Lauren Shelton paints to evoke and express emotions that she believes we all struggle with. Her large-scale works put viewers in the midst of the world that she has created and she hopes they will be struck by a force that is familiar, but fascinating. Born in Lynchburg, Shelton received a B.A. from Randolph College.

She currently lives and works in Roanoke, Virginia. Waylay was purchased by the Randolph College art department and is currently displayed in the art building.

“When I painted Waylay, I hoped to evoke the overwhelming feeling of being swept inside a wave. When the force feels too strong, you allow the water to carry you and trust you will find your way back to the surface. The large scale of the painting was crucial because this work deals with the idea of feeling insignificant and accepting the lack of control we have over life. It suggests a universal sense of the human experience. Everyone has fears, nightmares, secrets. These feelings come from a powerful place inside of us, much like forces of nature.”
Introduction

One of my spring delights is to read through the papers nominated for the Writing Board’s three awards. This year, the Board received twenty-three nominations from six different departments, and I applaud their final selection: Sara Taylor walks with protagonist Catherine through *Northanger Abbey* and considers the subject of connected texts; Danielle Robinson unpacks her creative process through an exploration of “Eleven,” a Sandra Cisneros story; and Emily Patton Smith presents birds not only as scientific reference materials but also as artifacts of our cultural heritage.

There is no doubt that Randolph fosters good writing. During 2011/2012, through end-of-semester evaluations, faculty identified 158 students as excellent writers, and it gives me great pleasure to record their names here on the closing page of *The Jack*.

Professor Bunny A. Goodjohn
*Director of the Writing Program and Tutoring Services*
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When the subject of connected or symbiotic texts arises, one of the most obvious pairings is Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey* and Ann Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Austen keeps her protagonist Catherine awake into the night devouring *Udolpho*; she then discusses the book and others of the genre at length with her companions, and allows her fictional adventures in combination with her friends’ commentary to color her interpretation of her experiences. A simplistic reading of the texts would assume that Austen is burlesquing Radcliff, and on a certain level this is true. *The Mysteries of Udolpho* quite easily fits the description of ‘little gothic shocker,’ and given its content and authorship would have been considered second-rate in comparison to works by Richardson and his male contemporaries, to whom Austen alludes in the social scenes at Bath. Though there is an aspect of humor to the gothic scenes in the novel, Austen both elaborates on the expectations that readers had for that genre and imparts to the situations a feeling of immediacy in both place and time, questioning contemporary societal norms that modern women would find as heinous as any dead wife in the cellar or madwoman in the attic. In addition to her social commentary, Austen also takes the opportunity to praise the novel in general and the female-authored novel in particular, both through the direct commentary of her narrator and her illustration of novel readers. Far from being a simple parody of a popular piece of cheap entertainment, *Northanger Abbey* engages with and elaborates on *Udolpho*, legitimizing the work of female novelists and utilizing the principles of the genre to express her views.

The first half of *Northanger Abbey* is set in the spa town of Bath, and therefore has few inherent opportunities for gothic references. In Catherine’s discussions with Isabella it becomes clear that both girls are greatly fond of novels; shortly after Catherine is seen reading avidly. Though these earlier passages lack the gothic overtones of the latter half of the book, they do play on the conventions of novels such as Richardson’s *Pamela* or Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair*; which would have garnered more respect due to their ‘serious’ subject matter and male authorship. This stands in contrast to the works that the girls themselves are reading as well as to the general tone and content of the second half of the volume. Austen at this point brings the narrator to the foreground to defend the girl’s reading habits, denouncing the practice of writing characters who refuse to indulge in novels: “if the heroine of one novel be not patronized by the heroine of another, from whom can she expect protection and regard?” (Austen 21). The narrator continues to describe the novel in glowing terms, calling it the “work in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wit and humor, are conveyed to the world in the best chosen language” (22). Austen directly
defends novel reading and novel writing as noble pursuits, indicating that she has some higher purpose in making frequent allusions and direct references to *The Mysteries of Udolpho* as a female-authored novel.

The purpose behind these allusions becomes clearer in the second half of the novel, in which Catherine travels to the titular Northanger Abbey. At three points in this section the genre in general and *Udolpho* in particular are directly satirized. During the coach ride to Northanger, Henry Tilney perceives what sort of opinion Catherine has formed of the abbey, and enjoys playing into her excitement, asking her if she is “prepared to encounter all the horrors that a building such as ‘what one reads about’ may produce? Have you a stout heart? Nerves fit for sliding panels and tapestry?” (124). He goes on to describe in vivid detail the sort of setting that *Udolpho* has prepared her to expect, complete with purple velvet and peals of thunder. Perhaps due to this suggestion, Catherine twice finds herself in situations fitting for any gothic romance, once when faced with a large dark cabinet which she is certain contains a manuscript similar to that which Henry describes in his fancy, and for the second time when she becomes certain that General Tilney’s unpleasant disposition must be proof positive that he murdered his wife, and forays into that lady’s vacated chamber to search out the truth of the matter.

Catherine’s expectations of intrigue and mystery at Northanger Abbey go unfulfilled, but this does not mean that there are no readings of the scenario beyond burlesque. In causing her heroine’s gothic fantasies to be unfounded, Austen brings to attention societal norms that parallel the situations typical of gothic fiction. Though General Tilney proves to not be the murderous villain that Catherine expects, his treatment of his offspring and his attitude towards his late wife’s memory indicates that he is both a domineering father and an unfeeling and unsympathetic husband (Lambdin 124). When this is considered in conjunction with his treatment of Catherine upon her departure from the abbey, we cannot help but consider him a cruel and unkind man. Catherine set out to find a fantastic horror, but finds instead the very real and day-to-day horrors of what most take to be civilized society. The contrast is heightened by Henry Tilney’s commentary on Catherine’s fancy. He encourages her to consult her understanding of the probable in combination with her observation, insisting that such scenarios as she imagines could never take place in such a country and in such an age as that in which they live. Yet it is in England, and in their age, in which the General’s tyranny is socially justified. Austen’s juxtaposition of the gothic villain with the typical English gentleman questions the subordination of women, comparing the contemporary marriage relationship, in which the woman was legally rendered non-human, with fictional situations in which husbands murdered or imprisoned their wives, demonstrating that the General’s behavior towards women is as immoral and unjust as that of the villains of gothic romance.

Rather than satirizing Radcliffe’s work in these passages, Austen is satirizing the andro-centric reality that defined the roles and traits of the women in her novels. The villains are not lodged in some gloomy castle in an exotic country, but rather occupy comfortable houses quite near her readers. Despite its humorous moments, *Northanger Abbey*’s appropriation of elements from *The Mystery of Udolpho* endows it with a serious message. Satire has long been a vehicle of political and social commentary; that it has been written by a woman quietly at home rather than by a man party to active discourse on the matters of the day should be no grounds for readers to discount the potential deeper meanings of the text. Had it not drawn so liberally upon *Udolpho*, it is doubtful that *Northanger Abbey* would have presented more than a tongue-in-cheek
analysis of social interactions. The juxtaposition of the texts demands that the reader draw parallels and make comparisons between mirrored situations and characters. The relationship between the two works is complex and mutually beneficial, the latter work building on the former to encourage readers to consider their situations, as well as legitimizing the work of female novelists as well as the gothic novel as a genre.

Works Cited

*Sara Taylor* is a recent graduate from the English department of Randolph College and will be heading intrepidly to the M.A. program at East Anglia in September. She ritualistically squelches her disappointment in being born a girl with homemade mead and gratuitously graphic short fiction.

*Nominated by Mara Amster, ENGL 493*
the lid of my box until my imagination resigns and settles back into the darkness.

The key to freedom comes in unexpected ways: a song on the radio, a poem written by a friend, the sun making patterns between the leaves, an idea sparked by the enthusiasm of a professor alive to the moment and its endless possibilities. When I’m aware, emphasis on the *being* verb, then sometimes I escape; I write a whole poem without stopping, or my story morphs into something completely different than I had intended. The things I write outside of my box have the element of surprise, the capability to show my another version of myself that I didn’t know existed.

Escaping my ego isn’t something that’s done easily. Learning to write beyond the confines of my ego is like trying to trace the path of a single thread through a Navajo blanket. Woven by years of habits and culturally shaped responses, my ego hides in intricate geometric patterns; detailed images, interesting characters, quaint metaphors and similes, all wonderful elements of writing, but if my ego is present in them, then they can’t transform into their full potential. My stories will remain stagnant and predictable, and they’ll never become an integral part of me. Instead of letting my ego determine the patterns, I can study the origin of the patterns and once understanding comes, I can weave fresh patterns all my own.

Operating in the space outside of my writer’s box is intimidating, but it is also the most liberating experience I can have as a writer. When I’m not fixated on a specific way of doing things I have the ability to expand up and down and out, and even in, which doesn’t sound like expansion, but is, because expansion is about going to places that I’ve never been before.

pupils expanding in darkness, mouth of a tunnel, a space to hide in, a loop to slip through, lips shaped by song, smoke rings flying on expended breath to dissolve in the light of the moon

Inhabiting Ego: We’ve been close for many years. His name is Igor. He keeps me in my windowless writer’s box and reminds me that I’m comfortable pressed against the rough boards of its six symmetrical sides. He tells me it’s safer on the inside, that it’s risky to push the boundaries. I nod sagaciously and proceed to write hopeless drivel. If I attempt to stretch my creative limbs, he pushes on the lid of my box until my imagination resigns and settles back into the darkness.

In her short story “Eleven,” Sandra Cisneros writes from the perspective of a girl named Rachel on her eleventh birthday. The story is vivid, evoking emotion and nostalgia using craft techniques such as repetition and vivid character development. The story is contained in a day, but it stretches across time and space, economic status, ethnic boundaries and age to encompass all of its readers. Rachel is having a miserable experience at school, and she longs for the day to be “far away like a runaway balloon, like a tiny o in the sky, so tiny tiny you have to close your eyes to see it” (Cisneros). As a young writer, I am my own version of the “o in the sky.” I write and my writing feels invisible, my goals shrink into the atmospheric void of insignificance; I long to escape the o and become the double rainbows, the migrating flocks of geese with light glinting from wing tips, the stunning sunsets that bleed into the darkness of night; I want to see and be seen with eyes wide open; I grow tired of squinting to make my writing feel valid, unique, visible; I want to be present, past, and future—these are the thoughts of a moment and a lifetime, the doubts that accrue in the white spaces between the inked letters on the page. Finally, weary of inhibition, I step outside of myself and my negativity to consider the o: the eternal curving line, the space in the middle, the potential for expansion.

Danielle Robinson for Spin Circles of Light

Award for Best Long Paper 2011/2012

Danielle Robinson for Spin Circles of Light
The Moment: When an opera singer is preparing to sing, she will breathe in until her diaphragm is fully expanded. Once the diaphragm has been filled, a skilled opera singer can sing for prolonged amounts of time without taking another breath. In the same way that an opera singer can sustain a note, the ability to sustain a moment in fiction is invaluable for me as a writer. If I cannot stay in a moment, push into the sides of it, stretch it to its greatest capacity, then my stories will collapse on themselves. The components might all be there: the narrative arc, the why, the answer to the big question; however, the story will be flat, the individual parts equal with no variation of lightness or heaviness, and stagnation will set in.

When I feel like I’m losing control of a story—I’m sure that five pages is enough, or a character is taking me to an unfamiliar place—I jump out of the moment to regain mastery. The secret that’s being whispered in my ear and simultaneously shouted from the rooftops, is that real power comes when I’m not afraid to rest in the moment. One way that Cisneros lets “Eleven” expand, while also staying in the moment, is the mental and physical space that Rachel occupies. The expansion comes as Rachel moves from the desk, to the classroom, to the playground, to the sky. She remains in the moment because her focus remains on the idea that she is all the ages she’s ever been.

The moment that is the inside of the O always has potential to expand, but it also has the potential to stay tiny and insignificant. It’s important to not rest in the wrong moment. A good writer knows when to withhold weight, and when to pour it out until a moment has morphed into the next scene, or the next piece of dialogue, or the next story.

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Learning to write beyond the confines of my ego is like trying to trace the path of a single thread through a Navajo blanket.

Stratification: A chef cuts into an onion knowing he’ll find layers of crisp rings fitting snugly together. In “Eleven,” Cisneros talks about how growing old is like being an onion. She plays with the idea that “when you’re eleven, you’re also ten, and nine, and eight, and seven, and six, and five, and four, and three, and two, and one.” With each draft of a story that I write, it “ages” in the sense that a layer is added. My understanding of the story grows and my ideas mature. The original concepts are still in my mind, but they are covered over with new ideas, different perspectives, changes in point of view, relocation of setting, or a shift in motivation for main or minor characters. The layers form and my stories become like onions, inverted ones. The skin of the story always comes first, and then I write my way towards the center. I usually start by writing on the surface because that layer comes most easily. If I wait until I understand what the story is about, then I will never start writing.

As I finish the first layer, the second layer begins forming, and then the next and the next, until I reach the nucleus of the story. There is an inherent danger to starting on the surface. The risk of getting stuck there is always a possibility. Whether an onion is consumed one layer at a time, or with biting through several layers at once, the taste saturates the mouth, while the smell permeates the nasal cavities. A successful story should do the same thing. Even if a less discerning reader doesn’t make it to the core of the story, the presence of the other layers should still contribute weight and significance.

red beet slice, Ferris wheel, silver rimmed dinner plates, the widening of a woman’s cervix in preparation for birth, bright lips of an active volcano, nucleus of a cell

Birth: Cisneros talks about the difficulties of “birthing” a book, but she also talks about how she is afraid of physical birthing. She says the idea of being pregnant is intriguing, but the thought of actually giving birth scares her. It scares me too—not the physical birth, but the birthing of a story. There is something comfortable about a story gestating in my mind. It floats, comfortably growing in the amniotic fluid of my imagination. I am caught up in the beauty of producing something that’s
part of myself. I like the way a story feels moving around, adjusts to fit in the space that’s designated for it. Throughout the day it gently bumps into my other thoughts, reminding me of its presence. At night it rests with me while I sleep. It feeds on my experiences. I conduct research to give it more sustenance to grow.

The “labor pains” start when I put pen to paper, or fingers to keyboard. It’s a twinge at first, a tiny pang of doubt, or uncertainty. I dismiss the sensation quickly and continue stringing together sentences, reveling in the creation of images with color and texture and something that’s like a taste on my tongue, but I can’t explain; the first page blooms, the second, maybe even the third. By the time I get to the fourth page I can’t ignore the building pressure. The pressure scares me. I question—what made me think I was capable of giving birth—why I didn’t leave it to wiser, more skilled writers who are prepared to handle the experience. I wonder if maybe it wouldn’t be better to stop the process, to let the story linger in my mind for a little longer. I try to push it back in, but it’s too late. I attempt to move on to something else, but my mind is full of the unborn portion of the story. If I persist in my resistance, the story dies. It can only survive inside of me for a time before I forget it, or it warps, or it fizzles into nothingness.

I’ve heard that the worst parts of giving birth fade in a woman’s memory. It’s not as though she doesn’t remember at all, but the rewards outweigh the costs. That’s why I keep writing. When my stories survive the birthing process, I get to watch them grow into something that is still part of me but also completely separate; like cells undergoing mitosis, we are one and individual.

_the hemisphere’s invisible wrapping around, the waxing moon, Saturn’s rings, one million earths circling inside the globe of the sun, a bright copper penny_

The thing about an o is that it can shrink to a period or grow to the size of suns. It’s a shape and a letter—a pool of limitless opportunities. The center of the circle is always the center no matter the size, and the circumference is always the circle’s set boundary. I focus on the “tiny o” and forget that it’s situated in the never-ending expanse of the sky. How wonderful to have the freedom of inhabiting the space inside or the space outside of the o, to write through the circumference of the circle to the center and back out again. The o encompasses sunsets, wings, and rainbows, but it’s also encompassed by them. In the darkness or in the light, with squinting or wide-open eyes, seen or invisible, I am a writer and always will be.

**Work Cited**


**Danielle Robinson** A native of New Mexico, Danielle Robinson graduated from Randolph College in 2012 with a B.A. in English/creative writing. Her fascination with people and their everyday lives serves as a catalyst for her writing. Danielle has a passion for dance and thoroughly enjoyed participating in Randolph’s dance program during her time at the College. She loves spending time with her family and traveling in the United States and abroad. She would like to thank Jim Peterson for sharing his love of all things weird and wonderful and teaching her to embrace the present moment.

Nominated by Jim Peterson, ENGL 363
Emily Smith for Tales Dead Birds Tell: The Historical and Cultural Context of Early Avian Specimens in the Biology Collections of Randolph College (extract)

This is an extract from Smith’s senior thesis submitted for a degree in Heritage Studies. In the full paper, the contributions of several major bird collectors were discussed, including Adolphe Boucard, Robert Ridgway, George Gaumer, Ferdinand V. Hayden, and others; for reasons of length, only the section on Boucard is included.

Natural history collections serve to teach us about the extent and evolution of biodiversity; they also teach us about the evolution of the human understanding of, and relationships with, the natural world. Early avian specimens in the collection of the Randolph College biology department have direct ties to notable nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scientists and collectors, and derive from important private collections as well as the Smithsonian. By examining the provenance of these early specimens, we may begin to appreciate their significance, not simply as scientific reference material, but also important artifacts of our cultural heritage. They are relevant to understanding issues of imperialism, the westward expansion of the United States, the development of conservation law, and the value of individual appreciation for ecological sustainability.

An Overview of the Randolph College Avian Collection

Randolph College currently holds a salvage permit from the Virginia Division of Game and Wildlife, for the purposes of adding to its collections of specimens for scientific study. Over the summer of 2011, the Randolph College avian collections were re-catalogued, with the goal of developing a systematic inventory which would reflect the taxonomic relationships between the birds in the study collection. At this date, the collection numbers 303 specimens; of these, one specimen is an osteological skull, a few specimens consist of single wings or tail feathers, and one species is represented by a single feather. The remainder of the specimens consists of study skins, with the exception of five full mounts. The locations of seven specimens featured in the early handwritten inventory are presently unknown. In the current collection of birds, 51 families are represented.

Much of the history of the formation of the college collections is, to date, unknown. A few exotic mounts—including a kiwi still in the collection—feature in photographs in a 1913 textbook by the longtime head of the R-MWC biology department, J. Irvin Hamaker. Prior to the formation of the present catalogue, however, no comprehensive inventory of the avian collection existed. A handwritten catalogue and corresponding loose pages identified bird, mammal, fish, and reptile specimens in the collection until about 1968, but it appears that this list may never have been comprehensive. In addition to this early inventory, archaic tags on the specimens offer some information on pre-1960 additions to the college collections; many of the older tags derive from the Smithsonian collections. From these sources, it is apparent that the oldest-known specimen dates to 1866 (predating the college itself), and that 80 or more specimens—some 29% of the current avian collection may have been in place by 1960.

In reviewing the data compiled in the new catalogue, it appears that the bird specimens were largely added in batches:

1860–1912 Early ex-Smithsonian acquisitions, including National Zoological Park
Several individuals are identified as sources for the Smithsonian-derived specimens in the collection. Five birds bear original tags labeled “Boucard Museum,” as well as subsequent Smithsonian tags; another, *Tachybaptus dominicus*, is identified in the handwritten inventory as having been collected by Boucard, but is missing tags which would confirm this suggestion. Seven birds are identified by Smithsonian tags stamped with the name “G.F. Gaumer” as collector. *Chlorostilbon assimilis* and *Calidris mauri* are identified in the handwritten inventory as having been collected by Ridgway, though they lack original tags which would provide a more solid provenance. The specimen of *Cyanocitta stelleri* bears a Smithsonian tag with the name “Dr. Hayden” as collector and “Colorado” as the location of acquisition. Additional specimens from the Smithsonian have collectors identified as “Dr. E. Palmer,” “W. Palmer,” “A.H. Jennings,” “L. M. Turner,” “S. Turner,” “McL. Panama,” “Victor J. Evans,” “E.S. Schmid,” “W.H. Ball,” “Mrs. R.S.R. Hitt,” “J. Stearns & Co.,” “H.F. Cross,” and “W.M. Perry.” These names, and the suggestion of a Smithsonian connection, provided a starting-point for my investigation of the originating material in the Randolph College collections.

For the purposes of this paper, I will focus on the earliest specimens dated 1860–1912 which have a Smithsonian provenance; more specifically, I will treat those associated with named collectors, with the exception of a few where circumstantial evidence suggests the specimen’s association with a particular collector already represented in the Randolph College collection. The specimens in this group are among the most carefully preserved in the entire collection; many remain in excellent condition. The skins are generally filled with wool roving, cotton wadding, or flax tow (“oakum”), though a few may have been filled with sawdust. The original tags are preprinted with the name of the originating collection (Boucard Museum or United States National Museum / Smithsonian), with individual details generally handwritten in graphite, iron gall ink, or India ink. The location “Yucatan” and collector’s name, “G.F. Gaumer,” are stamped directly on the tags of the Gaumer specimens, and the W. Palmer specimen bears a Smithsonian tag stamped in purple ink on the reverse: “Gift of R. Ridgway, to U.S. National Museum. II.” At least one specimen, marked “McL. Panama,” bears holes in the beak left by the collector’s birdshot.

In researching and documenting the birds’ provenance I found it most effective to group them by collector rather than type or location collected, and to proceed to uncover their history and context by investigating the published materials pertaining first to the collector, then to the collection site, and finally to the species itself. The birds “tell” a very human story, about individual and collective efforts to understand the amazing biodiversity which populates the world. Among the collectors represented in the Randolph College avian collections are experts and enthusiasts whose passion for natural science is visible today in their specimens, which have become part of the scientific heritage of Randolph College and the world.

**Adolphe Boucard (1839–1905)**

Adolphe Boucard was a French naturalist and collector, who attained an interest in natural history in part due to the extensive travels which he made early in life. Although Boucard described “no less than 44 new species of humming birds, 5 insects, and a mollusk,” with “13 species and 2 new genera” accredited to his work *The Genera of Humming Birds* (1895), Boucard never seems to have been regarded by his contemporaries as a serious scientist, but rather an enterprising enthusiast of natural history, particularly ornithology. Boucard’s interest in natural history began at a very early age, but it is uncertain where he attained his education. When he was twelve years old, he spent the year 1851–1852 in San Francisco, at Stockton Street on the edge of what would become Chinatown. Like another expatriate Frenchman, John James Audubon, Boucard appears to have spent his precocious youth engaged in conducting experiments of natural history, often at the expense of his hapless subjects.
He later recalled:

From March to August [1852], I collected specimens of Natural History. Many were the species of beetles and butterflies that I collected on the suburbs of San Francisco. During my rambles I very often met another Frenchman, the well-known collector Lorquin, who was chiefly searching for insects. I also collected many species of birds, and more particularly Humming-birds. Two species were abundant, *Calypte annae* and *Selasphorus rufus*. I found many nests of these two species during the months of March and April, and at one time I had as many as sixty of them alive, all taken from the nests. I fed them with fresh flowers and small insects. My intention was to send them alive to Europe, but even the most robust died at sea, and it was a complete failure.\(^{28}\)

Boucard participated in two expeditions to southern Mexico between 1854 and 1867, collecting specimens for other scientists, including Philip Sclater and Osbert Salvin.\(^{29}\) In 1865, during the French political occupation of Mexico, Boucard was associated with a French scientific expedition into southern Mexico and Central America.\(^{30}\) At this time, possibly at the recommendation of Sclater, he became a corresponding member of the Zoological Society of London. He subsequently returned to Paris,\(^{31}\) and although little is known of his endeavors between 1868 and 1880, he seems to have remained actively engaged in the business of collecting. By the 1880s he was living in London and assisting with the publication of *Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London*, although he returned to Paris to represent Guatemala at the 1889 Exposition,\(^{32}\) for which the Eiffel Tower was constructed.\(^{33}\) In 1891 he was listed in 225 High Holborn Street, London, where he advertised under the firm of Boucard, Pottier & Co., “Naturalists and Feather Merchants.”\(^{34}\)

In addition to retailing specimens outright, “Messrs. Boucard, Pottier & Co. beg to advise Directors of Museums and private Amateurs that they undertake to stuff from a Humming bird to a Whale at very reasonable prices.”
From the 1860s to the 1890s...[s]tylish milliners sold elaborate hats “featuring whole, stuffed birds”; jewelers’ settings framed not gems, but preserved hummingbirds; and women’s gowns were spangled with thousands of iridescent beetle wings.

“Naturalist and Feather Merchant,” Boucard dealt in ...all kinds of Objects of Natural History, Collections of Mammal and Bird Skins, Skeletons, Human and Animal Skulls, Insects of all orders pinned and set, or in papers; Marine, Fresh Water, and Land Shells; Reptiles and Fishes in spirit; Crustacea and Arachnidae in spirit; Ethnological collections from all parts; Showy Bird Skins and Feathers for Plumassiers and Naturalists; Mammal Skins for Furriers; Bright species of Insects for Artificial Florists; Rare old Stamps, used and unused; Curios of all sorts, Pictures and Works of Art, etc., etc., etc. All possessors of such objects should not dispose of them without consulting Messrs. Boucard, Pottier & Co., who having a large connection with Amateurs in all parts of the world, are able to get the very best prices for them.44

Among the individual collectors from whom Boucard purchased specimens were George F. Gaumer (who will be discussed at length below) and Alfred Russel Wallace,45 who with Charles Darwin presented the theory of evolution by natural selection.46 In addition to retailing specimens outright, Messrs. Boucard, Pottier & Co. beg to advise Directors of Museums and private Amateurs that they undertake to stuff from a Humming bird to a Whale at very reasonable prices. Only experienced and scientific Taxidermists are employed by the hour for that work, which will always be of the best class.47

Initially, public and private museums and educational institutions served as the primary repositories for prepared zoological specimens. By the mid-nineteenth century, however, popular interest in natural history spurred another, more ostentatious market for preserved insects and birds: the fashion industry. From the 1860s to the 1890s, the increased availability of exotic specimens led to their incorporation as objects of adornment. Stylish milliners sold elaborate hats “featuring whole, stuffed birds”; jewelers’ settings framed not gems, but preserved hummingbirds; and women’s gowns were spangled with thousands of iridescent beetle wings. Michelle Tolini suggests, “proliferation of such adornment in middle-class life belied an increasing disengagement from nature brought about by the industrial revolution and the dramatic changes in urban and suburban living.”48

1 Cover of Harper’s Bazar, 3 October 1885, showing a fashionable hat trimmed with a specimen of an exotic bird.49
The specimen trade in the late nineteenth century was extremely lucrative. Demands from academic institutions, fashionable milliners, and wealthy private collectors allowed Boucard and other dealers to purvey tens of thousands of specimens per year each. Walter Burton comfortably asserted that the field collecting of birds and mammals was “an easy way of making one hundred pounds sterling a year.” Ferdinand Hayden, an American geologist, noted an instance of a “scientific swindler” who impersonated scholars and government researchers in order to con valuable books and specimens from noted collectors, suggesting the potential of these items for profit and the high demand which made resale easy and attractive to con artists.

The number of entomological and ornithological auctions in London rose steadily in the second half of the nineteenth century, with the peak of sales between 1880 and 1890. Three other specimens in the Randolph College Collections from unnamed collectors bear nineteenth century tags evidencing connections to the trade in specimens: a common magpie, *Pica rustica*, stuffed with oakum, could be purchased for “1,50” while the more exotic masked parakeet, *Prosopeia personata*, cost “6,50”. A blue-crowned motmot, *Momotus momota*, was purchased in the American market for “$1.00” according to its tag.

From the 1860s to the 1880s, dead birds of exquisite plumage were considered *haute couture*, and the demand for exotic specimens for use in fashion trades was particularly insatiable. Madame Tilman, a New York couturier with a base in Paris, featured an emporium of such specimens at her millinery showrooms: “‘Among the beautiful flowers...we see humming-birds, butterflies and all kinds of brilliant winged insects...The birds and butterflies are of course perfect, being the real birds and insects preserved and mounted.’” *Godey’s Lady’s Book* of October 1863 predicted that “‘the ornithological and entomological fevers’ in the fashion industry would “‘continue with increased violence throughout the winter’”—indeed, the trend would persist over twenty years more, with marked devastation to whole populations of species. With the accelerated trade in specimens, concerns were raised over its implication for the survival of species. To raise awareness, conservation groups such as the Selbourne Society and the Audubon Society were formed; they published literature aimed at eliminating the “traffic in feathers adorning women’s hats” which annually “cost the lives of millions of our finest birds.” According to Tolini, it was as much the methods of collecting as the numbers which appalled ecological activists; one feather harvester attested that “feathers were not gathered from the ground but taken from birds shot while in their nests.”

By 1891, when concerned women began to wear cheaply produced, dyed-feather “imitations” of the exotic birds, Boucard’s business was jeopardized, and he responded with vehemence: “[I]t will make very little difference to the wingy tribes, if Ladies condemn themselves in not wearing as adorns to their perfections the most brilliant jewels of Creation, such as Humming Birds, blue Creepers, bright Tanagers, wonderful Trogons, and Birds of Paradise, etc. etc., which enhances so harmoniously with their charms. ...Even supposing that the fashion would continue for ever, it is my opinion that certain species of Birds are so common that it would take hundreds of years before exhausting them. ...If Ladies don’t wear feathers as ornaments from sympathy to the poor birds...they must not
eat them neither, and they must not wear any furs for the same reason. Are they prepared to do that? But as I said before, Nature is so prolific and such a good Nurse that Ladies can make their mind easy on that point, and continue to use the beautiful birds which harmonize so well with beauty, and refuse to wear such poor imitations of the real thing, as what is to be seen everywhere in London this year."

In the first issue of The Humming Bird, Boucard himself gives some idea of the massive scale of this lucrative trade:

As far as my experience goes, the yearly Exportation of Bird Skins is as follows:

- Colombia: 200,000
- Brazil and Trinidad: 300,000
- Mexico and Central and South America: 100,000
- Japan: 100,000
- India: 200,000
- Africa: 100,000
- Europe: 500,000
- Total: 1,500,000

What is that! Nothing when you think of the 100,000,000 which are killed annually for eating purposes.

Boucard, however, was careful to temper his criticism of the fledgling conservation movements, although his motives have a decidedly anthropocentric bent: “I should suggest to Governments to prohibit partially the killing of birds in certain seasons and totally the destruction of Eggs; as also the killing of all species of Warblers, and some of the Passeres, which are quite indispensable to Agriculture.”

Boucard’s arguments were ineffectual, as the scientific community also recognized the very real potential for the extermination of species as a result of unchecked collecting. Over the next thirty years, public outcry against such commercial collecting of birds for the specimen and fashion trades eventually led to establishment of protective laws such as the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 in the United States.

Whatever may be thought of his large-scale trafficking of specimens, Boucard was unarguably sincere in his enthusiasm for natural history and his high regard for the value of scientific inquiry and understanding. He was also known for his generosity toward others who shared such interests. Rosenberg recalled that any success I may have had, and any services I have been able to render to the cause of Zoology, are in great part due to the interest he took in me and the encouragement he gave to me as a young beginner. The expedition which I made to the Republics of Colombia and Ecuador in 1894-1897, were due to his initiative and support, and resulted in many discoveries in all branches of Zoology.

Kofoid writes that Boucard’s great contributions to the field of ornithology included his expeditions in “Mexico, Central and South America, and Panama” as well as “his superbly prepared skins of the humming birds of the American tropics, and his critical suggestions as to age and sex differences” in the Trochilidae. Boucard retired in 1894 to the Isle of Wight, and died March 15, 1905, at his son’s home in Hampstead.

On Boucard’s death his collections were bequeathed to the Musée d’Histoire Naturelle in the Jardin des Plantes, Paris, with the condition that it “be kept separately, the original labels attached to the skins, and that the collections would always be accessible to ornithologists and specialists.” As Kofoid notes, duplicate skins were to be distributed to similar museums in Lisbon and Madrid, and also to the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, D.C. The Randolph College specimens derive from the Smithsonian set. They are:

- Tachybaptus dominicus: Least Grebe Central America 1866
- Malacoptila panamensis: White-whiskered puffbird [Guatemala?] (no date)
- Troglodytes striatulus: House wren Colombia 1886
- Thraupis episcopus: Blue-grey tanager Venezuela (no date)
- Icteris chrysater: Hooded oriole Panama 1877
- Cacicus cela: Yellow-rumped cacique Panama 1877

Two other birds in the collections bear noting beyond this list. The first is a Brazilian ruby hummingbird, Clytolema rubricauda, an exquisitely
prepared older specimen which unfortunately lacked any tag which might have cited its provenance. The species is found only in southeastern Brazil. Boucard describes the species on pages 209–210 of his Genera of Hummingbirds, stating that he owns the type specimen illustrated in plate 27 of Louis Pierre Vieillot's Oiseaux Dorés ou à Reflets Métalliques (1802), which Vieillot allegedly identified as Heliothor rubineus. The extraordinary quality of the preparation of the Randolph College specimen is consistent with that of other Boucard specimens, and as he is known to have had at least one example of this species, the possible connection would merit further investigation. As previously noted, the least grebe from the Boucard collection was also missing its original tags, and was identifiable as Boucard’s based solely on the descriptive entry in the handwritten inventory; therefore it is entirely possible that other Boucard specimens may not retain their original tags, and if the tags were lost or removed before the early inventory was created, the provenance of the specimen would remain unknown.

Another specimen worth considering with respect to Boucard is a male black-chested jay, Cyanocorax affinis, collected in Panama by a “McL.” The reverse of the tag has a former collection number, “53929”, as well as the number “87”. Alexander Whetmore, in Birds of the Republic of Panama, describes two parakeet skins in the Smithsonian collections similarly labeled “Panama McL.” with a collection date of 1862, which were received from a collector named McLeannan. The parakeets “both show holes made by fine shot in the bill” — a detail also evident in the bill of the Randolph College specimen. Thus, the specimen of C. affinis is easily attributable to McLeannan, who worked as the track master at Lion Hill on the Panama Railway during the second half of the nineteenth century, and who collected specimens for Philip Selater and Osbert Salvin — Boucard’s early associates in Mexico. Whetmore notes that some Smithsonian specimens from Boucard’s Museum identify Arce as the collector, but “from appearance” more probably were prepared by McLeannan. Whether C. affinis was collected for the Smithsonian or for Boucard is unknown, as the specimen lacks tags from either collection; however, that McLeannan collaborated with Boucard and his colleagues in collecting and identifying Panamanian birds is worthy of note. A second bird in the Randolph College collection may have a similar provenance: Colonia colonus (long-tailed tyrant) from “Gamboa Canal Zone,” subsequently located at the National Zoological Park.

Given the vast number of specimens Boucard was responsible for trafficking, the association of Central and South American specimens with Boucard is not, of itself, remarkable. What sets the Randolph College specimens apart from so many others are the labels which identify them as deriving from Boucard’s personal museum, via the Smithsonian, from which they were deaccessioned. As we have noted before, Boucard likely saw hundreds of thousands of skins; to preserve them he prided himself on hiring the most skilled and professional taxidermists, and dealt only in top-quality specimens. The fact that the bird specimens in the Randolph College collections were among those he chose to retain in his personal collection speaks volumes for their quality and importance as individuals of their species.

Conclusion
Initial research on the provenance of early avian skins, deaccessioned from the Smithsonian collections and subsequently acquired by Randolph-Macon Woman’s College, yielded...the Randolph College avian cabinets contain more than merely dry flesh and fading feathers. They hold the fragile remains of creatures with stories to tell about the limits and potential of our own understanding, and our scientific heritage as Americans.
surprising and valuable results. The collectors of these skins traveled uncharted and dangerous regions of the Western Hemisphere to acquire the specimens, and their adventures and discoveries added greatly to the scientific understanding of evolution and biodiversity. Some of these activities led to the large-scale depletion of populations or the loss of whole species; others led to legal means of conserving birds and also their unique habitats. The men who shot and carefully prepared the beautiful birds in the collection had roles in the construction of the Panama Canal, the creation of the Migratory Birds Act, the mapping of the western territories of the United States, the founding of Yellowstone Park, and the exploration of Alaska. Some explored the commercial potential of scientific knowledge, while others set extraordinary examples by their individual efforts to preserve the astonishing landscapes and ecologies they encountered. Thus, the Randolph College avian cabinets contain more than merely dry flesh and fading feathers. They hold the fragile remains of creatures with stories to tell about the limits and potential of our own understanding, and our scientific heritage as Americans.

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End Notes

1 The salvage permit allows for the collection of specimens already dead as a result of incidents such as road or window kills, or those specimens acquired from previous collections.
2 Smith, Emily, and Douglas Shedd. Catalogue of the Randolph College Avian Study Collection, 2011. (Excel file, Randolph College Biology Department) All specimens and their corresponding catalogue numbers are derived from this inventory.
3 Cygnus olor, AV3.2.1/1-2011.
4 One Falco sparverius, AV12.1.1/3-2011; two of Strix varia—right wing AV22.3.1/6-2011, and tail AV22.3.1/7-2011; and two of Turdus migratorius—left wing AV39.3.3/25-2011, and right wing AV39.3.3/26-2011.
5 Pavo cristatus, AV5.5.1/1-2011.
6 Apteryx sp., AV1.1.1/1-2011; Aptenodytes forsteri, AV2.1.1/1-2011; Aix sponsa, 3.3.1/1-2011; Gavia immer, AV6.1.1/1-2011; and Haliaeetus leucocephalus AV11.1.1/1-2011.
7 Pavo cristatus, AV5.5.1/1-2011; Haliaeetus pelagicus, AV11.1.3/1-2011; Accipiter bicolor, AV11.2.2/1-2011; Buteo lineatus, AV11.3.1/1-2011; Chordeiles gundlachii, AV23.1.2/1-2011; Regulus calendula, AV38.1.2/1-2011; and Passerina rostitae, AV47.4.2/1-2011. It is unknown whether these birds were deaccessioned or simply misplaced. In each case the specimen in question is the only representative of its species in the catalogue, though according to subsequent legislation they are largely irreplaceable. This demonstrates the urgent need, expressed by Dr. Shedd, for updated records and the development of a collections management procedure.
8 Individuals, such as former faculty or alumnae, may prove an additional source of information regarding the history of the collections.
9 Hamaker (1913), Principles of biology, 303. Some of the mammal mounts feature on other pages.
10 The handwritten catalogue is a black clothbound composition book and entries appear to have been made in three stages between 1958 and 1968, based
on the various handwriting featured; in the first hand, the latest specimen is dated 1958, while the latest date assigned to a specimen is 1968. The associated two pages contain field notes on rodents and bats taken on a survey of Giles County, Virginia, in August 1972.

Douglas Shedd: “There never has been a true curator for the collection, so over the years it has been cared for by various people with many other academic responsibilities and limited time for the collection.”

One complicating factor is that it appears that some blank tags were appropriated from the Smithsonian, as well as actual specimens; one such tag was found in a drawer of labeling materials. For this reason, only those specimens with former Smithsonian catalogue numbers, or other reliable connections to Smithsonian staff or collectors, will be considered to have derived from the Smithsonian.

Randolph College was founded as Randolph-Macon Woman’s College in 1891, and was opened to students in 1893.

Local specimens may have been added throughout the college’s history; however, the vast majority of tags for locally-sourced specimens do not specify the date the bird was collected or prepared.

Other older specimens are missing their tags but may also have had Boucard as a source, based on the source location, species, and other circumstantial evidence.

I have listed these individuals as their names appear on the specimen tags, or in the handwritten inventory. I will attempt subsequently to identify each by full name insofar as research has allowed.

They may also be among the most toxic to handle; as discussed above, preparation with arsenic was the preferred method of preserving skins in the late 19th century, based on its effectiveness in the long-term deterrence of insects.

This approach is, admittedly, more frequently found in the attribution of art works or historical artifacts than in the study of scientific specimens, but this tactic very rapidly and effectively produced specific results—much more so, in fact, than the few instances where I was forced, by lack of collector identification, to trace the history of the species in scientific descriptions.

Sometimes spelled “Bouchard.”


Ibid.: “Little bibliographic notice was taken of The Humming Bird or its articles in scientific bibliographies. The Zoologischer Anzeiger records volume 1 and four articles, but omits all reference to later articles or subsequent numbers. It omits all reference to the Genera of Humming Birds. The Zoological Record notes certain parts and the whole of the Genera, but that incorrectly.”

Kofoid 85.


Quoted in Kofoid 86.

Philip Sclater, M.A., F.R.S., Secretary of the Zoological Society of London, and Osbert Salvin, British ornithologist. See also Stone (1916) 240.

The Randolph College specimen of the Least Grebe, Tachybaptus dominicus AV7.1.1/1-2011, is dated 1866 and was probably collected on this expedition.

Kofoid 86.


Boucard (1891).

Boucard (1895) title page.


Kofoid 87. This suggestion was corroborated by W. F. H. Rosenberg p. 39.

Boucard, The Humming Bird Vol 1 (May 1 1891), vii.

Rosenberg 39.

Asma 23 describes Wallace’s collecting as well as his collaboration with Darwin on this theory.

Boucard, The Humming Bird Vol 1 (May 1 1891), vii. The Boucard specimens in the Randolph College collection provide evidence of this claim—though they are among the oldest specimens they are in outstanding condition, having been beautifully preserved.

Tolini.

Image from Tolini, Fig. 1.

Tolini. Boucard’s estimates of the total yearly traffic in skins are discussed below.


The skin of Eutoxeres Aquila AV25.2.1/1-2011, collected by “J. Stearns & Co.” in Colombia, and Lesbia victoriae AV25.1.1/1-2011 from “Mrs. R.S.R. Hitt” may also have commercial connections.

Godey’s “Chitchat” (April and October 1863 respectively), quoted from Tolini.

Image from http://www.steampunkmagazine.com/weekend-links/, under the heading “Victorian Recycling” with the ironic theme: “sustainable steampunk.” Accessed 1 Dec 2011. Another such pair is found in the V&A Picture Library (Fig. 6 in Tolini).

Tolini, citing T. Gilbert Pearson, undated pamphlet for the National Audubon Society.

Boucard (January 1891), article beginning on page 1; quoted Kofoid 88.

Boucard earlier details the local practice of snaring hummingbirds to be eaten (like shrimp) as a delicacy, “30 or 40” at a time. Kofoid (89) observes that “it is to be regretted that the statistical and commercial data pertaining to the skin and feather trade were not more fully made a matter of record by him” as the inventories and reports of auction sales in The Humming Bird “suggest the great possibilities of significant data in his hands. …Could these data have been recorded fully and methodically, they would doubtless have afforded a mine of information on the geographical distribution of humming birds and relative frequency of species, and thus a partial picture of the then existing status of the evolution of this most highly specialized and widely diversified group of birds.”


Rosenberg 39.

Kofoid 89.

Rosenberg 39.

Kofoid 87. The full extent of the collections at the Musée d’Histoire Naturelle has not been determined by the author; the museum website (below) notes “numériquement très importante, de A. Boucard”, but as of 30 Nov 2011 the ornithology collections were not searchable by collector. http://www.mnhn.fr/museum/officenaturelle/collect/collectMuseum/collectMuseumSci/FicheCollection.xsp?COLLECTION_COLLECTION_ID=272&COLLECTION_ID=272&idx=61&nav=liste

Kofoid 1923, p. 87. Presumably the duplicate items gifted to the Smithsonian were not subject to such conditions, as it is from this collection that the Randolph College specimens were acquired after their deaccessionment.

AV7.1.1/1-2011.

AV8.1.1/1-2011.

collected for Boucard by “Arce”. The location is based on that of another skin of this species in the Smithsonian, SI#145245.

AV37.3.1/1-2011.

AV45.1.1/1-2011.

AV48.3.1/1-2011.
76 Av48.4.1/1-2011.
77 Av25.4.1/1-2011.
78 Helmut Sick (1993) *Birds in Brazil: a natural history*, Princeton University Press. Although the species has a limited distribution, it remains extremely common within its range.
80 Av7.1.1/1-2011.
81 Av32.1.1/1-2011.
82 Whetmore (1968) 79.
83 Ibid.
84 Whetmore (1968) 67.
85 Whetmore (1968) 466, 477. Unfortunately, Whetmore does not specify the details of the preparation which form the basis of this observation. See also note 105 above: the puffbird also bore a Boucard tag identifying “Arce” as the collector.
86 Av30.1.1/1-2011.

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Nominated by Kelley Deetz, IST 494
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