we going on
Rod
ok so he says it’s the only dignity I have that air plane
Virgil
see uh can I say one more thing
(0:43:00)
Rod
please
Virgil
the only thing he half right but that’s the only dignity he have he should have self esteem be first
by itself but the only dignity he got is in a in a plane that’s kinda like that’s kinda like screwed up
that’s kinda like putting uh money before your own self
Rod
right like saying um the dignity I have is bound up in the kind of car I drive or the clothes I wear
the dollar figure in my bank account or the wife or the husband that I got or the whatever it is
Virgil
yea
Rod
and:::and there’s a question about then well what’s if you strip off all that away whats
Connie
you have no dignity
Virgil
it’s
Rod
that’s where he is he feels naked and that’s what he says that he’s there in that field with a broken
ankle feeling naked
Betty
right
Virgil
see the way he acting and talking about people he don’t have no selfdignity about his'self. he aint
even see the little shine, way he talking about the old man
Rod
Virgil
he aint got no up bringing

Rod
so there’s a what do you think about like he’s down grading that old man but what:::what would
you say about that old man is he a dignified character does he have some dignity?

Connie
yes!

Virgil
he tried:::he tried to help him

Rod
he’s a he’s a helpful man

Virgil
he tried to stay on that leg he gone have to cut it off they gave him some advice

Rod
yea the first thing e did was really help him he went and took off his boot yea alright does that
help yea that helps a lot it feels a lot better right so this is a helpful old man we’ll see we’ll::::we’ll
see what what else we think about the old man as we go along. Well he Todd saw the old man
watching. His torn overalls clinging limply to him and that he he felt a sharp need to tell the old
man what he felt. But that would be meaningless if I try to explain why I need to fly back he’d
think I was simply afraid of white officers but it’s more than fear, a sense of anguish clung to him
like the veil of sweat that hugged his face. He watched the old man hearing him humming snatches
of a tune as he admired the plane. he felt a further sense of resentment

Rod
such old men often came to the field to watch the pilots with childish eyes. At first it had made
him proud may have been a meaningful part of a new experience. But he soon realized they did
not understand his accomplishments and they came to shame and embarrass him, like the
distasteful praise of an idiot

Rod
so there he goes he’s calling the old man an idiot now

Group (chorus)
yea uh huh

Rod
and we just made the very top of 152…catch where we are…152….A part of the meaning of
flying had gone, then and he had been able to regain it. If I were a prize-fighter I would be more
human, he thought. Not a monkey doing tricks, but a man. They were pleased simply that he was a
Negro who could fly, and that was enough. He felt cut off from them by age, understanding, by
sensibility, by technology, and by his need to measure himself against the mirror of other men’s
appreciation. Somehow he felt betrayed, as he had when as a child he grew to discover that his
father was dead. Now, for him any real appreciation lay with his white officers; and with them he
could never be sure. Between ignorant black men and condescending whites his course of flight
seemed mapped by the nature of things away from all needed and natural landmarks.
{Daphne coughing severely in the background}

Rod: you ok did you get your water?

Daphne: yea I got it

Rod: can you get some more? (0:47:00)

Daphne: yea I have bronchitis real bad....yea probably need a bottle of water you got any

Rod: no I don’t think we have any in here o there’s some bottles over there I don’t know where the cooler is?

Group (unison)-it’s outside….go outside

Rod: {yea but out there} with no cups?

Daphne: it’s some cups out there

Rod: well go ahead and bring you some in here if you need to feel free yea do what you need to do

Daphne: ok

Rod: What does he mean between ignorant black man and condescending whites? Hear what he’s talking about:::about:::about how he’s measuring his accomplishments?

Group: yea…Randy nods his head

Rod: so he’s an ignorant black man who’s that?

Betty: the old man

Rod: that’s the the old man who’s trying to help him out right?

Virgil: condescending mean you achieving things?

Rod: condescending means
Virgil
mean that people that can achieve a more gracing pace
Rod
and but that condescending would be like uh like if well it's a little bit like those white
military officers would say to him...O hey that's great I thought you could do this well so good
for you you can actually achieve more than you thought. And while there complimenting him
there's also an insult in there. Right because they saying you know you're not really as good as
Connie
the others
Rod
yea! Or as good as you know white pilots would be I guess would be the other comparison you see
what I mean? He feels stuck because he can't really there's no really true measure of his own
(Can't make out if Betty or Connie said this)- Accomplishments
Rod
his own worth yea there's no place to measure yea no way to measure his accomplishments fairly
uh...yea I think that's right
Virgil
I thank I thank uh he a little more ignorant himself
Rod
well that's I think that's really interesting that he's got some learning to do
Virgil
yea yea
Rod
right?
Virgil
maybe he young maybe he 19 20
Rod
maybe really young yea
Virgil
you never know his age
Rod
that's right
Virgil
the paper aint say his age just yet you know he a youth you think immature so
Rod
I think your right
Virgil
we get on into the story and see how maybe they'll tell his age or something
(0:49:00)
Rod  
maybe so I think that’s a good thought lets:::lets check that out 

Rod  
Under some sealed orders (we’re kind of right in the middle there of 152). Under some sealed 
orders, couched in ever more technical and mysterious 
terms, his path curved swiftly away from 
both the shame the old man symbolized and the cloudy terrain of white man’s regard. Flying 
blind, he knew but one point of landing and there he would receive wings. After that the enemy 
would appreciate his skill and he would assume his deepest meaning, he thought sadly neither 
from those who condescended nor from those who praised without understanding, but from the 
enemy who would recognize his manhood and skill in terms of hate….

Rod  
we get:::we get a picture there I think of why he wants to fight…why he wants to go to 
war…because he feels like there he can prove himself and he can he can let loose some of the 
anger he’s feeling…does that seem right? Now what’s he what’s he angry about?

Virgil  
{he ready to fly the plane}

Rod  
well there’s that what about even before that? Well I mean the whole reason he went to training 
to::: to pilot training

Virgil  
he better he took to uh…uh more dignified

Connie  
he did a better job

Rod  
who:::who was he angry at you think?

Virgil  
his self

Rod-his self?

Virgil  
maybe it

Rod  
from of racism of the white world that he was living in? Right…yea

Group  
all speaking and saying yea

Virgil  
and that aint what that aint what the paper said it didn’t that aint what the story was uh talking 
about from:::from the point of view I’m understanding he really was carrying a conversation on 
with himself mostly he thinking to himself but he had no fingers to point at no one cause he 
wrecked that plane.

Rod  
yea that’s right and he then
Rod look at it as just his mistake and they were gonna blame this whole race they were gonna say he crashed it because he’s black right?

Virgil right

Rod they were gonna say he failed

Virgil he only assume:::he only assume this he don’t know what them people might say latter on in the story they:::they might say well well well try again

Virgil cause the only thing he’s in a field trying to get receive some help and the only thing he assuming about what they gonna say we they come about this about wrecking the plane

Rod he’s making a lot of assumptions here

Virgil right

Rod but he we do find out that he:::he wants to go to war and take out his enemy

Virgil enemy

Rod yea take out his enemy right

Virgil where they can recognize his manhood and his skills in terms {wit} hate

Rod In terms of hate?

Virgil hating the enemy of of uh the United States of America

Rod ok alright…alright

Rod he sighed, seeing the oxen making queer, prehistoric shadows against the dry brown earth. “You just take it easy, son,” the old man soothed. “That boy won’t take long. Crazy as he is about airplanes,” “I can wait,” he said. “What kinda airplane you call this here’n?” “An Advanced Trainer,” he said, seeing the old man smile. His fingers were like gnarled dark wood against the
metal as he touched the low-slung wing. “Bout how fast can she fly?” “Over two hundred an
hour.” “Lawd! That’s so fast I bet it don’t seem like you moving!” Holding himself rigid, Todd
opened his flying suit. The shade had gone and he lay in a ball of fire. “You mind if I take a look
inside? I was always curious to see…” “Help yourself. Just don’t touch anything.” He heard him
climb upon the metal wing, grunting. Now the questions would start. Well, so you don’t have to
think to answer… He saw the old man looking over into the cockpit, his eyes bright as a child’s.
“You must have to know a lot to work all these here things.” Todd was silent, seeing him step
down and kneel beside him.

(0:53:00)

Rod

“Son, how come you want to fly way up there in the air?” Because it’s the most meaningful act in
the world …because it makes me less like you, he thought. But he said: “Because I like it, I guess.
It’s as good a way to fight and die as I know.” “Yeah? I guess you right,” the old man said. “But
how long you think before they gonna let you all fight?” He tensed. This was the question all
Negroes asked, put with the same timid hopefulness and longing that always opened a greater void
within him than that he had felt beneath the plane the first time he had flown. He felt light-
headed. It came to him suddenly that there was something sinister about the conversation, that he
was flying…

Virgil

hold on for a second

Rod

yea ok …what do you take from that question so the old man asked him “Son, how come you
want to fly way up there in the air?” And what he thinks is because it’s the most meaningful act in
the world because it makes me less like you.

Virgil

well he think that man is uh a ass kissuh

Rod

huh …how come what do you mean?

Virgil

thank he just an Uncle Tom or something in a field working he got a low graded job

Rod

ok

Virgil

after he was uh beside him he would probably say a well accomplished job both on his mission on
another plane but he’s talking to this man cause he have a less job that he have a status of life

Rod

so he’s doing the he’s flying and to keep:::keep from being he perceives to be an ignorant low
wage um peasant to:::to be in a different status ta have a different status right? …Ok Alright
are we together now on um 1…54? He felt light headed. It came to him suddenly that there was
something sinister about the conversation that he was flying unwillingly into unsafe and uncharted
regions. If he could only….  

(0:55:00)

Rod
be insulting and tell this old man trying to help him to shut up. I bet you one thing, yes, that you
was pretty scared coming down, he did not answer. Like a dog on a trail the old man always
seemed to smell out his fears and he felt anger bubble within him. “You sho scared me, when I
seen you coming down that thing with it rolling and jumping it like a pitchin’ hoss, I thought you
sho was a goner. I almost had me a stroke!” He saw the old man grinning. “Everythin’s been
happening round here this morning, come to think of it.” “Like what?” he asked. “Well, first thing
I know, here come two white fellers looking for Mister Rudolph, that’s Mister Graves’ cousin.
That got me worked up right away…” “Why?” “Why? ’Cause he done broke outa the crazy
house, that’s why. He liable to kill somebody,” he said. “They oughta have him by now though.
Then here you come. First I think it’s one of them white boys. Then doggone if you don’t fall
outta there. Lawd, I’d done heard about you boys but I haven’t never seen one o’ you all. Caint tell
you how it felt to see somebody what look like me in a airplane! The old man talked on, the sound
streaming around Todd’s thoughts like:::like air flowing over the fuselage of a flying plane. You
were a fool, he thought, remembering how before the spin the sun had blazed, bright against the
bill board signs beyond the town, and how a boy’s blue kite had bloomed beneath hi
m, tugging gently in the wind like a strange, odd-shaped flower. He had once flown such kites himself and
tried to find the boy at the end of the invisible cord. But he had been flying too high and too fast.
He had climbed steeply away in (exultation) exhaustion. Too steeply, he thought. And one of the
first rules you learn is that if the angle of thrust is too steep the plane goes into a spin. And then,
instead of pulling out of it and going into a dive you let a buzzard panic you. A lousy buzzard!
“Son, what made all that blood on the glass?”

(0:57:00)

Rod
“A buzzard,” he said, remembering how the blood and feathers had sprayed back against the
hatch. It had been as though he had flown into a storm of blood and blackness. “Well I declare!
They’s lots of ’em around here. They after dead things. Don’t eat nothing what’s alive.” “A little
bit more and he would have made a meal out of me,” Todd said grimly. “They bad luck all right.
Teddy’s got a name for ‘em, calls ‘em jimerkrows,” the old man laughed. “It’s a damned good
name.” why is that funny? Is it funny?

Rod
uh uh

Rod
it’s not funny?

Rod
it’s not funny!

Rod
it’s not funny ok I:::I know what:::what do you

Rod
because:::because knowing that the guy calls them jimerkrows

Rod
the yea Teddy:::Teddy does the young boy right? The boy, right, the boy who’s run to town to get
him help

Rod
yea

Rod
to get help…calls buzzard [“jimerkrows”]
Betty
[uh...buzzards]
Randy [buzz]ards yea they call em buzzards…what they call em?
Rod you know the vultures, right
Randy the vulchers
Rod you know the same as vulchers we got em yea:::yea you see them around here all the time right.
Randy and little Teddy calls em jimmcrw
Rod the vulchers
Randy yea
Rod those:::thoe racist segregation laws right about separate toilets and bus um seating
Randy well {I thinking about begging the system but one say} it’s you know we used to when we was segregated period uh I think it was called segregation
Rod uh huh
Randy it got something to do with segregation {am I correct?} segregation
Rod yea and they Jim Crow….Randy-when it say white only black only
Rod yea and uh those were that was referred to uh
Randy we can not go into those places
Rod right right
Randy with white only
Rod right
there were just some harsh very harsh very harsh um harsh times that we went through

Rod

[extremely]

Randy

before I was born

Rod

right right

Rod

“They the damnedest birds. Once I seen a hoss all stretched out like he was sick, you know. So I hollers, “Gid up from there, suh!’ Just to make sho! An’, doggone, son if I don’t see two old jimcrows come flying right up outa that hoss’s insides! Yessuh!

Rod

The sun was shinin’ on em and they couldn’ta been no greasier if they’d been eating barbecue!”

Rod

his stomach quivered. “You made that up,” he said. “Nawsuh! Saw him just like you.” “Well I’m glad it was you.” “You see lots a funny things down here, son.” “No, I’ll let you see them,” he said. “By the way, white folks round here don’t like to see you boys up there in the sky. They ever bother you?” “No.” “Well, they’d like to.” “Someone always wants to bother someone else,” Todd said. “How do you know?” “I just know.” “Well,” he said defensively, “no one has bothered us.”

Blood pounded in his ears as he looked away into space. He tensed, seeing a black spot in the sky, and strained to confirm what he could not clearly see. “What does that look like to you?” he asked excitedly. “Just another bad luck son.” Then he saw movement of wings with disappointment. It was gliding smoothly down, wings outspread, tail feathers gripping the air, down swiftly—gone behind the green screen of trees. It was like a bird he had imagined there, only the sloping branches of the pines remained, sharp against the pale stretch of sky. He lay barely breathing and stared at the point where it had disappeared, caught in a spell of loathing and admiration. Why did they make them so disgusting and yet teach them to fly so well? It’s like when I was up in heaven, he heard, starting. The old man was chuckling, rubbing his stubbled chin. “What did you say?” “Sho, I died and went to heaven…maybe by time I tell you about it they be done come after you.” “I hope so,” he said wearily. “You boys ever sit around swap lies?” “Not often. Is this going to be one?” Well, I ain’t I ain’t so sho, on account of it took place when I was dead.”

The old man paused. “That wasn’t no lie ‘bout the buzzards though.” “All right,” he said. “Sho you want to hear bout heaven?” “Please,” he answered, resting his head upon his arm. “Well, I went to heaven and right away started to sproutin me some wings. Six-foot ones, they was. Just like them the white angels had. I couldn’t hardly believe it. I was so glad that I went off on some clouds by myself and tried em out. You know cause I didn’t want to make a fool outta myself the first thing…” It’s an old tale, Todd thought. Told me years ago. Had forgotten. But at least it will
keep him from talking about buzzards. He closed his eyes, listening. “...First thing I done was to
git up on a low cloud and jump off. And doggone, boy if them wings didn’t work! First I tried the
right; then I tried the left; then I tried ‘em both together. Then, Lawd, I started to move on out
among the folks. I let ‘em see me ...” He saw the old man gesturing flight with his arms, his face
full of mock pride as he indicated an imaginary crowd, thinking. It’ll be in the newspapers, as he
heard, “... so I went and found me some colored angels—somehow I didn’t believe I was an angel
till I seen a real black one, ha yes! Then I was sho—but they tole me I better come down cause us
colored folks had to wear a special kin’a harness when we flew. That was how come they wasn’t
flyin. Oh yes, an you had to be extra strong for a black man even, to fly with one of them
harnesses ...” This is a new turn, Todd thought. What’s he driving at? “So I said to myself, I ain’t
gonna be bothered with no harness! Oh naw! Cause if God let you sprout wings you oughta have
sense enough not to let nobody make you wear something what gits in the way of flyin. So I starts
to flyin. Hecks, son”, he chuckled, his eyes twinkling, “you know I had to let ev’body know that
old Jefferson could fly good as anybody else. And I could fly too, fly smooth as a bird!

Rod
you got it ’ijah? Um 158
(1:03:00)
Rod
...down that uh just the uh little second paragraph there... What is this story he’s telling what’s he
doing? What’s going on?
Randy
(laughing)
Rod
Jefferson, you know that’s the old man there his name was Jefferson we know that now. He’s what
flying around Heaven? What’s he doing?
Virgil
Todd lying to him not to hear him talk no more
Rod
Well this is Jefferson this is the old man telling him the story
Virgil
That’s the old:::that’s the young boy telling the story
Rod
No no you it’s the old man telling the story
Virgil
the young boy telling the story
Rod
no:::no it’s the old man telling the story...uh the pilots listening to him tell the story about how I
died one time I went up to Heaven and started sprouting wings and flying all over Heaven yea
Virgil
you sure?
Rod
yea right everybody else get that?
Virgil
1898
I thought he told him that that he what he said he aint wanna hear about no buzzards no more
1899
Rod
1900
right he said uh yea I uh:::uh see let’s see
1901
Virgil
1902
he said he said he wanna tell him the story where he don’t wanna hear about no buzzards
1903
Betty
1904
yea the young pilot=
1905
Virgil
1906
=told him told him that he was started talking about a story about buzzards he aint wanna hear
1907
about the story about buzzards no more
1908
Rod
1909
um it::it yea he’s talking about how the old ma’s telling me a strange tell at least it would keep
1910
him from talking about buzzards he uh if I listen to him tell the story about sprouting wings in
1911
Heaven at least he’s having to talk about buzzards eating horses anymore. Yea this is the story the
1912
old man is telling hear
1913
Virgil
1914
ok
1915
Rod
1916
alright… its it’s strange all of a sudden he breaks into this story about flying around in Heaven and
1917
not only that about how there’s seems to be some kind of Jim Crow Laws in this Heaven that he’s
1918
telling the story about right cause black angles have to wear a particular kind of harness right to
1919
keep them from flying so high or something like that right why is he tellin this story? anyway he
1920
says “So I said to myself, I ain’t gonna be bothered with no harness! Oh naw! Cause if God let
1921
you sprout wings you oughta have sense enough not to let nobody make you wear something what
1922
gits in the way of flyin. So I starts to flyin. Hecks, son”, he chuckled, his eyes twinklin, “you
1923
know I had to let eve’body know that old Jefferson could fly good as anybody else.
1924
(1:05:00)
1925
Rod
1926
And I could too, fly smooth as a bird! I could even loop-the-loop—only I had to make sho to keep
1927
my long white rob don roun my ankles…” Todd felt uneasy. He wanted to laugh at the
1928
joke…what’s the joke there?...
1929
Virgil
1930
uh he was telling the story about people fly [and he know it was a lie]
1931
Rod
1932
right but there’s a joke right at the end there…I had to I could even loop-the-loop but I had to
1933
make sure to keep my white robe down roun my ankles. What’s the joke? Why did he have to
1934
keep he robe down around his ankles? Keep:::keep from flashing everybody in Heaven (laughing)
1935
right to keep from…being indecent
1936
Group/Rod
1937
wow…(laughing)
1938
Rod
cause if his robe came up... he might show everybody his junk...Alright so that was the joke. Todd felt uneasy. He wanted to laugh at the joke, but his body refused, as of an independent will. He felt as he had as a child when after he had chewed a sugarcoated pill which his mother had given him, she had laughed at his efforts to remove the terrible taste. “... Well,” he heard. “I was doing all right till I got to speeding. Found out I could fan up a right strong breeze, I could fly so fast. I could do all kin’sa stunts too. I started flying up to the stars and divin’ down and zooming roun’ the moon. Man I like to scare the devil outa some ole white angels. I was raisin’ hell. Not that I meant any harm, son. But I was just feeling good. It was so good to know I was free at last. I accidently knocked the tips offa some stars and they tell me I caused a storm and a couple lynching’s down here in Macon County—though I swear I believe them boys what said that was making up lies on me...” He’s mocking me, Todd though angrily. He thinks it’s a joke. Grinning down at me... His throat was dry. He looked at his watch; why the hell didn’t they come? Since they had to, why? One day I was flying down one of them heavenly streets. You got yourself into it, Todd thought.


(1:07:00)

Rod-Like Jonah in the whale. Jonah in the whale you know that story right? What:::what was the story there?

Virgil something about a whale and {this lady} I forgot:::forgot the whole story it’s been a while back story bout a whale and this lady on:::on a quest like Rod

but Jonah was a prophet this is an Old Testament story. Jonah was a prophet of God who refused to do something God told him to go to a city right go to Ninevah And he didn’t want to go there and so he went the opposite direction hiding from God He was on a ship and God caused a storm to come and eventually Jonah jumped over board or had himself thrown off that ship Betty and the whale Rod/Connie he got swallowed up Rod
	right and then he lived inside that whale for three days and three nights and during that time he repented right you know prayed to God and was spat back up an then went an did like God wanted him to do/ so what’s the relationship between t, why is Todd thinking of himself as Jonah and the whale here i wonder?... like he somehow is doing something against God’s will. I:::I wonder I’m not really sure why why he’s thinking that I wonder what you think? I dunno maybe:::maybe we’ll come back to it I’m not really sure what I think of that. So old Joseph goes on and he’s still tellin – oh, Jefferson I mean Jefferson I mean is uh is the old man’s name. He goes on telling the story about Heaven “Justa throwin feathers in eve’body’s face. An ole Saint Peter called me in. Said Jefferson, tell me two things, what you doing flying without a harness; an how come you flyin so fast? So I tole him I was flyin without a harness cause it got in my way, but I couldn’ta been flyin so fast, cause I wasn’t usin but one wing.

(1:09:00)

Rod

Saint Peter said, ‘You wasn’t flyin’ with but one wing? ‘Yessuh’, I says, scared—like. So he says, ‘Well, since you got sucha extra fine pair of wings you can leave off yo harness awhile. But from now on none of that there one-wing flyin’, cause you gittin’ up too damn much speed!”’ this is how Saint Peter talks (laughing). And with one mouth full of bad teeth you’re making too damned
much talk, thought Todd. Why don’t I send him after the boy? His body ached from the hard
ground, and seeking to shift his position he twisted his ankle and hated himself for crying out. “It
gettin worse?” “I… I twisted it,” he groaned. “Try not to think about it, son. That’s what I do.” He
bit his lip, fighting pain with counter-pain as the voice resumed its rhythmical droning. Jefferson
seemed caught up in his own creation. “… After all that trouble I just floated roun heaven in slow
motion. But I forgot - like colored folks will do - and got to flyin with one wing again. This time I
was restin my ole broken arm and got to flyin fast enough to shame the devil. I was coming so
fast, Lawd, I got myself called befo ole Saint Peter agin…. Back to uh top of page 160…. He said,
Jeff, didn’t I warn you bout that speedin? Yessuh, I says, but it was an accident. He looked at me
sad-like and shook his head and I knowed I was gone. He said, Jeff you and that speedin is a
danger to the heavenly community. If I was to let you keep on flyin heaven wouldn’t be nothin but
uproar. Jeff you got to go! So I argued and pleaded with that old white man, but it didn’t do a bit
of good. They rushed me straight to them pearly gates and gimme a parachute and a map of the
state of Alabama…” Todd heard him laughing so that he could hardly
speak, making a screen
(1:11:00)
Rod
between them upon which his humiliation glowed like fire. “Maybe you’d better stop a while,” he
said, his voice unreal. “Aint much more,” Jefferson laughed. “When they gimmie the parachute
ole Saint Peter ask me if I wanted to say a few words before I went. I felt so bad I couldn’t hardly
look at him, specially with all them white angels standin around. Then somebody laughed and
made me mad. So I told im ‘Well, you done took ’way ma wings. And you puttin’ me out. You got
charge of things so’s I can’t do nothin about it. But you got to admit just this: While I was up here
I was the flyin’est son-of-a-bitch what ever hit heaven!” At the burst of laughter Todd felt such an
intense humiliation that only great violence wo
surely burst his temples, and he tried to reach the old man and fell, screaming, “Can I h
because they won’t let us actually fly? Maybe we are a bunch of buzzards feeding on a dead horse,
but we can hope to be eagles, can’t we? Can’t we?” He fell back, exhausted, his ankle pounding.
The saliva was like straw in his mouth. If he had the s
strength he would strangle this old man. This
grinning gray-headed clown who made him feel as he felt when (he) watched (by) the white
officers at the field. And yet this old man had neither power, prestige, rank, nor technique.
Nothing that could rid him of this terrible feeling. He watched him, seeing his face struggle to
express a turmoil of feeling. “Whatchoo mean, son? Whatchoo talkin bout….?” “Go away. Go tell
your tales to tha white folks.” “But I didn’t mean nothing like that…I… I
(1:13:00)
Rod
I wasn’t tryin to hurt your feelings…” “Please get the hell away from me!”
Randy
(laughing at previous remark)
Rod
But I didn’t son. I didn’t mean all them things a-tall. Todd shook as with a chill, searching
Jefferson’s face for a trace of the mockery he had seen there. But now the face was somber and
tired and old. He was confused. He was not be sure that there had ever been laughter there, that
Jefferson had ever really laughed in his whole life. He saw Jefferson reach out to touch him but
shrank away, wondering if anything except the pain, now causing his vision to waver, was real.
Perhaps he had imagined it all. Let’s pause here a minute what:::what happened? What’s going
on?
Virgil

Jefferson giing him a story about he actually flight that he just said took place with & what in what
he's:::he's what his accomplishments was he just gii him a tale of of having angel wings and he
could really fly and achieve something in life widout this plane.

Rod
huh ok[

Virgil
[see what I'm saying] he was telling them a tale be like he was had wings in Heaven he was
knocking over stars they kicked him out you know go might get kicked out o the military or
whatever he was jus telling em a story to t' you know to boost im up n make em feel good but he
didn't mean no harm by telling that story[]

Rod
[ok][

Virgil
[he] was a man with wi-, for me, knowledge, wisdom and understanding []

Rod
huh [ok]

Virgil
so he:::he was very wise to me

Rod
so the point of that story from:::from Jefferson's point of view was that at the end of it when he
says even if what's he say? Well you may be kicking me out of Heaven now cause I was flying
around here to fast but…what's he say

Randy
I was the flyin'est sonof...

Virgil
you was to you wuz fly, you wuz [flyin]

Rod
[you really] ac[complished a lot]

Virgil
[you gave] you [gave it a try]

Rod
[you were a pilot]; right right

Virgil
he willing to try

(1:15:00)
Virgil
and he made it so far
Rod
why did Todd get so angry? Why did he...he’s so angry? Like he said if he could have stood up
on his ankle he would have strangled the old man
Virgil
he disrespectful
Rod
feels like he was
Virgil
[naw] he disrespectful
Rod
Todd was disrespectful?
Virgil
yea Todd is disrespectful
Rod
ok
Virgil
he disrespectful for even thinking about hitting an old man like that and for one he’s in a bad
predicament his self he:::he need to receive help
Rod
yea, well anybody else can you see what why is Todd so angry why else why is he so angry at that
story? Said he thought Jefferson was mocking him... right. So Todd took a very different
perspective on the story [than] you and I just did
Virgil
[right], mocking mean fun pestering about it
Rod
making fun of him right? he thought he was making fun of him right? what why would he think he
was making fun of him?
Virgil
because probably just because he was an old man wadn’t white and he was black not but all
the white telling the story he probably wouldn’tve of acted that way
Rod
ummm
Virgil
he did like he call thought he was an idiot, a peasant and he had no uh he had no uh what you
would say[?]
Connie
[dignity]
Virgil
{expansive gestures} he had no he had no uh what you call that I say um(..) no favoritism for that
man no liking for that man he thought the man was down low something like uh ol dead dog or
sumpin ‘n he, n’ he tho’t he couldn’t take no piece of advice from that man but the man was gi’n
him a story to uplift himself and the man said I surely didn’t mean (/) that

Rod
uh hmmm yea

Randy
that’s when he became very apologetic

Rod
yea the old man said wull, I:::I:::I didn’t mean it like that I didn’t mean any harm I wasn’t trying
to make fun uh hmmm somethin like that, right?

Randy
mnh[mm]

Rod
that what you mean the old man was [real apologetic all] the sudden

Randy
[he was very apologetic]

Rod
yea the old man said wull, I:::I:::I didn’t mean it like that I didn’t mean any harm I wasn’t trying
to make fun uh hmmm somethin like that, right?

Virgil
called im a [clown]

Betty- ° [like he] makin fun o himself°

(1:17:00)

Rod
yea… and so he thought that uh Jefferson in tellin this as he’s telling this clownin story about
flying around Heaven and uh letting his robes uh trying not to let his robes fly up and show his
show his uh, show is bum and speeding around and getting himself kicked out of Heaven that he
was making fun of Todd who wants to be to be taken seriously right as a dignified pilot and
military man right

Virgil
but Todd had wrecked the plane

Rod
and that’s right yea there he was it’s a it’s a little bit difficult he’s in this undignified position of
laying in a field with a broken ankle[]

Virgil
=who wrecked the plane
Rod who wrecked the plane? Todd wrecked the plane
Virgil so who fault who fault he in that position nn he should of stayed above and start, kep floating
Rod no doubt, in fact remember uh right before I guess it’s right before Jefferson starts to regail us and Todd with this story of sprouting wings in Heaven he tells us a little about how the accident happen[]

Betty [how] it happened[]

Rod [you] remember what he said? he said he uh mean in one way he was flying too high and too fast what he said, that he had been excited (...) because he was thinking about that little boy who was flying a kite and how he had he had been a little boy who dreamed of flyin and there he was when he said in exultation he climbed steeply away in exultation but he had been flying too high & too fast , too steeply he thought and then the plane starts to go into a spin and he hit (.) [one]

Virgil [a buzzard]

Rod one of those buzzards, right and in [the prop]

Randy [a buzzard]

Rod just came right into the propeller and that was enough to send it into into a tail spin. caused the crash so ... he says, um, now he’s looking at Jefferson who’s become really apologetic as you said, Randy, he see, he said

(1:19:00)

Rod son I didn’t mean it like that. I wadnt tryinda... no, hit from Jefferson’s point of view he may be telling the story just to pass the time right? trying to get his mind off the pain. he said to him try not to think about try to think about something else let me tell you a story... kinda like that. Now Jefferson says, don’t let it get you down, son, the voice said pensively. He heard Jefferson sigh wearily as though he felt more than he could say. His anger ebbed, leaving only the pain. I’m sorry, he mumbled. You just wore out with pain was all. He saw him through a blur smiling. And for a second he felt the embarrassed silence of understanding flutter between them. What was you doing flyin over this section son? Wasn’t you scared the might shoot you for a crow? Todd tensed.

Was he being laughed at again? But before he could decide the pain shook him and a part of him was lying calmly behind the screen of pain that had fallen between them recalling the first time he had ever seen a plane. It was as though an endless series of hangers had been shaken ajar in the airbase of his memory and from each, like a young wasp emerging from its cell, arose the memory of a plane. The first time I ever saw a plane I was very small and planes were new in the world. I was four and a half and the only plane that I had ever seen was a model suspended from the ceiling of the automobile exhibit at a state fair. But I did not know that it was only a model. I did not know how large a real plane was, nor how expensive. To me it was a fascinating toy, complete in
itself, which my mother said could only be owned by rich little white boys. I stood rigid with
admiration my head straining backward as I watched the gray little plane describing arcs above the
gleaming tops of the automobiles.

(1:21:00)

Rod
And I vowed that, rich or poor, someday I would own such a toy. My mother had to drag me out
of the exhibit and not even the merry-go-round the Ferris wheel or the racing horses could hold
my attention for the rest of the fair. I was too busy imitating the tiny drone of the plane with my
lips and imitating with my hands the motion, swift and circling, that it made in flight…. O sorry
guys were on the top just of 163. So all this in italics here where the type has changed he’s he’s
telling us about his first memories of ever seeing a plane and what does he tell us that he saw

Virgil
tiny airplane

Rod
tiny airplane a model

Randy
{nods} yea

Rod
right but:::but the airplanes were new right, at that time let’s see this is 44 even if he’s close to
twenty years old he’s four years old um yea so this was made maybe 1915 1920 you know
could have been something like that maybe 1920 something um (.) when airplanes were new in the
world and uh he saw that model and he thought that was what an airplane was was a toy
{laughter} (..)

randy
mmhhmm

Rod
After that I no longer used the pieces of lumber that lay about our backyard to construct wagons
and autos…now it was used for airplanes. I built biplanes using pieces of board for wings a small
box for the fuselage another piece of wood for the rudder. The trip to the fair had brought
something new into my small world. I asked my mother repeatedly when the fair would come
back again. I’d lie in the grass and watch the sky and each fighting flighting bird become a
soaring plane. I would’ve been good a year just to see a plane again. I became a nuisance to
everyone with my questions about airplanes. But planes were new to the old folks too and there
was little that they could tell me. Only my uncle knew some of the answers. And better still he
could carve propellers from pieces of wood

(1:23:00)

Rod
that would whirl rapidly in the wind wobbling noisily on oiled nails . I wanted a plane more than
I’d wanted anything more than I wanted the red wagon with rubber tires more than the train that
ran on a track with its train of cars. I asked my mother over and over again. Mama? What do you
want boy? She’d say. Mama will you get mad if I ask you? I’d say. What do you want now, I aint
got time to be answering a lot of fool questions. What you want? Mama when you gonna get me
one? I’d ask. Get you one what? She’d say. You know Mama when I been asking you… what I
been asking you… 164 now at the top {addressing those trying to find the page} “Boy,” she’d say,
“if you don’t want a spanking you better come on’n tell me what you talking about so I can get on
with my work.” “Aw, Mama, you know…” “What I just tell you?” she’d say. “I mean when you
gonna buy me an airplane.” “AIRPLANE! Boy, is you crazy? [laughter] How many times I have
to tell you to stop that foolishness. I done told you them things cost too much. I bet I’m gon wham
the living daylight out of you if you don’t quit worrying me ‘bout them things!” But this did not
stop me, and a few days later I’d try all over again. Then one day a strange thing happened. It was
spring and for some reason I had been hot and irritable all morning. It was a beautiful spring. I
could feel it as I played barefoot in the backyard. Blossoms hung from the thorny black locust
trees like clusters of fragrant white grapes. Butterflies flickered in the sunlight above the short new
dew wet grass. I had gone in the house for bread and butter and coming out I heard a steady
unfamiliar drone. It was unlike anything I had ever heard before. I tried to place the sound. It was
no use. It was a sensation like that I had when searching for my father’s watch, heard ticking
unseen in a room. It made me feel as though I had forgotten to perform some task……..

(1:25:00)

Rod

that my mother had ordered….then I located it, overhead. In the sky, flying quite low and about a
hundred yards off, was a plane! It came so slowly that it seemed barely to move. My mouth hung
wide; my bread and butter fell into the dirt. I wanted to jump up and down and cheer. And when
the idea struck I trembled with excitement: Some little white boy’s plane done flew away and all I
got to do is stretch out my hands and it’ll be mine! It was a little plane like that at the fair, flying
no higher than the eaves of our roof. Seeing it come steadily forward I felt the world grow warm
with promise. I opened the screen and climbed over it and clung there, waiting. I would catch the
plane as it came over and swing down fast and run into the house before anyone could see me.
Then no one could come to claim the plane. It droned nearer. Then when it hung like a silver cross
in the blue directly above me. I stretched out my hand and grabbed. It was like sticking my finger
through a soap bubble. The plane flew on, as though I had simply blown my breath after it. I
grabbed again, frantically, trying to catch the tail. My fingers clutched the air and disappointment
surged tight and hard in my throat. Giving one last desperate grasp, I strained forward. My fingers
ripped from the screen. I was falling. The ground burst hard against me. I drummed the
earth with
my heels and when my breath returned, I lay there bawling.  My mother rushed through the door.
“What’s the matter, chile! What on earth is wrong with you?” “It’s gone! It’s gone!” “What
gone?” “The airplane…” “Airplane?” “Yessum, jus like the one at the fair…I tried to stop it an’it
kep right on going…” “When, boy?” “Just now.” I cried through my tears. “Where it go, boy,
what way? “Yonder, there…” she scanned the sky, her arms aconniebo and her checkered apron
flapping in the wind

(1:27:00)

Rod

As I pointed to the fading plane. Finally she looked down at me, slowly shaking her head. 166
now. “It’s gone! It’s gone!” I cried “Boy, is you a fool?” she said. “Don’t you see that there’s a
real airplane’ stead of one of them toy ones?” “Real…?” I forgot to cry. “Real?” “Yass, real. Don’t
you know that thing you reaching for is bigger’n a auto? You here trying to reach for it and I bet
it’s flying ‘bout two-hundred miles higher’n this roof.” She was disgusted with me. “You come on
in this house before somebody else sees what a fool you done turned out to be. You must think
these here li’l ole arms of your’s it mighty long…” I was carried into the house and undressed for
bed and the doctor was called. I cried bitterly; as much from the disappointment of finding the
plane so far beyond my reach as from the pain. When the doctor came I heard my mother telling
him about the plane and asking if anything was wrong with my mind. He explained that I had had
a fever for several hours. But I was kept in bed for a week and I constantly saw the plane in my
sleep, flying just beyond my fingertips, sailing so slowly that it seemed barley to move. And each
time I’d reach out to grab it I’d miss and through each dream I’d hear my grandma warning:

“Young man, young man Yo arm’s too short To box with God…”

Rod
what about that memory of his?

Rod

wha do ya [think?]

Connie [he was dreamin]

Rod [what]:::what happened he was...

Connie dreamin (...) Rod
during that whole thing you [think was a dream?] Or is he remembering what happened when he was a boy

Connie ([nodding])

Group (chorus) rememberin what happened when he was a boy

Rod So tell e what happened it’s this long description what was [it about?]

Virgil [he went to a fair]

Rod [he went to a fair]

Virgil [saw a plane]

Rod and he saw [that model right?]

Virgil [he stawted fantasizin about planes]

Rod right. He started fantasizin he was obsessed with planes with planes and flyin and then he saw one in the sky one day maybe the first one I guess the first one he’d ever seen

(1:29:00)

Rod in the sky [right?]

Virgil [he thought] it was a model plane
Rod
he thought it was a model plane

Virgil
(someone) came and told him that, his mother rather [came]

Rod- [yeah]

Virgil
and told him that it was a real model

Rod
and he tried to {gestures reaching up}

Virgil
reach up and grab [it]

Rod
[he]:::he thought he was gonna be able to pick it right out of the sky

Virgil
he hurt his legs then too

Rod
and then he hurt then he fell and hurt himself and I don’t know it doesn’t seem like his injury was
was permanent or anything but

Randy
( ) his was crying too

Rod
the was definitely crying he was so [disappointed]

Virgil
[he seen tha doctuh]

Rod
…he was embarrassed, his mothuh sed, boy you you a fool.

Virgil
his mother asks was something wrong with his head he had a fever for two days, [but]...

Rod
[ri::ight]

Virgil
he coulda hadda a metal illness!!]

Rod
aayea:::yea who knows... what do you mean by that? What do you think?

Virgil
I::I’m saying could have been (...) bi (.) mana depressed bipolar ; (.) obsessed (teligent???)
Rod

um, huh (..) um.

Virgil

had a mental illness, I mean I’m just sayin for example, that’s not; but that’s not really that’s not really it but I’m saying the doctor came in and said he had a fever the mother asked what if anything was wrong with his [head]

Rod

[wrong] with his mind, yea [right]

Virgil

[ri:ght]

{Laughter from group?}

Rod

…So what did she think was wrong with his mind? You know, that’s [what I’m tryin ta]

Ben

[he have obsession..with planes air plan es]

Betty

[obsessed]

Rod

[ok, he wus obsessed, right ]

Rod

yea that’s right but then she/ she felt like he should have known that the plane was really you know it was really flying way up high in the sky and he wouldn’t been able to reach it or something

Virgil

[ri:ght]

Betty

[he fantasized] so much about it

Rod

right like he was so obsessed with

Betty

[so obsessed with airplanes]

Rod

yea that it overwhelmed his young reason or something like that

Ben

he was he’s putting airplanes over people’s feelings –uh he’s putting it over race and culture and he’s:::he’s putting airplanes like:::like it’s some kind of god or something

Rod

ah, that’s interesting you think that his obsession carried on yea he’s still obsessed with airplanes

Ben
he said that he only dignity was to fly plane was airplanes

(1:31:00)

Ben
he crashed the plane so
Virgil-I think he got a mental illness
Group (chorus)
{laughter}
Rod
what do you think about what kind what:::what would you say about that
Virgil
like manic, a little manic. grandiose thoughts
Rod
ok kind of grandiose
Virgil
somewhere in that category
Rod
yea
Virgil
seem to be that way cau the way he treating that man the way the little story he told why he was always obsessed with planes and trying something trying to accomplish something that he always wanted to do...
Rod
uh hmmm uh hmmm yea it's a it's interesting that we have these two different stories set inside of the main story right the main story is this pilot with the broken ankle and this old man he’s waiting to see what’s gonna happen then we got these two other stories the one that Jefferson tells about sprouting wings in Heaven and then this long you know memory from the pilot about when he was a kid and first was learning about [flying]
Betty
[(_) about flyin, yeah]
Rod
yea and it’s interesting to kind of compare them contrast them a little bit....Well why don’t we quit there for today? And we’ll come back and we’ll finish up this story next Monday ok well far as I know we’ll be in the next room um the:::the regular room yea Ben would it be ok with you if I take this one and I’ll make sure I have enough copies [for you next week]
Virgil
here go mine. pass ine down.
Rod
you want me to hang onto yours?
Virgil
yea
I will do that’s fine

you won’t lose it?

no I won’t lose them and I’ll make more copies make sure I got enough…Ok everybody thanks for coming

Rod

{addressing Randy} - he good luck with it all

Randy

thanks

{Rod and Randy discuss his personal problem while the other participants exit the room. Ben asked to speak with Rod for a minute after the session}
Session Four

00:00:00

Sophie

It's like my memory is not as good as it use to be. {Motions her hands around her head}

Rod

mhmm hmm.

sophie-

When you get older I guess…

Rod

Right, it's always a challenge as we get older right, {chuckles}

Sophie

{Nods} Yes

Rod

But ya know… uh what they say is that the more you do it,

Sophie

Uh huh.

Rod

The better

sophie

The better…

Rod

yea and you, you kind of stay sharp that way, yea working that math working that...doing some of

those things to stimulate what we've forgotten is a way of really keeping younger. Of really

staying younger.

Sophie

Yeah I've got some good grades on my math, got a hundred on some of my tests.

Rod

That's great…that’s great. Well yea I bet ya'll pick it back up no problem!

Sophie

Yea

Rod

No problem, you will be alright.

Daphne

What's that?

Sophie

My math
Daphne
Oh...she’s real good in math
Rod
Now this time Erin made some umm...chocolate banna bread. So we will try that out & see what we think about it.
Daphne
I ain’t had no breakfast this morning, I ain’t had no time to eat nothing.
Rod
Well you’re in luck, we have some breakfast here. So grab ya a piece of this.
Sophie
Did they tell ya about our cookies we made? We made some peanut butter...
Daphne
We made some good ol peanut butter cookies.
Rod
Ya did make some peanut butter cookies; oh I do love some peanut butter cookies.
Daphne
And um. We made em from just the umm package...ya know the umm the flour
Rod
Oh yea, right!?
Daphne
The flour packets.
Rod
Yep!
Daphne
And they came out real good.
Rod
Good, alright. That’s good to know.
Daphne
They were so good. They were called lil umm...
Sophie
Macaroon’s
Daphne
Macaroon’s
Rod
Macaroos, sure that’s good stuff. Alright let me see if I can gather up everybody else and Lets get to it.
Sophie
What kinda cake is this?
Daphne
He said chocolate something.
Rod
Chocolate banana, no nuts in that one.
Teague walks out room…
00:02:00
Daphne
They keep it so cold in this building.
Sophie
I happen to overheard the girl at the dentist talking about going out with her boyfriends.
00:04:00
Both women walk out…
Both women return…
00:06:00
A tall black male (virgil) walks in alongside medium size young black woman (connie).
Sophie
Hi
Virgil
Hi… {Pulls out chair and sits down}
Second black young male (ben) walks in.
Virgil
What! What! What! What! {In excitement}
1st black male gets up, walks over to muffin table.
4th Black woman (sandra) walks in.
Teague walks in…
Rod
Anybody seen Randy this morning?
Teague closes door.
Virgil
No Randy, No Joe, No Leah, No Tom.
Rod
Not everybody’s here ok…. Now
Virgil
Mumbles with food in his mouth

Rod

Okay, alright that’s ok. We’ll go along. We’ll miss them but we will catch them next time.

Alright, now

that’s um chocolate banana bread.

00.08.00

It’s an experiment; tell me what you think about it. No nuts in that one. We thought we’d try one
with nuts next time. Just tell me what you think. What do you think?

Virgil

{Man drinks soda} It’s straight.

Rod

{chuckles} Oh yeah? I tell you, she’s um, she really cooking a lot…baking a lot. Well, alright.

How was your weekend? Pretty good?

Sophie

It was fine

Rod

I got to talk to Sophie a little bit about GED school and stuff.

{Rod- grabs a chair}

Rod

You’re fine, you don’t need to move. You are just fine.

{takes a seat}

Virgil

I should have gotten my paper

Rod

Uh yeah I got it. I made some extra copies of it so we wouldn’t have to share. {Rod- chuckles}

Even though it is okay to share. (Addresses Sandra) Ummm….What do you think... Want to tell us
about your weekend?

Sandra

{Mumbles and scratches head} I went to church yesterdy

Rod

Yeah? … Yeah? ok

{Woman shakes her head}

Rod

Did you hear anything inspiring?

Sandra

Bout wurries..howda get ridda wurries.

Rod

Really. Well let us know. My goodness. That’s…that’s really…. That's uh valuable information.

Sandra
Most of the times when you get by yourself and go talk...and go see the birds and say a little something to the birds. It’s a strange way you can get rid of it... umm hummm... then worries

00:09:12

rod

Do anybody do that? Do anybody get outside and get by yourself and go hang out outside when you feel worried? Well, not when it’s 107 degrees outside.

{Crowd chuckles}

Rod

Maybe when the weather gets cool, but I like to do that sometimes. Sit under the tree and umm I never tried talking to the birds about my problems but I am willing to try it. Do anybody ever talk to the dog?

virgil- {raises his hand to brush hair} Hope they don’t answer back

rod

{chuckles} hope they don’t answer back. What does that mean if they answer back? {Chuckles} that is a good question. But that is the reason why some people say they like their pet, like a dog or a cat; because umm they are real good listeners and they don’t talk back. They don’t interrupt you and talk back. Cat might turn its back and ignore you and the good little dog will sit there and

00:10:00

Rod

At least act like they understand what you saying. And I guess trees may be good listeners although it’s kinda hard to tell if they are paying attention or not. I guess....Umm {taps pen on table}

{Every is quiet}

Rod

Umm what were we reading the last time? Where are we? Are we still working on “Flying Home?” Alright, I k now I got one for Virgil and who else?

Slides everyone a paper…. Turns to the man in the red shirt next to Teague

Rod

That is right. I took yours the last time to make copies. That’s right. Thank you for that.

Virgil

Where. Where were we at?

Rod

we were umm... let’s figure out where we were. I think we were way back down...What’s the last thing ya’ll remember from the story? And the other thing is Sophie missed out last time so we have to give her a uh... a summary right? Let’s all remind ourselves where we are in the story and make sure we know what happened so what was going on, what was the last thing you remember?

And who can give a kind of summary of the story so far? Uh so that we all remember what’s going on, you were here, you were here two weeks ago when we started this right? So you remember some of the story. Sophie, do you want to tell us what you remember from it, would that, is that a fair question? What was this about?

{Everyone is quiet}

Ben

{Mumbles} we umm...
Rod
We got Todd right? We meet Todd, who was Todd? Anybody?

Virgil
He was a pilot training for the Tuskegee airmen.

Rod
Right, Right a training pilot, training to be one of the Tuskegee airmen. Just down the street from us here in Moton field right?

Sandra
And that’s where he was (pushing Willie’s) daddy

Rod
He was what? {Confused}

Sandra
He was pushing Willie’s daddy, his daddy was trying to tell him thangs but he was, he was, umm. He was saying...he had his own words, putting it in his own words but his daddy was like, ya know, was like INVOLVED in the in the paragraph with him, was that the that para, was that the written…

Rod
Are you thinking of the old man? Is that the same one? The old man in the field. The daddy was in there, and his daddy was umm. {Thinks to self-} what his daddy was having. Was talking with him & he was...He was a PILOT wouldn’t he? Uhhh,

Sandra
Wasn’t he a pilot? An airplane pilot?

Rod
Uh yea. Yea yea yea...he was trained to fly in the military planes right?

Sandra
yee.

Rod
And he was training to go fight in world war two.

Sandra
But I don’t think we finished that one.

Rod
No, we didn’t quite finish it. Still working on it.

Sandra
Nah okay. Okay.

Rod
Now he said his daddy died. Right?
Okay...His daddy died when he was young, but there is an old man in the story...

So you got the main characters, the main characters in the story are Todd, whose the pilot.

And who's the old man? Who's that old man that's in here too? His name Jefferson remember?

He was uhh...a farmer or something.

Yea yea, he worked on the land anyway, whether he was a farmer or sharecropper, or whatever he was doing. So Todd crash lands this plane right? Something happen, remember what happen to the plane, why did he crash?

He hit a buzzard.

00.14.00

He hit a buzzard right, right.

Flying too high

That's right! He was flying too high and too fast cause he got excited watching. Remember what he was watching? What he saw?

{Mumbles...}

He saw a, he saw a umm {flips through papers} a little boy, a little boy flying a kite. Right? A little boy flying a kite & he thought about himself right? As a little boy flying a kite and he loved to think about flying airplanes and stuff, so he got excited and he was flying to high and too fast and then {snaps finger} Bang! He hit one of those buzzards right...and uh threw him into a tailspin and he came crashing down in the field.
And uh that field would have been, could have been down that way or over this way pretty nearby somewhere here in Macon county. Crash landed in the f...so what else? What’s the story? What’s he trying to do? To get the old man and the young boy to do?

Virgil
{Mumbles}

Rod
Well what what happens then? So he crash lands in and so what happens next? What’s the conflict in the story?

Virgil
He was going despair able, confusion about himself, I can’t say it was racist thing, I would say it’s more like, he was being foolish about his occupation of being an, having a pilot job that he wanted to um, ya know be more than what he was, but he had just wrecked, it was just a plane, it was just a common accident, so he took it irrationally, the wrong way, he was fantasying in his own mind that uh, how people would respond to the, [to the ac]cident.

Connie
[tha accident

Rod
Yea...

Virgil
So...

Rod
And how did he think people were gonna, what was he worried about? What was he concerned about?

Virgil
His umm. His umm...

Rod
How did he think people were [gonna react?]

00.16.00

Virgil
His [self-con]fidence. His confidence because he said that you only ya know you only get one chance to fly.

Rod
Right...Right {nods head}

Virgil
Back then ya know, you probably wreck a plane. They probably put you on the sideline, so he wrecked a plane.

Rod
{Shakes head in agreement} So he felt like, now you started to say it wasn’t necessarily a race thing or maybe it was what was the thing about race with it?

Virgil
It wasn’t no race; it wasn’t no racism in there because he was just talking to…

{Knock at the door}

Rod
Hey there he is!

Randy
Morning

Rod
Hey Randy! How are you?

Randy
How’s everybody doing?

{Crowd mumbles} Good

{Randy closes door}

Rod
Good, Good, were just getting started. Have a seat. Do you have your story or do you need one of these?

Randy
Need one.

Rod
Okay. {Reaches for story} How you doing?

Randy
{Mumbles} good good

Virgil
He was only talking to the two black people see.

{Teague passes story to Randy}

Randy
I’m sorry I’m late; I was ohh...im sorry. I was over tending to some business.

Rod
That’s a l r I g h t…okay good. Well were just getting the, were just getting the summary and reminding ourselves about this story, flying home, that we’ve been working on.

Randy
Oh yea.

Rod
And then we’ll get back to it, so Virgil you were saying that he was talking to two black people in the field, an old man.

Virgil

[One and the boy.]

Rod

[And the son.] yea...

Virgil

And I don’t believe there was any racism with that, (it was all consuming what they was) interpreting by themselves so ya know. It [wasn’t…]

Rod

[So he,] those two men weren’t saying oh well ya know you weren’t good enough to fly that plane, they weren’t saying anything like that.

Virgil

Because old man Jefferson was giving him a story about how he was flying in Heaven.

Rod

{Nods head} right....

Virgil

And trying to enlighten him that it was okay, (look he) Jefferson was telling him, he was telling him a story to make him feel more comfortable about wrecking the plane and you will have another opportunity to fly no matter what, now just flying a plane or whatever, you gotta soar in life [you gotta] reach another accomplishment..

Rod

00.18.00

Virgil

He gotta reach another accomplishment because if you just keep at this one thing, at it just a plane ya know, you get to old you might not could fly a plane and the war over and what you still ain’t gonna fly no more so he was trying to teach him ya know, you gotta fly in life. That what he was telling him in that story.

Rod

umm, that’s nice and that’s uh that’s uh a very different kind of interpretation, a very different way of understanding old Jefferson story. How did Todd take it?

Virgil

Todd took it & thought he was being sarcastic.

Rod

Thought he was.

Virgil

Thought he was being funny.

Rod

Thought he was making fun of him RIGHT?
He wanted to, he wanted to hit the old man if he could have gotten up on his feet but see I seen like, he had a mental (il) a mental problem from tha start because of the way he was, ya know calling him an idiot and what else he called him?

Rod
A peasant right?

Virgil
Yea a peasant...

Rod
{Nods head} yea.

Virgil
And he was doing the old black man, saying I don’t wanna be something like, I don’t wanna be nothing like you, if not the same words but he was telling his self to his self i don’t wanna be nothing like you, if you don’t wanna be nothing like him, everybody got like i said last time, everybody got a job, from a janitor all the way up to the president, somebody gotta do some type of job to keep the world revolving

Rod
umm hmm. {Nods head}

Virgil
So he was downing Jefferson and that led to make me think he want to hit the man that led me to think he got a mental illness.

Rod
umm hmm. {Looks over paper}

Virgil
Cause he, He got an attitude problem.

Rod
That’s interesting, what do you mean? You think he has a mental illness. What’s the difference between that and an attitude problem?

Virgil
I think he got a mental illness.

Rod
Like what? Like...

Virgil
Like the way he acting ya know, he came in age; i mean a rage of anger.

Rod
Umm hmm, he’s got some anger.

Virgil
He was already hurt with a broken ankle, and he just telling you a story just a story about, about an angel flying through heaven and you think he being sarcastic and funny. That, that’s a, that’s a, that’s a, that’s a sign of mental illness to me.
And plus ya know, people that fly planes are more from like a borderline genius to insanity, it seem like he was very high intelligence but at the same time he was in a maniac mode.

Rod
hmm. He was in a, he was kind of uh, whaddaya mean?

Virgil
[hyped up]

Rod
Hyped up

Virgil
Hyped up. He was very hyped up after that story.

Rod
00.20.00

Sandra
Uh uh.

Rod
I'm looking for that part, I'm looking for that part where he says uh, um, Jefferson asks him now he wanted to look at his plane, hey can i look at your plane? And what did Todd say? Yea you can take a look just don’t touch anything. Alright...so Jefferson looks around the plane asks a few questions, how fast does it go? All of 200 miles a hour. Well that sure is fast and what in the world would make you wanna fly an airplane like that anyway? Do you remember what Todd thought?

Sandra
He was probably just in his own world. {Chuckles}
It seem like he was in his own world, well he did, well he had a thought he didn’t say out loud though, he thought umm... {reads through papers}

00.22.00

Sandra

It was like a mental illness, it was just like he said a shimmery thing, mind thing, he had a pilot and he {yawns while talking} he was just interested in his pilot and his airplane.

Rod

Yea, seem like it. The old man was just kind of interested in it. I mean he never seen any, he'd never been that close to an airplane before probably. Here it is. Son. Here it is on 153, Son how come you want to fly way up there in the air? And then uh Todd thinks because it’s the most meaningful act in the world, because it makes me less like you he thought. But he said because I like it I guess. It’s as good a way to fight and die as I know. So what, that thought there it’s the most meaningful act in the world because it makes me less like you, what’s he saying?

Virgil

he's calling, he's calling, I guess lower, lower characteristics ya know

rod

Oh yea.

Virgil

He ain’t got, He ain’t got, he feel like he better than that man. That’s all. And he puts the man down... in further words.

Rod

And he’s also saying remember what we said about dignity in here before, he’s said the airplane was his only dignity and now that it was crash landed on the ground he felt naked without having that plane around him right? So the plane made him feel like what???

Virgil

A Superstar!

Rod

The plane made him feel like a superstar! That’s exactly right, the plane made him feel better than he felt like others and particularly where a, this is where I think race does come into it and I think and what, I think Todd is saying that flying an airplane makes me, makes him better than that old black man who was from Todd’s point of view ignorant, farmer, just this kind of peasant person ya know,

00.24.00

Rod

so he was so he thought that by training to be a pilot, by training to have this skill and go fight in the war, that what? He was going to become

sandra

He could fly over and over again. Keep flying it, keep doing it over, keep continue doing it because that was his game, his game was continue to keep doing it.

Rod

To keep flying and then there he is crash landed in the field.

rod- uh hmm.
Virgil
So he could control his own things, if something happened to his plane he know how to um
program it...uh hmm.
Rod
Ok okay.
Sandra
yep yep. He got that.
Rod
So remember there was the old man and the young boy. Who were first there when he crash
landed?
Virgil
Then he sent the boy to get some help.
Rod
yea he sent the boy to get some help right? to go get Mr. Graves, the guy who were gonna find
out who owns the land there and what did they say they were gonna do they were gonna take him
to town
virgil
On an ox car.
Rod
On an Ox car right and what did Todd say about that?
Virgil
He started asking was there white on one of them.
Rod
yea, he was concerned about white people coming around, yea! About what was he concerned
about being taken into town on an Ox car? Remember?
Virgil
He uh...He'd be embarrassed, ashamed.
Rod
yea, he would be embarrassed or ashamed, that’s right! He keeps talking about um about being
humiliated right uh...
sandra
It was a good story though.
Rod
Well were still working on it though, it’s long enough that its taking us a while to work on it, how
does that feel? You’re working on it over the course of a couple of weeks are you; have you
thoughts about it in the mean time? You giggling about it.
00.26.00
Virgil
{Giggles}
Rod
(Laughs)

Randy

All I know is that that buzzard and the lil guy in the story he gets his plane crashed because of a buzzard that hits the window.

Rod

yea. Yea. Um. Do you know what i mean when i ask is that symbolic in any way? Do you know what i mean by that, I mean it's one thing that yea in the story that a buzzard, that he actually ran into this bird and that's what caused the plane to crash but what do we know about buzzards.

What's a buzzard?

Randy

buzzards are terrible

Rod

They're terrible whyt?

Sophie

They eat dead...

Rod

They eat dead flesh right?! They're the birds on the side of the road,

Virgil

Their scavengers.

Rod

Their scavengers right.

Sandra

They can easily find dead people, they can smell em.

Rod

tyes. Right so and remember in the old western movies there would be the buzzards flying around in the sky, you know somebody died & the buzzards are circling around so the buzzards are associated with death, rot and decay stuff like that so some..

randy

Their gross.

Rod

yea, their gross right? It's a bunch of gross stuff about buzzards in this story, do you remember that story that Jefferson told about the buzzards it was so gross, do you remember it? What did he say about it?

Virgil

I forgot what he said but uh what Todd said I'd listen to this story better than the ones about the angels.

Rod

yea yea, well that was funny, i mean that story was funny about flying around Heaven and St. Peter was like your flying to fast Jefferson, slow down ya know, but the one about the buzzards
was gross, it was um, "They the damndest birds, once I seen a horse all stretched out like it was sick so I hollered get up from there just to make sure and dog on if I don’t see two Jim crows, Teddy he calls those buzzards Jim Crows and we wondered if that was funny or not.

Rod
Not funny, Randy thinks that is not funny at all.

Randy
Because you don’t wanna be called the Jim Crow.

ro-- well he's calling buzzards Jim Crow

00.28.00

Randy
He's calling buzzards Jim Crow, ya know if you think about that, the person Jim Crow and we don’t wanna be called Uncle Tom.

Rod
That’s right, that’s right so you think it would be insulting to the buzzards to be called Jim Crow or...

Randy
I don’t know, I'm not too sure. But it would probably be insulting.

Rod
Yea okay... but you kind of feel like it’s a little bit insulting.

Randy
{Mumbles}

Rod
I mean he really makes a point of saying just how disgusting these birds are, but that’s what it is that brings this plane down something associated with death and that grossness, ya know that’s sort of plaguing our pilot in some way i don’t know, I don’t know exactly what that means but yea he's worried about, he's worried about being taken to town on an Ox cart remember, he's just on 149 thoughts of himself riding an Ox through town past streets full of white faces down the concrete runways of the air field made swift images of humiliation in his mind. Right. And why would he feel humiliated riding an Ox cart into to town back to the air field?

Ben
He left on an aircraft, and he riding back through on an Ox, through town on an Ox and and whut wud hi superiors think.

00.30.00
Rod
Right, Right!

Virgil
That’s like driving a Benz one day or a Rolls Royce, and then driving a chavette the next day.

Rod
Or on a bicycle, ya know right? On foot walking yea...

Virgil
Laughs yea...

Rod
bumming a ride, or whatever it is, yea, yea, that’s exactly right! He says at one point in here, i forget exactly where, he says that buzzard set me back a hundred years, like he thinks he's making progress right? Not just for himself but as he says for his whole race right? Like he's one of the first black men to train as a pilot, I mean that’s what the Tuskegee airmen were doing right? Training what was gonna be pilot soldiers for the United States army and uh here all of the sudden instead of being this genius pilot right? This smart guy pilot, who has this technical skill and this great deal of dignity and esteem right he'll be laid up, broken ankle, slowly creeking into town on this old Ox cart like a peasant cargo or something like that, that’s what Todd is thinking.

Virgil
Whomp whomp, whommp. {Chuckles} {waah waah – sitcom sound…}

Rod
It’s got that feel too {laughs} I think that’s a nice way to sum it up.

Virgil
Yea.

Rod
If this was a sitcom i think that would be the noise we would hear at the end of that scene, we would see him on the Ox cart and the whomp whomp {laughs} and it would fade out at that.

Virgil
Yea.

Rod
And with people laughing at him, cause that’s what’s going on, that’s the scene in his mind. Cause he's got the streets lined with white folks saying ah ha we told you no black man can fly a plane. {Nods head in agreement} And I mean that’s part, that’s part of what he's worried about. I TOLD you this was gonna happen. Here you are, thought you were so high and mighty flying that airplane, now look at you. That’s what he's worried about...So we got a couple stories right there together, right we got Jefferson story about flying in Heaven and being kicked out of Heaven because he was flying too fast

00.32.00

Rod
And then remember the next story we heard and this was just before we finished up last time. Just before we finished up we heard the part about, do you remember what it was? It was about...

Virgil
He seen an old plane above his head.
{Daphne starts coughing}

Rod

And what was that about? When who saw a plane? That plane? Who was telling them story or thinking it really, he's not telling it to anybody, and he's telling it to us.

Daphne

Can I get some water?

Rod

Of course, please, yea yea. Get yourself a cup and bring it back in here so you can have it to sip on, yea so you're right Virgil, its Todd talking about when he saw that plane right? And you remember what that was about? Remembering...

Virgil

He thought it was a model plane but his mom had to tell him it was a real plane, rod- yea, so the first plane he ever saw was a model was just kind of hanging from the ceiling and he thought that was just.

Virgil

At the carnival

Rod

yea at the carnival, and he just thought that was the best thing he'd ever seen. {Extends arms out to emphasize point}

Virgil

And then um he fell to the ground and hurt his knee, had to call the doctor in and the doctor told him ya know, his mother told him to check his mind something, ain't right not the proper content, had to check his mind to see if he was okay.

Rod

Why did? Why was his mom concerned about his mind? Ya'll remember? I'll tell ya what? What if we start there and read that part, we just start there and read that part about his remembering when he was a kid, is that okay with ya' ll?

Virgil

Which one?

Rod

Well we'll start then on 162

{Everyone flips pages}

Rod

162, there were turns to italics, you know there's a little break and it turns to italics there. He says {Daphne walks in with cup of water...closes door.}

{Rod- pushes chair back and proceeds to drink some water.}

Rod

Excuse me Daphne, now I have to get me a sip of water too. {Drinks water} Got a lil tickle in my throat. This is the first time, ya'll found the page? You get it?
This was the first time I ever saw a plane, I was very small and planes were new in the world. Now he means that literally right, I mean this the time he would about that age when planes had just been invented. There weren’t airplanes before that. Planes were new in the world. I was four and a half and the only plane that I’d ever seen was a model suspended from the ceiling of the automobile exhibit at the state fair. But I did not know that it was only a model I did not know how large a real plane was nor how expensive. To me it was a fascinating toy complete in itself which my mother said could only be owned by rich little white boys. I stood rigid with admiration, my head straining backwards as I watched the grey little plane describing arch’s above the gleaming automobiles and I vowed that rich or poor someday I would own such a toy. My mother had to drag me out of the exhibit not even the merry go round, Ferris wheel or the racing horses could hold my attention for the rest of the fair I was too busy imitating the tiny drone of the plane with my lips and imitating with my hands the motion swift and circling {motions arms in movement to mock the plane} that it made in flight, so we imagine this little boy completely caught up in his own world, his own world making little engine motor noises, and pretending his hand is an airplane. After that I no longer used the pieces of lumber that lay about our backyard to construct wagons and autos now it was used for airplanes. I built fly planes using pieces of board for wings a small box for the fuselage, a piece of wood for the rubber. The trip to the fair had brought something new to my small world. I asked my mother repeatedly when the fair would come back again.

Rod

I lay in the grass and watch the sky and each flighting bird became a soaring plane. I would have been good a year just to see a plane again I became a nuisance to everyone with my questions about airplanes but planes were new to the old folks too and there was little they could tell me. Only my uncle knew some of the answers and better still he could carve propellers from pieces of wood that roll rapidly in the wind while wobbling nosily on oiled nails. I wanted a plane more than I wanted anything, more than I wanted the red wagon with the rubber tires, more than the train that ran on track with its train of cars, I asked my mother over and over again, "Momma?" "What do you want boy? She’d say. Momma will you get mad if i ask you? I'd say. What do you want now? I ain't got time to be answering a lot of fool questions, what do you want? Momma when you gonna get me one? I'd ask. Get you one what? She’d say. You know momma, what I been asking you, boy she'd say if you don’t wanna a spanking you better come on and tell me what you talking about so I can get on with my work. Awe Momma, you know. What did I just tell you? She’d say. I mean when you gonna buy me an airplane? An AIRPLANE! Boy is you crazy?! How many times I have to tell you, stop that foolishness, I done told you them things cost too much, I bet I’m gonna wham the living daylight out of you if you don’t quit worrying me about them things. But this did not stop me. And a few days later, I'd try all over again. Then one day a strange thing happen it was spring and for some reason I had been hot and irritable all morning, it was a beautiful spring I could feel it as I played barefoot in the backyard blossoms hung from the thorny black locus trees like clusters of flagrant white grapes, butterfly’s flickered in the sunlight of the short nude dew wet grass. I had gone in the house for bread and butter, and coming out i heard a steady unfamiliar drone. It was like, it was unlike anything I had heard before I tried to place the sound it was no use

Rod

It was a sensation like that when i had, when searching for my father’s watch heard ticking unseen in a room it made me feel as though I had forgot some task that my mother had ordered then I
located it overhead in the sky flying quite low and about a hundred yards off it was a plane it came so slowly that it seemed barely to move, my mouth hung wide my bread and butter fell into the dirt. I wanted to jump up and down and cheer and when the idea struck I trembled with excitement some little white boys plane done flew away and all I had to do is stretch out my hands and it will be mine, it was a little plane like that at the fair flying no higher the eve of our roof seeing it come steadily forward a [couple road grew warm with pollen] I opened the screen and climbed over it and clung there waiting, I would catch the plane as it came over and swing down fast and run in the house before anyone could see me. Ya got it?

Virgil

Yea

Rod

165, And swing down fast and run into the house before anyone could see me, then no one could come to claim the plane, it droned near and then when it hung like a silver cross and flew directly above me, I stretched out my hand and grabbed. It was like sticking my finger through a soap bubble the plane flew on as though i had simply blown my breath after it. I grabbed again frantically trying to catch the tail, my fingers clutched the air disappointment surged hard and tight in my throat giving one last desperate grasp I strained forward. My fingers ripped from the screen i was falling, the ground burst hard against me I drummed the earth with my heels when my breath returned i laid there balling. My mother rushed through the door "What’s the matter child what on earth is wrong with you? “It’s gone, it's gone. What gone? The airplane, Airplane! Yes em just like the one at the fair, I tried to stop it and it kept right on going.

0.40.00

Rod

When boy? Just now. I cried through my tears. Where it go boy? What way? Yonder there. She scanned the sky, her arms akimbo and her checkered apron flapping in the wind as I pointed to the fading plane. Finally she looked down at me, slowly shaking her head. It’s gone, it’s gone, I cried. Boy is you a fool she said. Don’t you see that that’s a real airplane instead of one of them toy ones. Real? I forgot to cry. Real? Yes! Real! Don't you know that thing you reaching for is bigger than an auto, you here trying to reach for it and i bet it’s flying about 200 miles higher than this roof. She was disgusted with me. You come on in this house before somebody else see's what a fool you done turned out to be, you must think those lil ol arms of yours is mighty long. I was carried into the house and undressed for bed and the doctor was called. I cried bitterly as much as from the disappointment of finding the plane was so far beyond my reach as from the pain. When the doctor came, I heard my mother tellin him about the plane and asked him if anything was wrong with my mind. He explained that I had had a fever for several hours and that I was kept in bed for a week, an I constantly saw the plane in my sleep flying just beyond my fingertips sailing so slowly but it seemed barely to move and each time I'd reach out to grab it I missed and through each dream I’d hear my grandma warning "Young man, Young man your arms too short to box with God". So that’s his memory, so (_ _) Virgil just like you told us he saw that plane at the fair and he ca[me kind o]f obsessed with it, yea and he was fantasizing about airplanes all the time. All he wanted was an airplane and

Vi

[fantasizing]

[0.42.00]

Rod

He thought it was a toy right? And this thing happened, one day one spring day he sees that airplane in the sky and it looks about the size of a model right? Climb up high to reach and grab it.. and it was like reaching through a soap bubble and he ends up reaching too far an falling to the
ground... his momma laughing at him for being a fool. And then why did she ask the doctor about
his mind? What's that about?

{begin rt transcription}notes: Session 4

0:42:32.9

Rod

why did she ask the doctor about his mind? what's that about? ...whaddaya think Sandra?

Randy

she tho't she tho't ee was crazy

Rod

ya think?

Randy

he sed ee saw a plane. she believed ee saw a real plane.=

Rod

[yeah]=

Randy

[i's] gone. started cryin i's gone i's gone.

Rod
	right, now, what made her think somethin wuz wrong with his mind do ya think? what made her
think that that he wuz actin crazy and that somethin wuz wrong wit him. whaddaya think?.. I'm
curious about that I'm not sure what I think about it..

Connie

{clears throat} (Ah..) Uh..uh..um how he came obsessed wit...um planes.

Rod

okay

Connie

so wuld'n lissen to is mom, ee wanne'd things HIS way.

Rod

right, right, ee wasn willin to jus lissen to her when she "ay, sed jus give u[p th]at fooli[shness]-
just let that go"=

Sandra

[yup]...[sh:sh, she...she] (she...knew it) wasn't no fission {vision}, nat it wuz a re'al(\)
plane(\) [(an it)] not ta play roun with the real's things=

Rod

right [(inaud)]

Virgil

[that part] at the end when she she tol im in the en' (...) young man young man, yo arms too short
to box wit God, that let im know that it wul be a challenge for im to go on in life for him to fly a
plane, to have a plane and (to proceed) this in this worl you gotta have prayers and (you know) things in life to help you grow stronger. (he he) had a challenge ahead of im.=

Rod

I love that you picked up on that cause this this warning in his dreams in his sleep about boxing with [God] (...) Virgil

[doctor did checked] im y'no wha"m sayin he he goin thru a little ('fraidness) y'know a small little thing da wha she tol im yo arms too short ta box with God.

Rod

what is at phrase mean ta you? box with God? what is wh[at is] that bring up for you?

Virgil

[fight]

Rod

yeah, fight, yeah. somethin like fightin with God. what wuld it mean to fight with God?

Virgil

[(inaud.)]

Connie

[(wouldn't)] won't win.

Rod

you won't WIN/ you [cant win boxing with god!] {excitedly, laughing} [Yeah.]

Virgil

[(inaud)... In other] words, youknow, he he wuldn't (want) actually be boxing with God. he sh challenge of this world that wuld lead him unto havin a havin a challenge God would have a fight wit him or fight against him ta order ta be able ta accomplish the goals that he wanted.

Rod

yeah, I think so. His, his his mama wuz sayin that he was tryin to outreach himself {arms gesture upward, reaching} right? [He wuz] tryin ta do too [much, right?] 0:44:50.7

Virgil

[(..might be sayin)] God gotta lotta plan fa him ta be somethin else insted of a pilot sayin that you fightin with God (inaud) real plan is fa you ta be somethin else (...)

Rod
wow, yeah, mmhmm that your fightin against what God really wants you to do somethin else and
your determined to follow this obsession, this dream,right, wow, yeah.... so, we we uhm ... I feel
like we learn a lot about Todd from that little section there. that first memory. you you imagine
how that shaped him and what how that pointed him in the direction of eventually tryin to be a
pilot, I mean, ya think uh uh I mean, and we don't know this from the story--do you think he
stayed obsessed with bein a pilot or do you think he went on kinda changed his mind and went on
to try and do other things [(..)]

Virgil
[he's a pilot in'nere/]

Rod
he was well he was but I wonder if he stayed determined to be a pilot or to learn about air[planes]

Connie
{shakes head} [no] no he didn't

Rod
[you don't think so?]

Connie
[no]

Virgil
way i figured it, nah i gotta finish tha story ta get tha real concept [of]

rod
right

virgil
but i figure dat if he wus train ta be a pilot back then, {tapping finger on table for emphasis} he
wus given a second chance. probly wus.

rod
seem like it

virgil
i had notice whut sed deyah on da papuh they wus comin out ta da airfield, groun crews

rod
they were comin out, okay alright..i wonder if as a kid, after this thing happened, where he fell and
wus kep in bed and he had this dream about his grandma, er yeah about his grandma not is mama,
warnin im about boxin with god, did he um take her advice and let go of that obsession or did he
keep on with it? and then maybe as a young man, maybe he wus in college or somethin and then
he hears about suddenly there's an opportunity for black men to train as pilots and then does that
like turn him back to this obsession he had as a kid? i and we don(//) know. yknow we're not told
what happened between this memory as a young boy, whad ee say four or five years old, an then
the time when ee goes an trains as a pilot. we don know what happened

0:47:09.7

....

0:47:24.9

virgil
whadja say [nah?]

connie

[(_) it sez (/) come true doh, dat his dream has come (/) true.

rod

it kinda has hadn it?

connie

mhhmm

rod

it kinda is, thats a good point connie, he is {gestures} LIVIN THAT DREAM right, he's got this airplane he's flyin.

virgil

ef ee don fly agin he flew onetime

rod

yeah thats right thats right,.but thats part of thats part of why hes so:oo .. why he's so upset about this crash is that it may endanger this dream [it]

virgil

[right]

rod

it may endanger the future of this dream, right, cuz he's not yet a full pilot yet, right, he does get ta fly by himself, he's in advanced training, right, but he wants to be a full pilot, right, ta go ta war, to be a COMbat pilot, [an have all tha]

ben

[(in tha beginning)] he sed he wanted to OWN a plane rich or poor.

rod

[right right thats true]

ben

[that might be whut she talkin about], ownin a plane

rod

thats true. whaddaya think connie, you sed that that his dream did come true in that he is able to fly planes()

connie

well, next page shows that um that whut he wunted it came true once he started flyin tha plane. whirling bl blades of the propeller had come true.

rod

hmm mhhmm. where is that? where are you lookin?

connie

i'm at 167 at the top of the page. he could not be sure wit that pain (tol how) horrible reoccuring fantasy of being split in twine by the whirling blades of a propeller had come true.

rod

MMMhh!
connie
see uh, he heard, he heard (see ah hope) so...
rod
so, you wanna, let's keep goin an read on through that, okay
virgil
who readin?
rod
hmm?
virgil
[who?]
connie
{to virgil} [you can go ahead]
0:49:28.6
virgil
awight. hes comin lak a bat outta hell. str straining
rod
well now lets go down lets go down right to the to the bottom of 166 right after the memory part
where he sez hey son=
virgil
=hey son. at first he did not know where he was and look look look at the old man pointing with
burning eyes. aint- that one o yall planes comin after you? after his vision cleared he saw a small
black shape above a distant field soaring through waves of heat but he could not be sure an with
the pain he feared that somehow a horrible recurring fan fantasy of being split in the twain by the
twirling blades of the propeller had come true. yous think he see you? he heard. see, i hope so. he's
comin lak a bat outta hell. straining he heard the faint- sound of a motor and hoped it would soon
be over. how you feel? lak a nightmare he sed. hey he he . hey, he done curved back tha other way.
maybe saw us he sed maybe he's goin to send out tha ambulance and ground crew and he thought
with despair maybe he did not even see us? where did you send the boy? down to mistuh graves,
jefferson sed, man what owns tha land. do you think the phone? jefferson looked at him quickly.
ah, (so). (dabney) graves as got a bad name of accounting him killin, but (him call through). whats
killin? them five fellers, aint-choo heard? he asked with surprise. no. eve.body
rod
every'body
virgil
everybody knows about dabney graves, especially tha colored. he done killed enough of us..
{turning page, then quickly} okay somebody else take ovuh.
rod
well so what's happened just now just to make sure we know what we're doin
virgil
he enlighten im let im know that danny graves is is a killuh [()] black folk
[yeah] yeah, this doesn't sound too good right?

virgil

nah

rod

an that's the guy that uh they sent teddy to go get im. he owns the land that he crash landed on. uh

oh, now we wonder what's gonna happen. okay who wants to who wants to read? [top 168].

randy

{gestures} i'll take it

rod

yeah.

randy

{clears throat} todd had the sensation of being caught in a white neighborhood after dark. what did they do, he asked. they thought they was men, jefferson said. an some he owed money lak he do me. why do you stay here? you black, son... i know but you have to come by the by the white folks too. oh: oh(\!), offensive. he turned away from jefferson's eyes at once consoled and accused. and i'll have to come by them by them soon. he thought with despair. closin his eyes, he heard jefferson's voice as the sun burned blood red on his lids. i have got i have got nowhere to go jefferson sed and they'd come after me if they did. but dabney graves is a funny fellow. he's all the time making jokes. he can be mean as hell an and then he liable to turn around and back the co back the colored against the white folks. ah seen him do it. but me, ah hates him more than anything else, cuz he jus soon jus as soon as he gits tired he pin a man he pin a man he don care what happens to im. he jus leaves em stone cold and then the other white folks um is double hard on anybody he ad helped. for him iss just a just a joke(\!). i don give a hilla beans fuh nobody but himself. todd listened to the thread of detachment in the old man's voice. it as as though (he held his words at arms length before him to avoid their destructive meaning,) just as soon as youd do me a favor then turn then turn right around (and have you strung up. inaud) me i stay outta his way cuz down here thats what you gotta do.

rod

whadoes he mean? me, i stays outta his way cuz down heah thats what you gotta do... stay outta whose way? ...

randy

{low} whose way?

virgil

oh, gotta stay outta his way? gotta stay outta his way, give im is space. he aint- tha type a person ta be dealt wit.

rod

yeah, he's talkin about graves, [right? still talkin about graves]

virgil

[he ah he ah]

randy

[graves]

virgil
he ain tha person, like, tha right person ta be dealin wit. jus you know you know have bu'ness fuh
bu'ness but aint- tha typa fellow ta have you know have as a friend.

well, kay {laughs}, [yeah]

[as he] been splain mo bout his daddy than he' can ah guess, cuz he know his daddy know who
know his daddy, who hi daddy was i guess. [uuh],

rod

[yeah] theyre talkin bout this man graves that owns the land, [right so]

[mmhhmm /]

an we think jefferson works for [im] ur somethin [like that]

[mmhhmm] [some'm like dat]

yeah, and he sez down here thats whutchoo gotta do, stay outta his way. i mean theyre talkin bout
this guy's, well, sez he's pretty mean, 'n he may be responsible fur stringin up colored men, i mean
whatre we TALK/IN about here? we talkin about, we talking about LYNching, is that kinda thing?

this is like uh... this is kindof a scary thing i think that the pilot's finding out about now. the
beginning of that page, the first of that page, that todd had the sensation of being caught in a white
neighborhood after dark. what does that mean? whats that whats that the sensation, whats he
talking about there?

connie

thats somethin that uh he ought not do, be caught out aftuh dark.

rod

right

virgil
dat's tha way thats what prestige time wus. wuz goin on in the past, you cant be caught in a white
neighborhood after dark.

rod

right, cuz what might happen?

virgil

[well you]

sophie

[might get lynched]
virgil
might get beat, might get shot

rod
{nodding} bad stuff might happen, yeah right, ok alright. so todd's asking questions, well, whadid those men do, and jefferson sez well, they thought they were men. what does that mean. an some he owed money like he do me. an todd sez but / why / would / you stay here then? why would you stay here? why would you stay in this in this place, an he's talkin about he's talkin about the uh jim crow south, right? he's talkin about the south at that time. he's talkin about macon county at that time. why do you stay here. an he say well, you have to come by the white folks too, whadoyou think that means?

virgil
hadda come by tha white folks?

rod
yeah

virgil
hadda deal wi:i'um [cuz they own everything]

rod
[gotta deal with em] cuz they own everything, i think that is whut hes sayin there i rilly do. and then he sez to todd, he se' i got nowhere to go. an theyd come after me if i did... an then he kinda backs off:"but that dabney graves, you know he's a funny fellow. he can be mean as hell but then he's turn he's liable to turn around and help ya out. ya know, it's kindof a strange little part here... me i stays outta his way cuz down here thats whutcho gotta do....

sandra
mm mm mmm

randy
want me ta continue?

rod
please if [you'd like to]

randy
[sorry, jus got a] little spaced out there fuh a minute.

rod
no no, that's okay we were kinda thinkin about that section.

randy
okay we're gonna continue on page 168. {quickly and fitfully, haltingly} (if ma ankle would ease fuh a while he thought. the closer i spin toward the earth the blacker i become, flashed through his mind/ sweat ran into his eyes and he was sure that he would never see the plane if his head continued whirling....

...he saw it gleaming silver as it circled and he was seeing a burst like a puff of white smoke and hearing his mother yell "come along boy, i got no time for them fool airplanes. i got no time." and he saw it a second time, the plane flying high, and the burst appeared suddenly and fell slowly, billowing out and sparkling like fireworks and he was watching and being hurried along as the air was filled with a flurry of white pinwheeling cards that caught in the wind and scattered over the rooftops and into the gutters and a woman was running and snatching a card and reading it and
screaming and he darted into the shower, grabbing as in winter he grabbed for snowflakes and 
bounding away at his mother's "come on here boy! come on i say!" and he was watching as she 
took the card away seeing her face grow puzzled and turning taut as her voice quavered,)
"NIGGERS, stay away from the polls" WHOA. NIGGERS STAY AWAY FROM THE POLLS.
(and died to a moan of terror as he saw the eyeless sockets of a white hood staring at him from the 
card and above he saw the plane spiraling gracefully, agleam in the sun like a fiery sword/ and 
seeing it soar he was caught, transfixed between a terrible horror and a horrible fascination. the 
sun)
1:01:16.1

rod
lets, i'm sorry here randy, lets pause cuz this is a weird section i think. what's goin on here? do we 
have an idea whats goin [on?] 

virgil
[seem] like it jumped time. 

rod

well yeah yeah thats right he jumped back to another memory that happened, even before he does 
that when he's lyin there in the field you know and he's in tremendous pain and he's kind of 
detaching, and he's kind of it almost seems like he's in and out of uh=

virgil =like he [goin delirious]

rod
[normal consciousness]

sandra
[mhhmmm]

rod

seems like he's getting a little del(_). what is this thing when he sez uhm, what what what he tried 
to see jefferson, what it was that jefferson held in his hand. it was a little black man. another little 
jefferson. a little black jefferson that shook with fits of belly laughter while the other jefferson 
looked up, while the other jefferson looked on with detachment. then jefferson looked up from the 
thing in his hand an turned to speak but todd wus far aw= WHUT is he talkin bout!!?

virgil
he gettin delirious

rod

he gettin kinda he does seem to be a little delirious.

virgil
it lak ah sehd, he might have a (mental illness _) buh then agin he mihgh not.

rod

who knows this seems like a little bit almost like almost like he's hallucinating right and having 
this strange kind of delusion or kind of delirious from the pain or [from]

virgil

[ somethin]

rod
experience, [yeah]
sandra
[(puzzled)] puzzling
rod
[whad you say?]
ben
[from dehydration]
sandra
he's like he puzzled
rod
he's puzzled, yeah, maybe from dehydration, maybe from ythe heat, yeah, he sez the heat's been really bad too. yeah and then after that, he has this memory an he sez he was goin mysteriously with his mother through empty streets where black faces peered from behind drawn shades. what's this memory?=what's goin on in this memory?=can anybody tell?
virgil
(_) look like .. when started out y'ow he jes started fantasizin, ligh he jump time and then ee started thankin bout somepin a whole different situation.
rod
thinkin (_ _). what was goin on in the time he was remembrin back to? he was walkin with his mother and...
virgil
it wa it wa relatin to the time frame when he sent the little doll he had in his hand.
rod
huh, [maybe so, that little jefferson doll]
virgil
[tha little tha little jeff, that jefferson had that] little doll then it switched all around to another whole story.
rod
switched to another time.
virgil
yeah
rod
an we don know how old he was in the memory he's havin here. an we don know where they're goin but people are scared, right? remember they're seein {gestures acting this out} faces peer out from behind curtains and people are scared. and then all of a sudden he sees this airplane, and remember this is back when he was a kid, he sees this airplane {gesturing} and then somethin comes out of the airplane, comes floatin down from the airplane and its all these little white cards, little white pieces of paper an he picks one up, and his mom takes it from him and reads, right, and this is what it sez, right...
randy
scuse me a minute i'll be right back.
yeah, sure. it's hard to read right, {low} niggers stay away from the polls is what it sez on that piece of paper. an then he's lookin at the card and it has the eyeless sockets of a white hood staring at him from the card. so what's that white hood on the card?

connie
uuh
ben
(inaud.)
rod
whaddaya think (inaud). apparently there's a picture on the card that besides these words saying stay away from the polls.. there's this white hood=
connie
=(_) (say more somethin) inhis mind. (thats where) he fanntasizin
1:04:56.3
rod
think so? i mean i take this as a memory he's have, he's remembering. i know it's kinda like a fantsay cuz like he's sorta delirious [like you sed]

virgil
[it don even make sense] rilly
rod
well, what's that hood? what would that hood be? why would there be a hood on a card comin down from a plane sayin stay away from the polls?
connie
he's (_). he dropp from one memory to another. so it seem like he's ..

virgil
he's hurt probly
rod
he's definitely hurt

virgil
he hurt
rod
i think what he's remembering here is um the KLAN, right, the ku klux klan, tryin to keep black people away from the polls when they wre allowed to vote..right? scarin and tryin ta rod-imitate and scare people from voting, right? so droppin these cards sayin, theyre threatenin, right? if you go to the polls, the klan'll get ya=that's what this white hood is right?

virgil
no/
rod
no? you don think so at all?

virgil
{shaking head} nh, cuz a woman tol him ta stay away from the polls.

nah nah nah nah, she's reading from the card, right? she took the card away and {now reading} seeing her face grow puzzled then turning taut as her voice quavered. she read it.

{gesturing the hood} [(_)]

{loudly} K K K

{pointing to randy} it's the klan hood, right! that was their uniform right?
=the ku klux klan= i think so i think thats what this i think thats what he's sayin. he's a little
[unclear about it in this sort of delirious memory]
daphne
[i think it is too] [i think it is too]
virgil
[but see what im sayin]
rod
you think it is [too?]
virgil
but see what im sayin is, he just delusional /
rod
you don think he's havin a memory about this?
virgil
nah
rod
you think he's just makin it up/
{gesture}
virgil
he jump from one time frame time settin o min to another=
rod
=yeah=
virgil
he jus talkin bout a doll an he havin another memory so quick {snap} right behin nat talkin bout
dissy in na head bout three uh foh (_) tha whol story is jes memory for [memory for memory]
rod
(he had) a couple a different sort uh flashbacks. well, so it may be, it may be that he's makin this
up, but it may be he's havin a memory=
connie
{sharply} of something
rod
of something that happened, right and this was a wha what he [sed]
connie
[it could] \ it be true, it could be.
rod
it could be. i think this type of thing actually happened historically, you know. the klan most
definitely tried to rod-imidate black people to keep em from voting after..
connie
specially when he sed somethin about tha hood that theres somethin that (you [woulda])
rod
yeah, the eyeless sockets of a white hood staring at him from the white card. um, seeing it soar he
sez, he wus caught between a terrible horror and a horrible fascination. so here this airplane, his
vision, right, [is bei]

connie
[spiraling] spiraling
rod
is being used as an instrument of intimidation and terror and so he's caught in between, right. i
mean this i mean this this propaganda, these leaflets, these cards that are being dropped by the
airplane this is horrible, you know, this is intimidating people, um, ah, i mean that you know but at
the same time, he's fascinated by the airplane, you know, he's continuing to be fascinated by the
airplane. it's a crazy sort of memory, or delusion, whichever it is he's havin here, i think, virgil,
whichever it is.

1:08:25.0
connie
(if it is dream would seem where like he0 brought up somethin bout tha hood starin at him from
the...from tha card and above he saw the plane spiraling gracefully and gleam in the sun's light if
fiery sword, fiery.

rod
yeah=
connie
=that that seem like somethin .. you wouldn't make up, so (he like)

rod
yeah, i dunno, i dunno. it's a it's a very bizarre and very dramatic delusion either way.
ALRIGHT, well, who you want to keep readin? who wants to keep who wants to read on?
anybody else wanna read [a little bit?]

i'll read]

okay, go ahead daphne. we're right there with um the sun wus not so high now.
daphne

um, the sun was not so high now and jefferson was calling and and gradually he saw three figures
moving across the curving roll of the field like looked like some doctors all dressed in white and
jefferson, they their coming at last todd thought and he felt such a release of tension within him
that he thought he would faint- but no sooner did he close his eyes than he was seized and he was
struggling with three white men who were for foring

forcing
forcing his arms into some kind of coat. it was too much for him. his arms were pinned to his sides
and as the pain. [blazed]
sophie {?}
[blazed]
daphne
blazed in his eyes he realized that he it was a straight jacket. whut filthy joke wus this? that ought
to that ought to (hold him) mister graves he heard. his total energies seemed focused in his eyes as
he searched for the faces. that was graves, the other two were searched for their faces, wait a
minute, the other two were hospital uniforms hospital uniforms. he was poised between two
poles of fear and hate as one called graves saying (he looks kinda purty in that there) suit boys, i'm
glad you dropped by. this boy aint- crazy mistuh graves, one of the others sed, he needs sa doctor
not us. dont see how you led us way out heah anyway, it may be a joke to you, but your cousin
rudolph liable to kill somebody. white fol k or nig nigguhs, don make no difference. todd saw the
man turn red with anger. graves looked down upon him chuckling. this nigguh belongs in a strait
clothing too boys, i knowd it tha minute jeff's kid sed something about a nigguh flyer. you all know
you cant let the nigguh get up that high without his goin crazy. the nigguh (brain) aint- built right
sophie
nigguh brain
virgil
drawing
daphne
drawing red face, filling that all the unnamed horror and obsceneties that he had ever imagined
stood materialized before him. let's git outta here, one of tha attendants sed. todd saw the othuh
reach toward him, realizing for the first time that he lay upon a stretcher as he yelled dont put your
hands on me. they ddrew back in surprise. what's that you say nigguh? whats that you say nigguh?
asked graves. he did not answer and thought graves foot wus aimed at his head. it landed in his
chest and he could not hardly breathe. he coughed helplessly seeing graves lips stretched out
stretched toward stretched taut over his yellow teeth an tried to shift his head. it wus as though a
half-dead fly {ragged claws scuttling} was dragging slowly across... his face and a bomb seemed
to burst within him. a bomb seemed to burst within him. blasts of his face...aah {clears throat
twice} a blast of hot hysterical laughter tore from his chest. {coughs loudly three times} causing
his eyes to pop and he felt that the veins in his neck would surely burst and a part of him stood
behind it all watching the surprise in graves' red face and his own hysteria. {coughing} he thought
he would never stop. he would laugh himself to death. it rang in his ears like jefferson's laughter
and he looked for him, centering his eyes desperately upon his face. {turning page, coughing} i
should probly get somebody else to read (soon).

rodb
thanks daphne

as though somehow had become his sole salvation in an insane world of outrage and humiliation.

it brought a certain relief. he was suddenly aware that although his body was still con contorted, it
was an echo that no longer rang in his ears. he heard jefferson voice with gratattitude. somebody
else can read.

rodb

who's up? anybody who wants ta read anybody? i will (if you wish). mistuh graves, tha army done
tol im not ta leave is plane. nigguh, army ah no, you getin off mah land. that airplane can stay cuz
it was paid for by taxpayers money. but you getin off and dead or alive it dont make no difference
ta me. todd wus beyond it now. lost in a world of anguish. jeff, graves sed, you and teddy come
grab hold, i wunt you to take this heah black eagle over ta that nigguh airfield and leave im.

jefferson and the boy approached him silently. he looked away, realizin and doubting at once that
only they could release him from his overpowering sense of isolation.they bent for the stretcher.
one of the attendants moved toward teddy. think you can manage it boy? i think i can suh, teddy
sed. well you better go behind then and let you paw go ahead so's ta keep that leg elevated. he saw
the white men walking ahead as jefferson and the boy carried him along in silence. then they were
pausing and he felt a hand wiping his face and it was as though he had been lifted out of his world
of isolation, back into the world of men. a new kind of communication flowed between the man
the boy and himself. they moved him gently. far away he heard a mockingbird liquidly calling. he
raised his eyes seeing a buzzard poised unmoving in space. for a moment the whole afternoon
seemed suspended and he waited for the horror to seize him again. then, like a song within his
head he heard the boy's soft humming and heard saw the dark bird glide into the sun and glow like
a bird of flaming gold...

{with the exception of virgil, who sat back some moments ago, no longer following along with the
text, everyone sits back and exhales--whew}

rod
gestures

randy
insulting, very insulting

rod
tell me, tell me tell me.

randy
insulting. gonna call somebody the N word, nigguh.

rod
over and over, right?

randy
that was back in the days when it was .. segregation things. jim crow. insulting. its insulting story.

ben
seems ta me like tha whole thing wus a delusion=

randy
{toward virgil} insulting!

ben
except fuh tha crash. and um the little booy an jefferson takin im back to town.

rod
tha whole thing seemed ta be a delusion?

virgil
tha only part that caught me right there when they sed they wus puttin im in a straight jacket den
he came out of straigh jacket back ta his uh di - not in tha right context - back ta his dignity

rod

MM

virgil
ya know right they where it say it would got back to is uh=

rod
={leans forward} out of isola[tion yeah?]
virgil
[his isolation. maybe they turned him [loose.] maybe they turned im out of the straight jacket an
let im live cus they found out he wus from tha army
rod
[(i dunno man)] maybe they did maybe they did, i dunno, but i think your right, the last part of
this.. is is horrifying, right?

virgil
and then another part is uh whats the whats the little boy's name?
rod
teddy
teddy, he tol teddy he belongs in a straight jacket too/.

virgil
you remember that part?
rod
no i didnt remember that [one.]

virgil
it wus back in tha story [(see)]
rod
that wus back a while ago?

1:19:57.5

virgil
and they say cuz uh cuz he put is foot in is chest.
rod
graves kicked im, right, graves kicked im. so, an randy, the whole, its hard, its hard ta read this
right, so ellison, the author, is writing about that time [right]

randy
[yeah]

rod
of of rampant racisim an so we get this, we get todd who is worried about racism through the
whole story and then here at the end, it almost seemed like his worst nightmares, his worst fears,
come true=

virgil
=but you see [how]
rod
but djou see how indecent he wus actin toward tha start toward two black men and then he got
treated worser by a white man.

much worse, [right]

much worse cuz he got jumped on. he wanted to jump on mistuh graves, [but]

rod

[ thats right]

virgil

he got jumped on.. by. mistuh graves himself.

rod

its interesting how things turned around there, right, when when when graves comes up, and the
two people from the hospital--do you remember early on when they sed, jefferson told im the men
from the hospital were lookin for graves' cousin er somethin like that.. his crazy cousin, yeah,
cousin rudolph, who had escaped from a mental hospital, right and who was a who wus like a
killuh

virgil

didn ah tell you dhoh, it wus all revolved around mental illness?

rod

it's funny how that works, [right (uh)]

virgil

[most] people in this world (that are advanced) is mostly manic depressed bipolar people on high..
advancement in tha mind. He wuz, you gotta be you know you gotta be more intelligent than
anything ta fly a plane cuz you got ta have accurate skills and all, elevation of tha mind, tha's why
i knew that he wus either goin manic a little bit over to the insanity part when he crashed that
plane, cu he wahavin too many delusional=

rod

=flyin too hi[gh]

virgil

[high]

rod

an too fast

virgil

plus he stories kep jumpin from story ta story, dat only whut he wus thankin about. an it ya know
he wus havin. it probly got either he git hurt from that.. from that crash
virgil
or he was havin episode. he coulda had a episode and crashed that plane. ya nevuh know.
rod
coulda been, you know or some combination of things. right remember what happens you know,
he's lying there hurt, finally he thinks the doctors are coming, he's gonna get rescued and the first
thing they do is put im in a straight jacket / ?

right? i mean how must that've felt for him? it's [his]

right? i mean how must that've felt for him? it's [his]

nightmare come true. n here's this racist this bigot redneck you know spoutin this you know
profanity and kickin im in the side an you know this graves sez all those things that we talked
about. member todd was worried about uh how white america, a lot of racist white america didnt
think a black men could fly? and thats whut mister graves you know thats what graves sez to im.
you know it you know uh {reading} his brain aint- up for it, and blah blah blah. um he wasnt good
enough.. and then so what happens ta todd? its this part daphne read for us, its as though a half
dead fly was dragging slowly across his face, a bomb seemed to burst within him. blasts of hot
hysterical laughter tore from is chest causing his eyes to pop and he felt that the veins in his neck
would surely burst. so he jus lays there laughing and laughing as though he thought he would
never stop. he thought he would laugh imself to death. what happened?

it went from one story to another story. then to another story, it it was changin. story was
changing.

wull, its like he lost it, right it's like it was all too much. an he jus started laughin. have you ever
been ina situation that wus soo bad, so crazy that you just that you jus all you can do is laugh
about it. and that even seems to make lightof it. he sez he wus lost in a world of anguish. you
know all of his fears about the worst possible ything that acuold happen about being humiliated an

and threatened, it seemed to have come true. and his response wus to you know its this suddenly
he started ta laugh. he started ta laugh about it... and its interesting like virgil sed, suddenly he
was looking for the voice of jefferson, right, the one he had been kinda downin throughout the
whole story as this kind of ignorant peasant man, all the sudden, he wanted jefferson back and he
felt like he could connect with jefferson. an it seems like jefferson and teddy came to is rescue,
right?

randy
yeah
rod
but they picked im up they picked im up on that stretcher and theyre gonna carry im off. they didnt
abandon him to those other men who wouldve done who knows what to im. we know that graves
is a i mean he's a pretty bad dude, he's a bad guy, right?
sandra
mmhmmm
rod
i dunno. whaddaya say whaddaya think? the end of this story's pretty rough, right. you sed that it's
pretty insulting
randy
very insulting. very insulting.shouldnt have done that guy like that
rod
shouldnt have done that guy like that.
randy
you could tell that he wus what they call bipolar
rod
ya think so?
randy
i think he's bipolar
rod
which guy? graves or the pilot?
randy
i'll say the pilot [(_)]
rod
[whad]dayou think about graves? so whaddayou think of him??
randy
bipolar i guess.
rod
um... he clearly.. uh carries the.. he's a character that represents the racist attitudes of uh in a way
the racist white south at the time. even the klan we were talkin about earlier. we know he had been
involved in these killings, right? he spouted that racist talk fer sure. so i dunno, wus todd wus todd
right all along? we kinda been talkin about how he seemed ta be paranoid, he seemed ta be
delusional. but then all that seems ta come true. all o that nightmare seems to come true for im.
whaddaya think?... i dunno, everybody's pretty everybody's pretty subdued
1:26:54.2
rod
after that.
randy
i find this story ta be very insulting. very insulting.
why do you think he wrote it then? why do you think=

ralph ellison?

yeah, why do you think he wrote it?

randy

i dont know, but you can understand a real story about um

connie
racism

randy
racism. [(_)]

rod

you think its very much its a story about racism, right

randy

yeah

rod

why do you think an author might write a story like this about racism? i mean it's not fun to read. i

mean parts of it are entertaining or interesting. but its a difficult story.

connie

maybe he wanted to tell how days which really were back then.

rod

i think that that makes sense, i think he's trying to let us know how things were...so what do we do

with that?

connie

it really doesnt tell you how. the story doesnt end, it just keep on an keep on. it doesnt really have

an ending.

rod

well whaddayou think happens next? thats one a tha things we can do is ask that question.

whaddayou think happens next?...

connie

thats a puzzle, thats a puzzle

rod

thats kind of a a puzzle right, but i think youre right-it doesnt have a definite ending, you know,

[(we can think about)] what happens next?

1:28:52.8

sandra

[they ju um] um they um they um whas hi name, graves and jefferson um they doin lotta

(escalatin) between tha while todd is there and thats not helpin todd at all noway cuz he (theyuh)
doin tha illusion in his mind, and so wha happened he just gon have keep gon have tha delusion
jus goin through his mind thas tha whole story jes got it {gestures} goin (forward) the way he's
happening, he jes got it re re (written) tha's happenin through his mind. an they jes wrote tha story
jus saying what everything that happened between tha um flyers and pilot an everything all like
that. an he jes go ahead and you know (red it)

ro0

do you think that todd will keep flying? will he be well enough to keep flying?
sandra
aahh thass a part we don know [{laugh}]
rod
we DON'T / know \ that's right thats right. well what what do the rest of you think? can you
imagine that he'll go back and complete his training?

randy
huh uh

Group (chorus)

{murmurs}

rod
we don't know thats true we dont know. what would keep him from it?

connie
himself

rod
ye:ah.. well he's got a couple of problems now right? one is, remember what graves sed, you YOU
get out of here...uh, teddy and jefferson are gonna carry im back to the airfield, but the planes
staying here, graves sed. (cuz its a non, you know) graves obviously didnt believe that... the
tuskegee airmen should be flying planes, and uh you know [he wus one of those]

randy
[but they] did because

rod
=but they did

randy
but they did, they don ca, they don wanna be called niggers, but guess what, they did it in theyuh
o:own / way \ thass why america's so proud of those tuskegee airmen, and alabama and tuskegee
alabama is very much proud of them.

rod
=extremely proud

randy
because they honored them with a (doctoral degree) with a (merit) to show what its like that a
black perosn can fly a plane

Group (chorus)

{nodding} mmhhmm

rod
[i think]
randy
{forcefully} [there's a lot] of history behind that!
rod
mnhmm, i think that's part of the answer i think exactly whatchoo sed is part of the reason why a
[ralph ellison]
randy
[they won]
rod
would have written this story [is to show us]
randy
{loudly} the tuskegee airmen won! they won, they won their, they got their [honors (on the ?)]
rod
[an what / did / they win?]
randy
{to daphne} sorry {?} {brings clenched fist to table top} they got they honors brother, i'm serious.
they got those honors cus they deserve it, the president of the united states honored them because
they um because they served and showed the rod-egritv and they were the first black people to
have fought in world war two.
rod
they [won even though]
randy
{loudly} [the fightin ninety-nines]
rod
s'right. they won even though they had all those obstacles. even though there were so many people
like graves=
randy
=yeah
rod
=who didn't think they could do it [or should do it]
randy
[nor only that] nor only that, uhm, whadjer your name?
rod
.ROD'ney
randy
=ronnee, nor'only that uh even eleanor roosevelt the pres, first lady of the president of the united
staes doneflied (in) the plane. iss jes iss / black history / by / itself.
rod
sure!
black history speaks for itself. i'm sorry that's a great story but i realized that the tuskegee (airmen) deserve that honor.

an i know somebody who who knows about that honor, iss ma friend, __________/. an he he tell some great stories about how he fallin in a plane.

rod
yeah.

rod
they won, they got the honors.

rod
{nodding} i think it may be that [thats part]

randy
thats whut makes tuskegee so great.

rod
i think that may be part of why ellison wrote this story is to sh is to help show us just how hard it wus and just what those pilots had to overcome=

randy
{nodding} i realize there aint- nothin wrong with tuskegee.

rod
nothin wrong with tuskegee. i lak tha town, so there you go.

rod
now, lemmee ask you this? is this a is this a hard question to ask? uh

randy
{softly} aah:oo:h

rod
are there still uhm

randy
iss a hard ending

rod
its a hard ending
its a really hard ending to the story. i mean, did todd lose it? is he is he lost his mind? i dunno. he
kinda went hysterical at the end, is he gonna be able ta get it together an go train some more? i
dunno /.
are there still um people like graves around in macon county and tuskegee?

connie
well, we don really know that one, but...it could be

rod
its kinda scary ta think about idn it? i dunno.

randy
lak I sed, macon county repeats speaks for itself. {drops hands on table in a gesture of finality}
sorry to say so, but its its da truth.

rod
=now lemme see if i i under[stand]

randy
[(iz watched the {??})] {looking at daphne}

rod
is what you mean is what you mean by that that we don't need a story like this? that ralph ellison
didnt need to write a story like this?

randy
he didn need to write a story like that, he should write somethin has even be'tter

rod
mmm

randy
about tuskegee airmen, about black people, who made it famous, like you know, madame cj
walker

rod
mmhhmm

randy
like madame cj walker had great (_ _). madame cj walker. and also george washington carver
who made discoveries with soybeans and peanuts.

rod
right, there's lots of [good history] here.

randy
[and sweet potatoes]

rod
absolutely

randy
and um booker t washington, how he made uh wus tha founder of um tuskege, wus tha president
of tuskegee uh university. AND he would serve as the founders of the father of the tuskegee
airmen. he founded tuskegee alabama.
you know that moton field is named after the second president of tuskegee university, moton wus the [name of] a long-time president.

yeah. moton {gesturing, pointing} where the [airmen trained]

and now they've got a new monument down there has anybody been down there to see it?

Yeah, to see the airfield, it's a [pretty] neat

Iss nice /

See some good airplanes.
yeah, he wrote uh invisible man and he wrote short stories. he wrote that story boy on the train that we read earlier remember when we read earlier about those two brothers on the train?

well thah one [wus about mama that wus changin jobs goin to a new town in oklahoma.]

well this wus a difficult story i think, it wus a difficult [story an you know the language that he uses, tha...]

alright, are we bout i guess we're about through fuh tha day. everybody, how's everybody fillin before we quit. {members get up to leave} now hold on wait a minute, i want to make sure we're all doin okay before we go. are we all doin okay before we go?

oh yeah

nodding

{nodding and general agreement from most. no reaction from sandra?}

alright well then we'll get back to it again next week. we'll see how we're fillin about this story and we'll start another one. {to sophie} i hope that you'll be back to join us if you're off monday. enjoy your classes otherwise.

sandra

you want us to keep these?

you certainly may
Session Five

(00:02:00)
randy
Voice
rod
We'll I’m sure she would like to hear that.
randy
[YE::AH]
rod
[Is this yours]
randy
No.
rod
Ok .. I’ll move it.
randy
..h I have wonderful great voice myself?
rod
Do you sing as well as a/c?
randy
Yes.
rod
We'll look at that?.. I didn’t know that.
randy
We'll .. I sing gospel. [(uuhh)]
rod
[You sing gospel]
randy
[Gosp::el]
rod
[You sing gospel in the church.]
randy
[SOMETIM.. u::hm ..] gospel .. but. bututbututbututbutut .. but when I’m in the place.I’m.. a
sing secular songs
rod
Yeah .. ok. ***
Secular songs sometimes (sumitbret)...you know.. I sing BOTH of them..but .. I don’t know..( I just sing both of em different I sing OO::WWW) {randy appears excited}
rod
HA HA HA HA HA? . Let me go gather up the rest of them.
{At 00:00:41 the int walks out and randy sits quietly alone in the room until 00:01:03 when he starts talking}
randy
I want to go to karaoke… di dup there did dup there in Auburn
{daphne walks in}
daphne
Hey there
randy
Hey.
daphne
.. How are YOU this morning
randy
I’m doing f:ine?
daphne
That’s good
randy
I see you brought you bottle of water.
daphne
Yeah(.) uhhum (””)
randy
MAN
daphne
You sleepy.
randy
NO NO(.) (I de) I forgot that ladies’ name(.) that she sung love with Diana Ross love hang:over(.) and she she has a wonderful outstanding voice
daphne
Uh huh (””)
{sophie enters the room to sit down}
randy
I said that girl can sandra:ANG?
daphne
Uh huh (””)
randy
Now I don’t know. She she SING LIKE DIANA ROSS, SHE LOOK LIKE DIANA ROSS, she
look like Diana Ross.

daphne
Uh huh! {chuckling}

randy
I don’t know who that lady is?

daphne
Uh huh?

randy
But she sang love love hangover (I un:no) (..)
{slaps the table} Im kina Im um [ok] (..) this lady got voi this lady was a nice voice I thought she
had a snobby attitude BUT NO .h but this lady got as wonderful voice

daphne
[Huh huh?] {chuckling}
(02:00-4:00)

randy
I DON’T KNOW WHERE SHE HAD COME FROM. {Hits table with excitement}

daphne
Uh huh.

randy
I don’t.. I get the impression. I get the impression she gone (um::ga::um) gonna be on [American
Idol one of these ol days]

daphne
[Uh huh]

randy
Hm Ha Hm[Hm Hm Hm Hm]: {Laughing}

daphne
[Ha Ha… Ha?]

{Both randy and daphne were laughing and engaging in conversation, but sophie seems
uninterested in the ongoing conversation and figits with her hair and clothes}

randy
I think she gone be on American Idol one of these days sweetheart. I don’t know?

daphne
Uh huh.

randy
Where. where she at?

Where she at?. Man she in the back. doig her i wen to her office,( ima ima ima come to her) and
say Honey you got a wonderful voice
Before I leave this place imma say this to het you got a wonderful voice you shocked the daylights out of me.

If y'all excuse me i gotta get my cell phone.

I'll be right back.. its some muffins right there you can get some

Okay... you want some muffins?

{daphne and sophie get up to get muffins together}

He aint talkin bout Tuskegee no more

Who?

{daphne and sophie leave sight of the camera and utterances are heard of conversation they then sit back at the table and eat their muffins}

{sophie and daphne make their way back to the table and partake in their muffins}

Hey. {Waving at person entering the room}
Hi

daphne

Hey CONNIE

connie

Hey

daphne

How you doing

connie

Good

daphne

Alright

A few indistinct groans and chatter is made as three more additional participants make their way into the session.

(04:00:6:00)

rod

Uhm We missed some between here and there. Randy was here, Elijah was on his way... Where is uh where is Betsy? Anybody seen Betsy?

{A few participants shake their head to say no}

rod

Not today, ok

rod

Alright

{randy enters the room}

rod

Do you uhm, do you think you will be okay finding another seat or do you need Ben to switch with you?

randy

[Im fine.] He's fine

rod

[Okay]

{Ben moves to another seat}

rod

Excuse me

randy

What's up y'all... [What's up everybody]

Ben

[Hey y'all. I'm fine]
We gave my father a real big birthday party this weekend. He's 85, he just turned 85. Randy, it was fun? Uh huh, Yeah. My grandma had turned 86. Randy, That's wonderful, that's wonderful, that's wonderful to turn 86. Uh huh. She looks well. Randy, My dad looks well too.

(06:00:8:00)

I'll be 45 in the next two years... in the next, in the next two years I'll be 45. Can you believe that? Uh huh. Im 40 you know 45 and... the next few years I don't got long way to go before I turn 50. Ha Ha Ha. Im 51. Randy. 51? Why don't you look that old?
daphne
[Yep]
randy
YOU DONT LOOK THAT OLD?
daphne
Turned 51 in July
randy
You dont look that old
daphne
That's what they say?
randy
You kinda young for my age.[ young chubby, cute,( gorteous)]
daphne
[ha ha ha, thank you, ha ha ]
randy
So..I dont know about that man
sophie
Are those your real teeth?
daphne
Uh huh..yep
randy
h. Ummm ..that means this gentlemen has to find himself a jo/b
daphne
Huh
randy
Cuz..Not to say im not a worker, im a, i just need to find something to do.. to compete. Im tryin to
bring some money
daphne
yeah... ya check, when does your check come?
randy
On the 3rd of the month.
daphne
On the 3rd? Mine come on the 1st
randy
Yeah.. im suppose to get gotta get extra cuz
sandra
[connie your friend know you're here. your friend?]
connie: yeah
rod: [okay, ALRIGHT THANKS, Al'right every:body. How ya'll doin today?]
daphne: We went to the bathroom
{A few participants respond saying good}
rod: Okay good how has your week been?
{good}
rod: Did you get you a muffin? They got peach and blueberry in there today ha ha .. if you're interested.
rod: The weeks been ok randy, I know you've had a busy one\
randy: [d:did]
rod: [That's what] you told me
randy: Yeah busy
rod: Anybody else had a busy week, a good we/ek
daphne: we had, they went, they celebrated my father's 85th birthday
(08:00:10:00)
rod: Is that ri:ght? Eighty-fi:ve
daphne: and he's in good health,[ good health]
rod: [Well FANTASTIC]
daphne: You'd think he's a young[ person the way] he gets around
rod: [Is that right?]
daphne: [he he]
rod
[Good, that good] Ok, was that fun a good birthday alright

daphne
Yeah, it was real nice, uh huh, he got a whole lot of money[ and presents and everything]

rod
AW NICE?

daphne
He got hun:dreds of dollars

rod
ha ha, i connie:now he was [ excited right]

daphne
[yeah uh huh]

rod
Well GOOD, that good, 85 that quite a, a milestone, i can't, i can't imagine 8\5. [ TURNING 85]
{Ben sneezes in the background}

daphne
[and my mother.] My mother was 92.

rod
Oh my good/ness

daphne
He he

rod
cell both[ lived, lived a nice] long ti\me

daphne
ye:ah.. UH HUH

rod
SO FAR. Right.[ So far]

daphne
[yeah] My mother's gone. she passed

rod
How long ago did she pass

daphne
She passed.. It's been two years

rod
A couple years.. okay, well okay alright, alright well i'm glad your dad celebrated his birthday,

that exciting. That's good. Th'ats good.

daphne
Yeah
Anybody else have something going on down this week?

Not too bad.

Not too bad? Ok

I'm kinda lonesome in the house though.

Not too bad? Ok

I'm kinda lonesome in the house though.

During the day I get kinda little lonesome, very lon'some.

Yeah I'm lonesome.

Yeah I'm lonesome.

Since my momma had been gone you know my mom had been gone for a while so. I got the house to myself.

So you lonesome when you're by yourself huh?

Yeah I'm lonesome.

Well I'm glad you come here ha ha ha. On Mondays at least we can to sit together and .. talk and visit and READ. and all that.

That's what I been do'i'ng.

Well I'm glad you come here ha ha ha. On Mondays at least we can to sit together and .. talk and visit and READ. and all that.

That's what I been do'i'ng.

Okay...um. I guess Betsy's not here today I haven't seen h'er and Virgil said he didn't want to come today..um he said that there was some, he was feeling like there was some controver'sy.

...Recently. So. but. So I wanted to ask ya'll HOW HAVE YA'LL BEEN FEELING last week
Oh Go/od
Well ..Oh well [G/ood]
rod
Well ..Oh well [G/ood]
rod
Very busy..yeah ver.ok
randy
So we're goin to. we're going to resume in January
rod
Ok
randy
Rehearse in [January]
rod
[Gonna go back] to it in January
randy
yeah
rod
Ok
randy
Gonna go back] to it in January
right..
randy
Uh
rod
right..
randy
Have yall had any thoughts about um the story we finished up last week remember we
finished up [that um]
randy
[Flying Home]
rod
Ellison story Flying Home.That's right, yeah that's right..Well what kind of, what kind of
thoughts, ya'll had any thoughts about it over.over the course of the we/ek u::h
randy
I would say the story time to be very bigatry, very very..[very]
its very sad.yeah a sad a story..it kinda hurt

A very sad st'ory

randy

sad [st'ory]

rodr

[Tell tell] me what.. say say more Connie I I cuz I think you're right, it turns out to be a pretty sad st'ory
connier

uh:hm It St/art off er in the beginning.. You know It wasn't that sad. but uh it da um the nasty char
ache ter or close to the ending things started gettin worse. you know from the beginning to the
ending things started gettin worse, started off. not too b\ad.

Uh huh.. Once uh.One thos, Once those men come and find. TODD the pilot right. once the once
that man uh the white man Graves comes in and he brings his hospital attendants with him and and
uh he kicks him and he's

(12:00-14:00)

rod

t t t t t t t t t t t

t t t t t t t t t t

very abusive and treats him very badly the way he talks to him and the way he talks about him
right.

connierr

Right

rod

Its um. it.. you know its interesting cause that that that doesn't happen until the very end of the
story right thats just the last few pages the last couple two three four pages when when that all
that stuff starts to happen.. ALL THAT STORY BEFORE. you got the pilot.. and he's worryin
about what might happen. right. and he's there talkin with o:/ld Jefferson RIGHT.. the old man.
and the old man is telling him stories about flying around and they're talking back and forth about
this and that.. and he's worried that whole time and then sudden/ly. Are things as are are
things..cause remember we were saying well mayb he was kinda PARANOID or maybe he was
making things worse than they were, but then all of a sudden.what, do you think that what did
happen was wor/se, that what he was thinking.or was it

{Throught this portion daphne seems engaged in the conversation, connie seems the most
responsive and actively thinking on the topic, sophie nods her head from time to time in
agreement, randy seems to be listening and thinking on the topic. I cannot tell the the reactions of
ben and sandra for ben is not facing the camera and not making obvious movements and sandra is
wearing shades sitting straight forward not looking at the Interviewer}

connie

It was worse than what he was thi'nkin

rod

All that humiliation that he was worried about happenin

connierr


Rig

And then, what happens? They come up and they put him in a straight jacket.

Right

connie

Right

randy

ben

Paranoid, anxiety. I'm not gonna say that person is paranoid anxiety.

ye'ah

ben

it makes you have delusions.

And and and we wondered about his state of mind. Remember, we saw that when he was a kid, he had that episode where he was reaching up to pull that plane up out of the sky. Not realizing that it was really way far away. Uhm. Uhm and his mom asked the doctor, well what's wrong with him? Is there something wrong with him, and we wondered if he had some kind of problem.

(14:00-16:00)

[ if maybe] delusions

[he had um]

What's that?

Dewlosions

Some kinda, yeah we wondered maybe. You know uh and then, we think that through the story. And then... does what happen to Todd does what happen to the pilot at the end make you reconsider. You know you know what i'm asking does it make you reconsider whether he was delusional or whether he was

It make you reconsider...yea, yes.

Cause we were kinda thinking MAN why is this pilot why is he so...uh why is he so worried about being humiliated. Why is he so... OBSESSED with
Rod: Yeah with humiliation and what the white people will think and what his officers will think, and you know he seems, that there's a lot about race in when in when we get in his thoughts. Right in his thoughts in the first part of that story..and then we think MAN he's kinda obsessed with this, and then that stuff happens at the end and we think WOW maybe

Connie: He wouldn't really think that was gonna happen. I thought he was gone have a normal normal life.

Rod: Bless you {directed toward Ben, he was having a sneezing episode during Connie's response}

Rod: Ye'ah.. ye'ah

Connie: Cuz he had that plane crash he thought. and that's when it all. and.. then he start as a world wind.

Rod: As a world [wind?]

Connie: [yeah]

Rod: All that all that stuff that happened to him when he after he crashed that plane.

Connie: Uh huh

Rod: [HMMM]

Connie: [Everything start] goin down. h'il

Rod: So that's a good, that's a really good point I think Connie. when he was up there flyin that plane. and remember we was look, he saw that kid flyin a kite and he remembered himself as a boy and how much he liked to fly kites and he was excited when he was flying that plane. he had NO idea that he was about to have a plane crash.

Connie: Right

Rod: That he was about to break his ankle, and he was about to be stuck in that field and meet that old man and have all of this stuff happen to him

Connie: (16:00-18:00)

Connie: Its all of a sudden
Randall
all of a sudden
Rod
All of a sudden
Connie
[Soso so so] sudden
Rod
Right it happened suddenly. So i'm not a pilot I don't know how to fly. Anybody here know how to fly an airplane?
{Rod chuckling Connie, Sophie, Randall, Daphne, and Sandra still seems unresponsive with no talking and very little movement}
Rod
Ho I never no I've never done that.
Randall
I don't want to
Rod
Don't want to yeah yeah I don't think that. Ha HA? I'm not sure. I'm not sure I'm courageous enough to learn {chuckling} how to fly a plane. But I, but I have had things happen suddenly that really changed. What I thought was gonna happen right
Daphne
[uh huh]
Rod
[I mean if nothing] so dramatic as a plane crash. But do have we all had things that have happened in our lives that suddenly change the course that we thought we were going this way and something happens and now all of the sudden we are going this way or that way or this way. I mean does that happen.
{Randall, Daphne, Connie all nod in agreement}
Connie
[Yeah] [some type a way] [yeah]
Connie
[Yeah]
Daphne
[uh huh]
Rod
Something dramatic comes along and it may be partly [my doing it may be]
Connie
IT TURNS YOUR WORLD UPSIDE DOWN?
Daphne
[uh huh]
It turns the world upside. [that's a good] way to put it.. You ever heard anybody say that my life is in a tail spin.right. And they don't meant they literally are in a plane that in a tail spin. some kinda spin the plane's actually spinning right?

{ daphne, ben, randy and connie continue to nod in agreement}

connie

[You're right]

connie, daphne, ben, randy

{unanimously} right

rod

So his. when Todd was crash landin in that plane his world literally was turning upside down probably he's oin over and over and over doing rolls in a tail sp'in. We u/se that expression right?

connie, daphne, randy

{unanimously} Right

rod

If. if I say say if. if I had somebody close to me a family member who was YO:UNG. you know who was in an ACCI:DENT or if I suddenly got very ILL or if you know I mean a number of things if i went through a DIVORCE or if I went through any number of things. I might say WO:W I thought everything was fine i was going along this way and suddenly I feel like i'm in a tail spin you know. suddenly I feel like i'm just i'm crashing to earth and I dont know which way is U/P and I don't know what's gonna happen.

{silence fills the room while everyone is in thought from 17:54-18:00}

(18:00:20:00)

connie

That's happens in ery I believe most of erybod in life of some point some turn some.. turns you another ta direction like a new job or . you have to accept it

rod

Uhm.. What What makes it possible for us to accept do you th:ink. Uh what makes it possible to go on. When we thought we were going this w/ay I thought, I thought you know I thought I was gonna be doing this kind of job and have this kind of family life and all that.and all of a sudden I'm on a what seems like a detour a different road you know[ something happened and now i'm over here.]

connie

[I THINK uh] G/OD G/OD I you know he. you go to chucch eryday an do things for God you have something to a .be beli believe in and helps you to go on[. an to go] an to achieve more higher expectations than thought you could achieve in life

rod

[uh huh] Wh:at do yall think it is about. u:h about goin to church and about believing in God and faith God, how do those things helps us get through uh the cut through the the the plane crashes in our own life you know what I, you know what I mean. how does that happen

connie
U:h just believin. believin you have faith. you can't do evrythang without ya faith I guess. and ya i just say without faith in God i think we could not make it could not make it life be turned upside down.

{ daphne is coughing making connie's discussion a little difficult to interpret}

rod

uh h/uh.. SO that if if I If I have a belief in a God that's BIGGER than me right even if MY life gets turned over there's still a.. plan.

connie

Like it da h/as in that uh I think this is a good one that was in dat uh phrase dat was in the u:h line how your arm to short to bark (box) with God.

rod

Ha ha ha right.

(20:00:22:00)

connie

I think that was it

rod

That's right? That's right that's something that uh.. I think that Todd was having dreams of his grandmo:ther saying th[at..] Son your arms is too short to box with, what does that phrase mean to y/ou. Too short to box with [God]

connie

[yeah]

connie

[God is] way bigger than he can do things mo/re than we can[.we like]. We like little [chr:dren] [to God] y'eah like lil chrdren. God can make yo world much better. ya kno he can just can do any/[thing.] He uh.. an'd he took F/AITH in him to fly a airplane but all a sudden somthin happun all ta suddun its like. er uh uh in the wars today a plane crashed all da suddun they is can check eryth[ang.] each if they can check but one mis one mis mistake can cause the life to be not no [more] can die or anything. airp/lane

rod

[Ri\ght] [ you okay?] { rod talking to daphne who is having a coughing/ sneezing episode}

daphne

[I'll be ok]

rod

[uh huh] [uh huh] [U:HM]

rod

Or li/ke YOU said put you on a totally different path rig/ht.

connie

Ri\ght

rod
Sometimes. I'm I'm glad you brought that up I think that's great I think that Todd's grandmother was trying to say. you know sandra:on don't try to fight against what G/od has plan/ned for you, you know. whatever that is. And U:h so do yo do you do we hear that expres/sion. where You know when God has a PL:AN for whatever it is I dont know maybe what that pl/an is but even if something there's something difficult that happens there's a plan for that there's a reason for it. And G/od knows that reason God is bigger than me and I dont know it yet but I that's what I think. Faith that God knows the plan, something like that.

connie
Right

rod
[So here's my] question then. going forward with the story a little bit. TO/DD got to do what he wanted to do right?

(22:00:24:00)

rod
He was a little and wanted to fly the airplanes. And no matter and uh nothing else THE ONLY THING I WANT IN THE WORLD IS I WANT TO FLY AN AIRPLANES right. Eventually he gets to the point where he is able to fly airplanes. So that was in God's plan right. That was in this big plan for him.. What about this plane crash. What about the time he spent in the field with a broken ankle, what about the abuse he took at the hands of this awful Mr. Graves. This bigot (22:27:22:29) {could not make out the speach due to daphne's constant coughing} in the story in (the land on the way ) Is that part of God's plan too?

sophie and connie
No

rod
You don't think s/o?{ And when we don't}

connie
[Its somethin thats happen] that just uh. I dont know why it happen but God know thats a like a person that fly a plane then all the sudden it it crash uh. thats not somethin they wished to happen it just somethin that happen out of the blue.

rod
Right

connie
yeah hopefully we all live but then all dont live and just we wonder why it happen thats not in God's plan that's somethin we really cant stop.

rod
Do you thi:mk. that anything go:od can come out of this whole experience that Ellison wrote about in [this story]

connie
[OH Y/ES] yeah

rod
How you. You didn't even hesitate.[ You didn't even hesitate.] OH YES I KNOW SOMETHING
GOOD COULD COME OUT OF THAT? Tell what what do you[ what do you]

connie

[HE HE HEHE HE He] {laughing hard} [W/ell he g/ot] well he got what his wishes wishes but he
didn't complete his u:h task but uh he got his wishes tho he flew a plane the first black man first
uhm person or er uh of color to fly a plane

rod

Uh huh

(24:00:26:00)

connie

so he got his wishes but he doen wish for the plane to crash

rod

Right

connie

But he was hopin that he'd have a better life. after he flew that plane left for somethin he might be
desired i/s to fly a plane

rod

Uh huh

connie

but. things didn't go like the way he planned i/t

rod

Right right.

ben

Understand the therapeutic elements.( thats the spirit I think)

rod

How how do mean[ how do you mean the therapeutic elements]

ben

[Uh uhm] this guy at a young age. uhm his mother said that he was goin through some kind of
psychosis and and and and and then when he crashed the plane. I I DON'T BELIEVE it this that
he's goin through some kind a psychosis and sayin that he's training for this or did he steal the
plane or something cause. they said a plane flew over but it didn't stop or anything. but when Mr.
Graves came this guy it was like he was goin through delusionals you know what I'm saying he
was paranoid and and and full of anxiety. He was goin through like delusions you know what I'm
sa/yin

rod

uh hum

ben

so its just like understand therapeutic elements no matter no matter u:hm.. how long say for
instant you been on you medication you need to keep takin your medication. because you still you
still can have a set back uh you know [what I'm sayin uh]

rod

uh hu'h
ben
cuz the medication has you feelin feelin feel feelin good that's what help yo brain [ you know]
rod
Right rig'ht. They sure treated him like he was crazy right when they came upon him and that that
may be part of the part of the bigotted uhm be/liefs of the timethat Ellison was writing about do
you think Randy? Do you[ you know]
randy
I would I would say that you know to me it was a very very sad st\ory but I know that what you
said about when he said the "N" word that was very insulting
rod
Uh h/uh
randy
I found that to be very insulting cuz he was a racist.
rod
Right. I think there's no doubt about it
randy
He's raci\st
(26:00:28:00)
rod
Y/eh there's no doubt about it. he's[ he's]
randy
[That's bac]k in those days hu uh again I would say that's back in the days when segreagation was
born with all that Jim Crow and everything else.
rod
guh huh
randy
It was some real hard times back in that uh back in the day before King came along
rod
right
randy
King came along after[Dr. King came along] and staightened everything out
rod
[right] We went a long way right long way we went a lo::ng way [to change]
randy
well but still racism has but still today racism has not changed since. becuase we got a black
president of the United States BARACK OBA:MA. and their and they tryin to TEAR HIM
DOWN.
rod
Did you say that racism hasn't chan\ged or has chan\ged.
Well Well I would say racism has changed because why is it it was one time I was in (the shower im not tryin to go to the mall) because well. I dont really remember this but what Dr. Martin Luther Kings said you know before his before he was ssassinated that you dont that hew could say he been over to the mountain top but you know what but a few years later we had a the dream had became a bigger a became a reality that you know we had a first black president of the United States Barack Ob'ama.

uh huh

and h:e won. It was a big it was a BIG win for him

uh huh

you know probably dont know what's gonna happen til 2012. they will probably try an figure out how to get (um a black man thing out) but. im sure that uh everybody was with Barack Obama

DEFINITLEY.

When Bush messed it up I'll neva forget the one thing that cracked me up

What's that?

Its that he was in a he was in I-raq at a press conference. and some man and some journalis ha ha ha ha he threwed two shoes at h/im

(28:00:30:00)

Y'all remember seein the the pictures from that. You know what impressed me about that. He was pretty qui/cK he actually dogded them

ha ha. its really one of the funniest thing[ I'd ever seen.]

[And it kinda remind me] You know what it kinda remind me of a my grandma would a back in the days my grandma would throw house shoes at me

{laughter again feels the room}
YEAH SHE’Ben TOSS A SHOE
That's fun'ny.
Its funny she'd toss house shoes at me.
That's what that jour/nalist was doin. Bad President uh. Bad President that what he was do'in
Bad [President]
Randy you bring up] a re/allly interesting point let me let me try somethin here and see if yall see
what yall think of this. Here's something I wondered. Barack Obama. the first black presienet in
the United States right. uh then I'm thinking about the first person of color you know to fly an
airplane thinking about the Tuskegee Airmen you were just talkin about that Connie
But one of the thing that Todd the pilot in our story talked about. that was so difficult for him was
that he was tryin to achieve a dream right he wanted to fly but he felt like. everybody was placing
the responsibiltiy for his whole race on him remember what he said.he said  everything he did he
felt responsible for his whole race.[ but he always]
All that burden. Does that is there any relationship there to our presi/dent
[All that burden on him]
All that burden. Does that is there any relationship there to our presi/dent
[Do you think that our president has that burden in some ways as well. I wonder. I mean I would
you know I think a lot of people treat him that way you know]. Li:ke
a lot of burden. He had a lot of burden put put on him too. That that there's some the things in the
house that passed he didnt have nothing to do [wi/th] but they passed it they passed it they it uh i
forgot what passed but uh they passed something he didn't really agree with it but they passed
any[way.] like tax tax  taxes high on[ taxed taxe]s uhm er uh stuff like that.
Well there's no doubt that ANY president has tremendous burden I mean that's you know that's a heck of a job to have to have right. Right to take over. I but I wonder if. Barak Obama has a particular has another burden. like our pilot Todd talked about. about feeling that he's representing the WHOLE United [States] just not the peoples of the color I uh think er they lookin they lookin at him jus yeah it is color too but just takin on the whole the whole United [States] that's a burden that's too heavy to bear. [uh huh] [uh huh] uh huh... well Randy when you mentioned the the insulting nature of the language in here there's NO DOUBT right there's no doubt that the way Graves treated Todd the way he spoke to Todd and th/en. we can say yes this was back in a TIME when you know that KIND OF LANGUAGE that kind of treatment was com/mon it wasn't acce/table it doesn't make it right but we know it was com/on we know it hap/pened. [And] [I wanna ask] you somethin.. did you know did di did you could tell that he was bipolar whan't he?.. was he was he very bipolar whuz he when he was very obsessed with planes. Who is that. you talkin bout the pil/ot. Yeah. uh.. because he was obsessed with pla'nes
How do you mean? How do you mean?

[I DON'T KNOW]

[Uh beca/use he] he thought. he .. oh well he he he can speak but u:h I think the reason why he
was bipolars

(32:00;34:00)

[uh] grab it right out of the sky yeah
{Both rod and connie reach as though they are grabbing out of the sky as the pilot thought, connie
seems tickled by this}

[uh] kinda set the whole.

[yeah] that a. that desire to fly an airplane might be seen as kinda manic right, zoomin flyin too
high and too fa/st remember that was one of the things that he did . that he said that happened
before the accident before the. before the cra/sh. yeah I dont know.. there's a couple things we we
can sa/y. that we know that Graves this was back in you know back in the 40's uh:m you know
in a very racist Macon County you know right here. uh. and the things may be SOME diffe/rent
now. BETTER hopefu/lly. it's still disturbing to read it. in a st/ory right. and we we could we could
take it personally righ I mean that's kinda what you were saying rgh I find this insul/ting.

rhod

So my question is, is that what we should do. should we get rid of that word in pr/int

connie

Right

(34:00;36:00)
Well right. Uh I mean we definitely you know... we wouldn't use that language... talkin' about each other right. but is there a point to it when writing or reading a story about the past?

Connie: Yes. Yes. It just really tellin you what happened then. and then its uh... I think its really the story to tell you what happened back then. uhm... that uh we accomplished things that black people accomplished. but he didn't really think he would have that plane crash he that really uhm... has the story uh... seemed like no word no ending to the "n" word.

Rod: Uh huh..

Connie: So yes.

Rod: Do you think that the author do you think that Ellison was trying to shock us a little bit with this story cause the ending of it it's horrifying right it horrifying the way he gets treated.

Connie: Right.

Rod: at the end and I kinda think that Ellison when he wrote the story he was kinda trying to shock us a little bit.

Connie: Right.

Rod: When we read that word. that "N" word and we see we we think about Graves kicking this poor guy with a broken ankle who's down on the ground and he KICKS HIM IN THE SIDE aw this is terrible. Uhm.I think He wants to shock us a little bit and make us think about just how awful it was.. yeah

{silent contemplation fills the room for about 14 seconds before the rod poses another question to his group.}

Rod: Well what do you think are you should we should we move along or uh I mean I don't wanna I don't wanna

(36:00:38:00)

Connie: U:H move along.
You ready to move along to somethin else. [Okay alright] that's fine that's fine.

[Randy]

[Move along]

Daphne

[hm hma ha]

{Group seems weary of such serious talk}

Randy

How bout a very very different type of story uhm.. kind of a uh... almost comic relief well we'll see if it turns out that way. Uhm. anybody ever see a cartoon back years ago uhn called rikki tikki tavi

Connie

Uhm no

Randy

Haven't heard of that one. Uhm. did I give you this one. you've got a copy already Deric okay great. thanks. Uhm. so how bout this you'll remember this one Disney did a cartoon version of the Jungle Book. you remember that one

Sophie

Yeah uhh huh

Randy

With Mogly the little boy that was raised by.. you remember you remember how that story went.. he he he was the man cub raised by the wolves right. he he was he was found out in the wilderness and then raised by wolves and he had a friend that was the bear and a friend that was a panther and he had to. Uhm. get away from the big snake and he had to fight the tiger and all that stuff and that was turned into a Disney cartoon called the Jungle Book. well the JUNGLE BOOK what is it Randy

Connie

[Oh yeah]

Randy

You mind if I use the phone for my uhm

Randy

Of coarse go ahead. The Jungle Book was actually the name of a large volume of fiction written by I guess an Englishman named a (Rudyard) Kipling. way back when and its got not just the story of Mogly that one that was turned into the Disney cartoon but a lot of different stories about all different kinds of animals and people and uh this is one of them Rikki Tikiki Tavi and this is one of my favorite stories from when I was. a kid actually saw. Uhm I thought we'd try this one like to see how ya'll like it and um see if I had good taste.

(38:00:40:00)

Randy

Let'sss.. anybody wants to what if I start would that be ok and then we'll we'll split it up
{Everyone nods that it is fine for the rod to start}

Rikki Tikki Tavi uhm {clearing throat}  This is the story of the great war that Rikki Tikki
Tavi fought single-handed through bathrooms of the big bungalow in Segowlee segolee canton
ment. So and uh that says that little footnote down below says that what that means is that its a
military station in India so these are a. British people. uh living in India. Dar/zee the TAILOR-
BIRD helped him and Chuchun'dra the muskrat who never comes out into the middle of the floor
but alwys creeps round by the wall gave him advice. But Rikki Tikki did the REAL fighting. he
was a mongoose. rather like a little cat in his fur and his tail but quite like a a weasel in his head
and in his habits. His eyes and the end of his restless nose were pink. He could scratch himself
anywhere he pleased with any leg front or back that he chose to use. He could fluff up his tail till
it looked like a bottle-brush. and his war-cry as he scuttled thorough the long grass wa:s
Rikkititikkitikkitikkitikkitikki I'm not sure how that supposed to be read exactly but
presu/mably that's where he got his name right. he kinda makes that noise as he's goin through th
bush when he gets exci/ted. Rikkitikkitikkirikkitikki

{Faint laughter is heard in the room}

One day a high summer flood washed him out of the burrow where he lived with his father and
mother and carried him kicking and clucking down a roadside dit\ch. He found a little wisp of
grass floating there and clung to it till he lost his senses. when he revived. he was lying in the hot
sun. on the middle of a garden. on the middle of a garden path ver/gled indeed. and a small
boy was saying he're's a dead mongoose. let's have a funeral {everyone flips the page}

(40:00:42:00)

96 yeah uh uh {clearing throat again}  N/o said his mother let's take him in and dry him perhaps
he isn't really de/ad. They took him in/to the house and a big man picked him up between his
finger and thumb and said he was n/ot dead but half choked. sandra:o they wrapped him in cotton
wool and warmed him. and he opened his eyes and sneezed. NOW said the big man. he was an
Englishman who had just moved into the bungalow. don't frigh/ten him and we'll see what he'll
do.   It is the har/dest thing in the world to firghten a mong/oose because he is ea/ten up from nose
tail with curio/sity. The motto of A/LL the mongoose family i:s run and find out. And Rikki
Tikki was a tr:ue mongoose. He looked at the cotton wool. decided that it was not good to eat.
Ran all around the table. sat up and put his fur in order. scratched himself. and jumped on the
small boys shoulder. Don't be frightned Teddy said his father. that' his way of making friends.
OU/CH he's tickiling under my c/hin said Teddy. Rikki Tikki looked down between the boy's
collar and neck. sniffed at his ear. and climbed down to the floor where he sat rubbing his nose..
Good graci/ous said Teddy's mother. a
nd that's a WILD creature. I suppose he s/o tame because
we've been kind to him. A/LL mongooses are like that said her hus/band. If Ted	
doesn't pick
him up by the tail or try to put him in a cage he'll run in and out of the house all day long. Let's
give him something to eat. The gave him a little piece of raw meat. Rikki Tikki like it
imme/nsely. and when it was finished he went out into the verand a and sat in the sunshine and
fluffed up his fur to make it dry to the ro/ots. Then he felt better. There are mor/e things to find
out about this house. he said to himself than /all my family could find out in their lives. I shall
certa/inly stay and find o\ut. Anybody else want to read?

randy

I guess I can

Sure

(42:00:44:00)
He spent all that day roaming oar the house. he nealy he nealy drown himself in the bathtubs. he put his nose in the into the ink uh er the writing table. and burn it on the end of th big man's ciga. fa he climbed up for he climbed up in the big man's lap to see how writin was done.. At nightfall he ran into Tedd's nursery to watch kero how kerosene lamps were lighted. And when Teddy went to bed Rikki Tikki climb up to/o. But he was but he was a restless companon cause because he had to get up and attend tos noise all throught the night, and fi/nd out what and fin/d out what mayde it Teddy's mother came out. Motha Mother and Father came i/n. the la/st thing to look look at the boy and Rikki Tikki was wa was waiting on the pi llow. I DONT LIKE THAT to his mother. I DONT LIKE THAT to his mother. said Teddy's mother i'm sorry. He might bi/te the child. He do He'll do no such thing. said the father. Teddy's safe saf Teddy's saf/it that. Teddy's safer wit that little beast. than if he had hound blood a bloodhound to watch him. UH:MM {Clearing throat} If snake come. if snake came into. If a sn/ake came into the nursery now...but Teddy's mother wouldn't think of wouldn't wouldn't anything so awful. Early in the morning Rikki Tikki came out early came to ea/veranda veranda ver/and:aa rod Veranda yeah Cut off rod Its cut off there just a little bit on the[ edge.] rod [riding] on Teddy's shoulda they give him a banana and some boil egg and he sat and he sat it on their laps one aft one after the other. because every well brel every well brough up mongoose hopes hopes to be a house mongoose (44:00-46:00) rod Same day he have room to run about in. and Rikki Tikki's mother said.. Rikki Tikki's mother.. she used to live in the general's house at Se se se Segu.. whats that word [se se se] {trying to pronounce the word} rod daphne [Segowlee] rod [Segowlee] its a place name yeah. randy Segowlee. Segowlee. had told Rikki Tikki told Rikki what he would do what what to do if he ever came across white man. .. Then Rikki Tikki went out went into the garden to see what what to be seen. I? I was ina I was in a large gardun only half cultivated. bushes bi big as a summer house Marshal Marshal Niel ro/ses lime and orange trees. clumps of of of bamboos and thi thicket of high grass. Rikki Tikki liked like licked his lips. This is a splendid this is a splendid hunting ground. he said. and his tail grew ub bu uh bu bottom bu bottle bushy at the at the thought of it and he scu scuttled up and down the up and down the garden. Snuffing here an an there til he heard very sorrowful voices in thorn-bush.
What does that mean his tail grew bottle-bushy at the thought of it. Can you tell what he's describing

sophie

Well fluffy uh yeah fluffy

daphne

[Uh huh.. yeah uh hmm]

randy

It's alright. It was Darzee the tailor-bird and his wife. He made a. They had made a beautiful nest by pulling two big leaves together and stitching them up stitch {sniffs then exhales} hhh. and stitch them up thetha the edges with fibers.

(randy)

They had followed the hollow with cotton coton and down downy fluff the nes sway uh to and fro the the umh {clearing throat} hh. the nest sway to and fro as they sat on tha on the rim and cried. What is the mat/ter Rikki said Rikki Tikki?

We are we are miserable said Darzee one of our babies fall out of the nest yesterday an and Nag at/e him. H::m/m Rikki Tik said Rikki Tikki that is ve/ry sad but I am a stranger here. Who is Nag? Darzee and his wife couw couwed down cowed coud cowered down in the nest without answerin from the from the thick grass at the foot of the bush come a low hiss. P::a/ge.. 98

(randy)

Uh huh

Uh huh

horrid cold sound that Rikki Tikki jump back jump back two clear feet. Then inch by uhm then inch u:m..hh then inch by the by the grass rose the head and spread hood of Nag. The big the BIG BLACK COB/RA and he was FIVE feet long from ton/gue to tail. When he had lifted his third of his himself clear from the ground. he stay balancin to and fro exatly as a danelion-duf bances inthe wind..as he look Rikki Tikki with his wicked snake-eyes that never change expression whoever whatever the snake be thinkin of. Who is Nad he said. I am NAG the great god Brahm put his mark uh upon our people when the first cobra spread his hood to keep the sun off Brahm. as he slept. LOOK be a look be a lo/ok and be afraid. He spread out his hood more than ev/er n Rikki Tikki saw the spec the spectacle mark on its on his back

(48:00:50:00)

randy

thats looks. that looks like exatly eye part of the hook n eye fastenin. He was afraid of the for the minute but it was impos/sible for a mongoose to stay frightenned of any length of time. an and though Rikki Tikki had never met a live cobra bef/ore wh:oa. hi ma his mom fed him on dead ones and he kn/ew that all mon that all grown mongoose mongoose buisn ess life was to fight and then fight and eat snakes. Nag knew that knew that t'oo and at the bottom of his cold heart was afraid. We'll Rikki Tikki an his tail began to fluff up again. marks or no marks do you think of it as right to you to eat the fledings out of a out of a nest?
Fledglings are just little baby birds right.

Say that again.

Uh fledglings, is it right for you to eat fledglings out of a nest? Those are just baby birds.

[Fledglings out of the nest?] thank you. Nag was thinking to himself watching the little movement in the grass behind Rikki Tikki. He knew that mongoose in the garden was mean den death sooner or later for him and his family, but he wanted to get Rikki Tikki out of his guard. So he dropped his head a little and put it on one side. LET US TALK. he said. You may eat eggs why should I eat why should why should I not eat birds? Beh/ind you LOOK BEHIND you he said sang Darzee. Rikki Tikki knew better than to waste time in staring. He jumped in the air as high as he could go and just under him whiz the head of Na Na na Nagina nag's wicked wife. She had crept up behind him as he was talking to make an end of him. He had never heard a sav savage hiss as stroke missed. He came down across her back. almo he came down almost across her back. And if he had me a mol mol old mongoose he woulda known that then was was time to break her back with one bite but he was afraid of the terrible lashing return-stoke of the cobra. He bit indeed but did not bite lone, he jump of uh whisking whiskin tai Na Na Nagina torn and angry.

Ok let's take a pause here shall we. And make sure we know what's goin on in the story.

It's sum it's sum a U:::H a military fam a military family found a mongoose.

I believe that they got so many animals in the backyard thinking his father is somethin like a scientis maybe his mother a scientist a researcher or somethin like that.
And then these animals they're fighting in the backyard already [the new] mongoose in there
and everythang

rod
[Ok]. Right NEW YOUNG mongoose right washed out of his bu'row almost drow'ned. alright
boy picks him up and they say O/h it's still alive so they kinda feed him and take him into the
house]. Now he's kinda in and out of the house and he went out into this back garden. He he
goes around to explore and he hears somebody cryin and what's that what's..who's cryin?

[Right]

Ben
Uhm the birds

Birds

[Right]

Ben
[Tailor Birds]

rod
yeah the TAILOR BIRDS right they because they. what happened..

They the snake ate one of the babies

Ate one of the bab/ies yeah it fell out of the nest and got eaten by

rod

Ate one of the bab/ies yeah it fell out of the nest and got eaten by

rod

Extremely right very very frightening ve/ry scary. uhm so the uh

(52:00:54:00)

rod

The cob/ra is NA:G right that's the male cobra.. and his wife is Nagaina right NAG and
NAGAINA and they're the wicked cobras right.. they're the mean ones.. sandra/o uh.. Rikki says
Rikki Tikki says I'm n/ew around here I don't know who Nag is uh i'm i'm sorry to hear that you
know your baby was killed but but what who's Nag and then here comes. the snake right {clears
throat} to confront him and say I am N/ag.. and u:h.. and then and then wh/at happens how does
he meet Nagaina... its kind of an ambush right, Nag says well let's talk a minute and then. you
know as as he's distracting Tikki Nagaina comes and..to[ strike] right to bite him. To bite
the mongoose but but he gets a warning. form the same tailor bird right. Be/hind y/ou LOOK
BEHIND YOU.. and then ju/mps up in the air. just in time to miss to miss that that stri/ke. o:k so
now we've got the drama set up in the backyard in the back garden. {sniffs} u:hm ... randy you
want to keep reading you want to let somebody else read?

[Uhmm]
Let somebody else read

Wicked. I'll read. Wicked wicked eh. Darzee eh. said Nag lashing up as high as he could reach
toward the nest to in. in the thorn bush. but Darzee Darzee had had built it out of reach of snakes
and it only swayed to and fro. Rikki Tikki felt his eyes growing red and hot. when a when a
mongoose eyes

(54:00:56:00)
daphne
grow red he's is angry. and he sat back on his tail and hind hind legs like a little kangaroo.
and looked all around him and chattered with rage. But Nag and Na na na Nag[ Nagaina] Nagaina
rod
[Uh huh]
daphne
had had disappeared into the grass. When a snake misses its stroke it never says anything or
gives any sign of what it means to do next. Rikki Tikki did not care to follow them for he did
not feel sure 'rod Sneezes' he would. he could manage two two snakes at once. So he trotted off
to the gravel path near the house and sat down to think. It was a serious matter for him. If you
read the old bu books of nat natual history you will find that they. they say that that when the
mongoose fights the snake and happens to get bitten he runs off and eats some he herb that cur/es
him. That's not that is not true. The victory is only a {flips page} matter of quick quickness of eye
and quickness of foot snakes blow against mongoose jump and as no eye can folw the motion of a
snake head

(56:00:58:00)
daphne
when it strikes that makes things much more wonderful than any magic herb. Rikki Tikki knew
he was a young mongoose and it it. made him all the more pleased to think that he had managed to
escape a blow from behind. It gave him confidence in himself, and when Teddy came running
down the path, Rikki Tikki was ready to be petted. But just as Teddy was stopping something
flinched a little in the dust and a tiny voice said be careful I am death. It was connie/at Karat
Karate Ka Kar
rod
Karait, yeah [I dunno how to say it either]
daphne
[Ka Karait yeah]
rod
and if you read that no/te down below..it says Hindi word for krait which is a type of brightly
banned venomous snake. so this is a small snake again a poisonous snake but then not as
dangerous as the..as the co/bra. right it's still a poisonous snake so it's right next to the path right
where this little boy is knee/elng down getting ready to pet the mon'goose.
daphne {Skips a couple of lines}
with. with the peculiar rocking swaying motion that he had inherited from his family. It looks very
funny but it is so perfectly balanced a gat.[gate gate]
rod
[Uh DID WE MISS] A LITTLE BACK THERE? Di/d we...or or did I: just miss it
randy
Dont think [we missed]
sophie
Ski/pped the dusty brown
rod
Ok right. theres a right after Karait, it was Karait the dusty brown snakeling...
connie
Uh huh when you you di/d miss the miss.. yeah that was missded
rod
daphne can you can you back up to that part right after the[ name that says it] was Karait the dusty brown snakeling, Tha/nk you
(58:00:60:00)
daphne
[Uh yeah]... wait Wh/ere is that at I dont see it
rod
Just the para/graph the next paragraph up from where you were I think
connie
It was Karait the dusty brown snakeling
{another female voice in the room was trying to aid daphne in finding the correct place. I was unable to tell from whom the speaking was done}
daphne
I must not be on the right pa/ge
rod
I think you a/re[ it's]
connie
[It's a hundred] right at a hundred up top
rod
Ye:ah. It's that para/graph that starts just as[ Teddy] was sto:oping
daphne
[O/H]. But just as Teddy was stooping something flinched a little in the dust and a tiny voice said be careful I am death.t was Karate Kar Ka karate something like that Karate karrot
rod
Right Karait
daphne
and and the dusty brown snak snackeling. snakeling that lies for choice on the dusty earth and hi
his bite is as cobra. but . he is so small that nobody thinks of him and so he does the more harm to
people. Rikki Tikki eyes grew red again and he danced to Karate with the peculiar rocking
swaying motion that he had inherited from his family. It looks very funny but it is so
perfectly balanced a gait that you can. you can fly off from it an it any angle you please and in
dealing with snakes this is a advantage. If Rikki Tikki had only known he was doing a much more
dangerous thing than fighting Nag, for Kar Karait is mu so small and can turn can turn so quickly
that unless Rikki Tikki bit Rikki Tikki. Rikki Tikki bit him

(60:00:62:00)
daphne
close to the back of his head he would get return the return stroke in the eye or lip. but Rikki did
not know his eyes were all red and he rocked back and forth looking for a good place to hold. Kra
Karrot stru struck out. Rikki back. wait. Rikki

connie
Jumpeded

daphne
good place to hold. Kra Karrot stru struck out. Rikki back. wait. Rikki

jumped sideways..and tried to run in but the wicked little dusty gray head lashed within a fract a
fraction of his shoulder and he had to jump over the body.and the head followed his his heels
close. Teddy shouted to the to the house oh look her/e our our mogo/ose is killing a snake and
Rikki Tikki heard a scream from Teddy's mother. His father ran out witha stick but by the time he
came up Ka Karait had l hun had lunged out once too far and Rikki Tikki had sprung jumped on
the snake's back dropped his head far between hi his fore legs bitten as high up the back of as he
could get..hold and...

rod
Rolled

daphne
dropped his head far between his fore legs bitten as high up the back of his he could get hold of
and rolled a way. The bite paralyzed

(62:00:64:00)
daphne
Ka Karait. and Rikki Tikki was just going to eat him up from the tail after the custom of his
family at dinner. connie somebody else can read

rod
Anybody else want to

sandra
when he remembered that a full meal makes a slow mongoose and if he wanted all his strength
and quickness ready he must keep himself thin. He went a:way for a dust bath under the castor

UH:HHMM { connie gave a dramatic moan showing here engagement into the story line} and
Teddy's father said that he was a provide nce

connie
A providence

sandra
a pro providence
rod

Meaning what tha that Teddy's father said that he was a providence meaning the mongoose was

a providence Rikki Tikki

sandra

Providence providence

rod

Meaning a a a gift alright I think like a gift from God almost right providence

sandra

and Teddy looked on with big scared eyes. Rikki Tikki was rather

(64:00:66:00)

sandra

amused at all the fuss which of curse course he did not understand. Teddy's mother. Teddy's

mother might just as well have. have petted Teddy for playing in the dust. Tik Rikki was tho thro

throughly enjoyin joy enjoyin himself

rod

Thoroughly yeah. Rikki was thoroughly enjoying himself

sandra

ok now I gotta go to the top...ok Th/at night at din/ner wal/king walking to and fro among the

connie

Fro

sandra

Fro the[ wi/ne]glasses

rod

[uh huh]

sandra

on the. on the table he could have stuffed himself three times over with nice things but he he

remembered Nag and Nag Na Na Nagana and and though it was very pleasant to be patted and

pet and petted by Teddy's m/other and so. and to si/t on Teddy shou/der his eyes would. would get

red from time to time and he would go off into his long war cry of rikki tikki tikki tock! he

he ha ha ha ha giggles after trying to make the war cry of the mongoose

rod

Ha HA Ha ha ha ha giggling along with sandra

sandra

Gotta gone over here

rod

Ha ha ha who else wants to

connie

Rik uh. Teddy carried him off to bed and and insist on Rikki Tikki sleeping under his chin.
Rikki Tikki was too well bred to bite or scratch, but as soon as Teddy was asleep he went off for his nightly walk round the house and in the dark he ran up against whatts that rod Chuchundra. Thats it Chuchundra

Connie

Chuchundra, an a the muskrat creeping [round by the] rod

Chuchundra. I'm sorry. Chuchundra is the name. Yeah, the name of the muskrat which is just another rodent another animal [that's in the house.]

Connie

[Chuchundra] is a broken hearted little beast. He whimper whimper whimper and cheeps. cheeps all the night trying to make up his mind to run into the middle of the room but he never get there. Don't kill me said Chu Chu:chundra almost weeping. Rikki Tikki don't. kill m/e. Do you think a snake killer kills musrants? said Rikki Tikki scornfully. Those who kill snakes get killed by snakes said Chuchun Chuchundra. more sorrowfully than ever. And how am I to be sure that Nag won't mistake m/e for you some dark night. There's not the least danger said Rikki Tikki. But Nag is in the garden and I know you don't go there. My cousin Ch:ua the rat told me said Chuchundra and then he stopped. Told you what? {Everyone flips page}

(6:00:00:70:00)

Somebody else gotta read

Randy

One O two {102}

Rod

One O two {102}

Sandra

Oh I see[ hush ain't it.]

Rod

[Uh huh yeah]

Sandra

Aint that where it is? I go to the bottom. Hu/sh Nag is everywhere. Ri/kki Tikki. You should have talked to Chua in the g/arden. I did not so you. I did not so you must te'll me. Quick. Chu chu Chuchundra or i'll bite y/ou bit you. am a very very poor man he sobbed. I never had spir/it enough to run or run out into the middle of the ro/om. HUSH I mustnt I must not tell you anything. Can't not you hear Ri/kki Tikki. Rikki Tikki listeneded. The ha house was as still as as still but he he thought he could just catch the faintest scratchin scratch in the world. a noise as faint as that of a waps walkin on a window pad

Pane

Connie

Pane. The dry scratch of a snakes scales on brick wood
2009
2010 connie
2011 Brick
2012
2013 sandra
2014 Brick wood. Th/ate's N:ag or Naganna he said to hi/mself and he is crawling into the ba/throom sli
2015 slice. You are ri/ght Cha Cha Chuchundra i should have
2016
2017 (70:00:72:00)
2018
2019 sandra
2020 tallkded to Cha Cha Chu Chua. He he stole off. off to Teddy bath'room. but there there was na
2021 nothing there and then to there was a brick pulled out to make a slice for the bath water and as
2022 Rikki Tikki whispering together outside in the moonlight.
2023
2024 rod
2025 I think we skipped a line
2026
2027 sandra
2028 Did I skip some?
2029
2030 rod
2031 Go back to he stole off to Teddy's bathroom
2032
2033 sandra
2034 bathroom lets see O/k..but theres was nothing there and then. and then.then to. then to Teddy's
2035 mother bathroom
2036
2037 rod
2038 Right
2039
2040 sandra
2041 That's where[ i'm a/t?]
2042
2043 rod
2044 [Uh huh]
2045
2046 sandra
2047 bathroom. At the bottom of the smoothe plaster wall there was a brick pulled out to make a sluice
2048 for the bath wa/ter and as Rikki Tikki stole in by the. Rikki Tikki was a brick pulled out to make a
2049 sluice for the bath water and as Rikki Tikki sto/le in by the by the masontee masonry cu curb
2050 where the bath is put he hea he heard Nag and Nagan Naganna whispering together outside in the
2051 mo/onlight. When the house is empty of people said Naganna to her hu/sband he will have to go
2052 away and then the garden will be
2053
2054 (72:00:74:00)
2055
2056 sandra
2057 ar our own again. Go in qui quietly and remember that the big man who killed Karait is the. is the
2058 first one to Then is the first one to bite. Then come out and and tell me and we will hunt for Rikki
2059 Tikki together.
2060
2061 rod
2062 But are you siure.. I'm sorry you go on go on I apologize you go ahead go aheas
2063
2064 sandra
ok. ok. But are you sure that there is everything anything to be gained by killing the peoples said Nag? Everything. When there were no people inside bung bunga bungalow. Did we have any mongoose in the garden. So long as the bug bung bung a lu is empty we are kings and queen of the garden and remember that as soon as our eggs in the melon melon in the [melon-bed].

sandra Bungalows. Did we have any mongoose in the garden. So long as the bug bung bung a lu is empty we are kings and queen of the garden and remember that as soon as our eggs in the melon melon in the [melon-bed].

rodriguez

sandra hatch as they may tomorrow our children will need room and quiet. Then I had not thought of that said Nag. I had not thought of that said Nag. I will go but there is no need that. we should hunt for Rikki Tikki afterward. I will kill the big man and his wife and the children and the child if I can. and come away quietly. Then the bung bungalu no will be empty and Rikki Tikki will go.

(74:00:76:00)

sandra empty and Rikki Tikki will go. [Rik]

rodriguez Pause there for just a minute if you would. Thank You.

{Everyone seems to readjust ready to discuss, sandra laughs after what she has just read}

sandra I know what's going on. What are they planning. What's what are we hearing in there now.

{it takes a moment for someone to speak up then Ben brakes the silence with his thoughts}

Ben I had an idea that the they are planning to kill the man and the woman. somethin about I don't know what a sluice is. but you know Rikki Tikki is in there, cobra sticking their head

rodriguez [Ok]. right. what were you going to say sophie {sandra is yawning during this segment of speech}

sophie They was tryin to get rid of em {unclear speech sounds very muffled}

rodriguez Yeah right same yeah trying to get rid. and and why are they planning to kill the people?

sandra I take a respon to that. Uh

{times passes as everyone silently deliberates on the answer}

Ben
They wanted to be [king and queen] of the [garden] and they don't want that mongoose in the garden.

sandra
[ye::ah]

rod
[right] .. YE/AH to get rid of the mong/oose. Ri/ght. Tha/t's Ri/ght. The[ mongoose is a REA]randy threat to [them right] right. They recognized. a Rikki Tikki as a real threat to [them] A::ND we learned something else too. Nag and Nagaina also.. what else? They've got something else hidden in the melon-b/ed. Back in the gar'den

sandra
[ooo:h] [hhhh.] [U:H H:UH] [uh huh] {Starts yawning}
sandra

Is it Nagain?. Somethin like that? Nag

rod

Nag and Nagaina and Nagaina says. that. and REMEMBER that as soon as our eg/gs in the melon-bed hatch as they may tomorrow our children will need room and [quiet so that] there's a. a ne/st ri/ght. There's a clutch of e/ggs that are gonna hatch too so there's gonna be little ba/by cobras around as we'll. and so

sandra
[Uh huh]

(76:00:78:00)

rod

The other thing that's funny here is that N/ag is the. the ki/ng of the garden. but w/ho's making these plans and tellin N/ag what to do?

connie
Chundra

rod

No Chuchundra's that little[ ah muskrat] he's the one that kinda warned Rikki Tikki that they were comin in the[ house rig/ht.]

connie
[O:h]

sandra
[Oh.] the M/omma?

rod

Ye/ah the momma right. Nagaina's the one tellin Nag o/k. This is what we're gonna do. Here's the plan. You go in and kill these people and them we'll hunt for the mongoose together. And Nag's sayin ARE YOU SU/RE do we have to kill the people? and she's tellin him lo/ok. listen to me alright I know what I'm talkin about.. That slu/ice thing {talking directly to Ben} yeah i'm not quite sure what that is either but my thou/ght is. that. it's so/me kind of opening ob/viously from the out/side to the insi/de? I think it's probably this is n/ot a house with modern plumbing? I think it's probably a. an opening where they can have a a wash space and then they can just open that and let the water drains straight out outside. So it's an opening where. u:hm ah. where the snakes
could get in the house. I think that's what's goin on. Alright do you want keep on you
wanna pass it pass it on. Anybody else or should I go or?
sandra
[Somebody else can read.]
connie. Rikki Tikki tingled all over with rage and hatred at this and then Nag's head came through
the sluice. and his five feet of cold body followed it. Angry as he was Rikki Tikki was very
frightened as he saw the size of the big cobra. Nag coiled himself up. raised his head and looked
into the bath. ah the bath. in the dark and Rikki could see his eyes glitter. Now if I kill him here
Nagaina will know. and if I fight him on open floor the odds are in his favor. What am I to do?
said Rikki Tikki. Nag waved to and fro and then Rikki Tikki heard him drinking from the biggest
water jar that was used to fill the bath. That is good said the snake.

NOW when Karait was killed the big man had a stick. He MAY have the stick still but when he
come in to ba/the in the morning he will not have the stick. I shall wait here until he com/es.
Nagaina do you hear me? I will wait here in the cool until daytime. There was no answer from
outside so Rikki Tikki knew Nagaina had gone away. Nag coiled himself down coil by coil
around the bulge at the bottom of the water jar. and Rikki Tikki stayed still as death. After an
hour he began to move muscle by muscle toward the jar. Nag was asleep. Rikki Tikki looked at
his big back wondering which would be the best place for a good hold. If i don't break his back at
the first jump said Rikki Tikki he can still fight. and if he fight he made sure that he would be banged to death and win the honor of
his family he preferred to be found with his teeth locked.

This was dizzing. he was dizzy, aching and felt shaken to pieces when something went off like a
thunderclap just behind him. A hot wind knocked him senseless and red fire singed his fur. The
big man had been wakened by the noise and had fired both barrels of a shot gun into Nag just
behind the hood. {turns page}

page 104... Rikki Tikki held on with his eyes shut for now he was quite sure he was dead. but the
head did not move. and the big man picked him up and said it's the mongoose again. Alice the
little chap has saved ou/r lives now. Then Teddy's mother came in with a very white face and saw
what was left of Nag. and Rikki Tikki dragged himself to Teddy's bedroom and spent half the rest
of the night shaking himself tenderly to find out whether he was broken into forty pieces as he had fancied. When morning came he was very stiff but well pleased with his doings. NOW I have
Nagaina to settle with and she will be worse than five Na/gs. and there's no knowing when the
eggs she spoke of will hatch. Good/ness I must go and see Darzee he said. Without waiting for
breakfast Rikki Tikki ran into thorn bush were Darzee was singing a song of tri/umph at the top of
his voice. The news of Nag's death was all over the garden for the sweeper had thrown the body on the rubbish heap. O:OH you stupid tuft of feathers said Rikki Tikki angrily. Is this the time to sing? Na/g is dead. is dead. is dead sang Darzee. THE VALIANT Rikki Tikki caught him by the head and held fas't. The big man brought the bang stick and Nag fell in two pieces. he will NEVER eat my babies again. All that's true enough but where's Nagaina said Rikki Tikki looking carefully around him. Nagaina came to the bathroom sluice and called for Nag Darzee went on. and Nag came out on the end of a stick. the sweeper picked him up on the end of a stick

(82:00:84:00)

daphne

[ Can I use. Can I go to the bathroom.] {daphne goes to the restroom}

(84:00:86:00)

rubbish heap and cried out. O:H MY WING IS BROKEN? The boy in the house threw a sto/ne at me and broke it. Then she flutt/ered more desperately than ever. Nagaina lifted up her head and hissed. YO/U warned Rikki. Rikki Tikki when I would have killed him. In/deed and truly you've choses a bad place to be lame in. And she moved toward Darzee's wife. slipping along over the dust. The bo:y broke it with a stone shrieked Darzee's wife. We:ll it may be some consolation to you when you're dead to know that I shall settle accounts with the b/oy. Myb hus/band lies on the rubbish heap this morning. but before night the boy in the house will lie very sti/l. What is the use of running away? I am sure to catch you. little fool look at m/e.. Darzee's wife knew bet/ter than to do that. for a b:ird who lo

Darzee's wife flut/tered on piping sorrowfully and never leaving the ground. and Nagaina quickened her pace. Rikki Ti/kki heard them going up the path from the stables and he ra/ced for the end of the melon patch near the wall. The:re in the warm litter about the melons very cunningly hidden he found twenty-five eggs. about the size of a bantum's eggs but with whitish
Rod: The tops of the eggs as fast as he could taking care to crush the young cobras, and turned over the litter from time to time to see whether he had missed any. At last, there were only three legs eggs left, and Rikki Tikki began to chuckle to himself when he heard Darzee's wife screaming. I had just noticed that it's 11:30 so uh uh you all want to continue a little or should be quit for now and we'll finish this up when we meet again.

Randy: Finish up.

Rod: Finish up next time?.. ok

Sandra: I read some of it at the house.

Rod: What's that?

Sandra: I said I read some of this [at the house.]

Rod: [No that's fine] you wanna take them with you and you can finish reading it and then we can come back together and read. NOW next mon/day. LABOR DAY. alright its a holiday

Sandra:OO. yeah. there won't be anybody here and the bulding won't be open so let's meet the following monday and. and we'll make that our last session. a/t lea/st our last session with the cameras and we can all discuss it in one meeting sometimes and keep reading or talking something else. outside of the research project [ok.] So we'll we'll do that next time that'll be not next mon/day but the following[ monday]. Ok great meeting I enjo/ed it ya'll.. See you ne/xt time.

Now if any of you want me to hang on to your papers I can do that or you wanna take them with you?

Daphne: [ok]

Daphne and Sophie: [ok]

Daphne: Your wife made to it?
Ye/ah she did.. oh yeah sure was.

Ok we'll see you.

Alri/ght se/e you th/en.

ok
Session Six

0:00:21.2
{we hear the television blaring from the waiting room. Advertisements and dramatic news
programming while facilitator arranges items in the room in preparation for this final session of
the reading group.}

0:02:20.5
{Randy enters room dressed in red t-shirt, light blue denim overalls and a white ballcap. he sets a
styrofoam cup on the table and sits quietly in a chair.}

0:06:24.9
ben, connie, sandra enter, exchange pleasantries, smalltalk. Ben has his medical/psychiatric
dictionary with him again today. Discuss and sign ECMH consent forms to release information to
me.

0:13:25.9
rod
betty's not here today. Virgil's outside. and we'll let daphne and sophie come on in when they get
here. well, so lets see, where were we? we were lookin at uh.. yall remember the story from last
week?

sandra
I think (_ _) 

rod
you remember anything about it?

sandra
i forgots mine

rod
i've got em i think i collected them from most everybody so lets hand em back=

randy
=oh rikki tikki tikki

rod
yeah, that funny little mongoose that made all that noise. well, no I dont have all of em. i know
youve got yours is that right ben?

ben
yeah

rod
so i'll take that back from you. thank you.

sandra
architects
do you have one randy
randy
no
rod
and do you have one down there?
connie
no
randy
mine's at home
rod
so heres one and heres one and do i have another one?...well I'll look on with somebody. Ben can i
look on with you? will that be alright?
ben
yeah
rod
okay {change seats), alright so what was this story? what was this story. {to ben} thank you very
much for that. do you remember what was goin on in here? this one is different from the other
stories we read in one major way {laughs}. why is it different than the others do you think?
connie
its talk about animals
rod
right, the main characters are not people, though there's some people in the story, right?
connie
right
rod
they're kind of, secondary. they're not as important to the story. so who are the main characters?
connie
animals
rod
yeah, what kind of animal?
randy
mongoose
connie
mongoose
randy
and the cobra
rod
the mongoose and the cobras, thats the main thing and whats goin on with the mongoose and the
cobras?
connie
they dislike each other
rod
yeah, right. so do we remember what happened from the beginning of the story? how did the mongoose meet the cobras? what's the deal? what was?
sandra
well
connie
uhm
ben
(_)
rod
yeah, in somebody's backyard, this is in India, in some peoples' garden, in their backyard you're right and rikki rikki tikki tavi was a kind of an orphan, right? he got washed out of his home in a flood i think it sez an he wuz all kinda alomost half drowned.

0:16:24.7
{daphne and sophie enter}
rod
good mornin
sophie
good mornin
randy
good mornin
rod
howre you ladies?
daphne & sophie
good
rod
good, welcome...get ya somethin ta drink and some getcha a piece of bread if you wish and then, ooh, did yall bring yer stories by any chance?
daphne
[i dont have mine]
sophie
[i've got mine]
rod
you did bring one, well maybe yall can share, would you be willin sophie
sure
okay great, shoulda made more copies to bring. i had anuff to begin with but i should bring copies the second time too i guess... so [y'all remember]

sophie
[anybody sittin here?]

no, thats you. you you get the throne.

sophie

{laughs}

{laughs} uhm, so we we're we're tryin to remember where we were in the story. we made it almost through rikki tikki tavi. you member rikki tikki.. what was that noi, why does he have that name?

...  

because he made a funny noise when he (walks in [the room])

because he makes that funny noise right and we were all tryin to tryin ta make that noise. Rikki tikk tchk tchkkkk {makes noise and laughs}

chorus
{laughs}

its hard

it is, i dont know how to make that noise. i dunno dunno how ta be a mongoose.

and thats a favorite book you sed you liked?

well when i wuz when i wuz little i liked this story. this wuz a story i liked yeah when i wuz younger when i wuz younger i remember likin this story and so i i i like to pull it out and read it every once in a while. yeah

sandra

oh, alright

so alright we've got rikki tikki and rikki's a mongoose right, he was this orphaned mongoose. right, almost drowned in a flood and then he found himself in these peoples' backyard and theres some birds and other critters in the yad and all these animals talk to each other, right?
{laughs} i wonder if the people can hear them talking or not.. i i guess maybe not, maybe they
dont know the animals talk to each other, do you think that the animals actually talk to each other
when we're not aware?

{smiling} yes

you think so? i kinda think they do too. that what we hear as chirp chirp chirp chirp chirp from the
birds i think they maybe they're talking to each other and we jes don understand what theyre
sayin.. uhm, where did we end? what had happened, yall remember? weve got nag and nagina

i thought we left of on 106

yeah? (_ _) 0:19:07.2

left off on 106 maybe? uhm, so... rikki's makin the rounds in the garden, he's meeting people right
and that he meets the tailor bird darzee and darzees wife and then she w warns im that the cobras
gonna strike im and he jumps outta the way and lets see he killed that little smake uh ki kirait
kirait or somethin like that, that little snake

mmhhmm

and so the people really like him cause he wuz protecting the kid, little teddy was it? yeah, little
teddy.. but i think where we were, lets see, he had already i think rikki killed nag who was the
male cobra, right in the bathroom. that cobra wuz trying to come into the bathroom to kill the
people in the house... yeah\ {reading} nag is ded as ded as ded sang darzee, the valient rikki tikki
caught him by the head and held fast, and then the man shot him thats right with the shotgun. but
whats what wuz tha other problem besides the two cobras they were gonna have babies, right?

mhhmmm/
cuz there wuz a nest of eggs somewhere and rikki wuz gonna try and find those [eggs]

did he find them? ye::ah\ connie

connie [eggs]

connie
I think [he did]

rod

[look at] the bottom of 105, rikki tikki heard them goin up the path from the stables and he raced
to the end of the melon patch near the wall. there in the warm litter about the melons, very
cunningly hidden he found twenty-five eggs about the size of a bantam's eggs, of a of a hen's eggs
but with whitish skin instead of a shell. i wz not a day too soon he sed, for he could see the baby
cobras curled up inside the skin and he knowed that the moment they were hatched they could each
kill a man or a mongoose. he bit off the tops of the eggs as fast as he could taking care to crush the
young cobras and turned over the litter from time to time to see whether he had missed any. at last
there were only three eggs left and rikki tikki began to chuckle to himself when he heard darzee's
wife screaming. rikki tikki, i led nagina toward the house and she has gone into the veranda and
oh, come quickly she means killing. rikki tikki smashed two eggs and tumbled backward down the
melon bed, the third egg in his mouth, and scuttled to the veranda as hard as he could put foot to
the ground. teddy and his mother and father were there at early breakfast. riliki tikki saw that they
were not eating anything. they sat stone still and their faces were white. nagina was coiled up on
the matting by teddy's chair, within easy striking distance of teddy's bare leg and was swaying to
and fro and singing a song of triumph. son of the big man that killed nag, she hissed. stay still, i
am not ready yet. wait a little. keep very still all of you three. if you move i strike and if you do
not move i strike. oh foolish people who killed my nag. she's out for revenge, huh?

randy
hmm
connie
hmm

0:22:42.0

rod
teddy's eyes were fixed on his father and all his father could do was whisper sit still sit still teddy.
you mustn't move, teddy sit still. then rikki tikki came up and cried turn round nagina, turn and
fight. all in good time sed she without moving her eyes. i will settle my account with you
presently. look at your friends, rikki tikki. they are still and white. they are afraid. they dare not
move. and if you come a step closer, i strike. look at your eggs sed rikki tikki in the melon bed
near the wall. go and look nagina, the big snake half turned half around and saw the egg on the
veranda. aagh, give it to me, she sed. rikki tikki put his paws on each side of the egg, and his
eyes grew blood red. what price for a snake's egg? for a young cobra? for a young king cobra? for
the last, the very last of the brood. the ants are eating all the others down by the melon bed. nagina
spun clear round forgetting everything that the snake..forgetting everything for the sake of the one
egg, and rikki tikki saw teddy's father shoot out a big hand, catch teddy by the shoulder and drag
him across the little table with the teacups, safe and out of reach of nagina. tricked, tricked,
tricked. rikki tchk tchk, whatever that noise is, chuckled rikki tikki, the boy is safe and it wz i, i
that caught nag by the hood last night in the bathroom. then he began to jump up and down all four
feet together, his head close to the floor. he threw me to and fro but he could not shake me off. he
was dead befoe the big man blew him in two. i did it. rikki tikki tch. come then nagina, come and
fight with me. you shall not be a widow long. nagina saw that she had lost her chance at killing
teddy and the egg lay betwene rikki tikki's paws. give me the egg, rikki tikki. give me the last of
my eggs and I will go away and never come back, she sed, lowering her hood. yes! you will go
away and never come back. for you will go to the rubbish heap with nag. fight, widow, the big
man has gone for his gun, fight. rikki tikki was bounding all around nagina, keeping just out of
reach of her stroke, his little eyes like hot coals. nagina gathered herself together and flung out at
him. rikki tikki jumped up and backward again and again and again she struck and each time her
head came within, with a whack on the matting of the veranda. when she gathered herself together
like a watch spring. then rikki tikki danced in a circle to get behind her and nagina spun around to
keep her head to his head so that the rustle of her tail on the matting sounded like dry leaves blown
along by the wind, he had forgotten the egg. it still lay on the veranda and nagina came nearer and
nearer to it till at last while rikki tikki was drawing breath, she caught it in her mouth, turned to the
veranda steps and flew like an arrow down the path with rikki tikki behind her. when the cobra
runs for her life, she goes like a whip lash if flicked across a horse's neck. rikki tikki knew that he
must catch her or all the trouble would begin again. she headed straight for the long grass by the
thornbush, as he wuz running, rikki tikki heard darzee still singing his foolish little song of
triumph. but darzee's wife was wiser. she flew off her nest as nagina came along and flapped her
wings about nagina's head. that's pretty brave. {turning page} if darzee had helped, they might
have turned her. nagina only lowered her hood and went on. still, the instant's delay brought rikki
tikki up to her and as she plunged into the rat hole where she and nag used to live, his little white
teeth were clenched on her tail and he went down with her and very few mongooses, however wise
and old they may be, care to follow a cobra into its hole. it was dark in the hole and rikki tikki
never knew when it might open out and give nagina room to turn and strike. he held on savagely
and stuck out his four feet to act as brakes on the dark slope of the hot, moist earth. then the grass
at the mouth of the hole stopped waving and darzee sed it is all over with rikki tikki. we must sing
his death song, valiant rikki tikki is dead for nagina will surely kill him underground. so he sang a
very mournful song that he made up on the spur of the moment. and just as he got to the most
touching part, the grass quivered again and rikki tikki, covered with dirt, backed himself out of the
hole leg by leg, licking his whiskers. darzee stopped with a little shout. rikki tikki shook some of
the dust off his fur and sneezed. it is all over, he sed. the widow will never come out again, and the
red ants that live between the grass stems heard him and began to troop down one after another to
see if he had spoken the truth. rikki tikki curled himself up in the grass and slept where he was.
slept and slept till it was late in the afternoon, for he had done a hard day's work. now, he sed,
when he awoke, i will go back to the house. tell the coppersmith darzee and he will tell the garden
that nagina is dead. the coppersmith is a bird who makes a noise exactly like the beating of a little
hammer on a copper pot. and the reason he is always making it is because he is the town crier in
every Indian garden. he tells all the news to everybody who cares to listen. as rikki tikki went up
the path, he heard his attention notes like a tiny dinner gong, and then the steady ding/ dong\ tack
took nag is dead dong nagina is dead ding dong took that set all the birds in the garden singing and
the frogs croaking for nag and nagina used to eat frogs as well as little birds. when rikki got to the
house, teddy and teddy's mother- she looked very white still for she had been fainting-
and until he
could eat no more and went to bed on teddys shoulder where teddys mother saw him when she
came to look at night. he saved our lives and teddys life she sed to her husband, just think, he
saved all our lives. rikki tikki woke up with a jump, for all the mongooses are light sleepers. oh/,
its you\, he sed, what are you bothering for? all the cobras are dead and if they werent, I'm here.
rikki tikki had a right to be proud of himself, though he did not grow too proud. and he kept that
guardedness as a mongoose should keep it, with tooth and jump and spring and bite, till never a
cobra dared to show its head inside the walls...
(__) well, i dunno {laughing skeptically I would say} (rikki tikki (_))
you don't know about rikki tikki, huh?
{shaking head} I don't know about rikki tikki
(rikki tikki, he's somethin though. he's a thing though, he plays he plays with everything, is a
sound though. ever time he say rikki tikki iss like a a uh huh.
yeah. do you think this is uh. why write this story? why do you think the author. wrote it?.. who's
it for, lets put it that way. yall don seem to like it very much, can you imagine anybody who would
like it? {laughs}

i have no idea

nah, you jus don think its a very good story, huh?
i jus don think its a very good story

okay, alright [any]

[i dont] think so

anybody else?

some animals, not all animals are at your life, some animals can save your life.

hmm, okay. yeah.. so its funny cuz uh the author kinda makes this out to be a hero story, right?
rikki tikki s is the hero of the story.
the mongoose, youre saying?
mmhhmm yeah, do you think thats right? is he a hero in this story?

mhhh/ {skeptically considers}. yes, i would say. he tried to keep the snakes away from the from the people and from the birds

connie

mmmm/ {skeptically considers}. yes, i would say. he tried to keep the snakes away from the from the people and from the birds

connie

birds

rod and the [frogs]

connie

[(an the other animals)]

rod so he certainly, yeah the way the story goes

randy

hes not a hero. don like that story. {maybe to daphne?}

connie

hes very brave

daphne

{to randy} do i like the story?

randy

{nods "yes"}

daphne

yeah, it wuz nice, yeah.

rod

{laughs} he seemed to be brave. and certainly little darzee singing his praises as though hes a hero; saved everybody in the garden saved everybody in the house. but i guess my question is uh wuz he just doin what mongooses do? i mean wus he really a hero or wuz he jus doin what .. mongooses do? [or whats the difference?]

connie

[(_.)]

0:32:07.2

{connie, daphne and sandra laugh}

rod

right, whats the difference? when do we call a person a hero? when is a person a hero?

sophie

when they save someone

connie
save someone
rod
alright, when they save somebody, [alright]
connie
a pet can become a hero too. a person dog when a dog save someone they call him a hero.
rod
a dog can be a hero, okay alright and that dogs just doin what it does.right, its jus bein a dog, right?
connie
right
rod
but it can still be a hero. okay/ alright so maybe a mongoose could be a hero too, he wuz a pet like that right, jus like a dog I guess though hes a little wilder than a dog i guess.
connie
not vicious, not vicious
rod
yeah, he wadnt too vicious with the i guess he wuz vicious with cobras but not vicious with tha little boy
connie
ohhh
rod
or the other animals, right?
connie
right
rod
ALRIGHT, well that wuz an experiment, i thought wed have an animal story and it didnt go over very well {laughing, others laugh}. and thats okay, we had a story not everybody liked very much. thats alright i guess, i uh now we know. now we know, we dont like animal stories [as much.]
connie
[i do.]
rod
you do? (okay _).
connie
yeah
randy
its okay
rod
okay, thanks {laughing}
uhm, well, what about another one, what about a story that's not about animals what about a story that's about people again? what about a story that's gonna be familiar to some of us, right? you know the story of moses?

chorus

mmhhmm

rod

alright, whado we know abot moses and um the is'raelite people?

sophie

he led the people to the promised land

rod

right! and out of/

sophie

out of

connie

bondage

sophie

out of bondage

rod

out of bondage in what nation? they were in bondage in/ ya remember?

sophie

(wadn it in) egyptian

rod

eypt, yeah, thats exactly right thats exactly right. {to ben} wouldja pass those down fuh me?

please. and yall can do the same over here please... so this/ is\ a version of that story about moses uh leadin the people the israel israelites, children of israel, the jewish people, the hebrews at the time, um out of egypt. an it wuz written by the same woman that wrote um a number of the stories we've aready read. remember john redding goes to sea, the very first story that we read

randy

right

rod

bout the young man who floated those little boats on the river and wanted to go away but never made it until he gotknocked offa that bridge in that storm. that was written by zora neal hurstson/ who is a woman who wrote in the early part of the twentieth century and she was from notasulga, right, she was from right up the road here. and she spent time here in macon county. um, she wrote this story and its her version of the moses story. i though it would be this one would be interesting to read. lets see what you think about it. um, should i start out and then we'll trade around or how do you wanna do? somebody else want to start out? {whispers} everybody's being very quiet
today {laughs}.

connie

you start it out
alright i will. escape from pharaoh. I dunno what that means {pointing to epigraph} [maybe we'll]

randy [i'll start]

figure it out. oh, you wanna start?

randy yeah

that's fine. whaday think that means "africa has her mouth on moses"? i dunno maybe we'll come back. you dunno?

randy i dunno

rod alright, randy you start.

randy night came walkin through egypt swishing her black dress. the palace was ples and the peasants slept. pharaoh and the servants of pharaoh had assured the egyptians that the terrors of moses were ended. he had sed moses must cease and the word of pharaoh wuz enuff. so the nation slept slept its sleep untroubled.

rod alright let me pause here, i know you just started, but I wanna make sure we know what's goin on here so far. first of all, that last story we had a mongoose as a character, whado we have here? night came walking through egypt swishing her black dress? what does that mean? night came walking?

carrie a lady

lady came walking, black dress

rod right right it seems like the author hurston is is she talking literally about a lady or is she describing nighttime

connie as [though]

rod [as] though she's a lady

sophie [(_ _)]

rod
i thin that's what shes doin, right? so she's saying, huh {laughs}, this is an artistic way of saying "it was nighttime" or "it was dark outside" but instead of sayin that she sez "night came walking through egypt swishing her black dress" {gestures}. you get the idea of, as night [walks along]

connie

[as she was a ghost]

ro�

as almost as though she was a ghost, right and as her as her the the flowing fabric of her dress comes through the streets of the of the country it becomes dark like its night. thats kind of a cool way of putting that I thought. so, and then what does it mean um pharaoh and we know pharaoh is the king right? pharaoh's the king of egypt right? and he sez

randy

he was a hard hearted person.

rod

a hard hearted person exactly from the story.

randy

a hard hearted person.

rod

hard hearted person. exactly. the pharaoh had assured the egyptians that the terrors of moses had ended, what's he what's he talkin about?

connie

the (rage)

rod

the what?

connie

the um.. (_uproar)

rod

okay and what was that uproar? remember what that was? [what happened]

connie

[want be king]

rod

what had moses brought to the egyptians?

ben

slaves

rod

okay, yeah, the hebrews had been slaves to the egyptians and moses, you remember his story? how did he start out? what was was was his story from the beginning? you remember how that went?

that he was born a hebrew;

sophie

(_ _)

ben
um

rod

and his mother

connie

sent him down the [nile]

sophie

[put him down in the basket]

daphne

[in the basket]

rod

{nodding} put im in the river, thats right, in a basket and who found him?

connie

egyptian

sophie

egyptian women

rod

yeah, and not just any egyptian women, but

randy

egyptian woman

rod

yeah, some egyptian women, it was the queen right? a princess or the queen that found him.

connie

right

rod

and so she raised him as an egyptian prince, so he went from being born to these enslaved people

to bein=

connie

=to bein king!

rod

to being like a king, to being a prince of egypt. but then when he got a little bit older, he uh, what

was it he tried to save a hebrew woman who was bein beaten by an egyptian slave master, right?

chorus

right

rod

and when he did that he killed the egyptian, trying to protect this hebrew woman. and then he ran

away because he was gonna be arrested, right, he was gonna be arrested. so he ran into the desert

and while he was there in the desert,

sophie

the lord spoke to him
That's right, the Lord called him and said essentially, what? Sophie, that he would be Connie, that he would be king of the Egyptian people.

Rod, right, and that he needed to lead the people out of Egypt, that's exactly right. And Moses, you know, he didn't want to do that. He went back and forth about it a little bit, but he did what God commanded him, right, did what the Lord told him to do and so that means that he went back to Pharaoh, right, went back to this hard-hearted king, who was, for the Egyptian people, not just a king, but they thought of him as a god, remember, he was thought of as being as powerful as a god. So Moses goes back to Pharaoh and he says famously in the way we remember it, "Let my people go."

Chorus, right.

Rod, he says the Lord says, "Let my people go. It's time for the Hebrews to leave, they're not gonna be your laborers any more. It's time for you to let them go. And Pharaoh being a hard-hearted person said...

Connie, NO.

Rod, forget it. Get outta here, what're you talking about? And then do you remember what the Lord did through Moses after that?

Randy, right?

Rod, you member?

Chorus, mmhhmm.

Rod, the plagues, (did somepin terrible, he put somepin on him, put some) on Pharaoh.
yeah, he put some'nm on pharaoh, you remember what some of the plagues were? [i wuz tryin to rem]

randy

i think iss a water turnin to blood.

daphne

flies

flies

then some hail came

{noddinng} hailstones, right

sophie

frogs

frogs

snakes=

frogs was another one

snakes!

=snakes!

rods

wass one of em too?

connie

snakes, it turned into a snake.

rods

ooh, he turned his snake into a stick didn't he?

randy

turned his staf into a snake

rod

his staff into a snake and then back again. pestilence was one of em which would be like a bad

illness

-Semitism
and boils on the skin, right, so some pretty nasty stuff. and that's what she's referring to when she sez the pharaoh had assured the Egyptians that the terrors of Moses had ended. so from the point of view of the Egyptians

Randy

Then [after that they had all]

Rod

[Moses was awful]

Randy

Got all those people who were slaves (about the slaves) Moses told 'em sed let my people go

Rod

Right, and if you don't, God's gonna do some terrible things to you. Do you remember what the very last one was, the heart, pharaoh's heart

Connie

Was [hard]

Rod

[Was still] hardened, [even after all those plagues]

Connie

[Even after all those plagues]

Rod

You member what the last plague was, the final one? Cuz we're about to get it, that's kind of where the story starts is with the last one. The last plague, do you remember what it was?

Connie

People (rot fleshed? They rot their flesh? Wadnt it bout the flesh?)

Rod

No, it was about the first born,

Chorus

Ohh

Rod

It was about the first born children

Sophie

Were killed

Rod

We're all gonna be killed, that's right. The first born would die. So that's kinda where we start here.

I'm sorry I took a long time {laughs} interruptin you

Randy

Don't worry about it.

Rod

You wanna keep goin and that's where we'll start?

Randy
thats alright. thats fine cuz we discussed things about moses and pharaoh, what he went through.

right, thats right

so i guess we'll continue folks. {laughing}

{nod}s

and um and the door have (um) and the people had done their part. (the rest was for moses and god to do). so in the stillness (of darkness) they kept waiting. the lamb has been sacrificed in every house in the lamb, and (sina) blood in the dark doors. the night went on its way.

now what did you mean randy, sorry to interrupt you again, that you remember this, you remember somethin, what did you remember?

the blood on the doors.

rods what god asked

rods what god asked

{gesturing to me but talking to daphne? quietly, mumbling} (don be talkin bout that, don get me started now.)

{nod}s

the people were asked, the hebrews were asked to sacrifice a lamb, and spread the blood of the lamb on the [doorposts]
Rod so that it would protect them, so that when the angel of death came to kill the first born, she would pass over those houses where she found the blood on the door. But for those houses where there was no blood on the door, she’d go in and do that work of killing the firstborn, right?

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rod
[thats right]
randy
[right, took his son,] bout to get into that right now.
rod
yep yep, think yer right.
randy
darkness (balanced up on) midnight looking (b ways) for day. then cried and died. (it was the great
cry that had issued first from the throat of israel years before and spread to the rim bones of the
world and come come back again. Now it was poured out through the mouths of the egyptian
nation. it was such a cry there none like it since the morning stars sang together and never shall
there be another like it as long as heaven is happy. hmmm. egypt cried out for the death of the first
born. every house in egypt was bloody. blood on the outside door in goshen, blood inside every
other house in egypt. pharaoh looked upon his first son and wept. his son was dead and the son of
sorrow was dead in his own blood. there were snorts and bellows from the stables from the smell
of animal blood. so pharaoh cried inside for his dead with all of his voice. every house in egypt
strained its voice trying to express its bereavement. the noise of it struck the sky and came back to
the nile and ran with it to the sea, the egyptian chorus of sorrow indoors. Outside, the paths and
pavements were full of soft, swift feet fleeing into goshen with its listening ears. these were the
sounds of the night, sounds without words. with the sunrise, princes and people sed this is the
hand, the right hand of moses. they lifed their ded from beds and sud in awe, moses and the god
of the israelites. they rolled their ded from straw mats and pallets and sud moses and his right
hand. they crowded in and arond the palace and shouted get moses and the hebrews out of egypt. if
you dont, everybody in egypt will be ded. so pharaoh sent for moses to dismiss him, his god and
his people from egypt. he was no longer proud pharaoh with the masklike face. he was a man
whose son was dead. but moses refused to go see pharaoh all that day. burials went on and burials
went out from houses all day in long lines and solemn weeping, and all egypt was in tears.)
sophie
mmm
randy
(pharaoh sent messengers to moses again, telling him not that the hebrews might go, but that they
must go.)
0:49:42.5
rods
see you get the difference there right? he's not saying oh, okay I changed my mind, you can go
sandra
mmm
rods
he's saying GET OUT. hes saying GET OUT, moses you take yur people and get out of here. we
dont want you here ny more. alright. you want to keep goin randy, or you want somebody else?
randy
{laughing} i feel somebody else need to read that line.
rods
which line?
this is an interesting story

you like this one better?

[so]

[anyone] else want to?.. (would have doubt in house what I)

moses heard the message sittin in his house, but he didn't say a word right then. the news was too big to speak all at once. he had to sit with his feelins for a while. afterwards he called his leaders to him and told them your slavery is over, your pharaoh has broken at

(wait wait wait, top of 180.)

you want to sophie, sure.

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its printed front and back so you have to either fold it over and flip it or some'mm like that.

last, we march out of egypt with a free people. we march out with a high hand. the people cried when moses told them. he had expected wild clamour and sound of cymbals and exalted singing and dancin but the people wept out of their eyes. goshen was very still, no songs and shouts. free at last free at last thank god almighty im free at last. no more toting stack sand and mixing mortor.

no more taking rocks and building things for pharaoh. no more weeping and bloody backs. no
more slavery from can't see in the mornin till can't see at night. free free so free till im foolish. they
jes sat with centuries in their eyes and cried and few could express themselves like that. (but the
majority jes sat in the doors of their dwellings staring out at life.) but moses put a stop to it all
0:52:42.7

sophie
that, all of it, all of that. you won't be free fuh long if you keep that up. stop that shouting and stop
that sitting. people, get everything you got to get together and let's go and that quick. why moses?
some of them asked, we're free now and we can take our time about everything. you people been
round pharaoh all this time and don know him no better than that. he is scared today and so he sez
you can go. tomorrow or next day he will realize that you are realize what he lost and send his
army into goshen to put you back to work. grab up your things right now. tonight we leave egypt
for ever. but
connie
good
sophie
good gracious, somebody grumbled, i wuz figuring on goin i wuz figuring on goin fishing
tomorrow morning. i don want to be bothered with no packing up today. it is too much like work
and i jes got free this morning. thats the heaven's truth too, plenty of others chimed in. look like
we done wep
rod
swapped
sophie
swapped one boss man for another, one for another one. i don wan nobody givin me no orders no
more. but it was moses that got us free, joshua tol them. if it hadn't been fo him, we would be haul
haul
rod
[hauling], yeah
sophie
[hauling]
0:54:45.1

sophie
hauling rocks right this minute. oh, i dont know about that, this god that done chose us would have
got us free anyhow. i nevuh did much care fo this moses like some of you all. what's the matter
with moses, he got us free alright. oh, i have every confidence in the man, i jes don trust him.
rod
so whatre the people, sorry to interrupt you here, whatre the people sayin?

sophie
(they don [__ __])
connie
[they dont trust him (__ __)]
sophie
don have confidence in him.
yeah, so he's um, he told them that that okay we're pharaoh told us to go. we're free now. we're gonna leave here we're gonna march out of egypt. and he's expectin, what did he expect their reaction to be? yeah an he expected them to be very excited, right? he thought theyd be celebrating, dancing, what are you kiddin were free, WOO/HOO. you know, lets have a party. but instead, the people were kinda somber, alright, they cried, they sat and stared, they kinda sat with it and let it tried to let it sink in a little bit. i mean the hebrews had been in bondage in israel for generations, for hundreds of years. so that all of the people all of these people wouldve been born there. i mean they were all BORN in egypt as slaves in egypt. so um, uh, it was a little, it was a pretty dramatic thing to think about hey we're free now, we're leaving, right. some of em sed, what is that, [free at last free at last] thank god almighty i'm free at last?

chorus yeah, yeah

rod what's that remind you of?

sophie martin luther king

connie king

rod doctor king, thats right, thats exactly right, and his

0:56:41.8

rod "i have a dream speech," right? its interesting, why does she put that line right there?

connie because she thought they would be free, (all the _ world) when she went back and thought about what whats happening when martin luther king, um

rod what wuz she, whats she doin do you think by putting that line there? . i mean shes makin us, shes wanting us to think about about king, right? about civil rights? about freedom in that way?

connie right

rod she seems to want to make a connection for us between the situation of .. black americans or african americans in the united states and the situation of the hebrew people in egypt, right? she seems to make that connection here. which of course doctor king did as well. right? talkin bout goin to the mountain, uhmn... but moses expected the people to be happy and excited and many of them werent. and he sez hey we cant be sittin around waitin, we got to go. get packed, right? its
time to go, we better get outta here before that hard hearted pharaoh changes his mind, cuz he
bound to do it right? hes gonna realize what he's losin an he's gonna come after us. an they say,
well man! you sure are bossy! you jes told me I'm free, i wuz gonna go fishin tomorrow, FREE?
now i gotta pack up plannin to leave here forever? ta leave the only home ive ever known? right?
so he gets this reaction from people that he was not expecting...
sophie {?} mmm {softly}
rod
and then they're sayin they're not sure they have too much confidence in him. its interesting to see
what the author, cuz obviously we dont find these things in the old testament story right of the
exodus. we dont find people complaining to moses that they want to go fishing the next day, or
they dont want to pack up and leave, right. so this is her version of the story. this is her fictional
account of what people might have sed or thought and we get a little bit different version of moses
than we usually do, right?
sophie
why do people talk like they did back then?
rod
why did?
sophie
why did they talk, ya know,
rod
like [how]
sophie
[they] accent (_) they talk. they [inherited that] or what?
rod
[how did they talk?] Um, which accents? whadda you mean, the way she's writing?
sophie
tha way theyre talkin
rod
the way theyre talking in the in her stories?
sophie
uh huh
rod
why do you think? why do you think? she, well, um, she writes, and remember in some of her
earlier stories we had a hard time reading some of her dialect, its a very, we sed that she wrote the
conversations of i think country people like where she wuz from like from
sophie
oh, [they were country?]
her rural home.] well thats whats interesting, shes writing um the the dialog in this story the same as she writes it in other stories that are about the rural south in the twentieth century

sophie
probly (_ ) from slavery huh?

rod
uh huh

sophie
probly they (didnt learn to read back there [in slavery])

rod
i think thats right i think thats right, so shes again shes making a connection between her own people and the hebrew people way back when, so she writes the same dialog=

rod
=in the same accents even though we know the hebrews would have been speaking a different language and we dont know what their speech woulda sounded like cuz nobody nobody wuz around back then. so shes again she using her imagination. this is how she imagines it to be. thats a good question, you know, why is she writing you know the speech like that? uhm.. do you think that shes even making a statement about people of her time, you know, and their reactions to bein free and wondrin what does it mean to be free. i mean, swappin one bossman for another?

whdoes at make you think of, anything?

sophie
in moses moses an ems days, i didnt know they you know talked in nat kinda speech.

rod
right, and i think they probably didnt. i think they probably didnt but when she's writing this story, she chooses to have them speaking like that. yeah, i agree its a funny its a funny thing, it doesnt. i mean this is not we dont read this in the king james bible, right? it dudnt sound [anything like that]

chorus
no, no

rod
in the bible. so she's trying to make the story more familiar i think to try and get us in mind of the well, what [might it have been like]

sophie
[she did a good job in writing the story though]

rod
i think so too, its, i think so too, it really does give us a different feeling about it. um, i think shes asking what might it have been like to actually be there. what would it have been like if moses came to you and sed okay, you know, we've been here for three generations now, it's time for ua to leave. might we go, what? i dont know. i dont know if i want to follow this guy. um.

sophie
i would want to know where we wuh goin.
yeah, where am i goin? thats right. that question comes up a little bit later in here. somebody asks hey, does anybody know where we're goin? ha ha. because the first objective is GET OUT of bondage. right, get out of this country of egypt, get out of the nation of egypt, but then suddenly people are thinkin, well, where are we goin? cuz we're goin into the wilderness, right? and you member, they were wanderin around out [there for]

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wus gunna be? i mean have you ever found yerself in a situation like that? where somethin
thatchoo really wunted, by the time you got it.. it felt different.

randy
{nods}
connie
yes

1:05:13.4

connie
yep, yeah, i understand whut yer sayin.

rod
well, how bout this one, you member bein a kid an wuntin to be grown? you member when you
were a kid an you wunted to be older? [whether]

connie
[(inaud)]

rod
you were in elementary school and you wanted {gesture} to be in middle school. you know you
thought those kids were so big an grown up and then you're in middle school, "oh man, if only, if
JUST (/) i wuz in high school (), yaknow, fi could just be a high school senior, i wish iza. oh i wish
i wuz eighteen years old i could move outta tha house, make my own decisions or whutever it
wuz, right?

chorus
{nodding}

rod
n, did you ever look back at those times an say oh ma:an oh man i wish i wuz a ki:id (\).
don have
a care in the world. don have to pay bills, [don have to do all the stuff that adults have to do.]

chorus
{laughter}

rod
i think that's a situation that many of us have had where we wa':anted some'thin.right, we wanted.
i wanna be responbl, right/ i wanna make my own decisions. an then we GET there,. that wasn
as much fun as i thought it wuz gonna be. you know?

chorus
mhhmmm

rod
i had it pretty good when somebody else wuz takin care of me an makin decisions for me, now its
you know all on me. you know that type of thing. so maybe we all go through some somewhat...
do you do you have do you know children or teenagers who want to be older? do you know any
right now? do you know any children or teenagers who wunt to be who wish they were older?

chorus
{some nodding}

rod
have you ever heard yourself saying to them, uh, don't be in such a hurry, you know to grow up.

{sophie} don't be in such a hurry.

{laughs} ma little niece don hardly wanna take a nap sometime, ma little niece, you know. an i seh she gon be wishin she had take that nap when she get bigguh. =

{rodrick} don'tch wish? i wish i had naptime every day! {laughs}

{sophie} she won have no nap then, she'll wish she had it {laughs}

{rodrick} right, that's a real good example, it's a real good example. yeah, kids that "i don't want to take a nap, i'm big enuf i don need to take a nap." uuhh(\) take advantage of it now, n' enjoy it

1:07:23.8

{rodrick} we don get naptime as adults, right? er we have to make it arsevles. alright, that's a long
enuf digression on my part. i apologize, sophie you wanna keep on?

{sophie} (sure) But moses, himself, moved from place to place, urgering. hurry and everybody unwilling s
or not.

{daphne} {coughing} {quietly, to rodrick} scuse me, can i go get some water?

{rodrick} uh course, please

{daphne departs the room}

{sophie} willing ah not, did whut he sed. the women tol miriam's commit that tehy jus couldnt get ready
due case it wuz baking day. we got done

{rodrick} {quietly, to rodrick} to rise, we kaint 'stub it or it wont be light. miiriam went back an tol moses whut
they sed an he went to see about it himself. make dough moses tol them but don put your seasonin
in it so it wont spoil an while you are at an while you are at it, mix enuf foh a week an that is jus
part of what i want done. everybody roast a lamb so that everybody in goshen can have a full
meal with some greens to settle the stomach. we got a long hard march in front of us tonight.

{rodrick} finally moses got them ready in the spirit, for everyone in goshen, the people were sayin "tonight."

{daphne returns}

{sophie}
everybody sed it according to their thought and their feelins. some talked it wit the edge of their
lips. some rolled it deep in their throats. some throbbed it inside their hearts and let their bodies
move wit the rhythm. some sed it with their eyes, with a gleam, with future-searching gaze. some
sed it with a question, "tonight?" they fixed and they did ar and they did around and they got
ready. nothin wuz still. nothin wuz still. children hunn'ed tha bitter erbs. men slaughtered beasts
and tied bundles, tied bundles. women mixed dough an cooked, an all the time, everybody
thought back over the years an every now an then they breathed "tonight." (moses had inspired
them for the journey and they were goin.) the god od the two (herindons)

... (turning page)...

what page we on now?

one [eighty-two], yeah

he bought ... he bought israel into egypt and israel must take him out of a land that is no longer fit
for his dust. hurry. the gracious cave..the gracious
carved and print casket of joseph rest on a pedestal before the house of moses and its bearers were
appointed so moses told everybody to eat in haste leaving nothing to eat behind them when they
were ready to go. they sang a song. now that they were ready to go and going, it was triumph
triumphant!

triumphant, but it wuz sad. it wuz a long time since israel had done any singing much and they had
forgotten how to shout. moses noticed that their glad notes broke on wails, wals. israel was used to
wailing now. they had used to wailin now. they had forgotten how to lowd
rod, [which] means to praise, like to sing praises.

sophie
[loud], his heart hurt for them, so he said to himself that they should see glory mountains and shiny valleys and they should learn to sing. he led them out of goshen with a high hand. out and out and out the tread of the tribes behind him. a great horde of mixed-blooded people grabbed up their things and joined the hosts of israel. let us be free too, they begged and moses said yes to them. his fighting men in front and behind with joshua's volunteer boys in the center to give aid and assistance to women and children out and out and out he led. people cried and died and stayed where they fell [aged]
sandra
[laugh]
sophie
aged ones hobbled and were partly carried. old ones crippled by generation behind them and blind by the looks ahead grasped and clutched at young shoulders and gasped dont leave me behind. babies borned themselves and joined the procession. out. out wus sech a big word [in egypt to the hebrews which wus moses]
sandra
[mmhhmm]
sophie
egypt [to the hebrews]
sandra
[hh {heavy sigh, loudly puts down paper, clears her throat, and drinks from styrofoam cup. rod looks over at her}]
sandra, {then, to sophie} sorry, one second; sandra what wuz funny?[you were tickled]
sandra
[i:ize just about to go to sleep. but i:ize laughin)] bout one of them sences she wz readinwhen she wus um readin it
uh huh. about about people cried and died and stayed where they fell.
sandra
yeah, uh huh. an i wuz fallin asleep too. {laughs}

were fallin asleep too? {laughs}. think about this scene, this is thousands and thousands, maybe hun'dreds and hudrends of thousands of people leaving uh

connie

earth
well leaving egypt, leaving egypt, on foot right? or on mules or in carts or with whatever they could carry or drag and whatever else an old people and young people and flocks of sheep and goats an uh just thousands and thousands and thousands of people and some of em died along the way and um babies were bein born. an just the whole of life goes on except this whole show is on the road, right? quite a scene if you think about it. you wanna keep goin sophie, er you wan someone else?
sophie
(nah, someone else)
rod
your throat gettin sore nwo? i'm sure. anybody else want to?..sandra
can i go get some water? {she departs}
sandra
(where are we)
rod
right at "which way moses?" down toward the bottom of 182, which way moses?
which way moses? aaron asked by the wilderness of the red sea. its a whole heap shorter through the land of the philistines. i know aaron, but our people are leavin slavery. it takes free men and su fuh fightin. the philistines let us through [might] let us through. might let us through without fighting but its too much of a risk. if these people see the an army right now, they would turn right around and run back to goshen. so lets hed them fuh the red sea. (the soft murmur of sandals and bare feet kept up in the night ) as moses and his hosts moved on.

1:16:28.6
1:14:35.0

[might] let us through...
ever see another brick again. not even a brick house to live in. my, me neither. where were going
now? out nun out. i dont mean that i mean jus exactly where we goin to (live permanent when we
get out?) moses may not moses may know, but if he does, he he aint tol nobody yet=

rod
=theres that question we were talkin about right? we knew it wuz comin--well, where are we
goin(/)? well OUT. were jest, we're leavin, we're leavin egypt. yeah, i understand but where
are we gonna live permanent, he sed. where are we gunna go? well(/), if moses knows, ee aint tol
nobody yet. awright, daphne.

daphne
you reckon is awright ta ask him. i guess so. you can ask im if you want to to. where is he now? he
wuz just ahead of us a few minutes ago. the two men looked up and became conscious of a
changed rhythm in the multiudes around them and aro behind them. it wus a sor sort of
spontaneous mass mass halt that and they saw the reason why..the reason right away. ahead of
them a short distance wuz a column of fire. what it consumed wuz hard to unerstand, for it tour.

rod
towered
daphne
..t.t
daphne
{gestures} towered [up steady]
daphne
[towered] up steady an solid as no flame they had ever seen. it wus like an illumination that
glowed but nevuh flamed. it brightened the countrysid but nevuh grew mo'uh uh less. what is
that, asked nun in fear. it must be where moses is. you thin he you think it is his right to hand
shining like that?.. you think it is right his rihght hand shining like that? it could be. is nothing
impossible with moses? le's go ahead to see what it is.

1:20:04.2
daphne
the two leaders marching ahead of the host hurried nearer the fiery column and stopped. it wuz
(moving) ahead as if it were borne, but nothing wus holding it up. it is as if its been colored like
lights just move along ahead of moses like a vertical beam. moses, moses, aaron asked, what is
that? {turning page}..

rod
does everybody remember learnin about the pillar of fire and the column of . cloud back in uh
sunday school, [bible school?]
sandra
[mnhmm]
rod
(that was)
sophie
seems we jes had that
rod
oh, did you, [just now, just recently?]
i have no idea how to say that word

ben

mhhmm

rod

the pillar of fire that will always go in front of us at night. it is a sign of the presence. in the
daytime it will be a cloud. go tell the people not to be afraid. when the fiery sign. the people
marched all night and camped next day far from the city of rameses

on the shore of the sea to rest and eat. moses gaze across the water and exulted. next mornin
pharaoh woke up and looked out the window on the city, new and fine, its towers, its parks and
streets which the hebrews had built for his father and him. he had a strange feelin of newness as if
he had not seen these sights for a long time. as if he had awakened among familiar surroundin
after a long horrid dream. then he noticed somethin no work wus goin on around the half finished
public buildin near the palace grounds. he called a servant right away and asked about it. the
servant didn't know. well go find out pharaoh snapped and ordered his breakfast. After a while, the
servant came back an sed that no hebrews had been seen that morning by anybody except a very
sick old hebrew found by the road by some fishermen. no work had been done for two whole
days.. two days, you must be wrong. send to goshen and find out what the matter. some more
foolishness out of that moses i reckon. if it is, i'm through playin with that man. he dies today, him
and all his magic. i don see why i stood him as long as i did. the word came back. a great song was
heard then the whole host of the israelite was seen marching out, driving their flocks and herds
two days ago. nobody has heard from them since. oh that worship they were talkin about. i did say
that they could go. i was too worried about the funeral of the firstborn to notice things. it is a ha
terrible thing to lose a son. then pharaoh became alarmed. (do you suppose) those hebrews have
run away. a lot of people are saying the same thing and they wunt their work done and (they aren't)
getting a bit done today. pharaoh thought a minute and his blood jumped salty. he was angry
with himself. he could have killed moses and saved himself this trouble, but he had yearned to
humble the man first, to outwit him and shame him. then would have come death for moses. but
the man had made a fool of him instead, before the whole nation and now he was gone with the
hebrews as he had threatened. pharaoh was resolved on his death. if he could lay hands on him
now. he rose up with a great scowl on his face.. thats my trouble he said, i'm too good natured.
ths right, you certainly are, all the servants and (courtiers) agreed.

1:24:20.2

ben
..i mus have been out of ma hed to let moses people go off and now we have nobody to work for
us. that is, i mean that just because i wuz grieved down at the death of ma son and ma grandson
and the firstborn of all the other people and se things, this man moses takes advan of ma good
nature and runs off with aw hebrews. an wha should we let them stop workin fo us and go off lak
that, one of the courters assed. its a sin and a shame when you come to think of it. them hebrews
off doin nothing an owah wuk undone.an worse than that, one of the othuh agreed, an they
could be stopped you know. theycntd be very far by now an them on foot too. get me ma war
chariots, pharaoh shouted. six hundred war chariots and me'en to feel them and have them reddy in
haf an hour. i'm goin aftuh those hebrews an i'm goin tuh bring them back. as far as moses is
concerned, i need to keel him wit ma bare hands. that rascal has been imposin on me fuh thirty odd
years. always some trick up his sleeve. git me ma fighting chariot and do it now (\).

people began
to scurry in every direction and pharaoh began to bless hinself fuh wa'uh. my finest sword
and javelin. i am a man of war today an it is the happiest day of ma life. i have been tricked and
tricked and made a fool of ba moses ever since he wus waned from his... {turns page}

his his nurse. he is facing me today fuh the last time=

rod

=186, top of 186

ben
..where are ma chariots an men? with a with a kill-mad cry, the six hundred chariots with pharoah
at the lead thundared out of the city before a cloud of road dust, and raced down the road to way
off. it wus late afternoon of the second day when moses came down to the sea. he ordered rest for
the night and plenty cooking and eating to keep up the strength of the hosts. some people
grumbled about sore feet and some missed their beds an houses. no moses let the elders take care
of that. he went down to look at the sea. he studied the wind and the sky and looked at the sea and
beyond. that wus the way things were when joshua came running an shoutin pharoah, the
egyptians, they are coming down behind us. chariots. moses hurried back to the israelites. by now
the thunder of hoofs and the gro of chariot wheels were easy to hear. women screamed in open
mouthed terror and whimpered in fear. men cursed out and (milled about in great whorls).
some tried to run away to the woods to hide. others just stood or squatted on the ground in dumb
fear, when they saw moses come among them they crowded about him. some clung to him while
others screamed at him. he hook them off roughly and kept marching toward the rear. i alus tol ma
husband not to bother with this mess, one woman sobbed. i tried to tell him we wus gettin along
alright in goshen but he wus so hard headed he had to go an get mixed up in it. voices broke out
everywhere and all (sprung) with fear. the war chariots of pharoah were in plain view now, though
though distance on the plain. moses could hear many things as he (shoved) through the camp.

439
couldnt that man find graves enuf in egypt to bury us all without dragging us out here in the
wilderness to die?

1:28:09.5

then i sed all along that moses wus some fake prophet, that god he made up out of his own hed.
did ah alays tell you all that them egyptian wus nice people tuh wuk fuh. you couldnt fin bettuh
bossman nowhey'uh. the idea of comin an foolin people off from home an leavin em with no
protection, i mean to tell pharoah just how it wus. didnt ah alus say we were better off in slavery
than we would be wanderin all over thu wildaness, followin after some strange man that nobody
dont know anything ab no no nothin about. tell the truth, didnt ah alays say that? i tol you all a
long time ago that we had enuf gods in egypt without messin with some fool religion that nobody
don know nothin about but moses. you all jus let him make a fool out of you. ah always knew it
wus some trick in that. that man is a (pure egyptian) and pharoah is his brother. he jes tol us off so
his brother could butcher us in the wilde=i tol you also. you heard me at the meeting distinctly
telling the man to leave us alone and let us serve out egyptian master in peace, didn you. we wuh
getin along fine. plenty tuh eat an a place tuh sleep an everythang. we wouldn be in the fix we in
now ef that moses had uh let us alone. who aksed him to butt in nohow? our business didn concern
him did it? it wus our back they wus beatin, it wus none of his an ef (we wus satisfied, he
shoulduh been tickled ta def. now pharoah is goin tuh kill us all. great ra, great horus, great thoth,
great isis, and the forty-two gods of the double justice, save us. slowed down by the weight of the
chariots over the rough ground, the horses were comin in a walk. moses reached the rear of his
great huddle of trembling humanity and took his stand between danger and his charges. again he
wus one against all egypt. (listening and) thinking back it wus hard to keep his fillins from flyin to
his hed, he had but to step aside and leave them to pharoah and his servants but pharoah himself
wus drivin the first chariot as the cavalcade approached and he wann'ed to face him and beat him
one last time. he laughed to himself as he thought, pharoah thinks he's pursuing me but its the
other way around {turning page}..

rod
188 now. top

1:30:53.0

ben
but iss the othuh way round. i been on his trail fuh thirty years an now i got.. the old coon at last,
as jericho would say. let me fuddle him up fuh a night and then i will raise mah hand. first and
last, im showin him mah ugly laugh. as chariots drew near the panic grew in israel.they committed
every kind of folly an showed their inside weakness. then moses showed his power again. he
turned his back on the egyptian horde and spoke to his own people. spoke to them in their own
dialect as one of them....

{reads remainder of story, ending at 1:42:38.9}

hmm...whadaya say, whadaya think?

randy
same story just like i told ya jus like in the movie.

rod
from the it wus like tha story in the movie {laughs} and like in sunday school and like in [church.]

[randy
[sunday school]
1953 rod
1954 we hear the moses story right? is this a this is a little bit different version of it right? this is a little bit different. this is her version of it, zora neal e hurston's version and and sophie you really hit on somethin one of the differences in in the language, right
1955 sophie
1956 (yes)
1957 rod
1958 in the language of the every day people(\ that we hear speaking to one another and speaking to moses and complainin about moses and then bein happy when moses wins right? and
1959 sandra
1960 mmhhmm
1961 rod
1962 an then right there at the very end you get somethin very interesting too, moses sits down on a rock after all the chariots of pharoah have been you know drown in the red sea after they crossed over, that miraculous crossing, and WHAT (/) does he think about? .. there jus right there at the very end, what you just finished readin ben--thanks for readin by the way everybody----- he sat there thinking hey, he sed this little voice in his hed sez hey moses, you could go back to egypt and be king. remember this is a man who grew up in the palace of pharoah, he wus a prince of egypt and now pharoah's ded and the armies that were loyal to pharoah were ded, he sez i could go back to egypt and be king. so he's got this, its almost like the devil on one shoulder and an angel on the other shoulder. one of em's tellin im to follow the voice of the lord who called him in the wilderness to be the leader of the nation of israel and the other voice sayin.. hey(\ maybe you could do somethin else. think about yerself, think about all that power an glory you could have. that's kindof interesting. i don think we get that in uhm the old testament story, right, we dont get moses questioning himself, questioning his mission by considering going back to egypt and being king, trying to be king. its just interesting i think that she puts that part in there, that she puts those thoughts in his head... do you like that? do you like the way she wrote that story? [i mean]
1985 chorus
1986 {nodding, general agreement} [yeah, yes]
1987 rod
1988 it's like reading a bible story but it's also a little bit more [entertaining]
1989 ben
1990 [yeah]
1991 sophie
1992 [an all] that an she (_) uh, about tha way they .talk an everything
1993 rod
1994 right
1995 sophie
1996 they got out whut they really wunted to get across they got it out
1997 rod
1998 sophie
1999 thats right, yeah, i think so. i think youre right, [they got it out]
2000 rod
2001 [(i didnt)] know if they [talked] that way.
2009  rod
2010 [yeah they]
2011 sophie
2012 they might've talked that way
2013 rod
2014 right right...an i think it helped..i think it helps...it gives me a different perspective on the story,
2015 anyway, i think about the the individual [people.]
2016 sandra
2017 [peoples] really direckin tha people buh' i think he (laked tha goo' lord bettuh than he lakded
2018 anything). he lakded tha lord.
2019 rod
2020 well he made that choice at the [end] didnt he?
2021 sandra
2022 [mmhhmm]
2023 rod
2024 at the end of the [story]
2025 sandra
2026 [mmhhmm]
2027 rod
2028 he sed alright lord, which way am i to take em? y'know im gonna do whut you asked me ta do, im
2029 gonna lead these people.
2030 yep
2031 rod
2032 yeah, thats right...the next story thats in there and yall take this with you if you wish an then the
2033 next one the tablets of the law is more about the moses story, the ten commandments story as a
2034 matter of fact. so you can read that one on your own if you wish. ahm, uh, lemme ask you the the
2035 like i sed this is our last official meeting you know to do to do the research, that is our last official
2036 meeting with the cameras an tha recorder while we're reading together. theres another part, which
2037 is that i sed in teh consent form early on that i'd like ta sit down with each of you individually for
2038 just (/) a few minutes, i;m thinkin maybe ten fifteen twenty minutes at the most, an just talk a little
2039 bit about what it wus like, so like a little interview. like a little interview just one on one. an if its
2040 alright, we can jus schedule that individually and do that in the next couple of weeks maybe, jus
2041 sometime when you're here anyway and we can sit down and
2042 randy
2043 how many weeks was it?
2044 rod
2045 what?
2046 randy
2047 how many weeks wus it?
we did six, well we did six
rods
sessions and then we did one more cause one of em didn't cause one of em didn't work, so [we really]

randy oo:oh
rod
so we really did seven, seven sessions
randy okay
rod yeah
randy (so th's) tha last one, we have ta say goodbye=
rod =yeah i know, what about that?
randy oo:oh (/) oo:oh (/)
rod whaddaya think about that?
sophie oh, {gesturing} this is ending up today. {?}
randy [iss vey interesting]
rod [yeah, this is our last like i sed official session [where]
sophie mmm
randy oh right
randy with the cameras and stuff like that. one thing i have in mind is, and i want to ask you about it too,
although i interrupted you randy, what were you about ta say?
randy oh nuthing
rod
okay, well, come back to it if you wish, is that we might be able to keep doin this if you want to,
just without the cameras. it wouldn't be part of a research study, but if we're enjoy'ing this

sophie

mmm

rod

it's maybe somethin we could keep doin. you know, if we like doin it, its maybe somethin we
could keep doin. and so i'd like you ta maybe think about that and let me know maybe when we do
sit down and talk for this last interview

connie

for us to keep doin it if we'd like?

rod

yes, if we'd like to keep doin it somehow, and if that's the case, then I can speak with uh, whoever
i need to, which means maybe the therapists and maybe jennifer here and maybe carol booker the
clinical director who you all know about how we could do that. if we want to do that, how we
could do that and when we could do it and that type o thing. so be thinkin about it a little bit if you
would.

randy

=kay

rod

then i'll just get with you i've got all your phone numbers, is it okay if i just give you a call to try
and schedule it?

chorus

{nodding, general agreement} yes, yeah

{connie passes story packet toward rod}

rod

you keep it if you wish, or you can give it back to me, either way

connie

i'll keep this one

rod

okay keep that one that's fine, alright, well, do you want to say anything else about the story or
about the sessions or do we need to say goodbye, I mean that's kinda weird right?

randy

i enjoyed everything.

rod

i have been enjoyin it too

sophie

i have enjoyed it. very interesting stories.

randy

very interesting stories

rod
well good I'm glad, i i really have enjoyed
rody
have enjoyed things
rody
have enjoyed talkin with yall.
rody
an the hospitality wuz great.
rody
{laughs} well, i know erin has enjoyed baking some things, i know thats part of what you're
talking about right, havin some goodies in the morning when we meet.
sophie
very inspiring
rody
well thank you for being a part of this
sandra
thank your wife for baking things
rody
she bake all that?
rody
yep, she did
rody
she's a good cook
rody
isn't she? I'm a lucky guy aren't I? she is a good cook....