

Department of English
Georgia State University
P. O. Box 3970
Atlanta, GA 30302-3970

October 29, 2009

As the former Director of Graduate Studies in English, and a professor of Southern Literature at Georgia State University, I have known Karey Perkins for twelve years. I admitted her to our Ph.D. program, advised her, taught her in two courses, and am directing her dissertation on Walker Percy. Karey has taught full-time as a Professor of English and Philosophy at DeVry University at the same time she attended GSU, working on an interdisciplinary degree in English and Philosophy. She passed doctoral exams in both fields with high marks, and her many responsibilities at DeVry have not deterred her from excelling at GSU as her A average attests.

Her primary area of specialization is Contemporary American Literature, including Southern literature, with an emphasis in semiotics, philosophy, and especially, theology in literature, but she is qualified and competent to teach a wide range of courses in writing and literature. Her interdisciplinary teaching duties at DeVry have extended her range as a teacher, making her a strong generalist.

Karey's dissertation, *Walker Percy and the Semiotic to the Fabric of Life: The Magic of Naming*, is based on a rock-solid reading of Percy's fiction and non-fiction prose in a way that advances the study of the ideas he derived from his deep readings in 19th and 20th century philosophy, psychology, and theology. The influence of the American philosopher C. S. Peirce is especially important. In addition to being a National Book Award winning author of fiction, Percy is revealed in Karey's work as a complex thinker who sifted ideas from many fields into his highly-regarded novels. Karey's dissertation is an interesting and important project that meaningfully crosses disciplinary lines in pursuit of Percy's influences and allusions. She utilizes her abilities in literary analysis, critical theory, and philosophy especially to explore in Percy's texts a widespread use of number symbolism, a method which she calls "ArithmeCrit." She then examines Walker Percy's application of semiotics in his philosophical essays and discovers that, in a major career shift, he uses a number symbolism corresponding to his semiotics in his last three novels. Karey has turned in to me a full draft of this dissertation, which I am now reading, and I hope to have as my co-readers a professor of philosophy who has written on Percy and a professor of mathematics who is widely read in philosophy and theology and has a deep interest in Walker Percy's work.

Karey was also a student in my Doctoral Colloquium class in which graduate students transform one of their academic papers, through writing workshops, into a conference paper for presentation at the final colloquium conference as well as for conferences outside the university. Her colloquium paper, "The Mariner in the Mirror: The Irony of Death in Coleridge's *Rime*," was well-received and also accepted to the Coleridge Summer Conference in England. She found the colloquium experience so valuable and helpful to her own development that she transported it to her own university, creating a similar workshop/colloquium for her colleagues

there. Her Faculty Forum project at DeVry showed her leadership, organization, and teamwork qualities as well as how she values and inspires scholarship and critical thinking.

Karey would be an asset to any college, especially one that values growth and development. She is dedicated, creative, and enthusiastic in her professional and intellectual endeavors, yet also practically-minded and a team player with colleagues within and outside her department. I am happy to recommend Karey to your institution. Please feel free to contact me for additional information or with any questions.

Sincerely,

Dr. Thomas McHaney
Kenneth M. England Professor of Southern Literature Emeritus
tmchaney@gsu.edu
404-378-2319