

# THE HARPER ANTHOLOGY

## S T U D E N T W R I T E R S

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Janice Barnet	Laura Jane Gresey	Catherine Quigg
Genevieve Betken	Dee Hanson	Jyoti Raghu
Charles Boswell	Jeanne Hanson	Holly Rushakoff
Casey Brookshier	Jessica Huth	Steve Shepard
Neil Bucalo	Kathy Kleiva	Barbara Singer
Joyce Butak	Kristin Kolesiak	Phillip Stahnke
James Cates	Barb Kottmeier	Kathleen Struif
Carol Coutts-Siepk	Barbie Markay	Frank Tebbe
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Tracey Dorus	Mary Patanella	Flora Wu
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### Special Contributor

Martin J. Ryan

The  
Harper Anthology  
of Academic Writing

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William Rainey Harper College

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# Foreword

Human language has the potential to be insensitive, ugly, even brutish. And yet we want to think, too, that Aristotle was right, that words are indeed what set human beings apart from the balance of the animal kingdom. We want to trust that just around the corner from the vulgar phrase lurks a sentence that resonates with ravishing poetry. We hope, as we pass ungraspable utterances, that we will come upon the sounds of words that are clear, frank, and true.

The *Harper Anthology* Selection Committee is determined and optimistic about unearthing language that possesses clarity, frankness, and truth; we believe that human beings will, in obedience to certain internal impulses, fashion words uniquely and express themselves transparently, sometimes beautifully. Most of all, we believe that good writing—poetic, lyrical, illustrative, substantive, altogether soulful writing—is perennial, like baseball. And given the caliber of the writings in this ninth issue of *The Harper Anthology*, we are justified in being so heartened. (Would you say we are idealistic? Romantic? Read on, and judge for yourself.) We do not promise that each of the selections in the following pages is “perfect,” but we do feel sure that in each piece a genuine struggle for meaning and a quest for literacy are apparent. We are convinced that the writings in this issue have sprung from students who are sometimes imaginative, sometimes informative, and always serious about cultivating both the reader and the self through the written word.

This year’s issue contains works that were completed in courses from 14 departments or programs: Chemistry, Early Childhood Education, English, English as a Second Language, Foreign Languages (Spanish), the Honors Program, Humanities, Journalism, Literature, Philosophy, Physics, Plant Science Technology, Psychology and Speech. Some of the selections that follow document personal trials: a person who is pushed toward the periphery of life because of her “status” as an overweight female; a woman who unofficially adopts an infant, only to be heartbroken years later when the birth mother returns to reclaim the child. The very first selection

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is, among other things, a kind of tortured monologue that powerfully illuminates a young woman's experience as a victim of anorexia nervosa.

Of course, there are also works that *celebrate* the process of being alive. There is, for example, a "Wilderness Journal" that reminds us—in remarkably observant and beautifully written terms—that the world, however infirm it frequently appears to be, is still a life-affirming place, a place where we can, upon assuming the proper temper, find ourselves meditative and at peace. There is a graceful poem, written in both Spanish and English, that embraces the memory of a good man (a father-in-law) whose body has passed away, but whose spirit of decency survives. Another essay shows a woman who "comes of age" by rejecting, at long last, a life of transience and rootlessness. Another underscores the cheerful and productive bonds of friendship that have formed and thickened among the employees of an area restaurant.

Each selection is preceded by the instructor's description of the assignment, and followed by the instructor's evaluation. At the end of the *Anthology*, the members of the Selection Committee describe their criteria for good writing, selected students offer their comments regarding why they view writing as a significant enterprise, and Professor and Poet Martin Ryan expresses his sense of the importance of writing in an Afterword.

Thanks to the dedicated members of the *Harper Anthology* Selection Committee; each generously donated much of his/her time to secure the quality of this ninth issue: Nancy Davis, Jack Dodds, Julie Fleenor, Barbara Hickey, Kurt Neumann, Kris Piepenburg, Peter Sherer, and Joseph Sternberg. Thanks, too, to Michael Knudsen from the Harper Graphics Department, to Anne Frost and Deanna Torres from Harper Publications, and to Peter Gart and the Print Shop staff for their first-rate production assistance. And thanks to all Harper faculty members who contributed their students' writings; without them, the *Harper Anthology* is surely not possible.

We are indebted, finally, to Harley Chapman, Dean of the Liberal Arts Division, and Pam Toomey, Liberal Arts Division Administrative Assistant, for their gracious support of the *Anthology*.

We hope and believe that the 1997 *Harper Anthology* will present you with much to admire, and maybe a little (maybe a lot) to oppose, for we do not expect that you, the reader, will leave each piece by singing unreserved praise. Indeed, human beings sometimes learn very well when they participate in activities of criticism and dissent.

Good reading!

*Andrew Wilson*

Chair, *Harper Anthology* Selection Committee

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# From the Edge of Starvation

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*Tiffanie Amirante*  
Course: English 101  
Instructor: Andrew Wilson

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Assignment:  
*Create a character and write from  
his/her point of view. Make the writing  
expose some truth or truths about gender  
role expectations in the United States.*

*I had a hole in my heart so I threw away  
my plate.*

—*Juliana Hatfield*

1.

There had been a mirror on the wall across from my bed when I first arrived. It was a small square mirror, not much larger than the one I had kept in my high school locker. It had a gold edging that served as a border, and broke up the monotonousness of the black white walls. At first, it hadn't bothered me. In fact, I didn't even look at it. I kept my eyes moving over the empty walls, focusing on other points in the room, looking at small cracks in the ceiling or the white-on-white pattern of the tiled floor. But my eyes grew tired of the colorless room, and I grew weaker, and began to be drawn to the mirror's smooth surface. I didn't want to look at it, but where else could my eyes go? I didn't want to see the reflections that I already had burned into my mind. But the mirror taunted me—teasing me with the truth. And so I let it win, and I succumbed to its wishes. And I saw what I was.

The reflection was gruesome, and honest, and I knew that this was what I had done to myself. My once blue eyes, which had been clear and bright, appeared now to be clouded and sunk deep into my head. Black rings danced around them from days and weeks of sleepless nights. The flesh on my face stuck to my bones, causing my cheeks to appear hollow. My skin didn't glow with life anymore, but instead was as white and pale as the snow that falls every Christmas Eve. My brown hair lay in twisted and damp clumps around my face. I remember wanting to scream in horror at the image that lay before me. And I must have, even though I don't remember making a sound, because two young nurses, scared and concerned, came rushing into the room. They looked around the room, and asked me multiple times what was wrong, but I did not answer. I just simply stared straight ahead at that mirror, at the image that I could not take my eyes from. Then one of them followed my gaze, and saw

that it was the mirror that had frightened me. She plucked it from the wall, slipping it into the pocket of her white crisp uniform. And the room felt quiet and still and the two nurses, bewildered, left, shaking their heads.

I knew they thought I was crazy. I could see it in their eyes every morning when they brought me my breakfast tray. They would leave, shaking their heads, whispering under their breath, after I had flung it across the room in a refusal to eat. I could see it in their stares as they stood there holding last night's dinner, which they had just found under the mattress while changing the sheets. But when the nurse came with the IV and the bags of food, then I knew that they not only thought I was crazy, but that I was hopeless.

2.

The new patient in room 320A had only been here for a week, and already she had caused more trouble in my life than any other patients I had had in my three years at the hospital. She was probably the quietest patient on the floor, except for meal time. That was the only time I ever heard her make a sound. The first couple days when we brought her trays of food she refused to eat them. So we tried other kinds of food, but either it ended up on our clothes, or we found it the next day under the bed or mattress, or maybe in the top drawer of the bedstand. The doctor ordered me to stay in the room while she ate her meals, and I had to feed her myself like I would a baby. But she caught on quickly, and just as soon as we thought we had made progress, I began to find pools of vomit on the floor or in the bathroom after mealtime. Sure, she had been eating, but it still did her no good.

The next step was an IV, and I was the one who had to do it. She didn't ever seem to notice when I came or went, and that day was no different. I found her sitting the same way, I always did, staring straight ahead into the nothingness that seemed to drown her. I don't know if she was just too weak to move or too lost in her own sorrow and pain. But

to me, it seemed she was waiting for something. Death, maybe.

After the IV was in her arm, the bags of food had to be changed three times a day. Everytime I went into the room, I half expected to find the IV on the floor, the food dripping into a puddle on the white tile. But I haven't yet. I guess somewhere deep inside of that poor girl there is a part of her that wants to live, that wants to fight until the bitter end. Most of the girls I saw were like this. They were fighters, sixty-five pound warriors. That's why they were here, I think. If they weren't fighters, most of them would not have made it this far.

Yesterday, when I came in to change the IV bags in room 320A, the girl's mother had been there. She was sitting next to her daughter, who seemed oblivious to her presence, clutching her small bony hand and crying, silent tears. My heart broke at this sight, and I had to hold myself back from turning around and fleeing from the room.

I tried to avoid looking at the girl's mother as I worked, quicker than normal. But the mother caught my eye, and said between sobs, "My baby was beautiful before..."

Her voice trailed off, tears and sobs coming harder. I wanted to reach out and comfort her, encircle her in my arms, and whisper that things would get better. But I didn't. I couldn't. So I stood there, my mouth wide open and watched as she shuffled through her purse and pulled out a small wallet-sized photograph.

"This was my baby," she said as she handed the photo to me.

The girl had been young, beautiful and full of life. Blue eyes, calm and clear, stared out at me. Brown silky hair curled down to her shoulders, full and shiny in the sunlight that fell on her. Her curvy, healthy body was not fat, but womanly. In that photo, I saw a girl who had life laying in her lap, just waiting for her to choose what she wanted. I saw a girl who had the rest of her life before her, a life that was blank and could be written on in any way she liked. And then I looked at the dying body



that had once been beautiful and fought back the urge to scream. I wanted to, so loud and so ferociously that life would spring back into her dead limbs just out of fear. I wanted to cry, and tell the girl that she could still choose. She still could change how her story ended. But I didn't. Instead I handed the photo back to the crying mother and left the room.

Today, when I went in the room to change the bags of food, I could feel the tears well up in my eyes. I had seen so many girls everyday, every week, every year, that were just like this one. I knew their sob stories and their sorrows, as though they were my own. But the one thing I knew that they didn't—the one thing I had to see and live and deal with everyday of which they knew nothing—was the aftermath of the destruction they had caused to their bodies. I saw the girls when they arrived in the ambulances, carried in on the stretchers. I felt their weak broken bodies as I dressed them and laid them into the beds that were too big for what little was left of them. I brought the food trays that never got eaten and put the IVs into the bony arms of girls too weak to eat. I saw the mothers and fathers, the sisters and brothers, come and go, crying, blaming themselves all the way to their cars. I heard the cries of loneliness and pain echo through the empty hallways at night. I found the girls who had used their last bit of strength to pull their IVs out of their arms before dying painfully of starvation. I lived and breathed and walked through this valley of living death everyday. I saw the horrors that these girls lived, yet never really knew, or saw or understood.

Standing there over the girl in room 320A, I wondered if my stories could make a difference in her life. I thought, maybe if she knew, she would eat. Staring into the empty eyes of a dying sixteen-year-old child, perhaps for what would be the last time, I wondered how many more sunrises there would be in her life.

3.

When they found me, it had been raining outside. The house had been empty that day, and I had been alone. My mother had been out, as usual, God knows where or with whom. As for my father, he had gone away so long ago I couldn't remember even what that house had felt like with him in it. It had at one time been a warm place in my mind, but it seemed that as I grew older and lonelier and sadder, the house felt it too and got colder. I had been trying to light a fire in the stone fireplace in the living room on that particular day, when I first heard the whispers. They were faint, like the wind whistling through the trees. I turned back to the task at hand, ignoring the unkind words that seemed to be hidden in the whispers. But they grew louder, and my anger grew, not just because of the imagined whispers or the fire that would not light or because my mother was never home or because my hair was too stringy (I picked up the metal firepoker by the fireplace and) or because I had cellulite (lifted it above my head and) or because boys never seemed to really like me (began to bash the mirror with a fury and) or because I knew why my father really left me (sent tiny fragments of glass showering the thick rich carpet and) or because I would never be pretty (into my face and) or beautiful (my arms) or really loved by anyone.

That was the first mirror I broke. It had been mother's favorite, and it had felt like heaven to feel the glass prick my skin. I was still angry though. I was sixteen years of crying-and-hate-and-pain-and-wasted-kindness kind of angry erupting all over my house. I moved on to the next room, the next mirror, crushing the glass into the soles of my bare calloused feet. I destroyed the two mirrors in the downstairs bathroom, the one in the kitchen above the stove, both of the ones in my mother's bedroom, and the one in my room. I smashed them all with the firepoker. I left my blood on their sharp edges and my mother's rugs. I felt every cut, every prick, every ounce of pain they shared with me. I

collected the glass in my arms, legs, and hands like a magnet. But I was not done. My rage was still in me, still burning holes into my flesh.

There was one mirror left in the upstairs bathroom. It was a free standing mirror with a dark cherry wood frame. You would swivel it around and position it differently so you could see the back or the side or whatever of you that you wanted. I never wanted to see any of myself (I struck the first blow and), not in that mirror (then another blow, harder than the first) or in any other mirror (and another) in any state (and another), city (and another), or town. Tiny splinters of glass hit my neck and face. My arms were sore and tired from the beatings I had given. The mirror was covered in spiderwebs, intertwining and wrapping around each other like madness racks a person's body. The mirror's beauty was gone (like mine). Its frame was cracked and broken (like mine). Its usefulness was gone (like mine). I began to scratch at the mirror's surface, pulling pieces of the glass out and tossing them behind me, listening to them shatter into a hundred pieces. My hands grew bloody from cuts, but still I persisted, until the blackness seeped into the corners of my world, and I fell, hard, onto the cold tiled floor, covered in blood and glass, sweat, and tears.

I don't know who found me, or how much time has passed since that day or even how I got to the hospital. No one seems to be very willing to tell me, but, of course, I don't really ask. My mother comes and visits. She sits by my side and cries and cries, asking me over and over again "Why are you doing this to me?" But that's my mom, always asking why me.

I don't know how I got so sick. It had not been my intention. I know I'm not crazy, like everyone seems to think. I knew what I was doing. I knew that my stomach hurt because it was empty. I knew why my clothes didn't fit anymore, and I knew why I spent all of my time exercising. I knew why people stared at me as I walked down the streets or through the hallways at school. Every meal I skipped, every sandwich I threw away, I felt. I saw

every pound that slid off my bones. I knew I was dying, and my heart broke every time I looked into the mirror or into the eyes of happy healthy bodies and saw the life that I knew I was throwing away. I drowned in death and hunger without a rope to grab on to. I didn't know how to stop, only how to continue, to inch closer and closer to that edge.

I blinked back tears that had snuck into my eyes. I was done with crying, I thought, sliding deeper into the pillows of my hospital bed. A fly had crept into my room sometime during the day. I watched him buzz back and forth around my room, between the two empty walls. My stomach growled, ravenously. I pulled the covers up closer to my face, wondered how that fly would taste.

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Evaluation: *Tiffanie's essay is an unusually insightful exposé on the crippling problem of anorexia nervosa. Her details are both vivid and alarming; her command of the language shows true promise for a career in meaningful creative prose.*

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# More Than Just a Pretty Picture

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by Janice Barnet  
Course: English 102  
Instructor: Nancy L. Davis

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Assignment:  
*Write a literary research paper.*

## Outline

*Thesis:* All of the various elements of the setting in Ernest Hemingway's "Hills Like White Elephants" reveal aspects of the characters' personalities and their relationship not readily apparent in their words.

- I. Natural landscape
  - A. White hills
    1. White elephant definitions and baby emotions
    2. Other white elephants in story
    3. Hill images
    4. Reactions to elephant comment
  - B. Dry areas and fertile fields
- II. Man-made elements
  - A. Train station and tracks
  - B. Bar
- III. Conflict of nature vs. man-made elements

Ernest Hemingway's "Hills Like White Elephants" is an unusual short story. The bulk of the story consists of dialogue, a conversation that upon first reading seems trivial and pointless. In addition, the description of the setting is so lean that it is easy to dismiss the setting as inconsequential, just a pretty tourist spot for the conversation. Yet, there are "larger issues lurking beneath the surface of the dialogue and description" (Mazzeno 1171). All of the various elements of the setting in Ernest Hemingway's "Hills Like White Elephants" reveal aspects of the characters' personalities and their relationship not readily apparent in their words. This elevates a superficially banal conversation to a "story that is much larger than the one in print" (Lanier 286).

The various natural and man-made components of the setting strengthen and deepen the story. The incompatibility between the natural and man-made components adds to the complexity of the story as well. The natural landscape in "Hills Like White Elephants" is mentioned only briefly, in a few sentences. Yet, it is vital to the richness and complexity of the story. The landscape includes the white hills and the contrasting dry and fertile areas.

The most prominent portion of the natural landscape is of course the white hills that feature in the title. This is the primary symbol, an ingenious image that reveals so much about the characters and the situation, without resorting to words. After deciding what to drink, Jig opens the conversation with the recurring image (Flora 34): "They look like white elephants" (Hemingway 343). At first, the hills just exist (Smith 210). But as the story unfolds, the white elephants become "an objectification of the...conflict" (DeFalco 168), a many-faceted symbol, representing the complexity of the emotions of the couple as well as providing background information that would take pages to convey in words.

The couple's feelings are represented by the various definitions of the term white elephant, symbolically suggested by the white hills. To Jig, the baby and conventional family life is "an unwanted gift,"

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but also something of great value (Kozikowski 107), two different definitions of the phrase white elephant. The American's feelings about the baby are shown by two additional definitions of the term. The baby is an "annoyingly useless gift," (Smith 208) and by disrupting his life-style or self-gratification, a plot to ruin him (Hannum 49). Each character would agree that the baby is a white elephant, but their emotions are certainly at odds.

Besides the feelings about the unborn baby revealed by the various definitions, the symbolic white hills reveal other thoughts Jig has during the story. Jig realizes the current emptiness of their lives and may consider their present lives white elephants (Smith 210) in their futility. If her final smile and "I feel fine" (Hemingway 346) is given an ironic interpretation, perhaps she feels that the man is no longer needed in her life. He may have become a white elephant to her, a deterrent to the fulfilling life she desires (Hannum 49).

In addition to the emotional revelations the phrase white elephants provides, the white hills conjure up several other images that add to the richness of this deceptively simple story. First, the shape of the hills are reminiscent of a pregnant woman's rounded abdomen and breasts, which perhaps, partly accounts for the American's stubborn refusal to look at or consider them (Landier 280). He doesn't want visible proof that this pregnancy could proceed that far. Then, since the man begins talking about the abortion right after Jig compares the color of the hills to an elephant's skin, the hills may bring to mind "the wrinkled, grey-whitened skin of a still-born child" (Abdoo 239). Perhaps the American has made the association, but he definitely wants to deny that "the only thing that's made us happy" (Hemingway 344) is anything more than an annoyance. He is completely committed to keeping his life "perfectly simple" (Hemingway 344) and commitment free. Finally, the distance of the hills may represent Jig's fears that the normal life she longs for is beyond her grasp (Smith 211). She is desperately afraid that "every day [they] make it more impossible" (Hemingway 345).

The final aspect of the richness brought to the story by the hills and their association with white elephants is this: Jig's comment and the reaction to it provide highly personal insight into the personalities of the two characters, an understanding of their struggle, and information about the history and future of their relationship.

The first personal aspect revealed by the hill comment is an imaginative, romantic streak in Jig's temperament (Smith 207). She is "interested in the world around her" (Holladay 1018). On the other hand, the conversation reveals the selfishness of the American's personality. He refuses to be drawn into Jig's hill symbolism. He probably understands what she is saying, because he seems to understand her later licorice symbolism (Hannum 48), replying testily "Oh, cut it out" (Hemingway 343). But while she is romantizing about the hills, he is selfishly intent on turning the conversation to the abortion. He apparently cares nothing for his companion, considering her a sexual convenience, not a life partner (Hannum 50). It reveals his "ego-centered, adolescent attitude" (DeFalco 168). The conversation about the hills emphasizes how at odds the couple's personalities have become.

The bickering about the hills small talk also reveals the underlying intensity of their struggle: "The harshness of their responses contrasts with the inconsequential nature of the subject to their discussion, suggesting that, the relationship between them is somehow strained but that neither wishes to discuss openly the real issue over which they are at odds" (Mazzeno 1170). Both characters have strong feelings about the pregnancy and are angry about the other's inability to see the situation through his or her eyes.

Finally, Jig's comment provides a glimpse "backward and forward, backward to the days when [she] said that the hills were like white elephants and the man was pleased and looked forward to a dreary future in which she will never be able to say a thing like that again" (O'Connor 232). It provides a "point outside time from which past and future can be viewed simultaneously" (O'Connor 232).

The comment and the reaction to it shows that the future of their relationship is not happy. The problem is unlikely to be successfully resolved for each of them. The hills in the landscape enhance the complexity of the story and provide insight into this most intimate of situations by their association to the term “white elephant”.

Two other aspects of the landscape briefly sketched in “Hills Like White Elephants” are the brown “dry side of the valley” and the “fields of grain” (Hemingway 345). The significance here lies in the contrast in the landscape which is a visualization of the choices available to the characters (Holladay 1120). The brown land symbolizes wasted, meaningless lives, and the fertile fields symbolize the opposite: fulfilled, meaningful lives (Lanier 280). Also included is Jig’s symbolic choice between “sterility and fecundity” (Smith 210). The stark variances in the landscape create “an appropriate scene for a discussion of whether to abort or to bear a child” (Smith 206). Life and death is represented by the contrast in the landscape.

In the midst of the discussion between Jig and the American, Jig walks to the edge of the train platform to contemplate her options. She can see in the landscape that she must choose between the barrenness represented by the dry area on her right or the abundance displayed in the fields on her left (Hannum 50). She obviously understands the “symbolic dimensions” (Holladay 1020) of the scenery and expresses the yearning she feels by saying “we could have all this...we could have everything” (Hemingway 345). However, the American emphasizes their basic differences by his response to the symbolism. In his selfishness he is incapable of even understanding the depth of Jig’s feelings (DeFalco 171). After hearing Jig bear her soul, he can only ask: “what did you say?” (Hemingway 345).

So, the natural landscape in this short story provides much more than an exotic backdrop for a “petty conversation...about hills and drinks and an unspecified operation” (Holladay 1019). It is the source of much of the richness, complexity, and depth to be found in the story.

The man-made elements of the setting in “Hills Like White Elephants” also provide insights into the characters’ personalities and relationships not explicitly found in the narration of the story. These man-made elements include the train tracks, the train station, and the bar.

The double railroad tracks in the story represent decisions to be made. They function like a fork in the road in a fairy tale: “A place where one can change directions symbolically represents a point in time when the couple can change the direction of their lives” (Lanier 280). The “two lines of rails” (Hemingway 343) are also a reminder of the differences of opinion and values held by the characters (Gilmour 49).

Because the conversation takes place in a train station with only forty minutes until the train comes, the conflict is intensified (DeFalco 170). There is an air of urgency to the situation. Soon, it will be too late to make a decision and the choice will be made by default.

The railroad station in the story does not appear to be an unusual spot for the couple. This familiarity is hinted at by the numerous stickers on their luggage: “The couple is rootless, wandering, far from home” (Flora 35). This suggests their past avoidance of responsibility and their lack of commitment to each other (Lanier 281). These two are not a married couple working together to reach a common goal.

The bar at the train station gives additional insight into their life together. The first words spoken in the story are: “what shall we drink?” (Hemingway 343). Within the story’s span of forty minutes, the two characters consume at least nine drinks (Sipiora 50). By the end of the story, both Jig and the American would be considered legally drunk anywhere in the United States (Smith 209). If Jig is serious about bringing her baby safely to term, her drinking will have to be reduced (Lanier 299).

Alcohol seems to fit prominently into their lifestyle. They admit: “that’s all we do...look at things and try new drinks” (Hemingway 344). This, along with the talk about the highly addictive absinthe, suggest addictive personality traits in both characters.

So, the man-made elements of "Hills Like White Elephants" provide an insight into the dilemma facing the couple. The bar, with its "reasonable" (Hemingway 345) patrons sheltered from reality by alcohol is a peek into the couple's past (Hannum 52); the railroad station suggests they are at a point of decision; the double set of tracks symbolizes the choices before them.

Interplay between the man-made elements and the natural elements of the setting reinforces the characters' conflict. As the story opens, "the American and the girl with him [sit] at a table in the shade, outside the building" (Hemingway 343). The natural parts of the setting symbolize the world that Jig is longing for. The man-made portion of the setting symbolizes the world the couple has been living in, away from reality (Hannum 52). The American embraces this world, isolated from reality, sheltered from responsibilities, and protected from the possibility of dangers in the real world. He wants to continue living in the world he has created for himself. Since the couple has not cemented a decision, they sit neither in the bar (the artificial, isolated, protected world) nor with nature (with life, commitments, and the possibility of dangers). They sit in the shadow cast by the world they are familiar with. Desiring the natural world, Jig looks at the hills, the ground, the fields of grain and the river. She longs for this world but also wants to please the American (Consigny 54). The American never looks at any elements of the natural setting. He refuses even to consider her wishes, feeling they are "unreasonable" (Hemingway 346). He is firmly committed to his "artificial...and ultimately selfish paradise" (O'Brien 23).

When Jig walks to the end of the train platform to be closer to the natural surroundings that symbolize the world she longs for, the American tries to manipulate her back into his world, where she is under his control. He says: "come on back in the shade...you mustn't feel that way" (Hemingway 345). He won't validate her feelings. He is egocentric.

The American understands the symbolic value of the natural setting and tries to convince Jig that the

abortion is compatible with what she wants (O'Brien 21) by calling the abortion "perfectly natural" (Hemingway 344). His is a manipulating personality.

If Jig refuses to submit to the American's unwavering demand, he would be likely to cut her loose to continue his irresponsible life without her: "The American prefigures his own future when he stops to drink without Jig in the bar" (Hannum 52). He doesn't seem to love her as he insists he does.

So, the conflict between Jig and the American is paralleled in the contrasts between nature and the man-made world in the story. This brings the story beyond that of a conflict between two people. It broadens it to a "condemnation of the aimlessness, hypocrisy, and moral and spiritual poverty of the modern world" (Holladay 1021).

As can be seen, the casually mentioned setting in "Hills Like White Elephants" "reveals a great deal about the situation that is never put into words by the couple or the author" (Lanier 286). Read superficially, the story seems to be an inconsequential, almost inane conversation. But the wealth of symbolism, much of it supplied by the setting, lifts this conversation between the characters to a level of utmost importance. The simplistic veneer of description and dialogue requires "the reader do much of the work in comprehending the story" (Hannum 46). The effort is lavishly rewarded.

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Evaluation: *I love this paper because I learned so much about character motivation and author's intent. Despite the story's familiarity with students, Janice manages new insights, arriving at some startling conclusions.*

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# Soil Erosion and Conservation Tillage

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*by Genevieve Betken*  
Course: PKM 110  
Instructor: Chet Ryndak

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Assignment:

*The students are to provide a report dealing with a problem in soil science and are to identify some potential solutions.*

Due to the effects of soil erosion, soil happens to be our most unstable major natural resource. Unnatural disturbance of the land, primarily by tillage, has accelerated the loss of our valuable topsoil. The traditional manner of tillage, known as conventional tillage, has produced short-term solutions but aggravated this serious problem. In response, conservation tillage is the proposed solution designed to decrease damage done to the land and reduce soil erosion in the long run.

Soil erosion occurs both naturally and unnaturally as wind or water moves across the ground surface, exerting an abrasive force that picks up soil particles and carries them away in suspension. Whether erosion is natural or unnatural largely depends upon the category and location of the occurrence. For instance, geological erosion occurs naturally when the removal of topsoil is at a rate so slow that the parent material replaces the topsoil as it is carried away. Sheet erosion is the general washing away of soil without much disturbance of the soil. Rill erosion, which takes place on cultivated land, is when small rivulets (rills) are cut into the soil by the abrasive pressures. Splash erosion results from raindrops that fall at up to speeds of twenty miles per hour, and may splash wet soil as much as two feet high. The effect of erosion increase in severity when the soil is bare and unprotected by organic matter.

Not only does the erosion of the soil decimate the land, but it also pollutes the air and surrounding bodies of water. For example, asphyxiation by the inhalation of soil particles is the severe result of large amounts of soil particles suspended in the air. Likewise, eroded soil can damage aquatic habitats, wetlands, and drinking water by transferring remnants of soluble chemicals from treated lands to nearby waters. Massive amounts of soil particles in the water also increase turbidity, which reduces the underwater light penetration necessary for photosynthesis.

In Illinois, 90 percent of our soil erosion results from rapidly-evolving crop production methods designed to maximize short-term profits. This is commonly referred to as conventional tillage.



Conventional tillage, also known as clean tillage, accelerated with the introduction of John Deere's steel moldboard plow in 1837. This plow enabled the farmers to cut through the deep prairie roots and fertile sod to bury the weeds to expose a fresh surface that created a clean seed bed.

Consequently, the soil structure became severely damaged, causing serious soil erosion and compaction dilemmas. These problems involved insufficient pore space, destruction of the natural aggregates, standing water on the ground surface, unnatural root development, and reduction of fertile topsoil (including the accumulation of organic matter).

The severity of soil erosion reached a noticeable peak between the Dust Bowl years of 1931-1935. Small dust storms lifted up thin layers of topsoil from the plowed-up prairie lands of the Midwest and turned them into huge, black, airborne tidal waves. This was not only economically devastating to Americans but also turned tragic when small children and animals began to die from asphyxiation. "Mini-bowls" resurfaced again during the 1950s and 1970s in the Great Plains area. These catastrophic events could have been prevented had the farmers kept a certain percentage of organic materials on the land as a protective covering. The loss of this valuable topsoil, an inch of which takes nature 300-1,000 years to produce, results from ignorance about our environment.

Conventional tillage has always been Americans' traditional method of farming. It was brought to America by European immigrants. As they expanded their territorial boundaries westward, the settlers discovered the rich Mollisol soils of the Midwest. These deep, loess soils held an abundance of minerals, maintained superb moisture retention, and a benign pH—all perfect conditions for growing crops. The objective in conventional tillage used by the early Americans was to burn or bury all residue to prepare a clean, pulverized seed bed to control weeds and insects, improve aeration and water filtration, and bury the crop residue. They believed that conventional tillage was the most beneficial for

crop growth. As technology advanced and different types of plows became available, maximum tillage of cultivated lands became possible.

Yet, conventional tillage greatly disturbed the soil and offered only temporary solutions to farming problems. In the long run, the excessive tillage destroyed the soil structure, resulting in insufficient air and water pore space for proper plant growth. This condition, plus the weight of the plows, tended to cause compaction of the soil layers, which resulted in water collecting over the surface of the damaged layers. Then, soil erosion occurred as water ran off the land and took a percentage of the soil with it. Crops suffered from asphyxiation and restricted root development as a result.

Government officials propose conservation tillage as a way of reducing soil erosion. There are a few different types of conservation tillage all of which involve a system that leaves at least thirty percent of the surface covered by organic residue. The most drastic method, which uses no tillage except to insert the seed and fertilizer, is called *no-till*. The only plow-like machine used is a disk that cuts through the stubble and drops in a mixture of seed and fertilizer. No-till is a primitive method that dates back two million years. The only difference is that primitive humans used a sharp stick instead of machinery to cut the narrow slits in the ground. After dropping in the seeds, they used their bare feet to close the holes.

*Stubble mulch*, or *reduced tillage*, is a more popular and even older form of conservation tillage. Stubble mulch refers to the leftover plant stubble, or other organic material (e.g., wheat or straw) added to the land, that is partially incorporated into the soil. This residue acts as a protective mulch that provides a barrier from soil erosion and creates a safe growing environment for the crop. Stubble mulch entails the use of a sweep, which is a type of chisel plow. The sweep cuts through the soil to till weeds without excessive disturbance to the land. The Native Americans were avid supporters of this conservative method of farming. They taught stub-

ble mulch farming to the settlers with the planting of corn. Unfortunately, the settlers did not heed the advice of the Native Americans.

Some other methods of conservation tillage include *ridge-tilling* and *strip-tilling*. Ridge-tilling creates permanent raised planting beds or ridges which are clean tilled according to conventional methods, and then planted with a crop. However, residue is allowed to remain between the ridges. Mechanical cultivation is required for weed control instead of herbicides. In the Midwest, this method of tillage is used where the drainage is poor and the land takes a while to warm. Strip-tilling is similar to ridge-tilling with the exception that the seed beds are at ground level with the protective untilled strips. Strip-tilling would be used for a more delicate crop and in an area where the climate is more favorable.

Most of the proposed solutions for the substantial decrease of soil erosion center around reducing the plowing of cultivated lands. There are many beneficial results that would arise if the plant life and organic materials were left to accumulate as a result of reduced tillage. First, less effort would have to be put into plowing the land, which would decrease fuel and labor costs. Second, the soils would improve their self-sufficiency by continually renewing themselves with the humus from the residue left on the surface. Not only would the organic matter supply nutritious humus, but it would also improve moisture retention and substantially reduce soil erosion. The movement of the particles by either wind or water would be slowed down by the cover of vegetation and the leftover plant residue. The use of residue on the surface of the soil would also decrease fluctuations in soil temperature up to fifteen degrees, slow down wind speeds, and protect the bare soil from splash erosion. In the winter, this protective covering would retain more snow which acts as a natural mulch to further protect the ground and reduce the depth of frost penetration. Earthworms, which aid in better aeration, granulation, improved drainage, and fertilization of the soil, are also encouraged to inhabit the fairly undisturbed soil. Still, the predominant

benefit resulting from conservation tillage would be the restructuring of the soil with a healthy ratio of aggregates to air and water pores.

However, conservation tillage is not without its drawbacks. Among them is the increased use of fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides, and fungicides that must be applied to the crop because the fecundity of the protective organic covering will increase the amount of insects, diseases, and weeds that will compete with the crop. Since there is an increased amount of pests, diseases, and weeds a more powerful than normal application of these chemicals must be applied to the crop. Herbicides such as Paraquet and Bicep are used to control and eliminate weed growth in the soil.

Nitrogen is one chemical that will have to be added to the soil. Nitrogen, an essential mineral needed for plant growth, was virtually depleted by the former inhabitants of the farmlands and the big grasses of the nearly extinct prairies. Excessive amounts of nitrogen are added to conservative-tilled lands to fertilize the crop quickly enough so that plants outgrow the weeds. Since nitrogen is water-soluble, most of the applied amount gets carried away with the water during leaching and erosion of the soil. These huge quantities of nitrogen, in addition to other fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides, and fungicides, are carried into lakes, rivers, and other wetlands. This process can then damage aquatic habitats and their surrounding environment and can contaminate drinking waters.

Another negative aspect of conservation tillage is the difficulty in cultivating and planting seeds through large amounts of organic material. To overcome this problem, numerous types of tillers have been adapted to this difficult task. The slot mulcher, wide sweep, narrow sweep, and rotary plow are all examples of tillers created to assist in cultivation. The use of a treader, grain drill, cross-slot drill, or corn planter (for corn) assist in seeding the seed bed after a subtle amount of tillage has been done. It is also suggested that tillage be performed on warm, dry days which is believed to result in better weed kills.

One of the factors influencing conservation

tillage the most is cost. Some fuel and labor costs are reduced due to less effort being put into the actual tillage of the land. Still, these factors may not reduce total production costs since additional chemicals and management effort are necessary. Crop rotations associated with conservation tillage may appear to produce less income but are financially stable in the long run. Improved management and bookkeeping are strict requirements for successful conservation tillage.

Conservation tillage is a beneficial solution to the soil erosion crisis that threatens our environment. Conservation tillage produces long-term results versus the short-term results that arise from conventional tillage methods. Yet, when compared to each other, reduced tillage yields better results both economically and environmentally. Knowledge of both methods is essential for investment in the proper solution. Education is the most valuable commodity people can obtain when making decisions about the use of the land.

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Evaluation: *Genevieve Betken has written a superb paper identifying a major problem in agriculture and has provided excellent commentary on some potential answers to the problem.*

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# The Fearsome Foliage of Venomous Science

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by Charles Boswell  
Course: English 102  
Instructor: Hanley Kanar

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Assignment:

*In an essay, 3-5 pages long, discuss the dominant themes of your chosen text. If applicable, use historical context to enrich your analysis.*

When Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote "Rappaccini's Daughter," it was his intention to create a frightening tale of the danger involved in delving into science's depths. Imagine an exotic and beautifully cultivated garden whose secrets are as mysterious as its keepers. Through Rappaccini's garden, and Rappaccini's daughter, Hawthorne turns beauty into a deadly disease, twisted by the conscienceless hands of science. The garden lures a man (who is perhaps an emblem of all men) to his doom through the sweet image of science's perfection. Yet the beauty of the garden is only skin deep. Lurking underneath is a seething, deadly poisonous nature whose contamination reflects the twisted soul of a man who would corrupt nature to his own ends. By creating a place where science and experimentation mutate the human species, Hawthorne attempts to show the conflict between the moral side of human nature and the logical scientific side.

Rappaccini attempts to create for his daughter, Beatrice, the perfect defense against unwanted contact, making her immune to others who would be destroyed by her. Though perhaps at one point, all Rappaccini wanted to create was a means for his daughter to be independent and powerful enough to fend for herself, he ended up creating a monstrous *döppelgänger* of what was once his daughter. She becomes completely cut off from the rest of the world, since interaction with the outside world would cause destruction and death. As a result, Rappaccini decides to create a mate for his daughter, in whose veins the same poison runs. Giovanni is that man. Smitten by Beatrice's beauty, Giovanni shakes off logic and reason to get closer to this enigmatic woman. When he learns of Rappaccini's twisted curse, he attempts to cure Beatrice of it, but instead he kills her with the antidote, leaving him the sole victim of the terrible curse.

An interesting aspect of this story is how it reflects, perhaps, Hawthorne's view of meddling with science. Rappaccini essentially creates an entirely new species, which is deadly to its predecessor. By interfering with evolution, by playing God, Rappaccini puts these two species together

and disaster ensues. Evolution, or perhaps God, seeks to keep a balance in the ever-changing world. Each step on the evolutionary ladder of one species is entirely separated from the other. When man interferes, and two stages coexist, evolution dictates that they must remain separate. Thus, since Beatrice is deadly to all others, she is essentially trapped in seclusion since her contact would cause chaos and death. The irony involved is that Rappaccini, the author of this evil, is not the one cursed with isolation. His unconscionable act punishes the one he loves instead of himself.

The love that both Rappaccini and Giovanni feel for Beatrice is really the central theme of the story. It is logic and reason, however, that destroys their desires and, ultimately, the object of their love. By interfering through the use of science, Rappaccini abandons morality in his love for his daughter and ends up destroying her. Giovanni, by abandoning all reason and the warning of logic, winds up being a victim to the terrible Rappaccini curse. Hawthorne seems to emphasize this relationship between morality and logic heavily. I do not believe he feels that logic is inherently evil; I believe he sees it as a powerful tool. That tool, however, can be as deadly as any weapon if used incorrectly. In not using this tool, Giovanni becomes incapable of perceiving the danger that the garden and Beatrice present to him. In not using morality to guide his science, Rappaccini is incapable of perceiving the horror he has created. It is this component of the story that we must focus upon: that without logic, we are little better than creatures; without morality to guide it, we can become an abomination.

Morality is the key to unlocking this puzzle. The other scientists agree that Rappaccini is an extraordinary scientist, but they feel that he is not to be trusted. This is because without a moral component to guide his actions, he creates without considering the ramifications of his actions upon those around him, perhaps our entire race. Interfering with God's work is what Hawthorne would call it. God, an omnipotent being, would be capable of creation with a perfect moral sense that we as human beings

cannot duplicate. We instead create with our own interests and evils. Humanity cannot take God's place, since it is incapable of the same kind of moral thought that He possesses. This is not to say that all science is evil, but that when we begin meddling with more primal and powerful forces, we are opening our own Pandora's box. We cannot see the consequences of our acts until they have occurred, and at that point, it may be too late.

Hawthorne wraps his readers in a world of deadlines: the deadliness of Giovanni's lust; the deadliness of the garden; the deadliness of Beatrice; and perhaps most frighteningly, the deadliness of Rappaccini's science. We see the havoc that is wreaked when two different species are unleashed upon each other. We also see the havoc that is wreaked when science is unloosed without morality to guide it. Though science is not evil inherently, perhaps man is, and his twisted nature can cause more chaos and destruction than any other species as a result of it. In any case, humanity has advanced in the ways of scientific knowledge, but the question still remains: Can we survive long enough to become ethical practitioners of it?

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*Evaluation: Charles' essay gives a sophisticated analysis of the conflicting themes in this short story. His makes a compelling link between Hawthorne's cautionary tale about the dangers of unbridled science and current discussions on the same topic.*

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# Cultures in Juxtaposition: A Collage on Racial and Cultural Differences

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by Casey Brookshier  
Course: English 101  
Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

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Assignment:

*To explore your attitudes about cultural differences, compose a collage of first thoughts, short life-experience narratives, and an imagined or remembered dialogue. Review your writing and arrange the pieces any way you like. Add a final section in response to the question, "So what?"*

When I first think of this topic, I think of my Grandpa Brookshier, because he's the most racially opinionated person I know. Then I think of my father, because I wonder what kind of influence my Grandfather had upon him. Then I think of old people in general, and I wonder if biases are cherished more strongly in later years because reasoning has become fixed and uncompromising. I used to think gray hair was a "garland of splendor," but now I'm not so sure. I suppose I'll never know how it felt to need to hate Germans or Japanese in order to protect your country, but I really wonder what causes hatred to be so imperishable.

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I'm walking through a mall with my friends Jason and Aaron. I'm 15 and we are vacationing here in St. Louis for the weekend with Aaron's uncle, and we are feverish with the anticipation of tonight's events. On occasion, we liked to go dancing at an imperial dance studio, of which Aaron's father was a patron. We all held similar interests in rare and marvelous big town goodies, not so easily procured in our small native town of Rolla, Missouri. Jason loved the quest for dashing name brand clothes at low, low prices. Aaron loved the company of perfumed, feisty-natured city girls who would not so easily fall prey to his slick, small town moves; and I just embraced the thrill of it all. Like young warriors preparing for the hunt, we used the mall as an initiation rite for our soon-to-come late night forays.

We tarried down the mall median when I spotted a promising clothing distillment on my right. We had just entered when Aaron spotted something. "Heyyyyyyyyyyy, look at this," he purred. In his hand lay an everyday black baseball cap, except for the large X printed in the center.

We simultaneously exhaled a bedazzled "Whoaaaaaaaaaaaaa."

"I've never seen anything like this, I wonder what the X stands for," I thought out loud.

"Hey, there are three colors here, and three of us. Wouldn't it be the *coolest* if we each bought one hat and wore them to the dance tonight?" Aaron per-

sueded. In that imaginatively creative group intuition boys have, with one always promising the achievement of "the score" with our dancing female partners in question, Aaron's idea at the time seemed quite bright. In our lovable naiveté, we acquiesced.

Five minutes later we left, wearing our spoils.

"Hey, I'm hungry, let's eat," Aaron remarked.

We all agreed that we should stop at the food court before we left. As we entered, the aroma of a thousand satisfied appetites made us drool. "I love mall food," I thought. Those dreamy, high-priced smells did, however, render us heedless of the unsightly stares we were receiving from the not-so-small African-American population. We stood deciding on what to eat when an older black fellow approached.

"What's up?" he said through perturbed lips.

"Not much." (cautiously)

"My friend and I were just noticing your hats... y'all know what them hats mean?"

"We just got 'em."

"Them are Malcolm X caps, Malcolm X was a great leader in a black power movement..."

As he explained, his voice trailed off, overshadowed by the ominous dark-eyed expression creeping over me. This second glaring fellow shook his head at us as if he couldn't relieve himself of a bad taste. I knew this was the first guy's friend because they had been sitting together at the same table. In my mind I thought vaguely, "Maybe we shouldn't be wearing these hats in St. Louis."

"...anyway, y'all shouldn't be wearing them hats in St. Louis cause there's a lot meaner black folks than us who would be interested in more than just a warning. Y'all know about gangs? If the crypts and the bloods see y'all wearing 'em..."

I glanced at Jason and noticed that his face had taken on a tight expression of righteous indignation. Being the tough guy in our group, I could see that he wouldn't be removing his hat anytime soon. I guess the black guy intuited the same because he said "All right, have it yo own way" and left.

I think the greatest tension I've felt racially is between me and my grandfather. When I was young, he would lecture me on the strife caused by racially disparate marriages. He'd ask if I thought it was right for a black man to marry a white woman. I was very young, and not knowing what to do, I said, "I guess it's all right if they love each other."

His retort was hard and scornful; after rolling his eyes disgustedly, he assured me that that kind of marriage was right under no circumstances.

I visited him in a nursing home a few months back with my father, stepmother, and stepbrother Hunter. My father humorously announced that Hunter had found himself a girlfriend back in Colorado (Hunter was seven). He immediately became bashful and my grandfather hunkered beside him and asked, "Is she white?"

He said it very discreetly, and my father and stepmother promptly laughed. I remained silent, but I felt the old repulsion rising. Being more surprised than anything, I wondered how interracial immunity could be so pressing as to demand the derangement of such an undeveloped and innocent psyche. To this day, I wonder if they laughed out of pity, respect for family, or because they thought it was funny.

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My mother's pretty meek and tractable. As far as racial enmity goes, I've never heard a blatantly racial remark from her. I'm not really solid on my father's racial views, as I see him so infrequently, but one incident does come to mind.

It was Thanksgiving about seven years ago. The entire Brookshier clan seemed to be eating under my grandfather's roof that day. After dinner they began recounting old reveries, as families often do. They came to the subject of my father's early occupations. When he was younger, he used to be a shoe salesman. Somehow the discussion changed topics, moving to what size shoe each race would require on account of their physical contrasts. They began talking of how Chinamen wouldn't require anything over a size seven when my father said, "I remember a black woman who came into my store one time. She said, 'Ya have something in a size ten

a little wide?”

However, when he said this, he added a dumb stereotypical southern drawl with an accent of sarcasm. Everyone commenced laughter, but I felt disheartened knowing that my father would make a seemingly physical and mentally detractive statement just for a big laugh. I don't know if he meant any ill-feeling towards African-Americans, or if that is how the woman really talked, or if it's just easy to say something you know everyone else will think is funny. It really made me wonder.

● ● ●

A couple of summers ago, I was visiting my father in Colorado. During my stay, my stepmother, Donna, knowing of my past Biblical intrigues, recommended a book entitled *The Power of Myth*. Not knowing the relativism between Bible and myth, I became curious, so when I went back to Illinois, I rented the audio version. In this book, a man named Joseph Campbell, teacher of comparative mythology, drew together a tapestry of wonderful relationships between belief systems that had never come in contact with each other. Asking how this was possible, for cultures far, far apart to have such similar philosophical conclusions about the nature of being, he concludes with various scholarly opinions about the universality of the human psyche. This book also questions the priestly historical interpretations of scripture. The Indian Upanishads and the Buddhist Sutras both carry motifs comparative with those in the Bible (as do many world myths and religions). They, however, do not interpret their belief systems as historical, but as metaphorical and psychological. This meant a great deal to me, because when I was a student of the Bible, I was happy, but when I was a student of a minister who hadn't had my experiences or upbringing, I began to lose interest. The glory of the maverick path had again been made known to me. Consequently, I began sharing my find.

My mother, however, had different convictions, and had always subscribed to the all powerful interpretations of a minister. I felt she might benefit from my newly-acquired input, so when I returned

from Colorado, I hired myself as a horizon-widening candidate. Trying to be as gently objective as I could, I would ask questions such as, "What if heaven were a psychological state of mind rather than a future reality to be realized?" I'm sure by now that the reader could make some appropriate deductions about her response, but if not, let's just say that she wouldn't hear of it.

Since that time I've been studying physics books as an instrument for laying the groundwork for a modern belief system. A few nights ago I said to my mother, "Did you know that the universe is reckoned to be twenty billion years old and thus far fifty billion galaxies have been spotted? The book I'm reading now says that in the future, artificial intelligence can be used to recode DNA structures and recreate humans after the world is engulfed by the sun."

"I don't believe God will let that happen," she said assuredly.

I stopped dead in my tracks. Despair overtook me as I realized I could never discuss freely with my mother the nature of the universe without running into the science of 2000 BC.

● ● ●

Fictitious dialogue with grandfather.

Me: Grandfather, please don't take this the wrong way, but I wanted to ask you why you are so angry with so many people.

Gr: (defensively) This is the way I was raised. Being the oldest of four brothers, I was the one who got hit or yelled at. My younger brother (Don?), he was the one who dad favored. He got all the special treatment. I didn't get a God-damned thing but harsh words with harsher treatment.

Me: Why do you think he was so hard on you?

Gr: How should I know? He needed someone to take his anger out on. I was the oldest. The most able to earn money. I got the responsibility while the others got the fruits of my labor. You're too young to understand anyhow.



Me: A tough childhood doesn't mean you should be hateful towards people that you don't know just cause they might be different.

Gr: Boy, I was laborin' 40 years before you were born. What gives you the right to judge me. In my day if a boy smarted off to his elders, he got whipped...huh, the good ol' days.

● ● ●  
 "When Lancelot went to rescue Guinevere, he rode after her so fast that he rode his horse to death."

—Joe Campbell

"Pleasure is the greatest suffering."

—Siddhartha Gautama

There was something ineffable about the presence of Julie Kuordum. When in her company, a mystical sublimity overtook me. Like a young sailor man who hadn't felt the reassuring ground underfoot for innumerable months, I stumbled onto and into her scintillating heartscape, a bejeweled bastion of compassion where no wrongs could be committed, and all sins might be absolved. Her flashy exuberance protested the obdurate pedagogy she was raised with. Her smile filled a room like a spill of sunshine through open shutters. I felt I knew her always...as if, by magic, I'd known her in some other lifetime, as a sharer of struggles, the dearest of friends, most intimate of lovers, that long searched for soul mate, a paramour immortal. A ruinous darling, she had the peculiar faculty of being at once as blameless as a child, and as crafty as an enchantress. Her feline countenance was so blissfully paralyzing, a puzzling mystery commanding study...and studious I was. The pain of her absence was unbearable, unspeakable...and her mother was a Jehovah's Witness.

For those who know not the Witness faith, it frowns upon interreligious marriages. When Julie's mother discovered the measure of our closeness, she forbade my presence. We did things she disapproved of, and she never intended to tell me of her boycott.

I learned all of this later from Julie's younger brother Ben. Under his mother's surveillance, he had called me one night. Curtly speaking, he told me that Julie was grounded for numerous months, and that she was never to see me again. If ever I revisited, I'd meet the wrath of his older brother's fury. Ben was very nice and offered to call again to let me know of the problem's current status.

I was mortified. I began having friends call the household, posing as Ben's friends so that I could keep a close correspondence. I soon learned that the overbearing dominance that had made Julie so inaccessible was a hardship for Ben as well. Ben was three years younger than I, but we soon became close brothers under duress.

Because Mrs. Kuordum felt me a rat, I reasoned that if I proved my worth, she might let me visit Julie. Ben and I masterminded a plan where I would treat his mother to a restaurant dinner. The closest I got, however, was temporary household readmittance for a short discussion. I thought this was my chance, though I knew chances were bleak. Before we held palaver, I prepared myself with a little Jehovah's Witness history, that I might better understand Mrs. Kuordum.

The night I left, the weather was like a foreshadowing extension of Mrs. Kuordum's detest for me. As I raced to Naperville, the ice gathered on my windshield faster than either my wipers could remove it, or my defroster evaporate it. Due to my limited visibility, I had to pull over several times on the highway to scrape the ice off. It got so bad that I nearly collided with a semi, and I finally just stuck my head out into the biting ice so that I could see. Through some grace yet unbeknownst to me I arrived. Half frozen, I entered the low lit, lived-in chamber of the Kuordum household. Two older brothers swept by, lending to my discomfort. I was greeted and given a seat across the table from Mrs. Kuordum. Ben then entered; smiling meekly, he sat to my right. Mrs. Kuordum then opened a book from atop an aged pile in front of her to share her beliefs. So began the talk.

After two hours of heartfelt discussion, I packed up my things and left the same calamity-bringing

defiler as when I entered. Although she wouldn't have openly admitted it, I'm sure I'd made a somewhat positive impression on Mrs. Kuordum. I guess even the most passionate dissertation wouldn't separate a mother of five from her stability-holding faith. She truly looked out for her children's best interests. That is so valuable and rare. I might have even secretly envied Julie's upbringing. I still wonder sometimes what the outcome might have been had things gone differently. Every book Mrs. Kuordum showed me was published by the Watchtower Society, a Witness literature foundation. I think it lamentable that a person's thoughts could be so dictated. I left knowing that Julie's mother would look out for her; however misguided, she would always seek her best interests. I walked out the door into the cold night environs.



So what? Should I have lashed out against a faith I didn't agree with and a family Julie loved just because our views differed? Should I have attacked my mother's family-instilled, minister-cultivated belief system just because she rejects philosophical deductions made from modern science? Should I have walked away from my grandfather, calling him a narrow-minded, opinionated, self-righteous bigot? When I ask myself these questions, an old Biblical verse comes to mind: "Be merciful, just as your heavenly father is merciful, for he makes the sun rise on the wicked and the good, and sends rain to the righteous and unrighteous."

What, by doing the things above, would I accomplish? It's easily said, and I have felt like doing all of the above, but for whose betterment? My point is this: If I were to do the above, would I not be a narrow-minded imperialist trying to impress my own convictions on others, just as much as the people I wrote about? I'm not saying that a person should lay down and try to let problems work themselves out with indifference. I'm saying that if freedom is a commodity that we can all cherish as Americans, more importantly as humans, shouldn't we, after making our effort to support our ideas and

causes, let others do the same, without fear of judgement? Abraham Lincoln once said, "Every time you point a finger at someone else, there are three more pointing back at you." Jesus of Nazareth said, "Why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, when all the time there's a plank in your own eye?"

Aren't the only persons we can ultimately change ourselves?

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*Evaluation: Through detailed, poignant scenes and narratives, careful analysis of them, and organization for dramatic effect, Mr. Brookshier's collage arrives at a singular, honest truth.*

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# Genetic Engineering: The Wave of the Future, Despite Skepticism

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by Neil Bucalo

Course: English 102

Instructor: Joanne B. Koch

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Assignment:

*Students were asked to write a research paper of eight to ten pages about a subject that interested them, using five to ten sources. They were encouraged to examine controversial issues, explaining both sides of the controversy.*

“Much of the DNA we extract is fragmented or incomplete... Now we are finding a fragment of DNA that overlaps the injury area, and will tell us what is missing. And you can see we can find it, and go ahead and make the repair. The dark bars you see are the restriction fragments—small sections of dinosaur DNA, broken by enzymes and then analyzed. The computer is now recombining them, by searching for overlapping sections of code. It’s a little like putting a puzzle together. The computer can do it very rapidly” (Crichton 105). In Crichton’s now famous thriller *Jurassic Park*, he describes what most readers call fiction. A reader, Tom Bucalo, remarked, “You can’t take blood from a mosquito and make a dinosaur, or can you?” The concept Crichton writes about is called genetic engineering, which is the “method of changing the inherited characteristics of an organism in a predetermined way by altering its genetic material” (“Genetic Engineering”). By using several techniques, the genes found in the cells of living organisms are manipulated and altered “to the solution of such problems as infertility, diseases, food production, waste disposal, and improvement of a species” (Levine). Genetic engineering emerged because “biologists wanted to understand how genes are organized and how they work” (Sofer 31). Genetic engineering has been used very wisely in order to benefit society, despite the possible dangers involved and speculated for the future. Early curiosity has led to a new science of its own.

The first experiment conducted dealing with inheritance was performed by a monk named Gregor Mendel, in the nineteenth century. From his experiment on pea plants, he determined the law of segregation or separation. The law states that “plants had what he called hereditary units and that when two plants reproduce sexually, the next generation receives one unit from each parent” (Thro 2). He also found that certain units are dominant over other units. Although Mendel first published his findings in 1866, his work was soon forgotten while cell science and the evolution theory were advancing. Inheritance studies did not start again until the

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year 1900 when several European scientists unknowingly duplicated Mendel's work. When they discovered that Mendel had found the same thing over 35 years before they did, they immediately named Mendel the founder of modern genetics. From the new understanding of segregation and dominance, a great deal of research was done on Mendel's units, or genes.

The first significant discovery was made by Thomas Hunt Morgan, who developed the theory of the gene. He found that genes are actually different trait locations on a chromosome. By the late 1930s, it was clear that a series of genes make up a chromosome. Genes are "subunits of the chromosomes, strung like beads along strands of a very complex molecule of deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA)" (Ravage 7). Arthur Mirsky, in 1949, "discovered that genes were made of DNA....By the early 1950s, scientists knew that DNA is a very long molecule built from subunits called nucleotides. Each nucleotide, in turn, is composed of three small molecules....Each sugar molecule has attached to it one of four molecules called bases" (Thro 10, 11). In 1953, Watson and Crick discovered that DNA consists of a "double helix, resembling a twisted ladder" (Dudley 97). During cell reproduction, parts of a chromosome pair exchange places, allowing linked traits to be separated. As research continued, linkage maps were drawn from the crossing-over information. Other scientists began to attempt to change or mutate the chromosomes. In the early 1970s, the first successful gene-altering experiment took place. In the 1980s, the first plant was genetically engineered. Ever since the start of genetic engineering, heredity has turned from a natural and random event into a process that can be artificially controlled. Most people agree that genetic engineering carries the potential for both good and harm. In order to take sides on whether or not genetic engineering is advantageous to society, a closer look at the opposing viewpoints is needed.

Genetic engineering will improve mankind's quality of life by improving plants and animals and by

creating new medicines and chemicals. Gregor Mendel concluded from his experiments that particles exist that carry hereditary traits, which are passed from one generation to another. Building on this discovery, scientists have been able to move pieces of genes, genetic information, from one organism to another. Genetic engineering of plants and animals has brought people better and more healthful food, a safer and more pleasant environment, and improvements in health. Agriculture and genetics have gone hand in hand to control plant reproduction of disease and insect-resistant plants. The frost-resistant tomato, for example, was genetically engineered to "withstand frosts, and retain flavor while being stored in a refrigerator....Other inventions include a spray for cabbages which contains genetically-engineered scorpion venom which attacks caterpillars munching on the crop" ("Genetic Promise Hindered..." 5). Animals, particularly bacteria, are generally altered to benefit society. New ways to help clean up the environment have been developed, including a genetically altered bacteria that feeds on oil slicks. The problem posed by the numerous toxic chemical dump sites that have been evacuated may be solved. A study conducted by research biologist Dr. Ananda Chakrabarty has developed a bacterial strain that feeds only on the chemicals and can remove and utilize "heavily contaminated soil within a few weeks. ...Once the 2,4,5-T [the contaminating chemical] is gone, the bacteria die off within a few weeks, becoming undetectable after a couple of months" (McCuen 103). Studies are also underway on gene-spliced bacteria to convert organic wastes into sugar, alcohol, and methane. Research is taking place to speed the degradation process of PCB's, dioxin, and a number of insecticides and herbicides that linger too long in the soils and streams. The possibility of converting waste materials into useful products also exists. Not only are plants and bacteria altered, but new ways of treating human diseases and manufacturing chemicals have been developed.

The first application of genetic engineering in medicine has been in the production of therapeutic

drugs, like insulin. Genes are selected for their ability to produce specific proteins and are spliced into other bacteria or viruses. The cells become protein factories, producing the desired drug in large quantities. Inherited diseases are also being treated with the use of genes. The genes that pass the inherited disease onward are corrected by injecting a new gene into the DNA, safely correcting the disease. The next generation, in turn, would not inherit the disease. The application of genetic engineering for human health care has brought into production a human growth hormone, proteins that are under clinical study for the treatment of dwarfism, and Factor VIII, which is a protein that is missing from the blood of hemophiliacs. Several diagnostic methods have been developed, such as the diagnosis of sickle cell anemia (Sofer 103). Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) is a new technique that has emerged, which allows DNA from a minute amount of starting material to be analyzed without the need of repeated cloning, and it is now used to amplify a particular sequence of DNA (Wekesser 128). Vaccines for the prevention of diseases and antibiotics to cure illnesses are very important discoveries to improve human health and the quality of life. More recent discoveries with genetics may provide new ways to identify, prevent, and cure disease.

Researchers are "applying gene splicing to the study of cancer and birth defects, hoping to discover what causes these diseases and how they can be prevented or cured" (Stwertka 8). Besides the successful use of genetic engineering to manufacture and produce drugs and chemicals, the use directly on humans is in the experimental stages. Laboratories have already developed the ability to provide a very detailed look at our genetic material. By being able to see the genetic information, genetic diseases can be diagnosed, even deciphering possible inherited genetic traits. Persons who are born with an inherited disorder resulting from a defective gene could have an undamaged gene implanted into their cells, preventing the continuation of the disease. In the future, cancer and heart disease will be cured and prevented with gene therapy. Dr. W. Anderson says

"doctors will simply diagnose their patients' illnesses, give them the proper snippets of molecular thread and send them home cured" (Elmer-Dewitt 53). Genetic engineering is safe and does not change the quality of nature.

Genetic information is exchanged whenever a bee carries pollen from flower to flower or a plant breeder crosses two plants. The only difference between this natural exchange and genetic engineering is precision. Since scientists can control the specific traits to be transferred, they are able to improve crops in a less time-consuming and a less random way. Molecular biologists are doing what plant breeders have been doing for centuries, combining genes in new ways to improve crops. There is no evidence that unique hazards exist from the gene movement between unrelated organisms. Genetic supporters point "to an unblemished safety record of some 20 years, and a rigorous regulatory system" ("Genetic Promise Hindered..." 5). David Cree, chairman of the Bioindustry Association's regulatory affairs advisory committee, said, "There have been several hundred releases worldwide of genetically changed plants, and there's no evidence yet of any threats... no harm has been caused by any of them" ("Genetic Promise Hindered..." 5). Also, the risks involved with engineered organisms are the same as the risks of modifying organisms by other methods. The process of introducing DNA into an organism "is no more likely to produce accidentally a high destructive organism than the natural processes that are going on around us all the time" (Sofer 141). The study of the risks involved should be based on the nature of the organism, not the method by which the organism was produced.

Times have changed recently, leaning towards the successful genetic engineering of humans. Researchers are already trying to decipher the human genetic code. The stated purpose is "to generate new medical strategies to combat diseases and aging" (Dudley 27). In January 1989, the United States launched the Human Genome Project, a research project led by James D. Watson, costing billions of dollars. The goal of the project is to discover

and map all of the estimated 100,000 genes prevalent in every human cell ("Deciphering Human Genetics" 4). In May 1989, a National Institutes of Health medical team under the direction of Steven Rosenberg genetically altered human cells and injected them into a patient, marking the first time genetic engineering was applied directly to humans. Some feel the completion of genome mapping will allow a health plan for every person, eliminating genetic disease and promoting better life. Both events along with many others foreshadow a future of the genetic manipulation of humans. The competition and greed to "get there first is no less fierce than it was to develop the atomic bomb or get a person into space," leading to the same drastic results (Dudley 27).

While many people are excited about the developments of genetic engineering, others feel that more harm than good will be caused. Dick Russell, an environmental writer, believes that genetic engineering "causes environmental hazards and puts enormous power into the hands of a few genetic scientists and corporations" (Dudley 25). The multimillion-dollar business has brought many universities across the U.S. enormous research grants from large corporations (Dudley 26). In 1987, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office announced that all forms of animals, except for homo sapiens, "should be considered 'patentable' subject matter... 'We're going to make animals that nature never made!' crowed Dr. John Hasler, co-founder of an animal biotech outfit in Pennsylvania" (Dudley 26). Now animals that nature never intended to be produced can be manufactured. An example of the bad effects caused can be seen by the experiments done by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The experimenters "inserted the gene that produces human growth hormone into pigs in order to create animals that would grow larger and faster than their normal siblings, on less food. Instead, the pigs were crippled with arthritis and had gastric ulcers, enlarged hearts, dermatitis, and kidney problems. Unfortunately, these transgenic beings were also somewhat leaner than the pigs without the human gene" (Wekesser 18). Suffering

from genetic engineering experiments does not concern merely animals.

An example of the harm done by genetic engineering can be found by examining the Monsanto chemical company. The company develops herbicides for better plant growth. Besides killing weeds, though, crops are also damaged. While one crop may benefit from certain herbicides, other crops that grow in rotation with the benefited crop are killed because the herbicides remain in the soil. Monsanto and other companies are hoping that the damaged crops will be able to be implanted with a gene that tolerates the herbicide (Dudley 28). Millions of dollars are spent annually in researching and experimentation to develop the technology to combat the herbicides that help the plants grow better. The possibility of an accident or production of a deadly virus lurks in the back of the minds of many of the researchers. So far no environmental problems have occurred, but when new manipulated organisms are let loose, the results are unpredictable.

Releasing genetically altered organisms into the environment could have negative effects. The organisms are potential hazards, and caution is necessary when dealing with genetically engineered products. In the past, no negative effects from handling the products have been documented, and the many laboratory workers have remained healthy. However, the concerns for environmental alterations are considerably different than those of laboratory uses. Genetic engineering is creating organisms "far more exotic than any creatures that have existed before...their potential for environmental damage could be far greater than for any 'natural' organism. It is important, therefore, that we understand all the potential environmental ramifications of an organism before it is released into an ecosystem instead of waiting and finding out about them after the damage has occurred" (McCuen 94). In environmental applications, the species in an ecological community will be exposed to the released organisms. The influences of the additions to the population size and function of the community can sometimes displace or destroy the species. An abundance of ecological documenta-

tion can be found to show the devastating effects that can result when organisms are introduced into environments where they are not normally found. While in containment, the organisms can be tracked and controlled. Once released into the environment, the problem of experimental control arises. The modified organisms that do survive and find a suitable habitat will reproduce and spread. Up until the current time, only small areas have been tested under the close supervision of trained experimenters. Knowledge of interactions of mixed populations in the environment is extremely limited. The amount of information unknown is much more than what is known, causing much concern about further experimentation. Genetic engineering may be a promising new technology, but the hidden costs or permanent effects must be considered.

Many scientists have predicted what will happen in the future. One of the largest controversies, though, involves an event that has not even taken place yet: the genetic engineering of humans. James D. Watson and other supporters argue that "genetic engineering can help correct genetic defects and prevent suffering and death" (Dudley 123). On the other hand, some people predict more drastic developments. Brian Stableford envisions "a future in which humans are genetically altered for space travel and underwater living" (Dudley 247). James Watson states, "We used to think our fate was in our stars. Now we know, in large measure, our fate is in our genes" (Dudley 101). No matter what is actually developed, the great debate about whether or not genetic engineering should continue will remain to grow as technology grows.

Genetic engineering has been used to benefit society and will continue to overshadow the possible dangers feared and speculated by many. In Crichton's novel, scientists withdrew dinosaur blood from preserved mosquitoes and found "dinosaur DNA." By using several techniques, the DNA strands were completed by inserting frog DNA into the missing dinosaur strands. The result was the creation of the once extinct dinosaur. Although the novel is fiction, the possibility of altering DNA is

not unreal. The once fictional dreams of a man are now a reality. The curious minds of the past began to change science through the discovered knowledge about inheritance, genes, chromosomes, and DNA. Scientists have been able to transfer genes from one organism to another, and they "now understand how genetic information is stored in a cell, how that information is duplicated and how it is passed from cell to cell, generation to generation" (Dudley 18). The potential to give humans the power over life itself exists. Critics, therefore, question the value and wisdom of genetic engineering. Many people feel that these ideas are very unsettling and even immoral. In turn, many questions are raised in areas such as the environment, agriculture, biological warfare, and animal rights. In such a fast moving field like genetic engineering, it is very difficult to predict what will actually occur in the years to come. The only sure fact is that genetic engineering will change people's relationships with nature, medicine, and even cultural values. Genetic engineering "promises to revolutionize medicine and agriculture and to have a major impact on the chemical and pharmaceutical industries. The new procedures and products that it will engender seem certain to have a growing influence on our lives in the coming decades" (Sofer 123). From recent experiments and documents, the prediction is proven true.

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Evaluation: *Neil has selected a complex and controversial topic, presented it clearly, without oversimplifying, and emerged with an intelligent opinion. I was impressed with his ability to research genetic engineering and explain it in a way that the ordinary person could understand.*

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# Dear Mrs. Weil

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by Joyce Butak  
 Course: Chemistry 121  
 Instructor: Barbara Q. Weil

Assignment:

*Gases are everywhere and all life depends on them. Write a creative short essay which demonstrates a relationship of gas laws and your life. Incorporate concepts discussed in class and explain the connection.*

Dear Mrs. Weil,

How are you? I'm doing well, but sometimes my sister really gets to me. For instance, this morning, the first thing I did was go to the refrigerator for a cold can of Diet Coke. I was wondering why anyone would want to drink coffee to wake up when a cold bubbly soft drink is so refreshing....

Anyway, after I showered, got dressed, did my hair and make-up etc., my Diet Coke was warm and flat. YUK! So I had to open a fresh can. I hate it when my pop goes flat so fast! My sister came in the kitchen while I was pouring out the old can—she's taking this chemistry class at college—and she gave me this huge lecture about some guy named Boyle. He wrote this law, or discovered the law, something like that, which says that the volume of a gas is inversely proportional to the applied pressure when the temperature is constant. Whatever, like I knew what she was talking about. I just agreed with her; you know how smart she likes to act.

Then, just to show her up, I called the 800 number on the Coke can. It's this number you can call to get all kinds of information about Diet Coke.

They told me all this cool stuff about how they make it. First, they dissolve CO<sub>2</sub> gas into water in the Carbo-cooler, and the gas stays in the water. Then they keep the now carbonated water under pressure until it's bottled, so it doesn't go flat. It's even pressurized when they add the color and flavors! So, if you take away the pressure on a gas, like CO<sub>2</sub>, its volume gets bigger and it escapes from whatever it's in, just like that guy Boyle was talking about in his law.

You know what else they do? They put different amounts of CO<sub>2</sub> gas in the cans than they do in the plastic bottles. When they pour the Diet Coke into cans, they put 3.75 volumes of gas in, and when they pour it into plastic bottles, they put 4.0-4.3 volumes of CO<sub>2</sub> gas in. I said that that can't be right because it's not more carbonated in plastic bottles than in cans. Everyone knows that; especially when the two-liter bottle goes flat right away! Well, get this, apparently, plastic is a more porous material than aluminum. If they didn't add more CO<sub>2</sub> gas, the soda in plastic would go flat before the soda in cans, even if the containers weren't opened. This is because the gas has escaped from the plastic, and the bottle therefore has less pressure in it. It's sort of like what that guy Boyle was talking about when he said the volume of a gas is inversely proportional to the applied pressure.

Well, you know how I hate to admit that my sister is right, so I suppose I wasted my time calling that guy at Diet Coke. But, maybe if I ever have to take a Chemistry class, and I hope I don't, at least I will know about a gas law.

Sincerely,

Joyce Butak

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*Evaluation: Joyce wrote a letter which she placed into an envelope and addressed to me; an idea I found most creative and fun. Her paper demonstrated a clear understanding of gas laws, research on the topic, and contained many interesting facts presented in a unique manner.*

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# Wilderness Journal Entries

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by James H. Cates  
Course: English 101  
Instructor: Annie Davidovicz

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Assignment:

*The wilderness journal is a long-term assignment in which students are encouraged to make use of the writing modes and techniques discussed in class, in a journal format, against a natural setting. Ultimately, a communion between a student's inner and outer realities is forged.*

*Leaves*  
*Saturday, October 26*

I have four hours and a monumental task ahead of me. I am facing a looming deadline imposed by a demanding, lawn-obsessed neighbor and the rapid approach of an evening engagement. My mission: evacuate all fallen leaves from the property, post haste.

When it comes to the matter of autumn lawn maintenance I will admit to be indifferent; you could accurately say that I am downright apathetic. I have absolutely no problem in the least imagining a plush, crisp, orange and brown carpet adorning

the front of my property. After all, when the snows come nobody expects me to shovel off my front yard, do they? Snow is much more problematic than leaves, at any rate. I have never heard of anyone being crushed in an avalanche of leaves, nor has a single soul ever been trapped inside the house by great drifts of leaves. Snow is a real hazard on the streets and sidewalks, and much effort is employed to remove it from these places, but as far as I remember, nobody ever had to ask for my assistance to push their car out of a leaf-drift. So given that a good fall of snow is a potential death trap, and we don't lift a finger to remove *it* from our lawns, why should I brave the mine field of sciatica and backache to gather these innocuous little husks?

The fact is I am going to rake this lawn and so for my own sanity (not to mention self-respect) I had better think of a very good reason.

Ah ha! I've got it. These organic sun-catchers will be great decomposing on the compost heaps. Well, I have my rationale and so I begin. I slosh through a couple of yards of maple and locust leaves and find what I consider to be an excellent location to start. Soon I am grooming the ground with vigor; working up a good sweat with all the honest travail of a respectable, responsible suburban home-owner. I feel the muscles in my back and arms tighten as the rough wood of the rake handle raises blisters on the knuckles of my thumbs. Five minutes, ten minutes, thirty. Now I stand erect and proud and survey the results of my half-hour's toil. To my shock I have cleared an area roughly the size of a small wading pool. This won't do at all; I have got slightly over three hours to get this lawn cleared or I will have to suffer the humiliation of admitting to my dear wife that I couldn't complete the one task set before me on this otherwise, lazy Saturday.

It's time to bear down now and, having slipped a pair of gardening gloves over my battle-scarred knuckles, I dive once again (figuratively speaking) into this pile of leaves. In no time at all I manage to fill the street in front of the house (a true testimony to my lack of diligence thus far this season) and

now it's time to begin hauling these little monsters back to my very own organic graveyard—the compost heap.

The compost consists of two 4' by 8' plots of earth carved out of the back yard and surrounded by cedar 4x4's shortly after my wife and I moved into our home in June. It was too late in the season to start gardening, so we decided to use the time to feed the ground in anticipation of a hearty crop of veggies the following year. YUM, YUM. The voracious mud ravenously devoured everything we could give it. We shoveled in rinds, skins, leaves, grounds, ashes, left-overs, and still it was not satisfied. As time passed I began to vary the diet, adding sawdust, bits of charred wood and whole potted plants, and yet the ground demanded more.

Now, today, I am offering up several well-stocked barrels full of tasty, satisfying lawn crisps. What a treat for the heap. As I unload cask after cask of these evasive little rascals, the plots are covered by thick blankets to ease them into their impending winter slumber.

Now, as I pour out the last of the leaves, the wife arrives home, the neighbor pokes his head outside for an appraisal, and I am well-pleased with a fulfilling day's work.

*When Worlds Collide*  
October 31, 1996

I've recently taken several journeys into wilder areas than the one in which I reside. In September I traveled to Boulder Junction, Wisconsin; later that same month I strolled through a portion of the Deer Grove Forest Preserve near my home in Palatine, and during the first weekend in November, broke free from the harness of habit and obligation to spend two days in Galena, Illinois.

In all three instances the impetus was the need to escape. Webster's defines escape as "break(ing) loose, as from a *prison*." More than ever the obligatory, the mundane, the routine becomes increasingly tangible, oppressive, and claustrophobic. Days

merge with each other, demands regulate my time, and I find myself constantly contemplating an elusive 'someday', a paradise of freedom and fulfillment beyond the prosaic walls that hem me in.

Like an escaped inmate, however, I find life beyond the familiar, contemptible walls strange and difficult to negotiate. The sense of desperation to flee from the crush of my own kind is often matched by a feeling of intense loneliness when I am in the wild. It's like the conundrum of feeling the fierce pull of two lovers at once, each one satisfying different needs and needing different satisfaction. I have been perplexed by this conflict for some time now. In recent years as I have been contemplating a move to a less exploited environment, I have noticed that these thoughts are accompanied by a hesitancy, a feeling akin to that experienced by many in anticipation of matrimony. As harried as I am by the density of civilization, I must admit to a slight case of cold feet with respect to leaving it all behind. These recent forays into wilder worlds have provided me with an opportunity to investigate the nature of my reluctance.

During a moment of solitude in Wisconsin's wooded North, I encountered, for a fleeting instant, a kindred spirit in the form of *Gavia Immer*, a Common Loon. The occasion for this convergence was an evening canoe ride on South Trout Lake, a few miles outside of Boulder Junction. I had shoved the large, aluminum vessel off the muddy lakeside and through thick reeds that stood like a stockade along the shoreline. Once I was floating free, I scooped the rough, wooden oar firmly through clear, calm waters that resisted my efforts like a thick, smooth syrup. As the water spilled off the paddle, it resembled the sound of wooden beads dropping to the floor. In the background the only audible evidence of human activities was the soft drone of traffic on Highway M beyond the tall Red Pines. For some distance, the lake remained quite shallow, and I observed great, meandering herds of crayfish, skittish schools of minnow, and the ruddy ridges of the sandy bottom. Venturing further, I set my sights on a small, wood-

ed island to the north. As the space between surface and bottom expanded and that between sun and horizon contracted, the canoe seemed to be gliding across a glistening, glass sheet, replete with the feathery imperfections of a window pane. I felt enveloped by the surreal glow, and the excursion of the island seemed unnaturally brief.

The isle, as it happens, is a wild-life sanctuary, and I was astonished to see, at the top of one of the tallest trees, a rather regal-looking bald eagle. This was the first time I had seen the national bird outside of quarters and patriotic placards. I was transfixed, mesmerized by the motionless sentinel. As I slowly orbited the eagle's haven, it became apparent to me that the bird was watching not only me but a mate perched solemnly near a large nest of course sticks. I tried to keep my movements as non-threatening as possible so as not to startle the pair, and with a last look I began my return trip.

The paddle felt heavier, and it was necessary to switch hands periodically to avoid cramping. Roughly half-way back I was struck by the realization that I was not alone on the lake. As I got to within fifty feet or so of the shallow water, I saw to my right a lone form floating on the shimmering surface. At first glance this buoyant figure appeared to be one of the ubiquitous ducks I had been watching for days. On closer inspection, though, it became evident that this was a solitary loon. The animal was large and sat low in the water. It stared straight across its dark, pointed bill. The shiny blackness of the head and neck were broken only by a striking white band around its throat. The rest of the body was black, salted with white spots, large on top and smaller as they descended.

There we were, the loon and I, two loners intruding on one another's solitude, keeping a safe distance, alike in our isolation. Every other creature I had observed that evening, from insects to eagles, had been keeping company with its own, but the loon and I sat solo, commiserating across the calm water.

Late at night, in the darkness around northern lakes, above the concert of crickets and frogs the

lonely, haunting cry of the loon is heard. This aching wail can send chills up the spine, not from fear, but for the lonely longing it conveys. In times of isolation, whether in the woods or in the work-a-day world I carry this cry inside, audible only to myself.

Paradoxically, the loon at once echoed my loneliness and called me to communion with the nature I had merely observed all day. Perhaps that which I had interpreted as loneliness was a wild longing to be included in this world I had spied on from the outside; a need not to be a stranger but a part of this system. The call is strong and I felt it deep inside, perhaps listening for the first time on that September evening. I remain alert.

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*Evaluation: It is clear from his carefully composed, richly detailed journal entries that Jim Cates is a talented writer. His writing, though thoroughly original, reflects the stylistic nuances of writers such as Muir, Dillard and Bass. The ease with which he moves between serious reflection and jaunty wit is especially provocative.*

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# Teachers: Please Teach!

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by Carol Coutts-Sieпка  
Course: Speech 101  
Instructor: Louise J. Perry

Assignment:

*A eulogy is commonly thought of as an oration delivered in conjunction with a funeral service, but this "speech of praise" surfaces in many other life situations. For this assignment, students were to eulogize an individual, an institution, a concept, a place, an activity, or some other entity. Ms Coutts-Sieпка chose to praise the teaching profession.*

Imagine a room. Imagine 30 hyperactive, riled up six-year-olds in that room. Imagine yourself in that room alone with those 30 kids. Imagine you have to get the kids quiet and paying attention to you. Now, imagine you have to teach these thirty mini-individuals how to read. Sound scary? I'll bet. Yet teachers face rooms like this every day. Teaching is a skill and an art. Many of us would have a nervous breakdown if asked to deal with what teachers do on a daily basis. All children enter the classroom with their own personalities, needs, and histories. Each child is unique. Each child learns his or her own way and at his or her own pace. Now, imagine that you are the teacher and are required to put this classroom of 30 hyperactive kids through a curriculum dictated by the state government.

Besides the multitude of interesting issues each child brings to class with him/her each day, teachers are challenged with many other competing demands. Trying to educate today's youth is not an easy process. The state-mandated curriculum sets goals for each grade level. Money and resources are never enough to allow the teacher to best teach what is required. Society demands more accountability from its teachers, yet is not willing to pay for the support they need to accomplish this. Television and video games provide constant competition for learning. Instant gratification is the name of the game today, and learning takes too much time and energy. Children are not getting adequate support from their parents, both of whom are more likely to be working to support the basic needs of the family. Time is precious, and nobody wants to spend it on homework. Parents who do not support school work raise kids who do not respect school work. Administrations are mired in politics and paperwork, making even the slightest addition or improvement a time consuming and lengthy affair. Despite all of this, teachers teach.

Teachers no longer can walk in the classroom and simply relay information to the students. Teachers have become surrogate parents and social workers on top of their educating responsibilities. Children are coming to school not ready to learn. Children

are the largest growing segment of the poverty population in our country. Society's problems are making children suffer. The lack of universal health care, the absence of organized day care for working parents, the failure to provide early childhood education for all kids, and the lack of career and vocational training in secondary schools all set our children back when it comes to schooling. Children come to school in need of food, not education. Teachers have to feed them before they can begin to teach. Children go home to empty houses with no supervision. They are required to fit into their parents' busy schedules, not the other way around. Business rarely provides for employees with children. They are not important. And yet, teachers teach.

The children in our country have been compared very unfavorably with those of other countries in the world. Our children are falling behind in all subject areas. Society blames teachers for not doing their jobs, yet the United States spends a smaller percentage of its Gross National Income on elementary and secondary education than any other major industrial country, including our competitors: Japan, England, Germany, and France. Why are we so quick to criticize and so lax to support? The average salary of a teacher in 1992 was \$34,213, according to the American Federation of Teachers. This is an adjusted drop in salary of almost \$2,000 per year from twenty years earlier. How many other professionals do you know who have actually had their salaries lowered in those years? Teachers are chided when they demand a 1½% raise when other professionals are getting much higher ones. Why do teachers still teach?

Some teachers face incredible dangers in going to work every day. Children pack guns with their peanut butter sandwiches. Fourth graders are being gunned down on playgrounds for drug deals gone sour. Inner city schools are an exercise in discipline, not education. "Gunfights are replacing fistfights, and 'bullet drills' are replacing fire drills on many campuses," according to a 1991 United States

Department of Justice report. Over 5,000 high school teachers are physically attacked at school every month. We spend more municipal tax dollars on incarceration than education. Children are not learning to cope with their anger, merely to satisfy it the quickest way possible. Why would anybody teach?

Parents are a constant source of headaches for teachers. They are angry, pushy, proud, worried, and absent. They run the gamut of types. The push for them to be working is so great that the children suffer from lack of attention. Parents are too tired to help with homework or simply have no interest. Children are denied periods of free play and quiet individual time in favor of television and other distractions. Parents are lax to run interference because the kids are behaving themselves and it's easier to deal with. Divorce wreaks its own havoc on children. Children in poverty-stricken homes are required to go out and support their families after a day at school. Parental lack of involvement in schooling translates into a lack of importance for the children. Additionally, parental criticism and disrespect for teachers also translates to similar attitudes in children. Strange things come from parents who entrust their children to teachers for six hours a day. Parents have come to see school as a glorified day care. Teachers teach. Why?

Teachers are a rare breed of people. If you were to survey a group of strangers, how many of them would say they enjoy their jobs? Teachers, by and large, have a higher percentage rate of enjoyment in their jobs than most other careers. In 1991, the National Education Association found that 60% of teachers would choose to be teachers again if given the opportunity. How many other people do you know who would do that? For most, teaching is a love affair. Teachers are passionate, demanding, devoted, and generous. They put up with all the mess and confusion that comes with teaching because they love it. They love kids. They love to see understanding appear in a child's eyes. They love to be surrounded with thinking, questioning minds instead of thoughtless computer screens.

They want to make a difference with their lives. Teachers teach for many different reasons.

Just as no two children are alike, teachers are all different. How they manage to give our future all the tools they need to take on the world is a mystery. There is no magic formula to being a good teacher. Dedication to a mission is what keeps them in the classroom. Teachers are continually learning from their students. Each class is a new challenge. Each student brings new ideas and new problems to conquer. While many of us are finding ourselves stagnating in our jobs, teachers are constantly overwhelmed with new situations and challenges. As society changes, so do their job descriptions. Despite all the outside attacks on their attempts, teachers keep teaching.

Imagine yourself in front of a room of six-year-olds with their hands raised anxiously, awaiting your selection. Johnny is kneeling on his chair, his hand stretching for the ceiling. Joey sounds like he's about to die. Angela is so far forward on her desk, it looks like it might tip over. Everyone is eager to answer your question. When you finally call on one, the rest of the group looks disappointed. They all knew the answer. They all know that there will be other questions.

Imagine you are sitting with a child trying to decipher a word for the first time. Softly, she sounds out the word a letter at a time. Slowly, the syllables come together. After a number of attempts to put the syllables together, she understands. The connection between what is written in front of her and a word she has heard and knows is clear. She looks up at you, beaming, and pronounces the word beautifully. You feel her triumph. You are there with her. She moves on to the next word, and another battle fought and won.

Teachers teach for the beauty of the learning. They fight battles with society, administrators, parents, government, and children to be able to do what they love. They spend their own hard earned money to better the environment in which they teach. They live a mission to reach as many kids as

possible. Their job, to ignite and nurture the curiosity of a child, is enviable. They are blamed for everything from illiterate graduates to the economic decline of the country. Until we as a society are willing to put our money behind the educators of the future, we should be hard pressed to criticize.

Teachers teach for love. Teachers teach out of respect. Teachers teach because they cannot imagine doing anything else. Teachers teach to make a difference. Let our teachers teach.

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Evaluation: *Carol shares many insights with her audience, regarding the numerous "hats" a teacher wears: society's influences, expectations, pressures, and still how they (the teachers) spend their own, hard earned money, to better their teaching environment. Truly a "love" for learning and a "love" for the sharing of knowledge and experience with humanity are critical components of the teaching profession.*

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# E.R.

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by John Czapiga  
Course: Chemistry 121  
Instructor: Barbara Q. Weil

Assignment:

*Gases are everywhere and all life depends on them. Write a creative short essay which demonstrates a relationship of gas laws and your life. Incorporate concepts discussed in class and explain the connection.*

The Emergency Room door vigorously slides open. The First Aid Crew's fingers are pointing, while their mouths are yelling medical lingo. The intercom repeatedly announces your name. Scrambling paramedics race the stretcher and a sick boy into your presence. Quickly, you inspect his oxygen mask and check his blood pressure. Your keen knowledge and quick thinking save the day. After making sure all his insurance papers are filled out and signed in triplicate, you reenter his room to relieve his worried look and tell him his diagnosis.

"You had a very high fever," you begin. "Your body could not dissipate the heat fast enough. But with some antibiotics, you'll be fine."

The boy pulls the oxygen tube off his nose and says, "I was worried. Dissipate heat, huh? How does my body do that?"

You place the oxygen tube back on him. "One quick and simple way is by exhaling. You see, your lungs are like a tank of air. Exhaling squeezes your lungs, decreasing the volume of the lung cavity, which increases the pressure inside. The increased

pressure allows the heated air to escape."

"Oh, yeah. I think I heard something about that in chemistry," he says.

After checking his pulse, you explain that his lungs do not give off much heat. To help out, the capillaries expand, increasing the surface area when they're hot, which releases heat, and contract when they're cold, to help preserve it. "There's that chemistry thing again," he utters.

You give him an encouraging look. "Your heart provides a blood pressure, which pushes blood through the arteries and veins. When body temperature rises, the blood vessels expand and the heart beats faster, allowing for increased blood flow. When blood cools, the vessels contract. When the vessel is expanded, the amount of surface area able to dissipate heat is increased because blood pressure has increased. This way heat is dissipated more quickly, and vice versa."

"Man," he says, "I didn't know so much science was going on inside me. I'm glad nothing went wrong."

"That's why I took your blood pressure," you say and smile. "If the blood pressure is too high and your fever increases, your body is not cooling the way it should."

"Wow, I never realized."

You hang his chart in front of the bed and remind him he will be all right. "Just remember that pressure, volume and temperature are all related. When temperature increases, volume increases, if it can. If it can't, pressure will. You'll be fine—even in that chemistry class—if you don't forget these simple rules."

As he starts to thank you, the intercom calls out your name. Another boy is being wheeled in. You dash to the emergency area and yell out, "Take his blood pressure!"

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Evaluation: *John's paper illustrated an unusual twist to the assignment in which he related it to something he found interesting. His paper was entertaining, factual, and creative.*



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# The Relationship of Mathematics to Physics

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by Steven Davis  
Course: Physics 121  
Instructor: Joseph A. Auer, Jr.

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Assignment:

*Study and summarize Dr. Richard Feynman's lecture, "The Relation of Mathematics to Physics."*

*Discuss similarities and differences between mathematics and communication (written, spoken) language. Can either style by itself completely communicate physics? What is the best mix of styles?*

*What is your opinion of the mix in Physics 121?*

*How does Physics 121 fit (or not fit) in with your education and/or job goals?*

Physics and mathematics are two interconnected disciplines. More precisely, the two are separate languages that often rely on each other. Each language allows us to better understand and manipulate the world in which we live. An important aspect in these languages is how clearly and precisely they can be communicated from one mind to another. Richard Feynman's lecture, "The Relation of Mathematics to Physics," goes into great depth about these two languages and the vast complexities that surround them.

Mathematics should be looked at as more than just numbers being manipulated to find answers. Mathematics really involves an extremely large amount of abstract reasoning. By making this reasoning more and more abstract, it can be applied to more and more situations. For example, two books plus two books equals four books. The frame of reference in this situation centers around the books. However, we are able to utilize this finding of two books plus two books equals four books by abstracting it. Instead of just books, the concept is abstracted further and further until it could be applied to any combination of similar three-dimensional objects. Mathematics is useful in this way because it is not limited to a set boundary. By abstracting, we can apply math to an infinite number of things, like substituting protons for books. This in turn allows us the magnificent ability to communicate clearly with each other. When someone says they have five one-dollar bills, we can get a mental image of the same amount of bills in our head as are in the other person's wallet. We may not know what kind of bills or in what condition, but we can precisely communicate through math a quantity that holds true for each person. This is one reason why mathematics is essential to physics. Math allows us to convey ideas very smoothly and with little change in meaning. Physics demands a language with little ambiguity and vagueness. Language barriers between nations and even from person to person in a community create problems of correct information transfer. The color red, for example, has many different shades. This creates a very high degree of ambiguity. By defining red with a mathematical quantity, we

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are better able to convey to another a standard of what red is. All of this illustrates how important the language of mathematics is to conveying accurate information in the physical world.

Feynman also discusses abstraction in math versus abstraction in physics. Math is intended to be extremely abstract. As discussed in the previous paragraph, this abstraction makes math universally useful. It can be applied to a wide range of possibilities. Physics, on the other hand, tends toward a more narrow focus. It concerns itself with particulars and defined quantities and boundaries. It is almost as if physics is confined to a unique frame of reference for each phenomenon. We know that as inertial frames change, so do the laws that govern those frames. Einstein illustrated this with the speed of light. By dramatically increasing speed, the laws of physics in that frame become somewhat skewed to what they were in the previous frame. So physics changes, to a degree, from each instance. However, one thing remains a constant in these differing realms: the mathematics. Yes, formulas may change and so may the dimensions, but the same abstract reasoning is there throughout all frames. This is why mathematics is the language of physics. It does not change as the physical world changes; its properties remain constant. It allows us to describe how something is happening, at what rate, and so on. This in turn can be communicated.

It is important to remember that math really is not anything real. In a sense, it is just a bunch of symbols. However, the human mind possesses the ability to affix meaning to these symbols. Therefore, mathematics is in no way concrete. In theory, it only exists in the human mind.

From this revelation, a distinction between mathematics and physics can begin to be drawn. Pure abstraction mixed with the reasoning powers of the mind create mathematics. This mixture, although very potent, fails us in a major way. Sure, it can go on all day telling us how much and how far, or how big and how hot, but it neglects to tell us *why*. This is where physics steps in to our world of understanding. Feynman uses the example of Newton's

law for gravitation. The people told Newton his equation meant nothing. In truth, it really doesn't. It is just some letters and other symbols. Throwing math into the equation allowed Newton to retort that his equation *is* important. "It explains how," he said. Math lets us explain how an object acts, not why. Physics uses math's "how" to help explain the "why." For example, math can tell you how a planet moves. It can be worked out and shown on paper by utilizing geometry. Place in some numbers for distances and other quantities, and you have "how" a planet moves. This in itself is great. You can use this information for a multitude of purposes, such as calculating orbital periods or some other quantities. The negative aspect in this is that it only gives figures. We need physics to tell us the "why." Why does the motion occur as it does? Why does it not occur in some other way? By incorporating useful mathematical relationships into a physical relationship, we approach a closer understanding of the "why."

Understanding the "why" brings about the usefulness. It is this usefulness that mankind seeks. By gaining knowledge from why something works, we build on our ability to manipulate this knowledge into useful work. To avoid a long philosophical discussion, it will be simply stated that man needs to know why to better his chances of survival. Take viruses again for example. We observe the virus and come up with averages and probabilities. We in turn use this to investigate why the virus does what it does. Now knowing the why and the how, we can develop this into something useful, say an antibiotic. In this case, it is only the usefulness of the information that can determine life and death.

Feynman briefly touched on an interesting point. This is the idea of the unification of physics. Feynman gave an explanation of the energy at certain parts in a ball. We can understand a great deal of things just from the outside of the ball, without ever seeing the inside. Chemistry, for example, allows us to calculate the interaction of atoms, without knowing the internal structure of an atom's nucleus. A unified theory would provide an understanding of

essentially everything. It would allow for simple explanations of extremely complex situations.

Feynman also touched on the ways in which physics is learned. He discussed one way of particular interest. To understand physics, you really have to *feel* what is going on. By repeating the same types of problems over and over, the instructor is attempting to place the “feel” of the idea in the pupil’s head. It can be done, but it takes a great deal of time and strenuous mental labor. The alternative is instead of being a pupil, one should be a student. A student is one who wants to feel the information. The problems in a calculus book can easily be mastered, but they are not the same as what the pupil may be tested on. The student utilizes these example problems to create an essence, or feel, of calculus, creating a vastly greater usefulness of information.

Mathematics is language with little ambiguity. Mathematics can partly be described as a language with borders. Bringing math into physics expands our ability to communicate effectively with each other about the environment in which we live. This brings up another fascinating attribute of physics. One does not necessarily have to exist in a particular environment to understand that said environment. We cannot travel at the speed of light, but by using physics, we can approach the truth of the mechanics in that environment. This only adds to the usefulness of physics: by knowing where we are, we can find out where we can go and the best way to get there.

The correct mixture of physics, mathematics, and communication is essential to a course in physics. Not only do our results have to make sense to ourselves, but we also must be able to communicate our ideas effectively; otherwise, our information is useless. This is why math is so important. Without it, we could not really share our ideas. Mankind progresses through the compounding of ideas. Mathematics gives us an ability to accomplish this efficiently.

Physics fits very well into my education. I do not see my education as a means to an end (i.e., education to get a job). I see my education as an end in itself. It is never ending and never finished. Class

should not be distinguished from work, and two different classes should not be viewed as separate. They should all use one another. My greatest grasp of this so far is incorporating my knowledge of mathematics into physics. As soon as I realized the two had something in common, I began to find all sorts of instances in which math is used in physics and vice versa. These two disciplines even tie in with philosophy and psychology. In philosophy, an example would be the complex semantics involved in saying that something *is*. In psychology, for example, it deals with how biochemistry affects who we are. There is an extreme sense of pleasure that I derive from thinking. I love the chance to figure out a problem or to come up with a theory. My mind is a universe, and knowledge allows this universe to grow. I can never stop learning, so my universe will never stop growing. By expanding my consciousness, I allow my mind to go wherever it can go, which in turn gives more and more meaning to existence. The possibilities of where exactly my mind can take me are confined by the limits of my education. This is how the course fits into my education—physics is another instrument that I will use to reduce my limits and expand my mind.

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Evaluation: *Mr. Davis' discussion has a strong technical orientation. I particularly liked his examples of abstraction versus realization, and his awareness of ambiguity in communication. His awareness of a "system level" or "big picture" perspective is also very good for this level of study.*

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# The “Invisible” Teacher

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*by Erika Dobson*  
Course: Child Care 101  
Instructor: Meenakshi Mohan

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Assignment:  
*Children learn through their active involvement  
and association with the environment.  
Students were asked to explain how  
environment can be a children’s textbook.*

There is not a bare wall in the classroom. At first glance, it looks more like a giant playroom than anything else, with toys perched neatly on shelves, dumped there by chance. This is the classroom of the Harper College Preschool program, and it in itself is a giant textbook—a living environment of education.

In a world where lack of computer experience equals professional inadequacy, students in Harper’s program are becoming familiar with the keyboard at ages three and four years old. While a computer is often avoided by adults who feel threatened by its technology, the children here are eager for their turns to use it. This early exposure allows them to grow up with an easier understanding of the opportunity allowed by a computer, and later in life they will make an easier transition into advanced programs needed for higher education and, eventually, various professions.

“You are only as big as the world you are interested in” (Roy L. Smith). The Harper College Preschool program offers access to all forms of intellectual, career-oriented, and societal interests. Available to the children are stations ranging from science to art to homemaking. Children are encouraged to go to as many stations as they like; gender-biased attitudes are not present here, and no child is pushed to choose one activity over another. One station, for example, consists of a little play kitchen which is just as popular with the boys as it is with the girls. Boys are not discouraged from making invisible dinners or pretending to clean house as they might have been in the past. Here they act out real-life situations in an environment that is equally attractive to both sexes, one that resembles home.

Toy vehicles, animals, people and puppets also allow children to act out real life through fantasy. Fire trucks, ambulances, and police cars help children become friendly with institutions they need to trust. Included with these vehicles are miniature firemen, paramedics, and policemen who are, in

many cases, models of who the children want to be when *they* grow up. Plastic animals allow more play than do the live ones kept in the room, and all teach respect and love for a species other than our own. Whether pretending the animals are in a zoo, on a farm, or in the wild, the children are basing their play on outside knowledge that they have already acquired by this age.

The puppets are not unlike the toy animals and people in that they encourage fantasy play. They do, however, promote creativity to a greater extent due to their structure. Puppets are difficult to maneuver if not used by one's hands to move the arms, legs, or mouth. This encourages dramatic play by the children, and with the large number of puppet "actors" in the collection, any number of children can engage in a single play; this fosters more cooperative interactive play among the students.

The very existence of the play stations encourages a great deal of independence, with the children doing what they want to do rather than what their friends are doing, even if it means being alone at a particular station. Picking up after themselves instills a sense of responsibility. The freedom to move from the science station to the sandbox to the shoeboxes filled with keys and Barbie shoes keeps their minds from becoming stagnant. They learn to like school and to be excited by it.

There is an entire corner and bulletin board devoted to the weekly topic. Each week, before the children arrive on Monday, the area has been set up with materials relating to the topic of the week. There may be samples to pass around to the children, or accessories to study and compare. On the bulletin board are pictures, words, and small items also pertaining to the topic. This corner and the board spur discussions and questions that keep coming the whole week long. This is an area of the room that stimulates learning in more of a school-like atmosphere than the rest of the room, thereby preparing the students for later education.

Though the human teacher is regarded as the main source of knowledge for the children, the importance of a stimulating atmosphere cannot be ignored. In conjunction with the efforts of a good teacher, a well-planned environment can drive a student to use his/her most significant tool of learning: his/her own mind. In a classroom such as the one found here at Harper, students can learn strategies and principles that they will need later in life, in further education, in careers, and in society. This is the importance of the textbook classroom, the invisible teacher.

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Evaluation: *Erika's essay "The Invisible Teacher" is quite funny, interesting and informative.*

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# Journal Entries

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by Tracey Dorus  
Course: Literature 115  
Instructor: Nancy L. Davis

## Assignment:

*Journal Entries: Students were asked to write a series of journal entries in response to prompts specifically related to each of the works of fiction read in the class. The course theme this semester was "Wrestling the Demons Within."*

## *Living in the Shadow*

*Prompt: What demons inhabit Okonkwo?*

When thinking of demons, one might conjure up visions of wild, passionate creatures, who set about torturing our souls, destroying our sense of well being. Most often though, demons are creations of our own minds caused by fears, misled beliefs, or ignorance. For Okonkwo, the protagonist in Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart*, demons seem to resonate throughout his being, caused by his own self-defeating fears.

A man of great stature, Okonkwo was well known and respected in his village. "His fame rested on solid achievements" such as "throwing Amalinze the Cat" (Achebe 3), being a successful farmer, and having three wives and two titles (8): "Okonkwo ruled his household with a heavy hand," and his wives and his children "lived in perpetual fear of his fiery temper" (13). Okonkwo too lived in perpetual fear; "It was the fear of himself, lest he should be

found to resemble his father (13). This fear was Okonkwo's greatest demon.

To Okonkwo, as well as to other members of the clan, his father was seen as "lazy and improvident" (4), a "failure...[whose] wife and children had barely enough to eat" (5). Living in the shadow of his father, Okonkwo reacted to many of life's challenges based on the fear that he would be seen like his father was: "He threw himself into [life] like one possessed. And indeed he was possessed by the fear of his father's contemptible life and shameful death" (18). From this fear he cut down his would-be adopted son Ikemefuna's steps, killing him with his machete because "he was afraid of being thought weak" (61). It is possible to believe that Okonkwo killed Ikemefuna, knowing that he was to die regardless, in order to keep the others from getting pleasure from slaughtering him, but Achebe chose to have us see this event as a matter of pride, a man upholding his image, rather than a man torn by the customs of his tribal village. And so we are forced to accept this fear of weakness in Okonkwo, as well as his ruthless ways of exorcising any sign of it from himself.

It was very important to Okonkwo that his son Nwoye not display signs of weakness either: "Okonkwo wanted his son to be a great man. He would stamp out the disquieting signs of laziness which he thought he already saw in him. 'I will not have a son who cannot hold up his head in the gathering of the clan. I would sooner strangle him with my own hands'" (33). When Nwoye decided to join the Christians, Okonkwo became infuriated, and wondered why he should "be cursed with such a son" (152). Okonkwo couldn't see how his own temperament, combined with the "haunting" traditions of the clan, such as "the question of twins crying in the bush and the questions of Ikemefuna who was killed" (147), had driven his son from him. Nwoye, too, now had demons he was fighting against, and the cycle continues, of running away from what we fear most.

There was one person who was able to unearth the goodness in Okonkwo's heart, and that was his daughter Ezinma: "Okonkwo was specially fond of

Ezinma...But his fondness only showed on very rare occasions" (44). And on rare occasions were we shown Okonkwo's compassionate, loving, nurturing side. When Ezinma was ill with a fever, or *iba*, "Okonkwo sprang from his bed...and ran into Ekwefi's hut" (76). Full of concern for his daughter, Okonkwo "went into the bush to collect the leaves, grasses and barks of trees that went into making the medicine for *iba*" (76). On another occasion, again when Ezinma was ill, Okonkwo made four trips to the shrine of Agbala, after the priestess, Chielo, took the sick child to see Agbala "in his house in the hills and the caves" (101). Here we were shown a father "gravely worried" (112), about his daughter, though "nobody else knew it" (112). His pride would not have allowed anyone else in his village, with the possible exception of Ekwefi, to see him that way.

In his dying days, Unoka, Okonkwo's father, told his son that he knew Okonkwo would be able to preserve and succeed in life, even after his run of bad luck during the harvest season, because Okonkwo had "a manly and proud heart. A proud heart can survive a general failure because such a failure does not prick its pride. It is more difficult and more bitter when a man fails *alone*" (24-25). Little did Unoka know that he was foretelling Okonkwo's fate, fate Okonkwo designed himself by being rigid in his beliefs, ruled by his inner demons of fear and pride. In the end Okonkwo dies alone, a life ended by the self-made circle of rope around his throat, strangled with his own hands and the demons he could not face.

### *The Shadow of Frankenstein*

*Prompt: Who is the monster in Frankenstein?*

To answer the question, "Who is the monster?" in Mary Shelley's novel, *Frankenstein*, is no small task. In order to do this we must first define what we mean when we say "monster." Is it how people behave, or is it the reasons for their behavior, such as revenge, jealousy, anger, or greed? Or is the defi-

inition based on how someone looks? Initially, we might assume that the creature that Victor Frankenstein created was the monster, but in reality, this creature is used by the author to symbolize mankind, its desires, its prejudices, its consequences. So, before we can even consider this creature as a monster, we must look to its creator.

Victor Frankenstein made no secret of the passion that drove him early in the novel. He not only wanted to be a great scientist, he wanted to "...pioneer a new way, explore unknown powers, and unfold to the world the deepest mysteries of creation" (Shelley 47). He was driven in this way knowing that anything less would be "treading in the steps already marked" (47) by the scientists who came before him. Victor worked relentlessly, day and night, in order to fulfill his most ardent desire, often giving up rest and nutrition for his ultimate goal. For two years, he pressed onward towards the discovery of his most burning query, "Whence...did the principle of life proceed?" (50). This quest was realized when Victor discovered "the cause of generation and life," as well as the capability "of bestowing animation upon lifeless matter" (51).

Though excited in the prospect of fulfilling his dreams thus far, Victor also had to acknowledge the simple rules of life that he was neglecting to live by:

A human being in perfection ought always to preserve a calm and peaceful mind and never to allow passion or a transitory desire to disturb his tranquility. I do not think that the pursuit of knowledge is an exception to this rule. If the study to which you apply yourself has a tendency to weaken your affections and to destroy your taste for those simple pleasures in which no alloy can possibly mix, then that study is certainly unlawful, that is to say, not befitting the human mind. (54)

Fast in his tunnel vision, Victor did not see what he was creating. He also neglected to look beyond the creation process to what the possible conse-

quences of his actions might be. Not once did Victor ask himself, "What will I do with this creature once he is alive? How will I care for him? How will the world respond to him? Will he have needs that I will be responsible to meet somehow?"

Being driven as he was did not in itself make Victor a monster, though the quality of his life was surely diminished. We see Victor become a monster when after he gave life to the creature, Victor shuns it, is horrified and repulsed by it, and ultimately abandons it, "unable to endure the aspect of the being [he] had created" (56). And so the mind, soul, and stature of this creature took on a monstrous quality, not unlike that of the creator himself, and became the shadow of Frankenstein.

### *Learning to Blossom*

*Prompt: Discuss the quest theme in Hurston's  
Their Eyes Were Watching God.*

Zora Neale Hurston transcends the cultural gaps of society by telling the story of Janie, in her novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Through her use of dialect we feel as if we were pulled right into the town of Eatonville, and are sitting on the porch of Joe Starks' store, listening to the stories spun off the tongues of the black people there. The theme of her story makes us believe they are the faces of all people.

One of the things we as readers note and admire about Hurston's written words is the way she beautifully describes how Janie comes to understand the mystery of love and marriage through her visits to the "blossoming pear tree in the backyard." The mystery to Janie is how the tree went "From barren brown stems to glistening leaf-buds; from leaf buds to snowy virginity of bloom. It stirred her tremendously. How? Why?" (Hurston 10), she wondered.

This extraordinary example of how aware Janie is about her awakening womanhood only gets lovelier as Hurston describes the sweet fertilization of the blossoms and its effect on Janie's whole perspective of love and marriage:

She saw a dust-bearing bee sink into the sanctum of a bloom, the thousand sister-calyxes arch to meet the love embrace and the ecstatic shiver of the tree from root to tiniest branch creaming in every blossom and frothing with delight. So this is marriage! She had been summoned to behold a revelation. (10-11)

At sixteen Janie yearned for love and was overcome with feeling after witnessing the miracle of nature: "Oh to be a pear tree—any tree in bloom!" (11). This experience began Janie's quest to find someone with whom she could feel as the blossom did with the bee. Unsuspecting was she, that she would also find herself in the process of her search.

Life, however, is not always able to fulfill the dreamy, innocent yearning of a child. Sometimes our circumstances and things beyond our control can get in the way of our dreams, as Janie is made to realize when her Grandmother, Nanny, decides Janie is to marry Logan Killicks. Janie begs Nanny to change her mind: "Lemme wait, Nanny, please, jus' a little bit mo" (15). At this point in the story, we are confronted with how hard Nanny's life has been and how much of her own dreams she had to give up: "Ah was born back due in slavery so it wasn't for me to fulfill my dreams of what a woman oughta be and do" (15). Though slavery was over, life was still hard for black people and black women especially: "De nigger woman is de mule uh de world so fur as Ah can see. Ah been prayin' fuh it tuh be different wid you" (14). In Janie, Nanny saw all of her dreams and hoped Janie would be able to fulfill hers through Logan Killicks.

Janie thought a lot about love and how she hoped to feel in it before her wedding. She believed that "Husbands and wives loved each other, and that was what marriage meant. It was just so" (20), and so Janie believed this would happen for her too. It didn't take long in her marriage to Logan however, for Janie to realize "that marriage did not make love," or that wishing didn't always make things so.



With that realization, “Janie’s first dream was dead, so she became a woman” (24).

When Janie took off for Eatonville with Joe Starks she untied the apron she had put on that morning and “flung it on a low bush beside the road and walked on,” believing that “From now on until death she was going to have flower dust and springtime sprinkled over everything. A bee for her bloom” (31). Janie didn’t realize that she was trading one form of slavery for another, an apron for a muzzle. Married to Joe Starks, Janie soon realized, she was unable to have a voice. After Joe was elected mayor of the town, one of the people asked to hear “uh few words uh encouragement from Mrs. Mayor Starks” (40). Joe instead stood up and said, “Thank yuh fuh yo’ compliments, but mah wife don’t know nothin’ ’bout no speech-makin’. Ah never married her for nothin’ lak dat. She’s a woman and her place is in de home” (41). Janie rightly becomes irritated with her husband for taking the choice away from her and making it himself, but she keeps her thoughts to herself. This became a pattern for Janie throughout her marriage to Joe, until he slapped her after a meal that didn’t turn out perfectly. She finally had had enough of his treatment and “something fell off the shelf inside her...her image of Jody tumbled down and shattered” (68). Janie realized that “she had a host of emotions she had never let Jody know about. Things packed up and put away in parts of her heart where he could never find them” (68). Before Jody dies we realize how much Janie has grown and learned through their marriage as she tells him, “Ah run off tuh keep house wid you in uh wonderful way. But you wasn’t satisfied wid me de way Ah was. Naw! Mah own mind had tuh be squeezed and crowded out tuh make room for yours in me” (82).

After Joe’s funeral, Janie “burnt up every one of her head rags and went about the house the next morning with her hair in one thick braid swinging well below her waist” (85). Janie was ready to begin the next chapter of her life. For the first time Janie was able to ask herself what she really wanted out

of her life. She was no longer anyone’s responsibility, nor was she responsible for anyone. Her life was hers to do with as she pleased.

By the time Janie meets and falls in love with Tea Cake, she is ready to have a relationship with a man as his equal. This time Janie took her time getting to know Tea Cake. She had nothing to run away from and no reason to go running away to something either. And even though life was not perfect after she and Tea Cake were married, Janie did not give up who she was at the core of her being in order to be in a relationship with him. This is the heart of Hurston’s story!

*Their Eyes Were Watching God*, then, is not a story only about African-American people; it is a story about all people—their failures, their triumphs, their shortcomings, and their strengths. It also is not a story only about an African-American woman: it is a story about all women and their struggle to cling to their dreams, find their voices, and learn how to blossom.

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Evaluation: Tracey’s responses to the three novels are insightful and creative. I like her risk-taking, both in her analysis and in her writing. She uses metaphor effectively to harness meaning.

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# Gabriel Conroy's Epiphany in "The Dead"

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by Nanette Fabros  
Course: English 102  
Instructor: Barbara Hickey

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Assignment:

Write a scholarly, critical analysis of a literary work.  
Include citations of the primary source,  
and refer to at least eight secondary sources.

Since James Joyce had been brought up in Ireland, many of his works reflect the cultural repression by British rule (Schwarz 3). Many of James Joyce's stories are very similar to the trials he had come across in his own life. James Joyce was born on February 2, 1882, in Rathgar, a suburb outside Dublin (Schwarz 3). As Joyce grew older he believed that "Ireland should join Europe's intellectual and cultural community" (Schwarz 6). Much like Joyce, his character in "The Dead," Gabriel Conroy, was dissatisfied with Ireland's culture. "The Dead," a short story printed in the collection

*Dubliners* by James Joyce, was written in 1907 while he was in Paris (Schwarz 8). A few years prior to writing *Dubliners*, Joyce had met Nora Barnacle, whom he would marry officially in 1931 (Schwarz 7). Once again, Joyce's life was reflected in "The Dead." Nora Barnacle was from a small town in Ireland and had lost a young lover many years before meeting Joyce, which upset him (Ellman 91), just as Gabriel Conroy felt in the story. "The Dead" takes place at a party hosted by the Misses Morkans, two older ladies and their niece, which occurs annually between New Year's Eve and the feast of Epiphany (Schwarz 21 [note]). Gabriel Conroy, the two older Misses Morkan's nephew, is the story's protagonist, an egocentric literary writer whom the aunts adore. Because of Gabriel's pompous attitude and his preference for cultures other than his own, he kept his love for his wife and country at bay.

Gabriel looked down upon many of the people that surrounded him. His aunts, whose characters remained flat and static, had helped to place him on top, for "He was their favorite nephew, the son of their dead elder sister, Ellen..." (Joyce 25). The Misses Morkan chose only Gabriel to speak at their dinner, "as in years past." While Gabriel's wife, Gretta, speaks with the aunts about purposely not wearing goulashes in spite of Gabriel's wishes, the eldest aunt quickly changes the conversation in order not to upset Gabriel. Even Gabriel's dead mother had set him up for being pristine by giving him and his brother Constantine names of Christian religious figures. Adrienne Auslander comments on "Gabriel the angel of annunciation and Constantine, the first Christian emperor of Rome" (Auslander 179).

To Gabriel, many of the guests could not compare with the knowledge that he had. He looked down upon others as if they were ignorant. While the guests were at the party he mentions that "The indelicate clacking of the men's heels and the shuffling of their soles reminded him that their grade of culture differed from his" (Joyce 24). Because the people that are dancing are staying true to their cul-

ture, it has an annoying effect on Gabriel. Also, while Gabriel was looking over his notes for his speech, he seemed undecided about what to quote from, “for he feared they would be above the heads of his hearers” (Joyce 24). Gabriel worked for a pro-British newspaper and taught at a university, so he believed his knowledge was at a much higher level than anyone else’s.

Not only did Gabriel act condescendingly toward guests at the party, but he also treated his wife in the same manner. As Gabriel spoke to his aunts and cousin, Mary Jane Morkan, he commented that last year Gretta got a cold from taking a cab all the way home last year. If Gabriel did not protect Gretta from her own stupidity again, “she’d walk home in the snow if she were let” (Joyce 25). This shows that Gabriel feels he must look after his wife; otherwise she would not know how to take care of herself. He also insults his wife and says that they arrived late for the party because “my wife here takes three mortal hours to dress herself” (Joyce 22). However, Gretta retorts by telling the aunts Gabriel makes all of them wear goulashes, their son must lift weights, and the daughter has to eat stirabout (Sperber 65). In the beginning of the story Gabriel keeps Gretta’s feelings at bay. Gabriel mentions to Gretta that Miss Ivors invited them to go to the Aran Isles for a vacation; the Aran Isles are near to Gretta’s hometown of Galway on the west side of Ireland. Gretta gets very excited and says, “I’d love to see Galway again” (Joyce 33). Gabriel tells her that if she wants to go, she can go by herself.

The ideals that Gabriel has become challenged once Miss Ivors dances with Gabriel. In Celtic times women were looked upon respectfully for their excellence in art and were “representatives of the supernatural”; unfortunately the Catholic church kept women subjected (Burnsdale 42). The character of Miss Ivors feels very strong about Irish culture. Miss Ivors’ character is flat and remains static throughout the story. She believes in keeping the Irish traditions alive, which she displays by wearing a brooch with an Irish symbol on it. At the

time Miss Ivors and Gabriel were dancing she asks him, “Who is G.C.?” (Joyce 31); in other words, who is Gabriel Conroy? The reason she asked him who he was is that he writes for a pro-British newspaper that does not favor Irish independence. During the party Gabriel often looks outside at the snow and a park where the Duke of Wellington monument stands. He mentions how nice it would be out there. The Wellington monument is modeled after an Irishman who became an English hero (Schwarz 34 [note]). After they talk for a while she calls Gabriel a “West Briton,” which means he does not believe in Irish nationalism (Schwarz 31 [note]). After the talk with Miss Ivors, Gabriel is very distraught and says, “Of course the girl or woman, or whatever she was, was an enthusiast but there was a time for all things” (Joyce 33). As literary critic Suzette Henke points out, Gabriel “dismisses his opponent as a childish female whose audacious demeanor has so unsexed her that she seems to belong to a third unnamed gender” (Henke 43).

Once again in the story, Gabriel’s views were challenged by a young servant girl named Lily. Lily’s character was flat and static. The critic Bernard Benstock states that Lily’s name is an allusion of death, for lilies are used for funerals (148). When Gabriel arrived at the party, he had Lily hang up his things. While she put things away, Gabriel asked her if he would be going to her wedding soon. After Gabriel’s comment Lily snapped back, “The men that is now is only all palaver and what they can get out of you” (Joyce 23). It upset Lily that Gabriel thought “everyone is happily in love and on the way to the altar,” as critic Richard Ellman states (94). Joyce never pointed out directly why Lily may have been rude to Gabriel in the pantry. As literary critic Margot Norris concludes, she may have had terrible experiences with men, and that might be why she became so upset with Gabriel (Norris 200). To brush off the feelings of embarrassment Gabriel had felt, he gave Lily a shilling to cover up the unpleasantness.

Gabriel was not proud of his culture. He felt other countries had better things to offer. During

the confrontation with Miss Ivors, Gabriel is asked if he would like to go to the Aran Isles so he can keep up with the Irish language. Gabriel replies "if it comes to that, you know, Irish is not my language" (Joyce 32). Miss Ivors continues to prod him about being true to Irish customs, so Gabriel breaks down and exclaims, "O, to tell you the truth...I'm sick of my own country, sick of it!" (Joyce 24). Gabriel tried to cover up the embarrassment he felt for where Gretta came from. His mother used to call Gretta "country cute," implying that people from that part of the country are simple. Miss Ivors asked Gabriel if Gretta would like to go on the trip with her because Gretta was from there. Gabriel tells Miss Ivors that "Her people are" (Joyce 32), almost as if he is saying that her family is from there, but she is nothing like them.

Towards the middle of the story, Gabriel begins to be more appreciative of the things around him. During the party, Gabriel did not pay much attention to his hostesses. However, when Gabriel's aunt Julia finished singing "Arayed for the Bridal," he "applauded loudly with all the others at the close of the song" (Joyce 35). Gabriel even began to be more sensitive towards things of his own culture. On the way home, Miss O'Callaghan mentions, "you never cross O'Connell Bridge without seeing a white horse" (Joyce 52). Gabriel looks out the window and says, "I see a white man this time." The white man happened to be a statue of Daniel O'Connell, an Irish patriot (Schwarz 52 [note]).

After dinner was completed and people were getting ready to leave, Gabriel saw his wife in a way he had not noticed before. Mr. Bartel D'Arcy, a flat, static character, could be heard singing a song in the distance. As Gabriel looked up to the top of the stairs, he saw "A woman was standing near the top of the first flight, in the shadow" (Joyce 48); it was Gretta, and for the first time he looked at her in such a way that he did not realize it was she. Upon hearing the distant song, Gabriel discovers a fresh side of himself as he looks upon his wife with admiration (Brunsdale 89). Because Gabriel notices his wife as a beautiful sexual being, he feels that his

stay at the hotel, according to critic Vincent Pecora, is an "escape from normal life" (240). The life Gabriel and Gretta had been living was that of just a father and a mother. There were only a few times when they had romantic moments together. Gabriel wanted to "recall to her those moments, to make her forget the years of their dull existence together and remember only their moments of ecstasy" (Joyce 52).

Just as Gabriel is about to embrace his wife and become close to her, Gretta confides in him about a secret love named Michael Furey, a stock character, she had in the past. Unfortunately for Gabriel, he was not expecting the reaction. The reason Gretta was reminded of her past love was that Bartel D'Arcy, a tenor singer at the party, sang "The Lass of Aughrim," a song Michael used to sing. Gretta goes on to tell Gabriel of a love she had in Galway. They were both young and very much in love. At this point Gretta's character becomes round because her feelings and past life were revealed. Her character is not dynamic, however, because Gretta does not change by telling Gabriel. She went on to tell Gabriel that she was going to leave Galway and live in a convent in Dublin. At the time, Michael Furey was very ill and distraught over the news of Gretta leaving. During a rainstorm one night, Michael went to Dublin to sing to Gretta from outside a window. Soon after Michael sang to Gretta, he passed away. Gabriel asked Gretta what he died of, and she said he died for her. After learning of the experience Gretta had with another man prior to their marriage, he became upset and challenged. "A vague terror seized Gabriel at this answer as if, at that hour when he had hoped to triumph, some impalpable and vindictive being was coming against him" (Joyce 57).

By the end of the story, the theme was clear that in order to have a more meaningful life, individuals need to love the people around them and be more accepting of their own culture. According to critic Mitzi Brunsdale, for Gabriel to become a stronger, more passionate person, he must leave behind his shell of arrogance and open his mind to a better,

more fulfilling life (47). After Gabriel learned of Gretta's past love, he had an epiphany that proved how empty his life had been: "So she had had that romance in her life: a man had died for her sake. It hardly pained him now to think how poor a part he, her husband, had played in her life" (Joyce 58). Gabriel and his wife were only playing their parts as family; there was no real togetherness between the two of them. As he lay beside his wife, he thought of Michael Furey and knew that "He had never felt like that himself towards any woman but he knew that such a feeling must be love" (Joyce 59). In the last paragraph of the story, Gabriel says he must "journey westward." Some critics would think towards death, but according to Richard Ellman, Gretta's hometown of Connacht is in the West "where life had been lived simply and passionately" (96). It seems that Gabriel might want to become more connected to his wife and the culture around him.

There are several people in the story that have an impact on why Gabriel's views need to be broadened. The older ladies in the story, as Bernard Benstock points out, call attention to the fact that Gabriel's own life is what he makes of it (Benstock 149). The two aunts, Miss Julia and Miss Kate, lived lonely lives. The two ladies were single and lived with their niece, Miss Mary Jane. To occupy their time, "Julia, though she was quite grey, was still the leading soprano in Adam and Eve's, and Kate, being too feeble to go about much, gave music lessons to beginners on the old square piano in the back room" (Joyce 22). Because Gabriel's aunts had not lived a life with love and romance, Gabriel feared the same fate might fall upon himself. After Gretta had fallen asleep, Gabriel's mind wandered thinking about Aunt Julia and how his life too might come to a similar end:

He had caught that haggard look upon her face for a moment when she was singing "Arrayed for the Bridal." Soon, perhaps, he would be sitting in that same drawing-room, dressed in black, his silk hat on his

knees. The blinds would be drawn down and Aunt Kate would be sitting beside him, crying and blowing her nose and telling him how Julia had died. He would cast about in his mind for some words that might console her, and would find only lame and useless ones. Yes, yes: that would happen very soon. (Joyce 58)

The person who had the most effect on Gabriel's change of heart was Michael Furey. Just by looking at Gretta at the top of the stairs, he saw a side of his wife he never knew. Although he did not know Gretta was thinking of someone else as he was looking at her, he became attracted to the passion he saw in her. When Gabriel was looking at Gretta in their hotel room, he had a strong desire to have her and "be the master of her strange mood" (Joyce 54). By seeing how Michael could have such an effect on Gretta, Gabriel was faced with the fact that he has not had the same impact on anyone.

By having the story told by a limited omniscient narrator, there is much distance put between the characters, just as Gabriel put distance between himself and the people he came in contact with. The thoughts and feelings of Gabriel were mostly expressed throughout the story. When Gabriel was confronted with Miss Ivors, he felt that his job had no political influence on him because "literature is above politics" (Joyce 31). He felt that Mary Jane's playing of the piano was annoying because "the piece she was playing had no melody for him and he doubted whether it had any melody for the other listeners" (Joyce 29). While Gabriel was at the party he would sometimes tune out and think, "How cool it must be outside! How pleasant it would be to walk out alone, first along by the river and then through the park!" (Joyce 1). The park was, according to Daniel Schwarz, "where key members of British government in Ireland were assassinated" (Joyce 34 [note]). Again, it is shown that Gabriel did not fit in with the rest of the guests and longed to be away from them.

Due to the epiphany at the end of "The Dead," Gabriel was awakened to the fact that he had no deep attachments to his wife or culture. The arrogance and superiority that he had kept a space between himself and what he yearned to be near. To change his life, Gabriel had to look at what his life had been to see that his only hope for happiness was right there around him, his wife and culture.

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Evaluation: *In her clear and literate prose, Nanette explores Gabriel Conroy's epiphany in "The Dead." Her citations of the primary source make her analysis especially convincing.*

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# Debunking the Cinderella Myth

by Andrea S. Fudala

Course: Honors Literature 224

Instructor: Nancy L. Davis

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## Assignment:

Read the poem "Cinderella" by Anne Sexton.

First, analyze the poem on its own terms.

Next, analyze it in the context of a heroine we have discussed at length this semester.

Finally, write your own Cinderella poem as a response to one or both of the above or as a response to something comparable in your own life.

The poem "Cinderella" by Anne Sexton admonishes the female fantasy of male salvation through its use of tone. Sexton uses the medium of poetry to comment on the fantasy women hold, that they may find salvation through the clichéd "knight in shining armor." On the surface of "Cinderella," Sexton expresses a jazzy re-telling of this fairy tale, but she writes with such an obvious tongue-in-cheek tone it is apparent she is using subtle cynicism to say women living out the Cinderella story is strictly fantasy.

In the beginning of "Cinderella" Sexton describes "salvations" both genders desire, stories of those who beat all odds, the person who *is* that "one in a million." At the beginning of each stanza, Sexton paints the picture of the underdog, the "plumber with twelve children/who wins the Irish Sweepstakes. From toilets to riches" (Sexton 2-4). With each example, she ends with a poignant "That story" (5). The first four stanzas tell the stories of both men and women; they are short and represent an approximate quarter of the poem.

The rest of the poem is spent describing a modern, neo-Cinderella. Sexton writes of a Cinderella who "...slept on the sooty hearth each night and walked around looking like Al Jolson" (31-32). She twists the classic tale with lines like "Cinderella went to the tree at the grave and cried forth like a gospel singer: Mama! Mama! My turtledove, send me to the prince's ball!" (56-59). This tone is not that of the classic Cinderella fairy tale; instead of the "Wizard of Oz," she gave us "The Wiz." This is the first indication that there is more to this re-telling than meets the eye.

"Cinderella" still relies on the classic ending, with Cinderella and the prince living in eternal bliss. However, as Sexton describes it, "Cinderella and the prince lived, they say, happily ever after, like two dolls in a museum case never bothered by diapers or dust, never arguing over the timing of an egg, never telling the same story twice....Regular Bobbsey Twins. That story" (100-108). The tone of this ending explodes with sarcasm.

The satirical tone Sexton uses in "Cinderella" indicates her cynical view of this fantasy. She tells us this fairy tale remains true to the events in it, but she adds new spices, thereby not remaining true to the *essence* of it. The essence of Cinderella is that her prince saves her from a destitute existence, that she could not have done it without him, and that as his bride she will magically receive eternal happiness, without lifting a finger. The tone of Sexton expresses a "yeah, right" attitude, implying that the female fantasy of achieving salvation through a man is nothing but a fantasy, and not a good one at that.

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By comparing Sexton's Cinderella with the examples she gives in the beginning of the poem, she clearly says through tone that a man rescuing a woman from the cold, cruel world is as likely as Bob Dole winning the 1996 Presidential election.

"Cinderella" is the antithesis of Ada in Jane Campion's *The Piano*. Ada's existence may be comparable to Cinderella's in several ways: both had no power over their existence. However, Ada takes charge of her destiny as much as possible within the confines of her role as a woman in her culture. For instance, Ada is sent off to New Zealand with her illegitimate daughter in an arranged marriage against her will; it is clearly against her wishes because of her reaction toward her new husband. At her arrival she glares at him with defiance and holds her daughter in front as a shield, as if to warn him to not approach her.

In general terms, Ada is treated similarly to Cinderella by wicked stepsisters, though in Ada's case they are wicked step-peers. She is outcast because she is different. The wicked peers are shocked by Ada's impassioned strong-willed behavior, just as Cinderella's stepsisters and mother look for offensive behavior from her. For example, the wicked peers, two women, gossip about Ada's piano playing, saying they wish she would play the calm, reserved music they prefer. However, in reality, both Cinderella and Ada are outcast simply because they are different. Cinderella is beautiful and pure, Ada is mute yet impassioned.

Ultimately, the character of Ada serves as the antithesis to Cinderella because she takes charge of her love life. Instead of standing around singing "Someday My Prince Will Come," Ada takes charge of her own destiny. For instance, though she has no say about giving Baines piano lessons, she could have told her husband about Baines' sexual advances, which would have ended the lessons. But she does not do this, her first step in pursuing the affair with Baines. The piano lessons and Baines' advances become more sensual with each visit, until Ada finally makes love with Baines. Ada does not

simply consent to the sex; she is a willing partner. Later in *The Piano*, Ada manipulates her husband into thinking she has no feelings for Baines, and then directly "disobeys" him by sending Baines a message, declaring her love for him. Finally, though Ada has been severely abused by her husband, she gathers herself and her daughter and leaves her life in New Zealand to be with the man she truly loves.

Ada does not represent Cinderella; she is the polar opposite of Cinderella. Though societal influences and her lack of power parallel Cinderella's, she chooses to be the master of her own destiny. She not only does not waste time fantasizing about her prince coming for her, she actually pursues her prince, Baines. Cinderella symbolizes what women dream, escaping the burden of taking full responsibility for their own lives. Ada, however, is a modern symbol of a woman's inner strength—staying true to herself and making her dreams a reality.

The pining, whining, "woe, woe, I need a big, strong, strapping man to save me!" attitude of Cinderella makes me think of many women I know. In fact, I know more women who suffer from the Cinderella complex than not. Furthermore, I myself played the role of Cinderella as a teenager. I always thought that the "right guy" would make everything okay. Though I was not conscious of it, deep down I even believed I would not have to take any responsibility for my life, that when the right guy came along, I could just sit back and let him take the burden of responsibility off of me. The most unhealthy aspect about this is the amount of time I spent either by myself, or with like-minded girlfriends, literally fantasizing about my dream world with my "dream guy." How many hours, days, weeks, did I spend anticipating the Great Male Salvation? I knew it was just a matter of time before I could leave my miserable job and not worry about getting an education because "my man" would be there to take care of me. With this in mind, I wrote a very simple poem about a woman fantasizing about a date.



The Plumber

The small of her back screams  
as she tucks the sheet under the mattress.  
She's been cleaning rooms since 5 o'clock—  
only an hour to go.  
She's worked for this hotel  
coming up on two years now.  
She knows she does a good job  
though her boss once whispered "dumb bitch."

Tonight she's got a date—  
he's the plumber who fixed 224.  
He saw her coming out of 217  
and started talking.  
Next thing she knew he asked her  
to have dinner and "maybe see *The Birdcage*?"  
How friendly he was! Sure,  
he looked grubby, but he was working.

She pictured him dressed up for her;  
definitely a nice pullover.  
She wondered what kind of flowers  
he would bring. Maybe daisies!  
She knew he would drive a newer  
Ford or Honda.  
He probably owned a condo  
on the north side, no roommates.

He wanted nothing more  
than his perfect woman.  
He wanted to sweep her off her feet  
carry her into his solid world.  
He would propose quickly and sweetly—  
medium rock, white gold solitaire setting.

*There wouldn't be anything wrong with him.*

He wouldn't want her working as a maid anymore  
though she would passionately argue with him  
"But honey, it isn't fair for you to be our sole support!"  
yet he would insist.  
She would insist on him not moving to get even a  
Kleenex, since he worked.

*He would make sure she had nice clothes.*

Her mother would laugh with warmth  
when he teased her cooking at Thanksgiving.  
Her girlfriends would be jealous  
they would say he spoils her  
"like a friggin' queen, I swear to God!"  
but she would explain that he believed it the man's job  
to take care of her  
that she couldn't stop him if she tried.  
She had a good feeling about him.

She needed to hurry!  
She would do her nails.  
Also, she would roll her hair  
which takes an extra twenty minutes.  
She would make him wait for her—  
though not too long.  
And she would tell him she's nervous  
let him get the conversation going.  
She had a good feeling about tonight.

Her instincts told her to let him  
control the date, men like that.  
Definitely let him make the decision  
on the restaurant, but don't act like it!  
He needs to feel like  
she's contributing something.  
Talk about work, sports, his interests  
but throw in one other topic, like a fun bar.  
*Yeah, she had a really good feeling about him.*

Of course, she had never considered  
marrying a plumber before.  
She would feel kind of silly  
saying it to her friends, at first.  
She would just keep a straight face  
be a vicious bitch if they commented.  
To hell with them anyway!  
Plumbers make good money, don't they?

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Evaluation: *Andrea's choice and analysis of a fictional character and her professionally written poem are searing testimonies to the folly of the "Cinderella myth."*

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# An Environmental Evaluation of Some Belief Systems

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by *Laura Jane Gresey*  
Course: Philosophy 160  
Instructor: Jerome Stone

Assignment:

*Expound the environmental ethics of*

- 1) *monotheism,*
- 2) *Native Americans, and*
- 3) *Hua-yen Buddhism.*

*Use J. Baird Callicott's Earth's Insights among other sources. Make a final critical evaluation.*

## Part I. Western and Amerindian Religions.

A common theme today in the more thoughtful of our modern speakers via books, magazines, and TV is the necessity to take a long hard look at how we are using our earth. Some of the present and potential usage of our earthly heritage poses grave danger to the future of life as we know it. The possibility of nuclear poisoning, already realized at Chernobyl, hangs over all nations. Deforestation, the depletion of our ozone layer, farming methods which disperse and exhaust the soil, mining practices which leave poisonous slag heaps and earth unfit for agriculture and industrial waste polluting our air and water are some of the threats to the continued well-being of both plant and animal life.

J. Baird Callicott, in his *Earth's Insights*, argues the need for a global environmental ethic which could be accepted by all cultures and creeds to encourage the preservation of our planet's ecologies. His ethic would be expressed in scientific language, and built on environmentally conscious facets of present cultures. As much as possible, his ethic would include any helpful world views already existent. For this purpose, he explores the mainstream intellectual traditions of the world and also several lesser-known systems of belief. In each case, he tries to pinpoint the ideas which would lend themselves to the creation of an environmental ethic which would be acceptable to as broad a spectrum of people as possible.

In our own Western tradition, he explores the possibilities in the Judaic, Christian and Islamic religions. All are monotheistic, patriarchal structures with their roots in the Near East. Each overlaps the other in some respects; they are interrelated.

Although Judaism and Christianity have widely divergent viewpoints today, they have a common root in the *Old Testament's* book of *Genesis*. The creation story of *Genesis* is susceptible to various interpretations regarding the relationship between God, man, and nature set out in *Genesis 1: 26-28*:

<sup>26</sup>And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

<sup>27</sup>So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them.

<sup>28</sup>And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

The mastery or despotic interpretation of this passage pictures man as master and nature as slave. Man must "subdue" the earth and its living crea-

tures, which exist for man's use and may be used as he sees fit. In such a thought frame only man's welfare is to be considered with no thought for the good of the earth unless man is somehow threatened. Man is indeed threatened by misuse of the earth's resources today, but this viewpoint is generally a poor basis for an environmental ethic which would promote the welfare of all living species.

The citizenship interpretation swings in the other direction. It is based on the text of *Genesis 2: 18-19*:

<sup>18</sup>And the Lord God said, It is not good that man should be alone; I will make a help mate for him.

<sup>19</sup>And out of the ground, the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air.

Here the suggestion is that animals are the companions of man who is not radically different than they are. When man began to use plants and animals for his own purposes and to think of some as "good" and others as "bad," it changed the balance of nature. Assuring that God wished the order of nature to remain as He had created it, then the attempt to change or master it was an offense. *Genesis 6: 6-13* relates God's displeasure with the "corrupt" earth and His plan to destroy it by a great flood. Thus, man's anthropocentrism was the original sin and his "salvation would seem to lie in a return to innocence, nakedness, and reimmersion in nature" (Callicott 20). This is not a course which humanity as a whole is free to choose, even if anyone was so inclined.

The stewardship interpretation is not only favorable to the environment but has already been adopted as a working point of view by many. All creatures created by God are good and have intrinsic value. Man as the "image of God" has a moral duty to care for the earth and its life forms so that all may prosper. For those whose beliefs are rooted in Judaism or Christianity, this can be a powerful incentive to an earth healing policy.

The Quran of Islam can be interpreted to fit either the despotic or stewardship point of view.

An older religious system in the West is deduced

from artifacts found all over the eastern Mediterranean basin. Earth was the Mother, the Great Goddess, or to use one of her names, Gaia. From the remaining evidence it seems that in Neolithic times society may have been matriarchal or perhaps egalitarian. Based on the idea of the earth as a great maternal and productive system, some modernists have tried to develop an ecofeminist Goddess spirituality. Some have argued that Earth is a great metabolic organism, perhaps even with a soul. From such a point of view, it would be criminal to use earth's resources in any but a way that would best preserve it. Humanity itself might be considered as just another of earth's resources which could be kept or discarded as needed for the good of the earth organism.

Whatever intrinsic value humanity has, and we do exist as the current top of the evolutionary process, must be carefully assessed in regard not only to our own long term survival but also in terms of the survival of the supportive surroundings which the earth has provided.

Among the earlier peoples in North America, the Amerindians, there existed a great respect for the well-being of other life forms. In spite of the great diversity of the Amerindian groups and of their divergent biomes and languages, it is possible to see that certain general motifs are usually present. Their lifestyles precluded anything but an intimate association with nature, and they had a profound respect and identification with natural forms and conditions. Among the Oglala Sioux the spirits of animals were often venerated and called upon for power to aid humans (Walker 144, 157-161, 167-171). Natural forces such as wind, sun and moon were deified (Walker, 50-1), although there was considered to be an overall Great Spirit, Wankan Tankan, who was the original being and who encompassed all others in his own being in some mysterious fashion (Walker 73, 75). Natural sources were to be used as needed, but never squandered. A bluebird chief of a Hopi village said, "Our religious teachings are based upon the proper care of our land and the people who live upon it" (Joseph 53). The Amerindians

who lived in what is now New England believed that “everything in creation has a spirit to which the people were bound and with which they tried to live in harmony” (Josephy 207). The general religious outlook of the Amerindians lends itself to the formulation of an environmental ethic.

## Part II. Flowery Splendor and Physics

The Hua-Yen school of Buddhist philosophy is generally considered to represent the culmination of Buddhist teaching. It is a syncretic development, mainly by the Chinese philosophers Tu-Shun (557-640) and Fa-Tsang (643-712) based on the *Hua-Yen Ching* (Flowery Splendor Scripture).

Hua-Yen is a philosophy of totalistic organism. All principles and facts are an interpenetrating and mutually identified harmonious whole. But this whole, Totality, is also the Void or Emptiness—Sunyata. The non-obstruction of the Void permits the interpenetration of principle (li) and matter (ch’i). Because of non-obstruction, all things can be seen as simultaneously arising. And because all things are One, the Buddha-Mind, the idea of individual things is illusory. The realization of Totality/Void can only be truly achieved by reaching Buddhahood. However some understanding can be achieved of these principles, even if limited.

Emptiness/Void/Sunyata is the core of Buddhism. Zeroness would also be an appropriate way of thinking of Sunyata. Zero is a dynamic cipher which signifies nothing and yet is intrinsic to the working of mathematics. A valid idea of Sunyata is impossible since everything the human mind can experience or imagine necessarily exists; but if we really cannot say what Sunyata is, we can say something about what it is not. It is not absence and it is not annihilation.

Saying it is not absence signifies the kind of absence which means something is not there, i.e., my purse is empty. It is not annihilation in the sense that something once there is now non-existent, i.e., there is no longer a species of bird called dodos.

We can observe that all forms depend upon other forms for their coming into being and that everything is in a constant condition of change. Nothing has a nature of its own that is not dependent on its surroundings and structural factors. Everything changes every instant and has no reality other than as separate instantaneous bits, which can be divided over and again until there is nothing. Thus we could say that all things are empty, even though form seems to be present to human perception.

In his book, *The Buddhist Teaching of Totality*, Garma C. C. Chang uses the following illustration to help understand simultaneous mutual containment. Looking at a cup of water, we can have different conceptions of what it is. It can be regarded as a liquid, as a chemical formula, an aggregate of molecules and so on and on. If at one instant we think of the water as a means of quenching thirst, then we are not thinking of it as a chemical formula, a complex of electronic movement, etc. We must shift to another way of regarding the water, to shift realms, to understand the water from another viewpoint. This is the human way—one at a time, the shifting realm approach—which is anti or non simultaneous arising. If we imagine being able to see the water in all its possible identities at once, then we catch a glimmer of what simultaneous mutual arising means. Also, the water in the cup has no distinguishable parts to the naked eye. Each particle of water enters into and contains another. This is a pale illustration of simultaneous mutual penetration and simultaneous mutual containment.

Any one perceivable aspect of reality cannot exist by itself. The water in the cup would not exist without the chance meeting of hydrogen and oxygen atoms; it would not stay together without the containment of the cup; it would not be in the cup unless someone or something had placed it there and ad infinitum. All existence is part of Totality and each aspect of that existence depends on all the other aspects of that existence for its being and identity. There is no such thing as an isolated event.

The Buddhist version of the Hindu metaphor of

Indra's Net is to picture an infinite net with a bright jewel on each knot. Each jewel reflects all the other jewels to infinity. Consider each being/event in the universe as one of the jewels, reflecting and indistinguishable from all the other jewels. Because each jewel exists in the net of Emptiness/Sunyata there is no obstruction between them. When there is no obstruction there is simultaneous mutual identity. There is no duality, but Oneness/Totality. So the Buddhist scripture says:

If neither nature nor character exists, it becomes the realm of dharmas of principle. When both fact and character are clearly in existence without obstacle, it becomes the realm of the dharma of facts. When principle and fact are combined without obstacle, the two are at the same time one and one is at the same time two. (Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* 415)

(Dharma is defined as things, events, becoming, matter phenomena. It cannot be defined as things alone since its meaning is greater.)

A poetic way of describing mutual identity in the Hua-Yen is:

The infinite lands that cannot be described  
Gather in the tip of one hair [of the Buddha],  
They neither gather nor press  
Nor does the hair tip swell...  
In it all Lands remain  
Just as they were before...  
How these Lands enter the hair...  
The huge vastness of the Realm.

Wing-Tsit Chan, in his book *Religious Trends In Modern China*, points out that the Hua-Yen school is still exerting a powerful influence in modern Buddhist thinking (104, 108, 116, 118, 133-4). But the Hua-Yen ideas are having an influence in an area apart from philosophy. In his book, *The Tao of Physics*, Fritjof Capra finds parallels between modern physics and the Flowery Splendor Scripture (*the Avatamsaka Sutra* in Sanskrit).

In the quantum field theories describing the

forces energizing sub-atomic particles, the distinction between the particles and the space around them has lost its validity. The electromagnetic, gravitational, strong and weak nuclear forces, known as the quantum field or space-time continuum, have been recognized by physicists as more than the glue which hold together the matter of the universe. Rather these forces *are* space and *are* matter. Matter and space are indivisible and interrelated facets of a single whole, just as Hua-Yen postulates reality as Totality/Sunyata. Matter is one aspect of the whole; the infinitesimal and elusive quarks and their fancifully named by-blows, which are the most basic bits of matter we know, are conceived to be portions of the quantum field spinning at such incredible velocities that when united they appear to us to be solid.

The idea of inertia is thought to be linked to the interaction of matter with the rest of the space-time continuum of which it is a part, although there is yet no satisfactory theory of explanation.

The idea that material objects are an inseparable part of the universe and can only be understood from the viewpoint of their interaction with the rest of the universe is also applicable to the fields of astrophysics and cosmology. Astronomer Fred Hoyle says:

Present day developments in cosmology are coming to suggest rather insistently that everyday conditions could not persist but for the distant parts of the Universe, that all our ideas of space and geometry would become entirely invalid if the distant parts of the Universe were taken away. Our everyday experience even down to the smallest details seems to be so closely integrated to the grand-scale feature of the Universe that it is well nigh impossible to contemplate the two being separated. (Capra 209-10)

Just as the Sunyata is not ordinary emptiness but has an infinite creative potential, so the space-time continuum has the same qualities.

The *Treatise of The Golden Lion* says:

2. Distinguishing matter and Emptiness

It means that the character of the lion is unreal; there is only real gold. The lion is not existent, but the substance of the gold is not nonexistent. Therefore they are [separately] called matter and Emptiness. Furthermore, Emptiness has not character of its own; it shows itself by means of existence. Therefore they are [separately] called matter and Emptiness. (Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* 409)

If we assume that the Hua-Yen view does indeed mesh with the most advanced ideas of modern physics as Capra suggests, then we must consider how the Hua-Yen Buddhists claim to have received their information. The idea that a vision or experience of the basis of the universe can be achieved by enlightenment through meditation is beyond rational explanation. And if we again assume for a moment that this is possible, it raises fearsome questions as to what the human mind is and of what it is capable. The Buddhist claim that all is the Buddha-Mind and that our minds are the Buddha-Mind somehow seems more credible, even though still impossible to understand.

In the Christian tradition we can find an echo of a Buddhist idea. In 534 C.E. four treatises were written under the pseudonym of Denys the Areopagite. Denys describes God as Good, wise, fatherly, etc., but says that although something of God is revealed in these words, that is not God. If we really want to understand God, we must say that he is "God and "not-God," "good" and "not-good," in a process of both knowing and unknowing. This we begin by saying that:

of him there is understanding, reason, knowledge, touch, perception, imagination, name and many other things. But he is not understood, nothing can be said of him, he cannot be named. He is not one of the things that are. (Armstrong 127)

The difference between the Buddhist Sunyata and this Christian view of God is tremendous, but they do share a similar idea of being/non-being. Denys conceives that the divine power can be tapped: "leave behind all our conceptions of the divine... [to] call a halt to the activities of our minds," in order to achieve an ecstatic union with God (Armstrong 127). Can this union perhaps be the same state of being as that achieved by the Buddhist enlightenment? If so, adherents of the two religions have shared a common and transcendent experience with only the interpretation varying.

Callicott considers the Hua-Yen philosophy to be compatible with an environmental ethic, more so than our Western mind set. The Western way of distinguishing between good and evil tends to judge pain and death as bad, life and pleasure as good. This is not a yardstick which can or should be applied to nature. In the natural way decay and death are fully as important as life and pleasure. The Chinese idea of good and bad all being part of the whole, yin and yang, more directly corresponds to the way nature works.

The Hua-Yen view of interpenetration of every part to make a whole means that everything is of equal importance; all is of value and in the Buddhist way of thinking all sentient life is worthy of compassion.

### Part III. Conclusion

A global scientific ethic could well benefit from many aspects of all the systems on which we have touched in this paper. The Christian stewardship and the Amerindian's profound respect for and identification with the natural world are excellent attitudes upon which to build a way of thinking which would preserve our biosphere for all. The Hua-Yen/modern physics ideas of interrelatedness could provide a framework for consideration of all things as being part of and connected to every individual. If people are encouraged to understand that all parts, including ourselves, of the system of nature are interdependent, it is possible that they

would modify their behavior in the interest of self-preservation.

Because there has already been a decided swell of both physical and intellectual work done by many concerned individuals and groups towards improving our environmental practices, it seems to me entirely possible that environmental awareness could eventually permeate most of the residents of the Earth. It may take more time than we have before more destruction of the Earth occurs; only time will tell if we survive or not.

The very machines which are in large part responsible for much of the damage to the earth may in turn save us. Because information is so readily forwarded to just about everywhere in the earth in very little time, it is now possible to send the environmental message to thoughtful people all over the globe. And many people are already doing just that. The education of children has already begun and must continue if help can continue in the future.

When people become convinced of the rightness of some way of doing things, then an ethic is born. An ethic comes from the hearts of people, not from the intellectual community. Putting it into words is just one way of helping it along and refining it.

There have been seeds planted; let us hope they bear fruit.

Note to Dr. Stone:

Because J. Baird Callicott's purpose and mine do not always coincide, there is material in this paper which could well have been excluded. J. Baird Callicott is interested in developing a global environmental ethic. I am interested in expanding my knowledge of religious belief systems, comparing them and finding ideas to enrich my own belief system.

I have found this class to be extremely useful in my own quest. It has been a delightful experience and I am very grateful to you for being my teacher. Thank you.

I have amended our original master plan by reversing I. B. and I. C. because I wanted the Hua-Yen next to the global scientific for purposes of comparison.

- I. Choose four parts to expound from the book.
  - A. One from monotheism.
  - B. [One from Eastern thought.] One from indigenous.
  - C. [One from indigenous.] One from Eastern thought.
  - D. "Global scientific" ethic.
- II. Critical evaluation of one of above from class, using class readings.
- III. Overall Evaluation.

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Evaluation: *She followed the assignment accurately and made good use of sources. Her writing flowed and word choice was good. She showed independent evaluative judgment.*

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# From the Depths

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by Dee Hanson  
Course: English 101  
Instructor: Peter Sherer

Assignment:

*Write a personal experience essay which reveals a participant speaker who grows or experiences some epiphany. Restrict the focus to an incident. Present plenty of sensory detail.*

Suddenly the words "POLICE STATION" jumped out at me. Braking quickly, I swung through the drive and into an open parking space. With trembling hands, I turned off the engine and looked over at Cass. The neon sign, glowing harshly in the early evening dusk, cast an eerie shadow over Cassandra's already chalk-white face. Her lifeless eyes, lost in a private hell, stared straight ahead. Gently, I tucked a stray wisp of Cass's long chestnut hair from her face. No words were necessary. Mustering her courage, she nodded and together we got out of the car. As if seeking reassurance, she slipped her small cold hand into mine, and slowly we walked up the steps. Finally, after three long terrible years, Cass was ready. She had had enough, and somehow had found the strength to break away from him. But, before the healing could begin, Cass needed to tell her story. She had to tell

the officer waiting what Jordan had done to her—how he mentally and physically abused her. Without her statement, the police could not help us, and we desperately needed their help.

Together we walked through the large double doors, and in a blur, I saw uniforms, heard dispatches, and sensed an urgency and desperation that matched my own. As if dazed, Cass and I followed the overly-solicitous matron to a small, stark room. Here, Cassandra would again relive her nightmare. Mike, a social worker with the police, stood to greet us and, sensing Cass's hesitancy, smiled and offered words of encouragement. In a voice which rang of sincerity and inspired trust, he said, "Don't worry, Cassandra, the Lieutenant here is just going to take your statement. He's butted heads with Jordan in the past and knows how dangerous he can be." With just a hint of censorship, he went on to say, "It's time you trusted the police and our legal system. We're here to help you, and we want to make sure he can't hurt you or anyone else any more." Cass nodded, but I thought I caught a flicker in her eyes which seemed to say, "No, you just want to use me to get Jordan, and because I'm desperate, I'll help you. But I don't trust you."

The lieutenant, correctly interpreting my puzzled frown, abruptly cleared his voice. "That maggot's been in and out of trouble for years," he explained. "He's dangerous and has a history of violence, but so far he's succeeded in eluding us." In a gruff voice which betrayed his frustration, he told how the police had watched their cases crumble repeatedly as charges were dropped time and again. Looking straight at Cassandra he challenged her, "If we're finally going to nail this piece of slime, we need you to testify. If you're not willing to see this through, don't waste my time!"

Ground rules established, the recorder came out, and our ordeal began in earnest. I prayed that the lieutenant would be gentle with Cass, but his eyes revealed a certain hardness that had probably come from years of dealing with humanity's scum. Looking at those eyes, I knew he was aware of Cass's delicate state, but I also knew he was deter-



mined and would be relentless in his questioning. Nodding, he sat down in the only remaining chair and encouraged Cassandra to begin by telling him, in her own words, what had happened.

In a monotone, she told of the brutal attacks she had suffered from this man who was not a man, but an animal. When she began describing how he bullied, threatened and beat her, the lieutenant barked out, "Details, Cassandra, we need details! When did he beat you? Where were you? Who saw it?" Together Cass and I checked the notes we had so painfully put together the night before. Then, having supplied the missing details, the proceedings, which to my mind had become an interrogation, continued. The room, small before, became claustrophobic. Cass's voice took on a haunting melody that seemed to float above our heads, and I strained to hear her whispered words, "I tried so hard to do what he wanted so he wouldn't get mad at me. But he'd get mad anyway. And then he would start pushing me, calling me a bitch and a whore, accusing me of seeing other guys behind his back. But afterwards, he was sorry and he promised me he wouldn't do it again." Then, in a small meek voice, she added, "But he always did." Prompted by the lieutenant, she went on to tell how, yelling, he would wake her in the middle of the night and, accusing her of seeing other men behind his back, would smack her. "Just to teach me a lesson," she said. "Dates, Cassandra!" the lieutenant screamed. But this time we couldn't supply the needed dates. Faltering, then continuing in a wooden voice that carried no condemnation, Cass told how she was required to keep her head down when they were out. "Once," she said, "I forgot, and he grabbed my arm and twisted it so hard. Then, when we were alone, he yelled and yelled at me. He kept saying he would kill me if I ever looked at another guy." On and on, it went. I was numb with shock and marveled that neither of us could cry. Were we beyond all feeling?

As I listened to her story in horror, my eyes kept straying to the bruises on her arms and to the rough red ridges on her neck where he had attempted to

bite off her nose hadn't faded. For wasn't that just the kind of evidence the lieutenant needed?

Finally, Cass began showing emotion. Her voice was no longer a monotone, and the pitch ranged from high to a whisper I could barely hear. Fidgeting, she kept clenching and unclenching her fist; her lower lip trembled and I saw stark terror in her eyes. The lieutenant, long since abandoning any semblance of kindness, was like a vulture coming in for the kill. Cass had reached the part of her story that he needed to hear. She told how Jordan, in a demonic rage, had broken into my home, had pummeled her, had thrown her against the wall and, finally, as she begged for mercy, had held a gun to her head and threatened to pull the trigger. At this point, I was asked to leave the room. Even in her own misery, Cass knew I couldn't bear to hear of his final assault on her. Not able to talk, I hugged my baby and walked out into the darkness. Finally, the tears fell.

A few days later, Jordan was arrested. Within hours, he was out on bond. By using every delaying tactic available, his lawyer succeeded in getting him postponement after postponement. Finally, although we had a restraining order and had changed our phone number, he "got to" Cassandra and "persuaded" her not to testify. The District Attorney went ahead, but without Cassandra's testimony we lost the case.

On that gray cloudy day, with tears blurring my vision, I watched my daughter slip her tiny pale hand into his larger dark one, and with head bowed, walk slowly out of the courthouse and out of my life.

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Evaluation: *In this personal experience essay, Dee participates as a thoughtful, caring—yet pained and frightened—mother of a troubled adolescent. The writing is honest and mature. The speaker elicits the reader's interest and understanding.*

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# The Mirror of Murders: Robert Browning's Insight on Human Nature

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by *Jeanne Hanson*  
Course: Literature 232  
Instructor: Barbara Hickey

### Assignment:

*Write a scholarly, critical analysis of a literary work. Include citations of the primary source, and refer to at least eight secondary sources.*

Robert Browning was a lover. He is well-known for his effusive and tender writings to and from his poet-wife, but in addition he was a lover of ideas, history, philosophy, spiritual virtues, and human failings. He loved the inexplicability of nature and humanity because both contained the ceaseless struggle with the daily business of life and death. In writing of this struggle in his dramatic monologues, he allows readers to examine their empathy, ethics, and expectations through the eyes of atypical personalities. Thus, Browning's poetry intrigues the reader with the moral/immoral, rational/irrational, and passionate/heartless qualities readily identifiable in daily lives. Because Browning calls on the universality of inner conflicts, he often elicits sympathy for characters whose despicable acts would most certainly brand them as evil or insane, and leaves the reader wrestling to find normative judgments.

In many of his works not only judgment, but even the definition of morality is left to the reader's discretion. Clyde de L. Ryals notes that Browning is much more interested in both/and instead of

either/or, and so establishes in his writing a high level of irony (90). Contradictory statements or actions lure the reader into a realm of suspended judgment while listening to the character's dichotomous psyche. Two familiar poems which epitomize the masterful way in which Browning presents his subjects for moral scrutiny are "My Last Duchess" and "Porphyria's Lover."

"My Last Duchess" is based on stories Browning heard about Alfonso II, a Duke of Ferrara, Italy in the mid-1500s. His wife of three years, Lucrezia de'Medici, daughter of the Duke of Florence, was rumored to have died of poisoning at the age of seventeen. The Duke had her portrait painted, and Browning conjures a meeting with an envoy for a potential bride. Thus, the scene is set for this exquisitely crafted dramatic monologue.

Written in iambic pentameter with couplets rhyming in an aabbcc pattern, Browning creates a very formal structure. Yet through the use of syntactical pauses in mid-line (caesura) and the repeated use of enjambment, the rhymes are barely noticeable and the feeling is open and flowing. The use of contractions such as *that's*, *who'd*, and *will't* are also typical of Browning's unconventional, but exact, style. Lois Marchino suggests that the syntax itself creates tension, heightening the horrors revealed by the Duke even as he is trying to maintain a casual air with his guest (1444). Condensed sentences and dynamic wording are most evident at the end of the poem when the Duke has revealed too much and is himself, perhaps, a bit tense:

This grew; I gave commands;  
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands  
As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet  
The company below then. (lines 45-48)

Critics disagree as to whether "I gave commands/ Then all smiles stopped together" suggests that the Duke's involvement with her death was common knowledge, or whether he was being candid in his method of justice towards disrespectful wives, or whether he was so carried away in telling of her indiscretions that he confessed more than was

intended. Norman Crowell offers the latter as the most plausible explanation, arguing that if the Duke's murderous nature were public knowledge, or if he were clarifying the punishment for bad behavior, he would hardly be in a position to entice future brides or enchant their agents (59). Taking Crowell's view also allows the reader to feel the mounting jealousy and frustration spilling out of the Duke as he complains that the Duchess had

A heart – how shall I say? – too soon made glad,  
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er  
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.  
Sir, 'twas all one! (lines 22-25)

Marchino feels that the dashes are feigned hesitations designed by the Duke to present a thoughtful, honest demeanor (1444). They might also indicate attempts by the Duke to control his jealous confessions. After reciting a litany of her delights which the Duke finds utterly pedestrian, he reveals his special irritation: "she ranked/ My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name/ With anybody's gift" (lines 32-34). This is the point of no return. The Duke's arrogance and misguided logic lead him to justify his heinous crime as the only reasonable solution to his wife's indiscriminate behavior. In the end his arrogance betrays him as he explains to the envoy why he never asked the Duchess to temper her *joie de vivre*. He says:

Who'd stoop to blame  
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill  
In speech—(which I have not)—to make your will  
Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this  
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,  
Or there exceed the mark...." (lines 34-39)

Browning's use of irony creates an unreliable, untrustworthy image of the speaker, which is typical in dramatic monologues. The reader at this point knows much more about the Duke's personality than he intended to reveal; he is a good speaker, he intends to make his will known, and he is disgusted with his wife's joyful, unfettered, gracious behavior

towards anyone else. The Duke concludes his defense with this ironic declaration: "...E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose/Never to stoop" (lines 42-43)—he, who stooped low enough to murder his wife.

A cursory mention of the dowry suggests that the Duke expects the envoy to give a favorable report, arrogantly dismissing the possibility of a more modest wedding gift. He repeats that his "object" is the young woman, not the dowry, hinting perhaps that he ranked this new Duchess with objects in his art collection—something to possess. The ultimate show of arrogance comes in the closing lines when the Duke points out a prized statue: "Notice Neptune, though,/ Taming a sea horse, thought a rarity,/ Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!" (lines 54-56).

Neptune is the Duke's idea of the perfect God—someone who can tame wild, rare, beautiful things and bend them to his will. The Duke assigns himself to this godlike role and takes his duties seriously. Geoffrey Bullough suggests that Browning admired men who employed all of their human faculties, and created characters who fully displayed their essential natures, even if criminal and violent (169). Browning demonstrates the Duke's full authority through the commands he gives. The Duke's control begins by showing the envoy the painting he commissioned and bidding him to sit and look at her, explaining that only the Duke himself draws the curtain aside. The middle of the poem (lines 13 to 45), which deals chiefly with the Duchess' smile, blushing cheek, and ready joy, highlights the only things over which the Duke has no control. But then he "gave commands" and, like the god Neptune, tamed the rare creature. In his twisted view of life, possession is defined as love and power has no relationship to morality. Thus he is doomed to live without the faintest notion of love, and his soul's journey toward truth is as frozen as the smile in the painting. Yet the Duke is satisfied with the situation for his power and control have been restored and now "There she stands/ As if alive" (lines 46-47). His impossible reality made him more tragic than contemptible.

Robert Langbaum points out that Browning is brilliant in getting the reader to suspend judgment regarding the Duke's sinister deed and even elicit a degree of sympathy as the Duke reveals more and more of his insecure nature (76). This does not mean that Browning has no morals or does not promote Victorian Christian ideology. It only means that because he has mastered the art of dramatic monologue, Browning can manipulate the reader's response to the speaker even to the point of having fleeting empathy with a cold-blooded murderer.

This is evident again in "Porphyria's Lover," another dramatic monologue in which the speaker has strangled his lover with her own hair because he wants to capture a moment of ecstasy. Many critics classify this brief, sixty-line poem, written in rhyming iambic tetrameter (ababb), as a purely sexual murder. Norton Crowell, on the other hand, argues that the lovers are not sexual at all but are both physically and psychically impotent and find a perverted sense of gratification in their psychically sick relationship (80-83). He cites:

Murmuring how she loved me—she  
Too weak, for all her heart's endeavor,  
To set its struggling passion free  
From pride, and vainer ties dis sever,  
And give herself to me forever (lines 20-25)

as evidence that they did not actually engage in sex.

Todd K. Bender takes a different view, citing Browning's fascination with contradictions of human nature, where a situation forces an inner impulse contrary to expected behavior (341). While in "My Last Duchess" the Duke's behavior is fairly normal, Porphyria's lover is quite peculiar throughout the poem. The first four lines describe a storm so violent that "It tore the elm-tops down for spite,/ And did its worst to vex the lake" (lines 3-4). Because in a dramatic monologue the reader sees everything from the speaker's vantage point, the speaker's emotions are woven into the words. The speaker immediately reveals his own anger by transferring qualities of spite and vexation onto

nature. He explains that he "listened with heart fit to break" (line 5) cueing the reader that love is his anguish. But then:

When glided in Porphyria; straight  
She shut the cold out and the storm,  
And kneeled and made the cheerless grate  
Blaze up, and all the cottage warm:  
Which done, she rose, and from her form  
Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl,  
And laid her soiled gloves by, untied  
Her hat and let the damp hair fall,  
And last, she sat down by my side  
And called me. (lines 6-15)

Here is a woman who can shut out natural storms as well as emotional cold. She stokes the fire, peels off one layer of clothing and lets her hair down, which was certainly a seductive act for a Victorian woman; then she sits beside her lover. All should be well, but he does not answer her call. Undaunted, she puts his arm around her waist, bares her shoulder and lays his head on it, then drapes her hair over his head. She has "come through wind and rain" (line 30), done every bit of action and speaking, by the lover's own account, and yet he deems her "Too weak/ ...To set [her heart's] struggling passion free" (lines 22-23), while he has not done so much as tended the fire, greeted her arrival, helped her with her coat, nor even responded to her affections. While Crowell uses this to state a case for the speaker's impotence, it can also be argued that he is filled with latent fury and is using every ounce of energy to maintain his composure. Thus, when Porphyria looks at him "happy and proud," he says:

at last I knew  
Porphyria worshiped me: surprise  
Made my heart swell, and still it grew  
While I debated what to do.  
That moment she was mine, mine fair,  
Perfectly pure and good.... (lines 32-37)

All of the energy is released towards the single end of holding the moment. She empowers him with her love, and he will sacrifice everything to feel powerful and adored. He loves the feeling of being worshiped and of having all of her attentions on him. Here we see the parallels between the lover and the Duke; both men demand the undivided attention and affection of their women, confuse possession with love, feel justified in their actions, and are satisfied with the outcomes. Porphyria and the Duchess also parallel one another, sharing a light-hearted love of life and a naïve blindness to their men's deadly obsession. They represent purity, honesty, and true love, which both men reject in favor of egotistical greed and self-satisfaction.

Like the Duke, the lover assumes a godlike role by ending a life and by thinking that he knows what is best for all. He sees Porphyria as she was in life, laughing eyes, blushing cheeks, and her "smiling rosy little head,/ So glad it has its utmost will" (lines 52-53). He grants what he perceives to be her wish—to give herself to him forever—and so is justified in the means to that end. As in "My Last Duchess," Browning's last thought is of the Divine: "And yet God has not said a word!" Critics disagree about the implications of this invocation. Bender says that the very mention of God admits to subconscious guilt (338), while Crowell feels that the speaker is truly surprised that God has not thanked him for being an instrument of His will—"the ultimate expression of hubris" (83). The latter supports the idea of the speaker's identification with God.

Critics and casual readers have suspected Browning of a malevolent attitude towards women stemming from his domineering mother, and they point to these murderous poems as a kind of misogynistic revenge (Chandler 83). But Michael Mason contends that Browning sought to demonstrate that even homicide seems forgivable if the reader identifies with the impulses inducing it, calling into question moral and rational judgments (254). Moreover, just as "My Last Duchess" was inspired by a painting Browning saw while in Italy,

"Porphyria's Lover" was most likely inspired by an excerpt from a transcript of a diary of a German priest who wrote of a young man awaiting execution for murdering his mistress. The section reads:

Do you think there was no pleasure in murdering her? I grasped her by that radiant, that golden hair, I bared those snow-white breasts,—I dragged her sweet body towards me and stabbed her...through her heart. She never so much as gave one shriek,—for she knew that my wrath was just, and that I did right to murder her who would have forsaken her lover in his insanity. I saw the dim blue eyes beneath the half-closed lids,—that face so changeful in its living beauty was now fixed as ice, and the balmy breath came from her sweet lips no more. My joy, my happiness, was perfect. (Mason 255-56)

Clearly, Browning's own obsession is in dissecting motives, perspectives, and personalities of real or composite individuals which he then, with uncommon ingenuity, distills into his characters. Psychological studies were no doubt part of Browning's reading and social conversation, and the 1830s concept of *monomania* was likely discussed. According to Mason, monomania was defined as an intellectual disorder in which sufferers are perverted regarding only one subject and are otherwise rational. They hold false assumptions and reach demented conclusions about the specific object but do not recognize their misperceptions even in later review of the events (260). Certainly the Duke and Porphyria's lover could have been diagnosed with this illness.

Browning did not want to examine his own feelings publicly, however, perhaps because he was so devastated by the harsh review of *Pauline*, a painfully self-conscious poem written in youth. Critics like Bender suggest that Browning subsequently hid behind the masks of his characters in the dramatic monologue poems (336). Philip Drew refutes that theory based on Browning's mastery of dramatic monologue, a form which, when employed by him, provides a flexible range of sub-

jects, situations, and sensibilities. Through it he is able to make the past come alive in his characters, use detached irony to a variety of ends, and "involve the reader in the process of discriminating truth from falsehood, of discovering the answer to Browning's constant question—"What say you to the right and wrong of that?" (362). A poet of such caliber has no need to hide anything.

Robert Brainard Pearsall says that Browning's tastes tended toward agony of the physical and spiritual, and that violence played a major role (49). Closer to the mark is that Browning was fascinated with the passionate motivations of people from all walks of life. Readers see the world through the eyes of Browning's dramatic characters, who unconsciously and subtly reveal their impulses for power, position, or acceptance. In the end it is the reader's own burden that Browning exposes as one struggles to define morality and make decisive judgments about the speakers. Perhaps, then, the mark of a truly great artist is the ability to create in his or her work a mirror in which to see our own truth.

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Evaluation: *Like Robert Browning's dramatic monologues, Jeanne's research paper is "exquisitely crafted." Her dazzling insight and sophisticated style allow her "to create in... her work a mirror in which to see our own truth."*

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# Rape Sentencing: An Illusion of Justice

by Jessica Huth  
Course: English 101  
Instructor: Andrew Wilson

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## Assignment:

*Write a persuasive essay in which you argue for or against a law, policy, viewpoint, or idea. Be sure to incorporate at least two outside sources (preferably print sources) into your paper.*

Suppose that, like millions of others in our country today, you have a close relationship with a rape victim. She could be your sister, your best friend, your girlfriend, or even your mother. The assault happened a little over five years ago when she was attacked, dragged to a van, and violently raped. After she underwent hours of examinations and questioning, her attacker was picked up and arrested. She was appointed an attorney by the state, and the man was put on trial. After many long months of time spent in court, he was convicted and given a shockingly short minimum sentence of four years in prison. You and she were relieved but outraged by the small punishment for such a terrible crime. For the past four years, she has been undergoing therapy to help her to deal with the aftermath of the assault. She had been slowly improving until

recently, when she realized that the rapist would very soon be a free man, a man she was sure would come after her for revenge. This man who had stolen her confidence and her pride would shortly be free to rape again, while she was still trapped in her world of fear, anxiety and terror. It is unbearable to see this woman you care about so much so deathly afraid of this criminal who will soon be again walking your town's streets. She will only feel safe and alive again with the knowledge that he is secured and behind bars.

Must victims of rape be forced to worry and fear this way? Must their lives always be gripped by the fear of another attack? Is this the fair and just work of our celebrated judicial system? The answer to all these questions is no. This cycle of repeated victimization is the sickening reality of rape legislation in our country today. I believe that swift and steady change must be made to implement mandatory life sentences, without chance of parole, for all convicted rapists.

Because the subjects of rape and altering state legislation are politically delicate and controversial, the arguments opposing life sentencing for rapists must be closely examined. I believe that this examination will only help to solidify the case in favor of the new legislation.

The first argument of the opposition would most likely be that to keep rape convicts imprisoned for the remainder of their lives would be a waste of taxpayers' hard-earned money. Taxes would have to be raised drastically to compensate for the additional costs of prisoner upkeep. This statement is untrue. Most sex offenders are put into some form of a treatment program. These programs cost taxpayers enormous amounts of money. In Washington, an institutionalized sex offender costs the state \$100,000 annually (Glazer 40). In contrast, the average cost of imprisoning a convict in a normal state prison is only \$19,000 a year (Gest 24). The institutionalized rape convict costs the taxpayers over five times as much as the imprisoned one. For what it would cost to institutionalize a convict for ten years, he could be imprisoned for fifty

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years. I do not believe that convicted rapists deserve pampering and rehabilitation when they could be simply imprisoned for a cost of five times less.

A second and related argument may be that prisons are meant to help not hurt people. Criminals have the right to treatment and therapy, despite the cost being much higher than that of regular imprisonment. This is a valid argument, but one that would only be made by a person uninformed as to the success of such treatments. Sex offender treatment programs have been studied again and again, and each time the findings are the same. Seattle Psychiatrist James D. Readon states that, "There is no scientifically based effective treatment for sex offenders. We couldn't find any research [showing] that treating is any more effective than incarcerating" (Glazer 36). In addition, a 1985 study of a typical sex offender treatment program found that the recidivism rate of offenders in treatment was about the same as that for offenders imprisoned without treatment (Glazer 36). Since the treatment methods in use today have been proven ineffective in reducing repeat offenses, I can see no reason to keep these treatment programs in operation. The extra \$81,000 annual cost per convict in treatment might be used to keep the offender behind prison bars for the remainder of his life.

Beyond the question of cost, one who has never lived through the ordeal of rape may claim that it is not a serious enough offense to call for the punishment of life-imprisonment. One may say that it is not as terrible as drug trafficking or murder and therefore does not call for as severe a sentence. In my opinion, rape is a crime of violation of the most intimate, personal and offensive kind. It is a different crime than murder but no less savage in its intent and destructiveness. Though no actual death occurs in rape, a victim's self-esteem, confidence, and personality are slain. One victim stated that, "The punishment, shame and humiliation I felt in the months afterward were worse than the rape itself" (Madigan and Gamble 59). Psychologists and rape experts Lee Madigan and Nancy Gamble insist:

An unexpected touch on her shoulder prompts a startled reflex, and the woman braces for an assault and possible death. The rape survivor cannot escape from her own mind, which is now, as in the event itself, under the control of the rapist. Once pleasurable activities are forgotten as though they existed in another lifetime. She withdraws from herself and is alone in a cell with no walls. She is held prisoner by someone unseen for months, maybe years. The terror may never leave. Certainly, she will never be the same. (5)

A final argument of the opposition may be that chemical castration, not imprisonment, is the appropriate punishment for rapists. Even though this may seem the perfect pay-back for a sex offender, I argue that, though logical and preventative, it allows the criminal to still be released back into society without being truly punished. Even after the loss of his sexual urges, he is free to live his life as an otherwise normal, innocent person. A rapist is far from innocent, with or without his sexuality. While his victim lives in remembrance of his attack and is unable to sleep in fear of another, he will be out and about, and sleeping soundly. He should be torn from his normal life as he tore his victim from hers. He should then be put behind bars and made to stay there for the rest of his days.

Recent rape statistics indicate American society's frightening acceptance of forced sexual relations. Every hour sixteen rapes are attempted, and ten women are raped (Madigan and Gamble 1). This translates into 240 women raped a day and 87,000 women raped every year in our country. The U.S. rape rate is thirteen times that of England and twenty times that of Japan (Madigan and Gamble 118). With rape recidivism rates estimated at up to 35%, thousands of rapes a year are committed by previously convicted sex offenders (Glazer 30).



Thousands of rapes could be avoided if rapists were kept in prison after their first offense. Many states are enacting "three strikes and you're out legislation." After three convictions, the criminal is sentenced to mandatory life imprisonment. Why not one strike legislation? Why should we continue to release known, dangerous sex offenders and say we can do nothing until they commit yet another crime? The bottom line is that there is no reason.

"The law can bind us to the past or help push us into the future" (Estrich 101). The past was the time when we chose to accept the fact that ours is the most sexually dangerous country in the world. The future is the time when we can all walk our streets feeling safe and confident in our legal system. Mandatory life imprisonment for rapists can help push us into this bright future. If you believe in keeping rapists behind bars, write to your congressmen demanding changes in rape law. Only with your help can we put an end to this age of needless strife and suffering.

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Evaluation: *Jessica's essay on stricter punishment for rapists is written with an excellent balance of passion and control. Her paper is well-organized, extremely well-written, and informative. Jessica also understands how to utilize outside sources without permitting her own voice to fade into oblivion.*

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# The Lost Episode from Albert Camus's *The Stranger*

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by Kathy Kleiva  
Course: English 102  
Instructor: Jack Dodds

Assignment:

*Dramatize an episode from a literary work that the author, for whatever reason, had chosen not to present. Use this episode to present your understanding of character, theme, and style.*

*(Kathy has chosen to present the hours between the time that M. Meursault, the protagonist of Albert Camus's short novel, *The Stranger*, kills a man for no clear reason and the arrival of the police to place him under arrest.)*

The sun beat down on the Arab, lying motionless in the sand. Blood oozed from his wounds, and soon I couldn't tell where the blood ended and the red-hot sand began. I stood there momentarily, listening to the waves lapping on the rocks nearby. The glare of the sun on the white sand was unbearable, and my eyes closed to shut it out. When I opened them, the steamer had moved imperceptibly along the horizon.

I walked along the water's edge in the direction of the wooden bungalow where Raymond, Masson, and the woman would be. The waves beckoned, and the chill of the water promised relief from the heat of the afternoon sun. I slowly walked out into the surf, and

the icy water cooled my body. I swam out deep, deeper than before, and thought of Marie back at the house.

"The Arab is dead," I said to Raymond when I got back to the bungalow. I stood at the bottom of the wooden stairs waiting for the others and watched as the sweltering sun slowly settled in the distance. "How did it happen?" Raymond quizzed. "Did you let him have it?" he continued. Marie came out and I told her what I had done. "Are you all right?" she asked. "What will happen now?" I was somewhat annoyed at their questions. I was tired, and I wanted to go home. It was done. It seemed unimportant. We're all going to die; we just don't know how or when.

We walked back to the bus stop and stood in silence as we waited for our ride. After about 20 minutes, the bus appeared, and we boarded for the ride back to the city. Evening had settled in, and the sound of the twilight lulled me to sleep. I awoke as the bus pulled up to our stop. I heard the dogs barking and looked to see if Salamano was out searching for his dog. I didn't see him. Perhaps the dog had returned by now.

We went to Celeste's for dinner, drank some wine, and ate our dinner in silence. I wanted to go home alone that evening, and I said my goodbyes at Celeste's. Marie looked concerned, but I didn't care. Everything was all right. Nothing had changed.

I slept fitfully. Thoughts of the Arab lapped through my mind like the waves of the ocean. I don't know if it was the noise in the street or the bright red sun of the new day, but I awoke with a start. The pounding in my head wouldn't stop, and I belatedly realized that it was someone knocking at my door. It was dawn, and the policemen were here to take me to the station.

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Evaluation: *Kathy has done an outstanding job of imagining how unaffected M. Meursault must have been by his crime. She dramatizes how attenuated is his sense of social morality and, at the same time, how keen is his appreciation of concrete, sensory experience. She understands Meursault perfectly.*

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# Hawthorne's True Intent in "The Birthmark" and "Rappaccini's Daughter"

by *Kristin M. Kolesiak*

Course: English 102

Instructor: Nancy L. Davis

Assignment:

*Write a literary research paper.*

*Thesis:* Through an analysis of the main symbol in "The Birthmark" and the characters and their related symbols in "Rappaccini's Daughter", Hawthorne's moral intent becomes strikingly obvious.

## I. "The Birthmark"

- A. Explanation of unpardonable sin
- B. Summary of "The Birthmark"
- C. Symbolism in "The Birthmark"
  - 1. Absolute perfection
  - 2. Fatal flaw everyone has
    - a. irony
  - 3. Men's control over women
    - a. Aminadab's role in the story

## II. "Rappaccini's Daughter"

- A. Beatrice
  - 1. Flower, fountain, shrub
  - 2. isolation
- B. Rappaccini
  - 1. His motives
- C. Baglioni
  - 1. Involvement in death of Beatrice
- D. Tie in of four characters/summary
  - 1. Sin/imperfections etc. of each

## III. Parallels between stories

- A. Aylmer/Rappaccini
  - 1. Their faults
  - 2. Implications on a social level
- B. Georgiana/Beatrice
  - 1. Implications on a social level
- C. "The Birthmark"/"Rappaccini's Daughter"
  - 1. Plot parallels
  - 2. Brief summary of social implications

Since his death in 1864, Nathaniel Hawthorne has held a sure place as one of our most significant writers. He is widely regarded as a master of symbolism and allegory, so it is to be expected that his tales have much more meaning when they are analyzed outside the boundaries of the text. In reality, his are stories with "satirical intent...distinctly directed toward American nineteenth-century aspects of the general human predicament" (Doubleday 325). Two of his better known Gothic tales, "The Birthmark" and "Rappaccini's Daughter," published in 1846, deal specifically with Hawthorne's views of humanity. In each of these stories he "presents the opposition of the love of science to human love" (Woodberry 140). A result of this opposing love is committing what Hawthorne termed an unpardonable sin. Each of these stories have two dominating themes, both of which are directly related to this unpardonable sin. One theme is that his moral idea "...is to the effect that imperfection belongs to mortal life, and if it is removed wholly mortality must go with it; and the lesson is of the acceptance of imperfection...." His other more general, yet equally important theme, is the consequence of sin for human lives (Matthiessen 191).

Hawthorne's definition of the unpardonable sin is not as straightforward as some may think. The actual sin is allowing the love of science to prevail over the love of another person. In and of itself, the love of science is neither good nor bad. However, in each of his stories, Hawthorne presents us with characters who, because of their scientific knowledge, are driven to control everything they can and ultimately end up killing those they supposedly love. Really what he is suggesting here is that when knowledge and emotions are rivaled, the sin, and therefore the consequences, are inevitable. In other words, one cannot balance the love of science and love of people without committing the unpardonable sin, and one cannot commit this sin without drastic consequences. As each of the stories are examined, Hawthorne's criticism of humanity and the irony with which it is associated becomes apparent. Through an analysis of the main symbol

in "The Birthmark" and of the characters and their related symbols in "Rappaccini's Daughter," Hawthorne's moral intent, to portray the evils of man and society as he saw it, becomes strikingly obvious.

"The Birthmark" is the story of a scientist, Aylmer, and his near perfect wife, Georgiana. Aylmer, being the scientist he is, develops an incredible love of science, which (inevitably) overpowers his love for his wife, and ultimately destroys Georgiana, who finally dies as a result of Aylmer's obsession with removing her crimson-colored, hand-shaped birthmark.

The most essential part to this story (and every other Hawthorne work) is the symbolism. The chief symbol in "The Birthmark" is Georgiana's own birthmark, in the shape of "the crimson hand" (Hawthorne, "The Birthmark" 181). The crimson hand, however, is not necessarily symbolic of only one thing. It could symbolize the site of absolute perfection, the one fatal flaw everyone has, or the amount of control men had.

We find out later in the story that Aylmer's laboratory was previously the site of several failures for him, not successes. When looking through his office one day, Georgiana finds a book in which Aylmer "had recorded every experiment of his scientific career...and its final success or failure" (187). She "could not but observe that his most splendid successes were almost invariably failures, if compared with the ideal at which he aimed" (187). Georgiana's crimson hand, then, presents "Aylmer with a chance both to right these professional wrongs and, in doing so, to establish Georgiana as the 'perfection' of hearth and home" (Weinstein 48). Aside from just making his wife prettier, Aylmer, if successful, would also be compensating for past failures. In this way, the birthmark is clearly symbolic of absolute perfection: Georgiana is now perfect, and so is Aylmer's inability to accept others' flaws, in particular, Georgiana's.

Woodberry once said that a "lesson [of "The Birthmark"] is of the acceptance of imperfection..."—a lesson which Aylmer never learned (140).

But what is Hawthorne really trying to say? According to Emerson, one of the things he tried to convey was "...that society gains nothing whilst a man, not himself renovated, attempts to renovate things around him" and that man cannot accept this as being true (qtd. in Doubleday 336). This is primarily what happens in "The Birthmark": Aylmer becomes obsessed with removing what he felt was a "fatal flaw of humanity which Nature, in one shape or another, stamps ineffaceably on all her productions..." never looks into himself to fix his own fatal flaws, and ends up erasing the mimic hand and killing his wife in the process (Hawthorne 179). Hawthorne also in this way brings into the story a touch of irony. It is ironic that Aylmer is the one who has sinned, not Georgiana, yet Georgiana is the one directly affected by this, not Aylmer. In truth, though, Aylmer's "quest for more than mortal beauty ironically releases the mortal flaws" of his own character (Rucker 448). The fatal flaw is on Georgiana's face, but Aylmer is the one obsessed with it, although he never acknowledges any of his own flaws—this in itself is Aylmer's flaw (Lang 96).

In order for Aylmer to fully control Georgiana, he must be able to control the appearance of the mark itself (representing control over nature), as well as Georgiana's action and her power. This is where the importance of Aminadab, Aylmer's underworker for his entire scientific career, comes into play. His consistent replies of "Yes, master" to Aylmer suggest to one critic that he represents "the unquestioning acceptance of authoritarianism" (Newman 35). He also represents, to Aylmer, an "ideal of immobility, stability, and submissiveness.... Georgiana proves far more difficult to manage than the worker [Aminadab]. Still, it is not Georgiana who is resistant to Aylmer's scientific manipulations, but rather her birthmark" (Weinstein 52). Really, the desire to erase the mimic hand and its reappearance becomes somewhat of a circulatory system between Aylmer and Georgiana. This circulatory system begins with a series of spatial violations. They begin when Georgiana is helped over "the threshold of the laboratory," and

continue on to when "Aylmer converted those somber rooms [of his laboratory] into a series of beautiful apartments" for Georgiana (Hawthorne, "The Birthmark" 189). Their separate worlds become one when, on another instant, Aylmer realizes Georgiana's presence in his lab. He "rushed toward her, and seized her arm with a gripe [sic] that left the print of his fingers upon it" (189). Clearly, Aylmer is not comfortable with Georgiana in his laboratory. At this point, the "crimson hand" had "taken a pretty firm hold of his own fancy," indicating his dislike of the hold Georgiana's mark had on him (191). Also at this point Aylmer "observes in Georgiana's birthmark the thematic of circulation" (Weinstein 50). He now unconsciously feels that his own self will be perfected through a "perpetual state of circulation"—in other words, as Aylmer makes Georgiana more perfect (by removing the mark), he himself becomes more perfect (50). As Weinstein puts it:

Aylmer and Georgiana enact their own version of this circulatory system only to reveal that one person's immobility [Georgiana's] becomes the condition for another person's [Aylmer's] unlimited circulation and capacity for self improvement.... Aylmer's attempts to control the spatial movements in the laboratory exemplify a self that exists as a subject that can only possess itself in its attempts to possess others... (50)

In the text itself, we have examined the birthmark as a symbol of perfection and as a symbol of desire to control. Hawthorne not only intended this, but he also intended Aylmer himself to become a symbol of something. Aylmer is meant to symbolize the amount of control men had over women, while Georgiana herself is representative of women's submissiveness during the same time. When this was written, "women had authority over the private home while men dominated the public world. That represented the ideal for many white, middle class families of the nineteenth century" (Weinstein 48). Aylmer's stubborn desire to control Georgiana, or

more specifically her birthmark, is really his attempt at keeping (what society said should be) their separate worlds separate. The same applications to society are seen in another of Hawthorne's short stories.

Once again, in the story of "Rappaccini's Daughter", Hawthorne's love of allegory and his perfection of symbolism are evident. While in "The Birthmark" there was only one major symbol, "Rappaccini's Daughter" has many more. Not only do the characters take on a more significant meaning when Hawthorne's moral intent is examined, but in the story itself, seemingly insignificant objects take on a whole new meaning. "'Rappaccini's Daughter' is replete with symbols and symbolic allusions" (Martin 87); the characters exemplify most of these.

According to Oliver Evans, the role of Beatrice "is simply to represent the three levels of the human heart: the sunny entrance to a cavern parallels Beatrice's physical beauty, the hellish gloom within the cavern parallels Beatrice's poisonousness, and finally, a region of perfect sunshine and flowers parallels the pure fountain of Beatrice's spirit" (qtd. in Kloeckner 335). The pure fountain to which he is referring is the fountain of water in the garden which gives life to the flowering shrub, something Hawthorne tried to associate with Beatrice's pure, innocent spirit. Hawthorne wanted his reader to view Beatrice as "a flower of love growing in immortal water" (328). Really, though, Hawthorne is pointing the finger towards the evil of man and his inability to accept what nature has given him: "Man may contrive and destroy, plant and neglect, but nature's water...remains inviolable" (327). In other words, even with all of man's attempts to destroy nature, the ultimate source of life (water) remains clean, pure, and free from man's evil.

The pure fountain of water is what gave life to the poisonous flower which Beatrice has been raised on, and which finally leads to her own isolation. The number of references to isolation in the story is incredible. As Kloeckner puts it, "No read-

er of "Rappaccini's Daughter" can forget the emphasis on isolation in the climax of the story" (326). Up until this point, we learn of Beatrice's situation: she is, first of all, innocent of her father's "perverted wisdom" (Lang 95). Beatrice is deliberately brought up on poison, all of her scientist father's doing, which is innocuous to her, but deadly to others, even Rappaccini himself. A young man, Giovanni, comes to town, begins to fall in love with Beatrice, until he learns of her situation. Soon after, however, he finds that he himself has been poisoned. Rappaccini tells Beatrice of Giovanni's poisonous state: "he now stands apart from common man, as thou dost, daughter of my pride and triumph, from ordinary women" (Hawthorne, "Rappaccini's Daughter" 233). Dr. Rappaccini is "proud that he has given his daughter the power to keep the world distant, and also a companion with which to do it" (Kloeckner 326). Beatrice welcomes the unhappy Giovanni into her world:

"There was an awful doom" she continued, "the effect of my father's fatal love of science, which estranged me from all society of my kind...."

"Accursed one!" cried he, with venomous scorn and anger. "And finding thy solitude wearisome, though has severed me likewise from all the warmth of life and enticed me into thy region of unspeakable horror." (230)

Hawthorne is clearly suggesting that "love, a love of mutual respect, would have been...at least a melioration of the isolation of Giovanni and Beatrice" (Kloeckner 326). On a different level, we find yet another of Hawthorne's criticisms: "They [Giovanni and Beatrice] stood...in an utter solitude, which would be made nonetheless solitary by the densest throng of human life. Ought not, then, the desert of humanity around them to press this insulated pair close together? If they should be cruel to one another, who was there to be kind to them?" (Hawthorne 232). Really, the isolation of

Giovanni and Beatrice prevents anyone else from being kind to them. On a social level, Giovanni and Beatrice represent society—Hawthorne’s criticism here is obvious. So what we have then, is “the isolation of potential lovers...and the association of the flowers with a pure source of water which is used in a perversion of nature, and in the nature of Rappaccini’s shrub” (Kloeckner 327).

We must note, though, that Rappaccini’s motive for creating such a shrub and such a life for his daughter is of special importance. “[I]n a twisted and prideful way, he has done all that he had done for what he sees as the welfare of his daughter” (Martin 91). Rappaccini is astonished that Beatrice wonders why he has inflicted such a “miserable doom” upon her (Hawthorne, “Rappaccini’s Daughter” 233). Rappaccini replies, “Dost thou deem it misery to be endowed with...gifts, against which no power nor strength could avail an enemy? Would’st thou, then, have preferred the condition of a weak woman, exposed to all evil, and capable of none?” (233). This twisted view of reality is incomprehensible to Baglioni, Rappaccini’s chief rival.

Baglioni tries to convince Giovanni that Rappaccini is using him only for experimental purposes. Now this is true, to a point, so his motives, as explained earlier, must be taken into account. More than just expanding the applications of his scientific knowledge, Rappaccini is also giving his daughter a companion. Baglioni, however, cares more “about vanquishing his rival than he cares for the welfare of Giovanni and Beatrice” (Martin 91). Baglioni, now motivated by pride and jealousy, gives the fatal antidote to Giovanni, and in turn causes the sacrifice of two human lives. In effect, what Baglioni has done is implicate himself in the death of Beatrice (91), a result of his quest for knowledge and his need to be better than Rappaccini—a result of his sin.

Hawthorne has brought together his four main characters and integrated the imperfections of each to give us his view of morality. Albeit with different motives (Rappaccini’s perverse desire for the welfare of his daughter and Baglioni’s pride and jealousy),

each “[has] used Beatrice and Gioranni as pawns in their own games” (Martin 92). Martin continues:

When Giovanni plays into their hands by putting his faith in science, the narrative envelope [his relation with Beatrice] collapses. The inner story of Giovanni and Beatrice, which depended on the heart for its continued existence, is, in effect, rejected by one of his principals, the would be redeemer. In the terms of Hawthorne’s tale, there is no redemption for Beatrice. Doubt and skepticism (bred by power and pride, jealousy and revenge) prove to be the ultimate poisons of the heart. (92)

Although the specific symbols in each story may be different (for example, the birthmark vs. the fountain, the garden, or even nature’s water), what they represent is quite similar. Stepping out of the text now, we must remember that “Nathaniel Hawthorne devoted his art to the interpretation of truth” (Perry 146). The truth which he so often wrote about was the nature of man, and the problems that he causes.

Both Aylmer and Dr. Rappaccini commit what Hawthorne deemed an unpardonable sin: their pride motivated them to separate, to a fatal extent, their intellect and their heart. In the stories themselves, Hawthorne presents us with two half-good, half-evil men. But what is he really trying to say about the nature of people?

He is pointing out the faults and weaknesses of humanity: the inability (or, in many cases, the lack of desire) to accept imperfections along with the good; the consequences of pride; the desire for control; the inability to see and fix flaws in our own self, all of which ultimately lead man to sin.

In the case of Aylmer, he prided himself on removing his wife’s sole imperfection, never bothered to realize his own flaw, became obsessed with altering what nature had created, and finally allowed his love of science to destroy his life. Aylmer, much like the Puritan community of Hawthorne’s time,

assumed "the responsibility of judging and perfecting... [his] fellow man" (Newman 33). Perhaps Hawthorne himself provided the best application of this plot to humanity. In his earlier journals, he writes, "A person to be in possession of something as perfect as mortal man has a right to demand; he tries to make it better and ruins it entirely" (qtd. in Parrington 166). Ultimately, this statement is "The Birthmark" reduced to its lowest terms, and one of Hawthorne's indictments of society.

As much as Aylmer and Dr. Rappaccini's roles are significant in Hawthorne's examination of society, so are those of Georgiana and Beatrice. On a textual level, "Beatrice's poison parallels Georgiana's birthmark; neither can live without her flaw" (Newman 261). But it is because of the relationship with men that they cannot live—Beatrice's submissiveness to her father, and Georgiana's to Aylmer. Now, on a social level, we see Hawthorne's attempts to portray women's roles in nineteenth century America, and ultimately his ridicule of this. Georgiana and Beatrice both allow their male role models complete control of their lives and fate, much like women allowed men in Hawthorne's age. Their representation of women is obvious in one more way as well. "Beatrice's identification with Georgiana's hand-shaped birthmark is strengthened by the purple handprint left on Giovanni's wrist by Beatrice's touch. Both have been interpreted as symbols of...humanity's inherent imperfection" (Newman 261). In other words, Georgiana's imperfection and the mark Beatrice's imperfection leave are symbolic of the dominant man's inability to see imperfection in himself, and inability to accept flaws in general, again, leading him to commit the unpardonable sin.

The stories "The Birthmark" and "Rappaccini's Daughter" have unmistakable parallels in the moral picture Hawthorne was trying to create when he wrote them. Each story deals with "the role of a blinded idealist who pursues scientific knowledge to gain control over other humans" and the sin he eventually commits. For each of these characters, "the cultivation of the brain eats out the heart"

(Matthiessen 192). This was the root idea integral to Hawthorne's reading of human nature. Also common in both stories are themes of isolation and pride, stemming from the sin each character commits; both Aylmer and Rappaccini possess too much of the latter, and both Georgiana and Beatrice have fallen victim to the former. Hawthorne, through his characters and symbols, paints a vivid picture of his views on humanity. Perhaps Fogle, quoting Nathaniel Hawthorne, gives the best summary as to what Hawthorne's true intent was:

The conclusion [of "The Birthmark"] epitomizes Hawthorne's thinking: "...had Aylmer reached a profounder wisdom, he need not thus have flung away the happiness which would have woven his mortal life of the self-same texture with the celestial...he failed to look beyond the shadowy scope of time, and living once for all in eternity, to find the perfect future in the present." There is a time for everything, and an eternity. (214)

Hawthorne would say that Aylmer, and the rest of mankind, should have waited.

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Evaluation: *Kristin tackles a complex topic  
with clarity and precision.  
Her focus and research are excellent,  
as is her ability to pull her readers  
into the dark and dubious world  
of these infamous Hawthorne characters.*

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# Daddy's Tears

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by *Barbara Kottmeier*  
Course: English 101  
Instructor: Joseph Sternberg

Assignment:  
*Write a remembering essay  
about an important time.*

The tears won't stop on this sweltering, southern Indiana night. It is before air conditioning cools our bodies and homes. The humidity hangs in the air, making it difficult to breathe. This is my first memory of the trauma of moving. I know I'll never see my beloved baby-sitter and friend again, so in an effort to console me, she is sleeping at our house. My younger sitter is compassionate beyond her years, but can't help the six-year-old little girl whose world is being shattered.

I remember we are in my double bed, in just our underwear, trying to escape the oppressive heat. She tries to cheer me by tickling my bare back, and when that doesn't work, she throws the wilted top sheet in the air to create a great parachute. As the sheet floats down, the breeze from it feels delightfully cool on my skin, but that doesn't change my mood. Sorrow is spending the night with us.

Though my sadness and confusion are palpable, I have guilt for these emotions. I know my parents don't want me to feel this way as they explain over and over. "Everything will be okay. We will find you another nice baby-sitter when we get to our new home in Kentucky." And they do.

We're both crying like babies, two ten-year old best friends, aware of the permanence of this parting. She gives me her favorite bear, the fuzzy lump of fluff she won at the carnival. When she won it, I tried to trade almost any of my treasures to make it mine, but she couldn't be swayed. Now the thrill of possession is negated by thoughts of leaving once again.

I wipe my tears off the Mickey Mantle baseball card her older brother has just offered. The three of us have been collecting cards throughout the summer, and this is the one we all wanted. I'm flattered that he would hand over his prized possession, but at the same time, surprised, because he and I have had many battles in the past. Now our truce will be final. From this day on, there will be no more childhood games with my two pseudo siblings.

The sadness this brings fills me with grief. I can actually feel the pain, as if a tomcat is trapped in my chest, trying to claw its way out. But my parents

tell me not to worry. I'll have lots of fun with all the relatives we're returning to in Michigan and with the new best friends I will make. And I do.

I'm torn because the tears won't come this time. My friends have conned our junior high Home EC teacher into letting us use the period to say good-bye. It seems odd; the room is decorated with blue and red balloons and streamers, such a cheerful atmosphere for this sorrowful bunch. At the end of the school day I will leave the safe haven of my Michigan home for a city I have trouble pinpointing on the map. Teardrops, however, are not in this picture.

The distress I feel at leaving my thirteen-year-old confidants is overshadowed by my relief at our escape. A week before the dreaded move, I commit a childish transgression, listening in on my father's phone call. Now, I want to run from this state, to fly if it were possible. My misdeed has cost me my innocence. I hear my father say to the woman on the line, "I told you never to call me at home." It sounds like a bad movie but I can't hang up for fear he'll hear the click. The rest of the conversation is a blur, but the meaning unmistakable.

My misery goes deeper than I can comprehend as the tears fall inside, where no one can see them this time. Though this move leaves me saddened, it brings with it the hope that, if we leave here, my parents might be happy in Nebraska. And they are.

Sixteen-year-old tears are the most heart-wrenching kind. We all hug and mourn, with magnified teenage emotion, about what daybreak will bring. It doesn't seem possible to have formed so many strong friendships in just two years. My best friend's mother has consented to a pajama party for our final evening together, so there is a flurry of pillows, blankets, and sleeping bags covering the floor. We will laugh, talk, and cry here until dawn. They present me with an engraved, silver charm so I won't forget them, but I will. The armor is getting stronger, and the wall constructed over the years is now difficult to see above. My boyfriend stops by, then doesn't want to leave, because he can't be there in the morning to say good-bye. He pleads, "We have to stay together until you

come back here for college." But he doesn't know what I know.

It's too hurtful to keep these ties; the faster the image fades, the less strongly the pain is felt. But I shouldn't worry about pain because my parents assure me that Glenview, Illinois is a beautiful village with a superior high school; I'll surely be happy there. And I am.

This time the tears aren't mine. Once again, Ford Motor Company has promoted my father. For him it's another honor, for me a sentence. We have been here for only one year and I have just become a senior. It is odd that my father is driving me to school. Usually I drive my metallic green Mustang, sun streaming in the open windows, radio blaring, cheerfully picking up friends along the way. But today I let him play chauffeur, because I sense he wants to tell me something when we are alone. Maybe he is expecting my reaction.

His news hits me like an avalanche. I feel buried, unable to breathe. Every new town has brought the turmoil of trying to fit in again. As an only child, with no brothers or sisters for support, I've been too consumed with adjusting socially to concentrate on school, studies or any other aspect of my life. My friends are my link to the world and without them, I am imprisoned in isolation. This constant upheaval wears me out. I feel like a bag lady, wandering the streets with her precious belongings, shuffling from one place to the next, unable to truly rest.

It finally hits me, I WILL NOT do this again. When I tell my father I absolutely, positively, will not go, he reacts with firmness. "You are only seventeen and have no choice but to come with us." When he realizes his tactic is not effective, he tries guilt. "How can you do this? Do you mean to say that your life here is more important to you than your life with us?" He finally understands that this is all senseless. What he says doesn't matter; a new phase will begin too soon. He has to pull the car onto the shoulder of the road as he starts to sob. I watch him take the crisp, white handkerchief from his suit-pocket in an effort to dam the flood of tears. "We'll miss you too much. You can't mean

what you're saying." His crying frightens me. It is something I've never seen before and I don't know how to comfort him. I assure him that, though things will be different, they'll be fine without me. The new move and all it involves will keep them busy. Still, I am steadfast in my determination to stay behind, so there is really no way to console him. What this all means to me I can't define then.

As I look back now, the significance is less clouded. Through those many years, I had been the one with the broken heart while my parents tried to apply bandage after bandage to my wounded soul. But they had been busy with a child to raise, new houses to decorate, career advancements to master, and a network of Ford friends to rely on, with little to threaten their sense of security. They could never fully comprehend what effect their nomadic life had on me.

My decision, that warm September morning, meant my parents would have to adjust to life without their main focus. They would experience a void similar to what I had felt. My father and I had come full circle, and it was I trying to make the coming change appear acceptable. That day, I was the strong one while my father shed the tears.

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*Evaluation: Fine tension exists between the emotional subject and the skillful sentences, precise language, and purposeful organization.*

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# The Journey Home

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by *Barbie Markay*  
Course: Psychology 107  
Instructor: Caryn Levington

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Assignment:

*Describe an aspect of your personal growth that has made an impact upon who you are now and how you experience yourself. This may be done in essay form, or through other creative mediums (fiction, poetry, visual or musical arts).*

As the airplane taxied to a stop, Kathy breathed a sigh of relief. Eight plus hours of being squeezed into a seat on that plane had caused her back to ache and her legs to go numb. She made a mental note to not fly that particular airline again; their seats were a full two inches smaller than the competitors—and that narrowness was the difference between minor discomfort and certain paralysis. Again Kathy felt her legs throb—the numbness mixed with that familiar pricking sensation. She tried not to fidget because she hated drawing attention; although at her nearly three hundred pounds, it was hard to be discreet.

The clicking of seat belts began and as she unfastened hers, she secretly thanked God that she hadn't needed to use an extender on that flight. Perhaps she'd have been more comfortable had she used one, but the thought of having to ask a flight attendant for a device to extend the seatbelt around her girth was more than Kathy could bear. She'd asked before on other flights and often the brainless attendant responded with "Oh, when are you due?" As if they couldn't tell Kathy was merely obese, not pregnant. Okay, okay—brainless was harsh; maybe thoughtless was a better word.

Kathy mused on this awhile as other passengers jumped to their feet, ignoring the "Stay Seated" signs, madly scrambling for carry-ons, souvenirs, bottles of liquor, and other nontaxable treasures they'd stashed. This was one of the worst parts of the flight. Being in an aisle seat was perfect during the flight, but boarding and unboarding was a series of genuflections Kathy's knees could hardly tolerate. Sit, stand, sit, stand—as the window and middle passengers made their way to their seats. You see, no one could fit around Kathy once she was seated. Her wide legs filled the space, so she'd graciously get up to let someone in or out—sometimes walking the complete length of the plane, depending on whether the window passenger's bathroom break was timed with the passing out of peanuts and drinks. Many was the time Kathy stood in the rear of the plane feigning interest in the empty sky view out the portal window, waiting for the passenger to

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finish his morning shave so she could follow him back to their row, closing it off once she seated herself, tighter than a cork in a bottle of champagne. How she hated to be noticed—dreaded its inevitability. This was not always the case. Remembering back just a few short years to a time when, crouched backward over her airline seat, chatting with passengers, engaging them in word games, conversations, political discussions—Kathy would “entertain the troops.” Anything to make long overseas flights more bearable. She could get an entire section to sing Happy Birthday to someone or provoke all to demand “Pin-on Wings” from attendants, calling it age discrimination that only those under twelve years were given them. That was over 120 pounds ago, “a whole person ago” thought Kathy, as she struggled with the overhead bin, contending for her bag. Funny, she used to think in chronology—so many months or years ago. But lately she found herself thinking in her own unique way of measuring time, “thirty pounds ago,” or “when I was a size 10,” or “when I was still only 50 pounds overweight.” She wondered if other people of size thought like she did. The plane had come to a complete stop—jolting her body and her mind; time to tackle Customs.

“I hope they don’t do the double-triple take with my passport; that was real embarrassing last time.” Kathy’s passport was issued one hundred pounds or more ago and Customs Officers often scrutinized her, finally realizing the eyes and mouth and nose were indeed the same eyes, mouth, and nose in the passport—just the face was “swollen.” “What a shame,” one officer was heard to mutter when Kathy was barely out of earshot. “I’m so ashamed,” she said to herself, hurrying away toward the luggage, much to her horror, “eye to eye.” It seemed that one of the conveyer belts shredded her bag; so the baggage handlers scooped up what was salvageable and stuffed it into a body sized clear plastic bag. Kathy came face to face with books, tampons, souvenirs and some giant underwear and bras—obviously her belongings. She now had to drag her “visible” belongings as well as her “concealed”

belongings to Damaged Claims. She joined other bewildered, irate passengers in the cramped area, all bemoaning the fate of their luggage, golf clubs, contorted sports equipment, etc. Kathy was next in line; suddenly, a woman in a Donna Karan suite began to swear loudly. She was “in a hurry—this is taking too long,” etc. etc. As ugly as her behavior was, one couldn’t help but notice her clothes, her hair, her chiseled features. She wasn’t beautiful; she was sculpted, and she was demanding to be helped. The Customer Service Rep turned from Kathy and without so much as an “Excuse me” to her, began helping the raving woman. For someone so large, Kathy felt small, helpless, victimized. She burned with embarrassment and felt the anger, but she was powerless to voice it. She betrayed herself. Swallowing hard, she counted to ten. Several times. If she had been beautiful, would this have happened? This thought stayed with her; the injustice of it all began to fan a spark inside of her. The days that followed were a whirl of readjusting. Living in Europe had changed her. She’d grown, matured, succeeded and advanced in her career. This was the first few years; the last couple years brought opposition, political struggle, corporate backstabbing and emotional stress so great that Kathy now carried an additional hundred or so pounds on her five-foot-five inch frame. She was nearly twice her former self, yet she felt only half the person she used to be. Meeting old friends was the most painful thing she had to face; preceding each encounter with a phone call, a warning, sometimes jocular, at all times very clear. Kathy made known her appearance—she wanted to buffer their shock. “People only hear what they want to hear,” Kathy thought, as she hung up the phone. This friend was saying “Oh I’m fat too now; three kids did it to me—I actually got as big as size 16!”. Kathy would have killed to be a size 16 again—(or even a size 20). She couldn’t remember what it was like to try on clothes and feel good. Speaking of clothes, she realized she needed to do some shopping—and soon. But where? “There must be some Plus Size department inside the major stores. I need dressy

stuff; I'll try Lord & Taylor's." The next day she headed out to the mall, psyched up to spend. As she wandered throughout the various women's departments, she realized nothing went beyond a size 14. Suddenly, she was too discouraged to continue. She began to make her way out of the store when her eyes fell on the perfect suit—fuschia, linen skirt, jacket and camisole. It was gorgeous. It was also \$300.00 and a size 8. Kathy stared, remembering. She once had owned a suit like this, also a size 8... a size 8...she blinked back tears. Just then a woman appeared, obviously a salesperson. "Beautiful isn't it?" she asked, "Yes it is," Kathy responded. "Can I help you?" the woman asked, sizing Kathy up and down. "Are you looking for clothes for yourself or someone else?" Her question seemed to invade Kathy's thoughts. She couldn't answer. Her beautiful memory had vanished, replaced by cold reality. "We have a Special Women's Department here" the pushy salesperson continued. "It's downstairs." Then she walked away. Maneuvering toward the escalator, Kathy asked herself what had just happened. "Why didn't I say something? Why didn't I tell her I had a right to look; why didn't I walk away from her?" With thoughts flying she stepped off the escalator—right into a war-zone. The "special women's" department looked like Filene's Basement after a midnight madness sale. Racks were placed so closely together that even slim people would find passage between them a challenge. One tired-looking, plus-sized woman was there to manage the whole area. No fuschia suits in size 26 here—clothes from all seasons were thrown together in no particular order. No order, no fuschia suits, no coordinates. "Where the hell is their display?" Kathy's little flame of injustice began to burn more brightly. There were more customers down here than upstairs in women's wear, but it was slim pickings—no pun intended—"and only one salesperson to try and help all of us—that's crazy!" Kathy voiced this to no one in particular, the sound of her voice giving her strength, momentum. "How come we're stuck down here, away from all the *normal people* departments?" She was getting bolder. From

behind a rack she heard, "Good question, honey. Why are we giving them our business?" The voice was attached to an attractive, rotund woman, wrestling with a hanger tangled between some blouses. "Well, I'm not—No—I'm not going to give them my business" and with that statement Kathy boarded the escalator. Turning back toward the "special women's department" as it faded from view, Kathy voiced "Never again—not even shoes or perfume from here 'til they change. "Not even when shoes are 20% off!" and with that recent declaration still ringing through her being, she began her journey into the maze of boutiques and businesses lining the walls of the mall.

**FOR SIZES 16 & UP**, a sign caught her eye. Sure enough, color coordinated outfits in sizes up to 26, actual displays, and several sales people. The store was also full of other women and an occasional stray husband. There were women, some even bigger than she, flipping through organized racks of tasteful clothes. Kathy was elated. Finally, her kind of store. The next 90 minutes were spent trying on, experimenting, mixing, matching, 'til at last she settled for an armful of coordinates, a couple pair of jeans and tops, and a teal green, satin night shirt; "Why not, I deserve it," Kathy thought, as she dumped her armloads on the counter.

Stretching her arms, tired neck, and back, she looked up, above the register area, rolling her neck and shoulders—and then she noticed it—something on the wall. "No, this couldn't be...." Her mouth fell open. There in black and white were models; as she looked around the store she noticed they adorned all the walls. Models everywhere, supposedly modeling the very clothes Kathy was now purchasing. Only something was very wrong. These models didn't look like Kathy, they looked like Oprah, after the diet. They were thin, thin models—and one was even eating an ice cream cone! "What kind of convoluted message is this?" demanded Kathy of the girl ringing her items. The teenager with cherub features looked right into Kathy's eyes and said ever so sweetly, "It's really bullshit isn't it?" and kept ringing. Kathy was refer-

ring to the ice cream model who on her worst p.m.s. day, maybe was a size 10, certainly not a 12 or a 22.

Kathy continued to point and voice her displeasure—"Why doesn't the company do something about this?" "We've tried to tell them—they don't listen." This time it was the store manager speaking—the teen kept ringing and grinning ruefully. "Well, I'll tell you what kind of message I'm getting from this 'art,'" spoke Kathy defiantly. "To me it's saying, boycott this store 'til they photograph me, or someone who looks like me, all 272 pounds of me and glue me, life-sized, to their damn wall—oh—and we can forget the cone...." The store became quiet. Kathy was fuming. She didn't care if someone got angry. Damnit all, she was angry!

► Angry at the skinny models taking jobs away from the more deserving, better suited, fatter models.

► Angry at the magazines that told her she was repulsive, unwanted, unattractive.

► Angry at the women's clinic who made her wear two hospital gowns when she went for her mammogram because they hadn't thought to order larger sized gowns. She actually had to walk through a public hallway to get to the mammography room—dressed in two small gowns...some "Women's Clinic."

► Angry at the doctor on the Greek Island of Poros, who (between puffs of his unfiltered cigarette), told her she was a fat cow and should get her stomach stapled; yet he failed to properly treat her knee-cut, bleeding and full of glass and pebbles, which was the reason she went to him in the first place. Thank goodness for the kind Greek pharmacist down the street from the doctor's office who gave her antibacterial spray and bandages. The last of the gravel came out of her knee with the scab six weeks later leaving a divot scar as a reminder of that doctor's inhumanity.

Yes, Kathy got mad, and it felt good. She realized she no longer had to be the victim and began to

Speak up, and speak to, and speak for, others who'd also been victimized. Today, she keeps a list of people's stories, their injustices, humiliations, and discriminations. She's thinking of going on-line with some of these stories. Some are almost too outrageous to be believed!

► The woman who was followed through the grocery store (by some obviously disturbed person), items such as ice cream and cookies being removed from her cart when she wasn't looking.

► Another woman, also in the grocery store, being told by a total stranger that she didn't "need to eat anymore."

► Another's visit to a female doctor for a bladder infection who was then told to go buy a particular book. The book was on Fen-Phen, the newly-approved appetite suppressant that fools the body into thinking it is full, which is great, if you're eating 3,000 calories per day. She was eating closer to 1,100, which was barely enough to fuel her 200-plus-pound body. The doctor knew nothing of her weight history, or eating habits—she just assumed—she assumed incorrectly. When you're a size 24, no one will believe you if you say your total fat intake is in the 10 to 12% range. Maybe she should have checked the woman's blood. Her cholesterol was 188.

► The plus-sized woman who'd done weeks of research on infections affecting larger sized people before giving birth via C-section to her son—and the doctor who ignored her research (the magazines and medical reports that stated **aggressive antibiotics were necessary for obese people**). It wasn't until the woman's wound became a fist-sized gaping hole, septic and life threatening, that the doctor finally agreed to megadose her with antibiotics—barely saving her life.

Although these cases seem extreme, they are the rule—not the exception. Kathy hasn't decided her exact "plan of attack" yet, but she knows she's in



training as some kind of fanatical “fat advocate.” If you ask her why, why she’s choosing to move in this direction, she says:

Who better than someone like me? You can’t trust anyone else to care as much for you, as you care for you. Maybe that’s cynical—but you don’t see Christian Fundamentalists campaigning for gay rights, do you? I don’t expect to see skinny, health industry, fitness industry people fighting with the airlines to replace seatbelts with longer ones. But when 20 or 30 or 300 large people write the airline president and say, “We’re flying on your competitor instead because they’re more accommodating”—somebody will take notice. Or if 15 or 20 women opt to have their \$140.00 mammogram someplace else—that clinic might wake up and order gowns. Money talks. I am here to rock the boat—and believe me, **Nobody Rocks a Boat like a Big Beautiful Woman like Me!**

Keep on Rocking, Kathy!

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Evaluation: *It’s notable for its honesty, integrity, and courageous introspection.*

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# The Painful Moment of My Life

by Anahid Melkonian

Course: English as a Second Language 069

Instructor: Ilona Sala

Assignment:

*Write a memoir of a happy, sad time in life.*

I was driving like crazy to get to the hospital where my father was. It had been over two months that he was there without improvement. He was suffering from kidney failure. He had gone through kidney dialysis for three years, and it seemed he could not respond positively to this medical procedure anymore.

Mother had told me on the phone that he was not doing well that day.

“Did you go to the hospital today?” I asked Mom.

“No, but your brother was there,” she sobbed.

“What is wrong, Mom? Why are you crying?” I exclaimed.

“He is not going to make it today,” Mom moaned.

“I will be down there soon,” I answered.

Not long ago, he came to this country. He soon adapted to his new life. English was not a major problem for him because he had worked as a mechanic for a British petroleum refinery in his country.

He used to tell me to check my car brakes all the time. One day, he was next to me in the car and said, “When was the last time you checked your brakes, they are too low.”

“I don’t think so. They are all right,” I mumbled. “By the way, how do you know? You are not driving,” I objected.

“I can see it even without feeling the pedals. I have enough experience,” he commented.

I knew he was right. He had been a car mechanic for years, and that was his source of income. He raised six kids in poverty and was the only wage earner in the family.

Perhaps his recent sickness was due to malnutrition. Even though he was following doctors’ medications and diets seriously, he was not satisfied with his health condition.

“They cannot do anything for me,” he said in a broken and weak voice.

“Who are they, Dad?” I asked.

“The doctors,” he answered hopelessly.

“Maybe they are waiting for a miracle,” he interposed.

“They are doing their best,” I replied.

Sometimes I blame myself because I could have done more for him. I was new in this country and was not familiar with geographical locations and hospitals as well. I took him to the nearest hospital, and he became their patient as long as he resided in that area. Sometimes, Mom says, “We should have taken him to a better hospital.”

“Yes, we should have,” I agree.

Not only did I go through a lot of pain and grief at that time, but I also blamed myself for mismanagement.

When I arrived at the hospital, it was too late. I approached him and touched the white blanket that he was wrapped in, as if to give him second life through my skin. I sobbed and bawled while I was blaming and accusing nurses and doctors of doing an insufficient job. They tried to calm me down, and I stood there for little while with my father's silent body, which was trying to tell me a story. The story of a man who was born and raised in poverty, married and raised kids in poverty, and died in a strange country far away from his friends. He closed his eyes to this world when no one was beside him at that moment.

Sometimes he had complained of being alone at home, with no visitors.

"Where is everyone? Why don't they (he referred to his son and daughters) come and visit us?" he chided.

"They are so busy with their work and families. They live far," I answered.

"Oh, these are all excuses. They won't want their children to do the same to them as they did to me," he had complained.

Now I remember his words, and I wonder if my children will take care of me or will leave me in a nursing home for months without visitation. He was lucky that his children were by his bed most of the time. I am wondering if my children will do the same when I get sick.

I had the most painful experience when I lost my beloved father. The guilt of not giving him sufficient care while he was sick is fading now. However, the memory of his struggle for life is still with me.

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Evaluation: *Annie jumps time smoothly and effectively to show the reader her young father and then how he is as he is dying.*

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# Nikko's:

## A Place with People

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by Laurin Navratil

Course: English 101

Instructor: Jack Dodds

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Assignment:

*Choose a community you belong to or know well from direct experience. Observe it first hand, conduct interviews with community members, and then write an informal report in the "New Journalism" tradition. Aim to be vividly descriptive as well as informative.*

It's 10:30 on Monday night. I pull into the parking lot at my workplace, Nikko's Restaurant. The neons are off and I have plenty of parking spots to chose from because the restaurant has been closed for half an hour. I park and go inside. Greg is mopping the floor, and Jack and Rich are sitting down having a beer and a smoke each, talking to Tony, our boss, about real estate. Because Nikko's is a place where someone without a nickname is a minority, Rich is better known as Itchie, and Jack as Jackson.

"What's up Bunk?" Itch hollers out to me. I sit down to have a smoke. While I'm shooting the bull with Jack and Itchie, I decide to write my research paper on Nikko's. The paper I speak of was assigned to me by my English 101 teacher almost two weeks ago. Procrastinator that I am, I've even left choosing a topic until two days before the due date. My assignment is to write an informal report

on something important or interesting about a community to which I belong—something that makes this community what it is in surprising ways. I know I chose the right topic for this paper because the place and the people I work with are important to me. I'll be interviewing the people I love to talk to all the time. Not to mention, my boss Dino loves to help me with writing papers.

After a couple minutes of chitchat, I follow Tony to the "reg" (this is Nikko's lingo for register.) Before he starts counting money I tell him that I have a paper to write, and I'm going to write it about Nikko's. I need to ask him a few questions. "Okay, shoot," he says.

"So, how did Nikko's get started?" I asked.

"Well, my Dad and a partner—20, 30, 40, 60, 80, 100, 120—bought this land—230, 235—it used to be farm land." Tony can't stop his stinking work for two seconds.

How did Nikko's get started? Well, Nick Phillips and a partner bought the land on the southeast corner of Rand and Thomas in Prospect Heights. Nick's partner said he knew everything about the restaurant business. The building went up, and the restaurant was named after Nick's brother's place in Chicago. Nikko's opened on April 17, 1978. As it turned out, Mr. Partner was a crook. He was pocketing money and sticking Nick with the bills. After a year, the Phillipses bought him out. Tony, Nick's oldest son, left the hotel business to come manage the restaurant. Dino, Tony's younger brother had just graduated from high school, and he helped out, too.

It has been more than 18 years since Nikko's opened. Curious, I take a long shot and ask Tony how business is. To me, it seems pretty good. I work at the reg, and I would think we bring in a lot of money, but I don't know anything about the expenses of a restaurant, so I ask Tony. "Business has tripled over the last year," he says, "but so have expenses. Employees want more, suppliers want more, customers want to pay less, so where does that leave Tony?" His response doesn't satisfy my curiosity because Tony is never happy with any-

thing. He would have to say “Business sucks” in order for me to think he isn’t making any money. If he’s looking for sympathy, he’s not going to find it here. I guess I’ll never know how business is.

The reg was closed, and the floor was mopped, so it was time to go. Nikko’s is the kind of restaurant in which the kitchen is behind the counter. On a full crew night, we have a girl at the register, a Gyro cutter, a grill man, a steam guy, and a swing man (this is usually one of the little high school boys who goes around and wipes down tables, sweeps, pours drinks, takes out the trash, and refills ketchup and mustard bottles).

We are known mostly for our gyros. In case you didn’t know, a gyro (yee-roh) is about 30% lamb and 70% beef. We use a special, homemade cucumber sauce on our gyro instead of the traditional sour cream. Customers may also be attracted to the 50-cent beer with a sandwich before 5:00 pm on weekdays. Whatever it is that the customers like about us, they must like it a lot because some have been coming in regularly for 18 years.

Now it is 12:30 pm on Tuesday, and I have just stopped in for lunch. Dino comes and sits down with me. “What’s up, Bunk? New hair cut?”

“No, Dino, you ask me that every day.” We talk for a few minutes. He asks me if I can babysit his kids again tomorrow night, blah, blah, blah. He goes in back to do dishes. I go to look at the schedule and say hi to Rico, Jason, and Jason and try to ignore Jill. (The older of the two Jasons we often refer to as “Lee Harvey” or “Mr. Lee.”)

Dino calls me in back and asks if I have a hot date tonight. “No, Dino, you ask me that every day, too, and every day, I tell you I don’t get dates. But I do have a paper to write.”

“What’s your paper on?”

“Well, as of last night, it’s about Nikko’s.”

“So, how can I be of service to you?” he asks, in a smart-aleck voice.

“Well, what’s the typical day for a manager?”

“Hmm, I get here at about 8:00 pm with a plan. I know what needs to be cut, and I know what orders

need to be checked in. I need to get the steam table ready, blah, blah, blah. By 8:30, the plan’s out the window. My set-up man slept in. Someone stops in for directions. The bread guy is late. Suddenly, I’m one man, trying to be two, when we really need three. There is no typical day for a manager.

I tell Dino that I can’t write a paper on this. By this point in the conversation, Jason, Mr. Lee, and Rico have joined us in back. Dino looks around at all of us and says, “Of course you can. Think about it, Bunk, what makes a place?”

“Huh?”

“What makes one party better than the last one?”

“More beer,” Jason says, laughing at his own joke.

“No, it’s the people. What makes a place is the people.”

Now there’s a trigger. “So why did you get a job here?” I ask Lee Harvey, who has been working at Nikko’s for 6 years.

“I got the job from Rico. He said it’s a fun place to work.” I continued to ask around, and it turns out that Rico got the job from his brother, Steve, who got it from a kid he went to high school with whom nobody’s seen in years.

“Pretty much everyone who works here got the job from some friend they had that said it’s a fun place to work. Then they get here and find out it sucks, but they stay because it’s a fun place to work.” Mr. Lee seems excited that what he just said sounded cool.

Dino adds, “I would consider this job a reward-punishment type of deal. How many times have you, in the same shift, been knee deep in a rush, sweatin’ balls, wondering ‘What the hell am I doin’ here?’ and a couple of hours later you’re sitting down with your buddies, hangin’ out, drinking a cold beer, watching a game, thinking ‘It can’t get any better than this. I’m getting paid for this.’”

I figure that people will be interested to know what the employees like and dislike about their jobs. Kristen, one of the few employees who didn’t know someone at Nikko’s when she first started working, was attracted to the job as a customer. She

said the managers seemed cool, and it seemed like a fun place to work. Now she says she hates it, but she's staying anyway. Kristen might say she hates her job because complaining about your job is the popular thing to do among Nikko's employees, or maybe she says she hates her job because she doesn't know all of us very well, or maybe she doesn't like all of us very well. Whatever her story, I don't think she really hates it. I don't think anyone really hates it here.

Jason, 20, who has been at Nikko's for three years, says he stays because the pay is good, and it's easier to keep your high school job than it is to be out looking for a new one. What he dislikes most is the hassle of driving 22 miles to work every day, but he deals with it.

Jill, who has been at Nikko's for three years says, "It's an okay job." I was a little surprised by how she answered my "What is your least favorite part about working here?" question.

"Tony and Dino are chauvinist pigs. They think all we can do is reg and dishes. It seems like you've either got to be a guy around here, or young and single, to get any respect."

I have been working at Nikko's for a year and have never heard anyone say that before. I certainly don't agree with it, but then again, I'm young and single. "What's your least favorite part of the job?" Rico asks me.

I reply, "Working with Jill." I get high fives for this one.

What Mr. Lee doesn't like about Nikko's is that "once you get older and have more responsibilities, nothing's good enough for [the managers] anymore."

"I've been working here for nine years, and they're still telling me how to do things. Like, hello." Rico says.

So, as you can see, the employees each have their hang-ups about Nikko's. Most of them will tell you that they hate their job, when asked, but everyone stays because it is a fun place to work. We have all met a lot of people at Nikko's, and we have all developed important friendships. It's a place you

know you can turn to if you need anything. Dino implied this when he said to me, "Where else can teenagers come to get an interest-free loan at any-time, without having to hit their parents up for money? And do you know a boss so cool, anywhere else, that would spend all this time helping you out with your homework?" He's right. He is pretty cool.

The customers may think they come to Nikko's because of our gyro with cucumber sauce or our 50-cent beer with a sandwich, but, as Dino said, "What makes a place is the people." Tony and Dino are like my second fathers. Nick may have thought he started a restaurant back in 1978, but what he really came up with was the beginning of "The Nikko's Family."

I think I can definitely fulfill my assignment with this topic. Today I found something that makes the Nikko's community what it is in surprising ways. Even I am surprised at what I have discovered. Excited to write my paper and liking my job more than I did two hours ago, I get in my car at quarter to three and drive to Dino's to babysit his kids.

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*Evaluation: Laurin's report not only provides detailed information about the restaurant where she works; it not only dramatizes her conclusions about her chosen community; it also dramatizes life in that community and shows readers why Nikko's would be a great place to work.*

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# Childless Adults: Don't Take Your Frustrations Out on Parents

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by *Darraugh Nolan*  
Course: English 101  
Instructor: Martha Simonsen

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Assignment:  
*Write an argumentative essay.  
Defend or attack the thesis of an editorial essay.*

When I first married, I did not want children. I did not want the responsibility of parenthood, and I did not feel I could do a good job raising a child. I did not want to raise a child in a world that seemed crazy. Besides, I did not like children. Three years later, I changed my mind and decided that having a child would add spice to my life. I now have three children and do not regret having them. In fact, I feel fortunate at this time in my life. While my husband works, I raise three children and attend school. I realize that many mothers do not have the luxury of staying home. And at one time, I did not either.

My household arrangement appears to be an exception rather than the norm for the nineties. Leslie Lafayette's article titled "Stop Ignoring Adults Who Aren't Parents" states that "the American 'family' is changing. Many [adults] are divorced, single, living together or married—without raising children" (8). But the American family is also changing for those who have children. Nowadays, over 50% of all marriages will end in divorce (Carr 13). Many of these divorces affect children. Many women find themselves looking for a new job or trying to find better paying jobs to support their families. Employers are confronted with the issue of providing benefits that will better assist family employees. Lafayette sees these benefits as an encouragement toward parenthood. She states, "the workplace can seem a minefield to [childless women and men], as it is strewn with benefits and perks that encourage parenthood, while offering little to the employee who is not rearing children" (8). Lafayette believes that the government also gets in on the act of encouraging parenthood by providing additional tax credits for each child an individual has. In a way, Lafayette is right. Eight years ago I would have loved to work flexible hours, or better yet, work from home. How many April fourteenths passed by when I would have loved to claim that additional dependent to offset the \$800-\$900 I always seemed to owe the IRS.

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Most of Lafayette's article continues to focus on an invisibility that she and other childless adults feel society is perpetuating. However, I find Lafayette's position difficult to accept. Elizabeth Winfree-Lydon of the company Employers Group also disagrees with Lafayette's claim of invisibility. She states, "If anything, people who don't have children have an advantage. They are recognized quicker and advance faster in the work place. They have the edge because they have fewer responsibilities to interfere with their growth" (Jones 12). While attempting to validate Lafayette's claim of benefits and perks geared toward parenthood, I, too, come to a slightly different conclusion. Even though the government and many employers provide benefits that seem to favor family employees, these benefits, as well as others, are available to all employees.

The government provides each American citizen a tax credit to deduct from his or her tax filing. This tax credit is not only for children, but can also be taken for oneself. The government further allows a tax credit for grandchildren, children-in-law, parents, step-parents, grandparents, siblings, and relatives related by blood. In order to claim a dependent, the tax filer must provide more than half of the potential dependent's total support (Dept. of Treasury 12). Lafayette deliberately singles out parents as the beneficiaries of such tax credits. For some reason, Lafayette ignores the government's definition of a dependent and instead chooses to view the tax credit as an expense that "comes at the cost of [childless adults'] own taxes" (8). Quite frankly, I am surprised Lafayette did not attack the small percentage of day care expenses that parents can, within limits, write off their taxes. The day care expense write-off could be construed as parental favoritism. On the other hand, this small write-off gives a helping hand to parents who must work to survive, just as the small tax credit gives a helping hand to reduce each person's tax burden.

In her article, Lafayette points to a disheartening fact: many children are ignored, abused, or abandoned. Subsequently, some of these children

become out of control. It seems that Lafayette's statement is specifically directed at parents. Dr. Michael Ostrowski, psychologist and former psychology professor at Harper, would agree that parents contribute to the uncontrollable children. He states, "Many juvenile children come from a divorced or broken home situation. [The children's] parents are single-handedly parenting and working full-time jobs. Single parents are feeling overwhelmed. Subsequently, these children are receiving little to no supervision. These children may turn to gangs as gangs give these kids what their own parents can't give: time and attention" (Personal Interview).

It is inappropriate, however, for Lafayette to suggest that all children are out of control, as her statement seems to indicate. Besides, because everybody is affected by the actions and behaviors of many out of control children, it is not just a parental problem, but a societal problem. This is not to say that the parents are off the hook in supervising their children; however, society can provide some help. One way society can help is through its employers.

Many employers offer benefits that are available to all their employees. Some of these benefits would appear to favor parents, as Lafayette points out in her article (8). Some of the benefits that Lafayette criticizes are flexible hours, telecommuting, and early leave or late arrival times. While these benefits support parenthood, these benefits provide a crucial element that seems to be missing in families: time. As Dawn Gray, editor of *MOMents* states, "time is...the number one issue" (Carr 13). Furthermore, Jerry Lipsch of Spectrum Youth states, "we need as a country to look at making sure the average person can afford to raise children without the adults in the family having to work so many hours in energy-draining jobs that they don't have time to spend with their kids" (Carr 13). So it would seem that flexible hours, telecommuting, and early leave and late arrival times are minor solutions that benefit not only the employee, but his family, and ultimately society.



Lafayette mentions other benefits that seem to favor parenthood. These include additional health care for children, daycare on the premises, paid leave to bond with babies and, again, allowing parents to leave early or to arrive late while other employees cover for these parents. Lafayette also states that “employers should offer all employees equivalent benefits” (8). I am puzzled. After researching benefits that some employers offer, I have found that almost all of these benefits do apply to all employees within the company.

I could find little evidence to support Lafayette’s claim that employers are providing for additional health care for children. However, my research did bring two points to my attention. First, world-wide corporations provide fabulous health coverage at a very low cost to their employees. *Money* profiled the top ten employers’ health benefits. The health insurance premiums varied between \$0 to \$1654 per year. Unfortunately, most of these employers “are eliminating benefits or asking employees to pay more for them” (Luciano 128). Secondly, nowhere in *Money*’s article or its profile chart does it say that one group of employees pays differently from another. However, according to American Demographics, some employers do pay for a baby’s birth and pick up some costs associated with health insurance premiums (Mergenhagen 32). So, it seems that Lafayette may have a valid complaint on insurance benefits.

The “day care on premises” benefit that Lafayette refers to seems to be mainly offered by the larger corporations (Roberts 44; Luciano 131; Mergenhagen 32). This is another benefit that Lafayette correctly states as benefiting parents. However, this benefit does help a needy group of parents: the welfare-dependent parents who are moving into the work force (Chilman 454). Considering that welfare reform is a major issue in society today, I do not see how Lafayette could object to this benefit.

I am not aware that some employers provide paid leave for parents to bond with babies. If this is the case, then I have worked for the wrong companies.

I wonder if Lafayette was referring to the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). FMLA does not provide for a paid leave nor does it apply only to parents. The Act does provide up to twelve weeks of leave to care for a sick immediate family member or to spend time with newborn babies, for male and female employees alike. The Act also allows for employees to take time off for medical appointments, continues the employee’s health insurance during leave, guarantees the employee’s job, and applies only to companies with more than 50 employees (Parmelee 103; Brown 233).

Early leave or late arrival by an employee can be annoying, especially when it becomes a habit. However, Lafayette focuses on family employees as being the culprits. How many co-workers are really annoyed at covering for family employees? According to a 1993 survey conducted by Families and Work Institute, 85% of all workers would not resent putting in extra hours to accommodate workers with children or other personal needs (Jones 12). Early leave or early arrival is used by a majority of employees and is, for the most part, accepted by employers, as long as employees do not abuse the privilege.

While reviewing my research, I have found that fringe benefits that apply to all employees do abound in some companies. Some of these fringe benefits include eldercare, a year’s pay for community service, fitness equipment and centers, free legal consultations, a year’s leave for job-related activities, and flexible spending accounts that can be used toward child care or medical expenses (Luciano 131). Other minor benefits include free checking, automatic check deposits, 401K plans, various IRA plans, etc. It seems that employers have not necessarily forgotten childless employees as Lafayette insists.

In summary, employers offer more benefits now than ever before. These benefits cross all groups and accommodate many different life-styles. Employers are aware that the American family is changing. But it’s not just the employers who are trying to accommodate, it is also the government.

The politicians have made the term "family values" a large issue this election year. One reason is statistics show that gang participation, juvenile crime, and split families are on the rise. As Amy Carr of the *Daily Herald* writes, "Family experts agree that the time has come for government, business, and society as a whole to finally start adapting to the real challenges today's families face every day" (13). Lafayette would like to see the term "family values" which she defines as decency, honesty, loyalty, a solid work ethic, love for neighbor, responsibility for community, country and planet, changed to "human values" (8). I agree with Lafayette; however, Lafayette is missing a very important point. These values start at home.

Finally, it may appear that Lafayette and other childless adults are deliberately being ignored. Taking their frustrations out on parents is not the answer. Lafayette states her viewpoint as a childless adult fairly well. However, she limits her credibility when refusing to stand in a parent's shoes and see society from the parent's viewpoint.

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Evaluation: *An argumentative essay with both depth and conviction is rare in English 101. Darrough argues logically and persuasively.*

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## Wherefore Is This Poetry?

by *Mary C. Patanella*

Course: Literature 105

Instructor: Barbara Hickey

Assignment:

*Write a critical analysis of a poem.*

William Shakespeare is best known as a playwright of unmatched creativity. The language he uses is often considered difficult to follow, to understand; however, if the reader has any knowledge of poetic devices, he can see that Shakespeare was not only a talented scriptwriter but an amazing poet as well. In *Romeo and Juliet*, he uses the young lovers' first meeting as a playground for the creation of a sonnet, imagery, and metaphor to effectively produce an atmosphere of passion and innocence.

While the play itself is written in sporadic rhyming patterns within the conversations among the characters, this particular meeting between Romeo and Juliet is written in pure English sonnet form. In choosing to give the young lovers such a poetic and rhythmic verbal encounter, Shakespeare sets up the idea that the two characters are one and the same; they are connecting on the same literary and spiritual level. The melody of the words each says to the other acts to create the romance of their encounter and the subsequent continuance of their passion and intensity toward each other.

Adding to this passionate tenderness is the imagery that seems to follow freely between the characters. The religious images create an overtone of purity and innocence as Romeo calls his own the "unworthiest hand" (line 1) so as to be undeserving of touching the "holy shrine" (line 2) of Juliet. By using the ideas of saints, pilgrims, and prayer in this verbal exchange, Shakespeare adds childlikeness to the characters, which is a perfectly deceiving guise

for their true implications of a more physically passionate relationship. Juliet is reacting to Romeo's interest in her by playing hard-to-get; her apparent innocence acts as a cover for what she truly desires: a kiss from Romeo. The same could be said for Romeo, who is behaving like a gentleman yet attempting to get what he wants: a kiss from Juliet. The two play an intriguing game with one another that leads to the result they each hoped for behind their guises of innocence and naiveté.

The end of Juliet's first encounter with Romeo leads to their first kiss, but again it is disguised in a religious mask. Juliet begins the metaphor of lips put together as in a kiss in terms of hands together in a prayer. By following through with this idea, Romeo says, "let lips do what hands do" (line 11). Their attraction takes a passionate turn toward adulthood from the innocence of their childhood. Under the canopy of prayer, the young lovers seek to satisfy their passion in a world that condemns such a union.

As a poem, this particular excerpt from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* can stand on its own for it includes such poetic devices as sonnet form, imagery, and metaphor to create a mood of friskiness in youth. Their verbal dance contains the curiosity of childhood as well as the desire of adulthood, a combination that provides an attractive platform for poetry. Recognizing Shakespeare's success as a playwright is only scratching the surface; to dig deeper at the individual components of his plays is to realize the true poetic genius that pervades his frame.

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Evaluation: *Wherefore is this an excellent essay? Mary's analysis shows deep insight and extraordinary sensitivity to the details of the text; her style is precise and poetic.*

*And who is singing praise of Mary C.?  
I amb, I amb, I amb, I amb, I amb!*

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# The Comfort of Home

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*by Christine Pomroy*  
Course: English 101  
Instructor: Joseph Sternberg

Assignment:  
*Write about an experience that  
was very important to you.*

It's 1978, and I'm in my hospital room holding my firstborn child. He is absolutely beautiful. Truly a miracle. I still can't believe I'm holding the baby I have always wanted. Since I was a little girl, all I ever really wanted to be was a wife and a mother. Everyone tells you labor and delivery are painful, but as soon as you see your baby you forget all about it. WRONG! How could I ever forget this trying experience of giving birth? Riding in the car in hard labor. Crying in pain. Enemas and IVs. Unsympathetic nurses. A crabby anesthesiologist. Pushing and pushing and pushing for hours to get this baby out, while lying on my back. A forceps delivery. More pain. NEVER AGAIN! Women have been giving birth for generations. Please tell me there is a better way to do this!

It's two o'clock in the morning on a cold December night, 1987. A peek through the wooden shutters in my living room shows there is a beautiful moon glistening on the newly fallen snow. I pace between our living room and dining room checking my watch, timing each contraction. I am in labor with my fourth child. I am nervous and excited at the same time. Is this the real thing? I've had false labor before. When my contractions continue to be eleven minutes apart, I awaken my husband, Bruce. He calls the doctor to let him know I'm in labor. My doctor tells him to call back when they are seven minutes apart. Fifteen minutes later, they start coming every seven minutes. Bruce calls again. I call my mother and my friends, Cathy, Sue and Liz, who want to be here with me for the birth of this child.

So far, my contractions have not been too uncomfortable. They last only about thirty seconds. I keep walking so labor will progress quickly, unlike my first experience with labor and birth when I was confined to my bed.

I hear the doorbell ring. It's Cathy, my midwife. She follows me to the bedroom to examine me. "You are dilated to four centimeters," she tells me. I was hoping for more. I need to be at ten centimeters.

Within a few minutes, Dr. Elvove arrives. The first thing he asks is, "Cathy, how is her blood pressure?"

I hear her reply, "I haven't had time to check it yet."

I know why he is concerned. During my pregnancy, my blood pressure was elevated at times. High blood pressure during labor indicates a hospital delivery. He checks my blood pressure and tells me it is perfect. I knew it would be. I am comfortable at home. He then listens to the baby's heartbeat. Everything is just fine. But still, we have awhile before the baby arrives, so Dr. Elvove decides to go downstairs to catch up on some sleep.

By now my mother and friends arrive. We all sit in the living room and talk, while Bruce gets things ready in our bedroom where the birth will take place. Sue and Liz flip through our family photo albums as we laugh together. I am surprisingly calm. This goes on for about an hour. Then suddenly, my contractions become stronger and closer together. I do my relaxation and breathing exercises. I find I need to focus more, and request that everyone stop talking during my contractions. After a half hour of this, I have a hard contraction and my water bag breaks. Cathy examines me. "You are now fully dilated Chris," she says.

My mother leaves to awaken Dr. Elvove, and Bruce wakes our three boys up, too. They have been prepared for this moment for a long time, and they wouldn't want to miss seeing their baby brother or sister being born.

Everyone gathers in our bedroom. The video camera is set up on a tripod. We want to capture the events of this birth on video and take photos. A spotlight reflects off the ceiling to make the room brighter. I would prefer to have it darker, but the video is important to me, so I compromise. I'm sitting propped up with fluffy pillows supporting my back. Everyone around me is excited and talking. As soon as the baby's head begins to crown, the room gets quieter. They are all in awe. Dr. Elvove checks the baby's heartbeat every few minutes with a stethoscope. He tells me, "Everything sounds fine."

With heated olive oil, Cathy very gently massages the perineal opening with her latex gloved fingers. This feels wonderfully warm and will make delivery

more comfortable for both me and the baby. She also suggests it would be better to deliver the baby while lying on my side. It's a little more uncomfortable, but this way I will tear less. I feel awkward this way, because I've never delivered a baby this way. With each contraction, I push. My friend holds my knee up to help me. Bruce is by my side holding my hand. He continuously encourages me. "You're doing great, Chris. Keep pushing. You can do this."

"Cathy, how much of the baby's head can you see?" I ask. She guides my hand to touch the baby's head. It's amazing! This encourages me even more. I'm surprised to see how calm and relaxed I am between contractions. As long as I push during the contractions, I feel no pain at all. It actually feels good to push.

Finally, I feel the burning pain. The baby is ready. "Push gently," Cathy tells me. "We don't want the baby to come out too fast."

"Yes I do!" I tell her.

After a few controlled pushes, the baby's head emerges. My doctor suctions out the baby's mouth, and with a final push, the shoulders and body glide out easily and quickly. Dr. Elvove announces, "Time of birth 4:45ia.m."

"Is it a boy or girl?" I ask excitedly.

"I don't know, Chris," he replies. "Why don't you take a look?"

I do, and immediately begin to laugh. "It's a boy...again," I announce.

A sigh of relief fills the room and everyone else begins to laugh. They were afraid I would be disappointed.

Cathy places the baby on my stomach, and covers us with a towel. He begins to cry—what a healthy cry. I kiss Bruce, and our sons come closer to get a better look at their new brother. They are mesmerized. They witnessed the entire birth—what an amazing thing!

The bedroom has a party atmosphere. There's a buzz of conversation going on. Bruce pours champagne and makes a toast. The group consensus is to name this new little wonder Evan. After about fifteen minutes, it's time to cut the umbilical cord.

Bruce gets to have the honor. Within a few minutes, I deliver the placenta with one more contraction.

Dr. Elvove examines the baby. He's twenty-one inches long and very healthy. Next, my doctor wraps the baby in a blue towel and holds him up in the air. He attaches the towel to a fish scale. Evan weighs nine pounds and one ounce. Everyone laughs at the peculiar instrument used for weighing. My mother and sons take turns holding Evan, while the doctor quickly examines me. I only need three surface stitches. (I had many more with my first childbirth; I couldn't walk for a week.) Now I am able to walk to the bathroom shortly after my delivery. I'm amazed at how much better I feel this time.

I join everyone in the living room, and sit in our recliner to feed Evan. He is so alert. Instinct tells him what to do and he nurses. He looks right into my eyes. I immediately feel an intense bond between us.

After breakfast and phone calls, it is time for a nap. I return to my king-sized bed and climb under the covers. Evan is with me, sleeping by my side. I'm physically tired, but I can't fall asleep. I keep looking at this beautiful baby. As I lie here in the comfort of my own home, I now know there is a better way.

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Evaluation: *In a natural voice and unsentimental manner, Ms Pomeroy conveys the beauty and value of her home delivery.*

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## Feminist Philosophy in Brenda Bosman's Analysis of *Nervous Conditions*

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by Denise Prickett  
Course: Literature 208  
Instructor: Martha Simonsen

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Assignment:  
*Summarize and critique a scholarly article  
on a novel we read for the class.*

Bosman opens her critique of Tsitsi Dangarembga's novel by noting that the title, *Nervous Conditions*, includes a "pluralised substantive" (93). Bosman believes this suggests the novel will involve plural perspectives; indeed, Tambu's story investigates not a single condition, but "triple levels of entrapment" (Bosman 94). Describing these conditions, through exploration of the central female characters and through analysis of the novel's women's community, is the focus of Bosman's critique.

The triple levels of entrapment are "the poverty of blackness" (Dangarembga 16, qtd. in Bosman 92), "the weight of womanhood" (Dangarembga 16, qtd. in Bosman 92), and the troublesome "Englishness" (Dangarembga 202, qtd. in Bosman 92). The entrapments of Tambu's mother and Maiguru differ only

on the surface (Bosman 94), and Nyasha's struggle with these three conditions leads to her breakdown (Bosman 95). Bosman notes that Tambu tells her story from a perspective which embraces women and their importance, stays connected to the black community, and questions the white influence (96). Tambu is able to escape the triple entrapment through her telling of the novel (Bosman 96 and 98).

The women's community of *Nervous Conditions* is a solidarity in the face of patriarchy and adversity (Bosman 96). But this "survival mechanism...has not only enabled women to survive; it has also allowed patriarchy to thrive, for it has been founded upon a male definition of a woman's identity" (Bosman 96-97). Their survival tactics are based upon the male definition of the reason for female existence: to serve men obediently.

Asserting herself at the men's formal dare, Lucia "explodes the myth of male dominance" (Bosman 97). Lucia's rebellion at this meeting stirs a heated argument among the *maininis* as they hold a coinciding women's community meeting in the kitchen. Maiguru, as the ideal subservient woman, is nevertheless an enemy of the women's community due to her status and her white education (another level of entrapment). The polarity between Lucia and Maiguru exposes the solidarity myth of the women as a patriarchal structure (Bosman 98). Only Nyasha (and Tambu as she relates the novel) is consciously aware of the complexity of entrapment: "But it's not that simple, you know, really it isn't. It's not really him, you know. I mean not really the person. It's everything, it's everywhere. So where do you break out to?" (Dangarembga 174, qtd. in Bosman 99).

Bosman's explanation of the triple levels of entrapment, which I have roughly outlined above, clarified my own interpretation of the novel and its female characters. Her critique is insightful and well supported by the text. For me, Bosman's interpretation was preaching to the converted; but I believe she puts forth a convincing argument nevertheless.

Bosman's article interprets *Nervous Conditions* from a feminist perspective that uses the concepts of

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identity politics and positionality. She also examines this particular feminist perspective itself. I think this examination and the form of her article, a direct address letter which is acknowledged as a fiction, provide fascinating insight into the multidimensional perspectives of feminism today. As Bosman notes in what I believe is her thesis, these perspectives are integral to *Nervous Conditions*:

It seems to me that Tambu's story is... inseparable from identity politics and positionality, and that it presents most forcefully a feminist argument for the usefulness of the problematics of identity and difference in the context of a history that is always already in motion—and thus in contradiction. (92)

Because she is a white woman settler, Bosman is in some ways Tambu's "other"; but having read Tambu's story, she is also closer than that, a part of her "you" (Bosman 91). Bosman wants to identify with the woman in *Nervous Conditions*, but, as Trinh T Minh-ha, a Third World feminist, explains, claiming that women's oppression is a universally uniform experience is a "trap of appropriation and exploitation" (Bosman 92). Bosman explains Minh-ha's position: "[W]hose baseline establishes the dominant criteria of sameness and/or difference...?" (92). Similarly, Audre Lorde reproached Mary Daly for universalizing women's oppression, saying, "[T]he oppression of women knows no ethnic nor racial boundaries, true, but that does not mean it is identical within those boundaries" (qtd. in Bosman 92). Bosman asserts that minority women are harmed by this appropriation and exploitation of their oppression (99).

In writing her critical interpretation of *Nervous Conditions*, Bosman tries to maintain the position the novel has given her because she understands and embraces the concepts of positionality. In contrast to essentialist theories, which stress the indispensable conceptual characteristics of a thing rather than a thing's existence as a particular experienced actuality, positionality asserts that "the concept of woman is a relational term identifiable only within a (constantly moving) context" (Alcoff, qtd. in

Bosman 91). Positionality stresses that women cannot and should not be lumped together as a faceless group of oppressed victims.

Developed by Linda Alcoff, a half-Latina, half-white feminist, positionality is compatible with the desire to engage in feminism as a solidarity movement rather than a unity-in-sameness movement. Feminist philosopher Karen J. Warren writes, "Because there are no 'monolithic experiences' that all women share, feminism must be a 'solidarity movement' based on shared beliefs and interests rather than a 'unity in sameness movement' based on shared experiences and shared victimization" (438). Bosman uses positionality in her article to recognize and respect the fact that as a white woman settler, she has experienced oppression in a different way than the black women natives in the novel.

In order to respectfully recognize different experienced actualities, feminist philosopher Marilyn Frye advances a concept called "the loving eye." The loving eye knows the independent separateness of the other, and "does not make the object of perception into something edible, does not try to assimilate it, does not reduce it to the size of the seer's desire, fear and imagination, and hence does not have to simplify. It knows the complexity of the other" (qtd. in Warren 440). In contrast to "the arrogant eye," which generates a moral hierarchy of beings and creates a unity-in-sameness approach, the loving eye's perception is "an expression of love for one [who] is recognized...as independent, dissimilar, different" (Warren 441). In this way, the difference of the other is respected and whatever sameness exists can also be acknowledged (Warren 441).

Bosman writes her critical analysis of *Nervous Conditions* in the form of a direct address letter to the novel's author, Tsitsi Dangarembga. Bosman explains,

The 'informality' of this letter is integral to my politics: my identity, and yours, must be acknowledged in their particularity.... 'I' and 'you' are both material subjects whose interests and needs cannot be set aside either in the name of universal sisterhood or in deference to some ideal of rational objectivity. (92)



Minh-ha asserts that “speaking nearby or together with certainly differs from speaking for and about” (qtd. in Bosman 93). Therefore, by using a direct address letter, Bosman can be certain she is not speaking *for* Dangarembga (or Tambu and the novel’s women), and by acknowledging that this letter is fiction, Bosman recognizes that she is speaking from a position *nearby* these women and their experiences (Bosman 93).

There is a parallel tool in feminist philosophy for these concepts, too. Feminist philosophers have relatively recently begun using the first-person narrative as a way to explore issues in ethics. Warren explains two reasons for the usefulness of first-person narratives that support Bosman’s use of the similar direct address letter acknowledged as a fiction. First, this type of narrative “takes relationships themselves seriously” (439). This is important in Bosman’s situation because she wants to acknowledge the relationship, be it similar or different or both, between her own and the author’s (or characters’) experiences. Second, the first-person narrative “gives expression to a variety of ethical attitudes and behaviors often overlooked or underplayed in mainstream Western ethics” (439). Similarly, Bosman’s use of a direct address fictional letter lets her give expression to her personal connection to the topic of the literature she is analyzing, in contrast to the traditional critical essay form which analyzes a novel from an unattached, outside perspective. Bosman’s chosen form allows her a depth and range of interpretation not possible in the conventional form of literary examination.

Bosman, in her thesis, asserts that Tambu’s story is inseparable from these theories and concepts. Bosman believes *Nervous Conditions* presents a convincing argument that these perspectives are useful in explaining a historical context, because they illuminate women’s different experienced realities. By employing positionality and identity politics, Bosman recognizes that her interpretation of *Nervous Conditions* is affected by her own identity and experiences, and she avoids the harmful trap of appropriating the separate and different experiences

of the novel’s black women natives. She tells Dangarembga, “[Since] I cannot position your discourse in relation to me, I have tried to position my own discourse in relation to you” (100). I think Bosman is a little uncomfortable having to recognize that she is the white “other” in this novel, but she believes this is the most respectful way she can comment on the novel. I must agree. Bosman’s final sentence, “I greet you, Ma’Tambu” (100), exemplifies her feminist solidarity.

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Evaluation: *Denise evaluates a scholarly article in a scholarly and lively fashion. She also beautifully connects her work in two classes— literature and philosophy.*

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# Searching For What a Poem Is

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by Catherine Quigg  
Course: English 101  
Instructor: Peter Sherer

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Assignment:

*Define in a stipulative way a term that refers to a concept. Introduce a speaker who connects personally as well as academically to the term. Include a variety of sentence patterns.*

I'd really like to know what a poem is. Up until now, my reading, experience and intuition have guided me to thinking any writing that has the form on a page of a poem, is a poem, especially if it relates an idea or incident with originality and conciseness. I may have been influenced by something I read long ago, "You know it's a poem, not prose, when the writer instead of the printer decides on the length of the printed line." Somehow, though, I knew a poem had to be more than that.

I was aware Emily Dickinson had once said, "If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know it is poetry." This kind of physical recognition, however, I see as subjective; one never knows how his poem will be received; one can only hope.

Two years ago I began writing what I thought were poems, but I lacked confidence in them because I kept getting confusing signals as to what constitutes a poem.

Joining a workshop of other aspiring writers only confused me further. Our workshop procedure is for each writer to give a copy of her poem to each group member, read it aloud, and then listen silently as others critique her work.

One week, for example, I read a "poem" entitled "The Hotel Cocotores" about a day at the beach in Progreso, Mexico. Written in stanzas in free verse, my poem had neither rime nor meter.

"That's not a poem," said one critic, "that's an anecdote." I wasn't totally devastated because I'm accustomed to such remarks. Another commentator has a habit of calling most of my poems "prosy"—a real putdown in local literary circles. Indeed, this kind of comment can lead to recommendations that the writer put her musings in short essay form rather than poetry.

Since I'm a proud and fairly competitive person, I decided to solve my poem problem by searching for the definitive explanation of what a poem is—or is not. I wanted to know what differentiates poetry from prose.

I began with the *Oxford English Dictionary*, which indicated a poem is "a composition in verse or metrical language; usually also with choice of elevated words and figurative uses, and option of syntactical order, differing more or less from those of ordinary speech or prose writing."

Since much published contemporary poetry is written in free verse without meter, I dismissed this definition as outdated and decided that an established modern poet would be a more reliable source of information.

At a week-long poetry seminar in Frankfort, Kentucky, in June 1996, I had the good fortune to meet such a poet in Richard Taylor, author of two published collections of poems, *Bluegrass* and *Earthbones*, and the winner for two National Endowment for the Arts writing fellowships. Taylor is professor of English at the University of

Kentucky. Of Taylor's work, major American poet, A. R. Ammons, said, "The fine perceiving that gives substance to these poems is wonderfully equalled by the forming freshness of the words."

Taylor told seminar participants, "Poetry is a moment or experience you decide to communicate in a full and creative way to evoke that presence." He said every poem should at least have clarity and a structure devised out of what the poet feels.

Using plain, unfettered language, Taylor described the act of writing a poem: "Discover what your voice is. You must put your voice on paper in economical form to be an effective poet. Listen to what you write, the way you speak, the patterns of your breath with pauses, repetition, and rhythm. Unlike prose, poetry has no set line length; poetry is compact, concise. Love of language is the core; never say 'tree' when you mean 'hackberry.' Hear the language, its resonance and its aptness."

He advised us to create little dramas to make our poems take on a more kinetic quality. "Use some dialogue," he said, "play images off each other; quote someone; resurrect the past."

I learned the question to ask is not so much "what is a poem?" but rather "what is a good poem?" There are good poems and bad or weak poems, false starts and throw-aways. As Taylor said, "Some horses you have to dismount from, but there are other horses in the corral. Resist publishing your weaker efforts."

Bad poems, in Taylor's opinion, are poems that don't communicate; they are intellectual games, needlessly obscure. He said, "You can raise questions, but as in any house, there should be some means of entry." Other indications of weak poems according to Taylor are arty abstract language, anemic verbs, lots of modifiers and sentimentality. "If you want to write good poetry, read good poetry," he advised.

After attending writing workshops, after listening to established contemporary poets, and after reading published poetry, I have come to the conclusion that no two writers travel the same path. A poem can arise from a casual meeting, a fleeting rec-

ollection, a chance word, or a beautiful sunset. William Butler Yeats said, "Poetry...is in the last analysis an endeavor to condense out of the flying vapors of the world an image of human perfection...." Yeats knew he had finished a poem when it was put together like a finely made box.

But I think Taylor said it best: "Poetry is a means of discovery, a rhythmic perception of the world in intense form." That's a definition that can work for me; my search is over.

Now I know that my poem about a day at the beach in Progreso may be "prosy," it may be an anecdote, it may lack adequate figurative language—but it *is* a poem. The important question I must answer for myself is this: is it a *good* poem?

The Hotel Cocotores

The Hotel Cocotores, run-down,  
on a deserted stretch of beach—  
the only place open in Progreso  
that breezy December day.

A lone waiter beckoned us to his small cafe  
so near the water we could hear waves  
brush against boats just back  
from fishing grouper  
in the Gulf of Mexico.  
"Only one thing for lunch,"  
he said, "Pescado ɔpa."

We sat in warm sun and listened  
to the music of lapping surf  
and sea gulls  
until our soup was served:  
chunks of fresh fish  
laced with savory herbs.  
White wine teased  
my throat with the sweet taste  
of freshly picked grapes.  
I was content.

Barefoot, we walked white, sandy beaches,  
empty but for fishing crews  
cleaning nets for tomorrow's catch.  
In shade of late afternoon,  
we caught the second-class bus  
back to Merida,  
knowing we could never return.

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Evaluation: *Catherine explores the meaning and value of a poem in this delightfully personal stipulative definition. Noteworthy is Catherine's tight, forceful writing style. Sentences are crafted, and phrases are nicely controlled. The accompanying poem well exemplifies "what a poem is."*

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# Poetry Journal

by Catherine Quigg  
Course: Literature 105  
Instructor: Joseph Sternberg

Assignment:

*Keep a journal in response to our assigned poems.*

## “I Heard A Fly Buzz When I Died”

Shades pulled down, curtains drawn, Aunt Martha lay dying of cancer in a small midwestern hospital.

I had come for a final visit, perhaps to hold her hand and say a prayer. I had been with her for just a short time when the door opened and a female relative bounced into the room, almost gleefully.

Within a few minutes, she said, “Do you know who’s getting Auntie’s fur coat? Me!”

Horrified at her indiscretion, I said, “I don’t think this is the time or place to talk about it.”

“Don’t worry,” she said. “She’s in a coma and she won’t come out of it.”

“The sense of hearing is the last to go,” I said.

As if to rebut any further challenges, my cousin went to Aunt Martha’s closet, took out her long mink coat, threw it over her shoulders, and waltzed around the room.

I hadn’t thought of this incident for twenty years—not until last week when I reread Emily Dickinson’s renowned deathbed poem, “I Heard a Fly Buzz When I Died.” That’s when I realized the

ironic meaning of her words:

There interposed a fly  
With blue, uncertain, stumbling buzz  
Between the light and me

## “The Road Not Taken”

In the late 1950s, I heard Robert Frost read his poem “The Road Not Taken” at a poetry symposium at Loyola University in Chicago. I was fortunate to sit just a few feet away from this craggy faced crusty poet who read his poetry with a crackling voice. Hearing Frost read his works transported the listener to the lonely farms of New England where Frost lived and worked.

Asked many questions about his writings, Frost’s inevitable response about a specific work was “The poem means what it says and nothing more.” He said he was simply telling stories, not trying to convey more universal meanings as certain academicians had suggested. “It is up to each reader to find his meaning in my poetry for himself,” he said.

Although he knew he was disappointing his audience, Frost would go no further in explaining the philosophy or meaning behind his works. He was a rugged individual and, at this stage in his life, he was not going to bend to meet the public’s expectations.

Despite Frost’s own words that “The Road Not Taken” should be enjoyed as a literal tale of a walk in the woods, I see a more universal meaning with the poem symbolizing choices we make in our lives.

Career choices, for example, can have a profound impact on a person. When I chose to become an advertising writer, I had to forgo newspaper reporting which would have been “the road less traveled” because it paid less money. Financial independence was more important at that stage of my life so it guided my decision. I was “...sorry I could not travel both” roads. While I was stimulated and challenged in my advertising career, I sometimes look back and wonder what would have happened if I had taken a different path.

### “Anthem for Doomed Youth”

April 1996: I sit here in peacetime America reading “Anthem for Doomed Youth” by Wilfred Owen, the great English war poet who was killed in action just eight days before the World War I armistice.

Writing as he did on the front lines of the war, Owen knew his subject too well. His searing poems remind one not only of World War I and its terrible casualties, but also of the young men fighting and dying today in Chechnya, Bosnia, the Middle East and other hell-holes throughout the world.

Indeed, there are thousands of young men today who “die as cattle” and there are no “passing bells.” There is only “the monstrous anger of guns.”

In the late 1940s, war veterans on the GI Bill lived in quonset huts at the pleasant midwestern college which I attended. They seemed an age apart from their immature but more monied colleagues, who often viewed them as intruders into an otherwise luxurious campus life. These war survivors were less than honored; few of us knew or were made aware of the sacrifices they had made for all of us. They were judged solely by the shoestrings on which they lived.

During the Vietnam War, I was among those who opposed the war at its outset but found little leadership or opportunity to voice those views. Politicians, newspaper columnists and television commentators set the tone by backing the war. Those expressing anti-war sentiments were treated with hostility or people just politely changed the conversation. Only, belatedly, in the later years of the war, did middle-class, middle-aged people gather the courage to speak openly and march against the war...and I was one of them. Everyone knows of the ignominious return of the Vietnam veterans.

America, arms merchant of the world, bears responsibility for doomed youth around the world; for those dead and dying from “The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells.”

### “Peace”

If one were to take the poem “Peace” by George Herbert literally, one would believe the Christian religion is the only true repository for peace in this world. According to the poem’s speaker, the “peace, which everywhere...you do pursue” can be found in the gospels of Jesus Christ as told by the twelve apostles.

Indeed, for many millions, the daily reading of the scriptures has brought the “sweet peace” they were searching for. Many of them, however, have taken the words of the apostles literally and used them to support self-righteous beliefs and to denigrate others with different beliefs.

Throughout history, the Bible has been used to bolster religious wars and outrageous actions, including those of Jesuits in persecuting non-believers during the Inquisition. Catholic Popes have kept their followers in line for generations with pronouncements of infallibility based on the gospels.

Not just Christians and Catholics misuse the preaching of their “god.” Peoples of many religions have fought each other, and are still fighting, because of differences in beliefs. We have only to contemplate the ethnics and religious wars taking place today in Bosnia to realize that this phenomenon continues in our time. The Hamas servants of Allah give witness to similar terror as they pursue the Israelis with vindictiveness.

George Herbert weaves an effective story with his allegory about the prince of old “who lived with good increase of flock and fold.” However, I cannot but consider it a myth that the gospels will bring peace to mankind when that has not been their history to date.

### “Redemption”

In his allegorical poem “Redemption,” George Herbert tells us on the literal level about a tenant’s search for his “rich Lord” only to find him dying amid “a ragged noise and mirth of/thieves and murderers.” The generosity of the Lord is shown when he grants the tenant’s request to change his lease even as he dies.

The ulterior allegorical theme of this poem is based on God becoming man and descending to earth and being born the Christ child. It is possible that Herbert, an Anglican clergyman, considered his poem a reflection of two parallel stories: Christ’s redemption or atonement for the sins of mankind and the personal redemption or liberation of the tenant from his prior lease.

Because I was totally unfamiliar with Herbert and found his work quite obscure, I looked into his background and found he was born into one of Wales’ oldest and most distinguished families. Turning his back on secular ambition, he was ordained to priesthood and appointed rector of a country parish. One literary commentator said, “His work is permeated with references to service and to Christ as the type of suffering servant.”

Another critic said, “His poems reveal a struggle between soul and body, between church and the world. The soul finds peace, not in a God of wrath and judgment but in a personal God of tenderness and love.”

As a Roman Catholic child growing up in the 1930s and 1940s in America, I learned about a different side to God’s nature—as we were made aware of God’s wrath and punishment if we sinned so much as a venial (small) sin. A mortal (serious) sin meant eternal punishment in the fires of hell. Believe me, I was impressed. A mortal sin could be something as benign as missing Mass on Sunday!

With the increase in the higher education of Catholics in the 1950s and ’60s, the Church backed off its “hell and damnation” theories and began to present Herbert’s God of generosity, tenderness and love. It was a belated but good move. However, some of us old Catholics are a little more cynical this time around.

### “Mending Wall”

John Lynen says the poem “Mending Wall” by Robert Frost presents an unresolved question: “Should men tear down barriers which isolate individuals from one another or should we recognize that distinctions are necessary to human life?”

Several things happen in the poem which belie Mr. Lynen’s summation. The speaker, possibly the author, initiates the action of building barriers (the wall) by repairing damage done to the wall periodically and arranging for his neighbor to meet him at the wall for Spring fence mending.

Given this information, I would rephrase the poem’s unresolved question as follows: “Should one go along with his neighbor’s desire for barriers between people and the land to keep the peace—even though he thinks these barriers are unnecessary?” But that is not the problem at hand. I have been asked to comment on Lynen’s paraphrase of Frost’s poem, an interesting question in itself.

In my opinion, men should not be forced to tear down barriers which isolate individuals from one another. Those barriers should not be constructed in the first place. The barriers which whites used in the South to keep blacks out of public places such as schools, restaurants and shops were unfair and unjust. Similarly inappropriate were the exclusion of the Irish from jobs in the early part of this century with signs indicating “Irish Need Not Apply.” The barriers we put around Japanese-Americans in World War II and the taunting of German-Americans at that time are other examples of divisions that should never have been created between Americans. If barriers such as these exist, they should be destroyed with the same non-violent vigor Martin Luther King and his followers used to destroy racial inequities.

Having agreed that men **should** tear down barriers which isolate individuals from one another, I am compelled to plead that we should also “recognize that distinctions are necessary to human life.” Those qualities that differentiate individuals are “distinctions” that make us interesting, vital human

beings with the freedom to choose who we want to be and what we want to do with our lives. Distinctions are not barriers; they are merely innate differences and they should be treasured.

I believe that men should tear down barriers which isolate individuals from one another **and** we should recognize that distinctions are necessary to human life. I see no contradiction in these two assertions.

### “God’s Grandeur”

In the sonnet “God’s Grandeur,” Gerard Manley Hopkins asserts the world is filled or, as he says, “charged” with God’s splendor. Using metaphorical language, he compares the majesty of the world God has created with shaken foil which gives off brilliant light, like a flame. Hopkins further suggests that the world, like oil from crushed olives, “gathers to greatness.”

When Hopkins raises the compelling question: “Why do men then now not reckon by his rod?” he is asking why men haven’t taken care of God’s creation. He observes that generations have trod, seared and bleared the earth with their trade and toil so that the land now smells and lies bare down to the soil. Hopkins has stated the problem of the earth’s desecration astutely.

But then the shining optimist in Hopkins shows forth as he consoles us, promising “And for all this nature is never spent.” We are left with the definite impression that nature can survive man’s destruction of the environment because the earth is self-cleansing by “the dearest freshness deep down things”—and God is always waiting in the wings.

Hopkins may be a superb poet, but he makes a poor prophet and conservationist. Perhaps there were more hopeful signs of the earth’s rejuvenation in the 1800s since the world was far less polluted than it is today.

However Hopkin’s cavalier attitude, that the earth can recover from man’s despoliation, is the kind of thinking that has given huge corporations an excuse to pour pollutants into the world’s land, air and water.

Chernobyl and the Nevada Test Site have land that will take thousands of years, if ever, to recover from radioactive fallout. Turbid undrinkable water exists in cesspools at the “brown brink” eastward and westward. Millions living in New Delhi, Mexico City, Tehran and Los Angeles are forced to inhale unbreathable, stinking air. Rainforests along Brazil’s Amazon River, which could help cleanse the air, are rapidly being depleted for commercial gain.

It will take more than the Holy Ghost to clean up the messes man has created and bring “the black West” back to God’s grandeur.

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*Evaluation: I admire the lean style and wide-ranging reflections of Ms Quigg’s poetry journal.*

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# My Life as a Marginal Woman

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*by Jyoti Raghv*

Course: Honors English 101  
Instructors: Martha Simonsen

Assignment:

*Write an essay on your cultural heritage  
in response to the assigned reading,  
"Marginal Men."*

In an essay titled "Marginal Men," Barbara Ehrenreich writes that "the marginal man lives between two worlds—one that he aspires to and one that is dying" (48). In that sense, I am also a marginal woman caught between worlds—in more than one way. I am caught between socioeconomic worlds and caught between cultures. All these different worlds combine to create a conflict in me, but not between the worlds. My conflict, rather, is whether I should conform to my sociological groups—given my ethnic, national, religious, educational, and economic make up—or whether I should try to seek and find a deeper purpose and meaning in life and find an identity free from any sociological classification.

I am caught between socioeconomic worlds. My father has a Ph.D. and my mother is a college graduate, but my family's financial situation has not been commensurate with my parents' educational attainment or earning potential. Technically, I should be classified as upper-middle class. Most of my life, though, I have lived like the underclass. The difference between where I belong and the reality of my experience has made me uncomfortable identifying with either socioeconomic group—or any socioeconomic group. I feel comfortable in academic environments; however, when I come in contact with other intellectuals or educated persons, I feel out of place. On the other hand, I don't feel any solidarity with the uneducated either. My living conditions always classify me in upper-middle class neighborhoods, but I've never felt any connection with other upper-middle class families. Nevertheless, I can't see myself as belonging in an inner-city ghetto either. I am probably more apt to enjoy museums, to listen to classical music, and to mimic genteel manners than to go to bars or bowling alleys, drink beer or use profanity. I feel incredibly out of place in all these situations, though. Thus, I can't really find a place in either socioeconomic group, nor can I find any other socioeconomic group into which I fit.



I also feel caught between two cultures—Indian and American. I am too American to be Indian and vice versa. I don't completely fit in either society. I don't identify with popular American culture in music, dress, dance, or pastimes. I don't often go to movies, play video games, watch MTV, talk on the phone, or care how I look (to an extent). At the same time, I don't listen to Karnatic (classical Indian) or Hindi music, watch Indian movies, eat Indian food very often, learn Indian dance (Barat Natyam), wear saris, or immerse myself in Indian culture. I don't really surround myself with Indian groups more than American groups. I also feel no overwhelming personal concern with the problems in either society. I don't really worry about AIDS, drugs, divorce, or domestic abuse. Nor am I overly concerned about poverty, job availability, soaring inflation, or marrying a man I never saw before either. I don't think I am the quintessence of either culture, but I am caught somewhere in between.

Likewise, I can't really identify with American or Indian values. Nevertheless, I do hold values typical of each society. I believe, like most Americans, in individual liberty, privacy and accomplishment. However, I don't feel passionately enough about those American values—or others such as patriotism and property rights—to fight to defend them. Nor do I share the American penchant for joining groups, participating in democracy, and protesting injustices. On the Indian front, I share the values which stress closeness to the family, obedience to parents, no divorce, and no sex before marriage. I also find, though, that these values of both societies, while good, are not enough to give me an internal compass; they are not enough to live my life wholly by, nor do they satisfy the deeper needs of my soul. Thus, while holding values important in both societies, I think I am searching for something more to guide me through life.

My experience as a marginal woman has led me to a lot of confusion, conflicts, and conclusions. Being marginal has made me more aloof and reluc-

tant to associate with groups because it's hard for me to know and explain who I am and what I feel. I've become confused as to where I belong and feel dissatisfied and uncomfortable in all worlds. Moreover, none of these worlds has really satisfied my wants or needs. I've also begun to question what really would give me happiness and peace. My experience has made me desire inner peace and solitude more than belonging in any group. I hope one positive aspect of my experience is that it has made me realize not to judge people based on their labels of race, class, or ethnicity. I hope when I see an African-American or investment banker, I look for what's inside these people. Also, I hope I have realized that each individual has to be allowed the freedom to be what he or she needs to be. The most important effect of marginal experience—if I can carry it through—is that it drives me to find a deeper sense of life that will satisfy all my needs.

For a long time, I kept clinging to my old confused identities of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic class. Lately, though, I have found that these confusions have brought me neither peace nor security. Without a strong and clear identity, I have found it difficult to survive in the world. I have found that the need to truly know who I am and grow into a better person is not a noble aspiration but an absolute necessity. Living life on the fringes means that I will never have the ordinary securities others have from identification with or belonging to a certain group. Now I wish to seek a deeper sense and purpose in life and to find a way to bury all confusions, and live up to my potential.

Being a marginal woman caught between worlds has had a profound impact on me. The conflicts inherent in falling in between socioeconomic worlds and in between cultures has nurtured in me a strong desire to find inner peace and freedom. I have at many times been reluctant to relinquish old notions of my group identities in order to grow as an individual. Nor has the task been easy for me. I also know, however, that growing as an individual

and not conforming to a group identity is where my peace and happiness lie. Thus, like the marginal men in Ehrenreich's essay, I am also living between two worlds—one that I know is dying (a world where my identity is based on my external sociological groupings), and one to which I aspire (in which my identity is based on what's in my heart) (48).

#### Works Cited

Ehrenreich, Barbara. "Marginal Men." *The Worst Years of Our Lives: Irreverent Notes from a Decade* 1990. Rpt. in *Modern and Classical Essayists*. Ed. Paul Marx. Mountain View: Mayfield, 1996. 47-49.

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Evaluation: *Personal essayists often reassure us that our conventional opinions are acceptable. Jyoti refuses to pander. Her bold stand and honest voice challenge us to analyze widely-held assumptions about group identity.*

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# The Repellent Nature of the Existentialist in Society

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by Holly Rushakoff  
Course: Literature 115  
Instructor: Nancy L. Davis

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Assignment:

*Write a critical essay about one of the novels we have read for the course. Use ample text evidence to support and develop your focus.*

In *The Stranger*, Albert Camus explores the theme that life is absurd by casting Meursault as an existentialist who is rejected by society. Meursault experiences life through his senses rather than through emotions, he views society as judgmental and future-oriented, and his philosophy is based on the inexplicability of life. Due to his “abnormal” perceptions, he is considered an outcast and an unsuitable member of society; this is demonstrated through his trial and conviction for killing an Arab man. However, Meursault did not intend to kill the man; it was merely a reaction of self-defense, as Camus describes the scene. But because Meursault, the existentialist, and society are repellents of each other, society, if given the opportunity, necessarily rejects the existentialist.

Meursault portrays many factors of existentialism. First of all, he lives through the immediacy of his senses. His opinions reflect his senses of sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste, as opposed to opinions and judgments regarding morality and feelings, like love, sadness, or companionship. While Meursault cannot love his girlfriend, Marie, in an intangible way, he loves the physicality of her: he “wanted her so bad when [he] saw her in that pretty red-and-white striped dress” (33), he craved “the salty smell Marie’s hair [leaves] on the pillow,” (20) and when they played in the water, as his mouth stung “with the salty bitterness[, it was Marie’s] tongue [that] cooled [his] lips” (33). Rather than lamenting Maman’s death, Meursault “dozed off,” “probably because of all the rushing around...the bumpy ride [to Marengo], the smell of gasoline, and the glare of the sky and the road” (4). The parts of life that affect Meursault are the instantaneous interactions, which sometimes are so intense that it is “hard for [him] to see or think straight” (16). During the funeral procession, “with the sun bearing down,...the whole landscape [shimmered] with heat[;] it was inhuman and oppressive” (15). Meursault felt powerless and viewed the sun as an abusive source. When Raymond, a neighbor, tries to start a companionship with him, Meursault accepts his offer for blood sausage and wine, figur-

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ing “it would save [Meursault] the trouble of having to cook for himself” (27). Instead of thinking of bonding, Meursault is persuaded to join Raymond because of a free meal. Even as he explained himself to the lawyer, Meursault said his “physical needs often got in the way of [his] feelings” (63).

As an existentialist, Meursault believes that life is inexplicable, thus absurd. When he walks outside during his mother’s funeral procession, he agrees with the nurse who noted that “if you [walk] slowly, you risk getting sunstroke. But if you go too fast, you work up a sweat and then catch a chill inside the church” (16-17). In that sense, life is like a trap. According to Meursault, “there [is] no way out” (17, 78). He is also uncritical of the actions of others. While it seems that Meursault has no morals, the truth is that he does not judge others, or place expectations upon them. Some may doubt Meursault’s morality because he does not stand up with those who announce their opinion. However, he listens to people’s logic or observes them. For example, Salamano, a neighbor, has a scabby spaniel that he takes care of, but he also beats it. Almost like a power struggle, the man “in hatred” (26) bestows terror in the dog. Many of Meursault’s acquaintances find the beatings pitiful and disgusting. According to Meursault, “really, who’s to say?” (26). When asked for advice from Raymond about his mistress who cheated on him, Meursault thought one “can’t ever be sure” what one would do in another’s situation, but he “understood Raymond’s wanting to punish her” (30). Meursault’s boss offered him an advancement to Paris, thinking that it was “the kind of life that would appeal” (40) to him. Meursault responded by staying where he was at, because “really it was all the same” (40) to him. Believing existence is absurd, Meursault “said that people never change their lives, that in any case one life was as good as another...and [he] couldn’t see any reason to change” his life (40). Even wishing for a different life “didn’t mean any more than wishing to be rich, to be able to swim faster, or to have a more nicely shaped mouth” (114). In fact, he thinks “everyone knows

that life isn’t worth living” (108). He says since everyone will die, “it’s obvious that when and how don’t matter” (109).

During Meursault’s trial, his lawyer claimed that the “perfect reflection of this trial [was that] everything is true and nothing is true” (88). This is absurd, yet explainable. When people have beliefs, in their mind they claim to know the ‘truth.’ But if the belief cannot be proven beyond faith, as is the case with religion, then it cannot be factually true. Because Meursault relies on his senses for information and it is through his senses that he shows any emotions, he understandably cannot believe in a God or an afterlife. Life is left incomprehensible, and searching for meaning is essentially a lost cause. So, when Meursault is convicted, “despite [his] willingness to understand, [he] just couldn’t accept such arrogant certainty” at first (104). Retaining the idea of the absurdity in life, Meursault felt “there really was something ridiculously out of proportion between the verdict such certainty was based on and the imperturbable march of events from the moment the verdict was announced” (104). Because he believes that life is unexplainable, Meursault did not appreciate the chaplain trying to force him to be religious. He explained that he “didn’t want anybody’s help, and [he] just didn’t have the time to interest himself in what didn’t interest him” (111). While the chaplain pitied Meursault, Meursault was annoyed with him. Meursault said, “I was guilty, I was paying for it, and nothing more could be asked of me” (112). Because his life happens as the clock ticks, he spent his life in the moment, with the ticks, whereas the chaplain lived for the time after his life. Meursault viewed him as “living like a dead man”: “he wasn’t even sure he was alive” (114). While the chaplain tried to instill a faith in God, or some sentient being, into Meursault’s beliefs, Meursault could only relate to such a search when he looked for a face “as bright as the sun and the flame of desire—and it belonged to Marie. [He] had searched for it in vain” (113). He thought that the chaplain’s so-called “certainties [were not] worth one hair of a woman’s head” (114). It seems that

that is all life can be for Meursault: pleasure and content through tangibility.

Another existentialist characteristic of Meursault was his opposition to conformity, or society. Meursault first sees the constriction of conformity in the tiny society of the old people's home. When passing groups of patients, the talking ceased, only to resume when Meursault and the director left. As if in a cage, "the sound was like the muffled jabber of parakeets" (5). Besides such implied restriction, Meursault noticed that they would make "weird smacking noises" when keeping vigil; "they were so lost in their thoughts that they weren't even aware of it" (10). The distance that they have created between themselves and their environment suggests the dissonance in society. Their presence gave Meursault "the ridiculous feeling that they were there to judge [him]" (9). One instance that typifies society is when a strange woman sits at Meursault's table at Celeste's restaurant. She was very methodical, "ordered her whole meal all at once,...added up the bill in advance, then took the exact amount, plus tip" (42) and put it out on the table. This "robot-like" (42) woman was planning so far into the future that she was out of her meal before she even started it. While waiting for her second course of food, she planned all of the radio programs she would listen to for the week. Definitely, this woman was not spontaneous, but quite rigid and unchanging in her ways and movements. In contrast to planning out actions, when Meursault had nothing to do, he would act on impulse, like when he followed the robot-lady. Her second appearance is in the courtroom during Meursault's trial where she, as well as others, seemed imposing, "without saying a word" (85). The prosecutor of the case said that Meursault "had no place in society whose most fundamental rules [he] ignored and that [Meursault] could not appeal to the same human heart whose elementary response [he] knew nothing of" (98). Not only did Meursault disagree, though latently, with society, but society disagreed with him. Having more power, society ejected Meursault from his place. Meursault, true to his existentialist nature, accepted

the inevitability of his death. As an existentialist, Meursault could not survive in society.

Although Meursault did murder the Arab, an act deserving punishment, we can see in a re-evaluation of the scene that he had no motives; he reacted in self-defense because of the compound intensity of the sun and heat. Camus captured the afternoon in an almost hellish tone. Meursault became increasingly hot and tired. With "rocky heat rising from the ground" (50) his breathing was interrupted. Throughout the scene, the sun tortured Meursault, whether it was "beating down on [his] bare head" (50), "overpowering [him by shattering] into little pieces on the sand and water" (52), glinting off Raymond's gun (53), or falling in a "blinding stream" (54), while Meursault's head was "ringing" or "swelling" (54). Soon, the air was "fiery" (55), and the entire beach was "throbbing in the sun,...pressing on [his] back" (55). The sun crept into a more personal region of Meursault, "starting to burn [his] cheeks" (56); now even the veins in his forehead throbbed. The injurious sun afflicted Meursault: "It was this burning, which [he] couldn't stand anymore, that made [him] move forward" (56). At this point, Meursault stepped into the realm of the Arab, who became the sun materialized into a form that Meursault could attack. However, it was not that Meursault was anguished by the sun and then acted out on the Arab. It was the Arab who first assaulted Meursault. The Arab made the sun deliver its final blows to Meursault. As soon as the Arab drew his knife, he "held it up to [Meursault] in the sun...[when] light shot off the steel...like a long flashing blade cutting at [his] forehead" (56). Sweat covered Meursault's eyes with a "warm, thick film. [His] eyes were blinded behind the curtain of tears and salt" (56). Next, he felt "cymbals of sunlight crashing on [his] forehead and, indistinctly, the dazzling spear flying up from the knife in front of [him]. The scorching blade slashed at [his] eyelashes and stabbed at [his] stinging eyes" (56). Camus wrote this scene to sound like the Arab was attacking Meursault with his knife, although we know it was not a flesh-piercing

assault. At the climax, the sea thrust “thick, fiery breath” and Meursault felt as though “the sky split open from one end to the other to rain down fire” (56). Fighting a symbolic death, Meursault tensed and “squeezed [his] hand around the revolver” (56). Camus did not write that Meursault actively pulled the trigger, but that “the trigger gave” (56). It was an innocent action, and justifiable in the existentialist’s view. After realizing that the gun already fired, Meursault wanted to be in control of his actions, not carried away by an outside force, so he then shot the Arab four more times. Society cannot accept that the sun causes a man to murder another man; it is not understandable.

The trial is the formal step to eject Meursault, although the trial ended up condemning Meursault more for the lack of mourning for his mother at her funeral than for the killing. Society cannot ingest his way of life; thus he is expelled. His act of killing results in his necessary separation. Perhaps he wanted to separate himself from society once and for all, even if it was an unconscious desire. Society, though, decides to kill him, rather than deciding on a less severe punishment, because it cannot relate to his way of life. An existentialist has no place in society. Meursault is an existentialist, mistaken by society for a heartless monster with no sense of morality. His “abnormality” leads to his conviction. Society is unable to sustain an existentialist, a non-conformist. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary that society execute Meursault.

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Evaluation: *Holly demonstrates a keen understanding of Camus’s controversial protagonist. Her detailed analysis and lucid explanations would convince the most skeptical reader that Meursault’s actions are “sense-sible.”*

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# Anne Bradstreet: A Soul Divided

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*by Steve Shepard*  
Course: Literature 221  
Instructor: Xilao Li

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Assignment:  
*Choose a writer from the Colonial period of  
American literature, relating the writer's work  
to the age she/he lived in*

Anne Bradstreet once wrote, "I have often been perplexed that I have not found that constant joy in my pilgrimage and refreshing which I supposed most of the servants of God have....Many times hath Satan troubled me concerning the verity of the Scriptures, many times by atheism how I could know whether there was a God; I never saw any miracles to confirm me, and those which I read of, how did I know but they were feigned? I know whom I have trusted, and whom I have believed, and that He is able to keep that I have committed to His charge....I have argued thus with myself" (243-45).

Anne Bradstreet (1612?-1672) was foremost a Puritan. She was thus assigned a doctrinaire life of absolute adherence to the stringent tenets of her religion. The Puritans, however, were faced with a dilemma, which arose directly from Puritan doctrine. Edmund Morgan expounds: "Puritanism required that a man devote his life to seeking salvation but told him he was helpless to do anything but evil. Puritanism required that he rest his whole hope in Christ but taught him that Christ would utterly reject him unless before he was born God had foreordained his salvation. Puritanism required that man refrain from sin but told him he would sin anyhow" (7-8). In short, "the Puritan way of life was, at worst, a series of impossible conflicts, and at best a difficult balance" (Richardson 102). As a Puritan, then, Bradstreet was caught in a vicious struggle between her earthly and spiritual lives, both of which, according to Puritan doctrine, could not exist together; for the Puritan's life on earth was to be wholly spent striving for salvation; terrestrial pursuits were to be forsaken.

It was with the mixed emotions and turmoil that accompanied her internal strife that Bradstreet imbued her poetry. Her verse, although teeming with biblical references, both explicit and tacit, and espousing such Puritan tenets as the exaltation of both the omnipotent God and the quest for regeneration, is permeated by an inexorable ambivalence, a wrenching struggle to reconcile the seemingly contradictory temporal and divine realms. Indeed, even

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the most cursory of perusals of the Bradstreet canon, from such masterpieces as "Contemplations, Upon the Burning of Our House" and "The Flesh and the Spirit" to such minor works as "To My Dear and Loving Husband" and "On Simon Bradstreet," reveals a "pattern of unresolved antitheses" (Stanford 76).

"Contemplations," Bradstreet's lengthy tribute to the sublimity of both nature and heaven, presents a series of contrasting sentiments. The most prominent conflict to be found here is that between mortality (earthly life) and immortality (spiritual life). Most striking in the poem is the juxtaposition of Stanzas 19 and 20: in Stanza 19 the poet laments:

By birth more noble than those creatures all,  
Yet seems by nature and by custom cursed,  
No sooner born, but grief and care makes fall  
That state obliterate he had at first;  
Nor youth, nor strength, nor wisdom spring again,  
Nor habitation long their names retain,  
But in oblivion to the final day remain. (209-10)

Here, man is born into a wretched and futile condition. The accursed life of "grief" he leads results only in "obliteration"; both he and his "habitations" are assigned to "oblivion." No mention, either explicit or allusory, is made of regeneration or God's grace. The terrestrial life is but carnal and, as all things of the flesh, must de cease, decompose and disappear.

The very next stanza, however, exudes quite a different sentiment. In Stanza 20 the poet reconsiders her previous posture:

Shall I then praise the heavens, the trees, the earth  
Because their beauty and their strength last longer?  
Shall I wish there, or never to had birth,  
Because they're bigger and their bodies stronger?  
Nay, they shall darken, perish, fade and die,  
And when unmade, so ever shall they lie,  
But man was made for endless immortality. (210)

The poet, comparing man to all products of nature, realizes that the "heavens, trees and earth," with their "strength and beauty," are relegated to the same dismal fate as that of man. They will "darken, perish, fade and die" and thus join man in his nothingness.

By the last line of the stanza, Bradstreet has

recanted the claims made by her worldly voice: in concluding, "But man was made for endless immortality," she has unequivocally embraced Puritan dogma. Yet, the credibility of her faith is dubious at best, for the argument of Stanza 19 is so compelling as to significantly diminish the potency of her conclusion. Thus, although in "Contemplations" Bradstreet ostensibly settles the dispute between the temporal and the ethereal, it is quite clear that her resolution is no better than tenuous.

The clash between heaven and earth is again a major theme in "Upon the Burning of Our House," a poem written after a fire had consumed Bradstreet's home in Andover on 12 July 1666. The poet's first reaction after describing the conflagration in some detail is a not too heartfelt acquiescence:

And when I could no longer look,  
I blest His name that gave and took,  
That laid my goods now in the dust.  
Yea, so it was, and so 'twas just.  
It was His own, it was not mine,  
Far be it that I should repine;  
He might of all justly bereft  
But yet sufficient for us left. (292)

She is suddenly smitten by a sense of lost earthly possessions:

Here stood that trunk, and there that chest,  
There lay that store I counted best.  
My pleasant things in ashes lie,  
And them behold no more shall I. (ibid)

She then lapses into ambivalence, with which she closes:

Then straight I 'gin my heart to chide,  
And did thy wealth on earth abide?  
Didst fix thy hope on mold'ring dust?  
The arm of flesh didst make thy trust?...  
Thou hast an house on high erect,  
Framed by that mighty Architect,  
With glory richly furnished,  
Stands permanent though this be fled...  
There's wealth enough, I need no more,  
Farewell, my pelf, farewell, my store.  
The world no longer let me love,  
My hope and treasure lies above. (ibid)



Clearly Bradstreet, although accepting this act of Providence, is horrified at the price she has had to pay for being one of God's children. The juxtaposition in the last two couplets of secular and numinous thoughts, in particular, bespeaks both a painful strife and a tenuous faith. While the very last line of the poem shuns terrestrial "treasure," a disquieting skepticism remains. Phrases such as "though this be fled," "I need no more" and "no longer let me love" indicate uncertainty. Moreover, the use of the word "too" in "it's purchased and paid for *too* (my italics)" suggests that the poet feels a need to justify to herself her faith in God. In short, once again Bradstreet defers to religious principle at the close of a poem; yet here her overt uncertainty betrays both diffidence and mistrust in God.

The minor works of Bradstreet, like the major works, are heavily permeated by the secular-spiritual battle. Indeed, her many elegies and "letters" to her husband are rife with expressions of ambivalence. What is singular in the case of Bradstreet's lesser works is her uncanny ability to successfully pit the worldly and the otherworldly against each other, and thus create tension, despite the brevity of these poems, many of which are but a few stanzas in length. Occasionally, as in the case of "To My Dear and Loving Husband," composed during one of her husband's many absences from home, she invokes conflict in but a single couplet: the poem closes thus,

Then while we live, in love let's so persevere  
That when we live no more, we may live ever. (225)

Here the poet expresses a desire that the love between herself and her spouse transcend the temporal realm, thereby defying the finality of death and achieving eternal love in heaven.

While this sentiment is sublime, it contravenes the very Puritan dogma that it appears to advocate. As Morgan explains, "It was the Puritan belief that a marriage was dissolved at death. Marriage was for the earthly life only, and in after life [sic] any union between spirits was no longer in effect. A person must not love any earthly thing too much, and even

excessive grief for a departed spouse or child was contrary to God's command, since it showed that one had too much regard for the things of this world" (49). Thus Bradstreet, while appearing to embrace the tenet of her religion, is actually embracing an idolatrous notion that borders on blasphemy. Robert Daly distinguishes between love of God and idolatry: "Though man is permitted, indeed required, to love the world, then, he must 'wean' his affections from the unmixed love of it if he is to pass from this world to the next. The man who cannot do so gives to the creature a complete love rightfully belonging to the creator and therefore commits idolatry" (85). The Bradstreet of "To My Dear and Loving Husband" clearly has not "weaned" her "affections" from her earthly lover and, consequently, is guilty of idol worship. Once again, the fire of ambivalence blazes through her verse.

"On Simon Bradstreet," an elegy to her grandchild, who was but one month of age upon his death, is perhaps the most telling of the strife between body and spirit that so doggedly afflicted Bradstreet. To be sure, the poem is a diatribe against God. Here, the poet tears away the shroud of enigma that served to dissemble her true sentiments in such poems as "Upon the Burning of Our House," "To My Dear and Loving Husband" and "The Flesh and the Spirit" (discussed below). Line 8 begins the denunciation:

Cropt by th' Almighty's hand; yet is He good.  
With dreadful awe before Him let's be mute,  
such was His will, but why, let's not dispute,  
With humble hearts and mouths put in the dust,  
Let's say He's merciful as well as just. (237)

Quite apparent are the poet's lividity with and weariness of God. Readily discernible too is her lack of fear of any retribution at God's hand for her near-execration of Him. Words and phrases such as "yet" and "but why," in conjunction with the repeated use of the contraction "let's," indicate the poet's being stretched to the limits of self-restraint, doing all in her power not to spew forth the curses that flood both her heart and mind.

The poem closes in typical Bradstreet fashion:

He will return and make up all our losses,  
And smile again after our bitter crosses  
Go pretty babe, go rest with sisters twain;  
Among the blest in endless joys remain. (ibid)

Bradstreet's verses, in general, conclude with an embracing of God that possesses some semblance of veracity. In the case of "On Simon Bradstreet," however, the closing deference to the "Almighty" is but a gratuitous gesture, an inclusion of Puritan dogma that is, at best, perfunctory. Randall Mawer affirms, "This closing couplet does not quiet the ironic echoes of the opening one, which establishes the subject of the poem as the living, not the dead, and whose proverbial tone captures perfectly the numbed first awareness of loss" (209). The same critic wryly and accurately recapitulates, "In short, 'let's pretend, like convicts, to accept the omnipotent warden's rules, since even a life sentence comes to an end. 'He will return, and make up all our losses, / And smile again after our bitter crosses.' (We can at least hold God to His promise that He will show, on Christ's second coming, the justice and mercy apparently withheld in striking down the baby Simon.)"

Of the entire Bradstreet canon, no single work is as indicative of the poet's internal struggle as is "The Flesh and the Spirit." Indeed, this work is the embodiment of the earth-versus-heaven conflict. The poem is in the form of a dialogue between Flesh and Spirit, personified as twin sisters. Flesh is the first to speak. She begins with a series of questions that, although acerbic in tone, are posed both lucidly and concisely:

Sister, quoth Flesh, what liv'st thou on,  
Nothing but meditation?  
Doth contemplation feed thee so  
Regardlessly to let earth go?  
Can speculation satisfy  
Notion without reality?  
Dost dream of things beyond the moon,  
And dost thou hope to dwell there soon?  
Hast treasures there laid up in store  
That all in th' world thou count'st but poor?  
Art fancy sick, or turned a sot  
To catch at shadows which are not? (215)

She then declares,

Earth hath more silver, pearls, and gold  
Than eyes can see or hands can hold. (215-16)

Spirit interrupts,

Be still thou unregenerate part,  
Disturb no more my settled heart,...  
Thy sinful pleasures I do hate,  
Thy riches are to me no bait,  
Thine honours do, nor will I love;  
For my ambition lies above. (216)

She then defends the ethereal:

The hidden manna I do eat,  
The word of life it is my meat.  
My thoughts do yield me more content  
Than can thy hours in pleasure spent...  
Eternal substance I do see,  
With which enriched I would be.  
Mine eye doth pierce the heavens and see  
What is invisible to thee. (217)

Spirit closes by exalting God's eternal heaven:

Of life, there are the waters sure,  
Which shall remain forever pure,  
Nor sun, nor moon, they have no need,  
For glory doth from God proceed.  
No candle there, nor yet torchlight,  
For there shall be no darksome night.  
From sickness and infirmity  
For evermore they shall be free. (217-18)

Upon first glance, one may deduce that Spirit has triumphed in this debate; for her lines comprise two-thirds of the poem's length. What's more, her discourse is much more poetic than that of her earthly twin: she speaks of such niceties as walls "made of precious jasper stone," "gates of pearl," "the Lamb's throne," "streets [of] transparent gold," "a crystal river" and waters both "sure" and "forever pure." Through scrutiny, however, it becomes quite clear that Flesh has fared far better than Spirit in their intercourse. Bradstreet has wittingly tipped the poetic scale in Flesh's favor via a stark contrast of character—that is, Flesh, albeit far from being a pleasant creature, is the more likeable of the two sisters. She is both compelling and concise, using incisive questions and wasting no words; she is tolerant of her sister's "notion without reali-

ty" ("Affect's thou pleasure? Take thy fill,/Earth hath enough of what you will"); and she is confident, not once wavering in her convictions. Spirit, to the contrary, is a pitiful creature: she is hateful ["For I have vowed (and so will do)/Thee as a foe still to pursue./And combat with thee will and must,/Until I see thee laid in th' dust"]; she is intolerant ("This city pure is not for thee,/For things unclean there shall not be"); she is difficult ("Be still thou unregenerate part,/Disturb no more my settled heart," and "Thou speak'st me fair, but hat'st me sore,/Thy flatt'ring shows I'll trust no more./How oft thy slave, hast thou me made,/When I believed what thou hast said,/And never had more cause of woe/Than when I did what thou had'st do"); she is garrulous, using 72 lines of verse to render her point (Flesh eloquently pleads her case in but 28 lines); and, most damning of all, Spirit is hypocritical ("My crown not diamonds, pearls and gold,/But such as angels' heads enfold./The city where I hope to dwell,/There's none on earth can parallel;/The stately walls both high and strong,/Are made of precious jasper stone;/The gates of pearl, both rich and clear..."). Referring to Spirit's hypocrisy, Robert Richardson derides, "Spirit describes heaven in the very material terms she has just scorned....Spirit does not reject jewels; she merely rejects terrestrial jewels in the hope of finer ones elsewhere" (105).

To lend credibility to the tenets espoused by both Flesh and Spirit, Bradstreet plays the role of concealed listener. She opens the poem, "In secret place where once I stood/Close by the banks of Lacrim flood,/I heard two sisters reason on/Things that are past and things to come" (215). By the tenth line, the poet has completely removed herself from the poem. Thus, by refraining from direct commentary—that is, by letting the sisters speak for themselves—she permits Flesh to outshine her counterpart and Spirit to falter without external intervention. If Bradstreet is an active participant in the debate, the effectiveness (or ineffectiveness) of the speakers is altered. Moreover, to play a role in a discourse of this scope (heaven versus hell) is necessarily to sacrifice objec-

tivity. Yet, ironically, Bradstreet has so stacked the deck against Spirit as to betray a predilection for the world of Flesh. While certainly lacking both the pathos of "Upon the Burning of Our House" and the causticity of "On Simon Bradstreet," "The Flesh and the Spirit" is nonetheless a sagacious and spirited incarnation of the struggle between the carnal and the divine, which only in death would cease to try Bradstreet's soul.

In the final analysis, then, Anne Bradstreet was a poet torn between the claims upon her soul of two worlds: those of heaven and earth. On the one hand, the dogma of her religion dictated that she forsake her earthly life for that of her spirit, while, on the other, her heart, mind and body indicated to her that this spirit was not alone. That the reconciliation of these two realms caused her tremendous anguish is testified to by her verse. Furthermore, a close reading of her canon reveals shades, or degrees, of ambivalence: there are serene recognition, as in "Contemplations"; veiled defiance, as in "To My Dear and Loving Husband," abject lamentation, as in "The Flesh and the Spirit," and audacious denunciation, as in "On Simon Bradstreet."

It is precisely this ambivalent quality that separates the works of Bradstreet from those of her contemporaries. At a time when other Puritan writers, such as Michael Wigglesworth and Edward Taylor, were rehashing tired, old biblical passages and overindulging in self-righteous pontification, Bradstreet was breaking literary ground, exploring the depths of her divided soul and recording her revelations in her verse. She was unafraid to challenge the doctrine of her faith, from the spurning of the mundane to both the reputed omnipotence and integrity of her creator and His role in her secular life. Her genuine and ardent expression of this internal strife breathes life into Bradstreet's poetry and is responsible for its being highly readable today, nearly 350 years after its composition. Her notions of earthly love and worldly passion were sentiments that would not be fully explored until the nineteenth century, during which Romanticism would take the literary world by storm. Thus, while Anne Bradstreet is incontrovertibly America's first published poet, her lit-

erary reputation must ultimately repose elsewhere: she is, undoubtedly, America's premier Romantic poet.

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Evaluation: *With accuracy and clarity, the essay offers an insightful reading of Anne Bradstreet's dilemma and charm as a Puritan, a woman and a poet.*

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# The Case of the Missing Nobleman

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by Barbara Singer

Course: English 102

Instructor: Nancy L. Davis

Assignment:

*Barbara chose to write a sequel to Edgar Allen Poe's  
"The Cask of Amontillado"  
for the creative section of her final class portfolio.*

The knocking kept on—it just wouldn't stop. I finally dragged myself out of bed as I realized the noise was coming from outside my front door. There was a young boy standing there with a note for me. I fumbled for a coin to give him, while unfolding the message. And what a strange message it was. Lady Fortunato wanted me to find her husband. It seems he disappeared during carnival last night. I wondered—perhaps he had a little too much of some of that vintage wine he seems to love.

Perhaps I should introduce myself. I am Detectri, a finder of lost or misplaced people. Most of my time is spent finding wayward husbands, and carnival is one of my busiest seasons. I had just settled down for some well-deserved rest when I received

this missive. Lady Fortunato had asked that I meet her at the palazzo at once, so I wearily readied myself for my appointment, wrapping my *roque-laïre* tightly around me.

When I came upon Lady Fortunato, I was stunned by her appearance. Her sturdy good looks were marred by the ravages of tears and sleeplessness. It seems that her husband, Fortunato, was supposed to meet her in this very spot not twelve hours earlier. It was unlike him to not appear, she explained, as he was a very punctual, dependable person. She feared foul play and that was why I was summoned. I began to question her about her husband, as I really knew him very little.

"He is rich, respected, admired, beloved" she replied, almost by rote. I wondered at this, but decided to say nothing.

"Did he have any enemies, anyone who might wish him harm?" I asked.

"Nooo, not an enemy exactly," she said, hesitating. "It's just Montresor that I really don't trust."

"What are you saying, woman?" I almost shouted. "Montresor comes from a long line of well respected noblemen. You cannot believe that he was the cause of any ill fortune to your husband!"

"Well, no, perhaps not. It is just his smile—it never touches his eyes. I know Fortunato can be difficult sometimes, even insulting to those he might consider friends. I don't think Montresor is the kind of man to endure insults," she explained.

It wasn't much to go on, but it was really all Lady Fortunato could tell me. I decided to trace Fortunato's steps last night from the time he was last seen. It seems he had much to drink and was reveling in the streets, dressed in costume complete with bells on his cap. I was told by witnesses that a man, matching the description of Montresor, accosted him at dusk, shaking his hand heartily. There was much noise and revelry in the streets, so very little was heard from their conversation, other than the one word, "Amontillado." Though I have very little interest in old wines, even I knew that this is a highly valued, expensive potion. Both Montresor and Fortunato were seen to be heading

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in the direction of Montresor's palazzo.

In a rare stroke of good fortune, I came upon Montresor's chief house attendant. I doggedly questioned him about the day before and, after a few gold coins were passed to him, he reluctantly admitted that he and all Montresor's servants had left the home unattended to "make merry" at the carnival. With the thinly-veiled threat of exposure of his absenteeism, I was able to convince him to let me investigate the Montresor estate.

I didn't know what I was looking for, I just felt that Montresor's home held the key. After examining the suites of rooms on the first floor, I descended into the vaults below. Was it possible that these two friends had partaken of too much Amontillado, and were fast asleep among the bones of Montresor's ancestors? I would soon find out.

The walls were covered with the white web-work of nitre. Good thing I am not sensitive to all this dampness and mold. "Wait, what is this I see?" I exclaim aloud. I hold my light up high over a bit of sparkling glass. It is the jagged, broken neck of a bottle of Medoc, lying next to a row of full bottles. It is almost as if someone had to have a drink quickly, as if he were choking or coughing, and a bottle was grabbed, for the top was knocked off, and the bottle drained.

I continued along my chosen path, which was littered with piles of skeletons and the occasional cask. There sure were other places I would rather be! The nitre was even more extensive here, hanging "like moss upon the vaults." Again my light picked up the reflections of glass—another broken bottle neck? I was beginning to think this was exceedingly odd. I continued descending deeper into the catacombs until I arrived at a foul smelling crypt.

I let my light wander over the walls in which I stood. I have never seen so many piles of human bones. Every Montresor who ever lived was apparently now residing here. I felt the cold chill of fear pass down my spine, and I furtively glanced behind me. Had I heard a sound? No, I am sure it was just my imagination.

Carefully, I began to examine the crypt in which I stood. Human skeletons were piled high to the ceiling on three sides, and a brick wall between two of the roof supports made up the fourth side. I ran my light along these walls and up to the vault overhead, realizing that I wasn't going to find anything here. Just as I turned to leave, I tripped and stumbled over some bones on the floor. I lost my footing and fell into the brick wall. Wait, what was this? I touched fresh mortar—how was that possible? I ran my hands up and down this wall and, yes, this mortar was fresh. What could be behind this wall? What reason would anyone have to brick it up? Do I hear the muffled tinkling of bells? As all of these questions bombarded me, I suddenly knew the answer. Montresor had walled up his friend, Fortunato. What kind of fiend would do this? The words of Lady Fortunato rang in my ears, "I don't think Montresor is the kind of man to endure insults."

I need to get out of here; I need to get help to tear down this wall. Maybe it wasn't too late for poor Fortunato. As I turned to go, an unexplained gust of wind blew out my light. However, before the light was extinguished, I could have sworn I saw someone wearing a mask of black silk heading my way.

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*Evaluation: Poe is a tough act to follow, but Barb is up to the task in her imaginative and convincing sequel to one of Poe's most harrowing tales of revenge.*

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# Microbrews

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by Phillip Stahnke  
Course: Journalism 133  
Instructor: Rhea Dawson

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Assignment:

*Write an informational feature article that explains, explores or examines an idea or issue. The emphasis may be on educating, entertaining or enlightening!*

Go into a liquor store these days just to buy a beer, and you'll find yourself in for a big surprise. Gone are the days of just Bud, Miller and Old Style. Now you can find beers like Anchor Steam, Honker's Ale, and Redhook.

These beers are called microbrews. A microbrew is defined as a brewery that turns out 15,000 barrels or less per year.

According to the Institute for Brewing Studies, in 1992 microbrews accounted for more than one million barrels of beer.

"The industry has grown at a rate of 40 percent per year for the last four years," says association marketing director Lori Tullberg-Kelly.

But why have microbrews become so popular recently? Dave Bryla, co-owner of James Page Brewery in Minneapolis, has one idea.

"People drink microbrews because they see it as a small luxury. Someone may not afford to buy the best clothes or a nice car, but they can buy a good beer. They are willing to spend \$6 on a six pack."

Bryla said.

Bryla, who recently left his job as marketing manager at General Mills to purchase the James Page Brewery, considers himself a microbrew fanatic. He says the sudden popularity of microbrews led him to purchase the brewery.

"Noticing that the number of microbrew drinkers are increasing, and the fact that sales of this product [James Page beer] have been increasing slightly over the past five years with little or no marketing, leads me to believe that we can make this a successful and even more popular brew," Bryla says.

Steve Dienhart, co-owner of Chicago Brewing Company, believes that there is a combination of effects on the microbrew popularity.

"People are not only drinking less, but they are drinking better. They want more pleasure out of drinking," Dienhart says.

Dienhart also believes beer drinkers are looking for a fresher and better tasting beer. Dienhart concludes by saying that people are searching for quality in a beer, not quantity.

The popularity has been seen at liquor stores as well as some bars. Binny's Beverage Depot, a liquor store in Mt. Prospect, carries over 750 different types of beer. Approximately 100 of those are microbrews, the sales of which are good.

"Microbrew sales account for only 5 percent of our beer sales, but sales are increasing rapidly," says Brett Pontoni, store manager and the beer purchaser for Binny's. "In fact, I make more money on one six-pack of Sam Adams premium lager than I do on one case of Miller Lite."

Pontoni adds that the microbrew industry is definitely hot.

"People hear other people talk about a certain microbrew and they will come in and pick up a six pack, but they will still buy a case of Miller Lite. Eventually though, they will only end up buying the microbrew, because the taste doesn't even compare," Pontoni says.

Binny's also sells home brew supplies for people who enjoy the hobby of home brewing. Pontoni

says that home brew enthusiasts also help the microbrew industry.

"Most people who are into the whole home brew thing enjoy a microbrew more than a mass-produced beer. So when they come in to pick up supplies for their home brew, they will buy some sort of microbrew, because they are already used to drinking a fresh beer that they produce. So while they are waiting for their brew to finish fermenting, they will drink the microbrew," Pontoni says.

Bars are also cashing in on the microbrew trend. Goose Island Brewing Company General Manager, Kevin Welsh, says bars are definitely interested in his microbrew.

"Currently in the Chicagoland area, approximately 400 different tap sites carry out Honker's Ale. It definitely shows that the market wants a fresher, better product," Welsh says.

Another key that has been instrumental in the popularity of microbrews has been "beer of the month clubs" such as the Great American Beer Club.

For about \$20 a month, customers will receive a gift box containing three or four different microbrews, a monthly newsletter with detailed descriptions of different brewing techniques and the history of selected microbrews.

"Our niche is delivering the beer fresh with good education materials and great customer service," says Doug Doretto, co-owner of the Beer Club.

As of May 1995, the Great American Beer Club had nearly 8,000 customers with more than 40 joining each day.

Seeing the recent popularity of microbrews, the big, corporate brewers have been buying shares of microbrews. For example, Anheuser-Busch purchased 25 percent of the Redhook Ale Brewery.

Anheuser-Busch will be in charge of distribution only. The company will have nothing to do with the marketing or brewing at all.

"This is a one of a kind alliance," Redhook Ale marketing assistant Elizabeth Wilson said. "Two companies who really have a lot to give each other team up in order to reach the consumer."

But does the idea of the corporate brewer buying into the smaller microbrews concern other brewers? Well, Brian Miller, brewmaster of the Prairie Rock Brewing Company in Elgin, says he's not worried.

"I believe that this could be exciting for the industry. The big guys have the ability to make whatever they want and help get it to more people," Miller says.

With the sudden emergence of microbrews in the Midwest (approximately 12 microbrews will open in the Chicago area this year), the question of over-saturation comes to mind. Are there too many microbrews in the industry? There were a lot of mixed views.

"It's not over-saturated, yet. I'll know when it becomes over-saturated when I lose a shelf in the liquor store," Dienhart says.

"I believe that it is over loaded. The ones that brew it the best and have the best distribution will survive," Wilson says.

A recent survey shows that the number of microbrew customers is on the rise while the number of corporate brew drinks has either flattened out or decreased. Some believe that this trend will continue, while others aren't too sure.

"This will continue, but I'll be long dead and gone before Bud or Miller falls," Pontoni says.

"Microbrew drinkers will eventually flatten out, and their kids will be sick of the beer their parents drink and return to Coors Light, similar to the way the microbrew trend began," Dienhart says.

Tullberg-Kelly says, there are more than 80 million beer drinkers in the U.S. But after all the growth and the extreme popularity of microbrews in the past ten years, microbrews only account for 2-3 percent of total beer production.

"That's a lot of people ripe for enlightenment—and a lot of people left to convert," Tullberg-Kelly says.

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*Evaluation: Phil notes a trend and succinctly analyzes it, using statistics and interviews with experts to help tell the story.*



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# Hesiod Secretly Loved Women

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by Kathleen Laura Struif  
Course: Humanities 120  
Instructor: Martha Simonsen

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Assignment:

*What symbolic significance do you find in the Pandora myth told by Hesiod in the Theogony? Support your analysis with references to Hesiod and any other readings.*

In Hesiod's *Theogony*, mortal women are depicted as being "an affliction for mankind" while feminine virtues are glorified through goddesses (20). This contradiction shows that Hesiod may not have been the stubborn misogynist that he claimed to be in his writing (21). This epic poem may have just been a tool used to encourage women to be submissive to men so that they may have more power and control in the world. The *Theogony* is full of stories about beautiful goddesses who bestow many wonderful things upon mortal men such as history, music, and the arts as well as the ground man walks on (Hesiod 5). Hesiod meticulously describes the goddesses's attributes while depicting the mortal woman as inferior and a negative influence (21). There is a definite connection between the mortal women that he degrades and the goddesses that he praises with religious fervor. Hesiod himself admits that all women descended from Pandora, who was created by gods and goddesses and

given to mankind as a gift (39). It is difficult to understand why Hesiod would hate the mortal version of the goddess unless you take into consideration the primitive aspects of lust that are symbolized through woman. Hesiod loathed the carnal desires and lack of control that passion encourages, not the actual female entity. Woman is shown to invoke in man the destructive sexual drives that threaten the delicate balance of reason and civilized society though she is not the reason for disruption. It is man's inability to contain his urges towards the alluring shape of woman that causes disorder in Hesiod's *Theogony*.

The *Theogony* resembles propaganda used to influence culture or even a moral story in which young men may be warned against the evils of lust. This story may have also been a persuasive device used to damage the reputation of women in order to better control them. Women which are, according to Hesiod, "conspirators in causing difficulty," seemed to be blamed unfairly for events not in their control (21). These negative views of women were used to degrade females, therefore keeping them subjected to male dominance. "These texts all evidence a deep suspicion of feminine power; they all seem concerned to validate the priority of the social over the natural order and to record the establishment of a 'rationally based' polity in which rulership was no longer to be determined matrilineally" (Downing 19). Downing is referring to the theory that suggests women had higher status than men before the time of Hesiod (19). Perhaps men were intimidated by the sexual power that women had over them and feared the loss of control that could bring about the weakening of a civilization. This power that woman has over man in Hesiod's writings is manifested in her physical appearance that brings out the worst in her male counterpart. This is illustrated through the description of Pandora's creation where Zeus told Aphrodite, "...to shower charm about her head, and painful yearning and consuming obsession; to put in a bitch's mind and a knavish nature..." (Hesiod 39). Hesiod further describes this inescapable curse by mentioning the hardships of a man that does not succumb to the temptation to marry and becomes lonely when he is old (21). The warning that Hesiod gives to

others clearly shows that regardless of how one attempts to thwart the powers of woman, she will always win in the end (21).

The goddesses in Hesiod's *Theogony* are respected and admired even though the primitive power of sexual desire and its repercussions are also attributed to the feminine. Fertility seems to be a highly regarded quality in both mortal and immortal women (Hesiod 31). This shows that women were redeemable from Hesiod's perspective as long as this power to bear children was used. It is ironic that Hesiod compliments women for fertility yet degrades them for having desirable qualities to attract mates and invoke lust in them. The ultimate fertile figure in Hesiod's *Theogony* is Earth, who was created after the Chasm (6). This female god is the most important figure in the *Theogony* since all other gods and things came from her (6). Earth symbolizes "the mother of primal fantasy" and is regarded as the origin of life and civilization (Downing 135). Earth has both the primitive and "divine" aspects of feminine strength (140). Hesiod praises Earth and her gifts, although he seems to minimize her powers by subjecting her to Heaven's abuse, including forcing her to not give birth (Hesiod 7). Zeus also indirectly dominates Earth by defeating Typhoeus, her youngest child (27-28). Earth then submits to Zeus and suggests that he be the "lord of the immortals" (29). This is another example of the anomalistic aspects of the feminine being dominated by a civilized masculine force. This same theme is expressed many times in Hesiod's *Theogony* with mortal and immortal women symbolizing carnal desire and its power.

The classic example of woman representing evil passions is apparent in the story of Pandora. This first woman was the punishment ordered by Zeus to avenge Prometheus' theft of fire (Hesiod 20). She was created to appear beautiful in order to entrap men with their own lust (Lefkowitz 115). "Both immortal gods and mortal men were seized with wonder when they saw that precipitous trap, more than mankind can manage" (Hesiod 20). Here Hesiod admits that man is also responsible for his inability to control his desire for woman. The remainder of the text is abundant with biased theories explaining the reasons why

women are evil, though they all seem to lead back to the original point of man's primitive nature. Women are blamed for being deceptive in the *Theogony* only because man is easily fooled with appearances (Lefkowitz 115). Under every derogatory reference to women in the *Theogony* there seems to be a common theme of a conniving woman taking advantage of a man powerless against his desires. The guilt should not fall on woman's shoulders; it is the man that fails to master himself.

Hesiod seems to be a misogynist, but I feel that his attitude towards women is misunderstood. Taking into consideration that women are direct relations of the goddesses that he worships so dutifully, it is hard for me to believe that Hesiod really hates women. It seems that Hesiod actually despises the lack of control that passions provoke in man and the disasters that result from thoughtless actions. In order to have civilization, all aspects of the culture, including the relationships between men and women, should be orderly and stable. The battle between the sexes is representative of the fight between a primitive world and the birth of civilized society. It is not woman that Hesiod is really blaming for destruction; it is the lust that man feels for woman. Passion and the aggression it invokes is indeed the "ill without a cure" (Hesiod 21).

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Evaluation: *Hesiod is commonly referred to as the first misogynist in world literature. Kathleen challenges this interpretation of Hesiod. She argues with force, clarity, and wit.*

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# Awakening To Frost

by Frank Tebbe

Course: English 102

Instructor: Nancy L. Davis

Assignment:

*Write a literary research paper.*

*Thesis:* Despite the relatively simple language of Robert Frost's poetry as a whole, his poems, "After Apple-Picking," "Come In," and "Mending Wall," are archetypal in their meaning. Frost uses such technical devices as symbolism, imagery, dramatic situation and—as Frost himself said—"sound of sense" to hide the more obvious meanings of his poems. Robert Frost's poetry was extremely ambiguous.

## Outline

- I. Symbols within "After Apple-Picking"
  - A. The ladder
  - B. The apples
  - C. The Celler
  - D. Empty barrel
- II. A more simplistic approach to the symbols
  - A. Apples are poems
  - B. Fallen apples equated with sub-par poems
  - C. Empty barrel = poet is out of ideas
- III. Problems with simple interpretation
  - A. The use of the word "heaven"
  - B. The ominous rumbling sound
  - C. A few words from Frost with regard to writing
- IV. Use of the words "sleep," "I," and "one"
  - A. Dreamy quality within poem
  - B. Reader has been tricked into believing religious symbols
  - C. Symbols are imagined by the reader
- V. Frost's "sound of sense"
  - A. "S" sounds within "After Apple-Picking"
  - B. "D" sound in line 25
- VI. "Come In"
  - A. Seems to be a ballad after 2 lines
  - B. Darkness at the end of first stanza
  - C. Poem doesn't discuss death, but Frost himself
- VII. "Mending Wall"
  - A. Untermeyer discusses contradiction
  - B. James L. Potter's interpretation
  - C. Frost discusses all of the various interpretations
- VIII. The nebulous nature of Frost's poetry
  - A. Frost's poetry represents life in its ambiguity

Robert Frost's poetry is full of irony and ambiguous implication. Just when the reader believes that he has come to an understanding concerning a poem or all of Frost's poetry in general, the poet/magician pulls the rug out from under the reader and one begins to realize that he has been tricked. Frost's poem "After Apple-Picking," which appeared first in 1914 in his book *North of Boston*, is archetypal in meaning despite its relatively simple language. Frost uses such technical devices as symbolism, imagery, dramatic situation and—as Frost himself called it— "sound of sense" (Parini 939) to hide the more obvious meanings of his poems. Other Frost poems such as "Mending Wall" and "Come In" are typical in their ambiguous implications and allusions to numerous topics.

In "After Apple-Picking," the use of symbolism, whether imagined by the reader or intended by Frost himself, contributes to the elusiveness of his poem. "The ladder, with its image of outstretched arms, implores heaven, perhaps even suggesting Jacob's ladder," as Walton Beacham notes in *Critical Survey of Poetry* (1175). And the apples "that struck the earth" (line 33) are like fallen men—or the narrator in particular. "Because apples have such a strong traditional association with the story of the Garden of Eden, one might also conclude that apples represent the narrator's fall into mortal existence—his banishment from the grace of God. He has not, himself, sinned but carries the burden of original sin" (1175). As such, the cellar in lines 24-26 can be viewed as Hell, or at least a sort of underworld for apples with its menacing "rumbling sound." Furthermore, if the reader chooses to view the empty barrel as being suggestive, he could equate it with such things as the narrator or man in general (1175).

Yet, because of the simplicity of the dramatic situation and the words Frost uses to describe it, one might take a completely different approach to the symbols in "After Apple-Picking." "The apples are sometimes equated allegorically with poems" when the poem is read "as a symbolic exploration of the poet's feeling about his work" (Potter 143). Read in

this light, the fallen apples can be seen as simply unfinished or sub-par poems. Thus, the empty barrel, perhaps, alludes to the poet who has not done enough or is out of ideas.

This simple interpretation does, however, omit certain clues that Frost leaves within the poem. For instance, "why does he say that (the ladder) is 'sticking' toward heaven? Heaven is not simply a direction; if it were, Frost could have said 'skyward' or not said anything at all since it is obvious that a ladder which sticks through a tree must be pointing up" (Beacham 1174). Also, why is there an empty barrel? "Both the ladder and the barrel are facts within the dramatic situation, but they are more than simple details because they raise questions which fall outside the realm of the poem" (1175). What would Robert Frost say about Potter's assertion that "After Apple-Picking" could very well be "a symbolic exploration of the poet's feelings about his work" (Potter 143)?

In the book *Modern Poets on Modern Poetry*, Frost submits,

"In literature it is our business to give people the things that will make them say, 'Oh, yes, I know what you mean.' It is never to tell them something they don't know, but something they know and hadn't thought of saying. It must be something they recognize." (Scully 50)

With this in mind, why should a poet write about writing when only a fellow writer could truly grasp or "recognize" this internal dilemma of creation? Would not Frost be going against his very own beliefs if he were to write such a "symbolic exploration" of something that only he and his fellow writers could comprehend?

"After Apple-Picking" is a poem about neither the value of a virtuous existence—as the biblical symbols referred to earlier suggest—nor the torment of a creative mind. "It is through imagination that man conceives death"—and a religious after-life, for that matter—"just as the reader has used his imagination to create the symbols in the poem" (Beacham 1177). And imagination makes one think of dreams, the subconscious mind breaking

through. Indeed, "After Apple-Picking" "has the enchantment of a lingering dream" (Untermeyer 244). It is through the word "sleep," which Frost uses six times in the poem, that the reader derives such an impression.

Upon careful examination of the poem, the reader will notice not only that the word "sleep" is used quite often, but also the word "I." There is, however, one clear deviation. In line 37 the narrator uses the word "one" instead of saying "I" once again.

Frost might as well have said "you" can see. All along, the reader has been thinking that the narrator is troubled about his sleep because he is unprepared for death, but now he begins to suspect that this interpretation is incorrect. "This sleep of mine" is not the sleep the reader originally understood, and the narrator corrects the misconception by adding, "whatever sleep it is." The reader believed it was death, and for good reason: again tricked into it, and having allowed himself to be tricked, the reader has fallen into the poem's message. (Beacham 1176)

The message is, as stated earlier, that symbols are simply imagined by the reader and are not necessarily fact. After all, "Facts are dreams, what Shakespeare called 'airy nothings'" (Parini 941).

The sound of the poem itself also leads to its imagined, dreamy, stream-of-consciousness air: "In letters, essays, and public lectures, Frost explained his self-conscious poetics, referring constantly to what he called 'the sound of sense'" (Parini 939). This "sound of sense" contributes not only to the reader's enjoyment of Frost's poetry, but also to one's comprehension of it. "Frost believed that a good poem 'says' something before it is understood, writing to his friend John Bartlett that the best way to hear 'the abstract sound of sense is from voices behind a door that cuts off the words'" (Parini 939). Within "After Apple-Picking," there are noticeable moments of Frost's "sound of sense." First, we notice all of the "s" sounds such as "ladder's sticking" and "still" in lines one and two. These "s" sounds make the poem sound a bit like dried leaves on the ground in the autumn. Next, we have the

"rumbling sound" in line 25 of "load on load of apples." The two "d's" make that "rumbling sound" come to life. Then again, we have the autumn "s" sound with "No matter if not bruised or spiked with stubble,/Went surely to the cider-apple heap" in lines 34 and 35.

It is because of Frost's "sound of sense" that, "For interior recitation, usually of complete poems, not only of lines and stanzas, Frost and Yeats are the most memorable poets of the century" (Walcott 31). It is also here, through the sound of the word, whether spoken or written, that we come to an understanding "deeper than reason" of who the poet is, what he stands for, how he truly sees and feels. And although symbol, imagery, and the dramatic situation help one understand the poem, it is Frost's "sound of sense" that assists one in understanding the poet and the world around him. And it is here that Frost thrives.

Another of Frost's trickier poems that leads the reader to believe one thing, then quickly to another, is "Come In." Once again, Frost lets the reader think whatever the reader would like to think without forcing the issue.

The reader believes after two lines that the poem is going to be a sweet little ballad about the music of nature (Brodsky 72). It is the line, "Thrush music-hark!" that would lead one to this conclusion. By the end of the stanza, however, the reader realizes that he has been duped. "It's 'Now'—in line three—that does this job of leaving very little room for fancy" (73). Everything changes in that third line as the word "Now" ushers in a new interpretation.

What's more, that 'dark'—in line four—is the condition of 'inside'—also in line four—which alludes directly to the woods—where the narrator finds himself. There is a slight choking air in the fourth line. (73)

That "choking air" in line four seeps right into the next stanza. Although the reader knows that the aforementioned music is from a bird, the second stanza is extremely dark. Indeed, the reader finds that the only reason the bird is singing is because it

is too dark to “better its perch for the night” (line 7). There is simply nothing else to do. Because of that darkness that pervades the rest of the poem, “one could argue that the poem considers something rather unpleasant, quite possibly a suicide. Or, if not suicide—well, death. And, if not necessarily death, then the notion of the afterlife” (73).

Now we’ll skip ahead to the final stanza. Once again, the word “I” is significant. The reader sees that the narrator is no longer talking about a bird, but himself—alias bard, or poet (73). Again, there is that possibility of deeper meaning immersed in simple language. Is this a poem about “being old and pondering what is next” (73)?

Malcolm Cowley presents a somewhat different view in *Robert Frost: A Collection of Critical Essays*:

The woods play a curious part in Frost’s poems; they seem to be his symbol for the uncharted country within ourselves, full of possible beauty, but also full of horror. From the woods at dusk, you might hear the hidden music of the brook, “a slender, tinkling fall;” or you might see wood creatures, a buck and a doe, looking at you over the stone fence that marks the limit of the pasture lot. But you don’t cross the fence, except in dreams; and then, instead of brook or deer, you are likely to meet a strange demon rising “from his wallow to laugh.” And so, for fear of the demon, and also because of your moral obligations, you merely stand at the edge of the woods to listen. (43)

Here again is the ambiguous nature of Frost’s poetry. “Come In” can be a poem about the finite nature of man, about death and the realm beyond, or it can be about “the uncharted country within ourselves.” Each individual interpretation depends a great deal upon how the reader wishes to construe the symbols—the symbols that the reader himself has created.

Finally, we have “Mending Wall,” which is probably one of the most well-known Frost poems. It is a rather nebulous one as well because “the strength of “Mending Wall” is that it rests upon a contradiction” (Untermeyer 110): “Its two most famous lines oppose each other” (110). One line states that “Something there is that doesn’t love a wall.”

Another insists that “Good fences make good neighbors (110). Louis Untermeyer goes on to write:

The contradiction is logical, for the opposing statements are uttered by two different types of people—and both are right. Man cannot live without walls, boundaries, limits, and particularly self-limitations; yet he resents all bonds and is happy at the downfall of any barrier. (110)

James L. Potter, in his *Robert Frost Handbook*, suggests that the wall “serves both to separate the men and to bring them together” (49). Each year these two men have to come together to fix the wall that separates them: “The neighbor farmer simply sees that barriers are necessary without understanding why, while the speaker knows why they are and sees the defects of barriers, too. He accepts the paradox and works within it” (49).

The poem also has broader implications: “It states one of the greatest problems of our time: whether national walls should be made stronger for our protection, or whether they should be let down, since they cramp our progress toward understanding and eventual brotherhood” (Untermeyer 111).

Untermeyer points out yet another interpretation when he writes:

In the voices of the two men—the younger, whimsical, new-fashioned speaker and the old-fashioned farmer who replies with his one determined sentence, his inherited maxim—some readers hear the clash of two forces: the spirit of revolt, which challenges tradition, and the spirit of restraint, which insists that conventions must be upheld, built up and continually rebuilt, as a matter of principle. (111)

Throughout his later years, Robert Frost had to answer countless inquiries concerning the theme of this popular poem. In *Robert Frost: A Living Voice*, by Reginald L. Cook, Frost says:

“I’ve got a man there; he’s both a wall builder and a wall toppler. He makes boundaries and he breaks boundaries. That’s man. And all human life is cellular,

outside or inside. In my body every seven years I'm made out of different cells and all my cell walls have changed. I'm cellular within and life outside is cellular. Even the Communists have cells (laughter). That's where I've arrived at that." (82)

Concerning the numerous interpretations other people have placed upon this poem and many of his other poems, Frost says, "I'm always distressed when I find somebody being ugly about it, outraging the poem, going some way, especially if it's on some theory I can see they're applying to everything" (83).

"Mending Wall"—and all of its implications—"answers itself in the paradox of people, in neighbors and competitors, in the contradictory nature of man" (Untermeyer 111). In "Mending Wall," "After Apple-Picking," and "Come In," we have seen Frost with all of his vague implication leading us, however slightly, this way and that, never quite telling us the answer we are looking for. Never fully answering the question, "What does it all mean," Frost leaves it to his reader to come to his own understanding, not just of his poem, but of life. And this is what makes Frost's poetry so ambiguous: it represents the life you and I must come to understand.

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Evaluation: *Frank has his finger on Frost's poetic pulse! His understanding of Frost's technique and themes reveals a sophisticated reader and a talented writer with a voice of his own.*

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# Newman

by Doriann Thompson

Course: Spanish 102

Instructor: Ana Lucy Hernández

Assignment:

*Each student's goal was to write a poem, in Spanish, using the present and past tenses.*

*Doriann chose to write a memorial to her father-in-law, a remarkable and loving person.*

Newman

Por ochenta y tres años  
Un hombre humilde, fuerte  
Ha estado viviendo, trabajando, amando.

Sus manos eran largas, toscas de  
Hacer mantequilla en la mantequillería.

Le gustaba ir al lago y pescar.  
Fumaba un cigarrillo y  
Buscaba peces.

El y su esposa, Alice,  
Tuvieron tres hijos,  
y tres nueras,  
y ocho nietos,  
y cinco biznietos.  
Entonces envejeció - enfermó.

El miércoles mientras Paul lo miraba,  
Newman murió.  
Su respiración cesó.  
Una lágrima cayó de su ojo.

Ya descansa.

Newman

For eighty-three years  
A humble and strong man  
Has lived, worked, and loved.

His hands were long and rough  
From making butter at the dairy.

He loved to go to the lake and fish.  
Smoking a cigarette as he waited.

He and his wife, Alice,  
Had three children,  
And three daughters-in-law,  
And eight grandchildren,  
And five great-grandchildren.  
Then he grew old and sick.

Wednesday as Paul watched,  
Newman died.  
His breathing stopped.  
A solitary tear fell from his eye.

He rests.

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Evaluation: *Doriann's poem shows great sensitivity.  
She has demonstrated a total understanding of the preterite and imperfect tenses.*

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# The Grass Isn't Always Greener; Sometimes It's Blue, Purple, or Silver

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by Rosemary Vitale  
Course: English 101  
Instructor: Joseph Sternberg

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Assignment:  
*Persuade us to consider your position on  
a subject that you care about.*

What is growing in front of your house, my house, and every other house in our neighborhoods? Grass. It's in our backyards. It's everywhere. Block after block, mile after mile, we see grass. We see homeowners mowing it, fertilizing it, watering it. Many of us see ourselves spending too much time and money on it. It is now time to question the practice of growing grass.

We all need to learn about an alternative: prairie plants, a large "family" of colorful and attractive grasses and flowers. These native plants grew and thrived in this part of the country long before there were neighborhoods and subdivisions. Requiring minimum care, prairie plants did very well. But then the prairies, along with their native wildlife, were cleared away to make room for the houses and the neighborhoods. Suburbia came along and with it came the proliferation of the lawn.

Today's lawn, which includes many turfgrasses of which Kentucky Bluegrass is the most popular, is not native to this part of the country. In fact, many of these turfgrasses were brought here and planted by the British colonist a long time ago to make the place look and feel like home. Unfortunately (for the lawn) our climate is not like England's. England is cool, damp, and rainy—perfect conditions for a lawn; but in the Midwest, we experience periods of heavy rain followed by hot, dry spells in the summertime—perfect conditions for prairie plants.

So why do we keep growing turfgrass if it is not the best choice for our climate? We are comfortable with it; our neighbors are comfortable with it. It is what we expect to see in front of and behind our houses. But there is a better alternative to huge expanses of green. Much lower in maintenance, better for the environment, and native to our region, prairie plants are an interesting alternative.

Consider the benefits of a natural landscape filled with prairie plants.

Once a prairie planting is established, it is low-maintenance. It doesn't require mowing, fertilizing, or frequent watering. Think for a minute what life might be like if we didn't have to spend a good portion of our "free time" working on lawn care. I

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think many of us, myself included, could get used to this. In addition, we would be conserving precious fossil fuels, we wouldn't have to purchase as many yardwaste bags or stickers, municipalities wouldn't have all those grass clippings to compost, and by eliminating the need for fertilizers and weedkillers, we would greatly reduce the amount of chemicals we put into the earth every year. And after a prairie planting is established, it would require very little watering. Most of us pay for water, and the water requirements for a green lawn are substantial. Prairie plants would only require watering in a severe, prolonged drought. Sounds good, so far, doesn't it?

Also, prairie plantings benefit wildlife because they create food and shelter for many animals. Many different types of birds and insects will flock to a "mini-prairie," and mosquitoes will not be among them. Mosquitoes like to be near water, and prairie plants use water very efficiently. (In a prairie after a heavy rain, water is not left standing on the surface; it drains down into the ground where the roots of the plants use very bit of it to their advantage.)

Now while a natural landscape filled with prairie plants is a very good idea for many homeowners, it is not necessarily the answer for everyone. In my opinion, if you are blessed with shade trees covering your outdoor landscape, there is no reason to rip out all your turfgrass and start planting a prairie. It won't work; most prairies like sun. You can, however, reduce the amount of lawn you have to maintain by replacing a good portion of it with shade-loving perennials.

But if you have a sunny area in front of your house, this is an excellent place to begin. Most homeowners don't do much with this part of their lawn, except maintain it. You could start by creating an "island" of prairie grasses surrounded by a border of turfgrass. (This is my current project.) Or, if the lawn in your sunny backyard doesn't get much activity, you could replace that lawn, or a portion of it, and create a larger prairie planting. (A portion of my backyard is my next project.)

Now if you still aren't convinced, it's okay. Many people love their lawns and don't mind the associated work and expense that they require. My neighbor spends part of almost every single day performing some maintenance task on his lawn and as a result, his lawn is beautiful. This is his hobby; it gives him great pleasure and satisfaction which he should not be denied. Homeowners with young children need a good portion of their backyard lawns, too. You cannot play on prairie grass; it doesn't hold up to traffic. Turfgrass will always win on this point.

But if you are willing to experiment, to give a little piece of the earth back to the plants that were here before we were, if you would like to give a little refuge to the wildlife and attract additional varieties of birds and butterflies, or if you are just plain tired of fighting the never-ending battle of lawn-care, visit your local library where you are likely to find a wealth of information on prairie plantings. There is so much more variety available with prairie plants, and the increased wildlife activity is something you can sit back and enjoy in your free time instead of pushing that lawnmower.

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*Evaluation: Ms Vitale's informal and lively style energizes her essay. She convinces me to try some prairie plants and put away the lawnmower.*

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# Little Girl Lost

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*by Kyle Van Wickevoort*  
Course: English 101  
Instructor: Jim Ottery

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Assignment:  
*Write about a significant event and/or  
person in your life.*

My mother had five children in five years. She was exhausted; her hands were chapped so badly they bled daily. Her irrational mood swings terrified us. My mother was either laughing and the picture of perfect domesticity, or smashing the TV set while we watched Saturday morning cartoons too loudly. My father was a “good Catholic” and wanted as many children as God would give him. His brother was on his tenth child compared to my parents’ fifth. When my brother Chris was born, my mother was at a breaking point. While in the hospital, she refused to see her new son. My father had to come and take Chris home. My mother went to Planned Parenthood for birth control after her “good Catholic” doctor refused to prescribe any. My father, an insecure man, could not support her act of independence. He felt the only way he could keep his beautiful Norwegian bride was if she was tied down with a house full of kids. “If you want more children,” my mother seethed under her breath, “I’ll give you a house full.”

That’s how our family got involved with foster care. My mother became very active with Social Services. Our house was an emergency 24-hour foster care home. In an effort to help prevent child abuse, Social Services encouraged overburdened single mothers or welfare parents whose patience had reached a breaking point to drop off their children at our house, sometimes for days or weeks at a time. Some became permanent baby-sitting jobs for my already overburdened mother. I can’t remember a time in my childhood when I didn’t have a baby in my arms to cradle or to feed.

When I was twelve-years-old, my mother, full of rage, sued for divorce from my father. We were accustomed to walking a tightrope of emotions in my parents’ marriage, but nothing could have prepared us for how we would be used as pawns in their divorce. My father, barely a shadow of a man after being forced out of our house to live in our rental property, asked us kids to move in with him. He assured us it would only be temporary, until my mother came to her senses. In retaliation, my mother said that if any of us went to live with him, we

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would be allowed to take with us the clothes on our backs and nothing more. After we left, it was the first time in years my mother was alone. The house was quiet, and she liked the calm and order she was experiencing. My father got custody of us five kids, plus several of the foster children—my mother got everything else. My father didn't have the emotional strength to fight. We lived in a house we had owned and rented out for years. The house was in a desperate state of neglect and in a borderline bad neighborhood. In the winter the wind whipped right through the house, and in the summer it was stifling hot. We used to joke how my parents were slum lords; now it wasn't so funny. We had to live in this dump.

The rule was, there were no rules. My older sisters and brother rejoiced in this new environment of freedom. I cried at the lack of order. Because Chris and I were the youngest, we were assigned by the older kids to clean up after them. If we didn't, the fear of physical retaliation loomed over us. The older kids took the bedrooms. Chris slept on a mattress in the cold damp basement; I found refuge on the couch in the living room. My father hung a blanket between the living room and the dining room, and this became his bedroom, which could be entered through the kitchen. I settled in as much as possible and tried to find something to call my own in all of this chaos.

My sisters and I were still quite young, but because we had so much experience with children, we were popular neighborhood babysitters. That's how I met Debbie. A guy at school had a sister who needed a babysitter. Debbie was a 21-year-old welfare mother with two little girls: Shelly, who was four, and Hope, who was two. Debbie lived within walking distance from our house and would pick me up to baby-sit in her home. I rarely got paid, but it wasn't so bad. Her house was as neglected and dirty as ours, but it was quiet with only Shelly, Hope, and me. After several months, Debbie found out she was pregnant again. She didn't know who the father was, but she did know that she didn't want the baby. Debbie's mother, a strong right-to-

lifer, pressured her to go full term. Debbie and I discussed the option of me caring for the baby. That way, Debbie could still collect her extra welfare but would not have the responsibility of taking care of a baby. Debbie's mother would not be the wiser; it would be our little secret. I approached my father with the idea, and he agreed to it as long as the baby would be my responsibility. He worked second shift and would watch the baby while I was in school. The plan was set. I had just turned thirteen years old.

It was an unusually chilly October day when the phone rang. It was Debbie, calling from the hospital. She had given birth two days earlier, and now that her mother had seen the baby, I could come and pick her up. Debbie told me that she had named the baby Jennifer and asked if it was all right with me. I said yes. The one mile walk to Blodgett Hospital through the brisk autumn air seemed to take forever, and I kept repeating the name "Jennifer" in my head. When I arrived in the day room, Debbie had a cigarette in one hand and Jennifer in the other. Jennifer was so tiny—no bigger than my favorite doll that I had been forced to leave behind only one year earlier. She was beautiful: clear blue eyes, with tufts of blonde sprouts on her little head. I loved her immediately. Finally, I thought to myself, something to call my own. Debbie was all too anxious to hand her over. I scooped up Jennifer in my arms and started the long walk home. Jennifer slipped quietly into the chaos of our house. Jennifer was a bright, alert baby. She was a ray of sunshine in my dark existence. I had a true purpose: to wake up each morning and see this little face that loved me unconditionally. She and I slowly worked into a comfortable routine. I would rush home after school so that my father could go off to work. As the months passed, we grew closer, and everyone I met thought she was mine. I always had Jennifer with me. It seemed normal to me, my family, friends and school. I learned to ignore the sexual advances from older men who assumed a 13-year-old with a baby must be promiscuous.

Debbie seemed out of the picture. I would occasionally take Jennifer to visit her sisters, Shelly and Hope. Debbie's mother was always invited at the same time, to keep up the charade, but Debbie herself seemed disinterested. She was sleeping late and drinking all the time. The next two years went by uneventfully. Jennifer and I visited Shelly and Hope less and less frequently. I heard that Debbie had fallen in with a fast crowd. If Shelly and Hope were lucky, they were dumped at neighbors' homes, but most of the time they ended up with strangers. Rumors floated around about their sexual and physical abuse. But Jennifer was safe. Her life would be much different—I would see to that.

Almost three years to the day from when I brought Jennifer home, there came a knock at our door. When I opened it, I couldn't believe my eyes. Debbie was standing there, looking only a little more alive than road kill. I had to step back as the pungent aroma of stale beer and body odor filled my nostrils. She told me that she had to take Jennifer. Welfare was on her back, and her mother was suspicious. My heart sank. I had never anticipated this! I hated Debbie but pitied her for all she was missing. Debbie was adamant: she was taking Jennifer. I tearfully packed what few personal effects this innocent child had accumulated in her three short years of life. I kissed her on her forehead and made a promise to always watch over her. And then, she was gone.

I cried for days after Jennifer left. My purpose to get up in the morning was gone. I begged my father to sue for custody, but he told me that he had enough experience with Social Services to know that in cases like these, they always gave custody to the natural mother. I was devastated; this was just an excuse. At sixteen years of age, I had no legal rights. I needed an adult to sue for custody, but deep down inside I knew the truth, just like with the divorce, that my father didn't have the emotional strength to fight.

When I would go to visit Jennifer, she would run to me, tears welling up in her big blue eyes, whimpering "Mommy." Debbie would grab her by her

long golden hair and yank her back. "She's not your mother," she would shout. "I am!" Debbie informed me that if I insisted on visiting, she would beat Jennifer in front of me. At that time, I struggled with my conscience. I had promised Jennifer I would always watch over her, yet my continued presence could bring her physical harm. I eventually decided it would be best not to visit anymore. I never mentioned her name again. It was just too difficult to explain to people what Jennifer had meant to me—that to me, she was more than just a foster care situation. I slowly began to experience my newfound freedom, but with this freedom came an even greater guilt. At 16 I turned to alcohol to numb my feelings, to ignore my guilt. My promise to her slowly faded from my memory. Time has passed, and I still grieve for the little girl lost. But I have forgiven the child who made the promise she could not keep to a little girl named Jennifer.

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*Evaluation: Kyle's use of detail makes her story a compelling read. In the process of writing, she learned that the details were what showed the significance of her story to her.*

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# Chinese Names

by Flora Wu

Course: English as a Second Language 086

Instructor: Kathi Holper

Assignment:

*Write an explanation of the meaning of your first name. Give detail on cultural and family factors relevant to choice of names.*

For the Chinese, names are a person's identity. With names, people can then distinguish each other during social contact. Thus, names have to be unique. Chinese names have two parts. The first part is the family name, with one or two characters. The family name usually originates from an ancient kingdom or tribe in China. Many characters of a family name have "city" or "city-like" parts. The second part of the Chinese name is the given name. It has one or two characters which can be anything.

Because many Chinese believe that names have a special relationship with the person, there are some customs for naming. Names can be parents' expectations, such as "great in literature," "be a patriot to your country," or "show respect to your ancestors." Names can also be a person's characteristics,

such as "patient and calm," "strong and powerful," or "tall and intelligent." Names can be ranks of the children, such as "the first girl," "the second girl," or "the third sister." Names can be moral values, such as "the four ethical codes," or "kindness and friendliness." Names can be used as a superstitious prevention of ghost. For example, many parents name their children "silly" or "ugly" because they want to fool the devil with the opposite meaning. Thus, the child may live longer and be healthier.

In Chinese culture, boys usually are more favored than girls because of their dominant role in society. Some parents who wish to have a boy sometimes name their daughter as "bring a boy" or "next to being a boy." Many families also have a name record which contains all names of every generation. The record has a family poem that is about the family history or ethical values that the family members need to know. Every generation then picks a character from the poem to be part of his name. Thus, by recognizing the character of one's name, we can also identify which family or which generation he belongs to. Only boys have the privilege of having names included in the family record. However, today, family records have less influence since there are fewer children born in each family. And more and more girls' names are kept in the family records as girls are becoming equal in the Chinese society. Names are usually picked and then handwritten with the Chinese brush by parents or grandparents to serve as one's unique identity and part of his family history.

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*Evaluation: Flora Wu has very successfully explained the importance of family names in Chinese culture. Her ability to select the most appropriate vocabulary is superior for a student who is writing in a second language.*

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# Finding the Early Signs of the Feminist Movement Within “The Yellow Wall-Paper”

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*by Beth A. Zimmermann*

Course: English 102

Instructor: Nancy L. Davis

Assignment:

*Write a literary research paper.*

Charlotte Perkins Gilman's purpose in writing the short story "The Yellow Wall-Paper" was to show her former doctor just how improper his treatment was for nervous depression. When analyzing this story we see the horror that can follow a treatment requiring "rest" and isolation during depression; we can also see the way women in the nineteenth century were kept out of control of their destinies. Their destiny was to be left to their husbands (or doctors) to control the decisions affecting their lives. This story shows us the influence this practice has on the mental health of an independent woman striving to stay that way in the late 1800s.

In the nineteenth century, doctors did not treat hysteria as a physical illness (Kasmer 7). Doctors at the time felt that hysteria in women occurred because some women *just* became overemotional or had a slight hysterical tendency. They did not believe that there was a physical reason for this illness nor understand the contributing causes. The treatment prescribed has since been found detrimental to those suffering from nervous depression. Such treatment consisted of complete rest and isolation for the patient. The doctors felt these women should live as domestic a life as possible, and believed they should have very little intellectual stimulation. This treatment prescribed to women "...attempted to help the patient through reintegrating her into her 'proper' position as wife by forcing her to focus only on her home and children" (Kasmer 1). We can see how the doctor and men viewed this illness with Charlotte Perkins Gilman's own case of nervous depression. Before her first visit with her physician, S. Weir Mitchell, regarding her deteriorating mental health, she prepared a detailed case history of her condition to share with him. She then found out that he did not want such information from his women patients. Dr. Mitchell once wrote, "Wise women choose their doctors and trust them. The wisest ask the fewest questions" (Treichler 191). This clearly shows us the way doctors regarded their female patients in the nineteenth century. It is interesting that Dr. Mitchell felt this non-questioning trust for

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the doctor should be characteristic of *women* patients. We can see how the woman was perceived as a child unable to contribute advice or question her own treatment with this case. Gilman herself was told by her doctor to have her child with her at all times, to lie down an hour after each meal, to have just two hours a day of intellectual stimulation and to "...never touch pen, brush or pencil as long as you live" (Jacobus 131). Gilman felt this treatment prescribed to her, which she followed for several months, contributed to the decline in her mental health and very nearly led her to insanity. She came to realize that the confines of a traditional marriage and raising children in the late 1800s strongly contributed to her nervous depression, contrary to the advice of her doctor. To improve her health and mental attitude, she left her husband and her baby to go to California to be a writer, and to become a leading activist for feminism. It was at this time that she regained her health. She felt that returning to her career and leaving her marriage allowed the return of her good health. Three years after her illness she wrote "The Yellow Wall-Paper." After it was published, she sent a copy to Dr. Mitchell to show him the error of his ways. She found out many years later that her story had caused Dr. Mitchell to change his treatment for nervous depression. This she had stated as the purpose for writing her story, and when told the effect it had on Dr. Mitchell she said, "If that is a fact, I have not lived in vain" (Gilman 118).

Women's status in the nineteenth century greatly affected the literature written by them. Once we understand the feminist element within "The Yellow Wall-Paper," we can see the rarity of such a piece of literature written by a woman in this period. Women writers in the nineteenth century did not feel free to write of feminism and the relationship between man and woman or husband and wife (Hedges, "Afterword" 39). Prevailing critical reviews of women's literature of the time insist that in these stories, the women were indeed upholding their traditional roles. When some of these stories were reexamined in later years, readers found

marks of feminism in them that were not picked up on originally ("Gilman" 715). In the 1800s, women were expected to be completely devoted to their husbands, children, homes, their aging parents, and to always put others' needs before their own. They were expected to be dependent, both financially and emotionally, on their husbands. There were many women who were not allowed to go to college, although their brothers were. Many women were "...treated as toys or as children..." (Hedges, "Gilman" 121). At the turn of the century, the women's movement was starting to progress, which in turn began to change people's ideas of what constituted the "perfect" family. This allowed women writers more freedom to criticize the traditional family and women's "place" in the home. Since women of the nineteenth century were treated as children and prisoners, Elaine Hedges did not find it surprising that the writings of this time portrayed madness and suicide of women (120). Women writers addressed madness to illustrate two things: women's need to break out of their predetermined role, and their attempt to find their way into a healthier role (Kawin 306).

Once we understand women's status in the nineteenth century, men's inability to see this as a problem, and men's perceptions of nervous depression at the time, we can understand why the feminist element in "The Yellow Wall-Paper" went unnoticed at the time of publication. In 1892 when Gilman wanted to have her story published, she met with much resistance from the editors. They felt it was a morbid horror story. Horace Scudder, the editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*, said that he would not publish it because the story had made him feel miserable and "he could not forgive" himself if he made others feel the same way (qtd. in Kasmer 1). Gilman was also told it should not be printed because of the bad effect it would have on relatives of "deranged" persons. The message to Gilman was that she should "stay in her place"; women should remain silent and continue to conceal these problems (Hedges, "Gilman" 119). The story was finally printed in *New England*



*Magazine* in May 1892. At that time, it was dismissed by most critics and then ignored for another fifty years. Conrad Shumaker wrote that the reason for people's uneasiness with the story, when published, was that it "struck too deeply." It gave a clear view of women and their traditional place (598). He argued readers had identified with the oppression, a view held in direct contrast to the opinion that the feminist element was not observed at the time it was written. Shumaker's opinion demonstrates that the feminist theme may have been "felt" by many readers at the time. Since such treatment of women was commonplace, readers may not have observed it consciously as oppression. Elaine Hedges further pointed out that although the editors and critics knew of Gilman's commitment to women's issues, they failed to examine this theme (qtd. in Kasmer 1).

Because of the perception of "The Yellow Wall-Paper" as a morbid story, when it was anthologized it was printed with ghost stories and other supernatural stories by women. "Ghost stories provided many women writers with an outlet for some of their most scathing attacks on domestic ideology" ("Gilman" 347). When Gilman's husband read her story, he told Gilman he had "...read it *four* times, and thinks it the most ghastly tale he ever read" (qtd. in Johnson 528). This shows her own husband's inability to see the underlying problems contributing to her ill health and the seriousness of her nervous depression. He felt the story was ghastly, yet failed to see her condition at the time as ghastly.

In "The Yellow Wall-Paper" Gilman shows us how the woman's role is perceived as less important than the man's, and that like a child, a woman needs guidance. The narrator tells us that her husband is "...very careful and loving, and hardly lets me stir without special direction" (107). In his "kindly" way he is controlling all of her actions, and doing it "lovingly" so no one can doubt his good intentions. Quickly we begin to see the effect that his love and guidance have upon her. When the narrator becomes ill, her husband lets her know that he considers her writing dangerous (Kawin 305). She

shows us his feelings about her writing when she tells us "...he hates to have me write a word" (107). The narrator's writing is considered "dangerous" to John not because of the effect it has on his wife, but because of the danger he faces from the lack of control he has when allowing her to write (MacPike 122). We hear her views on the subject: "Personally, I believe that congenial work, with excitement and change, would do me good" (Gilman, "Yellow" 106). She attempts to do some writing, but the strain of going against her husband's wishes tires her. Ultimately, she feels it is too tiring to rebel against her husband, her treatment and her role as a woman. When the narrator is becoming desperate near the end and talks of jumping out the window, she follows with "...I wouldn't do it. Of course not...a step like that is improper and might be misconstrued" (116). We can see that before she takes any action, she must decide if it is within her "proper" role. DuPlessis wrote that in this work and others from the period, a woman's biggest obstacle to overcome was her husband. She states that the "nurturing treatment the woman receives... is a form of social and emotional control, repressive tolerance at its shrewdest" (91), again showing us that John was "killing" her with kindness.

John's lackadaisical attitude toward his wife's illness comes from the misconception of the illness that people held at the time. Since John does not believe this to be a true illness, he feels her complaints are frivolous. Conrad Shumaker felt that much of this attitude could be attributed to the way people perceive women. He said that many people perceive women as having an imaginative view of things. On the contrary, they perceive men as viewing things with common sense (Shumaker 590). Often women's "fancies" are not considered important. When the narrator wants to move to the "pretty rooms" because of the horrid wallpaper, John lets her know she's giving way to "fancies." He calls her a "blessed little goose," dismissing her request as he would dismiss a child's (108). Her request is not considered important. When commenting on her husband's thoughts regarding her

complaints, the narrator uses veiled sarcasm. She sounds as though she is justifying many of John's actions, but once we see her comments as sarcasm, we see her true feelings: "...of course, I would not be so silly as to make him uncomfortable just for a whim" (108). She is showing us what is expected of her: women should not do things that might make their husbands uncomfortable. Their role is to provide comfort. John feels that his wife's need to move because of the wallpaper is silly and frivolous; she is letting her imagination get the better of her. Greg Johnson felt that John underestimated his wife's imagination. While trying to put his wife's imagination to rest by locking her away in the nursery, he is "unthinkingly allowing her the free play of imagination..." (523)<sup>i</sup> By confining her, John is setting up an environment that encourages the behavior that he is trying to "cure" her of. She has nowhere to go; therefore, she has time to analyze the pattern of the wall paper hour after hour. Because of this, her imagination uncovers many things within the pattern. By locking her away, John is exercising his patriarchal authority. He has confined her within her own home. She has been made a prisoner. Juliann Fleenor felt that to the narrator and other women of this period, their home was their prison, and confinement made it their insane asylum (128). This holds true for the woman in "The Yellow Wall-Paper."

Charlotte Perkins Gilman used symbolism in "The Yellow Wall-Paper" that can be interpreted as showing the narrator's oppression, or all women's oppression in the nineteenth century. Very early in the story we learn about the room in which the woman spends much of her day. The windows are barred and the room seems to have been used previously as a nursery. Loreale MacPike felt that the symbol of the nursery shows us the childlike state that the narrator's husband wishes to enforce. She also said the room symbolizes the woman imprisoned in childhood. Although the narrator is imprisoned, she feels her work can free her from her dependence upon her husband and male created world (MacPike 122). Since the wallpaper contains the creeping women that

she is trying to free, it becomes a symbol of both her confinement and her freedom (123). Elaine Hedges pointed out that although much description was given to us about the wallpaper, it remains mysterious and undefined. "The paper symbolizes her situation as seen by the men who control her and therefore, her situation as seen by herself. How can she define herself?" (Hedges, "Gilman" 120). As a woman, she is as undefined as the wallpaper. Since the "situation" the wallpaper represents turns to such a morbid one, it is not surprising that the "...narrator begins to see it as staining everything it touches" (Hedges, "Feminism" 120). Gilbert and Gubar felt that the description given by the narrator of a "...sulphurous yellow paper, torn off in spots...with 'lame uncertain curves'..." was ancient and smoldering, symbolizing "...the oppressive structures of the society in which she finds herself..." (90). As the narrator describes the paper, we can feel it surrounding her as the oppression does. The wallpaper and its oppression become her crisis to overcome. Greg Johnson felt that the wallpaper's being a central symbol equated "...her crisis with an item of feminine frippery—mere wallpaper—that is far beneath serious male consideration" (528). Such an important symbol, yet perceived by her husband as "fancy."

The creeping women in "The Yellow Wall-Paper" can be interpreted to be the many women entrapped in their domestic position. It becomes the narrator's mission to help the women find their way out. At first there is one creeping woman within the pattern that we can see as the narrator trying to escape the pattern of her life. Elaine Hedges calls our attention to the fact that as the story progresses, *many* women are trying to get free from the pattern (Hedges, "Gilman" 106). At this point, the narrator's original feelings of the house being "haunted" come true, for it is haunted by figures of women (Treichler 191). The story becomes a fight for all women. She takes her task of fighting for all these women very much to heart; she knows that they are all counting on her to forge the way. The narrator becomes desperate to free the women before she leaves the house. This she feels she must do on her own. We see this illustrated with the narrator's reac-

tion to Jennie when she sees the yards of paper from the walls. When Jennie laughs and comments that she wouldn't mind peeling the paper off herself, we see that the woman is vehemently against this: "...no person touches this paper but Me—not *alive!*" (Gilman, "Yellow" 115). It is her job, and hers alone.

The creeping women have also been said to symbolize women trying to become liberated from domestic secrecy (Jacobus 133). To spend the time as she would like, the narrator must be very secretive. She cannot allow anyone to see her studying the pattern of the paper, creeping about, or most important, writing, because of its dangerous intellectual stimulation. The secrecy is very stressful to her, tires her and adds to her decline. The strain of this secrecy is something from which she feels a need to break free. We see the secrecy she must maintain as she speaks of her husband's desire that she rest after every meal. She is not able to sleep, but feels that she must deceive him about this. This is shown when she says, "...I don't tell them I'm awake—O, no!" (Gilman, "Yellow" 112). We also see that she feels a need to conceal her creeping with her comment, "I always lock the door when I creep by daylight" (114). In the end, she locks herself in the room and finally feels the freedom to do as she pleases. She need not act in secrecy, and does not have to fear being discovered. We feel her immense relief when she says, "It is so pleasant to be out in this great room and creep around as I please!" (116). She is finally liberated from her domestic secrecy.

Although Gilman's intent in writing "The Yellow Wall-Paper" may not have been to show the oppression suffered by women at that time in history, we see this oppression come through time and time again in her story. We see the narrator's constant battle with tyranny. Gilman repeatedly illustrates acts of male dominance and its apparent harmlessness: "...just one modest feature of home decor" (DuPlessis 92). With her numerous comments, "I am glad my case is not serious... Of course it is only nervousness" (107); "It is hard to talk with John about my case, because he is so wise, and because he loves me so" (111); "He knows

there is no *reason* to suffer..." (107); and with John's thoughts, "...you really are better, dear... I am a doctor, dear, and I know" (111), she voices the insignificance of her feelings and illness as portrayed by those around her. The woman begins to emerge from her meek, compliant place. She speaks of all the creeping women that are now outside, "I wonder if they all come out of the wall-paper as I did?" (116). She now feels that she has made her way *out* of the wallpaper. In giving in to lunacy, she decides that she would rather submit to the nervous breakdown than submit to the "rest" and isolation society tells her she needs. This is her way of fighting back ("Gilman" 558). When her husband becomes desperate to get into her locked room, she turns the tables when she calls out, "It is no use, young man, you can't open it!" (Gilman, "Yellow" 116). In her rebellion, when calling him a young man, she is treating him as he had treated her, like a child. She has made the decision never to go back to the "place" she was before. "I've got out at last...I've pulled off most of the paper, so you can't put me back!" (116). Once John sees she has found the strength to rebel and fight her way out of the pattern, it is he who faints on the floor (Jacobus 133). It is John who finally loses control and we derive a certain amount of pleasure from this. We sense that in some strange way, it is her victory. With his fainting, he is toppled from his all powerful, dogmatic position. The delight that we take in this shows that we understand Gilman's purpose. She shows us the "...apparent harmlessness..." (DuPlessis 92) of male dominance. Charlotte Perkins Gilman fought to change that perception of dominance as being harmless, to show women that even loving and nurturing control could be harmful to many. She wanted to forge the way for all women to have the opportunity to become emotionally and financially independent, to topple men's power over women, and to live with purpose, which is why she lived by her own words, "In my judgment, it is a pretty poor thing to write, to talk without a purpose" (Gilman, *Living* 121).

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Evaluation: *Beth writes with confidence and conviction about a challenging writer and story. Her thesis, research and conclusions are excellent, indicating original thought and analysis on her part.*

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# Crimes of the American Family As Seen Through the Female Heart

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by Kim Zurek  
Course: English 102  
Instructor: Julie Fleenor

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Assignment:  
*Explore the role of women in Beth Henley's  
"Crimes of the Heart."  
Is the MaGrath family an unhealthy  
place for women?  
Explain by researching the play  
and related criticism.*

*Thesis:* Beth Henley, in her play *Crimes of the Heart*, portrays the American family as an unhealthy place for women.

- I. What exactly is the meaning of family values?
  - A. It refers to family members working together to create an atmosphere for happy, peaceful living.
  - B. They are the ingredients to life.
    1. Family values guide one through experiences.
    2. They nurture the body, mind, and soul.
- II. Two parents are needed for the ideal family structure.
  - A. They instill the most basic values in children.
  - B. Parents promote a positive environment.
    1. They encourage self-discovery.
    2. They supply children with a supportive environment.
  - C. Family structures less than ideal represent reality.
    1. The only guardian the household has is Grandpappy.
      - a. He is a controller.
      - b. Grandpappy makes Lenny feel ashamed for having a shrunken ovary, causing her to break up with her boyfriend.
    2. The three sisters separate, leading their own lives apart from each other.
    3. Lenny is the only binding force behind the MaGrath family.
  - D. Poor family structure results in the loss of proper moral development.
    1. Lenny is overwhelmed by self-doubt.
    2. Meg is scared of being "weak."
    3. Babe demonstrates immaturity.

- III. Physical or mental abuse is abnormal to family life.
  - A. Women are both victims and the cause of abuse.
    - 1. Babe is physically abused by her husband.
      - a. The abuse is not even emphasized.
      - b. The author treats the subject as if it were ordinary to life.
    - 2. Babe attempts to murder Zackery.
    - 3. Babe also commits statutory rape.
  - B. Betrayal and jealousy are forms of the mental manipulation used.
    - 1. The father abandons the MaGrath family.
      - a. The betrayal causes misplaced anger, fear, and revenge.
      - b. It also creates jealousy and insecurity.
        - (1) Lenny is insecure.
        - (2) Lenny demonstrates competition with Meg.
    - 2. The mother commits suicide.
      - a. The daughters lose a role model.
      - b. Meg tries to isolate herself from feelings and emotions.
  - C. Abandonment and betrayal lead to emotionally scarred families.
    - 1. It becomes a cycle, affecting each generation.
      - a. Meg leaves her family for Hollywood.
      - b. Meg betrays her former boyfriend, Doc Porter.
      - c. Babe betrays her marriage by having an affair.
    - 2. It represents a pattern causing severe responses.

- IV. Suicide is a popular alternative for family members.
  - A. People are overwhelmed with negative emotions.
    - 1. Loneliness, hate, and revenge are common thoughts.
    - 2. Fear, physical pain, and guilt are also popular feelings.
  - B. The only available way to cope with problems is death.
    - 1. The mother hanged herself and the family cat.
      - a. This causes Meg to isolate herself from other humans and love.
      - b. It stirred up the nurturing side in Lenny.
        - (1) She writes to Meg to keep her informed about the family.
        - (2) She wanted her sister to come home to support Babe.
    - 2. Babe attempts suicide several times.
      - a. She proves how the risk of suicide in relatives that have killed themselves is higher.
      - b. She represents how traumatized family members of suicide can get.
- V. Stereotypes are inescapable.
  - A. Women are labeled as emotional.
    - 1. Lenny shows jealous rage over popular sister Meg.
    - 2. Babe feels anguish over attempting several times and failing.
    - 3. Meg goes through emotional trauma and lies to her grandfather about her career.
  - B. Women find it easier to express themselves.
  - C. Women are defined as passive members of society.
    - 1. Babe is victim to an abusive husband.
    - 2. She never stands up to the brutal treatment.
  - D. Men are labeled as stronger, more powerful.
    - 1. Women associate men's abuse as a "guy thing."
    - 2. They accept the inhumane treatment.

The American family is commonly recognized as the structure that provides the individual with the basic foundation to a happy, successful life. It is the framework encasing moral values, cultural beliefs, traditions, social interaction, and love, as it also fulfills one's need for belonging. A family offers security; it allows family members to learn through each other's experience, yet still permits room for individual freedom and growth. The American family provides the stability both men and women need to survive in a constantly-changing reality. However, not all people share this same perspective on the family structure. In fact, some view the American family as restrictive and disappointing in form, of jaded expectations, lacking proper guidance and sincere role models. Females, in particular, appear to suffer the most from family life. Women are like clay—molded to the family structure, sculpted by the expectations of society. More specifically, "to defend the traditional family is to defend sexism...the woman here is not simply constrained, she is abused" (Wilson 25). The traditional family is no longer considered a safe haven, rather an "arena in which men are free to hit, rape, and exploit women" (Wilson 25). This dire perspective is shared by Pulitzer Prize winning playwright Beth Henley, who depicts the American family as an unhealthy place for women in her play *Crimes of the Heart*.

Before analyzing the traditional American family, one must be aware of the concept of family values and exactly what they mean. Patrick Tolan, associate professor of psychology and psychiatry at the University of Illinois at Chicago says, "Family values are among the most shared values of society. It's taking care of your own [family], teaching kids what's right and wrong, trying to make a good life" (Walek 1). Family values are the ingredients to living; they are all the elements necessary for life's feast. There will be meals that are too spicy, too decadent, or just too much to take in at once, but each and every meal is essential to the main course of experience. Family values guide individuals through each meal, each experience that nurtures the

body, mind, and soul. However, it is nearly impossible to eat those meals or partake in those experiences without the proper utensils—silverware, family. Family values may be difficult to consume without the ideal tools or the ideal family structure.

The ideal family structure would consist of two loving parents who are compassionate and supportive of their children. According to James Q. Wilson, "The family is the place in which the most basic values are instilled in children" (24). The family allows its members to work together on any problems that may occur during life's path. Parents encourage self-discovery in their children, reminding them about the supportive environment they reside in when faced with any self-doubt. However, when family conditions are less than ideal, such life lessons cannot and will not be taught. What is left from this less-than-perfect family is reality.

The MaGrath family represents Beth Henley's vision of reality, with a poorly structured household, lacking order as well as morals. The family is made up of three sisters: Lenny, 30, Meg, 27, and Babe, 24, who grew up without their parents. The only guardian they interact with is their grandfather, who serves more as a controller than a guiding parental figure. Lenny felt ashamed about having an abnormal ovary, leading her to break up with her boyfriend Charlie Hill. Meg refers to her grandfather's over-powering nature when she says, "Old Granddaddy's the one who's made her [Lenny] feel self-conscious about it" (Henley 34). Without parents, a family cannot develop that tight-knit structure, woven by togetherness, love, strength, etc. Critic John Simon explains how the play demonstrates "a loving and teasing look back at deep-southern, small-town life, at the effect of constricted living and confined thinking..." (216). It is no wonder why the women separate and lead their own lives apart from their siblings, because they do not realize that families stay together. Lenny knows a little more than the others concerning the significance of families, as she lives with her grandfather and takes care of him in his sickened condition. She also regularly writes to her sister Meg to inform her

on family news. Lenny is truly the binding force of the MaGrath family, as shown when she explains her birthday wish, or vision, of having all three sisters “smiling and laughing *together*” (Henley 124). Lenny takes on the leadership role for the MaGrath family, because someone must try to tackle the responsibilities typically handled by parents in order to have any family organization.

Despite Lenny’s efforts, the poor family structure the MaGraths grew up with cannot overcome their loss of proper moral development that results from the absence of parental figures in the traditional American family. The three women do not know what a solid relationship is, which is why none of them have solid marriages. Don Nelsen explains how the sisters “reveal an immaturity which is almost crippling: Lenny the eldest, plain-Jane frumpy, haunted by enormous self-doubt; Meg, a failed, pill-popping singer-singer scared stiff of being ‘weak’; and Babe, whose very name signals her stage of development” (215). Nelsen’s description of the characters shows the negative effects humans can experience without parents or a family that stays together to help each other grow and make successful choices in life. This lack of family structure proves to be adverse to women’s lives; yet, there are even more serious and unfortunate situations that stem from such an environment.

Abuse, whether physical or mental in form, is not by any means a normal or acceptable behavior in life toward men or women. It is a serious crime, occurring “among all religious, ethnic, and racial groups and in all geographic areas” (Howe). In *Crimes of the Heart*, the audience learns through subtle dialogue between Babe MaGrath and Barnette Lloyd that Babe has been physically abused by her husband Zackery, not once, but several times (Henley 59). Surprisingly, her abuse is not even emphasized in the play. Henley purposely presents the abuse indirectly, treating the audience as if they are already numb to such violence so common to real life. Babe is undoubtedly a victim of abuse, like many women in America; yet, she can not be excused from her attempt at murdering her

husband. Women can just as likely be the cause of abuse, or worse, homicide, as men are. When responding to the question of why she shot her husband, all Babe says is “I didn’t like his looks! I just didn’t like his stinking looks!” (Henley 27). But later she goes on describing that she tried to kill Zackery in effort to defend and protect her black lover, Willie Jay. Babe never learned how to deal with such trying circumstances, leaving her to use violence to cope with her problems. She has no family available to help her face the pain or the problem. She also does not realize that by sleeping with Willie Jay, 15, she has committed a crime—statutory rape. Babe needs a supporting family, to lead her away from ignorance—away from crime. Babe, then, becomes a highly complex character: the victimization she suffers grows into the victimization she produces. Surely, women are afflicted by physical abuse and also something just as severe, if not more so: mental abuse.

Mental manipulation is a powerful force. Unfortunately it is used by many people for selfish, inconsiderate reasons, leaving behind emotionally scarred victims. Betrayal and jealousy are two of the most prominent factors faced in reality. The *Random House Dictionary* defines betrayal as “being unfaithful or disloyal” (82). This principle is clearly presented in the play; as Chella Courington writes, “Beth Henley’s central theme in *Crimes of the Heart* is betrayal, particularly that of a fierce and rigid, life-denying patriarchy...” (526). The father of the MaGrath sisters abandons his children when the girls are very young, not knowing the disastrous results: “Misplaced anger, fear, jealousy, and revenge are the key passions, all of which are a response to the father’s initial betrayal and desertion” (Courington 527). Abandonment causes insecurity, and in Lenny’s case, she experiences self-doubt and displays jealousy. In a conversation with Meg, Lenny says “When you looked at my face, you said, ‘My God, we’re getting so old!’ But you didn’t mean we—you meant me! Didn’t you?” (Henley 18). Lenny is clearly paranoid, but even more apparent is her jealousy towards Meg. She



explains to Babe, "Somehow she [Meg] always seemed to get what she wanted. I resent it" (Henley 65). Lenny brings out the concept of competition—sibling rivalry. Family is not meant to be a contest among its members. In fact, sisters should help each other to be the very best person she can be. However, Lenny cannot help feeling competitive, because of her insecurities and low self-esteem brought out by the lifestyle she was raised in. But this is due not only to the father's abandonment but also to the betrayal by their mother who killed herself. When their mother committed suicide, she did not just take her life, but a role model for her children. As Courington states, "Their father's desertion and their mother's suicide are the catalysts for Meg's attempt to anesthetize herself against feeling and suffering by staring at pictures of grotesquely diseased people" (527). When two of the most important people (parents) in one's life abandon and/or betray a child, of course the individual is going to end up emotionally scarred or mentally disturbed, as Meg is. Parents or guardians typically prevent such insecurities, by reassuring their children of their strengths and achievements and overcoming the fear and doubts. Naturally, poor self-esteem is the result of mental manipulation created by parental abandonment.

Betrayal can be one vicious cycle, first affecting the parents, then inflicting the children. Meg, in turn, left her family for the glamour of Hollywood. She even refused to read her sister's letters, which contained information about family affairs. Meg also betrayed former boyfriend Doc Porter, promising she would marry him if he stayed with her during Hurricane Camille, and then breaking that promise (Henley 67). Babe also followed in her family's footsteps, betraying her marriage by having an affair with Willie Jay. These incidents of betrayal and jealousy aren't merely coincidental, but demonstrate a pattern of mental abuse resulting from an unhealthy family life. Sometimes a family member's actions can be so disturbing it causes severe, and quite often fatal, responses, like suicide.

People who are overwhelmed with a myriad of

negative emotions feel that the only way to cope with their problems is to end life: "Suicide is a way to solve various types of personal problems—loneliness, hate, desire for revenge, fear, physical pain, feelings of guilt, and the like" (Cavan 858). Stress can suffocate people, making them desperate for relief—even if it means death. The mother of the MaGrath sisters hanged herself and her cat one day, for reasons the audience never finds out, but what is more important is how this incident makes a major impact on the daughters. Nelsen suggests that in Meg, the suicide may have created "such an aversion to 'weakness' that she has inadvertently cut herself off from real human contact and love" (215). For Lenny, her mother's death stirred up the nurturing side in her, causing her to care very deeply for her siblings, trying to keep them together. This is why Lenny writes to Meg, and keeps her informed on current news, and also why she wanted her sister to come home to help support Babe in her legal matters. Unfortunately, Babe supports David Lester's proven fact that "the risk of suicide in the relatives and especially the children of suicides is greater" (351). Babe does not only attempt suicide once, twice, but three times. She luckily was unsuccessful in her attempts, but her actions show how traumatized the family members of suicide victims can get. People quite often commit suicide at home, only to be found by family members who will then be haunted with the memory "for the rest of their lives" (Lester 351). But memories of death aren't the only ideas that may haunt the individual for a lifetime—stereotypes can stick just as long.

Stereotypes are inescapable. Quite frequently women are the victims of such labels directed toward the traditional American family. First and foremost, females are noted for being emotional. Alan Clarke Shepard admits that the females of *Crimes of the Heart* often "erupt in anger toward those (including themselves) who engineer or sustain the emotionally impoverishing circumstances of their private lives..." (96-97). Shepard is most likely referring to Lenny's jealous rage over her popular sister Meg, or Babe's anguish when

attempting suicide several times and failing, or even Meg's emotional trauma in resorting to lying to grandfather about her career. Many people may even compare women to bombs...just waiting to go off, explode. Women are human beings that experience a wide range of emotions and should not be labeled over-emotional just because they find it easier to express themselves.

On the contrary, women are defined as passive members of society. In *Crimes of the Heart*, "we are invited to sympathize with isolated heroines whose fantasies demonstrate the difficulty of conceiving female subjectivity while entrenched in patriarchal epistemes, whose resilience is expressed in their canny, survivalist compromises with the codes of passive Southern womanhood" (Shepard 96). Shepard's statement is most applicable to Babe's situation: she had been victimized by an abusive husband which leads her toward desperate measures when she shoots him in the stomach. Normally, a woman in Babe's position would build up a strong defense surrounding the brutal treatment she received; however, Henley reinforces the passive female stereotype by resolving the entire case with a quiet side deal, instead of having Babe stand up for her rights, like she should have done all along, before shooting her husband: "Traditionally, women and men alike have accepted the fact that men have rights that women do not" (Burke 111). This inequality has been a sad, unfortunate part of life for centuries: "Male behavior has been considered the norm, and women have been viewed, to some degree, as inferior. These attitudes are part of the stereotypes that shape thinking about women and women's behavior" (Burke 111). In the case of abusive behavior, this statement implies that men are known as the stronger, more powerful gender, at least in the physical sense. So it is quite common for women to accept the brutality as a *guy thing*. Many women have trouble getting out of abusive relationships, especially without hearing many success stories of women who have risen above the violence. Therefore, women try to deal with the bruises, the

pain, the torture—like everyone else. A solid family structure would prevent, or at least control such situations. Parents, sisters, and other relatives can support a woman's right for happiness and success; but, as Beth Henley demonstrates, a poor family structure can be defeated by stereotypes.

The American family is a complex structure, ideally meant to support individuals in their journey through life. Families can offer each and every person a solid foundation to work from, to build morals, cultural beliefs, traditions, socialization skills, and love. It is a structure that can promote education, new experiences, and self-discovery. The family by far is the most influential system in the world as it is the place where values—the ingredients to life—are instilled. Without basic morals, without the family support system, travelers may wander off life's path to success. Family life is meant to take care of all ages, races, and genders, promoting peace and happiness and preventing individuals from getting lost along the way. Is this type of organization a reality? All human beings have their own perspectives; each individual possesses his/her own sense of realism. To some, a kind, loving, and supportive family appears only to be a pipe dream, but to others, it is their life, their reality. To Beth Henley, the traditional American family proves to be an unhealthy place for women, as depicted in her play, *Crimes of the Heart*. Women are like lumps of clay—the "Gumbies" of reality—molded to the family structure, sculpted by the hands of society and its expectations. Chella Courington explains that the play demonstrates how "the traditional family and community at large have failed women" (528). This is of course true, not just in the play, but in real life as well. Whenever a woman becomes a victim, whether to a poor family structure, physical or mental abuse, betrayal and jealousy, suicide, or stereotypes, the society has failed her. It is important to recognize the problems of reality, affecting both men and women. Ignorance is a crime, not just for the American family, but the world, as seen through the female heart.

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Evaluation: *Kim has carefully argued her thesis, that the MaGrath family harbors a diseased structure, which creates alienated lives for the MaGrath women. Her paper shows a maturity and objectivity which are impressive.*

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# What Is Good Writing? The Anthology Judges Give Their Standards

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Nancy L. Davis

Good writing is like a finely-tuned guitar: tautly strung, it sings in perfect pitch; it is played for and to an audience. In the most capable of hands, it speaks with an honesty and a clarity that resonates beyond the performance.

Jack Dodds

Whenever I read I look for details, details, details appropriate to the writer's purpose or the occasion: descriptive details, fresh facts or figures, supporting instances, insightful observation or explanation. Good writing is dense with information. Good writing is also alive with voices: the writer's voice (persona), dialogue, quotation, and allusion. Good writing always talks to me.

Julie Fleenor

I want to hear the writer's voice. I like vivid writing which convinces me that beneath syntax, semicolons, and transitions beats a heart and that this heart is connected to a brain which thinks. I want to see the writer wrestling with thinking and writing. I want to see discovery. Can every writer do this? Yes. Will every writer do this? Maybe. But when good writing does occur, it is an incarnation wonderful to behold.

Barbara Hickey

In Mark Twain's words, "Eschew surplusage."

Kris Piepenburg

All writing begins with reading—whether reading of physical or mental reality or another text. Good writers “have their feelers out” before and as they write, to soak up the details and depth of experience, whether lived or read. For whatever world a writer recreates and brings me to—whether involving technical concepts, a topical issue, a historic moment, a state of mind, a literary work, or a meaningful memory—I want to hear about that world through a focused, frank, unaffected, and unpretentious voice, and I want to get a full sense of that world, to be able to move around in it as in a “virtual reality.” When a writer has strong sensitivity to actual reality and brings meaningful detail from it into his or her writing, the virtual reality becomes as rich and deep as the actual.

Peter Sherer

Writing that focuses and boldly goes where it promises to go alerts and engages me. I like writing that is intelligent, consistent in its logic, and concrete in its detail. I like examples and I want to hear an honest voice which speaks to me in sentences which are fresh, crafted, varied, economical, and musical.

Joseph Sternberg

I like writing shaped for a specific audience and powered by a well-delineated persona. I like economical writing. I like writing infused with fresh, vivid words and graceful sentences. I like details and clear purpose.

Andrew Wilson

A piece of writing might describe a chair. A piece of good writing might have a man in that chair. A piece of super writing might show that man fidgeting—sitting, standing, sitting again; speaking, laughing, crying, moaning, babbling incoherently, drooling, or all of these. Super writing would tell the reader how that man’s shirt clashed with the fabric of that chair, and how that fabric *shooshed* as the scratchy wool of the man’s shirtsleeve brushed across it, bringing cigarette to mouth. Super writing would describe not only a chair and not only a man, but also the state of that man’s hair, and how he smelled, and the peculiar timbre of his voice. In other words, in my view, super writing features illustrative details—not exactly to the point of saturation or exhaustion, but I’d eat an overcooked chicken before I’d eat a raw one.

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# Harper Students on Writing

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Charles Boswell

I write late at night when there are no distractions. When I'm up at four in the morning, and thoroughly exhausted, I don't use formulas and stratagems to organize my writing. I just say what's on my mind. The next day I'm often surprised by what I came up with.

Casey Brookshier

This paper means a great deal to me because everyone knows what it is like to find conflict with another person's ideas. These conflicts can be painful and at times unbearable. However, I feel that this paper illustrates the ability of the human sufferer not only to survive but to take something deep from the experience of dissimilarity, and/or feel the need to find something deep to ease the pain of dissimilarity. A helpful writer is not the one who creates worlds of unreachable ideologies that are withdrawn from day-to-day experience. A helpful writer is the one who uses experiences of reality to uncover intelligible lessons for human sufferers in reality, so they can see clearly.

James Cates

I write and encounter distinct experiences: expulsion and connection. As I write I unburden, exorcise, and energize. Purging long-held impressions, casting reflections off any number of the thousands of facets cut into my ego over time. Later, the same recollection reflects a slightly different image, and I am startled at how little of myself I have known. Completion comes in connection with a reader.

Laura Jane Gresey

Searching for ultimate truth may be futile, but something about us demands the effort. Science, religion, and philosophy provide tantalizing tinder, enough to stoke the fire to know which burns in many of us. The search can consume a lifetime.

Jeanne Hanson

For me, writing is a process of creation much like working with clay. I begin with an unformed block of words, raw ideas, and rugged images. Then the kneading begins, wedging words until they soften into one another and start to take shape. The idea in my mind emerges onto the page while I move a clump of words from one place to another. It is a process of forming thoughts that are my own but carry the heredity of every experience of my life.

Barbie Markey

The way that I write is directly, shooting from the hip. I want to take the reader somewhere to let him/her get involved in the writing, see it, hear it, feel it, to be one with the character, to communicate experiences from the heart.

Darraugh Nolan

I enjoy writing argumentative essays, as the writing process allows me to state my viewpoint clearly and without interruption.

Denise Prickett

“Writing is easy—I just sit at the keyboard and bleed.” I don’t know who wrote this, but I’ve posted it, written in large black letters, next to my computer. It sympathizes with me every time I have to conjure my AWOL ability to write something intelligent.

Steve Shepard

Writing is for me an exercise in honesty; for it is the one activity of which I can partake that affords me the opportunity to divest myself of the masks and facades behind which I conceal from the world my true self—that is, writing is a medium through which I commune with my soul.

Doriann Thompson

Spanish, to me, is a language of music, poetry, and emotion — It seemed the perfect vehicle for writing my thoughts the day after my father-in-law died.

Kyle van Wickevoort

I feel at times, I’ve been misunderstood in my life with the spoken word. Writing has helped me set the record straight regarding events in my past. The word catharsis kept surfacing in my mind as I wrote *Little Girl Lost*.

#### CATHARSIS

An act of purging or purification.

Elimination of a psychological problem by bringing it to consciousness and affording it expression. This is why I write.

Flora Wu

Writing English as a Second Language has always been hard for me. However, I have found that practices and revisions help improve my writing a lot. I like writing because it allows me to redigest my memory and experiences in a more thoughtful way. Writing is like telling stories that is a mixture of laughs, happiness, sadness, anger, and surprise.

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# Writing

by Martin Ryan

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Every writer in this volume has achieved a level of distinction by the fact of being included in it. So you probably are, and should be, proud of that. But there is a hook in the fact also. Once you do this well, it's hard not to do it well again, and perhaps better the next time. And to do it badly or sloppily is to ask for serious self-criticism. It is just as true though, that when one does a thing well, there is a pleasure in doing it again. And all of us here have written well, are writing well, and will continue to do so.

The other part of this is what we all know: good writing is hard work. It may be pleasurable, it may be rewarding, but it is never easy—except for the bits here and there which seem to come free but usually follow periods of hard work and serious thought. Still, the “inspired” bits are sweet, aren't they?

But before going on, I want to say that it is a privilege to be offered the opportunity to write this piece. And I was given *carte blanche*, so to speak, regarding all but length. I was told to write whatever I wished to about the subject of writing. That is the kind of assignment which, when given to a class, can create elation based upon notions of absolute freedom which is often followed by despair at the seemingly infinite number of choices one can make. Hopefully, I have focused myself on aspects of this subject in a sufficiently interesting way to keep you reading.

Probably very few of you will become professional writers. But almost all of you will be (and have been) called upon to write “professionally.” Whether that writing involves reports, evaluations, letters of application or recommendation, the virtues or drawbacks of proposed projects, etc.—the list is nearly endless. My point is, writing will be with you for a long, long time. And, as I've said before, once you've written well (and been recognized for it, as well as recognizing it yourself), it is hard to write anything but well thereafter.

My own profession, obviously, calls for a good deal of writing, and I have been writing for a long time and still am. But one always wishes one's writings were better no matter how good they might



be. The other thing is that you are usually, if not always, writing yourself, writing you: your thoughts, opinions, hopes and dreams. You are writing to clarify those things or that thing about yourself that you wish to express: to communicate yourself to the reader, often even when the writing is about someone or something else. What the reader thinks about you as writer (no matter how skillfully your role is concealed or whether the reader knows it or not) often determines how seriously he takes what you say and what you are writing about.

Some of us, including myself, have written in hopes of publishing—and have done so, however sparsely. But to some extent, it's an almost hopeless endeavor. Not only must you overcome your own self doubt about the worth of what you write, you must then hope that your assessment of the quality of the writing as well is accurate. After all that of course, you must type, edit and send off your efforts with a self-addressed stamped envelope for its probable return. Then you must wait, usually a minimum of six weeks. But I once waited eleven months for a rejection which came on a standard printed rejection form. And three times, over the years, I never received any answer at all. But with some luck, some talent and a lot of perseverance a letter of acceptance may come—sometimes even with a check. My field of endeavor is poetry, so the check is never large; still, what a thrill!

Nonetheless, the statistics for the writer are grim. Most publications of recognized stature publish one percent or less of all submissions received. I know you know that math, but that's 990 rejections per 1000 submissions. But the fact is, most writers write because at some level, for some reason, they "have to." And this has been true, in varying degree, for me since I was quite young.

But publishing aside, it is true that writing, in many other occupations and professions, is often an ongoing and necessary endeavor. Sometimes it is simply the more or less mundane prose of normal business. But sometimes it involves putting forth projects, points of view and ideas in which you truly believe. And sometimes these efforts involve

matters which effect not only your own life but the lives of others as well: your colleagues, customers, business associates and people outside in the world. If indeed these efforts alter your own or others' lives, it is interesting to speculate whether or not such endeavors also constitute part of a maturity which is willing to institute such efforts and take on the responsibility for and acceptance of their results.

And often, because you are "writing yourself" as well as others into what you are saying, you are including the human aspect, i.e., making it real in a way that engages the reader(s) in a serious consideration of what you are saying, sometimes to the extent of producing a desired action or change. I hope you have that opportunity, because to do it successfully can often have the same thrill attached to it that seeing your name in print does. But to explore all of this to the extent that it deserves is probably the proper subject of another essay.

You have already been recognized for your writing ability, and who knows where that will lead? So, I conclude this piece hoping that I have made some useful sense about writing on one hand, while congratulating you on the other for a serious accomplishment. That you possess the talent you have and know it is to recognize a gift that will be of various and endless use to you for the rest of your life. Treat it as the friend it is. Cultivate it when you can and *don't stop*. Continue "writing yourself" as you go along in life, leaving your mark in cursive, type, or print. Who knows, maybe family, friends, or even the world at large will be touched, persuaded, or awakened to thought by what you, out of you, have put to paper.

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