

A STUDY OF THE INTERPRETATIVE ABILITY OF  
ENGLISH STUDENTS AND ENGLISH TEACHERS  
AS REVEALED IN A SURVEY OF  
CERTAIN LYRIC POETRY  
OF THE SOUTH

A THESIS  
SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT  
OF ENGLISH AND THE GRADUATE COUNCIL OF THE  
KANSAS STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE OF EMPORIA IN PARTIAL  
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR  
THE DEGREE OF MASTER  
OF SCIENCE

By  
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## CHAPTER I

### THE STATEMENT OF THE SUBJECT AND LIMITATION OF TERMS

Lyric poetry may be assumed to have wide interpretative powers. It may interpret the author himself without reference to time and place, or it may interpret a particular scene, location or event. Because of the musical or rhythmical quality which the name itself implies, it is probably more readable than other types of poetry for the greatest number of people. The study could be approached from two angles: first, the ability of the author to convey or interpret any particular scene; second, the ability of the student to interpret the scene as it is found in the poem. It is the latter approach which the writer has made to the problem to be studied.

The field of American Literature was chosen because it is not as generally well known as is the field of English Literature and hence is less liable to encourage the use of some other scholar's interpretation, rather than one's own.

#### Limitations

The field was limited in the first place to Southern poetry. It is true that the term Southern cannot be applied to specific geographical boundaries, but insofar as this work is concerned it is to be applied to that section of the United States, which during the period

the writer has chosen, passed through a social and economic upheaval into a modern American scene. Obviously, any sympathetic treatment of the "lost cause" properly would be called Southern.

In the second place, the field has been limited to the nineteenth century for two reasons: (1) the first poet of any consequence from the South was Edward Coote Pickney,<sup>1</sup> and (2) there were scarcely any poets of consequence anywhere in the United States, let alone the South, by the end of the century.<sup>2</sup> Literature was expressing itself in forms other than lyric poetry. From the statement just made it must not be understood that there were no poets or poetry at the close of the century. In the main, however, there was lack of interest or at least contribution in this field. It may be assumed from the above statements that the field naturally falls into a nineteenth century division, and with this assumption the writer believes the student of American Literature will agree.

As a further limitation, no poetry was considered which was not written by a poet native to the South. The term "native" is to be interpreted in the following sense: those poets who were born in the South and who also did a major part of their creative work in the South. Only recognized leaders in the field were considered. These leaders were selected in the following manner: the heads of thirty representative college and university English departments were asked what anthology they used in the

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<sup>1</sup> Born 1802 - Died 1828.

<sup>2</sup> Grant C. Knight, American Literature and Culture (New York: Ray Long and Richard Smith, Inc., 1932), p. 300.

teaching of American Literature. Seventeen replied, showing six different books being used.<sup>3</sup> Those Southern poets who appeared most frequently in these anthologies and still came within the preceding limitations were considered as leaders. Following are the poets by name:

Richard Henry Wilde	1789-1847
William Gilmore Simms	1806-1870
Edward Coote Pickney	1802-1828
Henry Timrod	1829-1867
Paul Hamilton Hayne	1831-1886
Abram Joseph Ryan	1839-1886
Sidney Lanier	1842-1881

One might ask why Edgar Allen Poe was not included in the above list. He has been omitted because he fails to qualify as one who did a major portion of his work in the South. For the same reason the negro poets of the latter part of the century were omitted. The writer made a diligent search for native negro poets, inasmuch as a great deal of the folk-lore of the South is built around the negro; but he failed to find one negro poet of any consequence who came within the limitations that have been set up. In this search for negro poets who might qualify under the limitations, the writer

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<sup>3</sup> Oscar Cargill, American Literature - A Period Anthology  
 Norman Foerster, American Poetry and Prose  
 Jay B. Rubbell, American Life in Literature  
 Jones and Leisy, Chief American Authors  
 Shafer Robert, American Literature  
 Snyder and Martin, A Book of American Literature



used Johnson's outstanding collection of negro poetry,<sup>4</sup> which includes the work of Paul Lawrence Dunbar.

Further limitations which were used will be found in Chapter II, when the method of procedure is explained.

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<sup>4</sup> James Weldon Johnson, The Book of American Negro Poetry (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1922).

## CHAPTER II

### THE METHOD OF PROCEDURE

An eight page questionnaire was used. It is presented in its entirety in the following pages. It was submitted to both high school and college teachers of English, and to advanced students in the field. The poems included were chosen arbitrarily by the writer with the assistance of the director of this thesis.

The instructions furnished with each questionnaire constitute further limitations upon the general subject as discussed in Chapter I.

The following is an exact copy of the questionnaire used:

This check list is submitted to gather information for a Master's thesis on the following subject: A Study of the Interpretative Ability of English Students and English Teachers, as Revealed in a Survey of Certain Lyric Poetry of the South.

Below are listed parts of stanzas, or completed stanzas, all of which are taken from the poetry of certain Southern poets. At the end of each line containing underscored words are parentheses in which you are to place identification as follows:

1. If you consider the underscored word or words as an indication of Local Color, indicate by placing the initials L. C. in parentheses.
2. If you consider the underscored word or words as an indication of Sectionalism, indicate by placing the initial S in parentheses.
3. If you consider the underscored item neither Local Color nor Sectionalism indicate by placing the letter X in parentheses.

If the entire quotation is underlined, the parentheses at the right is intended for the entire quotation.

For your information the following definitions are to be considered as a definite means of distinction, and all distinctions should be based upon them.

Sectionalism - Anything that may be taken as obviously interpreting the philosophy, feelings, attitudes, ambitions or desires, of people who live in the South.

Local Color - Any reference to specific objects, or places which are found in the South. For example: Oaks are not found exclusively in the South but Live Oaks are. Marshes are found everywhere, but "Marshes of Glynn" refers to a specific marsh.

Your cooperation in marking this list will be greatly appreciated and will be of great aid to the writer. When you have completed checking this paper, either hand it to the writer or mail it in the attached self-addressed envelope.

Very truly yours,

Jim Jay Wilcox

## QUESTIONNAIRE

Richard Henry Wilde (1789-1847)

From- "Stanzas"

\* \* \* \* \*

My life is like the prints, which feet  
Have left on Tampa's desert strand;  
Soon as the rising tide shall beat,  
All trace will vanish from the sand;  
Yet, as if grieving to efface  
All vestige of the human race,  
On the lone shore loud moans the sea-  
But none alas! shall mourn for me!

( ) 1

Sidney Lanier (1842-1881)

From- "Corn"

\* \* \* \* \*

\* \* \* \* \* Like Jove's looks awry,  
Long muscadines  
Rich-wreath the spacious foreheads of great pines,  
And breathe ambrosial passion from their vines.

( ) 2

( ) 3

\* \* \* \* \*

I wander to the zigzag-cornered fence  
Where sassafras, intrenched in brambles dense,  
Contests with stolid vehemence  
The march of culture, setting limb and thorn  
As pikes against the army of the corn.

( ) 4

( ) 5

\* \* \* \* \*

Deeply thy mild content rebukes the land  
Whose flimsey homes, built on the shifting sand  
Of trade, for ever rise and fall  
With alternation whimsical,  
Then swept away  
By swift engulfments of incalculable tides  
Whereseon capricious Commerce rides.

( ) 6

\* \* \* \* \*  
 Across this little vale, thy continent,  
 To where, beyond the moldering mill,  
Yon old deserted Georgian hill  
 Bares to the sun his piteous aged crest  
 And seamy breast,  
 \* \* \* \* \*

( ) 7

\* \* \* \* \*  
 Scorning the slow reward of patient grain,  
He sowed his heart with hopes of swifter gain,  
Then sat him down and waited for the rain.  
He sailed in barrowed ships of usury-  
A foolish Jason on a treacherous sea,  
Seeking the Fleece and finding misery.  
Lulled by smooth-rippling loans, in idle trance  
He lay, content that unthrift circumstance  
Should plough for him the stony field of Chance,  
Yea, gathering crops whose worth no man might tell,  
He staked his life on games of Buy-and-Sell,  
And turned each field into a gambler's hell.  
 \* \* \* \* \*

( ) 8

\* \* \* \* \*  
In dust, in rain, with might and main,  
He nursed his cotton, cursed his grain,  
Fretted for news that made him fret again,  
Snatched at each telegram of Future Sale,  
And thrilled with Bull's or Bear's alternate wail-  
In hope or fear alike for ever pale.  
And thus from year to year, through hope and fear  
With many a curse and many a secret tear,  
Striving in vain his cloud of debt to clear,  
 \* \* \* \* \*

( ) 9

From- "Sunrise"

In my sleep I was fain of their fellowship, fain  
 Of the Live-Oaks, the marsh, and the main.  
 \* \* \* \* \*

( ) 10

\* \* \* \* \*  
Oh, never the mast-high run of the sea  
Of traffic shall hide thee,  
Never the hell-colored smoke of the factories  
Hide thee,  
Never the reek of the time's fen-politics  
Hide thee  
 \* \* \* \* \*

( ) 11

From- "The Dying Words of Stonewall Jackson"

"Order A. P. Hill to prepare for battle." ( ) 12  
 "Tell Major Hawks to advance the commissary train ( ) 13  
 "Let us cross the river and rest in the shade" ( ) 14

\* \* \* \* \*

O hero-life that lit us like the sun! ( ) 16  
 O hero-words that glittered like the stars  
 And stood and shone above the gloomy wars  
 When the hero-life was done!

\* \* \* \* \*

Thou Land whose sun is gone, thy stars remain! ( ) 16  
Still shine the words that minature his deed.  
 O thrice-beloved, where'er thy great heart bleeds,  
 Solace hath thou for pain!

From- "Marsh Song-At Sunset"

Over the humped and fishy sea,  
 Over the Caliban sea ( ) 17  
 O cloud in the west, like a thought in the heart  
 Of pardon, loose thy wing, and start,  
 And do a grace for me.

From- "Under The Pine" (Dedicated to Henry Timrod)

\* \* \* \* \*  
 O Tree! hast thou no memory at thy core  
 Of One who comes no more? ( ) 18  
 No yearning memory of those scenes that were  
 So richly calm and fair,  
 When the last rays of sunset, shimmering down,  
 Flashed like a royal crown?

\* \* \* \* \*

O Tree! against thy mighty trunk he laid ( ) 19  
 His weary head; thy shade  
 Stole o'er him like the first cold spell of sleep:  
 It brought a peace so deep  
 The unquiet passion died from out his eyes, ( ) 20  
 As lightning from stilled skies.

## From- "From The Flats"

O might I through these tears  
 But glimpse some hill my Georgia high uprears, ( ) 21  
 Where white the quartz and pink the pebble shine, ( ) 22  
 The hickory heavenward strives, the muscadine ( ) 23  
 Swings o'er the slope, the oak's far-falling shade  
 Darken the dogwood in the bottom glade, ( ) 24  
 And down the hollow from a ferny nook ( ) 25  
 Bright leaps a living brook!

## From- "The Song Of The Chattahoochee"

\* \* \* \* \*  
 All down the hills of Habersham, ( ) 26  
 All through the valleys of Hall, ( ) 27  
 The rushes cried abide, abide,  
 The willful waterweeds held me thrall,  
 The laving laurel turned my tide,  
 The ferns and the fondling grass said stay,  
 The dewberry dipped for to work delay, ( ) 28  
 And the little reeds sighed abide, abide, ( ) 29  
 Here in the hills of Habersham, ( ) 30  
 Here in the valleys of Hall. ( ) 31

## From- "The Marshes of Glynn"

By a world of marsh that borders a world of sea. ( ) 32  
 Sinuous southward and sinuous northward the shimmering band  
 Of the sand-beach fastens the fringe of the marsh to the folds  
 of the land.

## From- "The Symphony"

\* \* \* \* \*  
"When all's done, what hast thou won  
Of the only sweet that's under the sun  
Ay, canst thou buy a single sigh  
Of true love's least, least ecstasy?"  
 \* \* \* \* \*

( ) 33

The poor, the poor, the poor, they stand  
Wedged by the pressing of Trade's hand  
Against an inward-opening door  
 That pressure tightens evermore;  
 \* \* \* \* \*

( ) 34

There's plenty that can, if you can't we know.  
Move out if you think yo're underpaid.  
The poor are prolific; we're not afraid;  
trade is trade.  
 \* \* \* \* \*

( ) 35

Then 'Trade is trade' but sings a lie:  
'Tis only war grown miserly.  
 \* \* \* \* \*

( ) 36

If business is battle, name it so:  
War-crimes less will shame it so,  
And windows less will blame it so.  
 \* \* \* \* \*

( ) 37

Thou trade! thou king of modern days!  
Change thy ways,  
Change thy ways;  
Let the sweaty laborers file  
A little while,  
A little while,  
 \* \* \* \* \*

( ) 38

Now by each knight that e'er hath prayed  
 To fight like a man and love like a maid,  
 Since Pembroke's life, as Pembroke's blade,  
 I' the scabbard, death, was laid,  
 Fair lady,  
 \* \* \* \* \*

( ) 39

And ever Love hears the woman's sighing,  
And ever sweet knighthood's death-defying,  
And ever wise childhood's deep implying,  
But ever a trader's glozing and lying.  
 \* \* \* \* \*

( ) 40



Henry Timrod (1828-1867)

From- "The Cotton Boll"

But these are charms already widely blown!  
 His to be the meed whose pencil's trace  
 Hath touched our very swamps with grace, ( ) 41  
 And round whose tuneful way  
 All Southern laurels bloom; ( ) 42

"The Poet of The Woodlands," unto whom ( ) 43  
 Alike are known  
 The flute's low breathing and the trumpet's tone,  
 \* \* \* \* \*

\* \* \* \* \*.Still,  
 In that we sometimes hear,  
 Upon the Northern winds, the voice of woe  
Not wholly drowned in triumph, though I know ( ) 44  
The end must crown us, and a few brief years  
Dry all our tears,

\* \* \* \* \*  
Oh, help us, Lord! to roll the crimson flood  
Back on its course, and while our banners wing  
Northward, strike with us! till the goth shall oling ( ) 45  
To his own blasted alter-stones, and crave  
Mercy;

From- "Spring"

\* \* \* \* \*  
 Yet not more surely shall the Spring awake  
 The voice of wood and brake,  
 Then she shall rouse, for all her tranquill charms, ( ) 46  
A million men to arms.

\* \* \* \* \*  
 And calling, with the voice of all her rills,  
Upon the ancient hills  
To fall and crush the tyrants and the slaves ( ) 47  
Who turn her meads to graves.

From- "The Unknown Dead"

\* \* \* \* \*

While with a vacant soul and eye  
I watch the gray and stony sky-  
Of nameless graves on battle plains  
Washed by a single winter's rain,  
Where, some beneath Virginian hills,  
And some by green Atlantic rills,  
Some by the waters of the west,  
A myriad unknown heroes rest.

( ) 48

From- "Ode 1866"

Sleep sweetly in your humble graves,  
Sleep, martyrs of a fallen cause:  
 Though yet no marble column graves  
 The pilgrim here to pause.

( ) 49

\* \* \* \* \*

Stoop, angels, hither from the skies!  
 There is no holier spot of ground  
 Than where defeated valor lies,  
 By mourning beauty crowned!

( ) 50

From- "Carolina"

Thy despot treads thy sacred sands,  
Thy pines give shelter to his bands,  
Thy sons stand by with idle hands,  
 Carolina!  
He breathes at ease thy airs of balm,  
He corns the lances of thy palm;  
 Oh! who shall break thy craven calm,  
 Carolina!

( ) 51

Paul Hamilton Hayne (1830-1886)

From- "A Dream Of The South Wind"

\* \* \* \* \*

Through the crystal gulfs of air,

The fairy South Wind floateth on her  
subtle wings of balm.

( ) 52

From- "Unveiled"

.....

The twinkling "ground stars," full of modest cheer,  
Each her cerulean cup  
In humble supplication lifting up,

( ) 53

From- "In Harbor"

.....

Voices of foe and lover,  
The sweet and the bitter have passed;  
Life, like a tempest of ocean  
Hath outblown its ultimate blast;

( ) 54

William Gilmore Simms (1806-70)

From- "The Edge Of The Swamp"

.....

Stretch'd at length, behold  
Where yonder Cayman, in his natural home,  
The mammoth lizard, all his armor on,  
Slumbers half-buried in the sedge grass,  
Beside the green ooze where he shelters him.

( ) 55

Abram Joseph Ryan (1839-1886)

From- "The Conquered Banner"

.....

Furl the Banner, softly, slowly!  
Treat it gently-it is holy,  
For it droops above the dead.  
Touch it not-unfold it never;  
Let it droop there, furled forever,-  
For its peoples hopes are fled!

( ) 56

From- "The Sword Of Robert E. Lee"

.....

Forth from its scabbard all in vain  
Bright flashed the sword of Lee;  
'Tis shrouded now in its sheath again,  
It sleeps the sleep of our noble slain,  
Defeated, yet without a stain,  
Proudly and peacefully.

( ) 57

The questionnaire was submitted to one hundred individuals and from these one hundred, sixty usable replies were received. The results are given in the following table. The table is to be interpreted in the following manner:

A glance at the questionnaire shows that there were fifty-seven items upon which an opinion was asked. In the first column on the left is found the number of the quotation. Column two gives the number of persons who called the quotation Local Color, column three the number of persons calling it Sectionalism, and in column four will be found the number of persons calling it neither Local Color nor Sectionalism, and column five gives the number of persons who did not attempt it. Columns six to nine inclusive give the result in terms of per cent of agreement with a possible perfect of 100 per cent.

Looking at quotation I,

"My life is like the prints, which feet

Have left on Tampa's desert strand;"

it will be seen that fifty-six persons in column two said the underlined words were Local Color, or 93.3 per cent in agreement as found in column six. Column three shows that no person stated that the underlined item was Sectionalism, or 0 per cent. In column four it is found that three persons, or 5 per cent, thought the underlined words neither Local Color nor Sectionalism. It will then be seen by column five that one person, or 1.67 per cent, did not attempt the answer. The total of columns two to six totals sixty, which was the number of replies received. The per cent of agreement as found in columns six to nine inclusive in each case will be as close to 100 per cent as it is convenient to figure it. The result in the other fifty-six quotations is shown in like manner.

TABLE I

## COMPILED RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRE

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Item No.	Local Color	Section-alism	Neither	Not Attempted	Percentage of Agreement				
					Local Color	Section-alism	Neither	Not Attempted	Percentage
1	56	0	3	1	93.33	0	5.00	1.67	100.00
2	45	3	11	1	75.00	5.00	18.33	1.67	100.00
3	24	2	29	5	40.00	3.33	48.33	8.33	99.99
4	34	8	18	0	56.67	13.33	20.00	0	100.00
5	7	24	24	5	11.67	40.00	40.00	8.33	100.00
6	9	38	13	0	15.00	63.33	21.67	0	100.00
7	45	11	3	1	75.00	18.33	5.00	1.67	100.00
8	1	37	21	1	1.67	61.67	35.00	1.67	100.01
9	10	46	3	1	16.67	76.67	5.00	1.67	100.01
10	52	6	0	2	86.67	10.00	0	3.33	100.00
11	8	27	23	2	13.33	45.00	38.33	3.33	99.99
12	39	11	8	2	65.00	18.33	13.33	3.33	99.99
13	37	12	8	3	61.67	20.00	13.33	5.00	100.00
14	12	6	38	4	20.00	10.00	63.33	6.67	100.00
15	5	24	31	0	8.33	40.00	51.67	0	100.00
16	7	45	7	1	11.67	75.00	11.67	1.67	100.01
17	30	6	24	0	50.00	10.00	40.00	0	100.00
18	14	15	30	1	23.33	25.00	50.00	1.67	100.00
19	11	14	32	3	18.33	23.33	53.33	5.00	99.99
20	12	9	20	19	20.00	15.00	33.33	31.67	100.00
21	10	14	32	4	16.67	23.33	53.33	6.67	100.00
22	52	5	3	0	86.67	8.33	5.00	0	100.00
23	31	4	24	1	51.67	6.67	40.00	1.67	100.01
24	48	4	6	2	80.00	6.67	10.00	3.33	100.00
25	37	3	20	0	61.67	5.00	33.33	0	100.00
26	21	3	36	0	35.00	5.00	60.00	0	100.00
27	56	1	3	0	93.33	1.67	5.00	0	100.00

TABLE I (continued)

## COMPILED RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRE

Item No.	Percentage of Agreement				Local Color	Section- alism	Neither	Not Attempted <sup>2</sup>	Local Color	Section- alism	Neither	Not Attempted	Percent- age
	Local Color	Section- alism	Neither	Not Attempted									
28	57	1	1	1	95.00	1.67	1.67	1.67	100.01				
29	28	4	26	2	46.67	6.67	43.33	3.33	100.00				
30	49	1	7	3	81.67	1.67	11.67	5.00	100.01				
31	52	2	1	5	86.67	3.33	1.67	8.33	100.00				
32	28	7	23	2	46.67	11.67	38.33	3.33	100.00				
33	1	16	40	3	1.67	26.67	66.67	6.00	100.01				
34	0	39	18	3	0	65.00	30.00	5.00	100.00				
35	0	43	15	2	0	71.67	25.00	3.33	100.00				
36	0	57	20	3	0	61.67	33.33	5.00	100.00				
37	0	29	26	5	0	48.33	43.33	8.33	99.99				
38	1	35	19	5	1.67	58.33	31.67	8.33	100.00				
39	27	12	12	9	45.00	20.00	20.00	15.00	100.00				
40	2	25	29	4	3.33	41.67	48.33	6.67	100.00				
41	33	13	10	4	55.00	21.67	16.67	6.67	100.01				
42	45	11	1	3	75.00	18.33	1.67	5.00	100.00				
43	34	8	11	7	56.67	13.33	18.33	11.67	100.00				
44	4	47	6	3	6.67	78.33	10.00	5.00	100.00				
45	2	55	2	1	3.33	91.67	3.33	1.67	100.00				
46	1	34	23	2	1.67	56.67	38.33	3.33	100.00				
47	4	45	8	3	6.67	75.00	13.33	5.00	100.00				
48	17	37	3	3	28.33	61.67	5.00	5.00	100.00				
49	9	48	2	1	15.00	80.00	3.33	1.67	100.00				
50	4	48	7	1	6.67	80.00	11.67	1.67	100.00				
51	18	37	1	4	30.00	61.67	1.67	6.67	100.01				
52	26	11	22	1	43.33	18.33	36.67	1.67	100.00				
53	21	4	29	6	35.00	6.67	48.33	10.00	100.00				
54	0	21	37	2	0	35.00	61.67	3.33	100.00				
55	49	4	4	3	81.67	6.67	6.67	5.00	100.01				
56	1	55	1	3	1.67	91.67	1.67	5.00	100.00				
57	6	52	0	2	10.00	86.67	0	3.33	100.00				
Total	1232	1159	874	156	36.02	33.89	25.56	4.53	100.00				

TABLE II

THE PROPER CLASSIFICATION OF QUOTATIONS  
 ACCORDING TO THE OPINION OF THE WRITER AND DIRECTOR

Item No.	Local Color	Sectionalism	Neither One
1	X		
2	X		
3	X		
4			X
5			X
6		X	
7	X		
8		X	
9		X	
10	X		
11		X	
12	X		
13	X		
14			X
15			X
16		X	
17			X
18	X		
19	X		
20	X		
21	X		
22	X		
23			X
24	X		
25			X
26			X
27	X		
28	X		
29			X
30	X		



TABLE II (continued)

THE PROPER CLASSIFICATION OF QUOTATIONS  
ACCORDING TO THE OPINION OF THE WRITER AND DIRECTOR

Item No.	Local Color	Sectionalism	Neither One
31	X		
32			X
33			X
34		X	
35		X	
36		X	
37		X	
38		X	
39	X		
40		X	
41	X		
42	X		
43	X		
44		X	
45		X	
46		X	
47		X	
48		X	
49		X	
50	X		
51		X	
52	X		
53			X
54			X
55	X		
56		X	
57		X	
Total	24	20	18

### CHAPTER III

#### INTERPRETATIVE ANALYSIS

The greatest agreement, 95 per cent, was on the following quotation, which is number twenty-eight in the series.

"All down the valley of Hall"

Both writer and director of this thesis considered it Local Color. That person who considered it neither Local Color nor Sectionalism, probably was not familiar with the underlined word "Hall" and neglected to use the dictionary or some other source of information. The dictionary shows it to be a county in Georgia, and since the instructions with each questionnaire were quite specific on this point, it cannot be anything but Local Color. According to the instructions furnished, there could be no reason whatsoever for its being classified as Sectionalism, and adherence to instructions should have prompted a different answer.

Number twenty-seven is a quotation from the same poem-

"All down the hills of Habersham."

Ninety-three and three tenths per cent agreed that it was Local Color. The reason for one person's calling it Sectionalism and three saying that it was neither Sectionalism nor Local Color is no doubt due to the reasons advanced for the erroneous classification of item twenty-eight.

What is true as to item twenty-eight is also true as to item number one, where again the writer called it Local Color. In this instance the underlined words were "Tampa's desert strand," and although a greater

number were in accord on their disagreement, 5 per cent, it still is Local Color, if instructions are followed, since "Tampa" is a definite place.

Fifty-five of the possible sixty called selections forty-five and fifty-six Sectionalism,

"Oh help us, Lord! to roll the crimson flood  
Back on its course, and while our banners wing  
(45) Northward, strike with us! till the goth shall cling  
To his own blasted altar-stones, and crave  
Mercy."

.....

"Furl the Banner, softly, slowly!  
Treat it gently-it is holy,  
For it droops above the dead.  
(56) Tough it not-unfold it never;  
Let it droop there, furled forever,  
For its people's hopes are fled!"

Obviously, both reflect Sectionalism, since in both cases the reference is toward "the lost cause," and in the instructions furnished all cases of attitudes and feelings were to be labeled Sectionalism.

There is absolutely no grounds for classifying these selections Local Color, as no specific places or things are mentioned, and the instructions plainly restricted the term to specific places or things.

Obviously the two persons who called the first quotation neither Local Color nor Sectionalism, and that one person who said the same of the second selection, were guessing.

In the following quotation, number fifteen, 86.6 per cent agreed that it was Local Color.

"In my sleep I was fain of their fellowship, fain  
Of the Live Oaks, the marsh and the main."

Six persons called the underlined words "Live Oaks" Sectionalism, for which there seems no excuse, because the definition of Local Color as given in the instructions is quite clear on this point. The identical term "Live Oaks" was given as an example. For those six persons, or 10 per cent, who called it Sectionalism, there is simply nothing to be said except that they seem unable to follow instructions.

The same number of persons were also in agreement on Sectionalism in number fifty-seven. The quotation is from the poem "The Sword of Robert E. Lee," and it would seem that the title of the poem from which the quotation is taken would give one a hint as to what to look for. The thought of the poem is that of "the lost cause," and it is obviously Sectionalism. Again, those six persons who called it Local Color, failed to understand or to follow instructions. While the sword would be a specific object, swords are most certainly not peculiar to the South. It is interesting to observe that this quotation is one of two in the entire series which no one classified as neither Local Color nor Sectionalism.

Item number thirty-one is exactly the same as number twenty-eight, and yet five fewer people agreed that it was Local Color. And since five did not attempt it, there were still three who had already classified it as Local Color, who were this time unable to classify it properly. Evidently they were not following the thought, since they called it rightly Local Color in the first instance.

Thirty-one also agreed that the word "Georgia" in number twenty-two was Local Color. For those five people, or 8.33 per cent, who called it Sectionalism, the writer offers no excuse. It is true that "Georgia" is a section of the South, but if they called it Sectionalism for that reason, they utterly disregarded instructions, as did those three who said it was neither Local Color nor Sectionalism.

Eighty-one and sixty-seven hundredths per cent agreed that quotations numbered thirty and fifty-five were Local Color. Number thirty is the same as number twenty-seven, and yet four more people called it neither one than was the case in number twenty-seven. The same person who called it Sectionalism in number twenty-seven called it the same in this one. Four people were certainly careless in their thinking. In number fifty-five, one needs only to refer again to the instructions. The quotation is:

"Where yonder cayman, in his natural home,

The mammoth lizard, all his armour on,"

Failure to refer to a dictionary is evident, and the average professor would probably have more respect for those who did not attempt a classification, than for those four who called it neither Local Color nor Sectionalism, or for those four who called it Sectionalism.

Forty-eight persons called the word "muscadine," in number twenty-four, Local Color, which is in accord with the opinion of the writer and director. There is absolutely no apology to make for those three persons who called it Sectionalism; it is simply another illustration of not reading and following instructions. It is possible to conceive that six people who said that it was neither one, could have heard of the word enough to be

familiar with it and, without checking up, failed to associate it with the South.

Nine people called number forty-nine "Local Color," when it is obviously Sectionalism. They did this in spite of the facts that the instructions are specific and definite, and that this selection certainly reveals the feelings and attitudes of the people. If a reason can be advanced for this error, it is that it probably resulted from a lack of clear understanding of the definition for Local Color, offered in the instructions.

In number fifty, there is a slight excuse for seven people's calling it neither Local Color nor Sectionalism. If simply the word "valor" were underlined it would be neither; but the word "defeated" is also underlined, which added word makes the underlined item refer to the Civil War; hence it is Sectionalism. Those few who called it Local Color, evidently show lack of clear thinking.

Number two deals with the same word as number twenty-four, "muscadine." Yet three fewer persons called it Local Color than was the case in number twenty-four. One fewer persons called it Sectionalism. But eleven persons called it neither Local Color nor Sectionalism; whereas only six said the same of number twenty-four.

It is hard to attempt to explain such inconsistencies because, at the most, an explanation would be a guess. However, there are twenty-one items between two and twenty-four, and if the person were not sure of number two, by the time he got to twenty-four, he might be a little more certain. Being indifferent, he probably failed to check his answer to number two. Ten people made this blunder.

The classifications of numbers seven, sixteen, forty-two, and forty-seven also show forty-five people, or 75 per cent, in agreement. For those who are not in agreement no new excuses can be advanced; apparently they too have erred in interpreting instructions.

Up to this point the writer has closely scrutinized those quotations upon which there was the greatest agreement. Now let us look at those quotations which are outstanding for their lack of agreement.

Number twenty stands out by itself because nineteen persons did not attempt it. The quotation is from "Under the Pine," by Sidney Lanier; and though the underlined words have an indirect reference by means of pronouns, there is a statement in parentheses following the title of the poem to the effect that the poem is dedicated to Timrod. Timrod is a southern poet and parts of his work are included in the questionnaire. Consequently, according to the instructions, it must be Local Color. If nineteen people failed to see the statement in parentheses - ("Dedicated to Henry Timrod"), then why did not some of them guess, as they obviously did in other instances?

In number three the reference was to muscadine vines. If "muscadine" is Local Color, then, the same would be true of their vines. Twenty-four persons agreed in calling it Local Color. A greater number, twenty-nine, said it was neither Local Color nor Sectionalism; and the writer sees how this error arose. If one were to take the one line in which the underlined words occurred, and set it apart from the rest of the quotation it would appear thus: "And breathe ambrosial passion from their vines." In this case it would be neither Local Color nor

Sectionalism. It was not the intent of the writer for this to be done, but it is quite easy to see that it might be done by even an intelligent person.

Let us next look at the underlined words of number seventeen, "Caliban Sea." If there were a body of water anywhere in the South by this name, it would naturally be Local Color. But to the writer's knowledge, no such body of water exists in the South. Yet thirty people called it Local Color. The name "Caliban" comes to us from Shakespeare's play, The Tempest, and has been used by a number of English and American writers. It is therefore neither Local Color nor Sectionalism, and was correctly classified by twenty-four. This, however, is only 40 per cent of the total. Six persons were completely at sea and called it Sectionalism.

In number eighteen, one finds the same thing found in number twenty, indirect references, which is Local Color. Only fourteen, or 23.3 per cent of the total, correctly labeled this item. For the thirty who said it was neither Local Color nor Sectionalism, the writer would advance the same reasons for disagreement given in number twenty. In number twenty, however, nineteen did not attempt, whereas in eighteen, only one failed to attempt the underlined words: "One who comes no more." For this inconsistency the writer can offer no explanation.

The underlined words "ferny nook," which appear in number twenty-six, would be neither Local Color nor Sectionalism, since it must be agreed that there is no basis for Sectionalism, and a ferny nook might occur anywhere in the world, be it Georgia or Madagascar. Thirty-six people, or 60 per cent, agreed; and twenty-one people, or 35 per cent,



called it Local Color. For those twenty-one people it seems a case of improper identification, because any Kansan who has observed the flora of his native state knows that ferny nooks are not confined to the South. The three persons who called it Sectionalism evidently were guessing.

Number twenty-nine is another example of improper identification. The underlined word was "dewberry." Twenty-eight persons called it Local Color, which is not the case, because the dewberry is found in many places other than the South. Only twenty-six, or 43.3 per cent, called it neither Local Color nor Sectionalism - the correct classification. Only two called it Sectionalism.

"By a world of marsh," is obviously neither Local Color nor Sectionalism, according to the instructions given; the writer would refer those twenty-eight persons calling it Local Color to the instructions given for determining Local Color. And there certainly is no specific marsh referred to in the underlined item. The twenty-eight people who disregarded instructions, represent 46.6 per cent of the total.

In number fifty-two, the underlined words were "South wind." Since the questionnaire concerned itself with the South, one might expect some to call it Local Color; and twenty-six actually did. However, it is possible to have a South wind in Shanghai or Quebec, as the twenty-two people who called it neither Local Color nor Sectionalism were evidently aware. Let it be said that the writer was highly gratified with the results of the above response, since the words underlined were designedly chosen to test the consistency of those answering the questionnaire. Eleven called it Sectionalism, despite the fact that a moment's deliberation should have assured a correct response.

The underlined words "ground stars" in number fifty-three present another case where division of opinion is practically inevitable. The writer and director of this thesis failed to agree on the proper identity of it. As far as the words "ground stars" are concerned, the reference is probably to flowers, but whether it is a peculiar literary expression, or actually a definite flower, the writer has failed to discover. Paul Hamilton Hayne probably knew, and the people of the South in his day probably knew; but for the writer it remains an enigma. If there is a definite "ground star" flower, then twenty-six people were right, but were probably guessing. If there is no such flower, then twenty-nine people are right, and also as the result of a guess. Four called it Sectionalism. In the writer's opinion, the item should not have been included in the questionnaire.

In this chapter, the writer has attempted to make an analysis of the various causes for agreement and disagreement. To attempt to explain why people do things, especially to explain the answers they give in experiments of this kind, is like looking for the fourth dimension. If such explanations were possible, the number of headaches experienced on the part of teachers of literature would be greatly reduced. However, for the purposes of classification, the reasons for disagreement have been divided into four general classes. Table III divides the causes for disagreement as the writer sees them. In the table those persons not attempting have been disregarded.

In arriving at the figures, the writer has taken several liberties, as previously stated. But generally speaking, the causes for disagreement

in each case seem plausible. It is quite plausible to assume that had people properly identified certain items they would have called them Local Color, instead of labeling them neither Local Color nor Sectionalism. It is reasonable also to assume that calling something Local Color and two lines later in the same poem referring to the same item as Sectionalism, represents marked inconsistency. In dividing between Not Thinking and Inability to Follow Instructions, the writer admits that the line is drawn more finely. However, since one might imply the other, the obviousness of the answer has been used as a basis of differentiation, those most glaring disagreements being called Lack of Thinking.

TABLE III  
CAUSES OF ERRORS

Item No.	Number disagreeing	Inaccurate thinking	Failure to follow instructions	Inconsistency	Improper identification
1	5				5
2	14	5		5	6
3	51	29	2		
4	42	54	8		
5	53	7	24		
6	22	9	13		
7	14		11		3
8	22	1	21		
9	15	3	10		
10	6		6		
11	51	23	6		
12	19		11		8
13	20		12		8
14	18	6	12		
15	29	5	24		
16	14	7	7		
17	58		6		30
18	45	20	15	10	
19	44	32	14		
20	29	20	9		
21	46	50	14	2	
22	8	3	5		
23	35	31	4		
24	10	6	4	6	6
25	40	3			37
26	24	3			21
27	4		1		3
28	2		1		1
29	32		4		28
30	8	1	7	4	

TABLE III (continued)

## CAUSES OF ERRORS

Item No.	Number disagreeing	Inaccurate thinking	Failure follow instructions	Inconsistency	Improper identification
31	3		2	1	
32	35	7	28		
33	17	1	16		
34	18		18		
35	15	15		4	
36	20	20		4	
37	26	26		13	
38	20	20		9	
39	24		12		12
40	31	29	2		
41	23	10	13		
42	12	1	11		
43	19		8		11
44	10	6	4		
45	4	2	2		
46	24	23	1		
47	12	8	4		
48	20	3	17		
49	11	9	2		
50	11	7	4		
51	19	1	18		
52	33	11			22
53	25	4			
54	21		21		21
55	8	4	4		4
56	2	1	1		
57	6		6		
Total	1163	484	439	53	194

In the above table there appear apparent inconsistencies in totals, as in number twenty-four. This is, however, not an inconsistency since the person checking the item, in erring in agreement, also committed another error by being inconsistent.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

This study has been extremely interesting, both to the writer and to the director. Since any study is possibly weak in certain of its phases, it would be well to look first at the weaknesses in the present study. A, a teacher in one of the larger Kansas high schools, criticized certain of the quotations in the questionnaire on the grounds that they were too brief. B, a superior student and English major, made the same criticism. As may be seen from Table II, page eighteen, A erred twenty-one times and B erred twenty-three times. In fourteen of the items, a majority of the persons answering the questionnaire were not of the same opinion as the writer and director. Of these fourteen variant items, it must be noted that four of them were due to a failure to distinguish between a general and a specific term, for example, such words as "dew-berry," "laurel," "sassafras," and "muscadine."

The second weakness the writer believes the project to have is a lack of some method by which the person answering the questionnaire could classify his agreement or lack of agreement. If some such provision had been worked out, it would have no doubt greatly reduced the number of disagreements due to improper thinking and inconsistency.

The third weakness which the questionnaire possesses is a lack of some specific instructions regarding certain words and phrases upon which an opinion was asked. If those people checking the questionnaires had been

told to look in the dictionary or some other source, when necessary, for items they did not understand, there would have undoubtedly been less guessing; for instance in the case of the words "Haberham" and "Hall." However, to guard against guessing would probably have been to invite more severe consequences. The individuals answering the questionnaire, in consulting sources might have been led to rely on some judgment other than their own. This would have invalidated the whole process.

Reference to Table III led the writer to conclude that some English students and teachers seem to read words with little attention to the significance of those words. There were 1,163 disagreements, which is slightly more than 11 per cent of the possible total of 10,260 disagreements. As will be immediately seen, this non-agreement is comparatively small. These results also tend to validate the somewhat arbitrary standards set up by the writer and the director. One cannot help wondering what the per cent of error would have been had it been possible to make the questionnaire conform more closely to strictly objective standards.

The writer further concludes that approximately 23 per cent of the persons answering did not follow instructions. The instructions as to what to do and what not to do were as definite as the writer was able to make them. In spite of this, nine persons added comments, while fourteen insisted on giving an answer where no answer was asked for. Naturally, much gratuitous information and well-meant advice had to be disregarded. One person used question marks in two places instead of the letters called for in the instructions. From this it would seem that the questionnaire was interesting, and that those persons who disregarded instructions in this

connection were sincere in their endeavor. According to Dr. E. J. Brown,<sup>1</sup> Director of the Graduate Division at Emporia State Teachers College, people contribute answers not called for in a questionnaire for two reasons; first, because the questionnaire is challenging, and second, because it restricts. It is the opinion of the writer that if, in the present study, additional information was added because of either of the above reasons, it would probably be because of the latter.

The writer attempted to ascertain to what extent those who answer questionnaires disregard instructions by volunteering additional information, but there is no satisfying evidence on this question. Dr. H. E. Schrammel<sup>2</sup> of the Bureau of Educational Measurements at Emporia State Teachers College states that in general the number of persons disregarding instructions runs rather high. However, the number disregarding written instructions is considerably fewer than those disregarding oral instructions. It appears then, that 25 per cent who disregarded instructions in this project are not out of line with results found in other studies.

It is possible that the failure of several to heed the instructions, and the tendency of others to volunteer additional information, were due to a lack of clarity in certain parts of the questionnaire. This is not extremely probable however, since 67 per cent did check the questionnaire without adding further information. A further canvass of the answers reveals that those persons volunteering information not called for

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<sup>1</sup> Statement made in an interview, May 10, 1938.

<sup>2</sup> Statement made in an interview, May 10, 1938.



failed to show a higher percentage of agreement with Table II than those not volunteering information.

One cannot help conjecturing what would have been the result of such an experiment as this, had those persons answering the questionnaire been personally directed; yet it is perfectly clear that such a method would have been physically impossible. It would have been difficult to gather a very large competent group together at one time. Usually, personally-supervised groups are used where time consumed in answering is a factor; this was not the case in this experiment, the person who checked the questionnaire having as much time as was needed.

In his study of the returns the writer found no conclusive evidence of collaboration.

The writer concludes from this study that there is apparent need for more attention to the meaning of content in the teaching of English.

The writer should like very much to see a study similar to this one conducted in the field of English Romantic poetry. It is the writer's opinion that English poetry is much more descriptive than is American poetry.

Finally, although the number of apparently inexcusable blunders is at first somewhat disheartening, when the total number of actual blunders is checked against the total possibility of error, the percentage is strikingly small. The writer therefore feels justified in concluding that the teaching of college English, with reference both to its content and form, is of a much better quality than some of the noisy critics would have us believe.

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