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CONNECTED SPIRITS: ADOLESCENT FEMALES AND ANIMAL AGENTS

by

ELIZABETH PARRISH

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in English  
Department of Literature and Languages

Carolyn Tilghman, Ph.D., Committee Chair

College of Arts and Sciences

University of Texas at Tyler  
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The University of Texas at Tyler  
Tyler, Texas

This is to certify that the Master's Thesis of

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For Cliff,

Thank you for making my dreams come true.

To all the animal agents in my life,

past, present, and future,

I thank you.

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## Table of Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Abstract .....  | ii |
| Chapter One General Information and Introduction .....                | 1  |
| Chapter Two Development of Identity and Peer Influence .....          | 4  |
| Chapter Three Adolescents and Relationships with Animals/Nature ..... | 17 |
| Chapter Four Adolescents and the Gendered World .....                 | 29 |
| Chapter Five Animal Agents in <i>The Member of the Wedding</i> .....  | 42 |
| Chapter Six Animal Agents in <i>The Welsh Girl</i> .....              | 56 |
| Chapter Seven Conclusion .....  | 68 |
| References .....  | 70 |
| Bibliography .....  | 74 |

Abstract

CONNECTED SPIRITS: ADOLESCENT FEMALES AND ANIMAL AGENTS

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May 2018

The novels *The Member of the Wedding* by Carson McCullers and *The Welsh Girl* by Peter Ho Davies create a unique opportunity to investigate human and animal relationships given the similarity of their time frames and main characters. Both novels feature adolescent females struggling to resolve their identities against the backdrop of WWII. Frankie Addams in *The Member of the Wedding* and Esther Evans in *The Welsh Girl* share the additional characteristics of deceased mothers, distant fathers, and contacts with animals. Because these books are *bildungsromans*, they permit a comparative analysis as separate experiments in feminine growth with attention to animal influence. Frankie loses her sense of identity and Esther loses focus about her sense of self, yet from the results suggested by the novels, each of the girls finds strength and support from the creatures around and uses these connections as catalysts for completing developmental stages. Frankie and Esther's growth toward autonomy leads to a solidification of their respective identities and successful preparation for adulthood.



## Chapter One

### General Information and Introduction

During my first semester of graduate school, I wrote a short paper on Mark Twain's *No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger* on the topic of the maid who becomes a cat. In Twain's novel set in a 1490 Austrian village, No. 44, a character with magical powers, changes a young maid into a cat. The maid decides her lifestyle will not suffer as a feline and, in fact, will improve. The deciding factors for this young lady come from her limited social position and the restricted opportunities available to her. When she is given the assurance of protection and a guarantee of safety from the male narrator, August, life as a cat presents a better prospect. Twain's story demands attention on two levels: his evaluation of life for females and cats and the reader's ability to accept a girl becoming a cat as credible. Of the multiple scholarly articles on the text discovered during my research, few addressed these topics.

Later that semester, I noticed other connections between females and animals when reading *The Pioneers* by James Fenimore Cooper. Cooper's Elizabeth Temple provides connection between the past and a new America. She lives comfortably in a new settlement in the northern woods and her marriage assures the success of her small town. Elizabeth embraces life in the frontier and appreciates the domestic animals in her life. A novel demonstrating this connection and providing a sharp contrast to Elizabeth appears in *Charlotte Temple* by Susanna Rowson. Charlotte Temple is a young lady unconnected

to the land and creatures and ends up dying early after a pitiful elopement and abandonment by her lover.

Throughout my graduate career, when reading the literature of various genres, a pattern of females in engagement with nature emerges. The lessons from these novels expose the legitimacy of woman working with nature, which is opposed to the traditional theme of man versus nature. For this research project, I wanted to evaluate connections in literature between females and animals through the lenses provided by development theory and ecocriticism. For this purpose, I selected two books: *The Member of the Wedding*, by Carson McCullers, and *The Welsh Girl*, by Peter Ho Davies. They contain significant parallels for a comparative analysis using my selected theoretical lenses, and they generate profound insights into the relationships between female identity formation and the positive influence of animal companions.

Although McCullers, an author influenced by the racial tensions of the southern United States, published her novel in 1946 and Davies, an author of Chinese and Welsh heritage, published his novel recently in 2007, their female characters share multiple similarities. McCullers's work has had years of critical scholarship, yet few mention the influence of the natural environment and animals. A review of the literature on *The Member of the Wedding* reveals topics in categories of gender roles, groups and identity, liminal positions, escape, travel, confinement, racial and social issues, sexuality, economics, and autobiographical insights about McCullers. Most of the scholarship focuses on Frankie's problems of identity as gender related. Frankie's definition of

herself involves resolving her sexual identity, if in fact, she questions this, but this narrow focus by scholars overlooks the facilitators that assist in her identity resolution. Because he is new on the literary scene, research on Davies's novel yields mostly book reviews; it lacks the volume of analysis that McCullers's book has generated.

Study of the two novels discloses that the young, female protagonists find strength and support from nearby creatures and use these connections as catalysts for completing developmental stages leading to a solidification of identity and successful preparation for adulthood. For Frankie Addams, in *The Member of the Wedding* by Carson McCullers, and Esther Evans, in *The Welsh Girl* by Peter Ho Davies, their summers force them to choose either to grow or to stagnate. Frankie loses her sense of identity and Esther loses focus regarding her purpose in life. Neither girl has a mother to guide her during the important summer in which they strive to develop autonomy; Mrs. Addams lost her life when giving birth to her daughter, and Mrs. Evans died of cancer. Additionally, the girls face developing sexuality and more experienced males try to take advantage of them. Frankie escapes from her most dangerous sexual encounter, while Esther does not. These young women find solace and symbolism in proximate creatures, allowing them to stabilize their identities and mature into females with successful futures.

## Chapter Two

### Development of Identity and Peer Influence

Family and peer influence play a role in identity formation and should be considered to assist in the understanding of character growth into societal roles. Before examining McCullers and Davies's protagonists in relation to their animal companions, a background in developmental stages of identity formation and their significance should be explored. The first step in the analysis of Frankie Addams and Esther Evans requires evaluating them as adolescents as Frankie is age twelve, almost thirteen, and Esther is seventeen. After a review of development stages and their influence on development, a focus on the natural world's stimulus on the girls and a case for animals as agents of identity formation will begin. Multiple theorists on child development have outlined significant tasks and the specific stages at which development occurs. Most significant among them are Erik Erikson, Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg, and Robert Havighurst whose respective theories outline developmental stages and tasks associated with the timeframe of the various developmental stages.

Erikson released his work in the 1950s-60s. He categorizes eight stages of "psychosocial development, the changing ways humans perceive themselves individually and in relation to society," and the first four of these happen by age twelve ("Developmental Stages" 314). Erikson divides the earliest four stages:

- Trust versus mistrust: birth to 18 months
- Autonomy versus shame: 18 months to 3 years
- Initiative versus guilt: 3 to 6 years

- Industry versus inferiority: 6 to 12 years. (314)

The focus for early adolescents falls on industry or inferiority wherein individuals begin to master school tasks and social tasks, for example learning to read and write represents specific subject oriented duties for children, and throwing a ball or running well falls into the social area as peers reward others who perform well in sports. Children who master a skill such as spelling or running show industry and build confidence in their abilities. If a child fails to cultivate the appropriate talents, then he or she cannot move forward into the next area of growth, which Erikson labels as “identity versus role confusion” for adolescence from ages twelve to eighteen (McLeod 3). The goal for this stage focuses on settling a sense of self, solidifying identity, and narrowing the roles an individual will fill in society.

Taken together Erikson’s stages four, initiative versus guilt, and five, industry versus inferiority, offer critical insight into the issues facing the main characters in *The Member of the Wedding* and *The Welsh Girl*. Frankie Addams, who has recently turned twelve, begins to question her place in society. Her summer becomes one of isolation and conscious struggle to find where and how she fits into the community that suddenly seems foreign to her. Before the summer, she performs well in school and seems to be popular with the neighborhood children, yet her changing identity keeps her from emulating the behaviors necessary to find acceptance with the older children. Frankie’s interest in motors, watches, and writing demonstrate her success in Erikson’s stage four as she exhibits mastery of several useful social skills, including her claim to be the best

knife thrower. Additionally, Frankie has the ability to move between the white and black neighborhoods, which further supports her confidence (industry) while she also recognizes the limits society places on individuals. All these accomplishments prepare her to move into stage five and the task of establishing her identity. The novel follows Frankie through this stage; her familiarity with the town's social structure aids her in identifying roles open to her as a white female but also places limits on her choices and pressures her to either conform to acceptable roles or reject social standards and do as she pleases. Although her skills instill confidence, Frankie experiences inferiority about her lack of knowledge about sexuality and this hinders her development. Frankie's conversations and dreams reflect her mental process to complete the necessary protocols and move forward.

At seventeen, Esther Evans begins Davies's novel firmly in Erickson's stage five and moves into elements of stage six "intimacy versus isolation," where she must overcome unwelcomed intimacy and decide upon self-enforced isolation or to trust in relationships again (McLeod 4). Esther has to re-establish her sense of identity after she moves too quickly into intimacy with someone she barely knows and finds that her inexperience has led her into danger. Her ability to rebound from the pressures of an unwanted, unplanned pregnancy allows her to regain her momentum. Esther had excelled in school, and she realizes that if her mother had not become ill, she would have done more with her education. Taking on the duties her mother left vacant upon her death, Esther acts as the woman of her father's farm by cooking, cleaning, and running the

household. She also manages to work in a local bar, the Quarryman's Arms, for extra pay and to enliven her routine. The bar allows her to mingle with a variety of strangers and to begin to behave as a young, independent woman. Esther's work both on the farm and at the Quarryman's Arms allows her to take on multiple roles as part of her identity formation and to confirm these roles as she makes decisions about her future. Esther begins to answer the questions in Erikson's industry stage that includes occupation.

Turning from Erikson's to Piaget's work, Piaget classifies four periods of "cognitive development" that allow individuals to "pass from one stage to another not just as a matter of course but only when they are confronted with the correct type of stimulation to initiate a change" ("Developmental Stages" 315). He predicts children cannot develop fully "in the absence of the correct kinds of stimulation" (315). Piaget arranges his stages as:

- Sensorimotor stage: birth to 2 years
- Preoperational stage: 2 to 7 years
- Concrete operational stage: 7 to 12 years
- Formal operational stage 13 to adult. ("Developmental Stages" 315)

His work focuses on the thought process of individuals and the importance of "increasingly sophisticated and abstract levels of thought" that "always occur in the same order, and each builds on what has been learned in the previous stage" (315). If an individual does not experience supporting environments, then he or she may not have the materials to mature into a mentally mature adult. Within the concrete operational stage Piaget suggests children must begin to think outside their "egocentric focus, becoming

able to understand a situation from the view point of another,” which allows them to connect better with peers and family (315). Without the ability to think beyond themselves young adolescents may stagnate and fail in relating to their social world. Once pre-teens respect the emotions of others, they better support society as a whole because they more readily engage in social behaviors and accepted roles. At the point of entering into the formal operational stage teenagers gain the ability to employ abstract ideas, and these “concepts and moral values become as important as concrete objects,” so “they are free to choose between various actions depending on a desired outcome” (315). For Piaget two factors remain vital in the successful growth for an individual: a steady completion of stages and the importance of stimulus.

Based on a Piagetian standard, Frankie Addams falls into the concrete stage but has begun to move into the formal stage. As Frankie crosses town to visit a fortune teller, she passes by the “old brick jail, three stories high” where the “criminals were caged in stone cells with iron bars before the windows, and though they might beat on the stone walls or wrench at the iron bars, they could never get out” (McCullers 123). She express sympathy for those in the jail and tells John Henry, her younger cousin, not to tease them. Her shoplifting early in the summer makes her connect to those who have been caught. Although her crime has not been discovered, Frankie knows the depression of being trapped. She limits herself to the kitchen and the surrounding walls dishearten her. She will not add to the misery of the prisoners for she appreciates freedom. Her ability to empathize has developed so much that she fears society may discover her differences and



compare her with freaks. She sees the differences in society, yet she also makes connections across racial lines, thinking only of the shared similarities between humans through a sense of humankind without adult prejudices. This desire to relate to others escorts Frankie into trouble as she naively believes in the genuine nature of people and lacks the judgment to weigh her suspicions and listen to the warnings her conscious sends her. She appears on task for her age and the absence of her mother seems to be somewhat compensated for by the presence of Berenice Sadie Brown, the family cook, who has helped to raise Frankie.

In comparison, Esther has firmly established herself in the formal stage and deals with the realities of the life around her while enjoying an occasional daydream about a different future. She questions the meanings behind words and raises questions like “why not motherland” instead of “fatherland” that show a subtle understanding of the realities of life. She realizes that adults do not always have answers and some questions are never easily answered. She begins to empathize with people and animals around her. Esther understands that Jim, their English evacuee, needs to fit in with the rest of the boys in town and that he needs to lash out because he cannot process the events around him. Her ability to approach situations logically (i.e. lying about her rape to protect her baby) demonstrates her achievement of Piaget’s formal operational stage.

Working in the 1980s and building upon Piaget, Kohlberg narrows his frames of human development to “formulation of moral reasoning” (“Developmental Stages” 316).

Like Piaget, he requires the completion of one stage before the next can begin.

Kohlberg's theory includes three levels with two separate stages within each level:

- Pre-conventional stage: moral decisions are based on how the individuals themselves are affected
- Conventional stage: moral judgments are based on the conventions of society, family, religion, or other social order
- Post-conventional: moral judgments are based on personal beliefs. ("Developmental Stages" 314)

Kohlberg does not include specific ages but uses age ranges for his levels; however, an analysis of the key concepts in decision making suggests the pre-conventional level features in early childhood, the conventional in the pre-teens, and the post-conventional in adolescence through adulthood.

Applying the levels identified by Kohlberg to McCullers and Davies's main characters situates the girls in the conventional and post-conventional levels. Frankie begins the novel as an outsider since she has rejected membership in the social groups around her, but she judges herself by the moral standards and conventions of her peers, family, and the local society. In her rush to find answers for her questions on identity, she focuses on the conventional social behavior of marriage. Although her attempt to join the wedding party reflects her moral agreement with the norms of her society, she feels restrictions in the confined limits of her kitchen, the traditional feminine realm, and the suggestion of finding a beau to take her places. One of Frankie's issues in finding her identity arises from her rejection of the social limits placed on her sex. As a Southern female, she acknowledges the appropriate dress and customs of a girl in her

socioeconomic class, but she rejects these standards by dressing as a tomboy. However, when Frankie wishes to find acceptance by her future sister-in-law, she puts on the correct attire. As much as she discards the behaviors of a young girl, she fears being wrong and labeled *freak* by those around her. These worries illustrate her place in the conventional stage, but she also starts processing elements from the post-conventional stage when she discusses the limits placed on black women with Berenice. Frankie's ability to comprehend Berenice's situation and acknowledge Honey Brown's awkwardness in resolving his place in the town show her progress in logical reasoning and her ability to make independent judgments.

Esther demonstrates two levels of Kohlberg's reasoning, conventional and post-conventional; she experiences a strong influence from her village and her father, for she fears admitting to being pregnant. She understands the norms of her traditional village and dreads the shame of people knowing about her sexual activity before marriage. Esther wants to impress the war evacuees from the city, the soldiers, and the BBC radio team, so she tries to act older and worldlier. All of these behaviors assign her firmly to the conventional stage; however, she has as many moments in the post-conventional as well. As Kohlberg describes, "moral judgments are internally directed, based on personal beliefs. People in this stage of moral development usually do what they consider is right even if it contradicts social norms" ("Developmental Stages" 316). Esther's attitude toward aiding in the capture of the escaped prisoner of war and the connections she feels with the women of the village who live trapped by marriage demonstrate this. She also

connects with motherhood and begins to change her behavior to protect herself and her unborn child even if she must lie. Later, Esther takes steps to protect her farm and keep it within the family, regardless of the enormity of being a single woman with a child.

A final developmental theory to consider comes from Havighurst who published in the early 1970s. Havighurst, like Piaget and Erikson, breaks development into stages, and he asserts individuals do not stop growth but continue to complete tasks throughout their lifespans. Havighurst's theory builds upon Erickson's ideas. He takes physical, psychological, and social factors into consideration, and his theory allows that individuals will complete levels at various rates after some universal considerations for physical development. He labels the particular time frame most favorable for completing a task as a "*critical period*" (Manning 76). Havighurst's skills to master between the ages of six and twelve include "building wholesome attitudes toward self as a growing organism; learning to get along with age-mates; learning appropriate masculine or feminine social roles; developing concepts necessary for everyday living; developing conscience, morality, and a scale of values; achieving person independence; and developing attitudes toward social groups and institutions" (Manning 75). These duties relate strongly to necessities for daily life and tie to a strong foundation for independence. Havighurst sets the next stage as adolescence occurring between years twelve and eighteen. The goals for this stage include new relationships "with age-mates of both sexes, ...accepting one's physique and using the body effectively, achieving emotional independence of parents and other adults, preparing for marriage and family life, ...acquiring a set of values and

an ethical system as a guide to behavior, developing an ideology, and desiring and achieving socially responsible behavior” (75-6).

Frankie, until the summer in which the novel is set, feels confident in herself and behaves in an outgoing manner; she walks about town visiting with younger children; she leads the attempts to build a swimming pool; she runs a drink stand in her front yard. She writes to her brother and sometimes helps her father in his shop. All these behaviors relate to her connection to those around her. Frankie daydreams about the world and seems to have a genuine interest in knowing about distant lands, including a strong sense of patriotism in her unrealistic goals to support the war in some manner. She loses confidence when her friend moves away and she has a confusing physical encounter with a boy. These unsettling events cause her to act out by stealing and then hiding at home. She fears being caught for shoplifting and for her sexual actions; her remorse demonstrates her conscience and moral standards as she tries to make sense of situations and assign values. She moves into adolescence, encountering difficulties because Barney persuades her into experimenting with a physical relationship before she has acquired enough information on human biology or the maturity to deal with the stress. This event in the garage causes a regression of her maturity. With the loss of Evelyn, her best friend, and the garage coercion by Barney, Frankie must exhibit caution in moving forward into expectations for adolescence. Havighurst labels this “under-protection” because parents fail by “pushing a child or allowing him to drift into a situation that makes demands he cannot meet with reasonable success and from which he cannot retreat without hurting

himself” (203). Frankie’s inattentive father fails to protect her from falling prey to a boy, so she must learn to protect herself; she elects isolation from peers as one method of protection.

Similarly, Esther experiences challenges to her mastery of adolescence because of her father’s under-protection. As for Esther, she steps into the roles her mother’s death leaves vacant to support the farm and assist her father. Esther works and argues to take in a child evacuated from the city. Esther works outside the home, which prepares her for independence and the future separation from her father. She matures with the exposure to the strangers she serves at the Quarryman’s Arms. Gradually through the safety of work, Esther broadens her locally focused view and begins to make choices about her future. Her rape and pregnancy cause her to change her outlook and doubt herself. In both Esther’s and Frankie’s situations, their crises in identity formation may have been reduced or prevented if they had living mothers who could protect them. Havighurst explains when they experience under-protection, “youngsters are pushed too early into a kind of dependence on the approval of other boys and girls, and pay more attention to the desires of friends than of their parents” (203).

One important factor of Frankie and Esther’s trouble with identity comes from social limits imposed by the adult world based on their age group. Denis Sindic discusses the influence of identity on citizenship claiming “the concept of citizenship is not merely legal but also encompasses political and psychological dimensions” (202). As a young American, Frankie feels patriotism toward her country and its efforts in the war, but her

connection to the community does not allow her to build upon her sense of personal identity because she has not become a full-fledged member of society with voting rights and civic responsibilities; she connects only through her father, Mr. Addams. Frankie cannot donate blood because of her age and feels “mad with the Red Cross, and left out of everything” reflecting her lack of identity as a full member of her society (McCullers 24). If Frankie travels, she escapes the confusion she feels in her town because she takes on an identity based on her origin. Visiting other parts of the country will allow Frankie to live the role of a Southerner. She comprehends the importance of regional dress and language demonstrated when “she had gone around pretending to be Mexican” wearing a Mexican hat and speaking a few Spanish words along with made-up words “jabbered in mock Mexican” (McCullers 61). Her plans to visit France or South America allow her to gain a firm “psychological citizenship ...rooted in a sense of identity” with her nationality (Sindic 210). Becoming identified as an American citizen, solves some of Frankie’s identity crisis and connects her to a national identity offering a sense of relief, much like the one she gains when she realizes her brother and his fiancé can provide the group, the “*we of me,*” she needs (McCullers 42).

Esther is older and works, allowing her to feel a stronger relationship with her community. She struggles less in finding external connections but wrestles internally. She and her peers grew up with a dual Welsh and English citizenship. Esther wants to experience the privileged English world over her poor, rural one. Her generation knows the old grudges of the town, how the “strike, all of forty-five years ago, almost broke the

town, plunging it into poverty” and created a rift between those who went on strike and those who returned to the quarry (Davies 27). However, they are not bound as strongly as their parents to the past. Esther feels great pride in her countrymen, but she realizes some of the male pride of “nationalism for what it is, selfishness, and more than that, a kind of licensed misanthropy” (Davies 203). Esther wants to escape the limits she sees, such as the visual reminders of the vacation camp for the tourists and the ruins of British military installations.

Developmental psychology sets out the issues facing adolescents that require mastery for successfully achieving adulthood. While the theories of Erikson, Piaget, Kohlberg, and Havighurst provide clear tasks and expectations, as demonstrated in the application of their theories to McCullers’s and Davies’s protagonists, Frankie and Esther, they also show that much of the guidance for adolescent development is social. Families and peers must nurture and serve as effective role models for individuals to complete the necessary stages.



## Chapter Three

### Adolescents and Relationships with Animals/Nature

Peer influence plays a much stronger role as children move through their teen years, for much of the day is taken up with school and classmates. Because of the extended time away from home, individuals take social clues from friends, students in and above their grade levels, teachers, and school staff. For youth these years offer multiple extracurricular activities pulling them away from home for even longer periods. Summers present many teens further opportunities to bond with friends. Researchers Hanoch Flum and Harriet Porton confirm identity formation “occurs not in isolation but in the context of an intricate relational process. Identity development is a story of connections and separations, of significant bonds that leave their mark through subtle processes. Especially in adolescence, the building block with which identity is forged are carved out of intense relationships” (369). Since peers spend more time together than with their families, they offer resources for support of development; in fact, many classmates work through stages at similar rates. For individuals who lack peer support, like Frankie and Esther, finding the motivation and necessities to move through developmental stages proves more difficult due to a deficiency of human mirrors; teens provide mirrors for each other (Flum and Porton 370). Peers help each other complete the tasks of learning gender roles, developing relationships, gaining independence, learning cooperation, and self-respect. Frankie and Esther lack best friends who can provide a “strong identification, a close selfobject, some protection from confusion, and some

peace” (Flum and Porton 381). Missing human friends to confide in, Frankie and Esther find a relatable secondary source of influence in the animals around them. Examination of their animal models as replacement for family and friends is credible; Frankie and Esther make an intuitive and logical choice.

From birth children are surrounded by animals. After babies learn to focus on items, the objects around them are animals. Parents decorate animal themed rooms for infants and the first soft toys children play with represent animals, from teddy bears to more exotic creatures. Children’s books feature domestic and wild animals, and many alphabet teaching tools include animals to illustrate the letters. Animals permeate children’s stories and the anthropomorphic nature of the storybook characters encourage children to believe animals have the same feelings and desires as humans. Family pets take on the roles of living stuffed toys and offer unspoken support and comfort for adolescents. Childhood memories feature favorite toys, and these toys usually represent a creature of the natural world. Language contains animal phrases and idioms; advertisements use creatures to capture attention. Because animal presence influences human society, animals form an alternative source to fill voids that adolescents encounter as they develop. This proves particularly true for Frankie and Esther who substitute members of the animal kingdom for the missing peers in their lives.

Frankie and Esther’s replacement choice for absent peer support arises organically from the human world around them. Their selection of animals over humans, when evaluated, initially may appear surprising, but is a reasonable choice as animals pervade

society and influence the social subconscious through metaphor and language. Esther observes her community and realizes how fittingly the animal-based term *sheepish* expresses what she sees. Her father parts a crowd the way “dogs part a flock” because “the villagers feel sheepish” (Davies 125). In the bar Esther hears “no pulling the wool over your eyes” and “hold your horses” (Davies 25, 27). She describes a man as a “murky beast” (Davies 46). Esther’s connection of human and animal behavior mimics the technique advertising companies use regularly “because animal characters transfer meanings on to brands” (Lloyd 5). The bull and bear represent strength, a fox appears sly, a cat reflects a great hunter, the wolf a team player, and a chicken signifies fear. Stephen Lloyd relates that advertisers apply “animal symbols” to “elicit responses from the underlying resources of the person. Animal choices are used to describe impressions of ...brands: strong and proud (lions, tigers)” or “those related to beauty, grace, and sinuosity are associated with the snake, python, leopard, swan, panther, and Persian cat” (10).

Although these associations may contain a basis on behavior, many connections come from prejudicial or limited knowledge of animal physiology. The facts do not matter to society overall, for instance the association of rabbits and chocolate (i.e. the Easter Bunny); the populace welcomes generalizations. For example, Frankie falls into illogical cultural beliefs about the *dog days*. She states her cat left during the “beginning of dog days....And the season of dog days is like this: it is the time at the end of the summer when as a rule nothing can happen—but if a change does come about, that

change remains until dog days are over” (McCullers 30). Dogs and cats do not always exist harmoniously, so it appears ironic that her cat disappears under rules governed by the dog. Oddly, Frankie holds no anger toward the cat or dogs, for she accepts this superstitious idea about the particularly hot portion of the summer, which she has heard throughout her life.

Creatures infiltrate expressions in languages around the world. Few civilizations lack proverbs which involve wildlife. Laurie Shannon explores the meaning of the term *animal* by clarifying “Beyond such daily and bodily engagement, animal effects extend to characterizations drawn from the bestiary tradition, with its inventory of attributes (the elephant’s memory, peacock’s pride, dog’s loyalty, rabbit’s fearfulness, fox’s cunning, and so on)” (472). Frankie makes a negative connection to the “old blindered mules going round and round in the same circle, grinding juice for the sugar cane for syrup. In the sameness of her tracks that summer, the old Frankie had somehow resembled that country mule...” (McCullers 49). She cannot see the mule’s tenacity and strength which allow it to keep moving in a repetitive task. Frankie uses the term “hog wild” to describe Honey Brown’s behavior (McCullers 128). She understands this phrase expresses excess activity, yet she also observes Honey’s “lips could move as light as butterflies” appreciating the contradictions in life (McCullers 128). Esther also notes inconsistencies in behaviors when the marriage proposal by Rhys includes the mention of his mother, her favorite teacher, “as if he were dangling Mrs. Roberts before her like a carrot” (Davies 43). Esther applies the analogy herself but resents the underlying implication that she

behaves like a creature without critical thought motivated only by food. Esther and Frankie experience how humans weave their relationships with animals into the verbal fabric of life.

As particular creatures become synonymous with traits, they can become teachers for these qualities. For various cultures worldwide, the animal acts as a spirit guide. The connection a tribe, family, or individual feels to a creature bridges the animal's qualities to the human, so "they often have been selected as obvious representatives of human groups, whether as totems or national emblems or team mascots" (Ritvo 216). Parents use animals to communicate behaviors and to cajole children into mimicking or avoiding behaviors. For example children should learn to swim like a fish because this means they are more likely to survive a fall into water. The phrase quiet as a mouse encourages children to sit still and make little noise. Children want to run like a horse, bringing an idea of limitless strength, power, and speed to their pace. Jennifer Armstrong lists "the courage of the lion, the loyal service of the dog, the skill of the spider, the patience of the ox, the curiosity of the monkey, the fidelity of swans" as mannerisms exemplified in children's books (34). Because of this conditioning by animal laden messages, children remain open to the lessons from the natural world. Frankie equates her conscience to Berenice, a "voice sounded, heard but unnoticed like the buzzing of a fly" (McCullers 63). Frankie acknowledges that flies annoy because of their constant noise but that humans can ignore them much like she ignores the frequent warnings of Berenice. Mr. Addams's hands move "carefully as butterflies," which suggest Frankie comprehends the

delicate nature of their movement and how appropriate this is for working on watches and jewelry (McCullers 64). Esther trying to discover a mutual subject to discuss with an American airman picks chickens when she finds he comes from Rhode Island. She feels proud to own “a half dozen of the rusty pullets” and fails to understand the American may not appreciate having his home known as the chicken state (Davies 160). Esther chastises herself for being pregnant and behaving as a “ewe in heat, no better than a dumb beast, she’s taken the tup at the first time of asking” (Davies 187). Her father calls the sheep “maggots,” but Esther resists this label and her relationship with the animals and land deepens when she needs to defend the sheep’s attachment to the land (Davies 203). Children have to learn empathy and respect for others, but once they value these examples, they find ways to employ them. Armstrong elaborates on the popularity of animals subjects to “encourage a sense of stewardship for the earth and its creatures; to elicit compassion, gentleness, wonder, curiosity, and to learn to extend that out into the world...for children [to] celebrate the triumph of small, defenseless creatures..., and we encourage children to identify with and share that triumph” (34). Frankie expresses concern for the performing monkey and Esther faces off an escaped prisoner of war to milk the cow who is “terrified” by the scuffle in the barn (Davies 242). The girls’ observations of the natural world allow practical lessons to unfold.

Since the world around teems with nonhuman life, children’s experience of animals begins at the earliest age. Williams et al. report the results of a study “indicating the important role pets play in children’s social and emotional development. For many

children having a pet is a source of emotional support and social interaction and helps them avoid loneliness” (14). Adolescents, newly transitioned from middle childhood, begin to replace animals with new interests and school friends, but creatures continue to be an influential component of their lives. Teens lacking schoolmates can experience a strong source of peer influence in the natural world if they remain open to its lessons. Isolated, transient, or victimized teenagers may settle on pets to provide comfort and stability. As a source of comfort, animals play especially important roles during periods of grief. Robert Trites emphasizes “accepting the death of the parent (the ultimate authority figure) creates the ultimate grief, for from it the child learns of his own mortality” (478). Frankie and Esther fall into this category based on the loss of their mothers and their social isolation. Both girls must confront fears about death at an earlier age than most. As Frankie and Esther begin to discover their identities, they move further away from their fathers, the limited single source of suggestions for life, but neither girl has a group of peers to replace the missing or the remote remaining parent. This situation is unfortunate for Frankie and Esther. As Kathy Rudy summarizes, “women seek to work out moral dilemmas through empathy, emotional connection, and interdependence” (31). Frankie and Esther have emotionally removed fathers, so they understandably turn to the animal world to make connections. Finding commonality in pets, farm animals, or local wild life helps these two teens work through requisite developmental tasks.

Children feel special when they have a pet. Children attempt to claim a pet when they cannot own one themselves, for “children who did not have a pet in their own home

reported that they did feel they had a pet of their own (e.g. at grandparents' home, separated parents' home or neighborhood pet)" as Williams et al. found in their research (13). This result affords a clear indication of the desire of children to form bonds with animals around them even when they are not together on a daily basis. Parents add pets to the household in an effort to teach responsibility and empathy to children with the added feature of a playmate for a child. Frankie has a cat she provides for and cares about. The human door has a small "square cat-hole" cut out for the cat and a bowl of milk waits for his return (McCullers 30). Frankie claims her pet cat is a distinct breed, a Persian, but Berenice insists it is a plain alley cat (McCullers 31). Frankie needs to appear unique and important; therefore, her cat cannot fall into a common category and must be a special breed. She also craves attention for herself and drawing attention to the cat brings more focus to her. She craves the physical contact of the cat as a source of affection. Frankie needs this pet to hold and love; its absence leaves another hole in her life. Christina Risley-Curtiss confirms the support from animals "because they offer love, affection, and unconditional acceptance. Companion animals also help families learn about certain life experiences such as responsibility, caregiving, and loss and death" (39). While the initial excitement of providing daily care for a pet may diminish, as Esther knows the routines of the animals come first, adolescents remain attached to their pets. When children transition to their teens, they become better suited to take responsibility for pet maintenance and many excel at this task. Esther begins to look at the farm as more than a duty; it becomes a vocation. She like many other teenagers starts to feel accomplishment



in the care and companionship of her animals. Williams et al. explain animal “ownership offers children the opportunity to engage in nurturing and caring behavior towards another living creature (e.g. feeding, grooming, cleaning, giving and receiving affection),” which benefits children in learning to “relate to other people” (14).

Humans control the world when it comes to resources and animals fall under this jurisdiction. At the time when they must distance themselves to develop, teens feel the burden of parental control. Adolescent search for autonomy places them in increasing confrontation with adults, so in their eyes they experience a lack of freedom, yet every domesticated pet lives daily with a lack of independence. Even though adults set limits for teens, these boundaries offer protection and safety; boundaries on freedom equally serve to protect animals, for fences and leashes keep pets safe. As children detect the limits of being young, adult rules seem arbitrary and harsh. As members of middle childhood, teens begin to notice their social limitations and cultivate the ability to empathize with others. Mammals share a time period of preparing to move away from parents to live on their own; thus teens and animals face similar restrictions and pressures. While subject to controversy in recent years, for legal cases, animal’s rights fall far below those of humans putting them in a powerless situation. Teens can sympathize as they struggle to assert their wishes and desires as they grow. Frankie and Esther react against their limitations. Frankie wants to escape and Esther wants to have choices about her future. Both girls find themselves restricted by the adult community and lacking the control to change their circumstances. Parents control adolescents, and

humans control animals. Moving through maturing cognitive stages, Frankie and Esther can apply their observations from the natural world to their personal situations.

The human and natural world entwine so intricately that humans cannot exist without the non-humans. People need animals for survival, but unfortunately for the beasts, as Rosi Braidotti observes, their “bodies are primary material products: think of the tusks of elephants, the hides of most creatures, the wool of sheep, the oil and fat of whales, the silk of caterpillars, and of course milk and edible meat” (529). Human expansion damages the natural world, yet wildlife needs mankind to protect its survival. Domesticated and wild creatures become food for consumption; their bodies offer meat and products like eggs and milk and byproducts, such as cheese, make up the majority of foods consumed globally. However, beyond the dietary value, animals play important parts in human life. Esther knows the dependence on animals first hand from living on a farm. She sees the symbiotic relationship of man and animal. Frankie knows little of the commercial values of animals and only experiences her pet cat and the wild birds and moths near her home. Animals fill roles beyond food or pets; they act as guardians, companions, therapy, teammates, and entertainment. Fortunately, for adolescents facing the task of establishing their identities, and specifically Frankie and Esther, animals also act as guides.

The foreseeable results of childhood animal connections are the focus of Risley-Curtiss’s study that confirms the “growing body of research supports the powerful relationships between humans and companion and other animals: both positive and

negative” (38). For Frankie and Esther the relationships with animals bring them positive results. Frankie sees a lone buzzard during the return trip from the wedding, a trip she did not expect to make. Instead of the songbirds she usually watches, this single bird flies through the sky reflecting her solitary journey of the summer. The buzzard feeds on carrion, the remains, and Frankie faces life with only Berenice and John Henry as her companions, the leftovers of all the groups she could join. She does not want this option. As the dark buzzard flies in a stark contrast to the bright sky, it echoes her situation; in her mind Frankie rides a bus filled with people who do not understand the tragedy she has experienced and the life she now faces. Her dark feelings and disappointment travel like the buzzard alone in search of sustenance (McCullers 149). She may label this experience as negative, but she grows through her disappointment and does not remain alone.

Evaluating Frankie’s easy connection to the animals around her does suggest a negative possibility: Frankie cannot build and sustain complex relationships with humans. John Archer poses the question that strong bonds with animals exist because of “some inadequacy in the person’s relationships with humans,” yet Frankie’s case contradicts this conclusion because she does not cause the failure of relationships and finds greater consistency in the moths at her window than the humans in her life (242). She suffers from abandonment when her mother dies, her best friend moves away, her cat disappears, her brother marries, and her cousin dies. The creatures around Frankie appear steady, like the monkey who visits town each summer. She learns faithfulness and lack of mercurial temperaments from the moths, cat, and monkey, preparing her to bond strongly

with a new best friend by the end of the novel. Her connections with animals appear normal and healthy; in fact, they allow her to remain receptive to contacts with others. Esther has positive experiences with animals even though living on a farm exposes her to harsh realities about life and death. She enjoys the company of the farm dogs and the consistency of milk and eggs that the cow and chickens provide. She sees a steady nature in the cycles of the animal life around her and this calms her. Animals form a significant part of her life experience. Both girls find their conditioned acceptance of nearby animals helps them during times of crisis. The human and animal connection allows Frankie and Esther to find natural, logical examples to study as they work through the process of their development.

## Chapter Four

### Adolescents and the Gendered World

Exploration of literature on children and the environment confirms the young have an affinity with animals and nature as writing “both professional and popular, is replete with evidence of the positive effects that animals can have on humans...” (Risley-Curtiss 40). For female adolescents this connection may strengthen or weaken as they become increasingly involved in school, extracurricular activities, and dating. Females who turn to the landscape and its denizens for refuge will find the wild supports them as nature most often is feminine when assigned a gendered representation. Evaluating the landscapes of Frankie and Esther, heroines of *The Member of the Wedding* and *The Welsh Girl* respectively, the non-human world around appears to them strongly female, permitting the girls to relate and find solace in the land and creatures that also experience limitations imposed by a male dominated society.

As male explorers launched expeditions from European societies, the world became female. The earliest pioneers wanted to master and tame the wild, less populated continents and claim them for their countries, so these worlds, even in their most deadly and treacherous states were gendered as women. The language used to describe the movement across oceans and continents appears harsh and commanding. Men sought to conquer; therefore, the world became Mother Nature allowing males of the world to triumph over this remote mistress. Terms illustrating mastery such as harvesting, plundering, and pillaging the resources of other lands abound in accounts of exploration;

lands appear as “possessions valuable in proportion to the pecuniary advantage which they [bring] to the mother country” (Chamberlain 1). The sea becomes the lady sailors cannot ignore; mines are forced to give up their treasures to the men who mine them. Literature holds countless references to the exploitation of the land by men reflecting a powerless nature under male control. Victorian literature, in particular with serialization of explorers’ accounts, brings the gendering of the natural world from the subconscious into social focus, for “imperialist romancers reflect on the idea of the earth as feminine” (Patteson 6). As possession through colonization efforts increased, the language applied to land ownership at home and in distant countries reflected the ideals of society, specifically England, the great colonizer, as “still able to send forth troops of stalwart sons to people and to occupy the waste spaces of the earth” (Chamberlain 10). Despite progress on the issues of women’s legal rights and citizenship in the United Kingdom and the United States, the gendering of the natural world as female persists. For example, the perception that nature needs the male to protect and represent it places undeveloped areas squarely in roles that women abdicated when they gained equality in the eyes of the law. Plants and animals cannot speak for themselves, and patriarchy asserts that humans must oversee their interests. This situation creates a bond between females and the realm of nature around them.

Frankie and Esther exist in societies dominated by male influence because the novels’ timeframes occur at the end of WWII in which countries were united in their focus on the military and male achievements. Civilians listen to radio reports of military

advancements and read papers about battles and grounds gained. Soldiers pass through cities, and their presence remains a backdrop to life in the towns. Frankie observes effects of male controlled war efforts saying the world seems “cracked by the loud battles and turning a thousand miles a minute” (McCullers 37). Esther thinks the “war has gone on so long—her whole life, it feels to her sometimes—it’s hard to imagine it ever ending, despite the victories” (Davies 188). Women and girls make sacrifices to support the war effort. Frankie imagines joining the war or donating blood so part of her can travel and take part in the male domain. Esther also tries to envision the action taking place in nearby continental Europe. If the social worlds around Frankie and Esther are masculine, the physical world remains feminine. Living in the male-gendered human world, the girls need guidance through the challenging developmental tasks they face on the road to adulthood; they find initial help in female-gendered nature, which leads them to interact with the environment and the animals closest to them.

From the start of her story, Frankie feels alone and fights the world around her. Her reaction to ignore the obvious solidarity of the plants around her corresponds with the human rejections she encounters. As Frankie the tomboy, she does not recognize the vegetation as a victim of male centered civilization. Yet, the natural world persists even though Frankie often reacts as if it works against her. Frankie’s spirit wilts over the summer from her burning need to find and solidify her identity; similarly the plants lose vitality and become husks under the summer sun. As Frankie walks through town, she sees “glimpses of brown river and green trees (McCullers 56). The vegetation along the

river stays fresh, but Frankie barely notices because she believes the wedding will supply her needs. She fails to appreciate the metaphors of the river and the trees. The river in town appears muddy and uninviting which parallels her confusion and lack of clarity. Like her counterpart the constantly moving river, Frankie maintains motion, but she fails to arrive at a destination because her path is muddied. Frankie reacts to her identity confusion with behaviors she knows to be inappropriate. Because she lacks clarity and moral grounding, she commits multiple petty crimes, and these actions place her in a position outside of her true character and the feminized landscape around her, making her future uncertain.

Frankie thinks of female associations to nature, like “bright flowered islands and a land by the northern sea with the gray waves on the shore.” However, her next thought of “bombed eyes and the shuffle of soldiers’ feet” causes the masculine presence to overshadow the feminine (McCullers 37). She has conflicts with the landscape’s failure to support her, and she initially lacks the ability to shift her view away from a conflicted world to embrace nature. Her room contains “a lavender seashell,” which encourages her to temporarily link to nature when she listens to the shell to “hear the warm wash of the Gulf of Mexico, and think of a green palm island far away” (McCullers 11). She holds the “snow globe to her narrowed eyes and [watches] the whirling white flakes fall” to help her imagine Alaska (McCullers 11). This action provides some comfort as she reflects on a “snowy wasteland,” “colors in the ice,” and “cold white gentle snow” (McCullers 12). Experiences with the items in her room help Frankie begin to see nature



as more feminine, and those are the moments when she connects to the creatures around her and moves forward to establish her identity.

Esther, however, thrives in the country despite wanting to experience life in the city. When she visits Liverpool, she quickly realizes her inexperience and the lack of support in the developed concrete and brick city. In contrast the (female) undeveloped countryside offers protection as if nature itself connects to Esther. When she accepts the reality of her pregnancy, Esther notices the parallels in nature to her situation. Individuals who acknowledge and appreciate the natural world do far better when faced with conflict or developmental issues. Cynthia Thomashow explains, “the tensions of adolescence play themselves out in the milieu of the natural world,” and relates her observations of teenagers “when the lines of distinction between nature and the self disappeared, the teens [like Esther] entered into a way of thinking about themselves through nature” (260).

Identifying an affinity with the natural world stimulates adolescents to progress in setting their identities outside of human social bonds, the “models of living other than the cosmetically driven social world” (Thomashow 264). For Frankie in self-imposed isolation and Esther in a similar state of limited social contact, turning to examples in the adjacent female gendered world of plants and animals links them to something larger and safer than the fickle human world. Frankie sees rejection by her peers saying, “they have been spreading it all over town that I smell bad. When I had those boils and that black bitter smelling ointment, old Helen Fletcher asked what was that funny smell” (McCullers 12). Her embarrassment makes her avoid other teens. She plays with John

Henry who also rejects her when he does not want to come over. The incidents with Barney and later the soldier make males dangerous and untrustworthy. Frankie finds nature unsatisfying yet safe. Similarly, Esther finds that males take advantage of innocence, and like Frankie, Esther has no close friends. Her daily conversations consist of talking with her father, Jim the evacuee living with them, the customers at the bar, or herself. Often Esther uses her comprehension of the world to teach herself. When the village fears for its safety due to the escaped German prisoner, she stops outside at night to test “herself for fear. And there’s nothing. Not even when she feels a puff of air against her neck” (Davies 239). She analyzes what might have caused the air and settles on the “owl from the barn” hunting in the field (Davies 239). Her assumption proves correct as she soon hears the owl; her ability to recognize the sounds around her and know the patterns of the creatures illustrate how comfortable Esther feels in nature. Her mind reads subtle messages from the animals and plants and helps her decode the world. Her experience with the owl and the night assists her to define bravery as “absence of fear” (Davies 239). Sobel relates the importance of the connection with nature because “this sense of deep empathy, of being saturated with nature, yet unique and separate, is one of the core gifts of middle childhood. The sense of continuity provides the foundation for an empathic relationship with the natural world. The sense of separateness provides a sense of agency, of being able to take responsible action for the natural world” (Sobel 17). Esther proves to be a good caretaker of the farm when she takes over from her father. Likewise, Frankie never harms the moths or tries to catch them in a jar; she wants them to

remain free. She offers the monkey comfort during their extremely brief meeting and feels sorry for his fear and confusion. Clearly, the girls lean upon the wild world around them for support and in that world they learn empathy.

For Frankie finding a connection in nature provides her a chance to recover from her loss of a best friend and the constant absence of a mother. She moves through the yards of her community without concern until the summer. She describes how nature has turned against her when “the trees were bright dizzy green, but later the leaves darkened, and the town turned black and shrunken under the glare of the sun” (McCullers 3). Frankie cannot yet name the source or sources of her discontent, so she mistrusts people and the environment. Instead of being open to her immediate location, she focuses on the outside world, which she wants to see and experience. Traveling as a theme runs throughout her thoughts: “she wanted more and more to leave the town: to light out for South America or Hollywood or New York City” (McCullers 26). Feeling rebuffed by everything close, she responds by discarding any positive elements associated with nature. Her life feels limited and overheated “like a green sick dream, or like a silent crazy jungle under glass” (McCullers 3). The sun, most often gendered as male in mythology, dries out the plants and takes the energy from the town and Frankie. She describes this as the “flowering spring was over and summer in the town was ugly and lonesome and very hot” (McCullers 26). Her confused stage suffers more during the harsh light of the male ruled world, watched by the sun.

However, at night under the influence of the moon, a gentle feminine object, Frankie begins to find clarity. She has an epiphany standing outside as night falls and then she notices the “lavender sky,” the “slanted starlight and twisted shade” and realizes that she stands in “a night so beautiful” (McCullers 46). After her solution of joining the wedding, she can experience her connection to the world again; Frankie labels herself F. Jasmine and describes the world as “no longer separate from herself” and “all was natural in a magic way” (McCullers 49). The cool moonlight stimulates Frankie’s thoughts in opposition to the withering severity of the bright sunlight. The signs of support by nature swirl around her, and by slowly connecting to the moths and the cat Frankie prepares herself to move freely in the day, a girl triumphing over the harsh sun. Her movement toward her identity needs the support of the “pale spring twilights, with the smell of dust and flowers sweet and bitter in the air, ...when the chimney swifts had gathered and whirled above the town and flown off somewhere to their home together, leaving the sky empty and wide...” (McCullers 25). Since the evening and night bring relief to Frankie, she may subconsciously feel a pull to enter the Blue Moon bar as it reflects the safety of the softer light of the moon, which she can stand, and blue also brings an association to the water of her island, represented by the shell in her room, or the cool, blue ice of glaciers.

Although, the river in town affords a constant to Frankie, she does not appreciate its steady presence. Like other influences in Frankie’s life, the river takes a subtle role. Water suggests change and rebirth, yet Frankie does not visit the river. The river stays a

muddy brown similar to the memory of her brother's face, which has "become masked and changing, like a face seen under water" (McCullers 6). She craves the ice of Alaska and snow yet ignores the opposite state of flowing water. She also forsakes building a pool during this summer. Frankie avoids digging in the dirt and suffers for it. Her height makes her "too tall this summer to walk beneath the arbor as she had always done" (McCullers 8). She cannot "walk around inside, give shows, and have a good time" in the arbor. She limits herself to "pick from the edges," around the arbor as nature forces her to make choices and adapt (McCullers 8). Her behavior around the arbor replicates her social behavior during the summer as she hovers on the edge of society. Frankie needs the soothing connection with water, plants, and dirt to settle her fractured spirit. By ignoring or denying the supportive elements that help refresh her, Frankie takes longer to overcome the doldrums and thwarts her development. The verdant plants slowly turn to black, and she cannot use the arbor, so she looks at the "tangle of dark vines, and there [is] the smell of crushed scuppernongs and dust. Standing beside the arbor, with dark coming on, Frankie [is] afraid" (McCullers 8). Finally, during the aftermath of the wedding fiasco, she sees only a buzzard in the sky. While her observations add to her feeling of loneliness, nature reflects her emotions. She notices the correspondence to her mood, but does not recognize the solace or the solidarity it offers. Although the world around Frankie may fail to inspire, pull her from despair, or provide an answer, it mirrors her moods. When she does embrace nature, the support from flora and fauna feeds her spirit, eventually allowing Frankie to find lessons in the life mirrored around her.

Esther finds her life moving in directions she cannot control and feels betrayal from the human landscape around her. Her first visit to the swimming pool at the abandoned vacation resort disappoints her. She grows up imagining the glamour of swimming in a pool instead of the neighboring ocean. A pool belongs to the social groups beyond her: movie stars, the English, and vacationers. When she ventures into the pool to pursue a relationship with the eternal Welsh enemy, a British soldier, she is raped and becomes pregnant. Esther finds that the manmade version of the natural world, the pool for the wealthy at Sunnyvale versus the seaside the locals use, puts her in danger. The visit to the pool forces her out of adolescent play, and Colin, the soldier, causes her to abandon her dreams of leaving home. When she escapes him and spends time on her farm, she appreciates the routines of the land and animals; she finds the encouragement to continue with her life. In addition to the animals, which help her to heal her damaged spirit, the plants and landscape offer comfort until she regains her confidence. Later, Esther dreams of swimming with Karsten, a German POW, mirroring the unification of two Hollywood stars, Esther Williams and Johnny Weissmuller. Water offers a conduit for healing when she asserts a mental claim over the pool that harmed her. The sea sends Karsten back to her. Her train trip along the sea lets Esther appreciate the harsh beauty of her country and begins to rebuild her pride in the resilience of the Welsh and, by extension, herself. Thus, she rebuilds her psyche through the relationships with the environment.

Esther loses a favorite sheep because of the male world. When Karsten escapes and the guards track him through the fields, their dog kills a ewe, so the male world invades the quiet of the family farm and takes the ewe Esther and her mother rescued. Events like this let Esther see the vulnerability of nature based on the impact of the male world, yet she also notices its strengths. As if to help her, the seasons change and the cooler winds require Esther to wear “heavy sweaters, swaddling herself in her long winter coat,” which help conceal her pregnancy (Davies 233). She begins to think of the land as a mother which protects and mourns its children. She hears Mrs. Roberts say, “they call it the fatherland...I wonder how the mothers feel about that. How did they ever let the men get away with that one?” (Davies 128). Later, Esther repeats this idea as she has the capacity to acknowledge the gender of the physical world, rightfully dubbing it motherland instead of fatherland. The prologue tells of the harsh winter, which destroys many flocks, but Esther’s flock survives because of her connection to the farm and the identity she claims, an identity that brings Karsten to her aid. She meets Karsten because of the land. The sheep lead her to him and later guide him to her. Esther finds friends in the natural world.

An unexpected source of feminine assistance comes from the quarry. The quarry represents a dual image: the power of men to take from the land and a womb growing the slate offspring of Wales inside. Mr. Evans brags about the slate of Wales covering the roofs of Europe. The slate quarry houses the national treasures of England during the war to protect them from bombing. Mother Earth hides the precious objects, and the slate

quarry hides Karsten, on his first night as an escapee, like a mother protecting a child by covering him with her own body. Karsten experiences a rebirth when he emerges from the quarry. The quarry initiates a new chapter in Karsten's life because his priorities change. Because Mr. Evans visits the quarry to ingratiate himself with its custodian in hopes of a job, Karsten finds his way to the farm, thus, in another small way, the quarry aids Esther in sheltering a friend and helping him find his way to her.

The quarry also plays a role in Esther's inheritance of the farm. The desire to work in the slate quarry enchants her father; consequently, Esther assumes the dominant place on the farm as he works less with his land and animals. The slate quarry seduces and leads to the destruction of this proud man when he picks it, like a mistress, over his farm. Esther notices that her father looks at the farm as a second choice to working in the slate quarry and resents maintaining "the flock, preserving the *cynefin* passed down through the ages, the weight of all that time, is more responsibility than he wants. They're a burden to him, the flock, the land. Maybe even her. Isn't this *my* birthright, she wants to cry..." (Davies 204). This realization about her father's preference for work in the quarry helps Esther make choices and find her voice. Mr. Evans eventually dies in the quarry, due in part to his own carelessness, giving Esther control of the farm.

Of the two protagonists Frankie and Esther, Esther exhibits a greater awareness of the sympathy of nature. Living on her farm in rural Wales predisposes her to notice the changes in weather and animal behavior. Because Esther has more contact with the environment, she more readily draws from the examples nature sets around her; Esther



has practical experiences. Frankie likes exploring the town and finding places and people. She has an inquisitive personality and needs to physically experiment with her world. She enjoys working with the tiny mechanisms inside watches; she exhibits an experimental approach, trying to reason why moths come to the window. Frankie and Esther both use their contacts with nature to help them with their development into adulthood.

Thomashow relates that teens “often claim a landscape, an animal, or some other natural feature as a metaphor for growth” (264). Frankie fixes on Alaska as a contrast from the heat of the summer. The idea of “snow and frozen sea and ice glaciers. Esquimau igloos and polar bears and the beautiful Northern lights” bonds her to nature (McCullers 6).

Once she understands the support of nature around her, Frankie does not need the dream of Alaska to sustain her because she moves to creatures instead. Esther moves from dreams of swimming pools to the seaside and hills with waves of sheep. When Esther connects to the land she farms, she draws from the daily experiences with farm animals to create personal growth; the only metaphors Esther needs comes from the farm. Because Frankie and Esther gain support through nature, they become open to learning from the natural world and the animals that they notice during their daily activities. This openness is essential to their personal development.

## Chapter Five

### Animal Agents in *The Member of the Wedding*

Summer offers months of freedom for most adolescents; the break from school allows time to enjoy life and reflect on the world in the days that stretch out full of expectations. Some, however, find their summers full of expectations turn into months of absences and disappointments. The summer she turns twelve feels like a summer of absences for Frankie Addams. Frankie misses several humans from her life in a small Southern town, and she discovers herself looking for direction. Frankie cannot replace the mother that died at her birth. She cannot make her self-contained father pay more attention to her or force her enlisted, engaged older brother to return to the family home. She begins the summer without her best friend, Evelyn, who has moved to Florida. Frankie, stranded and deserted by even her cat states, “It looks to me like everything has just walked off and left me” (McCullers 31). With her community before her, Frankie turns inward and indoors, avoiding the world and dreaming of something to fill the voids in her life and in her self-identity. She cannot label what person, item, or event might bring her an answer but settles on her brother’s wedding as the solution. The wedding’s failure to provide the solution pushes her to find another relationship to establish her identity. Frankie needs a mirror for “reflection and self-examination” (Flum and Porton 370). Frankie uses the moths, her lost cat, and the monkey of the traveling organ player as mirrors for her identity formation.

Each of these animal meetings offers a lesson to Frankie's subconscious mind. She connects the lessons and moves out of her confusion a little more with each experience. By the end of the summer, Frankie uses the internalized information gained from creatures to propel herself into a secure identity and to successfully join society. Elizabeth Anderson shares the psychological principle point "that if three important needs [mirroring, idealizing, and alter ego] are not met, especially during critical early growth and development, problems will develop. Experiences, people, animals, ideas, and other objects can meet the required needs..." (21). Anderson's point clarifies Frankie's ability to progress without peers. In fact, at the end of the novel Frances, Frankie now uses her given name, finds a new best friend and welcomes the move to a new house shared with her father and her aunt and uncle. She advances enough to not suffer at the loss of Berenice, who has played an important role in Frankie's life since her earliest years. Accomplishing "an entire adolescence of experience and growth" over the summer based on the examples offered through her animal encounters, Frankie deals with multiple changes that would have upset and paralyzed her a few months earlier (Raphael et al. 211).

Losing her mother at an early age denies Frankie a female role model, and without her best friend she becomes lost inside her adolescent personality. Since she lacks a mother, "Frankie's view of herself depends on the contribution of otherness to her identity" (Abernathy 95). She knows the appropriate behavior for a young lady, but she has an independent nature and rebels at the roles assigned to her. She must fix herself so

that she can reconnect with her community. Frankie has an aunt, the mother of her cousin and playmate, John Henry West, but Aunt Pet does not maintain enough contact to satisfy Frankie's need for a close female mirror. She models Berenice in several ways. Jeff Abernathy claims, she "looks to Berenice" as a surrogate for "a moral guide and as model for self-discovery" (85). However, Frankie cannot completely accept Berenice's example because, according to Chad M. Jewett, she discovers "a set of signifying closures beginning and ending with race, but encompassing sexuality and equations of sexualized racial identity" (96). Frankie respects Berenice's opinion and knowledge but senses the division between their potential based on judgments about Berenice's education. Frankie has ambitions to be a writer, playwright, traveler, yet she seems to intrinsically feel the limits of Berenice's future. Regardless of her color, Berenice's imagination is limited and it falls victim to her superstitions because of the "drastic separation imposed by the politics and economics of race" (Groba, "So Far as I" 72). Frankie worries over Berenice's failure to comprehend the extent of Frankie's identity crisis.

Ghosts of the missing females in her life surround Frankie. Frankie has no memory of her mother; Mrs. Addams leaves only a faded photo. At age nine, Frankie loses her grandmother, and now her best friend has faded away. Frankie attracts "pale green moths and yellow moths" to her window each evening to reflect the missing women in her life (McCullers 13). Michael Ferber explains the association of moths with the soul describing that ancient "Greek vase painting sometimes show a butterfly leaving the mouth of a dying person" (37). Frankie's mind holds the fluttering images of

matriarchs in her family like moths in a jar. The moths, creatures of the night, visit when Frankie feels lonely and is primed to think about her identity and her future. It seems she can call “the soft moths [to] tremble and press against the window screen. The moths came every evening when the lamp on her desk was lighted. They came from out of the August night and fluttered and clung against the screen” (McCullers 13). Her ability to summon or dismiss the moths gives her power and authority, which allows Frankie control and opportunities to express empathy. “Sometimes a butterfly is a messenger, a kind of angel, that brings grace or a change of heart,” and Frankie finds hope in the moths (Ferber 38).

Frankie tells the moths they can fly to any place they want, and this assertion contains several levels of meaning. Anna Young explores “the dual motifs of captivity and escape” and how they form, for Frankie, a “search for belonging and the development of her gender identity” (81). In her summer of crisis Frankie wants to escape, and she understands that the moths have an ability she does not, to fly and leave the town behind. Frankie on a conscious level understands moth’s attraction to light but, clinging to the illogic of youth, suggesting the moths can break away from their instincts and travel. She tells John Henry, ““it is the irony of fate....The way they come here. Those moths could fly anywhere. Yet they keep hanging around the windows of this house”” (McCullers 14). As a human, Frankie surely has a stronger chance to break free than the delicate moths with dusty wings, for her potential allows her to do greater things than the simple, impulse driven moths. Sarah Gleeson-White notes the “inherent human

possibility of transformation ... manifested in the recurrent images of flying,” yet Gleeson-White fails to connect this to Frankie’s interaction with the moths (118). Moths have morphed from caterpillars into flying creatures. This transformation lets Frankie know even the ugly state she feels trapped in will pass and she can emerge as her true self. Frankie believes if she finds the right answer, she will again feel normal and not become a *freak*; this belief is apparent in her preparations for the wedding.

Frankie looks to Janice, her future sister-in-law, since she cannot find the connection she desperately needs with Berenice, her cook. Their meeting enchants Frankie, but the engaged couple visit for a few hours and then leave, so Frankie faces another absence. Janice becomes an element of light for Frankie, a flame for her internal moth, so she plans to run away with Janice and Jarvis; this plan adds to the attraction of the couple. Like a lamp attracts a moth believing the light source to be the moon, Frankie becomes a moth flying toward a replica of what she needs that will only harm her. Her choice of dress colors reflects Frankie’s connection to a moth, or in this case a prettier version, the butterfly. John Henry even calls the moths ““beautiful butterflies”” (McCullers 13). In her attraction to the wedding and a possible connection to a familial woman to replace the ones lost from her life, Frankie tries to match Janice and the butterflies by selecting an elaborate dress with a bright color.

The moths in the story appear to travel in groups, and Frankie desperately wants to find a group, but she has lost her sense of identity and will not allow herself to join with anyone other than the drab group of Berenice and John Henry in the kitchen. The

kitchen group and the moths share similarities. The moths do not leave the warm light of Frankie's lamp and Frankie cannot seem to leave the warm, hot kitchen. She has been circling the kitchen all summer even though she wants to move far away. Like the moths she judges for not leaving, she judges herself for not escaping the kitchen. The kitchen seems to burn Frankie like a moth getting too close to a light. The kitchen attracts her but repels her at the same time. She knows her confinement is unhealthy, but Frankie fears leaving the dull safety of her home. She projects her feelings to the "green-and-white moths" saying they are "nervous at the window screen" (McCullers 150). The kitchen serves as Frankie's cocoon. She turns to it as a protective shield against the world. She hides in this warm and safe environment although she wishes to escape. The hot, confining kitchen helps her transform into a butterfly, her idea of what it means to be a young woman. Renaming herself F. Jasmine reveals Frankie's attempt to emerge from the confines of the culinary cocoon as a new being, one transformed as into a beautiful new creation.

The novel's division into three sections parallels Frankie's changes of identity (Young 82). Frankie begins the novel restless, insecure, and trapped, but she emerges at the end a transformed creature. She begins the book in her larval or caterpillar stage. Her restlessness during the summer takes place because she must mature; Frankie does not understand that she is entering a normal developmental stage in life that helps her to mature and prepare for the future. Like a larva or caterpillar she confines herself to her home. As the novel moves to section two, noticeable by the name F. Jasmine, Frankie

moves through her pupa or chrysalis stage. She begins to wear finer clothing and selects her dresses carefully, abandoning her tomboy uniform of shorts and t-shirt. Before the wedding she goes out to purchase a new dress for her wedding appearance as F. Jasmine Addams. As a newly emerged moth or butterfly, she must change colors and become a more social creature. The novel follows Frankie on her walk through town greeting and discussing her plans. She will soon, on Sunday during the wedding, show herself in her completed form. Frankie's choice of an "orange satin evening dress" suggests her connection to the butterfly over the less noticeable moth (McCullers 89). She changes her association from the scarcely observed insect that travels in night to a showier version that travels by day. She begins to feel safe moving in the daylight. The moths provide the first bridge for Frankie's connection to her identity and suggest a means of transformation into a butterfly.

Frankie gains material for her sense of identity with help from a second animal, her cat. Cats behave more self-sufficiently than dogs, making them a better choice for Frankie's pet. She calls her cat *Charles* or *Charlina* (McCullers 32). As she rejects membership of all groups, she gets similarly rejected when "Charles disappeared. Frankie does not see him leave the house and walk away, but ...when she called him to his supper, he did not come, and he was gone" (McCullers 31). Because the cat disappears, Frankie has only Berenice and John Henry. Her cat is a non-intrusive presence; he moves quietly on the fringe. The cat represents a change in strength and attitude for Frankie. The male cat, a tomcat, suggests Frankie's behavior as a tomboy. Frankie, up to this point in



the novel, behaves more often in a masculine manner, so the male cat fits better with her persona than a female cat. When Berenice tells Frankie that Charles has run off to find a friend, Frankie welcomes the opportunity to have a cat family. Frankie believes this will offer her an opportunity to connect with a family situation, a group of her own.

The cat represents the next step in transforming her identity conundrum into to a point of clarity. Frankie only sees the moths at night making them ephemeral creatures that contrast to her cat, which she sees both night and day. The cat wanders through the neighborhoods and may stop at homes that feed him. He may have continued wandering or been injured, and his absence worries Frankie, causing her to daily say “exactly the same words...’If only I just knew where he has gone” (McCullers 31). In some ways, the cat suggests her mother, a presence Frankie cannot keep. On the surface, her search for the cat acts as a search for a missing companion who provides a comforting physical presence, but at a deeper level this hunt reflects Frankie’s lost mother. Frankie has a nurturing relationship with her cat, for she feeds it and provides it a home, but, like a child who eventually leaves the parental home, the cat follows its instincts to roam. Frankie’s failure to keep the cat tied to a secure home implies her inability to succeed in the traditional role of a mother to a child. This failure has ramifications concerning her move toward adulthood as she begins to internalize the socially dictated roles for women. If she cannot care for a cat, how will she be able to care for a home and family someday? Subconsciously, she believes that she fails as a caregiver, just as her mother had failed. A parallel also exists between Frankie’s ideas of travel and the cat’s disappearance. Without

a good mother figure the cat abandons his home, and perhaps this suggests a path for Frankie to follow; she might need to leave all the benefits of home, food, shelter, and family behind to create a new place for herself.

Unlike the unalterable loss she suffers with her mother's death, Frankie searches for the cat. She recruits her cousin John Henry and the police in the pursuit of the cat. Clearly, Frankie expends effort to bring the lost child home in contrast to her lost mother who never returns. If the cat returns, he will be greeted with rejoicing and forgiveness by Frankie. She may try keep the cat indoors to prevent him from roaming for a time, but the cat will be allowed out. Frankie cannot keep her pet locked up, just as she can only temporarily confine herself. She limits herself all summer to her home and yard, yet, eventually, Frankie takes to the streets of her town. Part of her growth comes from her ability to become F. Jasmine and move through society again. The metaphor of the tom-cat, Charles, to tomboy Frankie points to the developmental tasks before Frankie. Like the cat, she hunts through the night and the day, not for mice or birds, but to find her identity.

Thus, Frankie reaches the age to question and seek answers about her mother's death, find acceptance, and evaluate her loss. Frankie connects this task with her cat because "companion animals can help 'restore the self and maintain it'" (Anderson 22). She exhausts herself in the search, reflecting her mother's death in giving birth to Frankie. Frankie's reluctance to accept the loss of her cat provides an example of the love between a mother and child, which she has lost. Frankie similar to a good mother cares

for her cat and worries for his safety. After he disappears, Frankie continues to search for him demonstrating the strength of her love. She realizes a mother can love a child and do her best but still lose him. Frankie can translate this realization to her mother so Mrs. Addams can remain a good mother although absent. The cat allows Frankie to process her mother's absence so that Frankie gains confidence in her ability to care for and protect family, including the relationship between a mother and daughter.

As Frankie travels from insect to mammal to upright mammal, she emerges from her cocoon of childhood into her adult form. She realizes she cannot simply fly away and neither can moths. The cat can run away, but Frankie cannot. As a young woman, she will not be safe traveling alone. Frankie's date with the sailor convinces her that she lacks the adult knowledge to safely enter the world alone. Her adolescent cat may safely leave the protection of his home, but she does not have the developed instincts that allow her cat to become self-sufficient. She instinctually recognizes the enormity of living in the world on her own is beyond her current skills when she does not try to jump on a train. Further evidence of her maturing nature appears when she allows her father to bring her home after her runaway attempt. Frankie might want to follow her cat into the world, but she must become stronger. The failure of the cat to return can represent either success or failure. Since Charles has not returned or been seen in the neighborhood, Frankie does not know if the cat presents a positive or negative role model. She cannot fully rely on his example and must seek another animal to copy. She then focuses on the animal most like herself the monkey.

Frankie finds the monkey, owned by the organ man, as the final animal needed to establish her identity. Frankie and the monkey share several points in common. Both depend upon men; the monkey belongs to the monkey-man. Frankie is an Addams; her father owns a jewelry repair store and Frankie's identity is to be the daughter of Mr. Addams. She is also connected with her brother when she goes to the wedding as the sister of the groom. Like the monkey, Frankie's identity depends on the males around her. The monkey wears a costume when working, and similarly F. Jasmine dresses in her "organdie best dress" to wander the town on what she thinks will be her final day there (McCullers 68). Both the monkey and Frankie perform in their suits. The monkey, although the most exotic and dexterous of the creatures Frankie meets, proves the most contained because he lives tethered to his owner. The monkey, removed from his environment, cannot survive by himself because he has no connection to his natural world and so lacks the necessary skills. The monkey reflects a connection to the South and the roles expected of women. If Frankie worries about social expectations pressing on her as she grows older, the monkey illustrates this worry. The monkey finds himself attached to a man, dependent upon him for his safety, shelter, and food. When Frankie comes upon the soldier fighting with the organ man as he tries to buy the monkey, the monkey's fate rests with his owner, and he stays "crouched and shivering down on the sidewalk close to the brick wall....and his little face, scared and desperate, had the look of someone who is just about to sneeze. Shivering and pitiful, he kept bowing at nobody and offering his cap into the air. He knew the furious voices were about him and he felt

blamed” (McCullers 67). Frankie finds herself in a similar situation, for she depends upon her father for her basic needs, and most likely she will need to marry to maintain a lifestyle similar to the one she has always known. Her new sister-in-law reinforces this concept as she successfully performs her social duty by finding and marrying an acceptable spouse.

Frankie proclaims the monkey as “darling” (McCullers 68). The monkey wears a costume when he works, and Frankie attempts to do the same by appearing in dresses to gain the approval of her brother and his bride. Frankie’s choice for her wedding apparel comes shortly after her encounter with the monkey and his costume. She selects a gown appropriate for an older female to wear as her attire for the wedding. She lacks assistance in her selection and picks an inappropriate item in an attempt to fit into an idea of adulthood. Frankie does not have as close a relationship with an adult as the monkey does with his owner. She does seek approval from her father and Berenice and clearly enjoys praise when she asks Berenice to retell events that portray her in a positive manner. Frankie needs to rebuild her confidence and find external approval from the adults around her and, at the same time, reconstruct her sense of self. She stands at the point of being ready for autonomy but needs the safety of connection to home or her father until she can completely stand alone or she needs to find friends to help her further her self-esteem.

Frankie easily connects with the monkey as she describes him as “nearly always wrong....he would get mixed up and bow and reach out his cap to the monkey-man, and not the audience” (McCullers 66). She fears being seen in town because the police might

arrest her for her early summer crimes of stealing and committing an act she does not understand with Barney MacKean in his garage (McCullers 25). Frankie does not explain what Barney makes her do, but Raphael et al. suggest it must be sexual in nature. Frankie has not had an adult explain sexual relations to her or how the female body matures. Frankie will soon be menstruating, and she has no preparation for this event. She denies what the other children tell her about procreation and does not fully comprehend the strange behavior she witnesses from the lodger in her home. Frankie's physical body has been assaulted by Barney as well as her self-confidence. These events help her relate to the monkey. She feels as if she cannot exhibit the correct behavior and empathizes with the poor, confused monkey who looks to its owner for guidance.

The monkey clings to Frankie when he "...skitter[s] up her leg and body and ...huddle[s] on her shoulder with his little monkey hand around her head," and she relates as one who feels lost and needs a nurturing presence in her life (McCullers 67). She grabs onto the wedding for safety. She also, for a minute, provides comfort to another smaller being, much as a mother does a child. Her encounter with the monkey parallels her experience with her mother. Mrs. Addams had a brief encounter with Frankie and then lost her much like Frankie holds the monkey for a few seconds. The dressed monkey appears like a tiny person, a baby. He behaves like a child, cowering when scolded, fearful of the fighting men, and seeking comfort from a nearby female. In a revision of her care of the cat, she befriends the monkey for a few seconds, for Frankie has no intention of keeping the monkey and mothering it. Unlike Charles, who may have tried to

return, the monkey clearly chooses his owner over her, but this illustrates to Frankie that good partnerships can develop no matter their length of time. She and the monkey come together for barely a minute and then the monkey moves on, so Frankie can have friends for a limited time and then can move on. Her friendship with Evelyn has ended, but they both move forward with a friend more suited to each's needs. Frankie begins to see that connections can change as situations change, and that her circle of friends does not dictate her personal qualities. This knowledge frees her to move forward.

The creatures Frankie meets become progressively less independent; the monkey while the most exotic remains the least free, the cat, although owned, still controls his movements, and the moths cannot be owned but remain completely wild. Her encounters move from night to day as Frankie passes from outside society, unsettled in her own character, to interacting with the people around her. She cannot befriend the older girls while she doubts herself. She grows from the girl most alone, hidden by the night like a moth, to a girl with more self-respect connecting with the cat who is able to travel both in night and day. Finally, she relates to the monkey, the most human of the mammals, that she only sees in daylight. Throughout her lost summer, Frankie observes the inhabitants of the animal world around her and finds similarities which propel her toward personal development and a new stage in her adolescent life.

## Chapter Six

### Animal Agents in *The Welsh Girl*

Esther Evans lives a rural life in Wales and has close, daily contact with the livestock around her. When Esther faces questions of identity, she naturally finds answers from the farm animals living beside her. Esther begins the summer in which the story is set excited at her prospects and for the end of the war which will bring changes to her and the Welsh community. Esther finds comfort but confinement in her village. The rural village offers tradition, defined roles, and security. Esther, age seventeen, plans to leave the limited world her home offers and move to the city; she has vague plans to work there or more hopeful plans to marry Colin, an English soldier, and leave Wales permanently. The magical evening she anticipates as the beginning of her life takes her to an abandoned summer camp for wealthy vacationers and ends with disillusion. That evening, Esther has her first chance to touch the swimming pool she has dreamed about for years, but the empty pool and its musty cover offer only dissatisfaction, foreshadowing the disappointing summer ahead. Esther and Colin sneak under the tarp, and she tries to imagine the water through the opaque cover expecting a proposal that never comes; instead, Colin rapes her. As the consequences of playing a more experienced woman, Esther embarrasses herself, loses her hopes for the future, and unsettles the life before her.

Esther has suffered disappointments before she met Colin. The death of her mother presents her with the first roadblock to her future. Mrs. Evans encourages her



daughter and supports her education, but her death prevents future opportunities for education since Esther needs to take over the tasks her mother had performed. Thus, Esther carries an extra burden to maintain the farm for her father and considers marriage to remedy her situation. She dreams of leaving the town and her burdens behind. Because Mrs. Evans died four years before when Esther was thirteen, Esther finds herself without a mentor to help to prevent the romantic danger that she encounters. When rape shatters her world, she has no human to guide her back to self-confidence. However, daily life on her father's farm puts the dogs, the sheep, the cow, and chickens in her path, and these simple creatures help Esther to reconnect with her identity of as a confident, purposeful young woman.

Growing up in a rural area, Esther cannot afford sentimentality toward animals or her situation. On one level this rule never falters, but when her life changes into an awkward time of shaken identity, she starts to reflect on the connections between the humans and the animals surrounding her. Her first lesson comes with the farm dogs, Mott and Mick. Esther comprehends that the dogs act as extensions of the humans; they operate with speeds and endurance the people cannot. Esther has grown up with the dogs on the farm and knows their worth. The dogs at "Cilgwyn, their smallholding," prove indispensable for the work of the shepherd (Davies 25). Without dogs to retrieve and maneuver the sheep, Mr. Evans could not pasture his flock because the time and effort needed to maintain the herd would prevent him from doing anything else. The dogs move like living tools for the farmer, and Esther feels like one of the pack, working to support

the farmstead. To remain profitable the farm must run efficiently and without emotion. Esther understands the value and necessity of the sheepdogs and appreciates their company because in addition to facilitating the running of the farm they offer protection. For the first time, Esther truly understands fear. She has experienced loss, grief, and uncertainty from the war, but after her rape, she loses her sense of security and character. She goes through the motions of her daily life, but she needs the farm and its routine to anchor her. The dogs help because they offer her a pack; she may not have a group of female friends or a father she feels comfortable confiding in, but she can trust the dogs. They do their work in a steadfast manner and this she can emulate. She will complete her duties in an efficient manner and protect her home. Although Esther works proficiently with her father, she cannot confess to him or trust his reaction. If she tells her father, he might discipline her and he certainly will try to punish Colin. She keeps quiet to save her father from danger and the village from hostilities with the British whom they already resent. She avoids public shame by keeping her secret, and she also protects the peace. In effect she returns to her den and licks her wounds like an injured dog.

In many ways the dogs offer a metaphor for the lives of the Welsh farmers and herd keepers. Homestead life has long hours with never ending tasks based on seasonal and flock needs. The men and women who own and manage farmsteads must work ceaselessly to sustain their sources of revenue. They make sacrifices, and they must connect as professionals to others in their community with similar skills and issues. The sheep-keeping community forms a powerful group; they create a pack like the dogs. The

farmers help each other and try to maintain their livelihoods and their stock. They present a fierce pack to outsiders. Esther feels this connection when the men gather in the Quarryman's Arms and discuss Wales and how the English try to control it. In this way the English are perceived as wolves and foxes attacking the Welsh and taking their possessions. Esther needs the patriotic community to which she belongs to surround her and protect her. Without the dogs Esther will feel physically less secure. The dogs allow her to see the benefit of staying within her community and following traditional behaviors. They also reflect the male dominated society; the men are the shepherds and they control the dogs. Esther sees that the dogs give up their freedom to be guided by the shepherds in exchange for food, shelter, and affection, much like the women in her community. The girls hope to marry for love and affection, but they need to marry for security. The dogs have a purpose and seem to enjoy their daily runs and relationship with their owners. If the dogs can remain loyal and find fulfillment in life, perhaps Esther can accept her role in the village and thrive under conditions she might not find ideal but can admit as having multiple benefits.

Feeling shaken, Esther finds the sheep provide the most obvious connection to her situation, and they become her second teaching source for piecing together her identity. She comprehends how vital sheep are to the county, but now that she feels exposed, she sees how vulnerable sheep are to outside forces. On a community level the sheep provide the livelihood for the area. They can survive and thrive on the mountainous terrain. They provide wool and meat—clothing and food which become important commodities for the

population. Unable to acknowledge the importance of the flock, Esther's father believes the slate mines will advance his community's economy after the war ends, and he pushes to find a job in the mines in preparation. Esther knows the importance of the sheep and so feels reluctant to fully support her father in his desire to work in the mines.

In the hunt for Karsten, an escaped German POW, a guard's dog kills one of the Evans's ewes. Esther recognizes this older ewe because it lost an eye as a lamb. Esther and her mother had rescued this lamb years ago, and the ewe provides a strong connection to Mrs. Evans and Esther's childhood. For Esther, the death of the ewe represents the loss of her youth and her old life. The blood she, her father, and the POW camp guards find "smeared on the grass" seems like her own blood (Davies 235). At first Esther mistakes the blood for "raddle" that marks the mating of the sheep, and she ties this idea to her own rape that should have produced this much blood, instead of the tiny mark in her underwear (Davies 235). The males hardly notice the ewe. Mr. Evans sees its death as a monetary loss and a violation of his land. Esther experiences it as the loss of a companion, a fellow creature controlled by the whims of men and tied to the land like herself. Part of Esther's shame comes from Colin's nationality; she has been violated by an English man, an unforgivable sin to her father. In many ways Esther sees herself as a commodity like the dogs and the sheep. She comprehends the limits of life tied to a farm shared with the livestock.

When Esther discovers her pregnancy, she knows the danger of revealing the fact to her father. Her reputation will suffer; a half-English child in a Welsh town will always

be an outcast. The country may eventually reconcile with the German enemies, but it will never completely forgive the English or accept Esther's child. She finds a grim solution in her father's old "bleak tale of the scabies epidemic in '34," when "...Dewi Thomas destroy his own flock to stop the spread. 'He shot them, one by one, in the head...'" (Davies 88). Esther decides to have an abortion rather than allow her child to be punished for her mistake; however, this action will bring her guilt and regret. Still, she feels this action offers the best option, much like the farmer who takes on the harsh task of cleansing his own livestock of contamination by killing them.

As Esther travels to Liverpool for the procedure, she changes into the clothes Mary Munro, an evacuated radio actress from the BBC, provides for a symbolic shearing of her old self. Like the thin body of a shorn sheep emerging from the heavy wool coat, Esther sees her body in its white slip appear from under her normal clothes. This fleeting description suggests she embodies a lamb traveling to slaughter. Esther changes her image and gains confidence by the simple act of putting on "a neat tweed suit with a matching hat and gloves, [and] an ivory-colored blouse" of silk a higher quality of material than she even expects to enjoy (Davies 280). These items of dress offer her a shield between herself and the city she visits. She has not traveled to Liverpool previously and has few worries of recognition, yet she feels comfort by disguising her appearance. Esther realizes that clothing can change the exterior of an individual but not the interior. She remains the once innocent girl from a small village in northern Wales. Her other protection comes from Mary who guides her through the city like a trained dog.

However, the doctor refuses the surgery and encourages Mary to take Esther back home providing an image of a shepherd giving commands to his herding dog. As a guardian of health, the doctor protects Esther's child and Esther from regret. Esther returns home and returns the clothes along the way. Redressing in her farm dress signals her acceptance of her place in the flock as part of her farm and her community.

The sheep provide an example for Esther that allows her to explain her pregnancy. This time instead of being shorn, she will put on sheep's clothing. She cannot admit to the rape, but she can cover the truth by passing off the baby as the child of a Welsh man. She remembers an incident when she helps her father deliver lambs. One ewe dies after her labor; her baby will be an orphan that must be raised with a bottle. Shortly after the ewe's death, another ewe delivers a lamb that dies. Mr. Evans hopes the childless ewe will raise the orphan lamb. However, this mother does not take the foreign baby until Mr. Evans covers it with the skin of the dead lamb (Davies 308). Esther will follow this example and cover her half foreign baby with the nationality of a Welsh father and, thereby, find acceptance for the child and herself.

For Esther the sheep and shepherd relationship becomes a metaphor for the Welsh people and WWII. The Evans family sells the male lambs for meat. They only keep the females and allow their rams to mate within the herd. The sold male lambs symbolize the young boys going to war where many of them will be slaughtered in battle. The returning human rams will carry the genes for the next generation marking the population with their traits, like the flock of sheep. Esther recalls her father makes "the raddle, the oily

red pigment he daubs on the belly and legs of the rams” so that he can tell which ewes have mated from “the red tails, [and] smeared rumps, where the raddle has transferred” (Davies 187). Esther fears being marked by the wrong male and tries to erase this possibility with an encounter with an escaped German POW. Even though the ewes have little choice in the ram(s) a farmer brings to the flock, they may choose not to mate. Esther chooses Karsten; like a ewe, she accepts his attention and allows him to sleep with her. Their attraction appears natural like animals that mutually consent to mate. His nationality might not be acceptable to her father, but his breeding and genetics offer a good stock. If Esther regards herself and others as sheep, Karsten provides the best choice of a male for breeding.

Esther remembers “*cynefin*, the flock’s sense of place, of territory” (Davies 86). The Welsh farmers use this term to express the sheep’s connection to the land. Esther in her present state begins to feel this sense of place. She remembers what this means and how the knowledge of the land passes through the ewes; “male lambs, the wethers, were sold off for meat each year; only the females, the future ewes, were kept. Whatever was passed down, then, however *cynefin* was preserved, it was from mother to daughter” (Davies 87). The female sheep teach their lambs their tie to their farm so well that the sheep have to be sold with the land because they cannot be moved. Esther experiences her tie to the land through lessons from her mother. Because of the connection she makes to her flock of sheep, Esther discovers the heritage she shares with the Welsh community and with the women of her town and women everywhere. Through the placid, normal

behavior of a herd of sheep, Esther sees the commonality of women's lives. Women, like sheep, tie themselves to places because of their men; the women do the hard work of carrying and giving birth to the next generation and of raising these children or lambs only to have them taken away by life under normal circumstances or by war and slaughter. Esther learns from her farm animals that she plays a vital role in the survival of a way of life and a community, a lifestyle that depends on females for its continued existence.

Esther's third bridge to a stable identity comes from the cow that provides sustaining milk for the farm, and later for Karsten. She has her second conversation with him in the barn where they meet over the cow, a large animal that can easily harm them. Cows are on the domesticated animal list that makes civilization possible for humans (Anderson 2). With dairy products and beef from cows, humans have sources of protein for little investment. The cow allows the Evans family to keep a supply of milk, which sustains them especially during this period of war rationing. When Esther lets Karsten drink the milk, she takes on the role of a mother feeding a child. She provides him the first food a human experiences, and vicariously through the cow's milk she asserts herself. She will not be dictated to by the male's world of war, for Karsten does not appear to her as a dangerous enemy, but rather as a lost and hungry child miles from home. At this point her closeness with the cow allows her to think about providing nourishment and sustaining life. She decides to feed Karsten and to keep his secret; she can only see harm in locking up another creature who feels as trapped as she does. She



has noted how the people of her town watch the POWs like they are animals in a zoo, and how the village boys tease the captured soldiers. She will not help them in their desire to take away Karsten's freedom. As an escapee Karsten becomes more like herself, lost and limited by the national conflicts surrounding them. Seeing herself and Karsten as animals controlled by the military and national powers allows Esther to have empathy.

Esther extends her empathy to the cow once she carries a baby. To have a cow that provides milk requires the cow to have a calf, a calf that will be sold because the Evanses have a small farm. If she has the child, she will enter this natural chain of life by providing food for her child. Esther observes the "cow's bellows feel like an ache in her own chest" (Davies 240). Esther has become breeding stock, but she will enrich the farm by creating the next generation. However, initially, she can force herself to get rid of her child because she has knowledge of the reality of life and death and herself as a commodity; sheep provide wool and cows and chickens produce food for humans, but when this livestock fails in productivity, they become meat. Animals' lives are dictated by their usefulness to humans. Her decision becomes one of following nature and of avoiding shame. When the doctor's refusal makes the decision for her, Esther begins to feel more accustomed to being part of the livestock on the farm, controlled by the males who own them.

The chickens, although briefly mentioned, produce another important supporting food for the farm. Chickens are also symbolically connected to Esther, as they produce unfertilized eggs, eggs that have lost the potential for a chick's life but become protein

for human life. Esther, accustomed to the production and consumption of livestock, can connect herself to production as she faces aborting her own child. Like the hens, she will soon lose a potential child, but, unlike the hens, she comprehends the loss of life. Esther takes her mother's role as the woman of the house, cooking and caring for her father and the evacuee Jim. Once again, Esther focuses on sustaining life and acts like a mother, a mother hen, protecting and feeding her brood. In many ways, she moves around the kitchen like a hen. The chickens help Esther connect to Karsten as she cooks and offers eggs to him. Karsten becomes an acceptable mate, and in feeding and sleeping with him, Esther links to both meanings of the egg, food and children. She learns the lessons from the animals and makes her way forward with renewed hope. Esther decides on the name for her baby, and this decision becomes the final connection to her future.

The novel's epilogue provides the last information on Esther. Readers see that she succeeds in resolving her identity crisis. She loses her father to a mine accident and almost loses the flock, but she gives birth to a daughter who will pass on the traditions of her people and their land. Esther finds her own place on the farm with the animals and together they will survive and nurture the next generation. Esther's daughter says, "*My sheep,*" establishing her claim on the animals, the land, and the future (Davies 331).

Throughout the course of the novel, Esther has moved from being a naïve adolescent to becoming a mother and farm owner. She has established her identity and her claim to the world around her. She has weathered pregnancy, the war, a winter that almost kills the local flocks, and the death of her father. She will now teach one member of the next

generation of females to proudly take her place in the community and to accept her place in the natural world around her. Together Esther and her daughter will keep their connection to nature to anchor their world and to maintain the land that sustains them.

## Chapter Seven

### Conclusion

Animals form a significant part of human life experience. As industrial societies move farther from individual food production and frequent contact with nature, modern times expand the use of nature, including tasks set for companion animals. Thus the notion of humans using animals as agents to aid in psychological development—improving their ability to cope with the stress of the world and demanding developmental tasks—is a logical connection. Paul Shepard in *Traces of an Omnivore* explains:

There is a profound, inescapable need for animal that is in all people everywhere, an urgent requirement for which no substitute exists. This need is no vague, romantic, or intangible yearning, no simple sop to our loneliness or nostalgia for Paradise. As hard and unavoidable as the compounds of our inner chemistry, it is universal but poorly recognized. It is grounded in the way that animals are used in the growth and development of the human person, in those priceless qualities which we lump together as ‘mind.’ Animals have a critical role in the shaping of personal identity and social consciousness. . . . Because of their participation in each stage of the growth of consciousness, they are indispensable to our becoming human in the fullest sense. (3)

As animal agents play critical roles in reality, these same roles appear in literature. This paper examined the hypothesis that animal agents aid in human developmental tasks and identity formation by analysis of two works, *The Member of the Wedding* and *The Welsh Girl*. Chapter One considered a review of developmental stages defined by Erikson, Piaget, Kohlberg, and Havighurst to confirm the necessity that both adolescent girls and boys must master developmental tasks to mature successfully and placed Frankie Addams and Esther Evans within these developmental stages. Chapter

Two validated the suggestion that animals play an important role for human society. Otherwise, the idea that either girl could observe lessons in neighboring animal life would fail. Chapter Three proved the gendering of the characters' landscape was female, propelling them away from human society and toward sympathetic support from nature. Finally, Chapters Five and Six analyzed *The Member of the Wedding* and *The Welsh Girl* for specific examples of animal agents.

In the end, Carson McCullers's Frankie Addams and Peter Ho Davies's Esther Evans faced a summer of developmental growth, and both benefitted by internalizing the examples of nearby creatures—animal agents. With the help of these animal agents, which acted as mirrors of the protagonists' lives, Frankie and Esther were able to cope with difficult teenage experiences and move toward adulthood. My study on the impact of animal agents on character development of the female protagonist in two critically acclaimed contemporary novels contributes to a relatively unexplored topic in literature, a topic that merits further study by literary scholars.

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