**Appendix**

**Table 1.1**

**Embedded Narratives in the Story *The Secret Life of Bees***

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| **No** | **Textual Evidence** | **Location in the Text** |
| 1 | ‘It’s a story our mother used to tell us when we got tired of our chores or out of sorts with our lives.’‘I’m not tired of my chores,’ I said.‘I know, but it’s a good story. Just listen.’I situated myself in the chair and rocked back and forth, listening to the creaking sounds that rocking chairs are famous for.‘A long time ago, across the world in Germany, there was a young nun named Beatrix who loved Mary. She got sick and tired of being a nun, though, what with all the chores she had to do and the rules she had to go by. So one night when it got too much for her, she took offher nun outfit, folded it up, and laid it on her bed. Then she crawled out the convent window and ran away.’Okay, I could see where we were headed.‘She thought she was in for a wonderful time,’ August said.‘But life wasn’t what she thought it’d be for a runaway nun. She roamed around feeling lost, begging in the streets. After a while she wished she could return to the convent, but she knew they’d never take her back.’We weren’t talking about Beatrix the nun, that was plain as day. We were talking about me.‘What happened to her?’ I asked, trying to sound interested.‘Well, one day, after years of wandering and suffering, she disguised herself and went back to her old convent, wanting to visit one last time. She went into the chapel and asked one of her old sisters, ‘Do you remember the nun Beatrix, who ran away?’ ‘What do you mean?’, the sister said.‘The nun Beatrix didn’t run away. Why, there she is over near the altar, sweeping.’Well, you can imagine how this floored the real Beatrix. She marched over to the sweeping woman to get a look at her and discovered it was none other than Mary. Mary smiled at Beatrix, then led her back to her room and gave her back her nun outfit. You see, Lily, all that time Mary had been standing in for her.’ | Page 67 |
| 2 | ‘It’s not a pretty story.’‘My story’s not pretty either,’ I said, and she smiled.‘Well, when April and May were eleven, they walked to the market with a nickel each to buy an ice cream. They’d seen the white children in there licking their cones and looking at cartoon books. The man who owned the market gave them the cones but said they had to go outside to eat them. April was headstrong and told him she wanted to look at the cartoon books. She argued with the man for her own way, like she used to do with Father, and finally the man took her arm and pulled her to the door, and her ice cream dropped to the floor. She came home screaming that it wasn’t fair. Our father was the only colored dentist in Richmond, and he’d seen more than his share of unfairness. He told April, ‘Nothing’s fair in this world. You might as well get that straight right now.’‘I was thinking how I myself had gotten that straight long before I was eleven. I blew a puff of air across my face, bending my neck to behold the Big Dipper. June’s music poured out, serenading us.‘I think most children might have let that roll on by, but it did something to April,’ August said.‘She got deflated about life, I suppose you’d say. It opened her eyes to things she might not have noticed, being so young. She started having stretches when she didn’t want to go to school or do anything. By the time she was thirteen, she was having terrible depressions, and of course the whole time, whatever she was feeling, May was feeling. And then, when April was fifteen, she took our father’s shotgun and killedherself.’I hadn’t expected that. I sucked in my breath, then felt my hand go up and cover my mouth.‘I know,’ said August.‘It’s terrible to hear something like that.’She paused a moment.‘When April died, something in May died, too. She never was normal after that. It seemed like the world itself became May’s twin sister.’ | Page 71 |
| 3 | ‘Well,’ she said, ‘back in the time of slaves, when the people were beaten down and kept like property, they prayed every day and every night for deliverance. On the islands near Charleston, they would go to the praise house and sing and pray, and every single time someone would ask the Lord to send them rescue. To send them consolation. To send them freedom.’ I could tell she had repeated those opening lines a thousand times, that she was saying them the exact way she’d heard them coming from the lips of some old woman, who’d heard them from the lips of an even older one, the way they came out like a song, with rhythms that rocked us to and fro till we had left the premises and were, ourselves, on the islands of Charleston looking for rescue.‘One day,’ August said, ‘a slave named Obadiah was loading bricks onto a boat that would sail down the Ashley River, when he saw something washed up on the bank. Coming closer, he saw it was the wooden figure of a woman. Her body was growing out of a block of wood, a black woman with her arm lifted out and her fist balled up.’At this point August stood up and struck the pose herself. She looked just like the statue standing there, her right arm raised and her hand clutched into a fist. She stayed like that for a few seconds while we sat, spellbound.‘Obadiah pulled the figure out of the water,’ she went on, ‘and struggled to set her upright. Then he remembered how they’d asked the Lord to send them rescue. To send them consolation. To send them freedom. Obadiah knew the Lord had sent this figure, but he didn’t know who she was.‘He knelt down in the marsh mud before her and heard her voice speak plain as day in his heart. She said, ‘It’s all right. I’m here. I’ll be taking care of you now.’‘This story was ten times better than Beatrix the nun. August glided back and forth across the room as she spoke.‘Obadiah tried to pick up the waterlogged woman who God had sent to take care of them, but she was too heavy, so he went and got two more slaves, and between them they carried her to the praise house and set her on the hearth.‘By the time the next Sunday came, everyone had heard about the statue washing up from the river, how it had spoken to Obadiah. The praise house was filled with people spilling out the door and sitting on the window ledges. Obadiah told them he knew the Lord God had sent her, but he didn’t know who she was.’‘He didn’t know who she was!’ cried Sugar-Girl, breaking in to the story. Then all the Daughters of Mary broke loose, saying over and over, ‘Not one of them knew.’I looked over at Rosaleen, who I hardly recognized for the way she leaned forward in her chair, chanting along with them. When everything had quieted down, August said, ‘Now, the oldest of the slaves was a woman named Pearl. She walked with a stick, and when she spoke, everyone listened. She got to her feet and said, ‘This here is the mother of Jesus.’‘Everyone knew the mother of Jesus was named Mary, and that she’d seen suffering of every kind. That she was strong and constant and had a mother’s heart. And here she was, sent to them on the same waters that had brought them here in chains. It seemed to them she knew everything they suffered.’I stared at the statue, feeling the fractured place in my heart.‘And so,’ August said, ‘the people cried and danced and clapped their hands. They went one at a time and touched their hands to her chest, wanting to grab on to the solace in her heart.‘They did this every Sunday in the praise house, dancing and touching her chest, and eventually they painted a red heart on her breast so the people would have a heart to touch.‘Our Lady filled their hearts with fearlessness and whispered to them plans of escape. The bold ones fled, finding their way north, and those who didn’t lived with a raised fist in their hearts. And if ever it grew weak, they would only have to touch her heart again.‘She grew so powerful she became known even to the master. One day he hauled her off on a wagon and chained her in the carriage house. But then, without any human help, she escaped during the night and made her way back to the praise house. The master chained her in the barn fifty times, and fifty times she loosed the chains and went home. Finally he gave up and let her stay there.’The room grew quiet as August stood there a minute, letting everything sink in. When she spoke again, she raised her arms out beside her.‘The people called her Our Lady of Chains. They called her that not because she wore chains…’‘Not because she wore chains,’ the Daughters chanted.‘They called her Our Lady of Chains because she broke them.’ | Page 79-81 |
| 4 | ‘You can wet the labels and listen,’ August said, and smiled.‘So, after Big Mama died, Our Lady of Chains was passed to my mother. She stayed in Mother’s bedroom. My father hated her being in there. He wanted to get rid of the statue, but Mother said, ‘If she goes, I go.’I think the statue was the reason Mother be- came a Catholic, so she could kneel down before her and not feel like she was doing anything peculiar. We would find her in there talking to Our Lady like they were two neighbors having sweet iced tea. Mother would tease Our Lady;she’d say, ‘You know what? You should’ve had a girl instead.’‘August set down the jar she was working on, and there was a mix of sorrow and amusement and longing across her face, and I thought, She is missing her mother. I stopped wetting the labels, not wanting to get ahead of her. When she picked up the jar again, I said, ‘Did you grow up in this house?’I wanted to know everything there was about her. She shook her head.‘No, but my mother did. This is where I spent my summers,’ she said.‘You see, the house belonged to my grandparents, and all this property around it. Big Mama kept bees, too, right out there in the same spot they’re in today. Nobody around here had ever seen a lady beekeeper till her. She liked to tell everybody that women made the best beekeepers, ‘cause they have a special ability built into them to love creatures that sting.‘It comes from years of loving children and husbands,’ she’d say.’ August laughed, and so did I.‘Was your Big Mama the one who taught you to keep bees?’August took off her glasses and cleaned them on the scarf at her waist.‘She taught me lots more about bees than just how to keep them. She used to tell me one tall bee tale after another.’I perked up. ‘Tell me one,’ I said. August thumped her finger on her forehead like she was trying to tap one of them off some back shelf in her head. Then her eyes lit up, and she said, ‘Well, one time Big Mama told me she went out to the hives on Christmas Eve and heard the bees singing the words of the Christmas story right out of the gospel of Luke.’August started to sing then in a humming sort of way, ’‘Mary brought forth her firstborn child and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in the manger.’‘I giggled.‘Do you think that really happened?’‘Well, yes and no,’ she said.‘Some things happen in a literal way, Lily. And then other things, like this one, happen in a not literal way, but they still happen. Do you know what I mean?’I didn’t have a clue.‘Not really,’ I said.‘What I mean is that the bees weren’t really singing the words from Luke, but still, if you have the right kind of ears, you can listen to a hive and hear the Christmas story somewhere inside yourself. You can hear silent things on the other side of the everyday world that nobody else can. Big Mama had those kind of ears. Now, my mother, she didn’t really have that gift. I think it skipped a generation.’ | Page 105-107 |
| 5 | ‘Tell her about Aristaeus,’ Zach said.‘Oh, yes, Aristaeus. Every beekeeper should know that story.’She smiled at me in a way that made me feel I was about to get Part Two of the beekeeper’s induction, Part One being the sting.‘Aristaeus was the first keeper of bees. One day all his bees died, punishment by the gods for something bad that Aristaeus had done. The gods told him to sacrifice a bull to show he was sorry, and then return to the carcass in nine days and look inside it. Well, Aristaeus did just what they said, and when he came back, he saw a swarm of bees fly out of the dead bull. His own bees, reborn. He took them home to his hives, and after that people believed that bees had power over death. The kings in Greece made their tombs in the shape of beehives for that very reason.’Zach sat with his elbows on his knees staring at the circle of grass, still fat and emerald green from our dance in the sprinkler.‘When a bee flies, a soul will rise,’ he said. I gave him a blank look.‘It’s an old saying,’ August said.‘It means a person’s soul will be reborn into the next life if bees are around.’ | Page 152 |