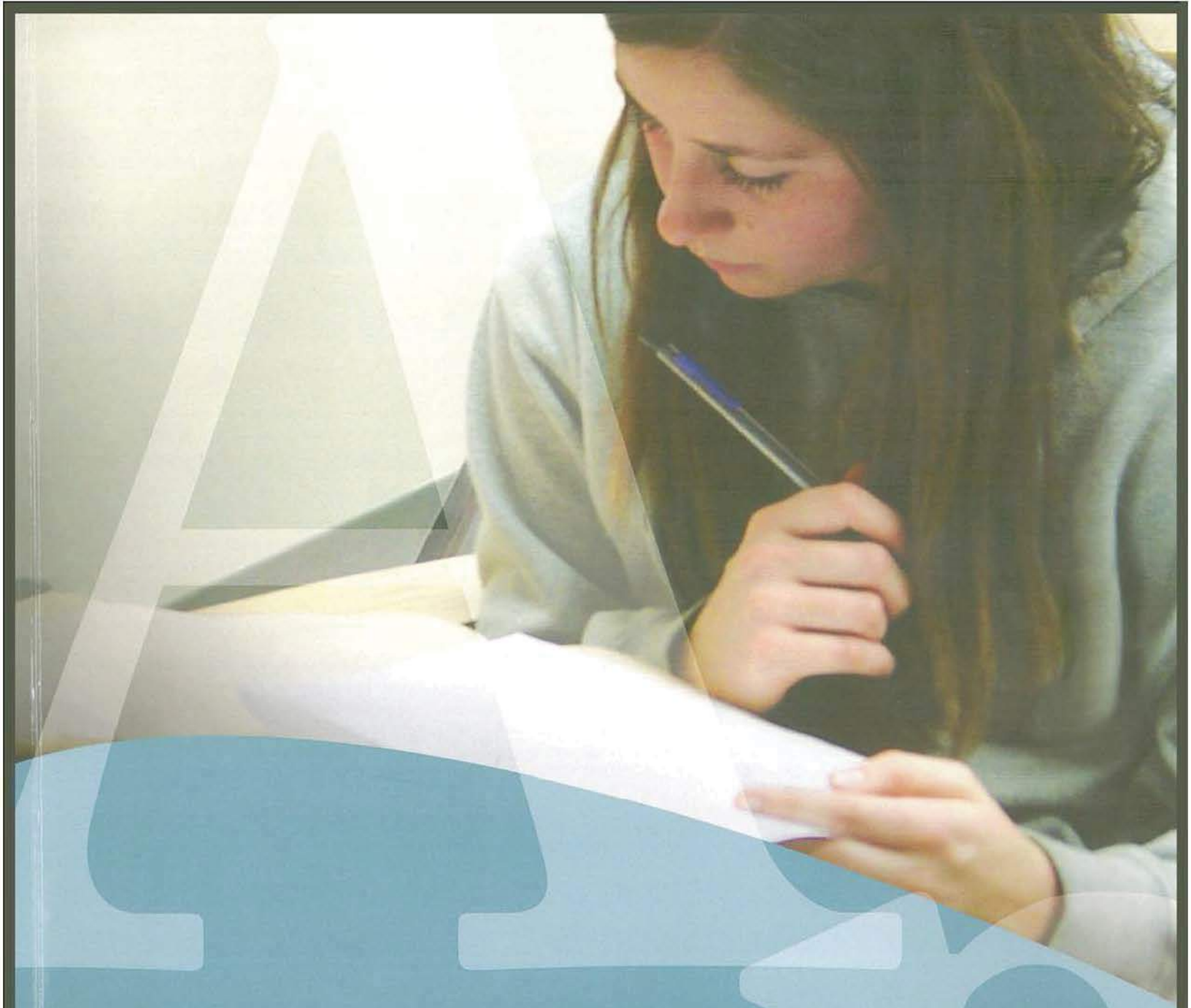

THE HARPER ANTHOLOGY

An annual, faculty-judged collection honoring the best academic writing, campus-wide, by students at Harper College, Palatine, Illinois

Volume XXVI
2014

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2014

An annual, faculty-judged collection honoring
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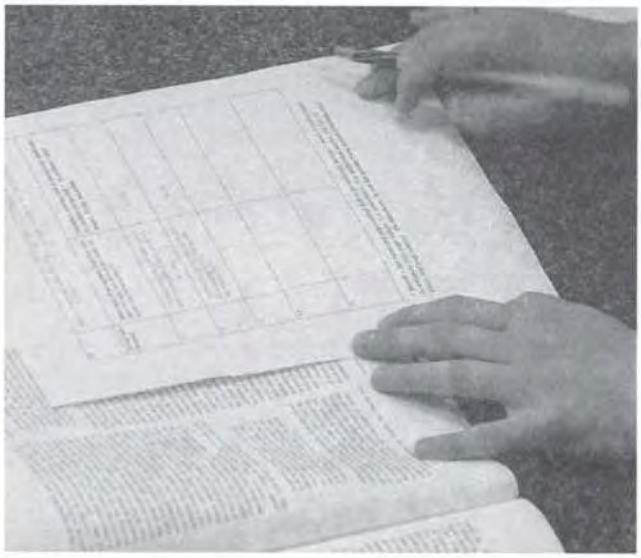

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Submissions are read each winter by the members of the *Harper Anthology* Committee

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Back issues of *The Harper Anthology* can be accessed at the Harper College Library website, by selecting the Harper Archives tab, followed by Institutional Repository and Student Publications

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Foreword

Best Practices for Teaching Writing: Growth, Identity, and Authenticity (and quite a few other things)

Kris Piepenburg, Chair
The Harper Anthology Committee

In her excellent Afterword to this volume of *The Harper Anthology*, on page 173, my English department colleague Anne Davidovicz observes, among other things, that

> Good students and even mediocre ones are hungry for growth. College offers courses that demand writing—in- and outside of liberal arts departments—that can perpetuate such growth. It is not only intellectual growth that these courses stimulate. It's a growth in identity, a link to one's passions, and a generator of authenticity.

Anne's statements here made me think of a recent incident with a student from one of my English 101 courses one evening, who was obviously distressed during a part of the final exam that involved the writing of an essay in class, in response to one of the essays we had read the week before. Students had a choice of responding to an essay about fraternity hazing, or to one about texting and driving. This student, one of the brightest of the group, was very agitated during the writing period, and finally, after most students had packed up and left, he said, "I can't do this tonight."

The student and I conversed for a while in the hall. In our conversation, I learned the following about him:

- Age: 21 years
- Job: Forty hours a week, washing dishes at Panera Bread (he'd been there two weeks)
- Living situation: With parents who are not on his case
- Other courses: Electronics engineering technology, likes it, doing well
- Previous courses: Taken English 101 before and dropped it; lost interest at midpoint of semester
- Intelligence (my estimation, based on past writings and class discussions): Superior
- General attitude toward school and life: Frustrated at how it isn't leading anywhere or building toward anything

Professor Davidovicz's thoughts about growth and identity all resonate in this student's case. He yearns for growth, and his identity is struggling to develop. I told him, that based on what I had seen over the years, that it isn't until the age of 25 or 26 that people feel somewhat established, or a little more certain of themselves and about what can be done in life, whether school is part of the picture, or not. I encouraged him to allow himself to let things happen at the pace that they do, to not give up, to finish my English 101 course and meet its mundane requirements. He was clearly struggling on multiple fronts, but it seemed to me, as well, that at least one aspect of my course (and probably other aspects, as well) were not resulting in what Professor Davidovicz wisely tells us college courses should do: generate growth in identity and authenticity. This is troubling, to me.

So many factors contributed to this student's frustration with writing that essay in class: the day he had spent working and his general frustration with himself certainly didn't help, but the limitations of the topic and the format seemed to be part of the problem, as well. In his distress, I sensed dissatisfaction with the things that "school" demands that every student do: in this case, demonstrate proficiency in responding to a text and developing an argument of some kind about it. This is pretty standard stuff in English 101, the type of in-class essay that the English department instituted for 2013-2014 as part of a writing assessment project. I had decided to continue using this type of assignment for Fall 2014 as part of the final exam.

As the student and I talked, I thought about how this assignment may have been tolerable for most of the class, but ill-suited to him. I thought about how inauthentic the assignment really was; it is a "practice" writing assignment that has no real audience and not much purpose for the student. The purpose of such an assignment is for the instructor, and for the institution: it allows evaluation of whether a student can read a text well enough to state a thesis in response to it and then write well enough and in enough detail to support the thesis. I don't think a tired but gifted student looking for meaning and relevance in his classes would be interested in such an assignment; it lacks authenticity, so completing it could probably not help a student generate authenticity. The topic choices I had given were fairly banal, too. Beyond empathizing for a young man who had died in a hazing accident in a fraternity, maybe there was just not much of interest here

for this student. It was a test, like one he had taken before in public school. These tests are necessary, in assessing whether masses of students are mastering writing skills, but Professor Davidovicz's words and my experience with this student are reminders of equally important purposes of teaching college writing, and of teaching, in general.

Best Practices: How the *Anthology* Can Help

Thankfully, not all of the writing assignments we give are so heavily weighted away from the student, in terms of purpose. Growth in identity, a link to one's passions, and "generated authenticity" are clearly evident in many of the works included in this collection.

In this volume, *The Harper Anthology* again serves the purpose of honoring excellent student writing, and it again provides a supplemental text that faculty can use to help teach writing in their courses. In many courses, reading and analysis of essays from the *Anthology* is a key component in helping students make progress in academic writing. This journal has provided examples of "best practices" in teaching writing for 25 years.

The institutional focus on assessment of learning during the past decade has resulted in more intense attention paid to whether students' writing skills are improving by the end of a semester of instruction. Along with the English department's assessments of student writing, the General Education Outcomes Assessment Committee also has conducted campus-wide writing assessments. This committee bas developed a Writing Improvement Plan over the past few years and has a short-term improvement plan in place, with the following goals:

- Gather and provide "best practices" writing instruction materials for instructors
- Provide students with a two-page pamphlet about college writing expectations
- Provide access to examples of writing excellence, using *The Harper Anthology*
- Make resources available on the Harper web, for students and faculty
- Develop a long-term improvement plan

This focus on helping students improve their writing skills is encouraging, and it is also encouraging that *The Harper Anthology* is considered, institutionally, as having a role in this effort. Every issue has been an iteration of what some of our best practices in teaching writing already are, and potentially, what they could be. Each collection of essays provides a sampling of the types of assignments Harper professors give; each essay is an example of a type of essay that a future student might be assigned to write; and each student's approach to an assignment provides possibilities for future students, in how they might approach a similar assignment. Figure 1, above, is a partial list of types of writing assignments and projects contained within this issue, for faculty seeking ideas for assignments or good examples for students.

Figure 1. Best practices: some types of writing assignments and papers contained within this issue

Research-based papers

Not based on literature: p. 11 (bilingual education); p. 14 (voter suppression, in APA style); p. 25 (illegal trade in fossils); p. 76 (increasing use of drone aircraft); p. 112 and 123 (artists and works of art)
Literature-based: p. 20 (novel); p. 138 (poetry); p. 55, p. 88, p. 165, many others (short stories)
With proposal and annotated bibliography: p. 82
Scientific research and field experience documentation: p. 93
Writing for web presentation: p. 149

Additional types of assignments

Summarizing a text's ideas and responding to them: p. 160 (an essay from a Philosophy course, in response to ideas proposed by Albert Camus)
Writing a critical review of a text: p. 144 (An essay from an Anthropology course, reviewing a book on the first inhabitants of North America)
Writing to learn: p. 1 (An essay from a Philosophy course, exploring whether Immanuel Kant's ideas about the mind are supported by modern science)
Personal memoir: p. 163 (An essay from an English 101 course, about working in a 21st-century American sweatshop)
Assignments for Developmental Writing: p. 109 and p. 158

Best Practices: Listening to the Students

Each *Harper Anthology* has featured "Student Reflections on Writing" interspersed throughout its pages. I invite every student writer to contribute to this feature, but not everyone submits a commentary. Every time I

Figure 2. Best practices: from the students' perspectives

On Authenticity and Identity

Allison Babiarz: The paper I wrote that got published was for something that I care about and enjoy learning and writing about. . . .It's difficult to spend hours writing something and do a good job if you hate it the entire time

Kara Kelly: Whenever a teacher allows me the freedom to exercise my creativity and express my individual writing style, I enjoy the assignment no matter the topic.

Kristjana Mitrollari: There has to be a balance between information and creativity. Every work I turn in for class always contains the elements that show my unique writing style. Every abstract and every research paper includes humor, creativity, or at least literary elements; otherwise, who would want to read it?

On Process

Linda Connor: [The] creative process is the challenge I love, one that keeps me motivated, engaged and forever in edit mode....

Kimberly Hayes: I gather a large volume of pieces, such as essays, reviews, and other related information about the particular subject, much like a disassembled puzzle, then I spend time with the materials, and I search for a fresh perspective or a hook to join all the pieces of the puzzle together. I love this process, and I spend a lot of time reading and writing and rewriting.

Ben Slotarski: I take a short vacation from writing after the rough draft is completed and revisit the essay a day or two later. With a fresh mindset, I approach my essay as a critic, meticulously scanning it for awkward phrasing, overused words. . . [and] ways of structuring the essay to make it flow better, putting myself in the shoes of the reader. I continue this process several times before the final due date....

On Professors' Feedback

Amy Jo Streuter: . . .these wonderful professors—whom I will always cherish—read my work, not skimming through "just another paper" or grading without full attention to detail. . .

request these, I wonder if anything new will be revealed with respect to student writing, in comparison with the past year's collection. Every year, I am pleasantly surprised.

Figure 2 is a collection of statements taken from the commentaries in this issue. In these statements, future students can learn something about "best practices" for completing writing assignments, and faculty can learn something about giving them. Every time I read commentaries like these, and on my best days, in every interaction with a student, I am reminded of some of the things I need to do as a writing professor. My encounter with the student described at the beginning of this Foreword showed me that I need to be attentive to meaning and significance for the student when requiring the writing of yet another in-class essay that has assessment of learning as its purpose, and that I need to think just as deeply about every assignment I give. I need to ask myself whether an assignment has an authentic purpose for the student; if the student can grow in some way from completing it; whether it contributes in a positive way to some growth in identity, or authenticity of voice or purpose in life; if it connects in any way with anything the student feels some passion for; and, whether I am too wrapped up in what my own interests are, in giving the assignment.

Some of the commentaries in Figure 2 speak to the issue of authenticity that arose with the student I described earlier. Allison Babiarz tells us that writing succeeds when a student cares about the topic, and that it is "difficult to spend hours writing something and do a good job if you hate it the entire time." Similarly, Kara Kelly reminds us of how individual choice and freedom contribute to a student's comfort level with an assignment. We can't make every student comfortable with every assignment, and sometimes doing uncomfortable things is necessary

to help students add skills to what they already know how to do, but we need to be attuned to discomfort, especially when it springs from students feeling little purpose in an assignment or little investment in a topic of study. As Professor Davidovicz reminds us, a "link to one's passions" is part of the picture of growth and success in a college course.

Best Practices: On Writing and Feedback

I hope, if you have read this far, that you have noticed the comment from student Amy Jo Streuter, on the previous page, about how grateful she is that her professors really respond to her writing, with full attention to detail. Obviously, this should always be one of our best practices. Faced with a grading deadline and mountains of papers, though, as well as what seem to be increasing student needs over the years, it is possible to understand how a student's paper might become "just another paper." Clearly, for Amy Jo, though, that has not happened here. What a nice thing it is, to read this kind of response, to the efforts of the Harper College faculty.

I also hope, that if you have read this far, that you read all of Professor Davidovicz's Afterword, on page 173. I have referred to it a lot, here, and I am grateful to her for having helped me to think about my own teaching, about teaching in general, and about assessment of writing, as well. There is much more, in the Afterword, though, about how we respond to student writing. Her comments about the value of meanness and love, in responding to student writing, will make you smile.

Anne's final comment on writing and feedback is "let the conversations continue." This statement rings true, in so many ways. The conversations with our students, on their papers (and in the hallways and in our offices) need to continue. The conversations among faculty, about teaching writing, and teaching, in general, need to continue. The conversations about writing assessment need to continue. The conversation we have, annually, springing from the publication of *The Harper Anthology*, also needs to continue. We all grow, in these conversations.

Thank you—if you have read this far—for continuing this conversation. And thank you, students and colleagues, for your support of *The Harper Anthology*.

Philosophical Ideas and the Modern Mind

Nick Alonso
Course: Philosophy 232
(History of Philosophy: Modem)
Instructor: Brett Fulkerson-Smith

Assignment: *Each student was required to submit an exploratory essay at the end of the term, based in part on weekly reflection papers about the course reading and discussion. The exploratory essay was to be undertaken without an end in mind and without preconceived or set ideas about the subject or what might be said about it. Students were to allow research and writing to determine the direction of this essay, in an exploratory "writing to learn" fashion.*

In *The Critique of Pure Reason,* Immanuel Kant explained his new, revolutionary ideas about how knowledge, metaphysics, and the human mind relate. Not uniquely, I found his ideas fascinating and thought provoking. The idea that we do not experience the world as it is in itself but rather only as it appears to us was particular interesting to me. Before reading *The Critique of Pure Reason,* I based all of my beliefs about knowledge and reality on the assumption that my experience is that of the world as it is in itself, not of a representation of the world that was in part created or altered by my own mind. This idea and many of his others are certainly intriguing to think about, but it becomes much more intriguing to think that some of Kant's ideas may actually be accepted and supported in today's world, where psychology, neuroscience, and cognitive science are all developing and advancing our understanding of the how the mind works. The question that then follows is: Are any of Kant's ideas about the mind supported by modern scientific discovery?

I

I began my search for an answer by reading through *Kant's Thinker,* which is a book that attempts to clarify and analyze Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason,* specifically his ideas on cognition and self-consciousness. While interesting, this book unfortunately only related modern analyses of Kant, and not modern scientific findings, to the author's interpretation of Kant's ideas about the mind. So, there was not much in this book that I could use to answer my question.

The next place that I looked was in an article written by Robert Howell, called "Kant and Kantian Themes in Recent Analytic Philosophy." Again, this article was mostly a discussion of current topics being analyzed and discussed within Kantian philosophy, but it still had a few important bits of information that were helpful. The article shed some light on how current Kantian philosophers are attempting to interpret Kant's ideas in the most acceptable way possible based on the current issues within Kantian philosophy. One section in particular will be important to take note of. The section says,

> Allison holds, Kant's idealism is not ontological but epistemic. Kant simply describes two ways in which the ordinary objects of our knowledge can be considered: in relation to the a priori conditions of our sensibility (and thus "as appearing" in our knowledge); and in independence of their satisfying those conditions (and so as they are "in themselves"). (Howell 45)

This is an interesting argument and I think may be a valuable one to keep in mind since, as Howell says, "If we do accept Kantian ontological idealism, then it will be difficult to escape problems...."Allison's interpretation seems to avoid the issues surrounding Kant's ideas about space and time and their absence in the world in itself. Allison seems to simply be saying that knowledge of an object can be taken as either related to the a priori conditions of our mind or separate from them. I think Allison's interpretation would be much more concurrent with today's scientific community, which, as far as I know, does believe that space and time exist independently of our consciousness. So, in light of this, I think I will take a slightly different approach to my exploration by making

my initial question a bit more specific. Do current scientific findings support the Kantian idea that all our knowledge is based on a priori concepts or conditions?

I looked for some answers to this in the article titled "Kant and Cognitive Science," written by Andrew Brook. This is a great article that addresses almost any question one could have about the relation of Kant to cognitive science. As for my previous question, Brook addresses it directly by saying that Kant believed that "the functions crucial for mental, knowledge-generating activity are processing of sensory-inputs and application of concepts to sensory inputs" and that this idea and others of Kant's "are at the foundation of contemporary cognitive science" (Brook 4-6). First of all, I find it incredible that a philosopherwho lived over 200 years ago had insights that are supported by scientific theories of today. The fact that Kant created these ideas without any prior understanding of the brain or any scientific-like understanding of the mind proves him to be a truly brilliant thinker.

But, while this is impressive, it also raises some questions. Brook does not go into great depth as to why cognitive science uses a similar model of knowledge as Kant does, but he does outline the basic approach cognitive scienceuses when trying to understand the mind in general. The approach consists of postulating "unobservable mental mechanisms to explain observed behavior," which is nearly identical to Kant's transcendental method. Brook says that this method "is now by far the most important method used by cognitive scientists" (4). So, again, this is an instance in which Kant and contemporary cognitive science are related, but this also is a bit surprising to hear because I could see this practice of postulating as being a bit controversial in the scientific world, where objective observation and rigid experiment are the most important methods used.

One could argue that we can postulate all we want about the internal functions of the mind, but we will never be able to directly observe these functions, nor will we ever be able to test any postulations about them, which therefore means they can never be proven. This may lead some people to view cognitive science as a kind of pseudo-science or as a pointless endeavor.

To me, these seem like valid concerns, but I would argue that other fields, like theoretical physics, postulate all the time about things that can never be tested (string theory?), and these practices usually are not viewed as pointless. Now, of course, they could say that postulations in theoretical physics are based on mathematics, which makes them more credible than postulations in a field like cognitive science, and this, I would have to admit, in some ways may be true. But I believe that there are still accepted methods used in scientific fields today that could be analogous to those used in cognitive science. Let's take paleoanthropology. A paleoanthropologist first takes data from fossils, such as the fossil's DNA and the fossil's age. Then, using this data, he begins postulating about what species this fossil belonged to and why it has the certain traits that it does. They make these postulations with both the data in mind and prior theories of evolution in mind. It is these postulations, after being widely accepted, that become the way in which we view the history of hominids and the human species.

I can see this as being similar to the approach of cognitive science, in that cognitive science also collects data through empirical means, then, using prior knowledge of brain and prior theories of the mind, attempts to postulate about how the functions of the mind must be. Then it is these theories that begin to form our understanding of the mind. But, in the end, it seems these theories are still only just that; they are not knowledge. Kant would agree with this. Brook mentions how "Kant held that psychology (by which he meant the introspective study of the mind) could never be a science," and he goes on to say that Kant believed that no knowledge of the self can come from the awareness of ourselves (Brook 4-8). First of all, I think that with today's technology, Kant may reconsider his statement about how the study of the mind cannot be scientific. But even if I do admit that, by Kant's definition of knowledge, nothing can be known for certain about the functions of the mind, I still think that theories of the mind can be made in a way by which they are supported by hard evidence, similar to theories of human evolution. Also, I feel that just because we can never have the same kind of certainty about the mind as physics does with its discoveries, this does not make it a pointless endeavor. In fact I'd say it is far from it, seeing as the mind lies at the foundation of all knowledge and our experience of the universe, thus making it one of the most important topics one could pursue. This then leads

me to ask, "What are some of the popular theories of the mind in cognitive science?"

II

This is a very general question, but I began to get some answers by reading further into Brook's articles. Brook wrote,

> In cognitive science at the moment, functionalism, specifically the functionalist version of the representational model of the mind, is virtually the official philosophical view of the mind. The basic idea behind functionalism is this. The way to model the mind is to model what it does and can do...("the mind is what the brain does"). (5-6)

So, there are two important things to identify and discuss here. One is the functionalist view of the mind, and the second is the representational model of the mind, both of which are separate yet connected, and both, as Brook mentioned, are popular views in the world of cognitive science.

The functionalist view of the mind is basically a way in which to view our mental processes. The functionalist approach would follow the same previously mentioned guidelines of collecting data then postulating, but the functionalist would make sure to postulate only about the actions and/or functions that constitute the mind and not of its underlying structure (Brook 7). For the functionalist, the mind is essentially defined by a collection of functions or as Brook says, "the mind is what the brain does" (6).

Brook goes on to say that for the representational model of the mind, the basic function would be "to shape and transform representations" (7). How Brook defines representation is not clear, but it seems that what he is talking about is the way in which we experience things mentally. The basic idea is that our mind creates for us a representative experience of what the outside world is like. Kant's view of the mind, as Brook shows, is basically exactly this. But, for now, I am more interested in gaining clarity on this idea of functionalism since it seems to be, as Brook says, the nearly "official" view of the mind in cognitive science. One sort of thing that still remains a bit ambiguous is in how to define the mind. If the mind is what the brain does, then why is the word "mind" used at all? Why do we not just say the functions of the brain?

To get a clearer definition, I turned to the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, which says, "Functionalist theories take the identity of a mental state to be determined by its causal relations to sensory stimulations, other mental states, and behavior" (Levin 1). I take this to mean that our mental states (whether they be emotion, desire, thought, or representations) are directly caused by our physical functions such as the ones mentioned. Because behavior, sensory stimulations, and other mental states are all in part determined by brain functions, it seems that this is another way to word the same idea that Brook laid out. That our mental states *are*, and/or, *are caused by* our brain functions. I think this definition is clearer because it did not use the word "mind" when explaining functionalism. The term "mind" is broad and ambiguous, and I would assume because of this, it would be problematic to use when trying to create clear definitions.

I think an interesting point to make is in reference to one of Brook's comments, which is that the only other major view of the mind in cognitive science comes from "eliminativist antogonists" (6). Some basic views of eliminativists are: *"(a)* There are no mental states, just brain states *and, (b)* There really are mental states, but they are just brain states (and we will come to view them that way)" (Ramsey 1). This theory is getting to the same question that I posed of why do we not just say "functions of the brain" instead of "the mind" or "mental states?" I am not sure why this necessarily is, but I think because of the fact that right now any conscious person is having some mental experience makes it difficult to say that there are no such things as mental states. I think this issue really comes down to how we ought to be defining all of these terms. Defining the mind gets difficult because objectively experiencing a brain function (for example, through a CT scan) is much different than subjectively experiencing a brain function (through thought or emotion). On one hand, no one can look inside someone's brain and see exactly what he or she is thinking or feeling, and on the other hand, no conscious person can deny that he or she is always having some kind of mental experience.

III

This has much to do with the classic mind-body problem, but, while it is interesting, I want to focus on functionalism, since it is currently the main view used

in cognitive science. Specifically, I want to explore the implications the functionalist view of the mind has on the idea of free will. If we consider our mental states (including decision-making thought processes) as causally determined by sensory stimulation, or anything for that matter, then we are essentially saying that any choice we make is actually just an effect of some cause and is thus not actually a choice. In which case, free will would not theoretically exist. We are not really making a choice if the thought, "I choose to do X," is just the product of some brain function (or in Brook's terms, thought is brain function) that is caused by something else, which is caused by something else,which is caused by something else, and so on. Nowadays, because we are able to scan brains, I am curious as to whether or not neuroscience has looked into the free will issue at all. And, if so, what did they find?

According to Michael Gazzaniga, who is a major researcher in cognitive neuroscience,

> Neuroscience [also] tells us that by the time any of us consciously experience something, the brain has already done its work. When we become consciously aware of making a decision, the brain has already made it happen. (88-89)

This excerpt does not go into the specifics of the experiments that were done, but it is clear that findings in neuroscience further support the idea that our thoughts are just the effects of brain functions or, in fact, *are* just brain function. This then further supports the idea that all mental function, and in turn our behavior, is a part of the physical world and is thus subject to causality, which would leave out free will. All of this leads to a deterministic view of the world, a world in which free will does not exist. So then, can any idea of free will continue to exist? Can it only exist as a form of religious or spiritual belief? Or can one still hold some view of free will without believing in the supernatural?

I could see how someone could make a basic religious argument for the existence of free will. They would claim that the soul exists and is what controls our mental functions and behaviors. And, because the soul is non-physical and supernatural, it is not subject to causality of the physical world and is therefore free. Their argument for its existence would probably be much the same as an argument for the existence of God or an afterlife. However, none of these claims would be backed by empirical evidence and would thus lie outside the realm of scientific knowledge and remain in the realm of faith.

I would prefer to hear an argument for free will that is not purely based on a religious or spiritual belief, and I think a good place to start may be with compatibilism. The basic argument for compatibilism is this:

> ...to be a free agent, to be free in choice and action, is simply to be free from *constraints* of certain sorts. Freedom is a matter of not being physically or psychologically forced or compelled to do what one does. Your character, personality, preferences and general motivational set may be entirely determined by events for which you are in no way responsible (by your genetic inheritance, upbringing, subsequent experience and so on). But you do not have to be in control of any of these things in order to have compatibilist freedom. They do not constrain or compel you, because compatibilist freedom is just a matter of being able to choose and act in the way one prefers or thinks best *given how one is.* (Strawson 1)

This view, though it has a different name, seems only to be determinism with a new definition of freedom. Compatibilists accept that everything is determined, so their definition of freedom then is one that has to coincide with this idea. Freedom, to the compatibilist, is just being allowed to do what one prefers, even if these preferences themselves are predetermined. One is not free if they are in shackles and cannot move about as they want. One is not free if they are an addict and want to stop using a certain drug but cannot. For compatibilists, determinism is not a constraint on their freedom. Only things that prevent them from doing as they want are considered constraints (Strawson 1), and, again, this is even if these desires are predetermined.

Initially, I did not like this view. I saw it as just determinism with a skewed view of freedom. Freedom for me was having the ability to navigate my future, a future that is a blank slate, one largely undetermined. I saw myself as not being already determined but instead being the determiner. So compatibilism, and with it,

determinism,was not initially appealing to me, but then I read about a question that compatibilists often ask, which is, "'what more could free-agency possibly be'" (Strawson 1)? I did not really have a good answer for this question.

What was I expecting science to find in the mind that would make my idea of freedom possible? Did I really expect them to find, as the saying goes, a "ghost in the machine?" Did I expect them to find evidence for the soul? What could physically exist in the mind that allowed for undetermined freedom? I have no idea. The more I think about it, the more it seems obvious that science would only find evidence that supports determinism. Immanuel Kant recognized this long ago. We could take the Kantian view and admit that we may never be able to know for certain everything about the mind, which would leave open the possibility for the existence of a soul or a ghost in the machine, but these would only be that, possibilities. And believing in these possibilities would require a type of faith that is becoming more and more rare in today's modern world. Personally, I am not sure if I would take the leap of faith. Coming from a scientific background, I just cannot ignore the empirical evidence that supports the deterministic viewpoint, but accepting determinism comes with a lot of baggage. We would have to redefine ideas like justice, morality, and responsibility.

Conclusion

Whatever my future beliefs end up being, it is now clear to me how important the understanding of the mind is to the way in which we interpret the world. As Kant rightly concluded so long ago, our view of knowledge is largely determined by a priori conditions of the mind. Cognitive science is making discoveries about the mind that are reshaping many of our prior beliefs about consciousness. Furthermore, these current theories of the mind have wide-ranging implications that can change and shift how we humans view our existence. In the future, I would like to research and write on the social repercussions of a determinist or compatibilist view. Personally, I cannot think of many things more interesting to think about than the thing that creates thought itself.

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Evaluation: *Nick's exploratory essay exemplifies the first stages of good philosophical research and discovery in at least two regards. First, the kinds of questions Nick challenged himself to answer through research and reflection are the kinds of questions that top-notch philosophers are currently asking in cognitive science about past masters in philosophy. Second, Nick's own thinking about the difficult texts, concepts, and arguments discussed in the essay demonstrates the care and deliberateness of good research in the humanities; he is as adept at analyzing a text as he is at laying out and following its philosophical implications.*

Dialects, Regionalism, and Culture: The Case of Japanese

Allison Babiarz
Course: Linguistics 205 (Language and Culture)
Instructor: Alina Pajtek

Assignment: *Write a research paper that explores any area of linguistic anthropology that interests you.*

When learning another language, we typically learn one variety of that language. But each language has a wide range of dialects. I am currently learning Japanese, and I was curious about what other Japanese dialects are like. As I learned more about dialects, I began to notice the strong connection between dialects and regionalism, so I decided to focus more on the relationship between them. What I looked for in my research was information on the standard and regional dialects, how the relationship between them as well as people's views of them have changed, and the influence of regionalism on dialect development. Due to the wide range of dialects, I decided to concentrate mostly on the Tokyo, or standard dialect, and the regional Kansai dialect, because they are the two most widely used.

Dialects in Japan are divided by region, and each region has subdialects for cities and towns. They can even be divided further than that, such as in Kyoto. Within Kyoto, there are three distinct dialects. There is the Gosho dialect, which is used around the old Imperial Palace; a dialect used by merchants; and a highly specialized dialect used in the Gion district by the traditional geisha (Johnston, "Dialect-Rife Japan"). Dialects in neighboring areas can be very similar to each other or almost impossible to understand. The major cities of Kyoto and Osaka are both in the Kansai region and very near to each other, but they have very distinct differences.

There are various reasons for how and why so many dialects came into being. Regional dialects developed in part due to the passing of time. Other influences on dialect development include isolation of islands and isolation caused by geographic barriers, such as mountains ("Dialects, History Etc."). There were also the limits of the time for communication and transportation. Feudalism and an almost constant civil war served to keep people within the areas in which they lived, separated from everyone else. For a long period of time, Japan was basically a series of independent fiefdoms or countries that were often at war with one another ("Dialects, History Etc."). So much conflict between areas, along with the limitations of the time, meant that many people didn't have contact with remote areas and people. A strong sense of regionalism also helped keep cultures and dialects within their originating areas. This sense of regionalism may have been partially caused by the civil wars making people more devoted to the areas they lived in, while rejecting anything different. In addition, each local area had different ways of living, and this guided the way dialects formed because the way people live strongly influences the way they speak (Kindaichi 58-59). Having so many distinctive dialects led to the inability to communicate when the country started to unify during the Meiji Restoration.

The problems that have been created by so many dialects have led to changes in more recent times. After warring stopped and Tokyo became the capital, there was a large increase in trade and greater centralization ("Dialects, History Etc."). Tokyo was the center, and thus the dialect used there acted as the lingua franca for speakers who had to communicate across dialect regions (Shibatani 186). During the Meiji era, there was a movement to unify spoken and written language so that the world would perceive Japan as a civilized nation that was able to communicate and maintain order throughout the whole country ("Standard Vs Kansai"). This desire for unification led to the creation and enforcement of Standard Japanese. The government established Standard Japanese in the nineteenth century based on the Tokyo dialect and adopted it as the national language until the end of World War II, when government enforcement of a standard language stopped (Yukawa). Standard Japanese still continues to be widely used without government enforcement, and it acts as Japan's representative language.

Student Reflections on Writing: Allison Babiarz

In most cases, a school paper writing process for me involves delaying when I start and leaving just enough time that I know I can finish in. It sounds bad, but I feel that if I try to start something early, it'll end up taking much more time to finish. If I start something with not much time left, then I'm forced to think and work faster. I take a long time writing anything. Part of what makes it take so long is the fact that I have the compulsive need to constantly reread what I've written to be sure I'm happy with it. Whenever I write a paper, unless it's exceptionally long or includes research, I usually start with no clue on what to do until I finally get an idea and write the whole thing at once.

I would and could never write a paper, or anything else, without having at least all the main points decided first. I divide Word documents into paragraphs and write the main points of each paragraph in parentheses. As I think of more things, I fill them in wherever they belong. Once I start to focus and get ideas, it can be hard to write them down as fast as I think of them.

If I'm writing a paper, I'm without a doubt listening to music. This makes less interesting papers a lot more bearable to sit and try to focus on. It also blocks out distracting noise. The paper I wrote that got published was for something that I care about and enjoy learning and writing about, so music only served to make it that much better. In the case of paper topics I'm less inclined toward, I just think how it's good that I'm learning something that I normally wouldn't. It's difficult to spend hours writing something and do a good job if you hate it the entire time.

Something that should always be remembered when writing is to not repeat words. One thing that makes an improvement in what I write is the fact that I right-click on any word that might possibly have a synonym and see what I can change it to. Variation makes everything sound better, and it's so easy to do that there's no reason not to.

Aside from the process of writing a paper, writing and reading on your own are always beneficial. I tend to write rather long e-mails, and I like spending time to make them sound good. As far as reading goes, one thing I really enjoy is fanfiction. There are definitely some exceptionally horrible and some not so good fanfiction stories, but there are also some that are truly amazing. It's interesting to read different writing styles people have. While I've read and appreciate some incredibly talented fanfiction writers, there's still something to be said for stories that aren't quite at that level or even downright bad. Knowing what to avoid is just as important as knowing what to include. Although reading something badly written isn't the most enjoyable thing to do, it can help by drawing attention to what exactly makes it bad. The well-written stories are much preferred, though.

However, even today, there is strong regionalism. One man reportedly said he wasn't from the town he lived in. When he was asked when his family moved to the area, he said "About 200 years ago" (Hays). Japan is known for having a homogenous society, but its strong regionalism takes away from the uniform structure it is viewed as having. Rather than the country being closed in, regions within the country can be closed in from the rest of the country, especially with their dialects. Different areas, especially major cities, have a lot of pride in the way they speak. A rivalry exists between Tokyo and Kansai, particularly Osaka (Scott). Some people from the Kansai region refuse to speak the standard dialect, even outside of their region. The strong pride attached to regional dialects makes people want their place of origin to be known, even if they aren't as easily understood. People from other regions also don't have an attachment to using the standard dialect like they have with their own. If you didn't notice the regionalism, it would be like not noticing Osaka Castle in the middle of Osaka.

The Tokyo dialect is used as the standard for Japanese, and it's the dialect you learn if you take a Japanese class. The culture of Tokyo has a long history of obedience, duty, and following rules because the samurai class was based in Tokyo in the Edo period (Hays). The values from the samurai spread to the culture at large.

Cultural differences tend to be reflected in the way people speak in different areas, and this holds true with Tokyo (Yukawa). The stereotype for people from Tokyo is that they are "busy, cold, impersonal, polite, formal, and stressed out" (Hays). In accordance with this, people living in other areas view the Tokyo dialect as being expressionless, snobbish, and unfriendly. This view is very different from the view people living in Tokyo have. For the people in Tokyo, their own dialect is normal, and they would never consider it to lack expression or sound unfriendly, because they are used to that way of speaking.

The Kansai dialect is often referred to as the Osaka dialect because of how notable the city is, even though Osaka is only a part of the Kansai region. Osaka is historically a merchant city, having a large presence of merchants and an absence of samurai, thus being more open and friendly for commerce reasons (Hays). The general view of people from Osaka is that they are more outgoing, pragmatic, independent, impatient, and disrespectful than other people, especially those from Tokyo (Hays). The dialect is viewed by others, mainly from Tokyo, as being either charming and funny, or undignified, rough, crude, and obnoxious (Scott). This view is largely attributed to the fact that the Osaka dialect is known to be used by comedians and the yakuza, or Japanese mafia. While the Tokyo dialect is used in news broadcasts, the Kansai dialect, particularly from Osaka, is greatly used in entertainment programs. Many of Japan's funniest comedians come from Osaka (Hays).

Although Osaka and Kyoto are very close to each other and both use the Kansai dialect, the general views of the people and of the dialects differ. Kyoto is an old, traditional city, being the capital and center of Japan for over a thousand years before Tokyo was the capital. People from Kyoto are viewed as being arrogant, cool, mannered, refined, conservative, and valuing tradition (Hays). Kyoto is home to many traditional, old buildings that people find beautiful, and people have a similar view of the dialect, finding it beautiful-sounding, elegant, and formal. The dialect uses old forms of speaking that are characteristics from classical Japanese, which was the most powerful language when Kyoto was the capital and center ("Standard Vs Kansai"). Old traditions are also most intact in Kyoto, and people still follow rules of etiquette that haven't been used anywhere else for hundreds of years (Hays).

The Tokyo and Kansai dialects vary in several different ways, encompassing aspects of their vocabulary, grammatical structure, and pitch accent in intonation. There is a wide range of vocabulary differences, which includes nouns, adjectives, and verbs. One interesting case involves the insult terms *baka* and *aho*. These roughly mean "idiot" or "foolish," and they are both used in the Tokyo dialect and Kansai dialect. However, the frequency of use and level of rudeness is reversed. In Tokyo, *baka* is used much more and is not as insulting. In Kansai, it's the reverse way. If you wanted to tease someone in Tokyo, you would call that person "baka," but if you were mad at that person you would probably say a more forceful "aho." Another difference that's heard very often is the use of the word "very." While in Tokyo it would be *totemo* or *sugoku*, it's *meccha* in Kansai. So if you eat something that tastes really good, you could say "sugoku umai" in Tokyo and "meccha umai" in Kansai. And to say the equivalent of "no," "no good," or "cannot," the Tokyo dialect uses *dame* or *ikenai*, while the Kansai dialect uses *akan*. "*Akan* is probably a modified version of *ikan*, which is the clipped form of *ikenai*" (Palter 20). Clipping words is a common grammatical feature of the Kansai dialect.

An example of differences in grammatical structure are the negative verb endings. In Tokyo, *-nai* is placed at the end of verbs to make them negative, and in Kansai, *–hen* is used. The copula placed at the end of sentences, similar to the verb "to be," varies slightly in that it is *da* in Tokyo and *ya* in Kansai. In terms of prosodic features, accentuation is generally much stronger in Kansai, giving the dialect "its more melodic, emotional tone as opposed to flat, monotonic Tokyo speech" (Palter 16). These prosodic differences parallel geographical variations: Tokyo is located on the Kanto plain, and "like the flat plain where it's spoken, the intonation of Kanto dialect is fairly flat" (Scott). Both dialects have different pitch patterns, and the location of high and low pitches on syllables in a word differs between them. With an abundance of homophones, intonation can play an important role in constructing meaning. For example, *hashi* can mean "bridge" or "chopsticks," and the difference can be heard in the pitch. In the Tokyo dialect, when the *ha* in *hashi* has a lower pitch, it means "bridge," and when the *shi* has a

lower pitch, it means "chopsticks"; it's the opposite way in the Kansai dialect (Ramsey 159).

With the wide variety of dialects, there isn't a clear distinction between what a dialect is and what a language is. One teacher of the Kansai dialect refers to it as a language, and he asks his students to write a paper on the differences between a language and a dialect so they learn how hard it is to distinguish ("Unique Lecture on Kansai Dialect"). When the dialects get to a certain level of difference and difficulty to understand, it might be said that they have become a language. Depending on the person you ask, the language used on the island of Okinawa is either a dialect or a different language (Johnston, "Dialect-Rife Japan"). Okinawa is one of the furthest reaching areas of Japan and had different originating people in comparison to the rest of Japan, along with some other areas. There is general agreement that traditional Okinawan and mainland Japanese have shared origins, but some linguists still have doubts (Johnston, "Dialect-Rife Japan"). "There are many different languages spoken in the islands and they are all listed as endangered languages by UNESCO" (Scott). The question of whether we are talking about a dialect or a language also appears in the far north in Hokkaido.

Dialects can cause a great many misunderstandings and inconveniences, some of which are taken advantage of by using them for comedy. A comedy called "Irumagawa" offers a good example of a misunderstanding in which a man from Tokyo travels to the Saga prefecture in Kyushu. He goes to a shop and asks for a brand of cigarettes, and the shop woman tells him "nai," which to someone from Tokyo means, "There isn't any." So he asks if she has a different one, and she says "nai" again, so he leaves, and when he returns to where he's staying, he's told that "nai" means "yes" in the local dialect (Kindaichi 59). In these two dialects, the same word basically means the opposite thing. Another misunderstanding that can lead to an inconvenience involves a person from the Kansai region and a person from the Chiba prefecture near Tokyo. The person from Kansai arranges to meet the other person on *shiasatte*, which means "the day after asatte," which means "the day after tomorrow." But in Chiba, it means "two days after asatte," so they end up meeting a day apart (Kindaichi 60). Problems like these can arise easily when people from different regions interact. If someone from Tokyo were to casually call someone from Kansai "baka" ("idiot"), it probably would not go over well. To try avoiding such misunderstandings, people can tell others ahead of time that they are from somewhere else and also be knowledgeable of the dialects of the places they travel to. However, even taking precautions won't always ensure clear communication among people from different regions.

There are often subtitles on TV in Japan because the language has not only many dialects and regional accents, but also homophones; this is particularly true for the Tohoku dialect that is used north of the Tokyo dialect. While the Tokyo and Kansai dialects are different, they can still be largely understood both by someone from Tokyo and Kansai. The Tohoku dialect is known to be the hardest dialect to understand, and even native speakers don't always understand it. It's so hard to understand that there are Standard Japanese subtitles on TV whenever someone speaks the dialect (Hashi). "It's often said that Tohoku people speak without opening their mouths" (Scott). When one man traveled to a town in Tohoku, he "could not hear the difference between *suzu* (bell), *susu* (soot), *so desu* (that's right), and *sosu* (sauce). They all just sounded like 'szszszszsz'" (Pulvers). Common features of the Tohoku dialect are drawing out vowels, blending diphthongs, and changing consonant sounds (Scott). People in the Tohoku area sometimes justify the way they speak by saying that it's too cold where they live to talk (Scott). The constant slurring when speaking makes people view them negatively and think they're lazy.

The Japanese are aware of the many differences between dialects and the problems in communication that can occur, and this was the reason for standardization. With the Tokyo-based standard dialect being used in schools, there has been great success, and almost all people can speak this common language and make themselves understood by people in other areas (Kindaichi 60). When the standard dialect was first enforced, other dialects were given a much worse view by being considered hindrances to the spread of Standard Japanese, and they became stigmatized as "bad language" (Matsubara 13). In schools, children were discouraged from using their local dialects with the use of a dialect tag system. That

is, if students spoke a local dialect, they had to wear a dialect tag until they caught someone else using the local dialect and then they would pass on the dialect tag to that person (Matsubara 13-14). Much of the media is in Standard Japanese because national broadcasting uses the standard. This has helped the spread of the standard, but also reduced the influence of local dialects and led to their overall decline (Johnston, "Dialect-Rife Japan"). There are fewer young people who speak the language of previous generations, and linguists believe that some of the lesser-used dialects face a threat of disappearing within a few generations (Johnston, "Dialect-Rife Japan").

Even with a drive toward a way of speaking that will make all people able to understand each other, there is still an importance and fondness of regional dialects. Speaking the standard dialect makes communication easier, but it can seem to some emotionless and much more distant than using a regional dialect. When speaking a regional dialect where it's spoken, there is more perceived familiarity and friendliness. Many people speak the dialect of their town or city when in their community, and standard Japanese everywhere else. With such strong regionalism, it often remains important to keep dialects separate. Some people in Tokyo dislike the Osaka dialect so much that it interferes with business. For example, a Japanese teacher from Tokyo grew infuriated after hearing a student's non-standard reply. "'That,' she said in a quiet voice but with eyes flashing anger and surprise, 'is not Japanese. That is Kansai dialect!'" (Johnston, "Speaking in Tongues").

Regional dialects are still very much present and will continue to exist despite some views. With the significance of the Kansai dialect, it can even affect Standard Japanese sometimes (Yukawa). Some Kansai words, such as *meccha*, can be borrowed. After being pushed down for so long, there is now an emerging positive view of regional dialects and revival efforts. The fondness of regional dialects can be found in the fact that an Osaka-based company developed a talking vending machine in 2003 that could use either Standard Japanese or the local Kansai dialect; these vending machines can now speak 12 dialects. In 2012, they "were placed by the main entrance of City Hall in Naha, Okinawa, after they won praise from local officials concerned that their local dialect was being endangered" (JIJI). It's beginning to look better for regional dialects, although some of the negative associations people make between dialects and the regions in which they are used will always be present.

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Evaluation: *Allison's paper is a perceptive study of the connection between language, region, and culture. Through a wide variety of examples from everyday interactions as well as from the media, Allison illustrates communication problems and stereotypes—both positive and negative—that exist or emerge when people speak different dialects. All these observations, as well as the examples of the actions that the Japanese take to attempt to find common ground while maintaining the different varieties of Japanese, make this paper a sophisticated analysis of language and culture.*

Mining Linguistic Treasure

Tomasz Bakalus
Course: English 101 (Composition)
Instructor: Janelle Brown

Assignment: *Write a research paper six to eight pages in length, using four to five sources.*

While the demographic profile of the United States of America continues to change, the controversy over bilingual education continues to boil. There might be different variants, but in its basic form, a bilingual education program denotes teaching non-English-speakers regular school academics in both their native language and in English. In such programs, students who lack English language proficiency use their native or primary language to learn basic academic skills such as mathematics, science and technology, while they also learn English—the societal language. The ultimate goal of bilingual education is not only academic success and English language proficiency but also the preservation, enhancement, and proficiency of the child's native language (Krashen, "Bilingual Education"). While mainstream society considers the ability to speak a second language as an intellectual asset, the critics of bilingual education argue that the English-only approach is the more suitable and effective way for the children to become proficient in the English language in a short amount of time and thus become assimilated into the mainstream culture. Certainly, bilingual education may have some drawbacks and may not be feasible in certain school districts; however, today's scientific evidence supports bilingual education as a more effective pedagogical choice than the alternative, English-only approach.

Considering the fact that the United States of America is a country of immigrants, bilingual or native language schooling has always been an integral part of education for many non-English-speaking children. However, opposition to rising immigration in the late 1800s and then the anti-immigrant sentiments during and after World War I "drove native-language instruction out of most public schools"; consequently, "[b]y the 1920s, most states had English-only laws for public school instruction" (Jost). It was not until the sixties—when the Civil Rights era sparked moves to improve education for non-English-speaking students—that the United States Congress authorized bilingual education through the Bilingual Education Act of 1967 and approved "financial aid to school districts to help students with limited English" (Jost). However, approximately a decade later, due to demographic shifts caused by immigration mostly from Latin American and Asian countries and again fueled by renewed anti-immigrant sentiments, a strong opposition to bilingual education developed. Consequently, the Bilingual Education Act was repealed in 2002 and replaced with the No Child Left Behind Act, which meant no direct federal funding to school districts. According to the National Association for Bilingual Education, the No Child Left Behind Act "neither prohibits nor encourages bilingual instruction" but "[i]t does, however, strike all references to bilingual education, bilingualism, and biliteracy from federal education law" ("No Child Left Behind Act").

Some of the main arguments against bilingual education include exorbitant costs, threat to national unity, and most of all, unnecessary delay—and often failure---to teach students the English language and literacy. Certainly, the cost is a concern as bilingual education programs do require supplementary school materials and teachers who are fluent and proficient in a language other than English. English-only or English Immersion programs—where all academics are taught in English—do "not require for the teacher to be fluent in a language other than English, which means that the job market is not overburdened by people whose only skill is bilingual education" (Boulet). According to Jim Boulet, the executive director of English First, a lobbying foundation that seeks to make English the official language of the U.S.and eliminate multilingual policies, some bilingual schools pose a threat to national unity because "bilingual education is a form of segregation, since it divides students by their ethnic background" (Boulet). Mr. Boulet argues that the bilingual programs, with their "very ethnocentric

view of history," fail to teach children "to respect this country" (Boulet). Furthermore, he alleges that by "giving people multicultural education; we deny them the chance to learn English; and we lose any means of common communication, or common symbols that allow us to communicate" (Boulet). The opponents of bilingual education point out that, although well-intentioned, the bilingual programs have proven to be a failure and that such "education ensures that children never learn English properly," which consequently prevents them from being assimilated into American culture (Boulet). They also allege that "the case against bilingual education has been proven over and over again," citing that academic test scores improved dramatically after California voters removed most bilingual programs with Proposition 227 in 1998 ("Ignoring Wishes on Charter School").

The above assertion--of the academic test scores improving dramatically after dropping bilingual programs in California—was forthrightly challenged by the proponents of bilingual education who questioned the way the tests were administered. For instance,"Asimov (2000) found that schools in California may have engaged in selective testing--excluding low-scoring students from taking the test" and "[s]he reported that in many cases in which SAT-9 scores increased from year to year, the number of students tested decreased" (Krashen, "Skyrocketing Scores" 37). Moreover, Proposition 227 went into effect around the same time as new testing methods were introduced throughout California and test scores improved throughout the state; therefore, the "score increases in California appear to be a result of the usual test score inflation that occurs when new tests are introduced" (Krashen, "Skyrocketing Scores" 39). According to Stephen D.Krashen, an Emeritus Professor of Education at the University of Southern California, who holds a PhD in linguistics, "[t]here were no significant differences in gains between districts that kept bilingual education and those that dropped it" ("Skyrocketing Scores" 39).

Bilingual education is effective and productive in teaching regular school academics and also helps to facilitate learning English. It should be apparent to anyone that learning basic academic skills, such as mathematics or science in one's native language, is far more efficient than doing the same in a language one does not understand. Moreover, according to James Crawford, a former executive director of the National Association for Bilingual Education, "[a] large body of research shows" that "well-designed bilingual education programs are far more efficient in teaching English than all-English approaches" (Crawford). Reviews of the research on bilingual education done by "Willig (1985), Greene (1997), and Slavin and Cheung (2004)" indicate "that using the first language to teach English language learners has beneficial effects on English language development" (Krashen, "Skyrocketing Scores" 39). The academicknowledge gained through the native language makes learning English more comprehensible—"[t]eaching subject matter in the first language stimulates intellectual development and provides students with valuable knowledge that will help them understand instruction when it is presented in English" (Krashen, "Skyrocketing Scores" 38). To be successful, a bilingual education program must consider the fact that English-language learners come from different social and economic backgrounds; and thus, they have different educational needs. This is especially important for children from poor households, with illiterate and uneducated parents, as such children "tend to fail in massive numbers when placed in English-only classrooms" (Crawford).

The English language learners are not the only ones who benefit from bilingual education. According to a recent study co-authored by Scott Imberman, anassociate professor of economics and educationat Michigan State University, bilingual education programs have a beneficial spillover effect on other students they're not meant for. The study involved native English-speaking students enrolled in Texas elementary schools with bilingual education programs. The findings of this study— published in the *Journal of Public Economics*—showed that these students "performed much better on state math and reading tests than native English-speaking students at schools without bilingual education programs" ("Bilingual Education Has Spillover Effect"). In Texas, school districts with an enrollment of 20 or more students of limited English proficiency in any language classification in the same grade level are required to offer a bilingual education. Comparing elementary schools—close to the required 20-student cutoff—with and without

bilingual education programs, the researchersdetermined that"scores on standardized math and reading tests for native English speakers were significantly higher at schools with the bilingual education programs" ("Bilingual Education Has Spillover Effect"). It should be noted that the study did not research the factors why, "but it could be because the English-speaking students received more direct instruction while the Spanish-speaking students were receiving bilingual education in a separate setting" ("Bilingual Education Has Spillover Effect"). In this particular research, the English language learners also performed correspondingly better; however, due to a relatively small sample, the findings were deemed inconclusive.

Bilingual education, or more specifically, bilingualism, offers cognitive benefits to anyone regardless of age. Although some people have concerns that learning two languages simultaneously creates confusion which prevents reaching proficiency of either, the science shows otherwise. During the 2011 annual convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, which took place in Washington, D.C., several studies were presented suggesting that "bilingual education offers benefits from infancy to old age" ("The Benefits of Bilingual Education"). Studies of babies—such as studies conducted by Janet Werket, a developmental psychologist at University of B.C.—suggest that children "raised in bilingual homes seem to have skills not possessed by those raised in monolingual homes" ("The Benefits of Bilingual Education"). Research indicates that learning two or more languages improves cognitive abilities such as improved memory, attention, abstract thinking, and problem solving. There is consistent research that bilingualism holds off Alzheimer's and dementia because "bilingualism requires us to exercise higher brain functions, and that consequently, bilingual people develop a 'cognitive reserve'—an ability to function longer than single language speakers" ("The Benefits of Bilingual Education").

Certainly, bilingual education may have some drawbacks, and due to costs, may not be feasible in some school districts; however, scientific evidence supports bilingual education as a more effective pedagogical choice than the alternative, English-only approach. Through acknowledging children's cognitive and emotional ties to their native language and cultural heritage, bilingual education creates nurturing and supportive academic environments and therefore, better opportunities for learning. The monolingual approach is especially ironic considering the cultural diversity in this country today—according to "Kenneth Prewitt, former director of the U.S. Census Bureau, 'We're on our way to becoming the first country in history that is literally made up of every part of the world'" (Swerdlow 42). Bilingual education addresses this cultural diversity and creates opportunities to foster a bilingual citizenry that can succeed in today's global economy.

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Evaluation: *Tomasz's passion for research and his ability to uncover the truth is evident in his work. Tomasz's paper is a reflection of his dedication to writing and research excellence.*

Voter Suppression in the 2012 Election

Chris Burnson
Course: English 102 (Composition)
Instructor: Janet Bone

Assignment: *After completing a series of assignments focused on American political topics, this student continued his interest in American political issues by exploring voter suppression in his research paper.*

The right to vote is one of the most essential rights that we have as Americans. In many ways, the Revolutionary War was fought to break free from monarchy and have duly elected leaders. Initially in the United States, only white, male, land-owners could vote, but in the decades since, the right to vote has been expanded to include nearly the entire adult population. The fifteenth, nineteenth, and twenty-sixth amendments to the *U.S. Constitution* give anyone over age eighteen, regardless of race or gender, the right to vote, and the twenty-fourth amendment specifically prohibits the use of poll taxes to deny people's right to vote (*U.S. Constitution*).

Expanding the vote generally benefits the population: when fewer people vote, a fringe or extreme candidate who doesn't represent the entire population has a better chance of winning. And when more people vote, moderate candidates who are more representative of the entire population are more likely to win. For example, if there were a town with two thousand voters, and one thousand of them believed that sea turtles are gods, then there would almost certainly be candidates in that town's elections who believe that sea turtles are gods and who would have pro-sea-turtles-as-gods platforms. But if there were a town with two hundred thousand voters and one thousand of them believed that sea turtles are gods, the candidates in that town's elections probably wouldn't have positions either way regarding sea turtles as gods. Or, if there were candidates who believe that sea turtles are gods, they'd also have to focus on broader, more everyday issues to get the majority of votes. The single issue---in this case, the sea turtles deities—loses its importance and ability to determine the election as the overall number of voters increases.

In the 2012 election, several attempts to restrict the number of voters came to light. These tactics were part of a Republican strategy to win the election by reducing the number of possible Obama voters, and these tactics should be recognized for the voter suppression that they are and should be blocked or amended so that no individual segment of voters is disproportionately denied their right to vote. For the most common tactic, many states passed voter ID laws that required some form of photo ID (usually driver's license or passport) in order to vote. "The 2010 election saw a wave of conservatives elected to Congress as well as to state offices. These new statesmen expressed the concern that 'voter fraud' committed by illegal immigrants was skewing election results" (McDermott, 2012). Accordingly, in 2011, twenty states that previously didn't have laws requiring voter ID introduced laws which would require some form of ID, and fourteen states that required some ID, but not explicitly photo ID, passed legislation to strengthen existing laws so that photo ID was required (National Conference of State Legislatures [NCSL] 2012, Jan. 26). And again, in 2012, in fourteen states that previously didn't have laws requiring voter ID, legislation was introduced that would require some form of ID, and in twenty states that required some ID (some of them due to 2011 laws) but not explicitly photo ID, legislation was introduced to amend or strengthen existing laws so that photo ID would be required (NCSL, 2013, Jan. 10).

Most of these attempts failed, but laws were enacted in some states: In 2011, new voter ID laws were passed in Kansas, Rhode Island, and Wisconsin, and existing laws were strengthened to require photo ID in Alabama, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas. Laws also passed in Minnesota, New Hampshire, and North Carolina but were vetoed by their governors. In 2012, new voter ID laws passed in New Hampshire and Pennsylvania, and the existing law was strengthened to require photo ID in Virginia. Legal issues effectively stopped or delayed many of the laws that were enacted until after the election. The Wisconsin law was declared unconstitutional in

March 2012, and enforcement of the Pennsylvania laws was temporarily blocked by a state judge until after the 2012 election. The laws in Alabama and Texas passed, but couldn't be enacted, because under Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, due to having histories of discriminatory voting practices, any changes in those states that affect voting must be approved by the Department of Justice (NCLS, 2013, Apr. 29).

Initially, the notion of requiring voter ID doesn't seem to affect many people or to be too burdensome. Most people have a driver's license, so these voter ID laws that require a photo ID require no extra effort on their part, but a significant segment of the voting population is affected. According to the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law, "Studies show that as many as 11 percent of eligible voters do not have government-issued photo ID. That percentage is even higher for seniors, people of color, people with disabilities, low-income voters, and students" (2012). The people most affected by voter ID laws are among the most vulnerable and marginalized in society, which brings up ugly echoes of Jim Crow laws. Additionally, Gabriel Sanchez, associate professor of political science at the University of New Mexico notes, "One consistent finding in political science literature is that whenever you increase the costs of voter participation, participation goes down, particularly among vulnerable segments of the population" (Katel, 2012).

For people who don't have a state-issued photo ID, getting one is far from a trivial matter and often can be quite onerous:

> ... citizens who lack such documents will now be obliged to assemble various other pieces of paper (birth certificates, naturalization forms, proof of residence, etc.) and make their way (presumably without a car) to a government office that can issue an official photo ID. (Keyssar, 2012)

Depending on where one lives, getting to these offices could take hours, and require missing work to accommodate the trip. And for some people, getting a birth certificate is impossible. Many elderly African-Americans were born in the segregated South, under Jim Crow laws, where undocumented home childbirths weren't uncommon. They simply have no birth certificates. Also, beyond the hassle of getting the necessary documents, the cost must also be considered. Most government offices charge fees to obtain documents, and the cost of the fees, plus the missed work and travel expenses, acts, arguably, as a de facto poll tax.

Another tactic for suppressing votes was cutting back the availability of early voting. In the 2008 election, early voters favored Obama strongly. "Nearly thirty percent of the electorate voted early that year, and they favored Obama over McCain by ten points" (Berman, 2011). Obama's advantage over McCain was even more pronounced in two key states: Florida and Ohio. In 2012, under Republican administrations, Ohio and Florida significantly reduced the availability of early voting, in Florida from fourteen days down to eight days and in Ohio from thirty-five days down to eleven days. Seemingly defeating the purpose of having early voting (for people who work on Tuesdays and who can't miss work on Election Day), weekend availability was very limited, and most importantly, early voting the Sunday before the election, a day when African-American churches traditionally encouraged voting by their members, was banned (Berman, 2011).

Voter fraud is often given as the justification for these changes. The states simply want to ensure that the elections are fair and untainted. However, the type of voter fraud that voter ID laws address is almost non-existent:

> A major probe by the Justice Department between 2002 and 2007 failed to prosecute a single person for going to the polls and impersonating an eligible voter ... Out of the 300 million votes cast in that period, federal prosecutors convicted only eighty-six people for voter fraud – and many of the cases involved immigrants and former felons who were simply unaware of their ineligibility. A much-hyped investigation in Wisconsin, meanwhile led to the prosecution of only 0.0007 percent of the local electorate for alleged voter fraud. (Berman, 2011)

In fact, while defending its new voter ID law in court, the state of Pennsylvania "conceded that the state 'will not offer any evidence of in this action that in-person

voter fraud has in fact occurred in Pennsylvania and elsewhere'" (McDermott, 2012). To cure this "plague" of voter fraud, which is less significant than a rounding error, laws are being passed, lawsuits are being filed, and voters are potentially being disenfranchised.

Without voter fraud as a valid justification, the reason for these changes becomes clearer. In June 2012, Mike Turzai, Republican majority leader in the Pennsylvania state senate, boasted about the Pennsylvania voter ID law, "Voter ID, which is gonna [sic] allow Governor Romney to win the State of Pennsylvania: Done" (McDermott, 2012). The changes for the 2012 election were motivated by politics, to try to defeat President Obama. Cutting back early voting in Florida gave the state the longest average wait in the country (Peters, 2013), but it also reduced early voting turnout and disproportionately affected African-Americans, who most likely would have voted for Obama (Gronke & Stewart, 2013). Also, most voter ID laws passed in 2011 and 2012 were very similar "to the model put forth by [the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC)] in its leaked documents" (McDermott, 2012). ALEC is a conservative think-tank/lobbying group that often provides Republican state legislators with drafts of bills to introduce in their state government and that until 2012 was a proponent of "reducing voter access to the polls" (McDermott, 2012). Clearly, the objective was to prevent Obama's re-election by reducing the number of Obama supporters who were voting.

Conservative state governments tried to defeat President Obama through a number of methods that would reduce the ability of his supporters to vote in the 2012 election. The measures clearly impacted or would have impacted segments of the population that would be inclined to vote for Obama, and even evoked memories of Jim Crow laws and the not-so-good-old days. These measures have nothing to do with preserving the integrity of elections. If concern for voter fraud is sincere, changes can be implemented over more time, in a manner that doesn't disenfranchise or unduly penalize people without state-issued IDs and that is not blatantly trying to affect the outcome of one specific party. If eligible voters are denied the right to vote, then democracy is being denied.

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Evaluation: *Chris uses substantial evidence to describe states' significant changes in voting ID laws, between 2010 and 2012, that could result in substantial voter suppression. As he concludes, "if eligible voters are denied the right to vote, then democracy is being denied."*

Setting and the Self: Poe's Palaces of Personality

Valerie Burton
Course: English 102 (Composition)
Instructor: Anne Davidovicz

Assignment: *Using MLA citation, write a literary analysis that combines your own critical thinking skills with those found in academic journals and research collections. Aim for using eight to ten outside sources in developing your essay.*

A house can say a lot about its inhabitants. We spend such a large portion of our lives inside our homes that it's no wonder it has become a symbolic extension of ourselves. The overall structure of the dwelling a person resides in, its various rooms and even the residents, have long represented the multi-faceted human psyche. More often than not, though, readers give little thought to the architecture within a story, placing it in the background as a minor portion of the setting. Little do they realize that characters and setting are intertwined in a much more complex, psychic relationship. Edgar Allan Poe brilliantly employs this technique on further inspection. In "The Black Cat" and "The Fall of the House of Usher," Poe skillfully crafts the architecture within the story to mirror its characters and conflicts.

The focal point of most critical analyses for Poe's "The Black Cat" would be the symbolic significance that Pluto the cat plays throughout the story. Little does the reader know that the house the narrator resides in presents just as much insight into the narrator's character as the feline of the title. After the narrator hangs his pet Pluto in a fit of drunken rage, his house is destroyed in a fire:

> On the night of the day on which this cruel deed was done, I was aroused from sleep by the cry of fire. The curtains of my bed were in flames. The whole house was blazing. It was with great difficulty that my wife, a servant, and myself, made our escape from the conflagration. The destruction was complete. My entire worldly wealth was swallowed up, and I resigned myself thenceforward to despair. (Poe 533)

Besides the fire serving as a kind of "divine punishment" for the narrator's actions, Poe is foreshadowing the insanity to which the narrator succumbs. The house represents the narrator, and the fire signifies a change in character and complete destruction of morality (Gargano 90). John Fraim, in "Symbolism of Place," notes that in literature, "[fire's] major symbolism is related to the sun and the powers of transformation and purification" (Fraim 2). It is also interesting to note that in the beginning half of the story, Poe describes his narrator as being docile and preferring the company of animals. Such a quick transformation is unusual unless feelings of anger were repressed for a long time and released in the symbolic form of the fire. Roberta Reeder recognized this act of repression and comments how "the fire which follows the hanging also symbolizes his desire to purge the instinctual forces within him" (20). Fire evokes the thought of powerful human emotions like passion and anger (Fraim 2). It is no accident that the narrator's darkened persona that follows after the fire precisely matches his psychological "house" being engulfed in flames.

Only one wall remained standing, to the narrator's surprise, even though the rest of the house was in ruins. Poe describes the wall as being "not very thick, which stood about the middle of the house, and against which had rested the head of my bed" (Poe 533). As if this scenario wasn't shocking enough, "the figure of a gigantic cat" being hung which looked "graven in *bas relief*" appeared on that very same wall (Poe 533). While this description certainly does provide a sense of horror for the reader, it has a much more important symbolic purpose as well. James Gargano writes "the remaining wall with the 'portraiture' of Pluto on it just as clearly signifies that what survives of the narrator will be haunted by his ineradicable sin against his own nature" (Gargano 91). The words from the description, "and against which rested the head of my bed," are a play on words for his actions being at the forefront of his mind. This "wall" remaining in his mind serves as the narrator's fear and guilt that will stay with him forever.

Once the house was destroyed, and therefore the narrator's sanity and morality, a new living space was found that provides insight on the narrator's current character. This new apartment is described as having "immense hogsheads of Gin, or of Rum, which constituted the chief furniture of the apartment" (Poe 534). This clearly represents the empty shell he has now become due to alcohol addiction. The "chief furniture" is a metaphor

for what he lives for, or values most, in his life now. With this as a comparison, we can see how his previous wealthy estate represented the many different aspects he once had in his life but are now taken up by alcoholism.

It is in this new house that a different large black cat resembling Pluto finds the narrator and takes a liking to him. Despite the cat's fondness for him, the narrator is enraged by it following him everywhere and in the cellar tries to kill it with an axe. However, his wife attempted to stop him, and his madness was then redirected, resulting in him killing her instead of the cat. When looked at from the viewpoint of women and femininity representing emotion and empathy, the death of the wife signifies the end of this aspect of himself. He is no longer being held back by a conscience, and at this point, it can be argued that he has reached his complete phase of insanity.

The narrator admits to himself that "I knew that I could not remove [the corpse] from the house, either by day or by night," meaning that he can never take back what he has done, and the only option he has left is to "wall it up in the cellar" (Poe 536). Reeder comments that "Poe often uses architectural 'enclosure' motifs to symbolize a character's escape from a world governed by rational law into an imaginary, visionary world within himself," and this can be seen in the narrator's attempt to wall away the body in the cellar, which symbolizes suppression in the subconscious (20). The walls of the cellar are described as "loosely constructed, and had lately been plastered throughout with a rough plaster, which the dampness of the atmosphere had prevented from hardening" (Poe 536). This suggests the permeability of the subconscious and how memories can easily be repressed within it just as the walls can easily be knocked down. However, the narrator becomes so confident that when the police arrive at his house that he insists there is nothing to be seen. When he "rapped heavily, with a cane which [he] held in [his] hand, upon that very portion of the brick-work behind which stood the corpse," the black cat that had followed him starts to howl behind the wall (Poe 537). Reeder describes this as the narrator's "anima," or the true-inner self of a person, trying to re-emerge when the narrator assumes he is most secure (Reeder 20). "When most assured, the narrator is really weakest; for his house, like the intellectual fabrications through which he desires to escape his conscience, is not so well constructed as he persists in describing it" (Gargano 92). The architecture symbolically conveys that when you try to suppress a portion of yourself for too long, it will find a way to resurface again, sometimes with dire consequences.

"The Fall of the House of Usher" is Poe's most famous piece where the dwelling becomes the inanimate equivalent of the dweller. The outside of the house, in its deteriorating state, is the direct representation of Roderick Usher's aging physical health. The house "reflects Roderick's physical state to such a degree that the building and the man seem united in a general excess of contagion and disease that has spread beyond Usher's wracked body to walls and windows; the building seems simply an outer shell, an extension of the person" (Chandler 54). However, the condition of the house does not only reflect Roderick Usher, but the entire Usher lineage as well. "No portion of the masonry had fallen; and there appeared to be a wild inconsistency between its still perfect adaptation of parts, and the crumbling condition of the individual stones" (Poe 301). This notes how although the Usher family has not yet "fallen," each "individual stone," or family member, is in a "crumbling condition" of ill health. The narrator also notices a "barely perceptible fissure" which continued in a zigzag direction until it disappeared within the tarn (a mountain lake) in front of the house (Poe 301). This fissure not only threatens the stability of the physical house itself but also serves as a symbol for Roderick Usher losing mental stability as well. The "black and lurid" tarn, when gazed into, provides the narrator "with a shudder even more thrilling than before," showing how the tarn is that darkest aspect of ourselves we fear to explore (Poe 299). When looked at from this perspective, the fissure that looks connected to the tarn illustrates how Roderick Usher's mental instability is being sprung from the very core of his being in a place that remains largely unknown: the unconscious mind.

The inside of the house takes us a bit deeper into the mind of Roderick Usher. When the narrator entered the home, "a valet, of stealthy step, thence conducted [him], in silence, through many dark and intricate passages in [his] progress to the studio of his master [Roderick Usher]" (Poe 301). The "dark and intricate" passages described here provide two different points of view. Roderick Usher can be seen as a deep and complex character. There is much more to him than meets the eye, and one would need to travel through these many hypothetical intricate passages throughout the story to finally decode him. Another view would be that the studio, being so closed off from the entrance of the house, mirrors Roderick Usher's detachment from both society and reality into a world of his own. Richard Wilbur acknowledges:

> Circumscription, in Poe's tales, means the exclusion

> from consciousness of the so-called real world, the world of time and reason and physical fact; it means the isolation of the poetic soul in visionary reverie or trance. When we find one of Poe's characters in a remote valley, or a claustral room, we know that he is in the process of dreaming his way out of the world. (104)

We can find more evidence for his detachment from reality in the windows found within his studio. The long narrow windows were "so vast a distance from the black oaken floor as to be altogether inaccessible from within" and "feeble gleams of encrimsoned light made their way through the trellised panes" (Poe 301). The windows look eerily similar to bloodshot eyes, as the latticework of the trellises distorts the red light to look like veins. This gives the reader the idea that Roderick Usher is in a very nervous state, as if he hasn't sleptfor days. If the windows are inaccessible from within, one can assume this means that he cannot make sense of what is seen through his eyes or establish a connection with reality.

"The Haunted Palace" is a poem referenced within "The Fall of the House of Usher" that provides insight on Roderick Usher's character before his mental illness. Poe himself even makes this clear to the reader when he repeats the phrase "red-litten windows" that reference back to the bloodshot eye-like windows within Roderick Usher's studio (Poe 307). The valley that the melancholy mansion resides in was described to once be a "happy valley" where spirits behind the windows were "moving musically to a lute's well-tunéd law" (Poe 306). These spirits are in fact Roderick Usher's musical talents that were once in sync with harmony, but now sound disordered. These times of happiness, health and harmony did not last for very long. As Roderick Usher's mental stability declined, these better times have become "... but a dim-remembered story / Of the old time entombed" (Poe 306). John Timmerman comments on "The Haunted Palace" as a "work [that] precisely traces the devolution of the House of Usher from a palace governed in orderly fashion by 'Thought's Dominion' to a den of disorder" (Timmerman 164). The travelers roaming through the valley, those that exist in reality and reason, now look on Roderick Usher and see utter chaos. His isolation into a world of imagination has caused him to lose awareness of what occurs around him.

The houses in Poe's literature paint a detailed picture of each character. We can see through careful inspection of the setting that much more can be learned about their story. Richard Wilbur comments, "by concentrating on one area of Poe's symbolism we shall be able to see that his stories are allegorical not only in their broad patterns, but also in their smallest details" (104). At first glance, "The Black Cat" and "The Fall of the House of Usher" seem to be merely horror stories about madmen struggling with their insanity. Through the context of the houses, we begin to learn much more. Cellars and dungeons bring us to the subconscious minds of our protagonists, the composition of each individual room is a different aspect of the self, and when a catastrophe occurs to the house, it also occurs to our characters symbolically. Poe's houses are truly constructed on the foundation of personality.

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Evaluation: *Valerie's introductory paragraph sets the stage for an essay that probes the melding of setting and character in two short stories by Edgar Allan Poe. Her prose style is concise and direct. Her secondary and primary sources are expertly maneuvered into her analysis.*

Super Sad True Love Story: Redefining the American Dream

Linda Connor
Course: English 102 (Composition)
Instructor: Judi Nitsch

Assignment: *Take one of your three earlier essays and extend it into a researched argument of eight to ten pages. Use eight to ten secondary sources to support your argument and be careful to cite them correctly.*

The American dream is an ideal that suggests that all of one's earthly desires can be realized, as long as one is afforded the opportunity to work hard to achieve those goals. For generations, people from other countries and cultures have chosen to pursue life in America as the golden opportunity to bestow on themselves and on their children. The first step to this golden opportunity is to live in a country where one can pursue their own version of the American dream and to achieve their own definition of success: obtain a job, purchase one's own home, take occasional vacations, and acquire the material goods deemed necessary to enjoy a comfortable existence. A second component of the American dream is the expectation that one can achieve upward mobility and to do everything possible for one's children so that they can reap similar economic benefits, after which that second generation takes care of their families in return. Throughout the generations, however, economic reality has shifted: opportunities have become more limited, and "a comfortable existence" has been redefined due to the deficiencies of our late-capitalistic economy. In the futuristic novel entitled *Super Sad True Love Story*, author Gary Shteyngart examines the American dreams of two sets of immigrant parents and their children, and chronicles the shift in their family dynamics as well as in their patterns of consumption, blaming these shifts on the failure of the market economy.

Shteyngart introduces the head of the Park family as Korean immigrant Sam Park, D.P.M, who embodies the idea of the American Dream in theory, but whose actual experience illustrates how the dream can erode into a nightmare. Dr. Park's income is dwindling due to his failing podiatry practice as well as the expenses of his two daughters, Eunice and Sally. Originally settling in California in an upscale "crimson tiled hacienda" worth 2.4 million dollars unpegged to the yuan (37), Dr. and Mrs. Chung Won Park now live in Fort Lee, NJ, in a much smaller home worth only 1.41 million dollars. Their domestic downsizing is partly a result of the decision to relocate to the East Coast, where their daughters attend college, and partly a response to poor economic

Student Reflections on Writing: Linda Connor

Excellent writing has inspired me since I was a small child, when from an early age I devoured wonderful books like *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn, Little Women,* and *Treasure Island*. These beautifully composed novels brought their stories to life in my imagination, the authors' words jumping off the page and dancing in my mind's eye. It was through these stories that I learned how to spell, collected new words as though they were friends, and began to derive true joy from the turn of a crafty phrase or a cleverly constructed sentence. Writing now brings me the same sense of joy when I am challenged to fill an expectant sheet of paper that is just waiting for the fruit of my own imagination. I love to put into practice that careful arrangement of words that conveys a new or surprising point of view, as I strive to bring my own thoughts to life for others to consider. Whether writing a letter, a literary analysis, a report for my job, or a blog, the goal is to choose precise words that are explicit to my intention, and that provide clarity for my audience. This creative process is the challenge I love, one that keeps me motivated, engaged and forever in edit mode – always in pursuit of that perfectly-constructed sentence.

conditions. The depletion of their family resources, due to both the poor economy and his daughters' unfettered buying habits and expensive educations, can be blamed on market inefficiencies like wage stagnation, according to economist Juliet Schor. In her essay, "The New Politics of Consumption," Schor contends that "many Americans have long-term worries about their ability to meet basic needs, ensure a decent standard of living for their children, and keep up with an ever-escalating consumption norm."

Compounding those common difficulties, Dr. Park's podiatry practice is failing due to market efficiencies relating to the Medicare insurance of his patients: there isn't any subsidized medicine left, so his poorer patients no longer receive care. These policy changes, driven by an obsession with market efficiencies over social services, are explained in *The Betrayal of the American Dream,* by Donald L. Barlett and James B. Steele, who offer the theory that "...the wealthy are now funding initiatives that decry the deficit and call for cuts in programs that provide safety nets for middle-class Americans such as Social Security and Medicare" (131). Economist Rob Larson also discusses the prioritizing of profits over people in his book, *Bleakonomics*, defining them as externalities, which are "...damages to parties outside a market transaction" (3). It is these externalities, taking the form of the elimination of Medicare benefits, which force Dr. Park to absorb the costs of treating a portion of his patients. He is also losing patients altogether, negatively impacting his profits and making him fall victim to the externality of government cutbacks. His declining practice is a tangible example of how inequities are visited upon the middle class by reduced entitlements in a capitalistic system, and the negative effects are on their continued access to the American dream.

In spite of the concerns for their long-term fiscal health, Shteyngart describes how the Korean immigrants continue to make monetary sacrifices for Eunice, their oldest daughter and Shteyngart's heroine, protecting her from the reality of their dire financial status in the hopes that eventually they will reap the benefits of their sacrifices when she becomes successful in her own right. These sacrifices are intended for Eunice's benefit and are in keeping with the American dream narrative that the children are provided for, as well as the "assumption that each generation must do better than the one before" (Barlett 146). Unfortunately, the Parks are actually creating in her a sense of "inflated expectations," according to author Gayle Porter in her essay, "Work Ethic and Ethical Work: Distortions in the American Dream" (545). In order to feed her distorted sense of what she deserves, Eunice unabashedly requests sizeable money transfers from her parents, who readily comply, and as a result, she develops a strong sense of entitlement and feels no qualms about exploiting her parents for their money. Later, Chung Won Park urges Eunice to study for her LSAT to enter law school, stressing that eventually she won't have to borrow any more money from her parents, which will, consequently, ensure that she will take care of her parents in return. Paradoxically, the mother also admonishes her daughter to enjoy herself in Rome, assuring her that all of the sadness that affects Eunice and Sally is also visited upon her as a mother. Always the long-suffering mother, she continues to protect Eunice by insisting that she is not to concern herself with any of the problems that might be occurring at home. The immigrant parent-child relationship continues in this way as the parents insulate their daughter from bad news, making no mention to Eunice of, what Lenny refers to as "their precious immigrant nest egg...declining steadily and ominously" (38). This "financial tightrope" [of] high expenses, low savings" to which Schor refers in her essay ("The New Politics"), is a grim reality for the Park parents, who continue acting out these elements of the immigrant American Dream narrative even though they no longer have the financial means necessary to do so.

Shteyngart draws parallels between the Parks and the novel's other immigrant family, the Abramovs, by portraying the immigrant parents of protagonist Lenny as another couple who come to America in search of their nest egg. Their grandiose American dream is to "wing their way from Moscow to the United States...in search of dollars"(10), yet they only attain working-class status. Emphasizing their dire economic straits, son Lenny recounts that they "immigrated to the States with one pair of underwear between them" (11), which illustrates their combined eagerness as well as desperation to embark on a journey in pursuit of happiness and economic security in America. This pursuit of the American dream

includes working-class jobs that cast Boris Abramov, a former engineer in Moscow, as a janitor at a government laboratory, and Mrs. Abramov as first a clerk, then a secretary. The American dream conversation is clearly evidenced here by their decision to leave their country as well as his higher-level job in search of wealth and stability in their adoptive country. These immigrants are the type that Porter explains: "immigrants to the United States who take on menial labor or who, in spite of having educational credentials in their country of origin, take on work below that educational status to bring their families into a situation of greater long-term opportunity" (545). Income from both parental jobs enables them to move from their tiny Queens apartment and allows them to purchase their own slice of America – a humble Cape Cod house on Long island – one of the components of attaining the American Dream ideal. Shteyngart relates the importance of their home-buying event through Lenny's fond remembrance of the signing: "the glorious fortune that we have been granted...from the carefully clipped bushes by the mailbox...to the oft-mentioned California possibility of an above-ground swimming pool in the back" (137) – to the Abramovs, this is the essence of the American dream. Equally important to Lenny's success in adulthood is the contribution of the Abramov salaries to afford Lenny the opportunity to earn a degree in marketing through NYU Stern Business School. Through both of those events, Shteyngart portrays Lenny as being well aware of the sacrifices of his parents; in his earliest journal entry, he acknowledges an "adult's relinquishing of selfhood in favor of future generations" is encouraged (4). Shteyngart carefully constructs the effort it takes for the Abramov family to reach "the good life" – and in her essay, Schor states that social critics "[suggest] the good life could be achieved by attaining a comfortable, middle-class standard of living" ("The New Politics").

Eunice and Lenny – the second generation of these immigrant parents– are also in search of the "good life," but Shteyngart highlights the differences between them and their incompatibility by comparing and contrasting their spending habits. Lenny's job "in the creative economy" (12) as a Life Lovers' Outreach Coordinator in the Post Human Services division of Staatling-Wapachung does not impress Eunice, the daughter of a doctor. Ignoring the fact that her father's professional status has failed to attain a high level of wealth, Eunice's main focus is on staying up-to-date with and obtaining the latest trends in fashion. She is a devotee of shopping and bidding on the newest in footwear and apparel through her äppärät. Selfishly, Eunice is completely unconcerned with how much of her parents' money she is spending or with her deplorable credit ranking. Those issues do not matter to her in the face of her focused consumption of status goods, which is what Schor refers to as "the new consumerism...the upscaling of lifestyle norms; the pervasiveness of conspicuous, status goods and of the competition for acquiring them; and the growing disconnect between consumer desires and income" ("The New Politics"). Her "disconnect" is clear as she continues to spend her father's money and max out her own credit with no anxiety whatsoever over the depletion of either asset, because she is so consumed with "upscale emulation" ("The New Politics") or appearing wealthier and more socially important than she really is.

In contrast to Eunice's new consumer attitude, Shteyngart depicts Lenny and his parents as less concerned with status goods and satisfied with their lot in life now that they are retired; their simple home and furnishings provide them with contentment. The Abramovs' contentment certainly arises from the awareness that they have already accomplished their interpretation of the American dream. In pursuit of the chance to achieve greater wealth in the Land of Opportunity, the Abramovs' goal is to provide their son Lenny with the groundwork he needs to do better and be more prosperous in his lifetime than they have been in theirs (Porter 545). Similarly, Lenny tends to save for his own future through "self-denial and bad tipping at restaurants" (Shytengart 253). Furthermore, he analyzes his investments and monitors his credit ranking to keep it at an impressive range. Initially, he is unconcerned with the trappings of luxury, as evidenced by his small, 750-square-foot apartment with a balcony that "could accommodate no more than a cheap twin-sized mattress and a fully opened suitcase" (Shytengart 25). Lenny doesn't have any fashion sense or the need for seasonal wardrobe; as he comments, "For me, the transition from May to June is marked by the radical switch from knee to ankle socks" (Shteyngart 51);

an example of his continuing theme of not yielding to new consumption.

Notwithstanding his mostly restrained spending, however, Shteyngart illustrates that Lenny is not opposed to dipping his toe into the new consumerism, and his reluctant participation is stimulated when Eunice arrives in his life. While Lenny spends a year in Rome in search of prospects (High Net Worth Individuals) for Staatling-Wapachung, he "[flies] first class everywhere [and buys] thirteen thousand northern euros worth of resveratrol" (Shteyngart 67). Once Eunice moves to New York at his invitation, Lenny springs for a bouquet of blooms and a pricey bottle of celebratory champagne, then pays for "business class on the subway" (Shteyngart 113) just to impress her. A few weeks later, he pays for "the equivalent of ten thousand yuan worth of goods" at JuicyPussy (Shteyngart 212): two brand new outfits for each of them, so that they can wear different ensembles to two social functions. These changes in spending behavior demonstrate the "upscaling of lifestyle norms" that Schor talks about in "The New Politics of Consumption." Furthermore, it's clear when Lenny says, "I may have been poorer, but you couldn't confuse me for the overaged faux-hipster that entered the UNRC three hours ago. I was what passed for a man now" (Shteyngart 212), that he has been influenced by "competitive consumption" (Schor, "The New Politics"), which dictates that one attempts to keep pace with what other groups are spending or wearing.

Eunice's dependence on new consumption, the upscale norms and the increasing "aspirational gap" identified by Schor as "desires persistently outrunning incomes" ("The New Politics"), are constant themes repeated throughout *Super Sad True Love Story.* Shteyngart establishes that, even though Eunice is unable and unwilling to work or save, she is still trapped in the cycle of spending money on status items that she cannot afford. For most of the story, Eunice considers the three hours that she spends volunteering at the Albanian women's shelter a sufficient amount of time spent away from shopping on her äppärät. Actively on the defensive, she consistently brings up this altruistic effort to both her mother and sister so that they will tell her father about it, as though her volunteer work mitigates remaining unemployed. In addition, Eunice talks to her mother about the difficulty of finding a job in Rome vis-à-vis the necessity of obtaining working papers, and that "they hate Americans" (Shytengart 30), as though this provides sufficient cause to remain without any income at a time when her spending on upscale commodities is rampant.

Shteyngart points out other important issues that are likely caused by Eunice's dependence on new consumption. They manifest as antisocial behavior and self-esteem deficiencies, as she eschews developing ties with Lenny's family and friends. Eunice's anti-social behavior and anxiety is clearly exhibited when she is conflicted about going to Long Island to meet his parents and then when she finally does agree to the trip, Lenny notes that she "is nervous to the point of quaking" (Shytengart128). A plausible explanation for this anti-social behavior can be found in another book by Schor, entitled *Born to Buy.* In it, Schor asserts that kids exposed to the consumer culture "may be less oriented to socializing with their peers, siblings and parents and may have poorer social connections overall" (173). Eunice's self-esteem issues brought on by her new consumption habits are also apparent during a social occasion with Lenny's friends, during which she buries herself in shopping on her äppärät for most of the night and interacts only when the conversation is about buying. Again, this is not surprising in view of Schor's findings that "high levels of consumer involvement reduce children's self-esteem in the area of peer and family relationships" and "[t]he more they buy into the commercialist and materialist messages, the worse they feel about themselves" (*Born to Buy*, 173).

Eunice's preoccupation with maintaining "status," and thereby social worth, with brand names, is consistent with disturbing ideas presented by political theorist Benjamin R. Barber, author of *Consumed*, who suggests that "a new cultural ethos is being forged that is intimately associated with global consumerism" (7). Because people tend to wish to remain young and to not act their age, there is an increase in marketing to these whims beginning at an early age (Barber 6). This is corroborated by author Susan Linn, who writes in *Consuming Kids* about the fact that kids and even infants are easy prey for "the efforts of marketers to promote brand recognition even before a baby can talk" (42). The significance of brand names for Eunice is evident throughout the story, and it is conceivable

that the reason for her allegiance is as Amanda Burgess explains: "When it comes to building kids [sic] brands, executives speak in terms of growing with a child from cradle to university" (qtd. in Linn 42). The mission of these marketers is to start early with brand recognition aimed at the younger audience, with the goal of having those youthful loyalties remain with the consumer over the years, thereby cementing an identity of "enduring childishness" (Barber 7). The combined theories of Linn and Barber clearly manifest themselves in the grown-up Eunice, who is so entrenched in brand name identity, new consumption and the ethos of infantilization, that she refuses to grow up and take responsibility for her own actions, instead remaining intent upon sponging off her parents to fuel her habits as a full-fledged consumer.

By exhibiting the shift in consumer patterns from one generation to the next, Shteyngart exposes how selfish the first-generation Americans are when compared to the selflessness of their immigrant parents. In *Super Sad True Love Story*, Lenny and Eunice are, first and foremost, concerned with their own well-being, even before one another's well-being, and definitely before they even consider the welfare of their parents. Aside from demonstrating the change in economic reality, demonstrating this shift in human nature, and what it means to the American Dream, is one of the saddest elements of *Super Sad True Love Story*.

Perhaps this shift is not surprising, as consumerism is synonymous with capitalism, according to scholar and author Maria N. Ivanova, who asserts that the American dream is a "...a hegemonic project that promote[s] the accumulation of commodities as a social norm, civic duty, display of individual achievement, and a key source of life-satisfaction" (334). Ivanova goes on to say that capitalism should be abandoned because "consumption creates externalities for society" and that "capitalism...systematically destroys the very human and environmental 'resources' it feeds on" (337). Larson concurs on an interrelated point in *Bleakonomics*, when he provides sound and fair substantiation that, by not taking costly externalities into consideration, capitalism will be the death of valuable natural resources (17). These assertions that both human and natural resources are being destroyed by capitalism and new consumption provide the context for the notion that the American dream is unraveling in *Super Sad True Love Story* due to the destructive externalities and psychological damage of the market economy.

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Evaluation: *Linda is an excellent writer who crafted an insightful and engaging essay for her final assignment. Specifically, she took on challenging social-science sources to flesh out a compelling interpretation of Shteyngart's novel.*

Stone-Cold Greed: The Criminal Underbelly of Paleontology

Jackie Cooney
Course: Geology 102
(Dinosaurs, Fossils, and Planet Earth)
Instructor: Kevin Cole

Assignment: *Students were to write a research paper, at least seven pages long, on any topic in historical geology that captured their interest and imagination.*

Dinosaurs have always captured people's imaginations, from the ancient dragon myths to America's first dinosaur displays. The love affair with the dinosaur is on-going, with no end in sight. The prestige and majesty of such prehistoric creatures can be a temptation some cannot withstand. It is a thrill to own millions of years of history, to feel the weight of the fossil with its perfect imperfections. The demand for the personal ownership of fossils caused a reaction in the market. People were, and still are, willing to pay big money for genuine fossils. Criminals took notice and began to raid their own countries for fossils to sell. Whole criminal networks formed around this new lucrative avenue for fast cash. Trafficking in fossils is criminal and detrimental to both science and the public. The only way to combat its persistence is to expose it.

People are more familiar with other aspects of trafficking, such as the narcotics trade or human trafficking. Illegal fossil, arts, and antiquities trading is the third most profitable industry next to narcotics and arms smuggling. Per year, cultural property smuggling generates approximately $6 to $8 billion ("ICE Homeland Security Investigations" 1). Pillaging other countries' natural heritage and selling it for profit has persisted for centuries. Never before has it occurred on such a worldwide scale as it does today. Some people blame the popularity of *Jurassic Park* for the increase in fossil smuggling (Burrell and Dixon 1). Arizona Mineral and Fossil Show Director Michael Zinn said in 1996, that the sale of "Sue," the *Tyrannosaurus rex*, boosted interest (Abel 1).

Zinn might not be far off the mark. It was more than just Sue's $8.36 million price tag that generated interest. It was the whole unbelievable story of her seizure by the feds and the two-year prison term for the paleontologist who excavated her bones. The media ran with the story, which gave the fossil market free advertising. The sale of Sue to the Field Museum of Natural History of Chicago in a partnership with the M^{c}Donald's Corporation and the Walt Disney Company intrigued buyers and sellers. It catapulted fossils to the mainstream (Simons 1).

Sue's sale wasn't the only factor that increased the fossil market's exposure. The recent demand for dinosaurs can be attributed to a combination of factors. Partially, the draw is the duality of the creatures. They are both fantasy and reality, horror and security. The creatures draw people in, but it's the expertly crafted publicity that keeps people engaged. Paleontology, fossil hunters, and their fossil finds are romanticized in the media. American newspapers and magazines like *Harper's Monthly* filled their pages with colorful accounts of nineteenth-century paleontologists surviving in the harsh lands of the West amongst hostile Native Americans. Splashy pictures accompanied these stories and depicted the Ivy League students as rugged individualists (*American Experience: Dinosaur Wars* 1).

Museums displayed skeletons for public view, allowing people to get within inches of the creatures of their nightmares. Images in books showed dinosaurs in life-like poses. The *New York World and Advertiser* ran a picture of a *Brontosaurus* standing amongst the familiar skyscrapers people saw every day. Decades later, the popularity of dinosaurs continued and gained even more steam when paleontologists like Dr. Robert Bakker changed the public's belief about dinosaurs. He showed dinosaurs as lively and interactive, a major departure from the prevailing idea that they were sluggish clods. The passion hit a fever pitch in 1993 with the Universal Studios release of the movie *Jurassic Park* (Abel 1).

Demand ran high for fossils. Attendance at fossil shows rose, and fossil hunters provided the supply (Abel 1). Unfortunately, the demand for exquisite fossils

brought with it the criminal element. As a result, legally excavated and smuggled fossils mingle together in the same marketplace (Williams 1).

Museums around the world also partake in these illegal specimens alongside private collectors. Big and small museums all compete against each other for resources, namely visitors that purchase tickets. They feel they have to find the biggest and best specimens to draw visitors away from other institutions and to their front doors. Smaller museums feel the tug of competition more than other established institutions. Fledgling museums tend to be more tempted to purchase questionable fossils than the more financially stable ones. China, Japan, and the Middle East are the most common countries known to pay for illegal fossils. However, there have been documented cases in which major, more established institutions have been accused of such improprieties and unethical behaviors (Brodie, Doole, and Watson 1).

Most buyers of ill-gotten bones probably never think about where their fossils came from. The sellers, on the other hand, know their products are illegal. As with any industry, there are practitioners who follow the law, and there are those who scoff at the law. The lawful practitioners take care in uncovering fossils. They do not take fossils from protected lands or take specimens out of countries where it is illegal. Unscrupulous dealers may look legit, but aren't, and may outright flaunt their unethical and unlawful behavior.

Fyodor Shidlovskiy searches Russia for any sort of fossil that brings in good money. He is personable and magnetic, but his tactics are downright reckless and criminal. To transport an adult mammoth skull the size of a washing machine, Shidlovskiy pulled it up into a helicopter using a rope that he slipped through the orbits of the skull (Simons 1). National Geographic Reporter Lewis M. Simons observed Shidlovskiy, and others like him, employ detestable methods to excavate or sell petrified remains:

> During my travels I witnessed some of the damage that unscrupulous or untrained dealers do. In northeastern China I watched pick-swinging farmers hack rock slabs containing the remains of ancient birds and fish with little more concern than they gave to plowing their fields. I saw smuggled and fake fossils sold as legitimate in the United States, which strictly prohibits the excavation and export of fossils from government-owned land without a permit....(1)

Reportedly, even Latin American organized crime groups are tied to fossil trafficking. In 1994, National Park Service paleontologist Dr. Dan Chure claimed that Columbian drug cartels purchased fossils stolen from private collections (Brown 1). Outside of Dr. Chure's statement, further evidence of cartel involvement is scarce. However, there is considerable evidence that fossil trafficking networks are highly organized and can fulfill the definition of organized crime. Organized crime does not only consist of cartels and the Italian mafia. The United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime defines organized crime as:

> A structured group of three or more persons, existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes or offenses established in accordance with this convention, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit. (Abadinsky 3)

The exact type of criminal organization isn't clear because at this point it is not known how the other requirements of organized crime are addressed (i.e., how permanent the organization, if there is a unique subculture, how violent and monopolistic it is, or the types of rules that govern it) (Abadinsky 3).

In 2012, arrests of fossil smugglers in Hunchun, China uncovered a well-organized illicit fossil-trading mechanism employed in the region. *Chaoyang Daily* reporter Zhang Wanlian discovered that the black market in fossils in China is no small-time affair. Because China's ancient environment was conducive to remarkable fossil preservation, it is a magnet for both academic paleontologists as well as the criminals (West 1).

Eric Propoki and his one-man company, Everything Earth, typically provided specimens within the limits of the law from his home workshop. No one knows why he decided to smuggle a 75% complete *Tarbosaurus bataar* into the United States from Asia. Eyebrows rose at the news of the *T. bataar* auction appointment. The *T. bataar*

is virtually unknown in the geologic record in America, but very common in Mongolia. He sold the *T. bataar* for a little over $1 million. Heritage House considered Propoki reputable and believed what he stated on the auction documents. Propoki denied smuggling the dinosaur into the U.S. But in an e-mail to an employee of Heritage House, he suggested that he could help the president of Mongolia stop the smuggling rings inside its borders. He added, "If he only wants to take the skeleton and try to put an end to the black market, he will have a fight and will only drive the black market deeper underground" (Williams 1).

China convicted Canadian academic Zhu Chunlin in 2006 of smuggling some 3,000 fossils. He participated in a part of a trafficking ring and still received a sentence of six years in a Chinese prison. The sentence was rather light, considering China has been known to execute smugglers (Sweeny 1). Comparatively, if Propoki is found guilty, his sentence can be anywhere between 17 and 30 years in a United States prison ("Why Dinosaur Bones are Worth the Risk of Smuggling" 1; "HIS Arrest Florida Man for Illegally Importing Dinosaur Fossils" 1).

The structures of the smuggling networks are rather complex and range in size. Fossil thieves, known as looters, make up the base of the organization's pyramid. Looters steal fossils from paleontological sites during or just after excavation or from institutions and/or private collections. They know that the fossils will be sold, but these people, usually, do not sell directly to consumers. They sell to middlemen (Brodie et al 13; "ICE Homeland Security Investigations" 1). In most cases, looters are economically and/or socially disadvantaged. They do not get large finder's fees for fossils. Compared to the profits pulled in from the sale, looters receive a pittance. For example, a Brazilian sold a fossil turtle for $10 to a person who turned around and sold it for $16,000 in Europe (Brode et al 14).

On top of the pyramid lay the vendors. Though most of the vendors are legitimate and reputable, they should be on the top of the pyramid. Without vendors, most of the crimes could not be committed. Furthermore, they garner profits from the sales of illicit fossils without fear of repercussions. They are different from organized crime fences, which exist as a place to strictly sell hot merchandise stolen by other organizational members (Abadinsky 287). In America, if an illegal specimen is sold using a vendor such as an auction house, the auction house is not held responsible. Even online vendors like eBay state on their listings that the seller is responsible for everything stated in the advertisement. The auction house assesses the seller's credibility and the seller's claim of the fossil's legitimacy. It is unknown how an auction house determines who to accept as a client or not. In the Propoki case, one vendor already passed him up before Heritage House took the *Tarbosaurus bataar* (Williams 1).

Integral in the exposé of the black market is how the crime networks get access to fossils and the process by which fossils end up on the auction block. The whole process starts with the looter. Looters are locals who know the land. Some know where the fossils are buried (Simons 1). Other times, the locals watch professional expeditions and wait for the most opportune time to poach the finds. Poachers do not take care when removing the remains. They quickly rip the fossils out of the ground, using the most barbaric of tools, without regard to the fossil's position and its relativity to its surroundings ("ICE Homeland Security Investigations" 1; Sweeny 1).They tend to use hoses, chainsaws and other power tools, mechanical diggers, and even dynamite to extract fossils (Simons 1; Burrell and Dixon 1; Kelbie 1). Conversely, the tools I have used in my years of handling fossils at the Kenosha Public Museum and the Burpee Museum of Natural History are focused on detail and precision. Tools like dental picks and brushes are to protect the bone while removing the matrix. Field paleontologists use shovels and pickaxes with extreme care so as not to damage either the fossil or the matrix. At the field stage, the matrix is valuable.

Transporting fossils is a very delicate operation. Shidlovskiy's tactic of roping the fossil and pulling it up into a helicopter is reckless and dangerous. Fossils are very heavy and very unstable. Hoisting a fossil by the eye sockets can damage the fossil or further break it up if the fossil was fractured in the first place. Paleontologists and field workers spend weeks digging a fossil out of the earth. They want to protect it so that it survives the journey. First, they seal it if the fossil is poorly preserved and is at risk of disintegrating. Next, they jacket fossils

Appendix A. These images show what can happen even to a professional out in the field. The preservation in this particular region is poorly compacted sandstone. Efforts are being made to piece it back together after it did not survive transportation, but the prevailing thought is that it will not be able to be removed from either the matrix or the jacket. Pictures are property of the author and were taken at the Dinosaur Discovery Museum in Kenosha, Wisconsin.

out in the field for more protection and for transporting. Jacketing a fossil is difficult. The plaster wrapping has to be tight enough to protect against water seeping in. Enough of the matrix needs to surround the bone for stability, almost like packing materials. Personally, I have not jacketed a fossil, but I have seen the right and wrong ways to do it. Poachers perform the paleontological version of a "smash and grab," without protecting the fossil. Who knows how many fossils have been lost to these deplorable methods? With all the measures taken to ensure the safety of the fossil, even the professionals have a hard time keeping everything intact. Appendix A shows pictures of specimens that were decent in the field but arrived shattered.

For smugglers, getting fossils out of the country can be difficult, seeing as a lot of countries have laws stating it is illegal to do so. But smugglers are a creative lot. Zhang Wanlian described one way criminals devised to get specimens out of the country. Smugglers placed "... piles of padded coats by the roadside. Over 100 men and

women moved like ghosts in the dim light of kerosene lamps." Chinese authorities caught smugglers attempting to drive across the border in a white van filled with 2,364 pieces of fossils (West 1).

Smugglers routinely bribe officials to look the other way while pieces of their cultural heritage are taken across the border. Usually, officials of third-world or economically depressed countries are more apt to accept a bribe. Shidlovskiy once recovered a wooly rhinoceros skeleton for the Yakutsk State University Mammoth Museum. Authorities rewarded him by giving him free reign in Sakha to gather and transport any fossils he wanted. In yet another incident, Russian Environmental Protection Committee officials stopped Shidlovskiy for illegally digging up fossils in Kolyma National Park. Shidlovskiy not only bribed them with an outboard motor, he also offered to "take care of them" if they poached fossils for him. The officials happily agreed (Simons 1).

After a fossil leaves its host country, it is shipped around the world to mask its true origins. The remains of dead creatures exist in a strange limbo until the traffickers find a buyer or a vendor who agrees to sell them (Brodie et al 29, Sweeny 1). If the package is headed for the United States, it must go through customs. Customs requires a declaration of contents, the items' origination, and the value of the objects. Smugglers will be deliberately vague or lie on the customs forms. Propoki's customs forms stated that the shipping crate contained "2 large rough (unprepared) fossil reptile heads, 6 boxes of broken fossil bones, 3 rough (unprepared) fossil reptiles, 1 fossil lizard, 3 rough (unprepared) fossil reptiles, 1 fossil reptile skull" (Williams, 1; "Why Dinosaur Bones" 1; "HIS Arrests Florida" 1). The documents state the value at $15,000 and the origination as Great Britain. The *T. bataar* originated in Mongolia and sold at auction for $1.05 million ("Dinosaur Fossils A Booming Business on World's Black Market" 1).

Fossil and rock shows are littered with illicit fossils. None of the reports consulted for this paper state who is selling the trafficked fossils in these venues. No one addresses if the pieces are sold through a third party or if the smugglers are directly selling to the public at these shows. What is clear is that some of the specimens are so exquisite that they are considered museum quality. At the 1994 Tucson Minerals and Fossil Show, someone exhibited Russian museum pieces with accession numbers still on them. The fossils shown in ballrooms are only a portion of what the dealers actually possess. The best fossils or the overstock are in the hotel rooms (Abel 1).

Sites like eBay and Craigslist offer an unprecedented opportunity to reach potential buyers. Legit and illegitimate sellers can create entire websites to sell their wares for relatively low cost. A Google search for "vertebrate fossils for sale" returned 121,000 results. An advanced search on eBay for "fossil vertebrates" returned 3,597 ads. Inevitably, disreputable dealers are mixed in with the reputable ones, and some websites look better than others. But the look of the website doesn't necessarily prove or disprove credibility. The internet is definitely a "buyer beware" situation. EBay has even posted a section on their website called "Buying Fossils—Law, Ethics, and Forgeries." The author suggests the buyer contact the seller to ask for the provenance and to prove legality of the item. If the seller's information is vague or the seller refuses to answer, they are probably illegally holding the fossils. If the seller provides documents stating the fossils are legal, it is the job of the buyer to practice due diligence and contact the organization listed on the documents. They could be a forgery ("Buying Fossils" 1).

Fossil smuggling can happen anywhere. Chinese citizens are starting to purchase fossils from their own country, which is still illegal (Sweeny 1). Seizures of illegal items in Paraguay revealed that traffickers tried to smuggle 13,880 kg of petrified wood in 2012. For that same year, authorities seized only 329 kg of cocaine (Sweeny 1). Authorities have investigated and charged the Black Hills Institute of Geological Research, Inc. in 1994 for selling fossils found on federal land, including "Sue." With the help of the National Guard, the federal government continually raided the Black Hills Institute as well as sent investigators to Japan to look into the specimens that museums purchased from the institute ("Paraguay" 1).

In response to American fossil trafficking, the government created a sting operation called Operation Rock Fish in Wyoming. It lasted 18 months and netted 29 felony arrests. Some of the charges include weapons and explosives infractions, drug charges, grand larceny,

and fossil pilfering. The then President of the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology, David Krause, in a 1996 article, stated that 90% of the perpetrators caught in the Wyoming sting operation had criminal records including drug trafficking and possession with intent to sell (Abel 1).

Fossils are intensely studied by paleontologists the world over. Theories about fossils, animals, and their ancient environments are published in peer-reviewed journals. As part of the scientific process, other scientists must have access to specimens to replicate the results of the first researcher to verify the findings. A fossil, no matter how mundane it may be, is important. A common fossil can help describe the paleoecology of a region as well as the variations in species morphology (Abel 1). An incredibly common fossil, termed cosmopolitan, existing for a short period of geologic time, may be deemed an index fossil. Index fossils help date and correlate unknown rock beds inside a formation (Levin 148-149). By removing index fossils from a rock bed, the relative date and subsequent geologic record can have false results. If enough index fossils are moved, the fossils may show a regional die-off. One might ask if fossils could be harvested to the point that it mimics a localized extinction. An unpermitted German fossil collector has almost completely removed the Birk Knowes Site of Special Scientific Interest in Lanarkshire, Scotland of its specimens (Kelbie 1).

Fossils in private collections cannot be studied with any regularity. Collectors can refuse a scientist's access to the fossil. They can sell it off or trade it easily and are not required to keep them. Any research done on a private fossil is then negated. Additionally, fossils have to be cared for and kept under certain conditions to slow further decomposition and/or instability. Most private homes do not possess the systems required to produce the near ideal conditions to retard decay. Repairs done to any fossils have to be done properly. A privately collected fossil may not be prepared in a proper way, which can affect the research value (Hone 1).

Fossil preparation is best done in a lab with specific equipment and specially trained workers. My fossil preparation training occurred at two museums, Kenosha Public Museum and the Burpee Museum of Natural History, where I learned on lesser specimens and watched more experienced lab workers until my work was satisfactory enough for me to move on to the more valuable fossils. Care for fossils is time-consuming and requires attention to fine details. Contrary to what movies show, fossils do not come out of the ground perfectly pristine and intact. Even if the fossil's preservation looks great in the ground, I have seen field jackets opened to reveal the fossil shattered in the process of transportation. When a fossil needs repair, paleontological adhesives like PaleoBond are used. PaleoBond comes in different viscosities for fossils of different thickness and weight. The sealer, Vinac, is formulated for lasting preservation of a porous object.

Some fossils are so delicate due to poor preservation or other factors that they cannot be removed from the matrix. The matrix, or surrounding rock, is kept in place to keep the fossil intact and safe from further deterioration (refer to Appendix A for examples). I am sure looters and traffickers encounter states of preservation that are difficult to handle. Traffickers do not care about what type of glue or sealer they use. The cheaper the supplies, the greater the profit margin. Shidlovskiy uses auto body filler and some sort of varnish to piece together and preserve a specimen (Simons 1).

After the fossil has been repaired and sealed, it has to be kept in a climate-controlled, low-humidity environment such as in collections storage at a museum or academic institution. Therefore, most bones on display are casts of the original. Casts are lighter and considerably more durable than a fossil. Bones are heavy and unstable. Furthermore, a bone that has been carelessly repaired and mounted can be dangerous. Like any shoddy construction, there is a considerable risk that the cheap glue or poor mount construction may fail and the weighty bones fall apart and damage other property or even harm people.

Hiding the origins of fossils affects their value because they lack a provenance. The provenance describes the place where the fossil was found. Some people might be more familiar with provenance in terms of art, where provenance shows the chain of ownership. It is different for fossils. The more information a seller can give to describe the original spot of discovery, the more valuable the specimen (Brode et al 3). The provenance not only tells the story of the fossil, it also tells the story

of the rock formations or at the very least, the significance of the region in regard to the geological record.

Scientists not only value the fossil but surrounding rock as well. The death position of the dinosaur tells paleontologists how the animal became buried and what happened to the corpse afterward (Switek 1). Fossils and the rock bed in which it is found are somewhat dependent on each other for relative dating. The Law of Superposition states that rock layers that have not been disturbed are deposited with the oldest layer on the bottom and each layer above is younger (Levin 15). A fossil found in a specific rock layer will show the relative date the animal existed as long as there is no evidence that the rock has been reworked. By seeing the position in the formation, a researcher can also see how the fossil fits in with evolution over time.

The rock makeup is important to the paleoecology of the region. Preserved remains of animals are usually found in sedimentary rocks, which are the eroded and lithified remains of igneous, metamorphic, and other sedimentary rocks (Levin 58). The lithology of sedimentary rocks shows different pieces of the depositional environment (Levin 84). The composition, texture, rock color, and fossil configuration gives clues to everything from climate to how far the formation was from a mountain or a seashore (Levin 90-91, 104-105, 107). Each rock is like a snapshot of what the environment was like when the sediments were laid down. Certain fossil prep labs keep all matrixes removed from the fossil. Looters and traffickers don't know the importance of the surrounding rock and discard it at the site or in preparation for sale. Fossil smuggling is about the money, not about the science.

Fossil smuggling affects not only science, but many people outside the scientific community. Eric Propoki told *The New Yorker* reporter Paige Williams that he didn't understand why paleontology was important. He said, "It's not like antiquities, where it's somebody's heritage and culture and all that" (qtd. in Williams 1).

Paleontology is part of a country's cultural heritage. Coming off of Propoki's own case and the repatriation of the Mongolian fossils, the *T. bataar* is gentrifying the country. The active mining industry has provided an abundance of skeletons without adequate practices and policies in place to care for them. The government is in the process of creating a brand new paleontology program along with new museums to house the collections. The dinosaur's new nickname will be *Mongol bataar*, meaning "Mongol Hero." The Mongolian government nominated May 18 to be National Mongol Bataar Day (Williams 1). The *T. bataar* is not the only cultural fossil of Mongolia. According to the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Homeland Security Investigations, the seized *Saurolophus angustirostris* from Propoki is yet another culturally significant fossil of Mongolia ("HIS Arrests Florida" 1). If dinosaurs weren't a part of Mongolia's cultural heritage before he smuggled the *T. bataar* out, dinosaurs sure are part of their culture now.

The looters are forced to work in dangerous conditions to retrieve fossils to sell. Field operations do not enact safety measures to protect the workers. University of Chicago Paleontologist Dr. Paul Sereno recounts a time in which he visited an excavation site in China dug by hand into a mountainside. The 900-foot-long tunnel lacked support structures and electricity. The excavation work had to be done by candlelight. Due to the absence of structural beams supporting the weight of the rock above, tunnels like the one Sereno described collapse, trapping hundreds of people underground (Sweeny 1).

There seems to be a belief that purchasing poached fossils helps the economically disadvantaged. Evidence does not support the idea. The real money never reaches the looters. It always goes to the upper echelons of the smuggling pyramid (Brodie et al 13). Looters rarely, if ever, experience upper mobility in this organization. Middlemen pay the poacher only enough money to supplement his or her income, not to help achieve economic success. The organization's purpose is to make money for the higher-ups, not provide a charity. From a business stand point, traffickers have to keep the overhead low in order to sustain large profits. By keeping the disadvantaged in their current states of despair, traffickers can exploit the poor for their own gain. Looters take the one-time and short-lived payment and then find themselves in the previous situation. Once again, the looter turns to poaching just to get by, thus perpetuating the crime (Brodie et al 14).

Fossils invoke feelings of joy and bewilderment,

allowing the imagination to run wild. For some, the attraction is so strong that they must possess a certain fossil, so they look for a suitable specimen. Not just any specimen will do. On the open market, they find beautiful and expensive fossils, legal and illicit, sold by people smitten by fossils. Some do not fall in love with the creatures themselves, but for the dollar figure the specimen might bring. The promise of quick cash for little effort strokes the predatory side of traffickers. It may look like just a simple exchange between one buyer lusting after an object and a greedy seller looking for the highest bid. The black market fossil trade touches more people than just the buyer and seller. It affects the people who loot paleontological sites, the scientific community that misses out on answers to perplexing questions, and the countries across the world that lose pieces of their culture, truckloads at a time. No, fossil trafficking is not a victimless crime. It is a crime of stone-cold greed.

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Evaluation: *Jackie's passion for this topic is self-evident as one reads her manuscript. This paper is thoroughly researched and presented in a readable, journalistic style. It is an eye-opener if you thought that all fossils followed a simple, direct path from the field to collections around the world.*

Images of Post-9/11 America: Todd James Pierce's "Newsworld" and Bruce Sterling's "We See Things Differently"

Micah Corlew
Course: English 102 (Composition)
Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

Assignment: *Write a literary research paper, including effective use of at least seven secondary sources.*

American media have reached nearly every corner of the Earth by now. More money is spent on production in Hollywood than some countries have in their national pockets. American media are mass produced and disbursed with viral precision. Even countries with little to no infrastructure or development can identify American celebrities and politicians. Sadly, the inverse is not true. America not only breeds infectious culture, but we brew the finest forms of ethnocentricity. Post 9/11, the joke was that Americans are warring in a country they cannot find on the map. The truth is disconcerting: our culture has developed an outward political expansion while maintaining an inward cultural focus. Fortunately, Americans as individuals are not to blame for the formation of the red, white, and blue iron curtain. Unfortunately, America as a whole is guilty as charged. The mass-media industry plays a significant role in creating this disconnection between national identity and geopolitical practice: large corporations and media conglomerates hold the rights to our perception of reality. News teams have the sole objective of providing unbiased information, but are prevented by doing so from the rash partisanship of American politics. The simple headline story of a man robbing a store can be warped from "Man Robs Store: Gun Control Needed" to, "Obama Economy Forces Man to Rob Store," depending on which news source is observed. Point being, any form of media can be distorted to gain political leverage over the opposing party. To further the asininity, if media are the primary source of information, then it indirectly writes history with its implications – it becomes the archive for historians of the future. Therefore, history is inaccurate and biased, as it is written by the corporate victors. When a population distorted by misinformation is exposed to cultures whose ideologies could not be more different, enmity is inevitable.

Authors Bruce Sterling and Todd James Pierce share similar views on American media and diplomacy. In Sterling's "science fiction" short story written in 1989, "We See Things Differently," he tells of a future America (seemingly the early twenty-first century) dwelling at the bottom of another economic depression. The main character and narrator – a covert militant Muslim disguised as a photojournalist – arrives on American soil to cover the rise of Tom Boston, a revolutionary political musician. In the present day of this work of fiction, America has fallen from grace due to outsourcing by multinational corporations. Russia and America have run each others' finances into the ground over a nationalist bout of "Keeping Up with the Joneses." The Arab countries have receded into isolationism and united into a fundamentalist Islamic caliphate, but are unable to escape imperialistic American culture. The story ends with the narrator putting the final touches on his manifesto, through a covert assassination. In this effort, he martyrs and plagues himself and Tom Boston with an incurable cancer-causing virus. As this eye-opening story closes, the reader cannot help but question American culture and the united Arab caliphate's right to defend their own.

In a contrary point of view, Todd James Pierce's "Newsworld" is a gloomy coming-of-age story about a group of high school boys dealing with the 9/11 tragedy in a world absent of emotion or understanding. Their lives have been spent surrounded by fabrications of history and lifestyle, robbing them of accurate information and individual thought. In the midst of a crossbreed between teenage angst and 9/11 confusion, the boys set out to make sense of the terrorist attack by exploring the fabricated ruins of a theme park attraction modeled after the infamous San Francisco earthquake. Pierce brilliantly turns news into satirical fiction through his created theme park, Newsworld. In an interview with Liza Hartman, Pierce explains the motive behind the theme park setting,

saying, "I'm interested in the idea of themed space and our cultural attachment to entertainment....The concept of themed space, in its barest form, is to create an artificial environment, landscape and architecture that is divorced from its surrounding geography" (par. 5). The story was initially written before 9/11 but after that tragic day in history, an unexpected piece completed Pierce's puzzle. He commented on his revision: "... after 9/11 happened, I thought the book needed to comment on how do people in an era where news is treated partially as entertainment respond to an event like that" (qtd. in Hoover par. 6). Both stories confront the ideological differences between the Middle East and the United States. In "We See Things Differently" and "Newsworld," the authors clearly represent American media culture as the cause of current political turmoil, both globally and locally.

Media and culture are separate entities of the same principle; media defines culture and vice versa. American media do not have the reputation for accuracy, and cultural products rarely require fact checkers. So it is safe to draw the conclusion that media is a microcosm of culture. As Americans, we tend to package important news into factually skewed bundles and sell it as entertainment to the masses. Pierce's fictional land of an informational amusement park, Newsworld, shows how distorted history becomes once passed through the hands of the media. As the story is being told, the narrator describes one of the attractions:

> When we were teenagers we first experienced the strangeness of boarding a ride based on a news story we'd seen on TV. As little kids, we'd watched in irritation as OJ's Bronco crawled up the freeway followed by patrol cars and TV news helicopters, the live footage interrupting Animaniacs, and Duck Tales. Five years later we climbed into similar Broncos – vehicles outfitted with lap bars and individual sound systems embedded into the headrests – and were whisked into the dim sound stage of Los Angeles. Dave Fowler, my best friend in junior high, told me, "This ride totally sucks." Yet we went on it three more times, until Dave could mimic the announcer's voice, a lazy California accent that made words such as "pursuit" sound more important than they did in the South. (Pierce 305)

Pierce's rendition of the O.J. Simpson police chase shows how skewed these attractions are. A murderous man's escape from justice is not something that should be glorified and made into an enjoyable experience, though at the time it was little more than media spectacle. Pierce is reminding us of how the media turns news stories into sideshows, reducing the immorality of crime and value of human life for the viewers, especially impressionable youngsters. The ride seems to be a metaphor for how news channels will spice up a story with embellishment and premature assumptions to the point of it losing all factual accuracy. The group of boys does not even perceive it as news: the glamor of the ride has dismissed the fact that O.J. Simpson murdered two people with his own hands. The spectacle of the car chase and the glorification of thug life is all that remains for them.

In a similar vein, earlier in the story, the narrator describes how the group of boys felt in immediate response to the attacks on 9/11. The narrator says, "Our emotions were mysterious to us, the fine divisions between melancholy and depression, yearning and desire. We suspected that someday we'd be able to tell the difference between such things, the same way our parents could tell the difference between a good wine and very good wine" (Pierce 304). In hindsight, this passage is telling of a generation of boys that is void of emotion. It would be socially appropriate and acceptable for them to feel sorrow or sympathy for the lives lost, or even misdirected anger, but there is nothing. They are emotionless, and they assume emotions are something to be learned like understanding the difference between the qualities of wine. They simply cannot process the harm done to their belief in a dominant America. Their disillusioned reality is the byproduct of Newsworld.

Having grown up and worked in the park, their perception of American losses in history has been solely presented in the format of entertainment. As the narrator describes the various allurements of the park, one of his interactions with the Vietnam attraction stands out as significant:

> After my evening shift I liked to walk through the park. I particularly like The Vietnam Experience, three acres so lush you forgot you were in central Georgia, a silver mist rising from vents hidden in rocks, water dripping from irrigation hoses molded to resemble jungle vines. It was kind of creepy, the way it was laid out, the huts made of sticks, military

> radios and grenade launchers left beside the Main Guest Trail. Sometimes I would meet my girlfriend, Devon MacCray, in the Lost Vietnamese Village. We would make out in one of the thatched huts while a cool breeze circled around us and the soft voices of the Vietcong whispered from miniature speakers hidden in banyan trees. (Pierce 305)

In this theme park, Vietnam is not a violent war that scarred a poorer country with the savage violence of the American war machine – it is another spectacle, an attraction to experience a cleaned-up version of history. Pierce's using the Vietnamese hut as a love shack for the narrator and his girlfriend is ironic in the sense that they are attempting passion in a recreation where thousands of lives were lost. He clearly knows of the atrocities that took place in those jungles, but his total lack of regard for the amount of death and chaos that ensued shows how much he does not understand the value of a life or the action of taking one. Respectively, the high school boys that Pierce has created are fairly typical personalities, but the context and situations he places them in is done so to force the reader to compare and contrast the story's many themes. This is a totally stunted generation, without the compassion and humility from a genuine sense of nation and self.

To understand Bruce Sterling's "We See Things Di erently," to the full extent, an understanding of Muslim-American relations and Islamophobia must be acknowledged. As seen in "Newsworld," the events on 9/11 left a gaping void in many Americans. Desperate, much like the boys of "Newsworld," Americans psychologically had to contextualize the atrocities that took place. The lack of understanding and fear of radical Muslims turned into misdirected anger toward all Muslims. To this day, people of Middle Eastern descent are discriminated against and categorized as war-mongering jihadists. This is the premise and contributing factor to Islamophobia – the irrational fear of Islam and its followers. As described by Steve Emerson in his statement to the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, "In the West, the concept of Islamic extremism is automatically associated with relatively small portions of Muslim society" (par. 9). Those small portions Emerson alludes to are the jihadist Muslims that Americans have come to fear. They are the minority and outliers of an entire faith, yet the passion for their beliefs speaks loud enough to represent a false proportion of Islam's followers. Most Muslims have no beliefs radical enough to justify actions that would harm others or damage the image of Islam. But due to American ignorance and media portrayal of Muslims, a considerable amount of Americans do not understand that the majority of Muslims are not jihadist Muslims.

From a Muslim point of view, there is certainly cause for resentment from both peaceful and violent Muslims. Peaceful Muslims have been the victims of widespread xenophobia since 9/11 and to this day struggle with equality. Immediately after the attack, Muslims feared misplaced blame and hatred for the crimes they did not commit. Unfortunately, that is exactly what they got. Hours after the attack, reports of disorderly conduct and hate crimes trickled into police stations around the country. In Chicago, the director of the Arab American Action Network, Hatem Abudayyeh, received immediate response from disgruntled locals. Upon closing his social center's doors at noon, a car pulled up next to him, the driver shouting obscenities, motioning obscene gestures, and even called him "baby killer" (Grossman and Ahmed-Ullah sec. 1: 17).This is just one of countless examples resembling two cultures continuously failing to understand each other. Although "We See Things Differently" was written before 9/11, it serves as quite an illuminator of current Muslim-American relations.

When comparing "Newsworld" to Sterling's "We See Things Differently," the world he creates – rather than being based in an emotionless world caused by distorted media – appears to be the projected result of a sprawling, money-hungry, media-driven culture. American culture and media abide by the same operating law: develop, produce, consume, and repeat. Development is easy, production is even easier, but the money maker is consumption and repetition. If Americans satisfy their "needs" of consumption before large corporations and media have met their quota, expansion and profit follows. Send it overseas; enrich the lives of everyone with American ideology while you enslave them in sweatshops and national debt. But we're not always welcome. We have gained the reputation of becoming that pesky neighbor that invites himself over, tracks mud all over the house, eats all the food, and then leaves before cleaning it up. So when our consumerist force-fed culture taints one that values necessity over luxury, virtue over vice, our

presence is not exactly welcomed. This happens to be an underlying theme Sterling is trying to demonstrate. As his main character, the Muslim journalist Sayyid, converses with a taxi driver upon arriving in America, he notes some major cultural differences:

> The cabbie smiled. It is very easy to buy Americans. The mention of money brightens them like a shot of drugs. It is not just the poverty; they were always like this, even when they were rich. It is the effect of spiritual emptiness. A terrible grinding emptiness in the very guts of the West, which no amount of Coca-Cola seems able to fill. (Sterling 763)

This is no trivial stab at American culture; Sayyid's words carry weight and accuracy. The passage shows that he evidently comes from a land whose culture does not idolize monetary gain, but spiritual fulfillment. His mention of Coca-Cola suggests that his image of Americans is painted by the multinational corporations whose business models strive toward world domination. His ideology suggests that money creates a spiritual void. This is the primary expression of their cultural differences. Many eastern philosophies value a less exploitative view of the world: not to deplete the world to fulfill human desires. This is one reason why Arab and American culture do not see eye to eye, along with years of imperialism in the region. American companies have the propensity to sap resources from the earth without replenishment. We are wasteful, excessive, and luxuriant, all of which are a detrimental combination to our earth and our global image.

As Sterling's story progresses, Sayyid is granted his interview with the musical politician, Tom Boston. In essence, they are discussing the current condition of the global economy and how it came to be:

> "We used our companies as tools for development," Boston said, with the patience of a man instructing a child. "But then our lovely friends in South America refused to pay their debts. And our staunch allies in Europe and Japan signed the Geneva Economic Agreement and decided to crash the dollar. And our friends in the Arab countries decided not to be countries anymore, but one almighty Caliphate, and, just for good measure, they pulled all their oil money out of our banks and into Islamic ones. How could we compete? They were holy banks, and our banks pay interest, which is a sin, I understand." He paused, his eyes glittering, and fluffed curls from his neck. "And all that time, we were already in hock to our fucking ears to pay for being the world's policeman." (Sterling 775)

This happens to be one of Sterling's most insightful points, as if he had a direct window into the future where he could foresee the problems stemming from American capitalism. He uses the voice of Tom Boston to vocalize how imperialistic economic, diplomatic, and cultural tendencies have an inevitable expiration date. Sterling's reasoning for the economic and social downfall is due to the rest of the world reacting to decades of manipulative imperialism – revealing the policeman as the thug. In that quote, Tom Boston mentions how the Arab countries have pulled all their money out of the American banking system, presumably because the countries' elites have reached a state of self-sufficiency, allowing them to unite into one Caliphate and rejecting their once imperial masters. This scenario is entirely feasible. As the global market expands while second- and third-world countries flourish, the conveniences that America offers, such as outsourced jobs and sophisticated banking systems, will become obsolete. Taking advantage of cheap third-world labor and resources, as well as propping up vicious dictators in poorer countries, has been economically and politically damaging to American longevity, as Boston points out. As we employ economically lesser countries to manufacture our cheap goods, we're providing them with a direct path to self-sufficiency; as we help develop their oil industries, we are offering the native rich a way to prosper at the expense of their own poor workforce. This is not to say that globalization is terrible and America should retain all the global wealth within our borders; we just need to realize as a whole that economic actions have economic consequences, and that cultural actions have cultural consequences.

One conflict in Sterling's story is how Americans proceed to the future with no regard to the past. The main character, Sayyid, witnesses this firsthand through his conversations with local Americans and expresses this through his thoughts early on. Within the first few paragraphs of the story, Sayyid states that, "They have forgotten that they used to shoot us, shell us, insult us, and equip our enemies. They have no memory, the Americans,

and no history. Wind sweeps through them, and the past vanishes. They are like dead leaves." (Sterling 762)

This quote sets the underlying tone for the rest of the story. The narrator holds serious resentment for America, which leads to some possible foreshadowing later on. At this point, it is safe to say Sayyid thinks Americans are simple-minded, foolish people with limited values. Sayyid is not the only one who thinks this, though. Qasim Rashid, a writer for the *Washington Post*, furthers these thoughts:

> Many of age Americans remember March 20, 2003, the day America preemptively invaded and obliterated Iraq to unseat dictator Saddam Hussein—while killing 100,000 Iraqi civilians. Fewer, however, remember the December 1983 meeting between Donald Rumsfeld and Hussein, designed to emphasize America's "close relationship" with Iraq as an ally. The regime America destroyed in 2003, American tax dollars built two decades prior. (n.p.)

This seems to be a persistent problem for Americans and a possible reason as to why some Muslims hold us in resentment. Historically, Americans do have the tendency to live without regard to the past. As Rashid further states in his article, our backing of Arabic leaders then later dismantling them is a repetitive path. It appears that from the eyes of Sayyid and Rashid, Americans have very short memories and refuse to learn from the past.

On the way to Tom Boston's concert at the American arena, Sayyid is forced to ride the tour bus with Boston's groupies. Sayyid attempts to carry on a casual conversation with the nationalistic stage hands but is confronted with seemingly different ideologies. After boarding the bus, he sits next to a female groupie and the conversation starts:

> "We buy a great deal from America," I told her. "Grain and timber and minerals."
>
> "That's Third-World stuff. We're not your farm." She looked at the spotless floor. "Look, our industries suck, everyone knows it. So we sell entertainment. Except where there's media barriers. And even then the fucking video pirates rip us off."
>
> "We see things differently," I said. "America ruled the global media for decades. To us, it's cultural imperialism. We have many talented musicians in the Arab world. Have you ever heard of them?"
>
> "Can't afford it," she said crisply. "We spent all our money saving the Persian Gulf from the commies." (Sterling 768)

Sayyid's exchange with the groupies on the bus shows how ethnocentric Americans are. He strikes up a simple conversation with the passenger next to him, and it turns into a pity fest for all the saddened Americans on the bus. Sayyid continues to make valid, fairly neutral points that are rebutted by ignorance. This conversation is one of the main points the author makes about Americans; they're closed-minded and arrogant, neglectful of Sayyid's cultural differences and opinions.

Lack of understanding of cultural differences is unfortunately nothing new in the United States. When a criminal event that relatively resembles an act of terrorism occurs, the media and law-enforcement quickly pull out their racial profiling glasses and begin the blame game. For example, on April 19, 1995, at precisely 9:02 a.m., a massive bomb was detonated under the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. At roughly the same time, several Middle Eastern men were noticed driving past the wreckage. The media took that information and had a field day. As reported in the *St. Louis Post*, journalists falsely assumed there were three suspects. They wrote, "In the Oklahoma City bombing, authorities were said to be looking for two 'Middle Eastern men' seen being driven away from the federal building by a third man shortly before the explosion" ("A Terror Bombing in Oklahoma City" par. 3). Under the coincidence of time and stereotyping, Ibrahim Ahmad, a man of Middle Eastern decent, was boarding a plane to Chicago. Upon arrival, he was seized by police and federal agents while news sources across the country reported they had the man responsible. After being falsely detained, Ahmad was quoted saying, "That's the sad thing, I'm sure that hundreds of people left Oklahoma City that day, but I was the only one stopped to be questioned" (qtd. in Dean par. 6). Ethnicity was obviously one major contributing factor into Ahmad's arrest, while assumption was the only basis for the media accusations. Although Sterling's fictional America does not incorporate any historical acts of terrorism, these examples help show the viewpoints held by Americans and how ethnocentrism runs rampant through American Media.

At the end of Sterling's political satire, Sayyid has

returned home from his tour with Tom Boston. He sits reminiscing about the man he has taken down in an eventual murder-suicide, through cocaine tainted with a cancer-causing virus. Despite their ideological differences, he maintains the utmost respect for his adversary. As he sits there, he looks back in retrospection:

> This is the dar-al-harb, the land of peace. We have peeled the hands of the West from our throat, we draw breath again, under God's sky. Our Caliph is a good man, and I am proud to serve him. He reigns, he does not rule. Learned men debate in the Majlis, not squabbling like politicians, but seeking truth in dignity. We have the world's respect.
>
> We have earned it, for we paid the martyr's price. We Muslims are one in five in all the world, and as long as ignorance of God persists, there will always be the struggle, the jihad. It is a proud thing to be one of the Caliph's Mujihadeen. It is not that we value our lives lightly. But that we value God more. (Sterling 778)

Sayyid is describing the importance of being free of Western influence. The Arab Caliphate has done so and gained the world's respect. They are free to exist as they like, so long as they subscribe to conservative versions of Islam. The remark that Arab politicians debate implies that there is thoughtful discussion, with consideration of other opinions taking place: the wise religious men simply command. Most importantly, though, Sayyid is proud to be a martyr, he is proud to stand for something greater than himself. In the context of the story, this is evidence of the cause and effect relationship of American culture in Arab countries. If we read between the lines, it is as if Sterling is reminding us that when American culture endangers a man's way of life – a life that means more to his god than to himself – that man will have no qualms dying for what he believes in.

Both stories shed a painfully pure light onto problems persisting in and out of America. We have been blinded by consumerism, preventing us from respecting the ideologies of other cultures and even respecting our own inherent values. We have sold the American soul and replaced it with consumables, reality TV, and other cheap entertainment. The immediate cost is projected onto our youth. As seen in "Newsworld," the teenagers are unable to differentiate entertainment from reality, which prevents them from developing any capacity for deep emotion. The long-term cost is evident in "We See Things Differently"; invasive culture can cause hostile backlash, while expanding the economic borders beyond our sustainable threshold can lead to economic depression. America is still an infant, relative to time. We have the hubris of a teenage boy, the ignorance of a child, and the bankroll to fund any desirable whim. We carry onward with little regard to the past, while teaching history without any consideration to the future. As said in the opening lines of "We See Things Differently": "They have no memory, the Americans, and no history. Wind sweeps through them, and the past vanishes. They are like dead leaves" (Sterling 762).

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Evaluation: *This paper is interesting and significant, as it discusses two modern short stories that deal with the post-9/11 American world and with Muslim-American relations. Literary critical studies of the works discussed in the paper are largely nonexistent; in this effort, the author has written a highly original paper, effectively bringing relevant topical sources to bear on the discussion of the literature. This is a particularly poignant paper, given the more recent developments in Syria and Iraq.*

Amy Yamada's "Kneel Down and Lick My Feet"

Cody Creasbaum
Course: English 102 (Composition)
Instructor: Andrew Wilson

Assignment: *Write a literary research essay.*

The world is a large and frightening place for anyone; the things that every human survives each day without even noticing can make the mightiest man quake in terror. But is that not our defining quality, the essence of what it means to be human? Mankind is, down to the last individual, a race of survivors: man's very precociousness is what allows him to rise to the top of the food chain and remain there to this day. In Amy Yamada's "Kneel Down and Lick My Feet," the reader is encouraged to take a much closer look at the sadism and masochism culture and what it means to be a survivor. Everyone has scars; some just wear them closer to the surface than others. But S&M isn't about cheap thrills in a back alley; it is an elegant and graceful practice, refined and perfected by artists. It is a secret world where the deepest, most hidden desires can be revealed, a place where one can be their truest self. S&M clubs are sexual by nature, but to define them by sex would be missing the point: S&M is about exploration, pushing your limits, and truly learning things about oneself. S&M allows people to reverse decades of sexual discrimination. What some may view as abominable torture, the clients of these clubs view as ultimate liberation from the petty toils of life: catharsis in its purest form.

The narrator of the story, Shinobu, provides quite the frank look into the world of sadism and masochism. Due in no small part to the poorly understood nature of the S&M subculture, it is often implied that professionals in kink clubs are desperate to escape from their situations, are deeply disgusted by their work, and are only there out of desperation. Shinobu neatly subverts this cultural trope in the following quotation:

> This place is called the Queen's Palace. It's a club for guys who want to get picked on. We don't get many misguided souls who want to tie up women or anything silly like that. So I feel safe. Even someone like me who doesn't really get off on S&M can have a good time. Show me another place where women have slaves in this day and age! Show me another job where you can abuse men and have them thank you for it. (189)

As evidenced in this quote, Shinobu is not a slave to the club, nor is she disgusted by the work; her enjoyment of the job actually indicates quite the opposite. As a dominatrix for the Queen's Palace, Shinobu finds herself uplifted and empowered by her work: this is in sharp contrast indeed to the traditional view of sex workers, and is in fact a rather ironic inversion. Even her sister Chika, a newcomer to both the world of sadism and masochism and the Queen's Palace itself, is treated quite well and soon acquires her own list of clients and a style all her own. Though the sisters may have been brought there by hardship, it certainly does not keep them there; they enjoy both the work and the rewards, as evidenced in the following quote:

> It seems I didn't have to worry so much. Within a week, Chika was like an old hand. She was quick. She learned the ropes. She even learned to tie a man up and hang him from the ceiling. More than anything, she seemed to like that she didn't have to hang out with the customers afterwards, that each session was a discreet little drama. And she seemed to be indulging her own ingenuity as well. She used music and candlelight, seemed to enjoy her own performances. (199)

Referencing the global workplace, gender discrimination still runs deeply in the world of work; dominant women are traditionally seen as a threat by their co-workers, and are sanctioned accordingly, while workers in the sex industry are typically viewed as inferior.

Japan in particular is infamous for its glass ceilings and frequent gender bias, which makes this story carry all the more weight in reply. This is evidenced in much of Yamada's writing, and her narrative tends to run towards this topic quite frequently. In a quote from Tim Appelo of *NYTimes.com*, "Amy Yamada's sexually explicit story 'Kneel Down and Lick My Feet,' the confessions of a tough-talking hostess in an S & M club, speaks volumes about the anger of women in a work-obsessed culture that condemns wives to housebound powerlessness" (n.p.). Rather than being subjected to discrimination or abuse for her exertion of dominance and profession of choice, Shinobu is rewarded; not only is she paid handsomely, but her clients also praise her effusively: "Plenty of these people seem to have highly developed personal aesthetics. One customer always brings me a new set of lingerie; another always brings me love letters" (197). Such adulation is indeed impressive, and a sign that Shinobu is particularly good at her job. In a conventional office job, it is safe to assume that she would remain unnoticed, simply another member of the staff; in the Queen's Palace, though, Shinobu is able to truly shine. Despite the fact that the customers of the club experience humiliation, as well as considerable verbal and physical abuse, none of them seem angered by it, or upset in the least; quite the contrary, as evidenced by the previous quote. Though the change in which gender is abused could be viewed by some as a hypocritical statement, the detractors must also recall that the men come to these clubs to experience their fantasies; the workers are not doing it out of prejudice, hate, or discrimination, they are doing it because they are quite literally asked to. If payment is rendered, it would be a poor business plan indeed to withhold the services requested.

A detractor might be quick to point out that someone who will cheerfully participate and lead the humiliation or abuse of another human being for profit must have some manner of character flaw to make them act in such a way. However, the women in the Queen's Club are no monsters, certainly far from it. Though they make a business out of sadism and masochism and earn their tips with chains and whips, when the time comes to hang up the ball gags and punch out for the evening, one would be hard-pressed indeed to separate them from just another group of colored-collar workers. Shinobu discusses this at length in her commentary about what it is like to go home and be with her boyfriend: "I have a man of my own, and for that matter so does Chika. When I'm with my man, I don't talk big the way I do at work. In his arms, I'm as cuddly as a kitten. People really do have an A-side and a B-side. They're complicated" (197). Though many stories have an unreliable narrator, such is not the case with "Kneel Down And Lick My Feet"; Shinobu is as frank and earnest a narrator as one could ask for, sometimes to the point of discomfort. As such, the reader is given no reason to doubt her words, driving home the fact that these women are, truthfully, no different than the average Jane. As said by Joseph Coates,

> "Kneel Down and Lick My Feet," for example, will remind many readers of Mary Gaitskill or Tama Janowitz in its matter-of-fact portrayal of a day in the life of an s-and-m brothel. Though completely and (at least once) gruesomely candid, it is also... a meditation on the nature of the self and its ability to compartmentalize: "So maybe our true selves aren't really anywhere but inside us," she says, after reflecting that "selling your body and working for a company are pretty much the same thing." (n.p.)

The question of why people enjoy this sort of entertainment often arises when topics such as this are explored; while this is a difficult thing to assess, there are always reasons. In some cases, it is simply a matter of preference; in others, it is a method of seeking acceptance. The concept of dominance and submission is an interesting one to explore, to say the least: In a quote from Tim Wong's portfolio, "An interesting theme brought up in the story is the idea that everyone has their A-side and B-side; that we all have a side that likes to be controlled and a side that likes to be in control" (n.p.). In many cases, however, it is safe to guess that the desire for subjugation and punishment stems from a past trauma.

The main conflict of the story takes place some time after Chika has begun working at the Queen's Palace, and she is confronted with a client who requests that she do something that she cannot stomach. The intricacy of this is where exactly the conflict takes place; unlike conventional conflicts, the aggressor is tied to a chair, helpless. The struggle is an internal one: man versus self. It is not as though Chika isn't capable of fulfilling

the request: the man has provided his own needles, paid fully for her services, and even permitted himself to be tied. The challenge comes instead from the disgust and horror at the enormity of the request; Chika simply cannot stomach the idea of putting heavy, sometimes rusty sewing needles through the man's genitals. She calls for back-up, and each queen is found wanting of courage, save two: Shinobu and Mama. Even they have difficulty with the internal struggle, further evidencing the distance between sadism and committing actual harm. If they were truly cruel brutes with no greater wish than the debasement of men, then they would have jumped at the opportunity to perforate the man. They honestly do not wish to hurt their client. Further evidence of this can be found in one of Shinobu's earlier quotes, "Aside from language, there's one other rule to this game. That is, after abusing the client you have to be nice to him. Anybody who gets hurt all the time is bound to get upset. You have to create a sense that you're punishing the client because you love him. The very whip of love. This is a world of whips and treats. That trade-off is the ultimate taste of the sweetness of life" (194). However, the man insists, and even claims that he has done it before, so the queens proceed. Their strength of character is showcased to the fullest here; they fear what will happen, and are loathe to bring harm to their client, but they steel themselves and do what is requested anyway.

Though it was a rigorous battle indeed, the queens at last succeed. In exchange for their services, the man offers them a look into his tragic life. His kind but sexually abusive mother would often do things like the queens have just done to him as a little boy. He is not bitter about it, though; instead, he waxes almost nostalgic, evidenced in this quote: "But there were times, I guess, when she couldn't take it any longer. She would call me to the room where she was sewing kimonos, and she would do things to me like we just did. It became a kind of habit. A strange habit. She's dead now. But I can't ever forget her" (202). He even calls her name as he ejaculates; this horrifying revelation could easily cause a knee-jerk reaction to condemn sadism and masochism for supporting this kind of activity, but that would be too rash a response. Yamada's gift for taking the high road prevents this scene from becoming too gut-wrenchingly horrific but keeps the story firmly grounded in gritty reality. In the words of a blogger by the name of gn0sis,"Explicit without being pornographic, avoiding overbearing moral messages of hysterical feminism or macho chauvinism, Yamada's novels manage to tread a narrow path and do it well" (n.p.).

A closer examination is in order; though he is subjected to monstrous physical abuse, it does not seem to harm his ability to behave properly in society. Though one cannot read this story without feeling that the man should seek out earnest psychological help, he is a perfectly polite individual, the very image of a Japanese salary man. Both during and after his treatment, he never curses or gets angry, only demonstrating a deep melancholy when threatened with the denial of his request. Furthermore, he is deeply relieved when he has concluded his business, and seems much lighter and happier for it. It is almost as though reliving his trauma gives him some measure of control over it: he is a grown man, and he is paying good money to request the chance to relive those moments. Instead of being a victim, and being haunted by those memories, the young man seizes independence, and claims those horrors as part of himself. In accepting his trauma and coming to terms with it, he makes himself stronger; he becomes whole again. Though it is implied he does this frequently, one can take comfort in knowing that he is doing it because he wants to, not because he has to. Dr. Joseph Merlino, a preeminent psychoanalyst and psychiatric advisor to the *New York Daily News*, had this to say in an interview on the very nature of sadomasochism:

> For some, it is the psychological need to dominate, for others the need to be dominated. Others vacillate between both domination and submission. Part of it is rooted in biology. We may be born with a tendency towards—let's call it 'problem' for a moment—and let's say someone is sadomasochistic. It's a problem only if it is getting that individual into difficulties, if he or she is not happy with it, or it's causing problems in their personal or professional lives. If it's not, I'm not seeing that as a problem. But assuming that it did, what I would wonder about is what is his or her biology that would cause a tendency toward a problem, and dynamically, what were the experiences this individual had that led him or her toward one of the ends of the spectrum. (n.p.)

What could have been a hellish complex that dooms him

to social iniquity has instead led him to have a firmer grasp on who he is, where he comes from, and why he does what he does. Though the need for counseling remains strong, this young man nonetheless defies the norm, and keeps himself from insanity with the help of S&M clubs. He mentions that other clubs refuse to provide the services that he asks for, either out of fear or out of disgust. Shinobu and Mama, showing remarkable fortitude, push through their own doubts and fears to help a desperate man achieve control over his deepest, darkest desire. If that can be called anything short of truly noble, then the legends of Arthur have lost much of their shine.

In conclusion, the world of Shinobu and the Queen's Palace are more than just a sleazy place to get one's thrills. S&M is so much more than the mere sum of its components, and Amy Yamada demonstrates that fact wonderfully in this story; spirituality comes in many shapes and sizes, and this is just one of a myriad. They may not be hospitals, and they certainly aren't churches, but in the truest sense of the phrase, these clubs are indeed places of healing and equality. Battling gender roles, bringing harmony to chaos, and having a bit of fun while they're at it, the queens lead troubled souls towards peace, one spike-heeled step at a time.

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Evaluation: *Yamada's story is a perfect example of a work of literature that has the potential to be mishandled. Happily, that is not what happens in Cody's analysis. This is a fluid, smart, mature essay.*

Widow's Walk

Laura Di Piazza
Course: Speech 101
(Fundamentals of Speech Communication)
Instructor: Cheryl Golemo

Assignment: *Present a narrative speech sharing a true experience that changed you in some way. The story should vividly bring us into your experience so that we can come as close as possible to "walking in your shoes."*

I have wanted to own a house with a widow's walk ever since I was six years old. For anyone unfamiliar, a widow's walk, or "widow's watch" as defined by the *Free Dictionary*, is "A railed, rooftop platform typically on a coastal house, originally designed to observe vessels at sea." My mother told me the back story behind these platforms dates back to when sailors would go out to sea, leaving their wives behind for months at a time. These women would watch for their husbands' ships on the horizon from home. But, as the name implies, few ships returned, and fewer men. The first time I saw a widow's walk was in Arlington Heights, a land-locked town with no need for one. But when my mother explained it to me, I told myself that I would go up on one someday, because it was tragic and beautiful. I wanted to see the view; and for me, that was the ocean, which I had never seen. As I grew up, and developed an interest in art, I have always imagined writing and drawing and painting and doing all sorts of creative pursuits with that view surrounding me, encouraging me. I don't know when the emphasis became on doing, rather than experiencing; when being productive trumped being awed.

Last fall, my oldest cousin was married in Martha's Vineyard. My aunt rented a house for all of the family to stay in, an old Victorian home with plenty of room. When she showed me a picture of it, I literally squealed. There was a large widow's walk right on top, and my aunt promised me that the attic room that led to it would be mine.

I would overcome anything to reach this place: a fear of flying, claustrophobia on a small boat. I wish I could say I did all of this for my cousin, but that wouldn't be entirely true. I wanted to get up on that platform and do everything I had hoped. In my luggage were brushes and paints, drawing pencils, a camera, and a fat notebook for writing. When we finally reached the house after a six-hour journey, it was nearing 10 PM and nearly pitch black. Everyone wanted to go to bed. But I dropped my bags and climbed those rickety steps right away. It was cool out, and with the island so far removed from the mainland, the stars were brilliant. The ocean was immense, and the waves sparkled as they hit the shore. It was everything I had dreamed of.

But the next morning, I had quite a shock. The wedding wasn't for two more days, so we had plenty of free time to shop and explore. I set up everything on

Student Reflections on Writing: Laura Di Piazza

People have always spouted off that old adage that you should only write what you know. I don't think I believe in that. I have always believed in writing what you experience; whether you color it with fantasy or fact, comedy or character, is completely up to you. I suppose I would say that writing is all done on the same highway, with all of us using the same system of verbs and nouns and literary devices, but the beauty of it lies in the ability to get off that highway at a million different exits, with each exit leading you to at least a dozen different winding forest paths. And you get to pick and choose, take rights and lefts, finding your own voice, or just letting yourself get completely lost. Getting lost is the most fun, because at the end of it you'll always find yourself with just one narrow lane ahead of you, and it's the road home.

the roof. But it was terrible. I couldn't paint, because nothing would stay still. I couldn't draw because the wind knocked the papers around. I couldn't write, because the noise of the sea and the wind was too distracting. The photos I took all looked wrong. I couldn't capture the essence of the place at all. I descended the stairs into my room, sulking, almost crying. I thought the beauty of everything would encourage me to be creative. But instead, it bitterly washed away any hopes I had of being productive. And for me, it was always "do, do, do."

Later that night, when I returned to my room after dinner, I saw the trapdoor to the widow's walk was open. I went out and found my aunt, staring at the waves. There were lights in the old houses behind us, glowing softly. We didn't say anything for a while, but then she turned to me and uttered, "It's really beautiful out here." That hit me hard. I looked at the sky and the sea and I realized that something can be perfect in an unexpected way. I didn't need to write and paint and draw while I was there. I didn't need to *do* anything. I could just lean against the banister and take it all in. I was making a mental imprint that would stay with me forever. I can definitely say I have never seen a more beautiful view, and putting it to paper would never do it justice. I still want to own a house with a widow's walk, but to use it more toward its original function: to watch the sea, to contemplate, and to be at peace.

Evaluation: *Laura's vivid portrayal of this sensory experience draws her audience into her world and dreams. Her poetic command of language gives a lovely musicality to the rhythms of the speech.*

Innocence Forever Lost: Pär Lagerkvist's "Father and I" and Aleksandar Hemon's "Islands"

Juanita Godlewski
Course: English 102 (Composition)
Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

Assignment: *Write a literary research paper incorporating effective use of at least seven secondary sources.*

The story "Islands," by Bosnian author Aleksandar Hemon, is a fictional account of a man's haunting memories of his unjust and cruel childhood, as told through the eyes of a child narrator. The main character, Uncle Julius, is an angry, bitter, pessimist, a cynical man who has struggled to find peace in a world of sadness, great loss, evil, and corruption. When his nephew and the boy's parents come to visit him on Mljet, an island near Croatia, Uncle Julius takes some pleasure in scaring the boy with stories of his horrific and violent past. One of these stories tells of a boy named Vanyka, whom he met in Arkhangelsk, one of Stalin's Siberian work camps of the 1930s. Vanyka was a brave, resourceful boy who challenged the authorities and paid dearly for his defiance. Witnessing this boy's demise was the pivotal moment that changed Uncle Julius' trust in humanity. Uncle Julius has come to the conclusion that life is a waste of time. In the end, everything will be lost, and everyone will be back to being as helpless and useless as the day they were born. This is a story of a man that forever mourns the childhood that he never had. In some way, he envies his nephew, the innocence, the trust one has when we are young. Once a person's innocence is lost, it is lost forever; they will never be the same.

The allegorical story "Father and I," by Swedish author Pär Lagerkvist, examines a boy's coming of age, and the pangs of insecurity that come with the process of maturing: the young boy no longer finds comfort in that which was familiar, the trust in his father, the images and sounds around him. The questioning of faith begins, and the fear of facing an unknown future. The main setting of the story is a wooded area near the railroad tracks. The boy is enjoying a brisk walk with his father, and admiring the beautiful, bright surroundings. Shortly after reaching a river bank, the darkness begins to set in, and soon they are engulfed in the darkness of the night. Our young narrator becomes fearful, looking to his father for reassurance, only to be told that God will protect them. The boy is confused, anxiety takes over, and he starts to imagine the worst. Then, they hear a loud roar; suddenly, they see a black, mysterious train ripping through the darkness into nowhere. The boy's father does not recognize the

Student Reflections on Writing: Juanita Godlewski

Writing is simply the imprint of our imagination. Before I begin to write, I see a picture in my mind that comes from a pool of thoughts. Perhaps it is a distant memory, a song, or even a smell that takes me back to a place and time that has left its mark. Through the years, writing has become my meditation, a time for reflection. The authors that have inspired me go beyond just telling a story, they explore a deeper meaning that allows me, the reader, to want to understand that obscure message. Yann Martel, author of *Life of Pi*, said in a 2002 interview with PBS, "I was sort of looking for a story, not only with a small 's' but sort of with a capital 'S' – something that would direct my life." Like Aleksandar Hemon and Pär Lagerkvist, he uses the magical intrigue of allegory to give us insight to how he views the world or how he wishes it to be. I believe in the human need to always want to relate, to belong, to be a part of something greater than myself. It is the power of this need that gives me the motivation to explore the things that I do not understand. In writing, I find my meaning; I find my direction.

engineer, nor why this train is traveling through at that hour. How strange this all is; "Father" always knows everything, he has all the answers. Why does he not know about this "ghost train" with the faceless engineer? All at once, the world as this boy knows it has changed forever, and he realizes that a parent will not always be able to give him all the answers, or to protect him from the endless darkness that is the future. Perhaps, here he even begins to question the existence of a God he cannot see. Is this young boy an atheist in the making? How differently this day would have ended if only his father had hugged him tightly and reassured him that nothing will harm him.

In both "Islands" and "Father and I," we see how trauma, fear, and the adult interactions we encounter as children will define our character, how we perceive others, our faith, and how we choose to deal with life's never-ending challenges. In "Islands," we see how a tormented man desperately needs to find acceptance of a past that he cannot change. He wants his young nephew to appreciate what he has now. One day it will all be gone, and he will have nothing left. "Father and I" tells us of how we all have to face an uncertain future, to find our own answers to those lingering questions about God, and learn to trust in ourselves, even in our darkest hour.

Aleksandar Hemon's story "Islands" is no doubt a reflection of his past; his words echo memories of the cruelty and injustice he has known to destroy the human spirit. The author was only a teenager when Marshal Tito (communist president of the former Yugoslavia) died in 1980. According to Sophie Harrison, the writer grew interested in political journalism, and ideas such as freedom of speech, which turned out to be a more effective way to annoy his parents than wearing torn jeans (par. 11). He was born in Sarajevo and came to America as part of a journalism exchange program. He was stranded in this country in 1992 on a tourist visa when civil war broke out in his country (Milofsky par. 2). Hemon wasted no time in mastering the English language, becoming a successful writer in English within six years. "When I came to America, I was already a writer, already published in Bosnia, I was planning to go back, I had no choice but to stay here after the civil war, so I enrolled at Northwestern University in a master's program and studied American literature. I read everything I could find in English, Twain, Henry James, Hemingway" (Hemon qtd. in Milofsky par. 4). Hemon has also managed to find his comfort zone here in Chicago; perhaps living away from his homeland makes it easier to look back, to remember. Hemon has made Chicago his home: "It's great, not just because it's the second largest Bosnian city in the world, but because here everything is right out there in the open, you can't hide things in Chicago. The conflict, even the violence between people. It's a very honest place, a tough place, but an honest place. I wouldn't want to live anywhere else in America" (Hemon qtd. in Milofsky par.10). His stories carry a personal message far beyond reflecting on the political and historical upheaval in the former Yugoslavia. According to Harrison, "Hemon says the move to America 'amplified' his childhood memories" (par. 3). Each one of the characters in his stories carries a fragment of the pain that comes with knowing true evil exists, and that it always will.

Hemon's story "Islands" gives us a glimpse of a young boy's first encounter with a world far beyond his understanding. He tries to imagine and make sense of Uncle Julius' anger and pain, a pain he never knew existed. Is Hemon struggling to make sense of the turmoil he left behind? Is he haunted by the memory of his Uncle Julius perhaps more than he cares to admit? In Jenifer Berman's article for *BOMB* magazine, she asks Hemon about his particular style of writing, "Many of your stories like 'Islands,' 'Alphonse Kauders,' and 'A Coin'are structurally disjointed or fragmented. Seeing you're a native of Sarajevo, people may want to suggest that this refers to the factious [sic] political and cultural situation in your homeland. Is this the case" (par. 5)? Hemon maintains his stories are not a monument to his country's past, that there is pain and suffering everywhere, that loss will always be a part of life regardless of any great tragedy. "To say that the fragmented structure of my stories is due to the breakup of the Soviet Union, and consequently, the breakup of the world that was organized around a USA-USSR binary - so many people around the word have witnessed fragmentation" (qtd. in Berman par. 6). In "Islands," the reader is captured immediately by the story of Uncle Julius, told through the eyes of an innocent boy. Loss is amplified when seen through the eyes of a child; there is no understanding and no going back. Hemon reflects:

> Something is always forever gone, but on occasion you get something in return. In fact, most things are forever gone, once they are gone. I guess one of the human instincts necessary for survival makes you somehow cover the losses; maybe it's the same instinct that prevents you from being able to imagine your own death. Were we able to imagine the nothingness at the end, or the suffering just before it, we would be paralyzed. So living with a loss is necessary. (qtd. in Berman par. 13)

Clearly, Hemon's readers can see a hint of Uncle Julius here; there is no escaping loss and the pain that comes with it. Hemon says, "the war in Bosnia made me angry, injustice makes me angry" (qtd. in Kaminski par. 6). Loss prepares everyone for that which cannot be changed; it is the cycle of life, and there is no hidden meaning. According to Bob Corbett,

> Hemon's world is not one of sweetness, light and ease. Rather his world is a dark harsh place where the greatest dangers facing us are humans. There is a strong echo of Jean-Paul Sartre's "Hell is other people," but perhaps even more terrifying since these others are not just the individual "others" of Existentialism, but the "others" as organized state and other institutional sources of hatred and evil. (par. 14)

Hemon is clearly no stranger to loss and despair: "I'm everyone in my books. That's the whole fucking point" (qtd in Harrison par. 21).

At the beginning of "Islands," a young boy takes a trip on a boat with his parents, to the island of Mljet. "The story is simple and could be any child's vacation. What is different is the language in which the author relates the story. It is heavily loaded with pessimist and negative images which are not typical of a nine year old vacationer" (Corbett par 7). The boy is dreading having to spend time visiting relatives in a strange place. He is angry to be away from his familiar surroundings. In telling this part of the story, the narrator says:

> From behind one of the petrified islands, shaven by a wildfire, a gust of waylaying wind attacked us, snatched the straw hat off my head and tossed it into the sea. I watched the hat teetering away, my hair pressed against my skull like a helmet, and I understood that I would never, ever see it again. I wished to go back in time and hold on to my hat before the surreptitious whirlwind hit me in the face. The ship sped away from the hat and the hat transformed into a beige stain on the snot-green sea. I began crying and sobbed myself to sleep. When I woke up the ship was docked and the island was Mljet. (Hemon 4)

Here, the narrator has a sense of what is yet to come. He is very young, and losing something he really likes is hard. He does not want to let go, but if he can only go back and change that moment, he can hold on, and not lose it. The boy is well on his way to losing that special innocence only a child has. He will leave Mljet wiser, and perhaps a tad more mature.

Aleksandar Hemon and his family migrated to Bosnia from the Ukraine, and a member of the Ukrainian branch of the family, Uncle Julius, resided there on the island (Wilson par. 8). The author is giving the reader a glimpse into his childhood memories, his people, and their real lives. Hemon initially lets the reader see the softer side of the main character, Uncle Julius, who greets his nephew with a big, sloppy kiss. Soon after, we learn that Uncle Julius is a stern, no-nonsense man who has seen a lifetime of pain and suffering. As a young adolescent, he spent time in a labor camp in Siberian Arkhangelsk, in a war-torn country under Stalin's rule. He witnessed severe cruelty and even death; each day was a fight for survival. He insists on telling his stories, obviously still haunted by his dreadful memories. At one point, the narrator says, "So that's how it is, he said, it's all one pest after another. Life is nothing if not a succession of evils, he said, and then stopped and took a pebble out of his left sandal. He showed the puny pebble to us, as if holding irrefutable evidence that he was right" (6). Uncle Julius sees his young nephew as small, fragile and vulnerable, so unprepared for life's unexpected obstacles. He finds himself annoyed at the boy's pampered, childish manner. After all, at his age, he was already a man, no time for silly play or even laughter. He did not have parents that coddled him; they did not make him feel safe from the cruel world. How can his nephew ever survive in the

world if he does not toughen up? This young man is in for a rude awakening, a life lesson he will not be likely to forget in the years to come.

Mljet, the island where this story takes place, is certainly not lacking a history of its own. During a family outing, while walking down a winding road, Uncle Julius decides to tell his visitors an interesting yet hair-raising story. Apparently, the people of Mljet once walked around in tall rubber boots in order to avoid being bitten by poisonous snakes. Those who were bitten by the poisonous snakes managed to survive by quickly cutting off their bitten flesh. Soon, the villagers discover that mongoose can kill snakes, so they foolishly overpopulate the area with mongoose only to learn that they kill way more than just snakes. They solved one problem and created another, and so this is life. Hemon, Daniel Davies tells us, "uses the struggle between snakes and mongooses to gesture towards the ethnic conflict in his homeland" (par. 5). Life is a series of unplanned disasters, one after the other. These are the words of a man that has lived expecting the worst from life. His philosophy of life is simple; only the strong will survive, and the struggle will continue for as long as they live. Uncle Julius clearly sees his young nephew was weak, perhaps even useless: "Look at yourself," Uncle Julius said. "You don't want to drink the water! What would you do if you were so thirsty that you were nearly crazy and having one thought only: water, water! and there's no water. How old are you?" (9). This suggests his lack of patience with the boy. He obviously wants the boy to appreciate what he has, what is so readily available to him without any effort. How different this little squeamish boy is from himself, how so very different a life; if only he could have had a day in this boy's life, if only he could have known this kind of childhood, a different kind of introduction to life.

Throughout the story, Uncle Julius continues to talk about his past, and perhaps in some way he is trying to prepare his nephew for life. Once a young gravedigger in the Siberian camp, he certainly had seen more than his share of horror, and through witnessing death, he learned about life. Uncle Julius remembers a boy named Vanyka from the Arkhangelsk camp. Vanyka had put up a tremendous fight; he was relentless and knew what he had to do to stay alive. Uncle Julius tells of the boy's ordeal:

> "He survived by filching food from the weaker ones, by lending himself to different protectors and bribing guards. Once – I think he drank some vodka with the criminals – he started shouting: 'Thank you, Vozhd, for my happy childhood!' At the top of his lungs: 'Thank you, Stalin, for my happy childhood!' And they beat him with gun butts and took him away." (10)

This boy was Uncle Julius's hero, not a fictitious super-boy from a storybook, but a real human boy. He watched as Vanyka's spirit prevailed, only to be crushed to pieces. By the end of his ordeal in the camps, Vanyka no longer cared what happened to him; he wanted to die. After a gruesome escape attempt and then recapture, Vanyka is abused, beaten, left for dead, and young Julius finds him, still barely alive, but begging to die, on a pile of corpses ready for burial. Vanyka has accepted his fate; he will never be free. There was no going back now, no salvation for a boy that had fought so hard to live. Vanyka will find peace and freedom in death. Near the end of telling Vanyka's story to the narrator and his parents, the narrator states, "Uncle Julius fell reticent and no one dared to say anything." The narrator continues, "I asked: 'So what happened to him?' 'He was killed,' he said, making a motion with his hand, as if thrusting me aside, out of his sight" (12). What a painful memory, that horrible moment that silenced a life. Uncle Julius has carried this tragic memory for so long; it is a story that needs to be told. Perhaps, telling his memories, he can begin to heal, but he will never forget those images of Vanyka. There was no forgetting, there will be no healing, just acceptance. Did Uncle Julius need to find a way to forgive himself; did his hand end a life that day?

According to Scott Trudell, Vanyka's story is one of the most crucial aspects of the narrator's maturation process. The political context is made clear to the reader, the way that communism, the government, and society at large play a key role in a child's loss of innocence (par. 10). The labor camp described by Uncle Julius was part of the gulag, the network of prison camps that arose in the Soviet Union after 1929. Millions of innocent people were incarcerated in the gulag, serving sentences of five to twenty years of hard labor. Prisoners in these camps worked outdoors and in mines in arid regions and in the

Arctic Circle, without adequate clothing, tools, shelter, food, or even clean water. It is not known how many prisoners suffered from starvation, illness, violence, and cold. Many prisoners, including women and children, died. More people passed through the gulag, for a much longer period of time, than through Nazi concentration camps, yet the gulag is still not nearly as well known (Hosford, Kachurin, and Lamont 3). How can any person, young or old, even begin to understand this kind of relentless evil? Hemon, through the characters in his story "Islands," can only reflect on the aftermath of unexplainable loss that can either make or break a person.

At one point, the boy's mother or Aunt Lyudmila (not clear in the story) asks Uncle Julius to stop torturing the boy with his stories. Uncle Julius is adamant; he feels the boy should know about life. Despite the fact that the boy is traveling with both his parents, we never hear the boy's father speak. So the only voices in this story are those of Uncle Julius, Aunt Lyudmila, and the boy's mother. The boy is even hesitant to take a walk on his own; he starts to imagine the mongoose violently killing a snake. One day, when the boy goes to the beach with his parents, he is asked to sit still and wait for permission to swim. He is constantly being protected by his parents, he is their only child, and he is only in his comfort zone when they are near him. Uncle Julius is the voice of doom; he is the only adult that will tell it like it is, no matter who likes it or not. He feels that it is important that the boy learn early on life's harsh lessons. One lesson comes to our young narrator like a scene right out of a horror movie. According to Davies, this part of the story is both beautiful and terrifying in its precision, and "one can sense Hemon's satisfaction in the central simile" (par. 4). The ultimate defeat and the thrill of victory are made clear to the reader. Two enemies are facing each other, stopping at nothing, and determined to destroy each other. Perhaps Hemon is making a connection here to the battles that men fight, the need to win, the obsession with power, and the need to control those that are weak? The narrator describes the following:

> Then the man let the dog go and there was, for just a moment, hissing and wheezing, growling and shrieking. The man yanked the dog back and the mongoose lay on its back, showing its teeth in a useless scowl, the paws spread, as if it was harmless now, and the eyes were wide open, the irises stretched to the edge of the pupils, flabbergasted. There was a hole in its chest – the dog seemed to have bitten off a part of it – and I saw the heart, like a tiny tomato, pulsating, as if hiccupping, slower and slower, with slightly longer moments between the throbs, and it simply stopped. (15-16)

Hemon continues to paint a picture of realism throughout his story. The descriptions of his characters focus on their less than appealing qualities. Trudell notes the allegory, "the dog's 'pink-and brown gums' and 'saliva' are sharply reminiscent of Uncle Julius' toothless pink, stained gums and his slobbery kiss" (par.12). In some way, this horrific reality brings to life what Uncle Julius has been saying all along in this story. No doubt this is the survival of the fittest; the dog has killed its enemy in a vicious attack. He did this by going at the mongoose with courage, straight to the heart. At that moment, this dog knew his only chance of survival was to destroy or be destroyed, to protect his master from this dangerous intruder. The dog took his chances; he followed his canine instincts and won the battle. Can the boy protect himself like the dog he saw? Can he have the courage and the strength? What saved Uncle Julius? Can anyone really be saved from their own fears?

The boy's fears are about to intensify, while boating with the family to a site on one of the island's lakes.

> "These lakes," Uncle Julius said, "used to be a pirate haven in the sixteenth century. They'd hoard the loot and bring hostages here and kill them and torture them – in this very building –if they didn't get the ransom. They say that this place is still haunted by ghosts of three children they hung on meat hooks because their parents didn't pay the ransom." (18).

Here, it seemed that Uncle Julius was trying to amuse himself by telling local ghost stories while steering the family around on the lake. It is another terrible story about children dying; this man was hell-bent on scaring his nephew. How unimaginable that those parents could not protect their children from the evil pirates. It is evident that Uncle Julius wants his nephew to understand, no one

can protect anyone all of the time. There is no time like the present to start learning about life, and the evils that exist. Uncle Julius has seen the worst of life; he is a man who no longer dreams of a better tomorrow. Once hope is gone, everything is gone. It is unlikely that the narrator will ever forget the stories he heard from his Uncle Julius; however, they may have been what defined him as a man. Perhaps he even strived to avoid ever becoming as cynical as his Uncle Julius had become. One story sums it all up; Uncle Julius tells of the time he was a young college student in Moscow. During his biology class, he meets the oldest man in the world; the man was no longer able to walk. He had reverted back to his infancy, crying non-stop and holding on to his favorite stuffed toy. Uncle Julius concludes,

> "I figured out then that life is a circle, you get back right where you started if you get to be a hundred and fifty-eight years old. It's like a dog chasing its own tail, all is for naught. We live and live, and in the end we're just like this boy [he pointed at me], knowing nothing, and remembering nothing. You might as well stop living now, my son. You might just as well stop, for nothing will change." (19)

Uncle Julius believes that no matter what, you will return to the very beginning. He is a true pessimist; everything will only get worse as you get older. You will be back to where you started from, helpless, unaware of the world around you. Left to depend on others to do the simplest things, you are a child again. Maybe, in the end, and only then, there will be innocence again.

After the experiences on this trip, the boy is left with a strange uneasiness; he is rather shaken. He was appalled at almost everything he saw, his Uncle Julius' gummy smile, Aunt Lyudmila's peasant appearance, and not to mention the slug near the water tank! The boy was made uncomfortable by any physical contact with his aunt and uncle. Uncle Julius did not help matters by telling the most horrid stories, causing the boy to become more fearful each day. In the end, he comes to realize that what his Uncle Julius was trying to tell him is true. Upon arriving home on the mainland, they found their neighbor had died suddenly, leaving their home unattended. As a result, the plants had withered and died, and the cat was crazed with hunger and thirst. Life, just like Uncle Julius had tried to tell him, is a disaster waiting to happen, and there is nothing he or anyone can do about it. No matter what people do in life, it will all be for nothing. Like the plant, and all that is nurtured, we will someday wither away and die. What is loved will slip away at any given moment, perhaps even lost in a fit of rage like the cat in the story. We are here in this life to take what we can; there is little time to waste. Once it is gone, it is gone forever; such is the circle of life, just like that favorite straw hat that floated away in the vast sea of nowhere. In an article by Mathew Kaminski, Hemon tells his interviewer "Loss is not something you can dismiss or forget about" (par. 3). He takes his readers to a familiar place, to a memory when the world abruptly changed, and innocence was lost forever.

In Roy Swanson's article, "Pär Lagerkvist: Five Early Works," he writes that Lagerkvist was born in Vaxjo, a southern Swedish town in the Kronoberg district of Småland province (par. 2). According to Swanson, Lagerkvist's father was a foreman in a railroad station yard. Details of his father's work appear in stories like "Braekman Blome" and "Father and I." Both of his parents were devout Christians, but their persuasion was marked more by the solace of the gospel than by the rigidity of the Law. Ultimately, Lagerkvist abandoned his faith (par. 3). His childhood memories seem to come from a dark place that haunted the writer throughout his lifetime.

In Lagerkvist's "Father and I," our narrator, a young boy, also struggles with the reality of a changing world, his world as he knows it. It all started so innocently. Who would have thought that an ordinary day could bring such changes? Here, he shares his thoughts as he and his father walk along the railway, through the forest: "We didn't make any great to-do about this going to listen to the birds, as though it were something extra special or wonderful; we were sound, sensible people, Father and I, brought up with nature and used to it. There was nothing to make a fuss about. It was just that it was Sunday afternoon and Father was free" (Lagerkvist 30).The boy is trying to act older than his age, not come across as an anxious child who can't wait to go out and spend a day in the woods with his father. He is trying to contain his excitement, a day his busy father has set aside to spend just with him,

no one else. Scobbie's overview explains, "The story is a study in contrasts, creating tensions between two different worlds, the smiling daylight walk representing a rural idyll with ancient beliefs, and the dark and terrifying homeward journey adumbrating a dangerous unknown outside world soon to be experienced by the boy" (par. 4). What starts out as a typical carefree day is about to change into a nightmare that alters a young mind forever. As the boy and his father start on their journey, he says, "We wanted to get to the river, for it was more beautiful there than anywhere else; there was something special about it, as farther upstream it flowed up past where Father lived as a child. We usually liked to come as far as this before we turned back, and today, too, we got there after a good walk. It was near the next station, but we didn't go so far. Father just looked to see that the semaphore was right – he thought of everything" (31). The boy admires the beauty of his surroundings, the place where his father spent his childhood. At this moment, he feels safe in the presence of his father. His father is his protector, and he is always looking out for their welfare. He feels confident, that this is how it will always be. This is the only reality that he knows: safe, secure and protected. The boy feels a strong connection with his father; they are brought closer together by these lovely grounds, by the glory of such a beautiful day. Jeff Polet concludes,

> Lagerkvist consistently employs the metaphors of sight and eyes to explore the problem of spiritual acuity. The eyes of his characters reveal not only the death of their souls, but also reveal a failure of apperception. Lagerkvist lets us know that only those who have eyes to see can do so, that life opens up its meaning when the soul has opened itself. (par. 43)

The surrounding darkness comes alive, revealing an inescapable dangerous world that lies ahead. To remain oblivious of this danger robs the mind of a reality that can lead to acceptance.

Our narrator goes on; it was beginning to get dark. The woods were changed – it wasn't dark there yet, but almost. He says, "We quickened our steps. Mother would be getting anxious and waiting with supper. She was always afraid something was going to happen. But it hadn't; it had been a lovely day, nothing had happened that shouldn't. We were content with everything" (32). Here, we learn that the boy's mother tends to be rather the nervous, worrier type. Perhaps the boy is overly protected by his mother? Early in the story, we learn that this father is not always free to spend time with him. Most of the boy's time is probably spent with his mother. She worries that something will happen even when the boy is with his father. This may explain why the narrator is easily spooked by the darkness and fear of all that is unknown. He tells us:

> We went on, Father was as calm as he walked there in the darkness, with even strides, not speaking, thinking to himself. I couldn't understand how he could be so calm when it was so murky. I looked around in fear. Nothing but darkness everywhere. I hardly dared take a deep breath, for then you got so much darkness inside you, and that was dangerous. I thought it meant you would die soon. I remember quite well that that's what I thought then. (32)

The boy is a typical youngster; he looks to his father for protection and guidance. He is afraid of the dark because he fears the unknown; his only comfort during this excursion is the presence of his father. His imagination has taken over, he wonders what creatures lurk in the endless darkness, and he fears for his safety. Every shape and sound is a new experience that can transform itself into his worst nightmares. Once the darkness is upon them, they will be swallowed by the night, and there is no turning back. This child's fear is rather overwhelming, and it has paralyzed him. Irene Scobbie observes, "It is typical of Lagerkvist that he can introduce natural objects and then in simple, deliberately naïve language turn them into symbols for disturbing emotional and philosophical problems. The realistic childhood setting suddenly opens into a yawning gap between two generations and an angst-ridden world void of religious belief" (par.7). The boy reaches out to his father: "Hugging close to Father, I whispered, 'Father, why is it so horrible when it's dark?' 'No my boy, it's not horrible,' he said, taking me by the hand. 'Yes, Father, it is.' 'No, my child, you mustn't think that. Not when we know there is a God" (33). If only he can draw comfort from his father's words,

but how can he know for sure that there is a God when he can't even see him? The boy's father is obviously a man who believes that God will protect them no matter what. How can he expect his young son to draw comfort from this? Even as adults, most of us do not have that kind of unwavering faith.

Polet tells us the following about the author's similar works: "Lagerkvist takes the theme of how isolation from God creates profound social alienation to its limits" (par. 53). We all fear the unknown, we fear what we cannot see and understand, and most of all, we fear death. Perhaps the father has long forgotten what it's like to be young, naïve, and impressionable. If only he had reached over and hugged his son at that moment, the boy's fears would have vanished. As the boy reflects on his feelings, he says,

> I felt so lonely and forsaken. It was so strange that only I was afraid, not Father, that we didn't think the same. And strange that he didn't help me and stop me from being afraid. Not even what he said about God helped me. I thought he too was horrible. It was horrible that he was everywhere here in the darkness, down under the trees, in the telegraph poles which rumbled – that must be he – everywhere. And yet you could never see him. (33)

Here we see the boy question the existence of God. How can he really be everywhere? How can that be possible? As children, we can believe in what we see and touch. Images of things like Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny are familiar, they have a face. When it comes to God, we have the image of a man dying on a cross, not easy to understand. Even as adults, we struggle to always believe, we question, then we retreat back to what we are taught. God is always with you, he never abandons his children. But maybe, just maybe, he sometimes forgets you are there? How can we know with any certainty about anything? Swanson gives a description of the author's beliefs:

> Early in his life, Pär Lagerkvist became aware of his incapacity for upholding and adhering to the stern and uncompromising religion of his forebears and of his consequent exclusion from the security and meaning that their religion provided. His estrangement from religious faith engendered his humanism, and his need for the security and meaning denied him produced his anguish. His humanistic inclination and his experience of anguish constitute the theme of "Father and I." (par.7)

Some readers may conclude that Lagerkvist has spent a lifetime trying to come to terms with his inability to believe in a higher power. As he rejects the faith of his father, he begins the long journey of finding answers to that which can't be easily explained.

Later in the story, the author shares a critical moment that reflects the narrator's fears, the endless emptiness that comes with the unknown:

> Then as we were rounding a bend, we suddenly heard a mighty roar behind us! We were awakened out of our thoughts in alarm. Father pulled me down on to the embankment, down into the abyss, held me there. Then the train tore past, a black train. All the lights in the carriages were out, and it was going at a frantic speed. What sort of train was it? There wasn't one due now! We gazed at it in terror. The fire blazed in the huge engine as they shoveled in coal; sparks whirled out into the night. It was terrible. The driver stood there in the light of the fire, pale, motionless, his features as though turned to stone. Father did not recognize him, didn't know who he was. The man just stared straight ahead, as though intent only on rushing into the darkness, far into the darkness that had no end. (33-34)

The black train in the story represents the unknown future: a future with bright sunny days and inevitable darkness, a time when his father will no longer be a constant presence for him. He will have to face his fears and become a man, just like his father. The engineer represents the father, who at that moment is not connecting with his son; he is a stranger. The father may have even forgotten what it was like to be afraid of the monsters in the closet. In some way, the father does not recognize himself anymore; he does not see he is letting his boy down. Like the speeding train, life passes quickly, and we struggle to keep up. He is forgetting the things that matter, and plowing through life without stopping to take notice of the little things we no

longer deem important. When we are young, we respond to what we see, what we can feel and touch. Faith is a part of the darkness; it is the unknown and way beyond the comprehension of a young boy. The black train can also represent the night, which will come and go quickly and all will be bright again. The engineer can also represent God, who is present, but he does not look their way, he does not see them in the darkness. How can he protect them if he does not even see them? He is leaving quickly without looking; without stopping, he is gone.

The narrator continues, "I sensed what it meant: it was the anguish that was to come, the unknown, all that Father knew nothing about, that he wouldn't be able to protect me against." The boy sadly concludes, "That was how this world, this life, would be for me; not like Father's where everything was secure and certain. It wasn't a real world, a real life. It just hurtled, blazing, into the darkness that had no end" (34). This passage reflects the narrator coming to terms with his experience. He knows that he will one day stand alone, there is no avoiding it. Father will no longer be able to share his words of wisdom with him. He needs to believe now, in something, perhaps maybe even in God. In order to face the dark uncertain future, somehow, he needs to find a way to have faith and hope; he needs to believe in himself. His father's world is foreign to him now, like the darkness he encountered that horrible night, like the moment he was robbed of his childhood innocence, that defining moment when a boy is one step closer to becoming a man. Here again, Swanson gives us a clear insight into the author's philosophy, "Without a god of light or a savior to atone for the evil of life, Lagerkvist saw only endless darkness and the responsibility of an individual to save his own or her own self, not as an immortal but as a vitally mortal self. 'Father and I' presents a nine-year old boy's initial awareness of this lonely fearful struggle"(par. 10).

This is a story of a young boy becoming a man, perhaps far too soon, and the moment that he realizes the world is never going to be a safe haven, regardless of any imposed religious teachings. Novelist and freelance writer Catherine Dominic writes, "Laden with telling imagery and symbolism, 'Father and I' reveals a perspective that, while stark, is full of complexity. The story should not simply be noticed in passing as an example of Lagerkvist's existential angst" (par. 2). Regardless of the dark mood of this story, Lagerkvist strikes a chord with his readers, a recollection of a childhood fear, and those monsters that never go away. The author does allow for some hope, but only that which comes from within a person's own strength. Adele Bloch gives an interesting analogy with the following:

> For him (Lagerkvist), the Schopenhauer-Freudian concept is valid: man is the author of his own fate, since whatever happens to the individual comes from within. Yet man needs a sense of purpose. Even if there is no real proof of the existence of God or Ideal Love or any ultimate truth, man will create a pattern, or reinterpret life according to a superior order, for he cannot tolerate the utter nihilism of the arbitrary inherent in his condition. (par. 1)

In both "Islands," and "Father and I," we see how childhood experiences have lasting consequences that can alter the way we live our lives, and how the interactions with those close to us can change who we become, and how we perceive life. In "Islands," we see how a man's lost childhood and grueling past robbed him of a happy, fulfilling life. Left with haunting memories, he is unable to forget and move on. In "Father and I," a young boy is unable to connect with his father in a fearful situation, and he is lost in a sea of confusion that leads him to question his beliefs. He is also forced to accept that he will only have himself to rely on, and he will have to find his own answers to those lingering unanswered questions. The boy's father tries to avoid an in-depth discussion about the dangers of life with his son. He gives him one simple response: believe in God, and all will be okay. In "Islands," the opposite is true; the uncle spares no details about his life, as he believes the boy should know the horrors that life can bring. He reveals the monsters in his life, and he does not hold back. Uncle Julius wants the boy to be a man, to face his fears, unlike the father in "Father and I," who only wants to instill in his son that there is nothing to be afraid of. We see the obvious generation gap between the uncle and his nephew and the father and the son. Perhaps both men had completely different life experiences as youngsters. One holds on to his faith, and the other has lost it forever. In both stories,

we see the fear of the unknown, the reluctance to accept strange surroundings, and the realization that life as we know it can change without warning, regardless of one's beliefs. Life can change everything; even those we love can change forever. In the end, we stand alone. Both Aleksandar Hemon and Pär Lagerkvist have revealed to their readers a true dedication to the memories behind their stories, to that which is suddenly lost forever: a child's innocence.

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Evaluation: *This paper features extremely competent, professional writing and synthesis of sources. Juanita has gone well beyond the requirements of the assignment, in terms of incorporating a diversity of research sources--and finding sources on these two stories is not easy. She has written an outstanding, well-informed paper, providing thorough critical interpretations of the works and a clear view into their biographical origins.*

Tillie Olsen's "I Stand Here Ironing": A Story of Resilience

Kimberly Hayes
Course: English 102 (Composition)
Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

Assignment: *Write a literary research paper incorporating effective use of at least seven secondary sources.*

"Only help her to know--help make it so there is cause for her to know--that she is more than this dress on the ironing board, helpless before the iron" (Olsen 345). In this final passage of Tillie Olsen's "I Stand Here Ironing," a heartbreakingly powerful story of the inexhaustible battle and somber triumph of the lives of one mother and her daughter during The Great Depression, Emily's mother reveals in a matter-of-fact tone to an imagined school official, and in the end, to herself, the story of her daughter's distressing childhood. "I Stand Here Ironing" unfolds as a series of recollections while Emily's mother performs the seemingly endless task of ironing. Kathy Wolfe, a literary critic, says, "The mother, as she carries out the careful yet drudging chore of ironing, also carries on the story of her oldest daughter's neglected childhood, periodically asking questions of the non-existent (and unspoken) school official who wishes to 'help' the girl" (par. 10). Olsen's stirring story gives the working-class woman a resounding voice of conviction and independence, perhaps for the first time in history. Elisabeth Piedmont-Marton states, "The story is one of the best examples in literature—and certainly one of the first—to offer readers a glimpse into the lives of working-class women and families from a woman's perspective" (par. 2). Tillie Olsen shares with the reader her own struggles as a young factory worker, through the lives of Emily and her mother, as Piedmont-Marton writes, "Olsen spent many of her working years in factories, and as a young girl worked as a tie presser, laboring long hours with hot and dangerous equipment under deplorable working conditions" (par. 4). Olsen's "I Stand Here Ironing" is a starkly honest portrayal of an impoverished, overworked, teenaged mother and her dreadfully neglected daughter during The Great Depression, and how their resilient spirits ultimately raised them up from their dire circumstances to become true survivors.

Tillie Olsen, the author of "I Stand Here Ironing," tackles the subjects of poverty, motherhood, illness, and the countless other obstacles that keep women from reaching their full creative potential (Wolfe par. 1). She draws from her own life experiences and uses her female voice to expose the socioeconomic bases of her characters' personal and professional limitations, and the psychological struggles that young, creative women face as a result of these hardships, as Wolfe says, "Though Olsen is no longer 'silenced' she has experienced the circumstances that keep people from realizing their full potential" (par. 5). Olsen's use of the metaphorical iron

Student Reflections on Writing: Kimberly Hayes

I have been a songwriter for many years. When I am writing a song, I am always looking for a hook, a theme, a catch phrase, a certain angle that will pull the listener in, as well as bring focus and continuity to the song. I apply this same approach to research and essay writing. I gather a large volume of pieces, such as essays, reviews, and other related information about the particular subject, much like a disassembled puzzle, then I spend time with the materials, and I search for a fresh perspective or a hook to join all the pieces of the puzzle together. I love this process, and I spend a lot of time reading and writing and rewriting. I look for several people to proof my drafts, such as friends and family members, for often they see things I no longer can see in my own work. Writing is a challenging and rewarding process for me, and I look forward to honing my craft with the tools Harper has given me.

is reflective of her own young adulthood as a tie presser. Olsen herself understood the meaning of hard work, low wages, and less than optimal employment conditions. She uses the iron literally to indicate the endless chores Emily's mother had to face daily, and her use of the iron figuratively suggests the constant weight of uncontrollable and unfavorable life circumstances these women in the story had to endure. Piedmont-Marton writes, "The iron comes to represent, then, the pressures of outside forces and the accidents of history into which we are born, such as poverty, divorce, illness, and prejudice" (par. 4).

According to the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary,* the definition of resilience is,"the ability to become strong, healthy, or successful again after something bad happens; it is an ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change" (n.p.). Emily's mother's resilient spirit is shown to the reader when she is faced with multiple adversities. She was a teenaged mother whose husband abandoned her and their 8-month old daughter during a desperate time in American history. Emily's mother was forced to work outside the home and had to leave her infant daughter in the care of their neighbor, her only childcare option at the time. Emily's mother revealed: "I was nineteen. It was the pre-relief, pre-WPA world of the depression. I would start running as soon as I got off the streetcar, running up the stairs, the place smelling sour, and awake or asleep to startle awake, when she saw me she would break into a clogged weeping that could not be comforted, a weeping I can hear yet" (Olsen 341). Emily's mother understood that she was not providing her daughter with the care that she needed, but she was essentially alone, exhausted, and doing her best despite her limitations and the obstacles she faced, as Helen Pike Bauer says, "She is acutely aware of the brutal restrictions on her life" (par. 3). She shared to herself and with the unnamed school official that the cries of her daughter still haunt her today, revealing to the reader that this was not a careless and unemotional choice to leave Emily, but rather a necessity. According to the PBS series titled *Surviving the Dust Bowl*, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) was not in full swing until 1938, and even at the peak of its effectiveness, only 13.5 percent of women were WPA employees. The majority of the women workers were assigned to lower-paying jobs (par. 3). Single mothers of divorce were primarily excluded from other state and federal aid programs, including the "mother's pension" programs that existed during the depression ("How Welfare Began in the United States" par. 12), further restricting Emily's mother's ability to properly care for herself and her daughter.

As Emily's mother continued to contemplate the dismal details of her early years with her daughter, she remained ironing, only stopping to tend to one of her younger children's needs. This act of ironing is representative of Emily's mother's life, riddled with disruptions, obstacles, and adversities. Her thoughts, her dreams, and her goals were interrupted by teenage pregnancy, abandonment, marriage, child-rearing, poverty, and illness. Piedmont-Marton states, "Economically alone and lonely, overworked, tired, she gave Emily all she could" (par. 3). Life had hardened Emily's mother. She plodded forward, as an act of survival, recalling, throughout the story, the painful memories of her early years with Emily, but knowing she had no other choice (Frye par. 4).

Emily's mother struggled to find quality employment and quality childcare for herself and Emily. This began a long pattern of leaving Emily with less than satisfactory caregivers, eventually giving way to a cold and hands-off approach to mothering. Here, Emily's mother explained, "It took a long time to raise the money for her fare back. Then she got chicken pox and I had to wait longer. When she finally came, I hardly knew her, walking quick and nervous like her father, looking like her father, thin, and dressed in a shoddy red that yellowed her skin and glared at the pockmarks. All the baby loveliness gone" (Olsen 341). At this point in the story, Emily's mother felt that sending her daughter away to live with her father's family was the best choice she could make for her daughter, but Emily was clearly neglected during her stay; she was sickened with chicken pox, dressed poorly, and was beginning to show physical and emotional signs of neglect. Emily had begun to see the world as unreliable. Even at a young age, Emily's experiences taught her to trust no one. Robert J. Kloss writes, "From Emily's vantage point, the world itself is simply not to be trusted—ever: nothing, no one is reliable, can be counted on to be there, consistently through time" (par. 9). Emily's mother

was reminded of her estranged husband as Emily bore some resemblance to him, adding to their dysfunctional dynamic and Emily's neglect. Kloss states, "It is a reasonable inference to discern in the child's resemblance to the abandoning father the source of mother's hostility toward her, displaced from him" (par. 29).

Later, Emily's mother enrolled her two-year-old daughter in nursery school, and she said,

> And even without knowing, I knew. I knew the teacher that was evil because all these years it has curdled into my memory, the little boy hunched in the corner, her rasp, "why aren't you outside, because Alvin hits you? That's no reason, go out, scaredy." I knew Emily hated it even if she did not clutch and implore 'don't go Mommy' like the other children, mornings. (Olsen 341)

Revealed in this passage, Emily was shuffled to yet a third place in her short lifespan. Both Emily and her mother began to distance themselves emotionally from one another, perhaps as a coping mechanism in order to survive their dire circumstances. Emily's mother demonstrated a clear sense of knowing these people and places were no good for Emily, yet followed through with these decisions in a detached, self-sustaining way. Later in the story, Emily's mother remarried and recalled the multitude of times that she and her new husband often left Emily, now age 5, alone while they went out for the evening. According to Emily's mother, her daughter would plead, "'Can't you go some other time, Mommy, like tomorrow?' she would ask. 'Will it be just a little while you'll be gone? Do you promise?'" (Olsen 342). In this passage, Emily's mother further demonstrates her immature and ill-equipped parenting skills, which cost her young daughter's well-being.

At one point in the monologue, Emily's mother revealed, "Now it is too late, as if she would let me holdher and comfort her like I do the others, I get up and go to her at once at her moan or restless stirring. 'Are you awake, Emily, can I get you something?' And the answer is always the same: 'No, I'm all right, go back to sleep, Mother'" (Olsen 342). Here, Emily had returned back home from a convalescent home after a long struggle with the red measles. She lost a great deal of weight, as the conditions at the home were deplorable. Emily was finally released after eight months with the help of a social worker. The first seven years of Emily's life had been increasingly difficult, both emotionally and physically. Emily had been conditioned, after persistent neglect and abandonment, not to have her needs met by her mother, or any other adult. Emily's withdrawn and sickly features developed into a variety of disorders, including depression, failure to thrive, eating disorders, and separation anxiety (Kloss par. 13). In many respects, Emily's mother was correct in saying, "Now it's too late,"for she had lost Emily to some degree. Although it was commonplace in the 1930s to send children to convalescent homes during illness or a mother's absence, which included a mother's hospital stay during pregnancy and delivery, these abandonments were not without adverse psychological effects for the children left behind. As a result of abandonment, illness, and neglect, Emily was slow to develop physically and emotionally, further alienating her from her peers and her younger siblings. Emily's mother described her daughter by saying, "She does not smile easily, let alone almost always as her brothers and sisters do. Her face is closed and somber, but when she wants, how fluid" (Olsen 341). It is clear that Emily's mother feared her daughter will carry on with the same struggles as she did, and not have a future life of ease or joy. Bauer writes, "But she fears that Emily's life will be simply the grim reprise of her own impoverished existence of struggle, fear, too little time, too little money" (par. 7).

Near the end of "I Stand Here Ironing," a ray of hope shines through this bleak story when Emily's mother recalls how her daughter, now the age of nineteen, developed her comedic stage career. She states,"I think I said once, 'Why don't you do something like this in the school amateur show?' One morning she phoned me at work, hardly understandable through the weeping: 'Mother, I did it. I won, I won: they gave me first prize; they clapped and clapped and wouldn't let me go'" (Olsen 344). In this quote, Emily's mother encouraged her daughter to share her talent for impersonations and pantomime at the school amateur show. Prior to this pivotal moment, Emily had been unpopular, introverted, and scholastically delayed, the characteristic results of life marred with neglect. After her mother encouraged

her, possibly for the first time, Emily responded with the most astounding and promising success, and Emily's mother shared,

> She began to be asked to perform at other high schools, even in colleges, then at city and statewide affairs. The first one we went to, I only recognized her that first moment when thin, shy, she almost drowned herself into the curtains. Then: Was this Emily? The control, the command, the convulsing and deadly clowning, the spell, then the roaring, stamping audience, unwilling to let this rare and precious laughter out of their lives. (Olsen 344)

In this most surprising twist, Emily clearly was excelling at her comedic craft, and as a result of her newly revealed talent, she gained attention from her peers, the school, the community and even her mother. However, even as Emily's mother mentally reviewed her daughter's triumphant success, in the story, she was still ironing, methodically, without pause, thus not allowing Emily the full attention she so desperately deserved. Whether out of habit, survival, or fear, Emily's mother continued plodding forth with her endless tasks, and perhaps Emily, too, found comfort and acceptance in her mother's familiar routine.

Emily's distinctive introversion and grim past provided her with a catalyst in developing her keen observations about the world around her, giving way to a talent for comedic impersonations. According to the research study, "The Big Five Personality Traits of Professional Comedians Compared to Amateur Comedians, Comedy Writers, and College Students," conducted by Gil Greengross and Geoffrey Miller, it was suggested that most comedians were considerably more introverted than actors and other types of entertainers. The study also found that comedians often masked their real life by presenting a different onstage persona, revealing that in general, comedians were largely untrusting of the people that surrounded them (82). It is not a surprise then that Emily was tapping into her murky past and transforming it into a powerful device that provided her with a means to finally get her needs met. Kloss writes, "In her public career, then, she appears to be imitating her younger sister's method of finding favor with the mother" (par. 37). Although Emily's humor in many ways was darkly tainted with cynicism and sarcasm (Frye par. 12), the adoration Emily received from these performances most likely fulfilled her emotionally in a way that she was never fulfilled as a child. Emily, for the first time in her life, was receiving praise, attention and acceptance. Olsen, as seen in her other works, provides the reader with a spark of hope in an otherwise sad and dreary story; despite the pained origin of that hope, she shares a positive message of survival and resilience emanating from her characters, ultimately raising them up and out of the darkness. Wolfe writes, "...it is that kernel of hope in her own life that extends to become central to her stories, surrounded though that kernel may be by apparent despair" (par. 5).

The metaphorical use of the iron throughout this story takes on a multitude of meanings. Emily's mother recalled a heap of disheveled memories of her and her daughter's life together, as she simultaneously ironed her wrinkled pile of laundry, a seemingly ceaseless task. This suggests that Emily's mother realized she would never truly understand how her daughter's neglected childhood has scarred and shaped her. She symbolically tried to iron the wrinkles out of Emily's past, a task that appears futile. Wolfe says, "...just as a chore like ironing is never completely done, she can't articulate all of the things that have affected her daughter, she 'will never total it all'" (par. 16). Emily's mother carried on with this task of ironing, nonetheless, in the hopes that her daughter would amount to more than her past may seem to allow (Kloss par. 39). Emily was more than the sum of her tousled memories and crumpled past. The fact that Emily's mother did not give up the task of ironing throughout the story gives way to the idea that a mother's work is never done. Though she was a less than ideal mother, self-admittedly, she still held onto her domestic duties, perhaps in the hopes that she could correct what was wrong in Emily's life. Piedmont-Marton suggests, "On a more figurative level, mothering is also an act of ironing, of smoothing out problems, of making things right and ordered" (par. 4).

Emily and her mother were survivors in the truest sense of the word. In Olsen's "I Stand Here Ironing," Emily's mother described her daughter's childhood in a straightforward, and blunt, if not somewhat cold manner.

She made no apologies for her own shortcomings as mother, and although she feared for the effects it may have on her daughter's future, she gripped onto hope, as tightly as the iron in her hand, that Emily would rise above the dire circumstances of her past, just as she had in her own life. Wolfe writes, "She realizes that the circumstances of her early parenting have made it difficult for Emily to ever reach her full potential; but what is most important is her further realization that Emily may rise above that, at least a little, despite being 'a child of her age, of depression, of war, of fear'" (par. 22). Emily's mother's strength and sheer determination were now rooted in Emily. It is clear that Emily's mother did not realize that she was responsible for this attribute of strength found in her daughter, although she recognized some of her daughter's enduring qualities (Wolfe par. 22). Emily's mother suffered through teenage pregnancy, abandonment by her husband, poverty, inadequate employment, sexism, and discrimination as a single mother, all during The Great Depression. As a result of her mother's uncontrollable circumstances, Emily endured years of repeated abandonment, physical and emotional neglect, unreliable care-takers, frequent illness, and a host of psychological disorders, within her life of nineteen years. Emily and her mother both emerged out of this story as resilient women, as each of them, in their own unique way, had risen above a lifetime of adversity. At first glance, Olsen's "I Stand Here Ironing" can be interpreted as a depressing story about bad mothering and the unfortunate effects this neglected childhood had on her poor daughter, but upon further examination, it is clear that Emily's mother was doing what she thought was best for her daughter. Emily's mother was doing what she knew, what she learned from her own ill-fated life. Emily, in the end, managed to not just survive but to thrive, against all odds, and not be "helpless before the iron."

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Evaluation: *Kimberly's research paper is the best I have encountered on this story, in any of the classes for which the story has been part of the syllabus—and that is a lot of classes. The focus in the paper is clear, the writing style is mature and distinctive, and the student has made her paper unique through use of sources beyond the usual literary critical studies widely available on this work.*

A Family at War: John Steinbeck's *East of Eden*

Kara Kelly
Course: Literature 112 (Literature and Film)
Instructor: KurtHemmer

Assignment: *What are the most significant differences between John Steinbeck's novel* East of Eden *and Elia Kazan's film* East of Eden?

John Steinbeck's novel *East of Eden* is a tale of two brothers in competition for the love of their father, but, most of all, it is a heartbreaking story of one man's life as he loses himself and finds his family. Elia Kazan's adaptation of Steinbeck's novel focuses mainly on Adam Trask's sons as they grow into young men and find out the ugly truth about their mother, but the novel is a tour of Adam's life from birth to death. Both the novel and book capture the struggle of Adam's son Cal as he fights against his brother, Aron, for their father's affection. The novel shows us that Adam's father favored him over his brother, even admitting out loud, "I love you better. I always have" (28). It does not seem as though Adam remembers this favoritism when it comes time to raise his own two sons. He does not say anything out loud to show his preferential treatment of Aron, but it becomes clearer as the film and novel continue. The film focuses mostly on this battle as we watch Cal fight to find himself and understand why he cannot live up to Aron. As we learn about Adam's life throughout the novel, we meet various characters and witness monumental events that bring us to the struggle between Cal and Aron that begins the film. The most significant differences between the novel and film are the insights into Adam's life in the novel, as well as the importance of the characters Samuel and Lee in the novel, because these elements alter our interpretations of the stories.

Steinbeck shows us immediately in his novel that Adam's life is not going to be easy. Very early on, his mother commits suicide, and his father is proved to be self-involved and unaffected by the thoughts or feelings of others. Although his father admitted he loved Adam more than Charles, Adam grew up lonely, without feeling any love or compassion. When he sees his stepmother smile:

> He ached toward her with a longing that was passionate and hot. He did not know what it was about, but all the long lack of holding, of rocking, of caressing, the hunger for breast and nipple, and the sweet feeling of anxiety—all of these were in his passion, and he did not know it because he did not know that such things existed, so how could he miss them? (22)

His thought process clearly shows how much he is unaware of his ache for a mother's attention or any type of nurturing. He never really felt love from anyone, which made it difficult for him to love until he met Cathy Ames. Even though Cathy was only pretending to care about Adam, it was the first time in his life be felt needed and cared for; it was the first time in his life he felt an intense love for another person. The movie does not show any background into Adam's life or his relationship with Cathy. Without this knowledge, it is hard for the audience to truly comprehend the encounter that took place between them in Adam's mind. He seems cold and without empathy for his son's hardships, which are very obvious in the film. He seems to be constantly irritated with his son Cal and warm toward Aron. It is easier to understand his conflicted feelings towards Cal when his past relationships are taken into account. In the book, Adam is the protagonist; in the movie, he seems to be the antagonist to Cal.

Another important difference is that Samuel Hamilton is a very big part of Steinbeck's story, but does not play a role in the movie. In the book, he delivers Adam's sons, serves as the handyman, and even forces Adam to name his sons when he is stuck in a depression over their mother leaving. He even succumbed to physical violence to force Adam out of his oblivion, so he could name his year-old children. During this time, Samuel, Lee, and Adam studied the Bible's story of Cain and Abel. This story has incredible significance for both the movie and the book. Adam rejects Cal's birthday present while embracing Aaron's, just as God accepted Abel's gift but had no respect for Cain's. After reading it aloud, Samuel reflects on the passage:

> I think it is the best known story in the world because it is everybody's story. I think it is the symbol story of the human soul. I'm feeling my way now—don't jump on me if I'm not clear. The greatest terror a child can have is that he is not loved, and rejection is the hell he fears. I think everyone in the world to a large or small extent has felt rejection. And with rejection comes anger, and with anger some kind of crime in revenge for the rejection, and with the crime guilt. (270)

Student Reflections on Writing: Kara Kelly

Writing has always been like medicine for my mind, spirit, and soul. Whenever a teacher allows me the freedom to exercise my creativity and express my individual writing style, I enjoy the assignment no matter the topic. Writing will always be an important part of who I am and a critical outlet for conveying my thoughts, feelings and emotions. To me, there is no beauty like the construction of words. I will forever be fascinated and captivated by the written word and the power it can contain.

This statement holds so much power and stands as a basis for both the book and the movie. In the book, it is harder to accept Adam's rejection after they read the Bible's story, and Samuel explains the repercussions. Before Samuel leaves for good, he is the one who tells Adam the ugly truth about his wife. He does this hoping to break Adam free from her, so he can be a good father to his children and provide them with a decent life. It is the first step toward healing Adam and releasing him from the ghosts that have been haunting him. Samuel is not even a character in the film.

Equally important is the omission of Lee in Kazan's film. In Steinbeck's novel, Lee plays the caretaker for Adam and his boys. He takes on a motherly role, not only providing cooking and housework, but also giving them spiritual guidance with tender affection. Lee plays the parental role through the book, while Adam is the only parental role present in the film. The little feminine presence in the movie to either boy is Abra, Aron's girlfriend. She provides both Aron and Cal with emotional support and guidance when they are in need, yet Lee provides these things during the course of the novel. Lee's character greatly impacts the entire story, laying down the groundwork for the theme with his analysis of the word "timshel." He explains, "The Hebrew word, the word *timshel*—'Thou mayest'—that gives a choice. It might be the most important word in the world. That says the way is open. That throws it right back on a man. For if 'Thou mayest'—it is also true that 'Thou mayest not'"

(303). This is a very important part of Steinbeck's novel that changes the whole thought process these men have on sin, choice, and free will. In both the film and novel, Cal believes he is bad and does not possess the same goodness that his brother and father have.

Consequently, the intensity of Cal's emotions and inner conflicts increase as the plot continues and eventually leads him to try and hurt his brother to get revenge for his own ill feelings. While his father is lying on his deathbed, Cal is flooded with guilt over the things he has done to put his family in this predicament. In the movie, it is Abra who begs Adam to make Cal feel needed and loved. In the end, her mission is successful, and Adam dismisses the nurse so Cal can take care of him. In the book, it is Lee who begs Adam: "Your son is marked with guilt out of himself—out of himself—almost more than he can bear. Don't crush him with rejection. Don't crush him, Adam....Help him, Adam—help him. Give him his chance. Let him be free. That's all a man has over the beasts. Free him! Bless him!" (602). Finally, after this moment of raw desperate hope, Adam is able to show compassion toward his son. He raised his hand with every ounce of energy he had and whispers, "Timshel!" (602). Steinbeck's version displays Lee as the connecting force that he was throughout the entire novel, which is more powerful than Kazan's use of Abra.

I believe Steinbeck's novel has a deeper impact on the audience because it allows for more background material about and deeper analysis of the characters. Kazan's film remains strong and appealing because of the brilliant performance of James Dean. Dean's performance lures the audience in and begs them to understand his perspective. He easily shows us how disconnected Cal is from his father and how desperate he is for his acceptance. Dean succeeds with his subtle expressions and movements portraying a lonely, vulnerable young man eager to be noticed and loved. He almost makes up for the background provided in the book and the message that is conveyed to the spectators. Steinbeck's message is built around the tale of two brothers and the effect rejection and isolation can have on an eager young adult. It is difficult to portray this message with an equal intensity when only a portion of the story is developed in the film, but Kazan and Dean were able to achieve something special by using their undeniable skills. The result is definitely a piece of art that will be respected and admired for many years to come, as will the novel.

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Evaluation: *Kara does an excellent job of examining the elements of the novel that did not find their way into Kazan's film and how they influence the audience's interpretations of the stories.*

Why You Should Hate Hip-Hop

Ricky Lelito
Course: English 101 (Composition)
Instructor: Andrew Wilson

Assignment: *Write an essay that persuades.*

Driving to Harper a few weeks ago one morning, I was listening to my favorite hip-hop radio station. The song playing at the time was by a famous rap artist that I saw at Lollapalooza over the summer. I felt on top of the world with my windows down, bass blaring, and rear-view mirror shaking. While cruising down Euclid, I started to rap along with the song, reciting the lyrics while bobbing my head. Before I knew it, I had said out loud, "When I die, bury me inside the Gucci store, when I die, bury me inside the Louis store, all I want for my birthday is a big booty hoe, all I want for my birthday is a big booty hoe." As a hip-hop artist myself, I was disappointed with what I realized I had just said. I kind of paused for a second and realized how absurdly stupid and ignorant those lyrics sounded. I thought, "So this is what rap has got us saying nowadays?" The song playing was "Birthday Song" by rapper 2 Chainz. Aside from having multiple references to violence, the song also glorifies women, sex, and money. As you can imagine, this isn't the only rap song on the radio that has similar themes. Most mainstream rap today promotes an unhealthy lifestyle, suggesting that violence, drugs, objectification of women, and adoration of money is the right way to go about your life. I believe that for these reasons, and many more, you should *hate* hip-hop.

There are so many things wrong with mainstream hip-hop today; I don't even know where to begin. I believe many people are "brainwashed" in a sense and must open their eyes to how hip-hop has tricked us into embracing *unacceptable* morals. We will start with the ridiculous terminology and phrases that rappers make us say, like "yolo," "swag," and "popped a molly I'm sweating." Adults, teens, and even young kids use these terms daily, referencing drugs and style, as if they are important. Popping a molly is another term for taking ecstasy, and we openly say that with no shame? Because our favorite rappers say it in a song, and because we idolize these stars, we end up adding pathetic words and phrases to our everyday vernacular. No matter what rappers say, we embrace it and accept it, because at the end of the day, that's who we look up to and want to be like.

Next, one of the biggest problems I have with mainstream hip-hop is the content of the lyrics. Specifically, how almost every song uses profanity and worships murder, sex, drugs, money, cars, clothes, and women. It's always the same thing over and over again. Rappers act like they are living the high life and that murder and getting money is the way to go. My question is how many people can you shoot before you go to jail? How many girls can you sleep with before you get AIDS? How much money do you really want? That's one crazy life if that's all they're doing. It's sickening that we allow our minds to be fed with such ignorance. Chief Keef, a famous rapper out of Chicago known for gang violence and drugs, literally brags about murder in his songs. From the track titled "Murda," he states, "I got pistol in my pocket, pull it out and pop it, my young n*ggas wildin' in Chicago catching bodies." In other words, he has a gun and is not afraid to shoot it. He also adds in how his crew is out in Chicago making killings. Considering Chicago is the murder capital of the country, is there anything right with these lyrics? According to the article in the *Washington Post* titled "FBI: Chicago Passes New York as Murder Capital of U.S.," Chicago recorded 500 murders in the year 2012, 81 more than New York. What is to brag about here?

To make this hit even harder, one of Chief Keef's gang members actually murdered a student at Buffalo Grove High School, a school in the area. He and his gang ended a life. The victim had family, friends, and a community he lived in, but that didn't matter to Chief Keef, and we are the ones who buy his music and listen to it on the radio, only supporting his lifestyle. Chief Keef is just one of many examples of rappers we listen to; we allow our minds to be molded by senseless lyrics. We need to broaden our horizons because there is so much more out

. there than material items and violence. Furthermore, the actual skill of most rappers' lyrical content is subpar. The elementary lyrics and hooks (choruses) aren't creative or intelligent, to say the least. I'm not telling you to be a super lyrical-miracle-swimming pool; I'm just saying to stop rhyming model with bottle and girl with world.

Moving on, this next point is personally very infuriating. Basically, we pay rappers to rap about how much money they have. If that isn't depressing, then I don't know what is. Some people say we're still in a recession, yet we're paying rappers to tell us how good they're living! Do you own a savings account? Yet you pay to go to concerts and buy albums? Here are just a few examples of some of the most popular rappers reminding us how much money they have. Platinum artist Drake in the song "Headlines" says, "I guess it really is just me, myself, and all my millions." Multi-millionaire rapper Jay-Z needs a reminder of what 50,000 dollars is worth in the song "N*ggas In Paris" as he says, "What's fifty grand to a motherf*cker like me could you please remind me?" Lil Wayne and 2 Chainz kindly tell us to reevaluate ourselves in the song "Rich as F*ck" as they emphatically yell, "Look at you, now look at us, all my n*ggas look rich as f*ck!" Trinidad James boasts, "One gold watch, two gold chains, six gold rings, it's nothing," as he flaunts Gucci jeans and gold grills, necklaces, and earrings in his music video for the song "All Gold Everything." Simply put, we are brainwashed.

In the same light, it is not acceptable to justify actions with money. Let me tell you what I mean by that. There are many rappers who I think are just miserable and hard to listen to. They put out mediocre songs with the same old content and brag about themselves. Some people label me a "hater" because I say that a specific artist is bad. They ask how I can hate someone who's out there getting money. In other words, I'm not supposed to hate on someone who has millions of dollars. My response to that is plain and simple: I don't care if I hate on them, he/she is terrible. I don't care if they're getting money. In fact, I wish they had not made money. Hitler had a lot of money, should we not hate on Hitler?

This leads me to the great saying "Numbers don't lie." Jay-Z, one of the wealthiest hip-hop rappers ever, said in his song "Reminder," "Men lie, women lie, but numbers don't." This really bugged me because *he* is lying. I believe numbers do lie. Especially when Jay-Z's record label, Roc Nation, pays for thousands of digital downloads to shoot his name to the top of the iTunes charts. His label also buys his albums to get him at the top of the 100 Billboard list. Little do people know that almost every major hip-hop record company buys copies of albums or mix tapes for their signed artist to make it seem like everyone is buying their newest release. It seems that numbers do lie, perhaps?

Finally, the last reason you should hate hip-hop comes down to one person: Rick Ross. Also known as "Ricky Rozay," William Roberts (his real name) is one of the hottest artists out right now. Flip to any popular hip-hop radio station, and you'll most likely hear him on every other song. Ross is known to rap about his nice cars (Maybachs to be specific), drugs, sex, violence, and of course, money. His success and filthy rich status in the music industry has his popularity at an all-time high among the general public. Although a world-renowned rap artist, there are many things you probably don't know about him. I will ask some simple questions that will make my point painfully obvious. Who starts out as a correctional officer, goes to college, and then drops out months later? Who then pursues a rap career (with no criminal record up to this point), and takes the name and identity of a renowned drug dealer (Ricky Ross) who has done 20 years in prison and is currently trying to steer children away from gangs, drugs, and violence? Then, who gets sued by the real Ricky Ross, wins because he knows the judge, and years later makes a lyric about date-raping a girl ("Put a molly in her champaign, she ain't even know it, took her home and had fun with her, she ain't even know it")? How can we continue to buy this man's music, go to his shows, and support his career without being enraged by his background? The hypocrisy William Roberts displays is disgusting, and the acceptance from the kids, teens, and adults is even sicker. All this is doing is promoting an inconsistent and deceitful way of living.

In spite of all my reasons why you should hate hip-hop, there are still opponents to my stance. For instance, some may argue that concerts are worth paying for. They create memories with friends and are just an overall

awesome experience. Although I can't completely deny their claim, I believe we have to understand the bigger picture. Even if you have a great time at a concert, you still gave that artist money to fund their career, and now they can continue to send out their music, or as I like to say, poison, to the generations. Understanding the messages and values in the songs by these rap artists is more important than one fun night at a live show. Another argument is simply that they like the music. The lyrics are catchy, the rhythm is smooth, and the bass feels good. My response is that you have fallen into the trap. Now that the artist has you hooked on the sound, they can really say anything they want in their lyrics, as long as the beat is appealing. My claim stands true because it is happening right now. Rappers represent a degrading and violent lifestyle, but they are making millions.

Lastly, some will refute my claim by saying that there are already hip-hop artists that exist that don't stand for praising material items, money, or women. They are claiming that there are multiple forms of hip-hop and it is up to us to listen to what we want to. My opponent's argument is similar to that of Gloria Anzaldua's in her essay titled "How to Tame a Wild Tongue." In her essay, she claims there should be a broader view of acceptable language. She states, "'*Pocho*, cultural traitor, you're speaking the oppressor's language by speaking English, you're ruining the Spanish language,' I have been accused by various Latinos and Latinas" (32). In this excerpt, Anzaldua is explaining how her culture believes there should only be one language, but she believes there are multiple languages that exist and should be acceptable to speak. This relates to my opponents' argument because they believe that there are already multiple forms of hip-hop, and all varieties are at our disposal to choose from. They say that we have a choice to listen to who we want to, not that we are forced to listen to certain artists. But once again, I disagree. While there are artists who spread positive messages with their music, the truth of the matter is that these types of rappers will never be popular. People don't want to hear an intelligent person rap about ending gang violence or staying in school, they want something that makes the flesh feel good. When was the last time you heard a rap song on the radio that actually suggested not tossing dollar bills on strippers and drinking until you pass out? For me, my answer is never. To sum it up, no one wants big words and a positive message on the radio. We listen to what the radio plays. We listen to the best-selling rap albums. We listen to what everyone else listens to.

In the end, self-glorification, money, and sex rule the world of mainstream hip-hop. Hypocrisy lies deep beneath the choruses and bass hits. Variety is nonexistent in the content of your favorite rapper's songs, and the violent lifestyle of many artists can actually hit closer to home than you think. Next time you're listening to your favorite artist, I want you to really pay attention to the lyrics and what they are saying to you. The greed and immoral behavior needs to stop in hip-hop, and the first place it starts is with the consumer. The way I realized I hated hip-hop was using the saying, "Don't ask what is wrong with it; ask what is right with it." As an artist, I stand for positive messages, being creative, and education. Don't fall into the twilight zone of senseless consumerism. What do you stand for?

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Evaluation: *At times with the convictions of personal passion, at other times with the colder logic we like to see in an academic enterprise, Ricky does indeed make a strong case for why his readers should hate (or at least be wary of) hip-hop.*

Phoebe Caulfield: The True "Catcher in the Rye"

Avonne Lindemann

Learning Community: Rock and Roll (The Beatles)
Courses: English 102 (Composition)
and Literature 105 (Poetry)
Instructors: Kurt Hemmer and Greg Herriges

Assignment: *One of the options for the research paper for the Rock and Roll Learning Community was to write about an aspect of J.D. Salinger's* The Catcher in the Rye.

The Catcher in the Rye, by J.D. Salinger, is a story about an adolescent boy, Holden Caulfield, who is extremely cynical and judgmental about the world around him. He is conflicted by the fact that he hates almost everyone he knows and at the same time is so sick of being alone. The rare times he half-heartedly tries to reach out to someone, he just ends up being disappointed in them because they are "phony" and do not seem to understand him. It seems that his hatred toward people seems to really be hatred toward himself; as long as he calls everyone a "phony," he does not feel so bad if they decide to reject him. He is also constantly trying to fight his inevitable transition into adulthood, which is probably one of the reasons why he does so poorly in school, causing him to get expelled from multiple private institutions. Holden lives in a world where he sees most people, mainly adults, as "phony," and children as good, kindhearted, and innocent. This leads him to have somewhat of an obsession with being "the catcher in the rye" from the poem "Comin' Thro' the Rye," a traditional children's song. Although he has mistaken the meaning, Holden imagines himself saving children running through the rye fields from falling off of the cliff, metaphorically saving their childhood innocence, and in a way saving his own innocence from the adulthood he dreads. His ideal of innocence, and the main innocence he wishes to protect, is that of his ten-year-old sister, Phoebe. Next to her, Holden's fixed view of the world and lack of maturity comes off as less winsome and more idiotic. Phoebe, being one of the only people he actually likes, is also the one person he believes truly understands him. Aside from Holden, Phoebe is probably the most significant character we meet in the novel. She plays many important roles and is the reason Holden comes to accept his inevitable adulthood, because she knows Holden better than he knows himself. She not only symbolizes childhood innocence but acts as Holden's teacher and anchor to reality.

Phoebe's name in itself is significant. In Greek mythology, Phoebe is known as the goddess of the moon. Just as the moon provides light for Earth at night, Phoebe acts as the light that fights against the darkness of Holden's depression. This light represents her pure innocence that is so precious to Holden. She is a shining star in his life and allows him to feel joy when nothing and no one else in the world can. The goddess Phoebe is also generally associated with Artemis, the goddess of the hunt. Harold Bloom, the author of *J.D. Salinger's* The Catcher in The Rye, states that this association resonates with the title of the novel because "it is Phoebe Caulfield who acts as Holden's master in the art of hunting/catching, leading up to the novel's climactic carousel scene" (185). It is Phoebe who saves Holden from himself at the end of the book.

In the same way, Phoebe has also been said to represent an oracle figure, says scholar Margaret Svogun. An oracle figure, who is traditionally a young woman, is someone who you consult and confide in, someone who offers advice and predictions (Svogun 111). Holden sneaks into his home to confide in Phoebe. Without even telling her that he has been kicked out of school again, she "knows the truth, and it inspires her outraged prophecy 'Daddy'll kill you!'" (Svogun 111). Phoebe repeats this over and over, as if it were a chant. Even the smell of the foyer of Holden's home and the smell of smoke left behind by his cigarette parallels the "toxic gases or vapor" present around the classical representation of an oracle (Svogun 111). Steven Engel, the author of *Readings on* The Catcher in the Rye, describes how Phoebe's reaction

to Holden being kicked out of school "affects him so deeply that he confesses far more than he intends to about the extent of his nihilistic world-weariness" (44). Phoebe really cares about Holden, and even though she was not sympathetic at first, she does try to understand and solve the problems he is having. And "just as a mythic hero's consultation with an oracle may help him to resolve a crisis," Phoebe helps Holden to overcome his obstacles in life (Svogun 112). Also, when Holden finds Phoebe on the bed with her legs folded in a yoga position, it is "an image one critic interprets as making her an emblem of 'the still contemplative center of life,'" according to Joel Salzberg (112). This imagery adds to the mystical aspects that the oracle provides.

Moreover, Phoebe, who is six years younger than her brother, seems to represent childhood itself. She is "pure, unaffected, wonderfully artless—that she writes under the pen name Weatherfield Caulfield, itself a kind of internal rhyme" (Bloom 39). She seems to not have a care in the world, aside from Holden's well-being. Many of the things she says seem very sophisticated for her age, yet her child-like playfulness seems to ring true with whatever she says and does. Bloom wonders "how can one not love a person who makes up middle names—the latest being Weatherfield—or who takes belching lessons from a fellow classmate?" (39). Phoebe is such a likeable character and is clearly adored and admired by Holden.

On the other hand, Phoebe also has somewhat of a maternal role. Holden describes Phoebe many times as being very mature for a ten-year-old. He believes she has a deep appreciation for things such as music and films that go beyond that of a child her age. Holden said that when Phoebe was even younger, she wore long white gloves, "like a lady and all," when she was out walking with him and Allie (61). While Holden does see that childish innocence within her, he also sees someone beyond her years. Bruce Mueller and Will Hochman, who wrote *Critical Companion to J.D. Salinger: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work*, state that Holden views Phoebe "as the most perfect female in his world, and he loves her unreservedly" (93). Also, Sarah Graham, author of *J.D. Salinger's* The Catcher in the Rye, expresses that, "Projecting onto Phoebe an adult persona means that she can be allocated the role of Holden's conscious, a responsibility often imposed on women and mothers" (118). She provides physical and mental comforts for him when necessary and also gives him money when he needs it, all things that a parental figure would provide for their child. Engel also says that much like a mother's love, "it is Phoebe's genuine love for Holden and her unselfconscious honesty in expressing her affection to him that provide the bridge by which Holden must eventually come to accept love in all its variegations of vision and touch, splendor and squalor" (67). Another example that is significant to Phoebe's maternal role is the blue coat she wears while riding the carousel. Bloom points out that "it was not unusual for critics to put an enormous emphasis on the color of Phoebe's coat. After all, blue is the color traditionally associated with the Virgin Mary, and in a novel that features Holden as an avatar of Christ" (40).

In addition, Holden sees a part of himself in Phoebe and wants to protect her innocence as if it were his own. Bloom believes that Phoebe is in a way "a mini-Holden" (81). When she comes to meet him at the museum "[h]e sees her, as if in a mirror, arriving with Holden's 'crazy hunting hat on'...and dragging Holden's 'old suitcase, the one I used when I was at Whooton'" (Bloom 164). Just from looking at her, he is starting to realize that his younger sister, who in many ways is his own mentor, actually sees him as a role model.

Furthermore, Phoebe acts as a teacher and guide in Holden's life. He even says "she sounds like a schoolteacher sometimes, and she's only a little child" (167). Normally, the elder guides the younger, but it is Phoebe who guides Holden from his fantasy life into his acceptance of the real world. Phoebe is also not afraid to challenge her older brother, whether she is telling him to stop swearing, correcting his words to the "Comin' Thro' the Rye" children's song, or saying exactly what he does not want to hear. For example, when Holden is asked to name one thing he likes, and he says "Allie," Phoebe flat-out tells him that does not count because Allie is dead. This takes Phoebe out of Holden's romanticized fantasy of childhood innocence, where he wants to stay. Svogun says, "Clearly, Holden's pilgrimage to see his beloved younger sister, and her talents for advising, listening, and enlightening, provide him with the insights, awareness, and guidance he will rely on to begin to come to terms

with his despair" (112). Holden is learning from Phoebe, whether he wants to or not.

At the same time, Phoebe purposefully acts immature, just like Holden, as a way of teaching him. She knew that it was necessary to grow up and needed to find a way to show Holden that, so when she meets him at the museum, ready to run away with him, her childish behavior is mimicking his own. She is even wearing his red hunting hat and dragging his old suitcase behind her, taking over his role completely. Her doing this makes Holden realize that by wanting to run away to the West and leave reality behind, "he has endangered the very goodness and innocence that he most wanted to protect" (Engel 45). This idea troubles Holden so much that he instantaneously forgets his whole plan to run away and assures Phoebe that he plans to go home with her. Phoebe is able to teach "Holden to mature by using her own immaturity to inspire his growth" (Mueller and Hochman 93). If Phoebe is really as mature as Holden believes her to be, I would think that the idea to run away with him was almost like a test. This test proved that Holden's "love for Phoebe and his desire to save her innocence is far greater than his hatred for the world and his determination to abandon it" (Engel 49). His contempt for the "phoniness" that surrounds him is nothing compared to his love and devotion for Phoebe and the little bit of goodness she provides for the world.

Most importantly, this shows how Phoebe serves as Holden's anchor to the reality he is trying so desperately to escape from. She is the one link he has to the life he has been living that he does not want to abandon. She is the one person he always wanted to love and protect and, in the end, she is the reason why Holden decides to stay and not run away. Engel explains that paradoxically, Holden "is saved through saving; the catcher is caught by the person he most wants to catch" (49). And while it seems that a younger sister would need her older brother, Phoebe proves to Holden that he really needs her. Because Phoebe seemed to always be in the back of Holden's mind, maybe subconsciously he somehow knew he would never be able to leave her. Maybe asking her to meet him one last time to say goodbye was a subconscious attempt to prevent himself from leaving.

At last, the final scene at the carousel is where Phoebe helps Holden to reach his epiphany. Bloom believes this to be one of the "great awakening scenes: the discovery of joy and heightened understanding and the capacity for close identification with others who are experiencing instinctual pleasure or fulfillment or satisfactory endurance" (109). The first thing that strikes Holden is when Phoebe runs back to him with his "red hunting cap, placing it on his head and effectively acknowledging the temporal nature of his identity as 'the catcher' when she tells him 'you can wear it for a while'" (Bloom 100). Phoebe has just saved Holden, and now it is his turn to be the savior. This action of placing the hat on Holden's head is almost like his coronation and gives him a sort of satisfaction that he finally gets to be "the catcher." By taking responsibility for Phoebe, he now feels that he can take responsibility for his own life. And as he watches the carousel turn, Holden says, "All the kids kept trying to grab for the gold ring, and so was old Phoebe, and I was sort of afraid she'd fall off the horse, but I didn't say anything or do anything. The thing with kids is, if they want to grab for the gold ring, you have to let them do it, and not say anything. If they fall off, they fall off, but it's bad if you say anything to them" (211). He finally realized that he cannot actually be "the catcher" because he cannot prevent kids from growing up. He knows now that "he must let children mature and experience life irregardless of its dangers" and his own personal fears (Mueller and Hochman 93).

While Phoebe, apart from Holden, is the most important character we meet in the novel, there is another character with similar significance that we cannot be introduced to. Allie, Holden's younger brother who died from leukemia three years previous to the time of the story, is equally (if not more) idolized by Holden. We obviously never get to meet Allie, but Holden describes him as if he were a saint. To Holden, Allie was perfect and pure in every way. Holden says that Allie was the most intelligent and nicest member of the family, above Phoebe, who is known for her maturity and wisdom in the novel. Like Phoebe, Allie is a clear representation of childhood innocence and even more so because he has died. Allie's death made him unchanging and infinite, and because he died so young, he was able to keep that childhood innocence forever. Many of the things Holden

says and does suggest that he is constantly thinking about Allie. For example, Holden bought the red hunting hat and started wearing it all the time. Its red color could be a connection to Allie's bright red hair. Also, it is a mystery why Holden keeps asking people about where the fish in the pond go when it freezes over in the winter. Could it possibly be that at the same time Holden is wondering and stressing about where exactly Allie has gone? Allie's death undoubtedly had a major effect on Holden and is probably the main reason why he seemed to give up on life. And, I think the thing that bothers him the most is the fact that he could not save Allie. That is why his fantasy is to be "the catcher" who saves children's lives. Whether he thinks it would make up for Allie's death or somehow bring Allie back, Holden is desperate to do something. That is what is so important about Phoebe helping him reach his epiphany. By realizing he cannot protect childhood innocence and that growing up is necessary and inevitable, he realized that he could not protect Allie from death and that death is just a part of life.

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Evaluation: *We were impressed with how Avonne interpreted the intricate details of Phoebe's relationship with Holden and used secondary sources to help clarify her claim that Phoebe "catches" Holden.*

The Lie of a Minute

Michelle Mabry
Course: English 222 (Poetry Writing)
Instructor: Anne Davidovicz

Assignment: *Students are required to submit 200 or more lines of poetry along with a metacognitive essay that addresses their progress. This essay should include a specific focus upon revision in addition to influences and goals.*

Student Reflections on Writing: Michelle Mabry

I can only describe writing as a way to communicate, most exactly; sometimes this is accomplished, but not always.

My truth in writing rails on sticking to how I want to say it and what I want to tell, or maybe how much I want to tell. What is left out can be as important as the words a writer lets appear.

Sometimes a piece of writing leaves me reeling. It can be just a sentence. The manner of constructing the letters into words and then--the knocking of one word against another or the tint of pause, the rush of subtle finality--what words can open a person?

I will try to get your attention and turn your head.

For Joseph Hace

"I don't love you as if you were a rose of salt, topaz or arrow of carnations that propagate fire: I love you as one loves certain dark things, secretly, between the shadow and the soul."

Pablo Neruda

Although I hesitate to categorize myself, I realize my surreal voice. Charles Simic says, "The surrealist poet offers the imaginary as the new definition of reality, or more accurately, he equates the imaginary with a truth of psychological order." I can hardly deny that this is my favorite chair, but I would not go so far as to call it my comfort zone. I rely on making myself comfortable by laying out the uncomfortable. I relish in making others sit up. I want my readers to remember, after they leave, what made them sit up.

My narrative voice struggles to keep up with this runaway mind. I ramped up my narrative voice quite a bit. In "The Truth of Sleep," a hungry love story plays out. The beginning, "We curve in sleep, / into each other," (1-2) rolls into "I wash the broken day down your house's drain / and your fineness, a giant beside me," (11-12) and stitch it up with "my cloak sharp, / my dagger close, / ready" (48-50). There is a definite sequence of events, if you will. One of my favorite poems, "The Truth of Sleep" takes me purposefully to somewhere/time delicately possible, almost unthinkably so. The closeness of subject and almost total insight into the suppositions dallied upon brings this piece its ragged strength. There are longer stretches intertwined with short sharpnesses. Curtness follows lulling sigh-filled descriptions:

> You will end up as ink
> trailing across my bones
> scarlet lanes to another life,
> lover,
> lover.
> I know how to wait. (26-31)

I revised this poem about ten times. In its "making," I pieced together lines and sections but chiefly wrote it all in one sitting. Certain lines, "The stem of my heart wears

a skirt" (15), I thought of while running and repeated over and over in my head so I would not forget. This was a line I "held" and slipped into the right place. The other revisions were a word change: "pickling" to "tracing" (!), one line-break change, a redundant word deletion, and moving a larger piece of the poem to another place within the poem, instead of keeping it at the end. These revisions were done after workshop. I considered stanzas but decided I like the flow. I recall messing around a little during the initial typing of the poem, but nothing large. This one was just waiting to get out.

One of my shorter pieces, "Late Kitchen," charged out from nowhere. This poem struts across my mind, so sure of itself—a little black dress that fits just right. The perimeters of the "kitchen" assignment helped keep a more specific focus and bolstered the poem's roots. Despite the surreal adventure presented here, the poem was written while standing in front of my cabinets, listing the contents and adding a little nightcap to the list. My imaginings included seem easily fantastical but I *could* fit in my cupboard: "I sleep in my cabinet, / safe from the night" (1-2). My grandmother visits my kitchen via my sister's presence, through my sister's middle name (after my grandmother, gone for forty-two years). Of course, "My heart explodes, / my oven shimmering with cookies" (18-19). I would feel this way, literally, if this happened. My heart would explode with love. I think the strength is the packed-in whomp of knowing, the certainty given in words of the impact of the events.

I changed the title to "Late Kitchen" during the last revisions. The word kitchen is nowhere in my poem, just in the title. I could not let myself keep the word "cups" and the word "cup" from the original "final" draft. I tried to allow it. (I failed.) I changed the lines to "and my jaded plates. / A small pink slipper of a cup…" (6-7). The result produced an unintended bit of rhyme: "plates" and at the end of the stanza, "Wait" (10). Breathe, breathe, in out, in out… I might need to let go a little sometimes with the repetitive word allowance. My rule on that is, only when necessary. In "Native Sugar," I use repeating words for the rhythm and the necessity and the literal sense of Illinois snowfall: "and the snow / and the snow / and the snow" (26-28). Near the end, I write, "too close, / too close" (41-42), again, for emphasis and literal sense.

"Native Sugar" is one of my poems that I want to work on shoring up. I feel that it's a house on stilts, and they're all askew. I will need to literally pull it apart to see what I want to change since looking at it hasn't worked. I think Richard Hugo gave me a lot of insight this past week when I was reading *The Triggering Town*. "If annoyed with something in the poem, look to either side of it and see if that isn't where the trouble is." I think parts of the poem are cooked, but it's raw in places: "astound you tiny / like a tinted craving, / delicate dessert" (20-22). Another part lacking concrete focus earlier in the poem, "to rest and slow pull my first" (8), bothers me even more. It's funny, the "problems" poets have. My friends at work would think there was something wrong with me if I told them!!

"4 Ways to Love" is another poem I am looking for ways to tweak. In the first and third stanzas, I share two voices but need to signify this (more) somehow. I dare not ruin my strong construction to add words to tell the reader the stanzas are each for a different child. The challenge looms. Perhaps a dedication or a specific epigraph might help here. I search for a way to leave the stuffing delicious and present the piece more accurately.

I continue to prod each day to pick a "right word" for an "almost finished" poem or something still in progress. I rarely do not write, but I still need a physical space that is mine to go to when I write at home. I often write away from home. In fact, the majority of initial drafts are on the backs of receipts, paper scraps, or in the notes part of my phone. I do want to pick a time to write every day. I worry that my writing will be forced since words come to me everywhere, all the time. I do need to experiment with writing each morning, first thing. This seems like it would work.

Since the midterm, I began searching for appropriate submission venues and contests. I ordered copies of *The Los Angeles Review*, which I discovered through Red Hen Press' website. I'm planning to submit my work during the next open call in February. I registered for the Women and Creativity class in the spring to continue my work and am considering retaking this class to be involved more readily "in poetry."

I added several new poets and writers to my favorites list since my midterm. An excerpt from "A Moth in

the Projector Light," Joshua Marie Wilkinson's poem, sent me in a whirl, and I researched some of his work and ordered two books. Adam Zagajewski's collection, *Without End*, gets perused daily. I swim deeper into Mary Oliver's lair without manners (*Why I Wake Early*). It's all lovely marrow in bones.

I will be working with our current text to continue assignments for myself and also with *Poemcrazy* by Susan Goldsmith Woolridge. I await a copy of *A Poetry Handbook* by Mary Oliver to investigate and challenge myself. Carol Rifka Brunt's recent release, *Tell the Wolves I'm Home*, saves me again with a tipsy turn into fiction..... velvet fiction!!! It's been a while since I've been steadily impressed throughout an entire book. Her presentation of theme and the settings show stunning narratives, which I need to continue to develop. I constantly search for role models with my flavor of story inside.

I'm still searching for a mentor and am committing to more diligence in that arena during the semester break. I'm unsure if there is an unspoken "procedure" to this but am not worried, just ignorant.

I plan on working with more stringent forms: sonnet, villanelle, and sestina, and also some manipulated poems and a ghazal. Any added variety or flavor juices my engine.

My progression during this semester leaves me with more of what I wanted and my direction more engrained. I added much narrative to my work, which was sorely lacking. I know a more specific and regular writing schedule is only up to me. My mountain of work I want to finish, revise, or begin taunts me regularly. I must visit these lonely poems. They need baths if we are ever to take the town.

I still struggle in abstraction, which is more protection for others. Fortunately, I am finished not liking my work. I will have to listen more to my favorite authors and their wise plying. It doesn't have to be ALL true. Mr. Hugo tugs my sleeve to help me use all my words so I can tell my story by telling another. I remind myself that this is not the courtroom but the crashing wilderness. It's so stunning that the words keep coming. Sometimes I hardly breathe. One line can keep me high for days. Hmmmmmmmmm....

To aid my flight I plan to continue with several books I've already been working with: *Triggering Town*, by Richard Hugo, *A Concert of Tenses* by Tess Gallagher. I will add several books referenced in the handout for this assignment: *Approaching Poetry*; *Written in Water*; *Written in Stone*; *The Practice of Poetry;* as well as Mary Oliver's *A Poetry Handbook*.

Native Sugar

To Mary Oliver

"...Since I see him every morning, I have rewarded myself
the pleasure of thinking that he knows me."
--from *Catbird*

Pico minutes come measured at this beach.
There's a curve in the coast
where some hills squeeze out flurries of sweet peas
like a sudden party
or a secret they forgot to keep.
Just across the street ticks the tide I imagined
in a colder place,
to rest and slow pull my first
into this chasing mane of wind.
That will never again.
And she sings to the day,
and through the night's in her debt.
Will she ever feel this sweetness
that I've thrown around,
snared with the loveliest people
like a box of sleep for dreams.
So many seconds start a library of time-
for plane rides or sharp pleasantries,
wherever this fineness shall take you;
astound you tiny
like a tinted craving,
delicate dessert.
I'll love you when the ponies come home,
the rafters seem to high,
when the viruses clone,
and the snow
and the snow

and the snow;
every time.

To sleep like
all the words spelled close,
running together.
You speak to me in bells
and your frowning ways arrive undone.
The syllables I serve to you feel like flames,
the tornado loves winding.
Maybe it's been given,
from the plover's angle
where you run wretched
and skyscraping,
too close,
too close,
too often.
I, just thick enough to draw attention,
whisper every clue

November Moor

To Anne Sexton

"...each spring will be a sword you'll sharpen,
those you love will live in a fever of love,..."
--from *Courage*

My hangar lost its airplane, and I prance around,
wheel chocks let the cat in.
Let the cat out.
Let the rain in.

The very first requirement,
asterisked:
windows that open on pinked air,
sheered sharp-
then I can look around and tell you.
Corners for beautiful young pieces of darkness to rest,
I still fit in every one,
like rain for the afternoon.
I point-one lamp, two lamps, three lamps, four-
turning the night on falls so delicious,
plush silence I never dared.
Give me trees for curtains
with my farther further neighbors.
Take away the mumbler but leave the children,
my golden bear and my of the summer.
They heave my heart to open her locks
and our oceans mingle,
salt and freshwater like sugar and coffee:
melt each other like sweet rain.
My bed surrounded, the valley's lilies rampant,
the white little jokers fizz with bite.
Cocoa shells settle like pearls.
Fat pineapple mint chaperones the rose,
scolds her close sweetness for pressing scarlet,
pricking my fingers in my sleep.
My target in the distance,
of course there is a gun,
and the sky fall frames the shallows
magnificent.

I shoot to fill the center of want.
Lovely aim, love to aim...
Bullets skim my desk uncovering
burrowed words.
Font splinters push delight,
dust my blinks to open.
Shelves press shy books together,
the scent of cedar kissing the words.
I lust right here, my bones built of want.
Lush fever is the sire
tipping my chair to the stake.
I burn with the quiet in my flames.

I invite the captor
for dessert and missing.
In my wind, by my night rules,
the maze you must travel to sweep me off my feet
shall remark your riled pelt.
Your coat shines without me
like some invisible ornament unpacked.
Spill your chocolate from that fucking darkness,
that bitter chair.
Your sweetness waits unbroken.
My atlas spreads her dreams.

Late Kitchen

For my grandma, Charlotte

I sleep in my cabinet,
safe from the night.
No one cooks here.
I curl up under years of pine,
baby teeth,
and my jaded plates.
A small pink slipper of a cup
leers at a blue apple for sugar.
Wait.

I count my sleep for minutes
in my dream of this silverware,
a gift from my mother
I actually want.

My sister ducks in
walking through the frame,
her middle name in her mittened hand-
Charlotte fiddles in my sink.
My heart explodes,
my oven shimmering with cookies.
A tiny green sword on my clock,
only red seconds turn
my time here.
I am early and preened
and everything is ready.

4 Ways to Love

April Fool's Day, 1986
How could I?
How could I not?
This million reasons on the burning bridge,
"I forgive you.
I see your heart blue filling your eyes
and they explode with stacks of light.
I know this concert of love anywhere."

April 11th, 1992
Here she is, of the summer.
Tasting the love so loud.
Mad and tiny,
hungry; she carries me to the water.
Her two i's skidding across the plains;
saving me in Chicago, where you can do anything.
We sleep so tight; the lake waits in place.

October 7th, 1995
I leave you in your sister's hands.
You do not belong here.
For ever, all years abandon sequence.
"I forgive you.
I catch the falling chairs, your hours trip on;
and the truth sits back down, the golden waiting.
I trust wanting, your love wandering with me."

November 4th, 2003
The last to leave this ocean of lust,
all the time in a hurry.
You run everywhere, your sleep feathers mine.
Stars fall for you in curtains;
I count and count.
The royal toast lightly burnt, the morning tells the dream.
Our flurried love plays with fire.

The Truth of Sleep

We curve in sleep,
into each other,
the years conspiring with their trust.
A collision this eventual,
of course we rumble,
and we work ourselves
to finely polished slivers
'til our trunks splinter,
and our looted arms cannot hold our hearts
any longer.
I wash the broken day down your house's drain
and your fineness, a giant beside me,
my planet seems far away,
but we are real.
The stem of my heart wears a skirt
to entice your raven blood
from dead things,
things undone and split.
Each cave in my chest glows,
sugared with quiet.
The laughing of your hands
tricks each petal of cold
to fall away
like thin veils of frilled light,
tracing the city with snow.
You will end up as ink
trailing across my bones,
scarlet lanes to another life,
lover,
lover.
Decades will never notice
the opening locks
and unfurling chains
of anchors.
My magic slices those reins
closed.
I know how to wait.
My patience keeps me warm.
Coffee is my horse.
I ride her dark fluid,
holding early,
early,
to streak into the day.
I fly all the hemispheres, tasting rain.
My ships toss codes
like morse fortunes.
My pinata bursting,
my cloak sharp,
my dagger close,
ready.

Evaluation: *Michelle's poetry suggests that while she has a clear sense of voice, she is constantly seeking ways to enhance it. Her original poems deliver fresh syntactical combinations and a range of emotional insights. Her analytical essay reveals her extreme commitment to writing. Her skills in academic writing are clearly as strong as her skills in creative writing.*

Widespread Use of Drones: Flying Too Far, Too Fast

Alexa Majus
Course: English 101 (Composition)
Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

Assignment: *After completing a group research project on a topic, each student from the group was to write an argumentative essay, drawing on information discovered through the group research project.*

Today, the market for drones is becoming increasingly demanding and versatile. Firstly intended for use by the military, these unmanned aircrafts are slowly being shifted to aid our domestic, everyday lives. The twenty-first century has evolved into a technology-centered society. As technology keeps advancing, so are drones and their capabilities. Drones do have high capabilities to serve society positively, but many controversies surrounding the use of drones are strong reasons why they should not be welcomed to the skies.

The first controversy regarding drones involves the military's use of them. The military uses drones to execute political targets who are involved in terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda and the Movement of the Taliban. As a result, countries in the Middle East such as Pakistan are now accustomed to seeing drones flying in the sky on a daily basis. However, none of them are accustomed to the high number of civilian deaths caused by drone strikes. It is challenging to get accurate statistics on civilian casualties caused by these strikes. Lev Grossman, of *Time* magazine, writes, "The government's drone strikes in Afghanistan are conducted by the military and are mostly overt, but elsewhere they're carried out either solely or jointly by the CIA and are generally covert, meaning the U.S. doesn't admit that they're happening" (2). A few nonprofit organizations do, however, dig up reports of covert drone attacks in order to retrieve accurate statistics. A nonprofit U.K. organization called The Bureau of Investigative Journalism estimates, "Since 2004, CIA drone attacks have killed 2,629 to 3,461 people in Pakistan alone, of whom 475 to 891 were civilians. The New America Foundation puts those numbers somewhat lower, from 1,953 to 3,279, of whom 261 to 305 were civilians. The CIA decline to comment in this article" (Grossman 2). The drone strikes in Pakistan have raised a controversial question: Are drones able to execute targets efficiently, or are they just killing machines? Drones were primarily desired to be used because they were claimed to carry out attacks more efficiently than can humans. With such a high number of civilian deaths, it is difficult to believe drones are truly more effective than humans in killing political targets.

Some critics argue that drone strikes are legal under the 2001 authorization that allows the use of force against those responsible for the September 11 attack back in 2001. Other critics believe government targets have broadened beyond the scope of the 2001 authorization (Grossman 5). Naureen Shah, an advocacy advisor with Amnesty International in Washington, states, "A 68-year-old grandmother was killed while gathering vegetables in a large vacant field. We don't have any indication that she was involved in posing an imminent threat to the United States or was involved in a militant group. That raises questions as to what the US government is doing" (qtd. in Crossan and Bell par. 4). Another drone strike in Pakistan left 18 laborers dead, one of whom was only 14 years old (Crossan and Bell par. 5). These two pieces of evidence support the notion that government targets have broadened, if not changed, since the 2001 authorization. If there is a whole range of people all ages being killed as a result of drones, it is plausible to conclude that no citizen is safe, whether they are affiliated with a terrorist group, or not.

President Barack Obama wants to integrate domestic drones into our daily lives; these everyday uses would include police using drones to map crime scenes, farmers using them to watch their fields, builders using them to survey construction sites, and Hollywood using them to make films (Grossman 2). According to Jeff Nesbit, "The reason the use of drones in cities is poised to become widespread is because Congress has required the Federal

Aviation Administration to loosen their regulations on the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and drones for domestic surveillance purposes, and allow more drones in domestic airspace by 2015" (par. 3). When society proceeds in this direction, controversies involving public safety and privacy will be of concern.

Flying drones may be deemed appropriate in the battlefield, but critics argue that flying drones over populated areas is unsafe because they may interfere with conventional aircraft. The Government Accountability Office expressed serious concern with drones' unreliable performance, their lack of sense-and-avoid technology that would help them keep from colliding with other aircrafts, and their lousy electronic security. Last year a professor at the University of Texas demonstrated that it was possible to remotely hack into and take over a Homeland Security drone in midflight (Grossman 5). Cases of drone software malfunctions have also been recorded during remote-controlled flight; the accident rate for drones used by the Department of Homeland Security for border security operations was significantly higher than the rate of manned aircrafts (McGlynn 3). Drones are known to crash a lot. According to Daniel McGlynn in "Domestic Drones,"

> In 2006, an unarmed Predator drone, operated by the U.S Customs and Border Protection agency from a base in Sierra Vista, Ariz., crashed while patrolling the U.S border with Mexico. This cause was attributed to operator error. And three years ago, the U.S military almost shot down one of its own helicopter-like drones after the craft's communication link failed and it began rapidly approaching a no-fly zone around Washington, D.C. (4)

Advocates against drones worry that drones will infringe too much on our daily lives. The idea of privacy would be foreign. Drones are the most powerful form of surveillance devised in modern times. For example, a Reaper drone that contains a Gordon Stare sensor pack can survey an area 2½ miles across from 12 angles at once. A drone of this type was involved in a police case in North Dakota. A country sheriff was trying to track three men who were possibly armed, and connected in the report of missing cows. The sheriff called in a drone from a local Air Force base, and it was able to spot the three men and also confirm they were unarmed (Grossman 6). Civil groups worry about the ability drones have to conduct surveillance. Surveillance conducted from a drone could lead to the government or law enforcement officials to repeal Fourth Amendment protections against unreasonable search and seizure. Lawyers for the American Civil Liberties Union told a Senate panel in March,

> The prospect of cheap, small, portable flying video-surveillance machines threatens to eradicate existing practical limits on aerial monitoring and allow for pervasive surveillance, police fishing expeditions, and abusive use of these tools in a way that could eventually eliminate the privacy Americans have traditionally enjoyed in their movements and activities. (McGlynn 2)

It is not the matter of America being against the use of drones for public safety missions, but rather privacy advocates object to police force or political personnel using drones to gather data through surveillance. In the article "Domestic Drones," Allie Bohm stated,

> Many state lawmakers think the federal government is not moving quickly enough to address privacy concerns about drones, particularly to restrict their use by police. Most of the state privacy-related bills would require police to obtain a warrant based on probable cause before they could use a drone to investigate a crime on private property" (qtd. in McGlynn 6).

In the case *Kyllo v. United States,* police charged Danny Kyllo with illegally growing marijuana in his house. Before police had gotten a warrant to search the house, they used thermal imaging technology to scan his house, and they found a high level of heat rays coming from inside the house, a clue that lights used to grow marijuana were inside the house. During the trial, the Supreme Court, however, ruled that the thermal imaging of Kyllo's house constituted an illegal search (McGlynn 9). Using thermal imaging before obtaining a search warrant violated

Kyllo's right to privacy. Not all Supreme Court cases end as Danny Kyllo's did. For example, in *California v. Ciraolo*, defendant Dante Carlo Ciraolo complained that Santa Clara, Calif., police lacked a warrant when they took aerial photos of his illegal marijuana-growing operations, located in his fenced backyard, and then prosecuted him. The Supreme Court found that Ciraolo's expectation of privacy was unreasonable and that the photographs did not violate the Constitution because they were taken from public airspace (McGlynn 9). Before police use drones to help convict people of crimes, the government and other legislative groups need to establish proper proximity of our airspace: When does public airspace become private property?

On that note, we should push for a society that does not endorse the need for drones, on or off the battlefields. Most citizens are not aware of ramifications that drones could lead to. American citizens will lose their sense of security and safety. Domestic drones will be able to gather data in seconds, from miles away, for just about any information needed. There will be well over thousands of drones flying in our airspace before people begin to see the detrimental consequences this will have on our lives. We base our lives on privacy, and a part of that would be taken away if drones navigate the airspace. We are eager, as a society, to keep advancing, but we are moving faster than we can efficiently and ethically understand.

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Evaluation: *In this brief but effective argumentative essay, which required use of only four secondary sources, Alexa makes a very reasonable claim and supports it with convincing data and case examples.*

Recurrences of Cephalan, Polemarchan, and Thrasymachan Justice in Plato's *Republic*

Ben Medina
Course: Philosophy 105 (Introduction to Philosophy)
Instructor: Brett Fulkerson-Smith

Assignment: *Write an essay in which you restate, in your own words, the theories of justice put forward in Book I of the* Republic*; next, explain the similarities and differences among the conceptions of justice offered.*

The three interpretations of justice put forth in Book I of Plato's *Republic* recur not only through the text's construction of the kallipolis, which stretches from Book II to Book VII, but also through Books VII and IX. The definitions of justice argued for by Thrasymachus, Polemarchus, and Cephalus undergird the creation of the kallipolis and shape the disparate value systems of its inhabitants. They also establish the template for Plato's second argument for the inherent value of justice, given through Books VII and IX. These segments of the text correspond to Books I and II in that Socrates takes the Thrasymachan concept of the stronger's ability to define justice, the craftspeople's Cephalan lifestyle, and the Polemarchan code of the guardians, and explicitly demonstrates the oligarchic results of Cephalan justice, the Timocratic government of Polemarchan justice, and the catastrophic, tyrannical results of Thrasymachan justice, the antithesis to aristocratic, Platonic justice. The key to the body of Plato's text is found in the diverging definitions of justice presented in its first book. Mirroring Socrates' epistemology, each of these definitions is a lesser reflection of the definition that came before it, each a greater distortion of the theory of justice arrived at in Book IV, which states that "justice will be admitted to be the having and doing what is a man's own, and belongs to him" (434).

The vast majority of the kallipolis' inhabitants are providers of food, shelter, and clothing, and they are guided by Cephalan philosophy. Cephalus is "satisfied to leave my sons here not less but a little more than I inherited" (330b), and Sophocles points out that Cephalus doesn't "seem to love money too much" (330b). Cephalus models many of the virtues desired in the average citizenry of the kallipolis. These individuals will "live in peace and good health, and when they die at a ripe old age, they'll bequeath a similar life to their children" (372d). The goals of the common citizenry and Cephalus parallel, so it makes sense that they would live by the same definition of justice, namely "speaking the truth and repaying what one has borrowed" (331d). Socrates points out that speaking the truth and repaying what has been borrowed can harm one and benefit one's enemies, such as those outside the kallipolis. Nonetheless, the common people of the kallipolis are primarily concerned with paying debts and speaking the truth, to better coexist. As Socrates points out, cities exist because "one person calls on a second out of one need and on a third out of a different need," and "people gather in a single place to live together as partners and helpers" (369c). Paying back debts is absolutely vital for the city to function, as each person has a single function for which he is best suited, and no one is self-sufficient. The cooperation implicit in Cephalan justice is foundational to the kallipolis. If Cephalan justice provides the base ideology of the merchant class, then it follows that the oligarchical government, which is run by the richest of the mercantile class in the degradation of the kallipolis, is also built upon Cephalan ideology. In the oligarchy, "the rich have power and the poor man is deprived of it" (559d), "men become lovers of trade and money; they honor and look up to the rich man, and make a ruler of him, and dishonor the poor man" (551). The defining aspect of this government is the accumulation of money, as it is created by "one, seeing another grow rich, seeks to rival him" (550e). Admittedly, Cephalus as an individual does not have this hunger for wealth, as he was born into it—"you are indifferent about money, which is a characteristic of those who have inherited their fortunes" (330c). However, "the makers of fortunes have a second love of money as a creation of their own" (330c). Although oligarchy is not as harmonious a government as aristocracy or Timocracy, Socrates argues, it is still

closer to the form of the good than democracy because the accumulation of wealth is upheld over the spending of that wealth. The abstract and intellectual is still upheld over the corporeal and earthly.

Polemarchan justice defines the guardians of the kallipolis. As the city swells with the need for prostitutes, pastries, and cattle, it requires more land. This necessitates conquering neighbors and going to war, an activity for which a new class of people is required—the guardians. Because it is "impossible for a single person to practice many crafts or professions well" (374a), guarding the city cannot be a cobbler's secondary occupation, especially since the city's populace lives to tell the truth and pay debts. The kallipolis requires a new set of individuals united by a single goal and a single definition of justice. The guardians live to harm the enemies of the city and benefit its inhabitants. They live by Polemarchan justice. Polemarchan justice impacts the guardians to such a degree that their entire selection and education is built around being "gentle to their own people and harsh to the enemy" (375c). Of the three interpretations of justice presented in the first book, Polemarchan justice is by far the closest to Socrates' ideal aristocracy, as demonstrated in Books VII and IX. "Timocracy (the government of honor) arises out of aristocracy (the government of the best)" (545d), brokering a middle ground between guardians and craftspeople—"the new government which this arises will be of a form intermediate between oligarchy and aristocracy" (547d). This form of government is the most just after aristocracy, as it still holds to an abstract, form-based and therefore harmonious value, that of passion and courage. However, worshipping virtue leads to "the waging of everlasting wars" (548a). It also leads to a society of individuals who, having lost the beacon of true philosophers, "are miserly because they have no means of openly acquiring the money which they prize; they will spend that which is another man's on the gratification of their desires...they have neglected she who is the true muse, the companion of reason and philosophy, and have honored gymnastics more than music" (548c). This is the downfall of a society built solely on Polemarchan philosophy.

The kallipolis is designed as a rebuttal to the revisionist zero sum view of justice argued by Thrasymachus, but the perception of justice as a set of rules decided upon by the stronger hangs over the creation of the kallipolis. While Socrates' plans to "supervise the storytellers" (377b), rejecting stories when they do not fit his criteria, do not directly benefit him, they are absolutely the "advantage of the stronger" (339a). Justice is defined by the rulers of the kallipolis. However, justice is not the benefit of the stronger, but the benefit of the kallipolis. The laws regulating the training of the guardians benefit the kallipolis, resulting in a just city. The guardians practice a craft, because they are trained to behave harmoniously, their impulse to outdo those untrained in guardianship directed at those outside the kallipolis. Justice is the advantage of the kallipolis. This is definitively proven in Book IX, when Socrates overthrows Thrasymachus' argument in three moves. A hedonistic, Thrasymachan conception of justice is first shown to be antithetical to Socratic justice. Thrasymachus believes, essentially, that justice is not objective, but the advantage of the stronger, or the tyrant. The unjust tyrant worships himself and lives for his own pleasure. This is the complete reverse of Socratic justice, in which justice is that which is most united with objective, reason-divined forms, and is often not pleasurable at all in a sensual, earthly sense. Having established that relativistic Thrasymachan justice and the justice of the kallipolis are antithetical, it follows that whatever is true for one, the opposite will be true for the other. If Socrates proves that Thrasymachan justice leads to the most miserable fate of all proffered forms of justice and the deepest in the transient shadows of his cave analogy, then Socratic justice must lead to the most honest and joyful existence. Socrates shows this by describing how a tyrannical man, in thrall to his appetites, "takes their (his parents') property, and when that fails, and pleasures are beginning to swarm in the hive of his soul, he breaks into a house...old opinions which he had as a child, and gave judgment about good and evil, are overthrown" (574d). This tyrant, increasingly isolated, is always "either the master or servant and never the friend of anybody" (576), and so he is "by far the most miserable of all men" (578b), rendering the philosopher king the least miserable, and the kallipolis the greatest form of

government. Thrasymachan justice recurs through the text as the reverse of Socrates' ideas, an inverted kallipolis used as a blueprint to construct its opposite number.

Each class of people comprising the kallipolis hews to a separate definition of justice. Whether they follow Cephalan, Polemarchan, or Thrasymachan justice is dictated by the work to which they are naturally suited. Those who took to the training in music and poetry but were not suited to the physical training required to achieve guardianhood instead became cobblers and merchants, paying their debts and telling the truth. The guardians, equally gentle and spirited, harmed the enemies of the kallipolis and benefited its friends. These rules and patterns set down to define justice within the kallipolis benefit not the ruler, but the kallipolis itself. These ideals are restated through Books VII and IX, in which the decline of the kallipolis is used as a framework to test Polemarchan, Cephalan, and Thrasymachan governmental models. The result of these microcosmic thought experiments shows that each form of government is farther from the initial conception of the kallipolis—"justice will be admitted to be the having and doing what is a man's own, and belongs to him" (434). In addition, it is demonstrated that Socratic justice remains the most viable of the forms presented.

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Plato. *Republic.* Trans. G.M.A. Grabe. Ed. C.D.C. Reeve. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992.

Evaluation: *In this essay, Ben explores how the definitions of justice found in Books I and II of the* Republic *inform the same. Ben's interpretation is novel. Nowhere in the professional literature have I seen the thesis that he develops, namely that each of the three conceptions of justice formulated in Book I apply to one of the three classes of the kallipolis (the beautiful or just city). Ben makes a plausible argument for this very interesting and enlightening interpretation of one of the classic texts of Western philosophy.*

The Underrepresentation of Women in the Science Community

Daniel Mehmel
Course: English 102 (Composition)
Instructor: Pearl Ratunil

Assignment: *Each student developed an eight- to ten-page research project, after writing a research proposal presenting the intended topic and preparing an annotated bibliography of sources evaluated with regard to their suitability for the project.*

Research Proposal

Carl Sagan's book *Contact* portrays the struggle many women face when pursuing a career in science, particularly in astronomy and physics. Themes of gender discrimination and the underrepresentation of women in science are clearly demonstrated throughout the book. One key example is when Sagan's main character Ellie is admonished by her stepfather, John Staughton, for her desire to understand how radios and electronics work:

> Staughton had made it clear that an interest in radio and electronics was unseemly for a girl, that it would not catch her a husband, that understanding physics was for her a foolish and aberrational notion. 'Pretentious', he called it. She just didn't have the ability. This was an objective fact that she might as well get used to. (Sagan 12, 13)

The term "objective fact" is used to describe men's commonly held beliefs of the 1960s and 70s that women were limited to being housewives, secretaries, and school teachers, and were incapable of becoming scientists, doctors, or physicists. In Staughton's mind, women's inability to grasp the complex knowledge of the higher sciences was an "objective fact," a fact no one could dispute, and in his mind, not just his own subjective opinion. The statement her stepfather makes that it would be "unseemly for a girl" displays his level of discomfort at having his stepdaughter dabble in what would have been labeled as the interests of a boy. His discomfort could be compared to the way modern-day parents might feel to have their son interested in playing with dolls. Staughton goes so far as to call it "pretentious" and cites Ellie's lack of ability. This harsh judgment on what was, at the time, just a young girl's hobby, could have discouraged Ellie from continuing her pursuit of science. Instead, her response was one of anger, and this early bias is what possibly drove her to pursue challenges with greater determination.

Throughout history, women have been perceived as inferior to men, especially in the scientific and academic arenas. What are some of the obstacles that women face when choosing a career path in the sciences, like astronomy and physics? Have social roles changed over time, for the better? Why is there a perception that women cannot succeed in the scientific community? Lastly, how do early childhood experiences shape women's career decisions as they grow up? In this paper, I will discuss reasons why women are discouraged from pursuing careers in the sciences, therefore being underrepresented in the scientific community, and the challenges they face excelling to higher levels in the scientific community.

Annotated Bibliography

Barthelemy, Ramo'n S., Megan L. Grunert, and Charles R. Henderson. "The Graduate Research Field Choice of Women in Academic Physics and Astronomy: A Pilot Study." ***AIP Conference Proceedings*** **113.1 (2013): 66-69.** ***Academic Search Complete.*** **Web. 27 Feb. 2013.**

This article gives statistical data on percentages of women in the fields of study such as physics education research and astronomy. The authors' study seeks to understand the research subfield choice of women in academic physics and astronomy at large research universities. The authors provide their evidence through in-depth interviews. These interviews have not shown why women chose their graduate research field but have shown that positive experiences prior to college are bringing these women to physics, while supportive advisors and collaboration among students are encouraging these women to persist.

Griffin, Elizabeth. "Descending the Career Ladder." ***Astronomy & Geophysics*** **43.6 (2002): 6.17-6.18.** ***Academic Search Complete.*** **Web. 8 Apr. 2013.**

This article discusses the difficulty women and minorities have climbing the corporate ladder in scientific fields. Griffin notes that because most research work given to women is done through "short term contracts" (6.17), women tend to fade away from academia, which is perceived as "giving up" (6.18). Griffin argues that the "giving up" (6.18) is a false persona because women will instead choose to leave not because the work is too hard or unimaginative but because of the stress impact of having to continue to obtain "short term grants" (6.17). Therefore, women choose to leave on their own terms to save some dignity. Griffin's evidence is given through other peer-reviewed articles analyzing employment policies and statistical numbers of women and minorities in high-rank positions in the scientific communities.

Kohlstedt, Sally Gregory. "Sustaining Gains: Reflections On Women In Science And Technology In 20th-Century United States[1]." ***NWSA Journal*** **16.1 (2004): 1-26.** ***Literary Reference Center.*** **Web. 27 Feb. 2013.**

In this article, Kohlstedt points out that the inconsistent patterns of women's participation in science and technology are due to social, economic, and intellectual obstacles. The author argues that while since the 1960s, the percentages of women in the sciences have steadily grown, they are still vastly outnumbered by men in these scientific fields of study. Kohlstedt's evidence is given through a number of graphs, quantitative surveys, and individual stories to describe the percentage growth of women in the science community. Kohlstedt's evidence has impact in terms of career progression for women in the science and technology fields of work.

Sheffield, Suzanne Le-May. ***Women and Science: Social Impact and Interaction.*** **Santa Barbara, Calif: ABC-CLIO, 2004. Print.**

This book gives the view of women's place in the scientific community throughout the past 300 years and analyzes the impact that social attitudes toward women had in determining which areas of scientific study were deemed proper for women to work in. The author uses historical evidence such as dates of discoveries and documents written by notable female scientists, such as Marie Curie, to describe work and home life as well as the challenges they faced as women scientists. Sheffield assesses the current state of women in science in an effort to attract more women to scientific professions. The evidence given is compelling and well documented.

Walker, Helen. "She Is An Astronomer." ***Astronomy & Geophysics*** **50.3 (2009): 3.25.** ***Academic Search Complete.*** **Web. 8 Apr. 2013.**

The article documents the first-ever resolution passed by the International Astronomical Union (IAU) for female astronomers in Great Britain. Most of the article aims to encourage and support equal opportunities for men and women in astronomy. Walker makes the distinction that the problems for women in astronomy are more intense than in other professional fields of work. Her evidence is supported through a website Walker set up that gathers profile data on women in the astronomy field. When visiting Walker's website, I found her statistical evidence lacking depth in numbers of profiles, not capturing the full scope of the problem.

The Underrepresentation of Women in the Science Community

Since 1970, women have made dramatic gains in science as a whole, but in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, women are largely underrepresented and are concentrated in lower-paying technical occupations. Although the gender gaps are slowly closing, the absolute number does not tell the whole story. While women are earning 50 percent of the science degrees, women are still underrepresented in the STEM fields, with only approximately 30 percent of degrees earned. Also, men are ranked higher and paid better than their female counterparts for doing the same job. In almost every field, men's weekly median earnings were approximately 20 percent higher than women's (Kohlstedt 16). While improvements in many areas have been made since the Equal Opportunity Employment Act was passed in 1964, the under-representation of women in STEM is still a prevalent issue that women who are trying to break those stereotypes face today. In his novel, *Contact*, Carl Sagan uses his main character, Ellie, as an illustration of the problem of under-representation of women in the STEM fields of study and work. Ellie is a prime example of a woman who overcomes the many obstacles women face in order to succeed in the science community.

There are many difficulties that women face when trying to succeed in STEM fields of study and work. At a young age, women are exposed to activities and interests their parents deem appropriate for little girls. On the flipside, girls are often steered away from activities and interests their parents consider to be too masculine, including science, math, and technology. Technology-based toys that hone children's science and spatial skills are often gender-oriented for boys. Sheffield writes, "Girls need to be given the opportunity to learn the skills that boys have acquired through gender-oriented toys" (Sheffield 191). Clearly, the underrepresentation of women in science stems all the way back to early childhood. In *Contact*, Sagan breaks this model, through Ellie, who is interested in astronomy, electronics, and other areas of science. As a young girl, Ellie faces disapproval from her stepfather, John Staughton, for her interests:

> Staughton had made it clear that an interest in radio and electronics was unseemly for a girl, that it would not catch her a husband, that understanding physics was for her a foolish and aberrational notion. 'Pretentious,' he called it. She just didn't have the ability. This was an objective fact that she might as well get used to. (Sagan 12, 13)

The term "objective fact" is used to describe men's commonly held beliefs of the 1960s and 1970s that women were limited to being housewives, secretaries, and school teachers, and were incapable of becoming scientists, doctors, or physicists. In Staughton's mind, women's inability to grasp the complex knowledge of the higher sciences was an "objective fact," a fact no one could dispute, and in his mind, this was not just his own subjective opinion. The statement her stepfather makes, that it would be "unseemly for a girl," displays his level of discomfort at having his stepdaughter dabble in what would have been labeled as the interests of a boy. His discomfort could be compared to the way modern-day parents might feel to have their son interested in playing with dolls. Staughton goes so far as to call it "pretentious" and cites Ellie's lack of ability. This harsh judgment on what was, at the time, just a young girl's hobby, could have discouraged Ellie from continuing her pursuit of science. Instead, her response was one of anger, and this early bias is what possibly drove her to pursue challenges with greater determination.

This problem of underrepresentation of women in science begins to take root in girls at a young age with the perpetuation of gender stereotypes. According to Afaf Gadalla, author of "Attracting Girls into Physics," "Girls are treated differently than boys at home and in society in ways that often hinder their chances for success" (213). Anna Borg agrees,

> Boys may be more boisterous, drawing more of the teacher's attention and the girls, encouraged by the etiquette of most cultures, wait patiently for their turns. Such early educational experiences combined with messages that science is "hard" and not for girls, may encourage girls to opt out as soon as participation in the subject becomes optional. (7)

Borg is reaffirming this stance with the word "etiquette," stating that women are taught to be quiet, while boys are

excused from these behaviors because they are boys. Borg also mentions "patience," which brings to light girls waiting to be called upon or answered, whereas boys and men rush to the foreground to be heard. These small reactions can have a major impact on young women's lives. Sagan shows how the opinion of others can have a negative effect on the decisions of young minds. In Ellie's case, being scolded for tinkering with scientific hobbies perpetuated her to anger, and yet she perseveres in her love for understanding electronics and science.

Another wall women in science face is the lack of support and respect from their male peers. Sagan shows that when Ellie was a student, she was ignored by her male classmates. She was just as capable and intelligent as they, yet her comments and ideas were invalidated because of her female gender. Sagan writes,

> She set out to broaden her education, to take as many courses as possible apart from her central interests in mathematics, physics, and engineering. But there was a problem with her central interests. She found it difficult to discuss physics, much less debate it, with her predominantly male classmates. At first they paid a kind of selective inattention to her remarks. There would be a slight pause, and then they would go on as if she had not spoken. Occasionally they would acknowledge her remark, even praise it, and then again continue undeflected. (22)

It can be seen that Sagan is emphasizing the obstacles that women face in communication with the opposite sex regarding STEM subjects. The phrase "difficult to discuss" indicates female apprehension to interject opinions after being ignored. A lack of communication with others, especially those who are peers, can provide unwanted stress in already fast-paced, high-stress environments. This uneasiness preserves a barrier between the two sexes. Schiebinger agrees,

> Men's and women's discomfort with each other may have to do with the fact that men and women as groups tend to talk about different things. Men talking to men may discuss business, sports, public politics, and hobbies. Women talking to women discuss companions, friends, children, clothing, health, and perhaps also their situation as women in a particular profession. (83)

This "discomfort" explains how men often discuss research outside of the lab, with the conversation usually preceded by talk of sports and the like, thus excluding women. Being that most of women's colleagues in science are men, women also find themselves left out of social situations where discussions of possible research opportunities often take place. This can limit their chances to network and further their careers.

Women who succeed in the STEM fields have found ways to adapt to their mostly male surroundings. Sagan lets readers in on a little secret for how Ellie copes with being a female scientist. "Part of it--but only a part--she knew was due to the softness of her voice. So she developed a physics voice, a professional voice: clear, competent, and many decibels above conversational" (Sagan 22). Ellie's "physics voice" clearly demonstrates how her ordinary voice was not suitable for her professional life; the fact that Ellie had to change herself shows that the world's sexist beliefs made others incapable of accepting the person she truly was. Her voice also being "decibels above conversational" emphasizes that Ellie was fighting to make her voice heard through the barriers of gender discrimination. Sagan showcases what many female students who venture into predominantly male fields of study have endured. Schiebinger affirms this notion: "Women also tend to speak in conspicuously higher voices than men, a distinct liability in a culture that lends authority to the lower male voice" (81). Men often display chauvinistic qualities when dealing with women, and Sagan's character Ellie, like many other women, is forced to adapt to make her voice heard as a woman in a man's world.

Unfortunately, women not only experience gender discrimination from men, but women can also experience discrimination from their own gender as well. Sagan writes, "Her competence and delight in science were taken as rebukes by many otherwise capable young women. But a few looked on her...as a role model" (23). As it was common in the past that women were not allowed to excel in predominantly male studies, Sagan shows both negative and positive reactions from the female gender when one of their own succeeds beyond the norm. The word "rebukes" demonstrates the disapproval other women had for Ellie. Was it jealousy? Or was gender discrimination against women being perpetuated by women? In many cases, gender stereotypes against women are just as

entrenched in women's minds as men's. Sheffield claims, "Men and women in positions of power keep women out, and in turn, women themselves internalize the social norms against women's participation in science, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy" (201). Looking closely at the phrase "internalize the social norms," Sheffield is pointing out that women are told what their place is by men, and women in turn then tell other women what their place is, which creates a revolving cycle of sexist social norms.

The underrepresentation of women in STEM is exacerbated by gender discrimination by both genders against women in the process of hiring and granting promotions. According to Naomi Ellemers,

> Consequently, experimental research has revealed that such stereotypes may result in a preference for male candidates over female candidates for promotion, even when judges are aware of the fact that the applicants are equally qualified for the job....Likewise, a recent experimental study among academic psychologists revealed that male as well as female judges preferred a male over a female job applicant when both had an identical record. (4)

When analyzing the word "stereotypes," this is referring to the preconceived idea that women are somehow less capable than men, even though evidence shows there is no significant difference in either gender's performance on the job. This gender stereotype puts female academics at a great disadvantage in terms of professional achievement and advancement. Furthermore, this sexism is brought to light by subtle biases from both men and women superiors viewing women as less competent than their male counterparts. These biases are not deliberate, but are often an unconscious result of preconceived notions being passed down through the generations of social exchange. "Past studies indicate that people's behavior is shaped by implicit or unintended biases, stemming from repeated exposure to pervasive cultural stereotypes" (Handelsman 16474). This bias plays into the myth that women don't care for or are not good at scientific research, especially in the physical sciences.

Even the methods of hiring in the sciences are biased against women. When women are able to procure employment, research facilities typically give them "short term contracts" (Griffin 6.17) to work on. Those "short term contracts" last for only about two to three years, pay less than longer research projects, tend to keep women out of the ranks for promotions, and stall their careers. Furthermore, those contracts do not give women enough time to advance one area of research or build up a group. This causes a dissatisfactory outlook from women who are fighting against sexism and the trap of a "glass ceiling." "Such claims of discrimination against women are consistent with claims of glass ceilings, reduction of authorship credit and pay for comparable work, smaller laboratory space, and fewer research resources" (Ceci 1). This discrimination is only one of the causes for women leaving the STEM communities. Helen Walker agrees "There is indeed a 'leaky pipe' with women dropping out of astronomy (and science in general) at each stage" (3.25). With each progression in the science hierarchy, fewer and fewer women are able to break through the "glass ceiling" into upper management jobs. This is a constant reminder that women are underrepresented in the physical sciences.

Moreover, their careers can often be disrupted by child-bearing, which can make it extremely difficult to return to the strenuous levels of scientific research. This becomes increasingly difficult for women in their thirties, as their biological clocks continue to run down. More and more women take time off from their careers in order to have children, only to find they are unable to get back into their career only a few years later. Taking a break from research and publishing has serious consequences in the scientific field, resulting in greater difficulty for women to receive grants for their work. Walker writes, "Astronomy, more than many disciplines, expect[s] a mobile work force, travelling the world on two- or three-year contracts. The next job often depends on the publication record from the last, so a career break makes a big impact" (3.25). In *Contact*, Sagan writes about how Ellie was in a relationship with a man who wanted to marry her and have children with her. As a scientist, Sagan is apathetic to the difficulties that women who put their career on hold face in order to have children, especially in the scientific communities. Sagan illustrates this with Ellie's response to her boyfriend's desires. "'A baby?' she asked him. 'But I'd have to leave school. I

have years more before I'm done. If I had a baby, I might never go back to school'" (25). The phrase "never go back" implies the understanding that having a baby would change everything in Ellie's life. This potentially huge responsibility would put her career at risk. Ellie chooses her career over marriage and family, breaking things off with her boyfriend in order to better pursue her passion for science. While women often have to choose between marriage and family or a career, men are free from the burden of having to choose and are able to have it all without sacrificing one for the other.

There are signs of hope that the barriers women face regarding gender discrimination in the sciences are being broken. Organizations like the US National Science Foundation have mandated that women from large research institutions be able to attend their conferences or have those facilities face the consequences of pulled funding. Women are now allowed to sue if they feel they are being discriminated against by higher learning institutions (Sheffield 201). These are just a few examples of steps being made to make STEM jobs more desirable and obtainable for women. Another key to success is moving beyond the historical issues and confronting current ones: like equal pay for services, better grants awarded, and longer terms of employment for completion of research.

Carl Sagan's character, Ellie, is a realistic example of what women who wish to succeed in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics must face. The under-representation of women in the sciences is due to a variety of obstacles such as women being treated differently as young girls, a lack of support and respect from male peers, and gender stereotyping not only from men, but from women as well. Carl Sagan paints an accurate picture of what it is like for women who struggle to work in male-dominated fields of study to overcome these barriers. Underrepresentation of women in scientific communities continues to be a problem today, although steps are being taken to help women overcome these obstacles.

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Evaluation: *Daniel's entire research project, from start to finish, is exemplary. His research proposal presents a fine example of how a good research question focuses the secondary research in his annotated bibliography. His annotations gave excellent assessments of each source with an eye to his research question. Finally, the research paper demonstrates how to synthesize research with analysis and argument effectively. It is an honor to have all three phases of a research project represented in the* Anthology.

Extraordinary: Gabriel Garcia Marquez's "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings"

Kristjana Mitrollari
Course: English 102 (Composition)
Instructor: Maggie McKinley

Assignment: *Write a literary research paper.*

Though "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings" is only one of Gabriel Garcia Marquez's many short fictional stories, it resembles his earlier works in genre and characters. The author was born in Aracataca, Colombia, and raised by his grandparents, who had an enormous influence on his novels and other works of literature. One biographer states, "Garcia Marquez believes he learned everything he knows by the time he was eight: his grandfather was a masterful storyteller, and Garcia Marquez grew up fascinated by the tales and myths about the region and its people that his grandfather loved to tell him" (Besner). His grandfather was a colonel in the army and led quite an interesting life, which young Garcia Marquez would hear endless tales about. Some critics believe this is the reason behind the presence of wise or magical old men in numerous works of fiction written by Garcia Marquez. His grandmother, on the other hand, and her many sisters, were very religious and believed in ghosts, omens, and supernatural phenomena. The elderly couple shaped their grandson's future by unintentionally inspiring him to create a new genre called magical realism (Besner). By putting this new style into effect, "Garcia Marquez not only combines realistic details with fantastic ones, but seems to give them both equal weight, an equal claim to reality or truth in the reader's mind" (Faulkner). By combining fantasy and reality to produce magical realism, the author opens up the door of endless possibilities and interpretations of "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings." The confusion in this unfamiliar genre simulates real life and forces the reader to accept impossible facts, like flying old men. This deep and detailed imagery of men with wings and tarantulas the size of rams intensifies the details of the tale. Garcia Marquez uses characterization as well to show the ungratefulness of the couple who imprisons the old man, as well as the ignorance of the villagers. The genre of the story (magical realism) along with ambiguity, imagery, and characterization, emphasize that humans are too self-involved to see the magic of life, even when it falls into their own back yard.

Starting with the old man with enormous wings falling into Pelayo's and Elisenda's back yard, the story quickly begins to resemble a fairy tale: the effect of magical realism helps the author establish a dream-like world that encourages the use of other literary devices to deliver his message. The story opens up with vague descriptions like "on the third day of rain," and "the world had been sad since Tuesday" (Garcia Marquez 334). By not setting a time frame for his story, Garcia Marquez is able to blend fantasy with everyday life, creating this interesting genre. Using timeless and peculiar descriptions with familiar weather and days, the author sets the tone of this uncommon fictional narrative. Though it seems magical, "if we approach the story expecting to be charmed by a fairy tale, the factual descriptions seem 'too real'; they spoil the 'magical' effect we hope for, by allowing the unpleasant and inconvenient details of everyday life to intrude on our imaginative land" ("A Very Old Man" 326). This quote perfectly demonstrates how the story would lose its charm and message if it wasn't for this specific genre. It suggests that the author's purpose is hidden in the magical realism, in the fusion of magic and reality. The old man himself is a concoction of a fairy-tale creature and a normal man. The reader learns to associate something familiar (a man) with something fictional (wings), which blurs the lines of reality and pulls him or her deeper into the story: "thus, the Magical Realism of Garcia Marquez's style – a blurring of the division between the real and the fantastic – is used to underscore the notion (indeed, the seeming contradiction) that the irrational is a natural part of life and must be accepted on its own terms" (Slomski). The vitality of magical realism to the story is supported by Slomski, who argues that even though reality and fantasy are opposing ideas, they can coexist. The reader has no choice but to accept that life is as unexpected and mysterious as a fairy-tale.

These qualities allow Garcia Marquez to employ ambiguity throughout his fairy-tale-like story to prove the disguised magic in life. Vague yet vivid descriptions enlighten the reader of the smallest detail on the man's wings. However, the origins of the man are hidden. The audience never discovers where the man emerges from; however, the couple and villagers definitely seemed too self-involved to figure out the truth. Different minds had different interpretations, and after failing to communicate with the poor, wounded man, "they were making all kinds of conjectures concerning the captive's future," perhaps "mayor of the world," "a five star general in order to win all wars," and leader of "a race of winged wise men who could take charge of the universe" (Garcia Marquez 335). By releasing a few, minute details, Garcia Marquez steers readers away from the big question: who is the winged man? He distracts them with less important facts not only to provide mystery associated with fantasy, but also to highlight the disinterest these villagers have in the unusual creature. By focusing on the public's interpretations of the angel instead of the angel himself, the author is mirroring them: he is portraying that the villagers only care about their own thoughts, and not reality, and pointing that out to the reader. The winged man will always be a mystery, but at first, "to the townsfolk, as to the reader, he immediately presents a problem of interpretation: what is he? How should he be treated" (Janes)? However, after a while it becomes "meaningless: he comes and he goes, yet just as the oddity of the angel impels the townsfolk to interpret, so the oddity of the story impels the reader to repeat their activity, interpreting them as well as the angel" (Janes). As Regina Janes points out in her critical essay of "An Old Man with Enormous Wings," interpretation in this specific story takes on many levels: the interpretation of the angel by the villagers, the interpretation of the villagers by the reader, and the interpretation of the angel by the reader as well. This confusing maze of interpretation not only adds to the ambiguity of the tale, but it also conveys an immensely important message: anything may be possible, but predicting and analyzing everything in life sucks the magic out of it. The magic lies in the mystery, and mystery returns when the readers realize that they never see the story from the angel's point of view. The story is told from an outsider's point of view to promote ambiguity because, "in works of realism (and many other forms) ambiguity is often used as an intentional effect, to make a story seem less "story-like" and more like life itself. It reflects the understanding that real life is far more uncertain than the stories in books, and often forces readers to choose among several, equally possible explanations of events" ("A Very Old Man" 327). The excerpt from a book of literary device analyses compares the enigma of the angel to the unexpected and incredible surprises of life. If too much time is spent trying to interpret unusual occurrences in life, the real magic will pass by and will never be enjoyed. Life is supposed to be complicated and random, but that is where the beauty of it lies, and if one wastes hours or weeks weighing out all the options, time is due to run out. Unfortunately, the villagers and the couple are blinded by their greed and fail to see the magic of the angel and the prosperity, joy, and new friends he has blessed them with.

The author incorporates blessings and magic in the detailed imagery as well, to prove that the smallest elements can cause a considerable impact. The old man's wings are described more than any other item in the story. Furthermore, the old man is described as more human than heavenly: "the old man is described in imagery of earthly poverty and human weakness,

Student Reflections on Writing:
Kristjana Mitrollari

As an immigrant, writing papers in English was not my specialty. However, as I put more effort into my essays, formulating my thoughts in English became easier than my native language. Writing, for me, is the easy part. However, formulating my thoughts is another whole story. There has to be a balance between information and creativity. Every work I turn in for class always contains the elements that show my unique writing style. Every abstract and every research paper includes humor, creativity, or at least literary elements; otherwise, who would want to read it?

contradicting traditional heavenly stereotypes. Even the birds with which he is compared to are ignoble ones" ("A Very Old Man" 326). Due to magical realism and blurred lines between fantasy and reality, the wings are described as decayed and decrepit. The narrator has no mercy when he describes the wings: "his huge buzzard wings, dirty and half-plucked, were forever entangled in the mud" (Garcia Marquez 334). By describing the angel with degradable adjectives, Marquez makes fantasy and reality blend into one person. He combines the grace of angels with the grotesque qualities of insects, hinting that there are two sides to all individuals and situations. The author suggests that despite unlikeable traits, every human being possesses power and beauty. Additionally, "the syntax of the sentence which reveals the old man's wings also diminishes rather than ennobles him....The supernatural is described as something ordinary or, even more precisely, foul and repellent" ("A Very Old Man" 339). By downplaying the magic of the old man, the author is able to help readers see Pelayo's and Elisenda's perspective and at the same time remind them that the angel may be miraculous. The contrast of beautiful and repelling descriptions is seen throughout the story. After being cooped up in the hen house for so long, the villagers bother the old man, and his wings stir up "a whirlwind of chicken dung and lunar dust and a gale of panic that [does] not seem to be of this world" (Garcia Marquez). In this case, the lunar dust is a contrasting phrase, as "lunar" seems to suggest heavenly origins, and "dust" is not often considered pleasant or desirable. "Chicken dung" creates an unattractive and disgusting image as well. Likewise, in the beginning of the story, Garcia Marquez contrasts the sea and the sky. "Sea and sky were a single ash-gray thing and the sands of the beach, which on March nights glimmered like powdered light, had become a stew of mud and rotten shellfish" (Garcia Marquez 334). By using vile vocabulary such as "ash-gray thing," "stew of mud," and "rotten shellfish," the author juxtaposes the diction hinting at an otherworldly beauty like "glimmered" and "powdered light." These examples of contradiction help blend reality with supernatural, celestial traits and attract the reader's attention. By incorporating opposing imagery into the story, Garcia Marquez is pointing out that humans fail to see the beauty in everyday life, just like Pelayo, Elisenda, and the rest of the characters in the tale.

Most of the characters in "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings" refuse to accept anything but their own opinions of the angel due to being preoccupied with their own selfish needs. The characters in this short story cling to beliefs and make fast judgments about the new creature. Father Gonzaga is the only character who does not immediately jump to conclusions at first glance of the old man. However, he fails to fully examine the man with wings and becomes distracted by the letters he sends to his superiors. Some critics believe that Garcia Marquez criticizes the Catholic church or religion in general by revealing that the leaders of this religion were most interested "if the prisoner had a navel, if his dialect had any connection with Aramaic, how many times he could fit on the head of a pin" (Garcia Marquez 336). Nonetheless, the author is criticizing all of humanity along with the church for creating and following such concrete laws about indefinite and uncertain phenomena. Father Gonzaga ruled out the possibility of the old man being an angel solely on the fact that he did not speak Latin. Latin is a man-made language, and it is only the language of God because humans decided so. Similarly, it does not matter whether the old man had a navel, neither did his size or the language he spoke. Garcia Marquez is judging humans for mandating unreasonable laws for the unknown. "Critics even see a reflection of themselves – the figure of the cultural authority, whose profession makes him unwilling to admit the obvious limits of his understanding" ("A Very Old Man" 324). By connecting Father Gonzaga to non-fictional cultural authorities, this critic displays that some professionals may be undeserving of the titles they hold, and regular individuals should not trust an authority figure without proof. Though many of the villagers hold their own beliefs about the angel, the priest patiently withholds his conjectures and places all of his trust into his superiors, only to be let down by their procrastination. While awaiting the letters, he forgets about the angel and is not mentioned anymore in the story. The disinterest of the church on such a related and miraculous matter shows the tendency of human beings to become engulfed in trivial things and ignore the unprecedented and extraordinary phenomena of life.

Likewise, Pelayo and Elisenda ignore the rules of hospitality and focus on the negative aspects, feeling that the old man was but a mere annoyance in their lives from

the beginning of the story until its end, consuming their eggplant mush and wasting their hen house. After the discovery of the angel, their original plan involved him floating in the middle of the sea until he died. The only idea powerful enough to avoid death implied greed, and it belonged to Elisenda: she charged admission for villagers to see the old man imprisoned. Once they unlocked the hen house and allowed the old man to sleep in the house, Elisenda felt that "it was awful living in that hell full of angels" (Garcia Marquez 338). Even though the old man gave the couple prosperity and happiness, their opinion of him never changed. Pelayo and Elisenda used their new wealth to buy extravagant clothes, improve their house, and realize their dreams, and never thanked the old man for the miraculous gift he gave them. When they remodeled their home, they even put up thick iron bars to keep other angels out. The author characterizes the couple this way in order to demonstrate that humans are greedy, selfish creatures that hurt others for their own benefit. He may have made the old man an enigma simply to prove that he was patient, understanding, and generous *because* of the fact that he was not human. Though the mystery was not revealed by the end of the short story, Elisenda paid no mind, and was only grateful to see the angel leave. "Then he was no longer an annoyance in her life but an imaginary dot on the horizon of the sea" (Garcia Marquez 338). Even though she should feel happy for the old man being able to fly again, the end focuses on her struggle and the final relief of the burden (the angel) off of her shoulders. Even though the old man is responsible for her wealth, she thinks of him as an annoyance. Even though humans witness huge acts of kindness every day, we shrug them off and continue complaining about other problems. Marquez wants his readers to see our faults and learn from the couple's mistakes. By characterizing them in this fashion, he helps readers understand why life's unexpected surprises can be a blessing in disguise. However, Pelayo and Elisenda are too blinded by greed.

Similarly, the unusually large crowds that come from all over the continent to see the angel resemble Pelayo's and Elisenda's characters: selfish and greedy. They travel thousands of miles to witness the angel performing miracles. They never stop to question the old man's wings or try to rescue him from the dirty hen house he is imprisoned in. They hurt him, by branding him and using other tactics in order to rile him up and get him to perform these miracles. The narrator states, "even the most merciful threw stones at him, trying to get him to rise so they could see him standing" (Garcia Marquez 336). This displays how self-centered and uncaring the villagers were. By characterizing the townsfolk this way, Garcia Marquez tries to point out that humanity as a whole is egoistic and malevolent, that one would rather hurt another than be kind. We like to see ourselves as good, helpful, and beneficial; however, our animal ancestors allow us to be forceful and violent. Correspondingly, the villagers throw stones, pluck feathers, and brand the old man. Once they realize that the old man's patience is not wearing out, they move on to the next attraction, hoping to gain insight for themselves. No character in the story succeeds in grasping the magic the old man brings to the town. Though he did not perform the miracles the villagers were hoping for, he did make sunflowers grow out of a leper's sores, and he also made a blind man grow three new teeth. Perhaps the mistakes were due to a lack of communication. Either way, it is undeniable that the angel possessed some form of magic that everyone around him chooses to ignore:

> ...it seems that, once they get an idea into their heads, they willfully convince themselves of its truth and ignore any evidence to the contrary—unless a more appealing version of the truth comes along. Their folly is a kind of exaggerated ignorance, which Garcia Marquez uses consistently for comic effect; but in their unquestioning application of "conventional wisdom," and their stubborn faith in their own ideas, they reflect habits of mind that can be recognized in all cultures. ("A Very Old Man" 328)

This long, yet important idea illustrates the attitude of the townspeople. They are horribly gullible, choosing to invest all of their faith in untested ideas instead of exploring and making informed decisions. Though the author portrays the population as ignorant, it is not only for humor – it depicts humanity, and that all cultures have a religion or theory they believe in, no matter what. Garcia Marquez highlights that this ideology could be dangerous and

suggests that it limits individuals, making them closed-minded. Though the villagers are extremely stubborn, they are attracted to quick and flashy entertainment.

Normally, the ram-sized tarantula distracts the townsfolk with her uniqueness and catchy story, which is the only thing they desire--significance and communication. She steals the public's attention, proudly telling her tale. Her story is perfect: the villagers can easily relate to it and its lesson. "A spectacle like that, full of so much human truth and with such a fearful lesson, was bound to defeat without even trying that of a haughty angel who scarcely deigned to look at mortals" (Garcia Marquez 337). The previous quote makes the old angel seem like a snotty, supernatural being – at least that is how the villagers portrayed him. In addition to that, the quote also explains that the villagers would only listen to those they could relate to, those that communicated their tales well. They were disinterested in the old man because they had no way to connect with him, and therefore they tossed him to the side. The quote speaks volumes about Marquez's opinion of humanity. He conveys that humans only know how to relate to others' problems by relating back to their own, and will not bother to help unless the issue somehow satisfies themselves first. The villagers can understand the spider-woman and feel her pain, but, "in contrast, the old man makes no attempt to explain himself and seems to contradict all religious and folk beliefs about the nature of angels. His very existence raises disturbing questions, but he offers no reassuring answers" ("A Very Old Man" 325). The lack of communication from the old man is what murders his chances of popularity among the villagers. They are disappointed in the angel's weird "miracles" and the inability to discover his past. Though they spend a little time playing the guessing game, all the characters soon give up and become immensely involved in the promising story of the spider-woman, leaving the old man alone in his chicken coop. Their persistent ignorance inflicts pain on the angel, yet they pay no mind and move on to the next attraction.

While being stubborn and inflexible limits the human mind, fantasizing can cause an individual to become out of touch with reality. Therefore, magical realism contains the perfect balance of realistic and fantastic details, giving the reader the best of both worlds. "The author suggests that both 'ways of knowing' are valid, perhaps even necessary to achieving a balanced understanding. Magic seems to lie just beneath the surface of the story, waiting to break through, almost beyond the narrator's control" ("A Very Old Man" 328). Garcia Marquez helps individuals realize the hidden, surprising beauty of life that surrounds us. If one chooses to ignore this, life can never be an enjoyable experience; instead it will be dark, loveless, and stressful. However, with open hearts, kindness, and generosity, there is no limit to the beauty that can be unleashed, in ourselves and others. The author conveys that equalizing imagination and reality enables humans to truly enjoy the little things in life while also being rational and professional. Furthermore, similar to the plot of the story, magic rests behind every simple object, waiting to burst through. Life is full of endless possibilities, and everyone has to choose how to live it. Choose wisely.

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Evaluation: *Kristjana crafted a clear argument about the underlying message of "A Very Old Man With Enormous Wings," a difficult short story to interpret, and she provided a number of insightful close readings of passages throughout the paper, to support her overall analysis of the story's greater significance.*

Harper College Provectus Automata

NASA Student Launch Program - University Student Launch Initiative Post-Launch Assessment Review 2012-2013

Scott Mueller; Craig Babiarz; Christopher Wessel; Eric Meyers; Kevin Compton
Course: Independent Study 290 (Rocket and Payload Design and Deployment)
Instructor: Margaret Geppert

Assignment: *Members of the Harper Society of Engineers participated in the NASA University Student Launch Initiative (USLI) contest during the 2012-2013 school year. The goal of this competition was to have students launch a rocket carrying a scientific payload to an altitude of exactly 5,280 feet (1 mile) and have it return safely to Earth within a certain distance of the launch site. The stages of the competition mimicked the engineering process. Students had to apply to NASA to compete (the bid), design and test a prototype, document their progress via a number of papers and presentations, do community outreach, and finally launch their completed rocket at the main competition in Huntsville, Alabama, in April of 2013. The paper that follows is the final documentation of the entire project, submitted to NASA in May 2013, after the main launch in Huntsville.*

Evaluation: *The students did a very nice analysis of the rocket and all of the payloads involved. I was impressed by how much they learned about rocketry, design, and manufacturing during the competition. The amount of outreach they did was also outstanding. I was most impressed by the section on the lessons they learned about being overly ambitious at the start of the project. While I was pleased that they were able to meet most of their goals, it was good to see them acknowledge that they had to work very hard to do so.*

Harper College
Provectus Automata

NASA SLP-USLI
2012 – 2013
Post-Launch Assessment Review
May 6, 2013

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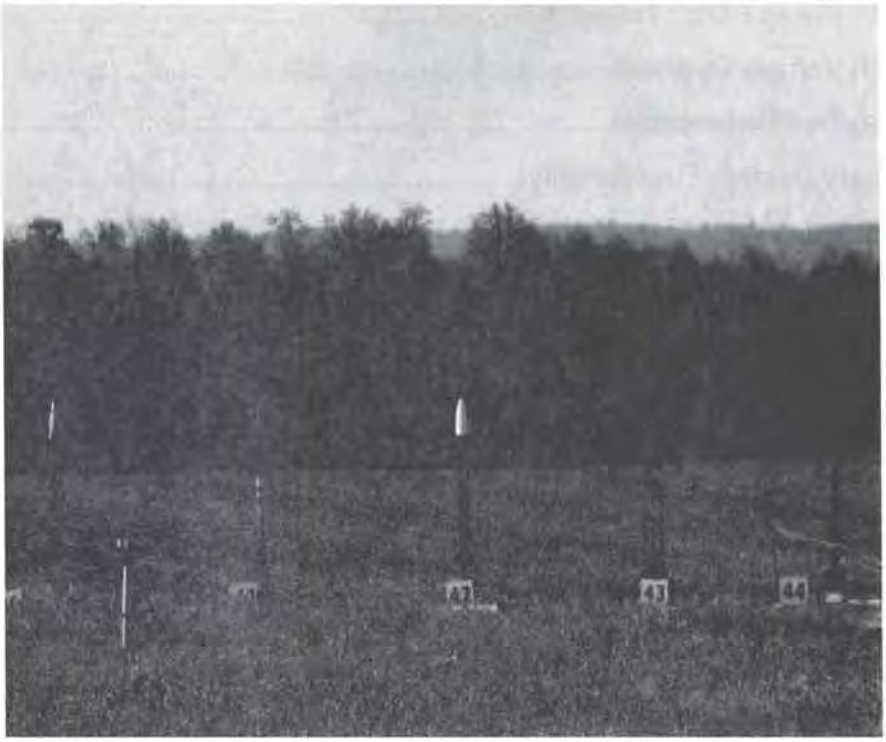


Figure 1: Launch Ready on Pad 42

1.1 Launch Vehicle Overview

Motor:	Cesaroni L1115
Height:	118" (with 2" of blunt body extension)
Diameter:	8" Primary with taper to 4"
Mass (on the pad):	51 lbm

1.1.1 Payload Descriptions

1.1.1.1 Energy Management System (EMS)

The EMS will be realized by varying the extension of a 1.5" diameter circular blunt body extending from an ogive nose that has been cut so as to have a flat 3" diameter face from which the extendible blunt body will protrude. A high torque Dynamixel servo and 4-bar linkage will be used to hold the blunt body in place during the flight. The degree to which this blunt body is extended will determine the drag coefficient of the nose. CFD had been conducted to determine the drag coefficients of the nose at various levels of

extension. This data will be later verified through field testing. Immediately prior to flight, atmospheric variables including wind and launch parameters such as launch rail angle will be measured and input to Rocksim to determine the coefficient of drag needed reach the desired apogee. Data collected from CFD and testing will determine the extension that will provide the needed drag coefficient.

1.1.1.2 Unmanned Ground Vehicle (UGV)

The Unmanned Ground Vehicle (UGV) payload was a robotics platform for teaching autonomous sensing, actuation, navigation, mechanical constraints, and embedded programming related to the field of robotics. The robot was selected to represent the deployment of a rover onto a planetary body. The quadruped robot monitored its efficiency of movement while traversing dynamic terrain. The rover's mobility and autonomy was controlled by the main processor module. Once the UGV landed, it used the GPS unit to head back towards the ground station while it relayed collected data. Ultrasonic sensors were used for obstacle avoidance, and an inertial measurement unit (IMU) with 9 degrees of freedom was utilized to maintain balance of the UGV platform. A current sensor took readings of the current flow in the UGV. The current readings were used by the UGV to adjust its walking gait for better efficiency. Efficiency meant lower current consumption while walking.

1.1.1.3 Science Mission Directorate (SMD)

The SMD payload included interfacing electronic sensors to embedded systems through hardware and software. The SMD collected various atmospheric data during the descent and ground operations of the mission. All of this data was transmitted to the ground station and recorded on micro SD card. The measurements that were taken included barometric pressure, relative humidity, temperature, solar irradiance, ultra-violet radiation, gamma ray detection, RGB color light sensing, and finally GPS coordinates.

1.2 Recovery System Functionality

All recovery systems functioned as intended with all ejection charges firing at the correct times and all parachutes deploying at their respective desired altitudes. Note that no issues were experienced in regard to the tangling of ejection charge wires as was seen at the team's previous launch. This problem was mitigated by the shortening of said wires.

1.3 Altimeter data

Data collected from the Raven3 and Stratologger altimeters recorded apogees of 5235 feet and 5236 feet, respectively. Altitude plots from these altimeters are included below. The vehicle experienced a maximum velocity of 577 ft/s at 4.26 seconds into the flight. The airframe descended under the drogue at a rate of 67 ft/s and under the main at 18 ft/s.

Note that both altitude graphs show a distinctive dip immediately following apogee. This dip resulted from an imperfect seal between the altimeters and the compartment where ejection charges were fired. Although attempts were made to better isolate the altimeters, it is evident that some gasses did enter the electronics bay.

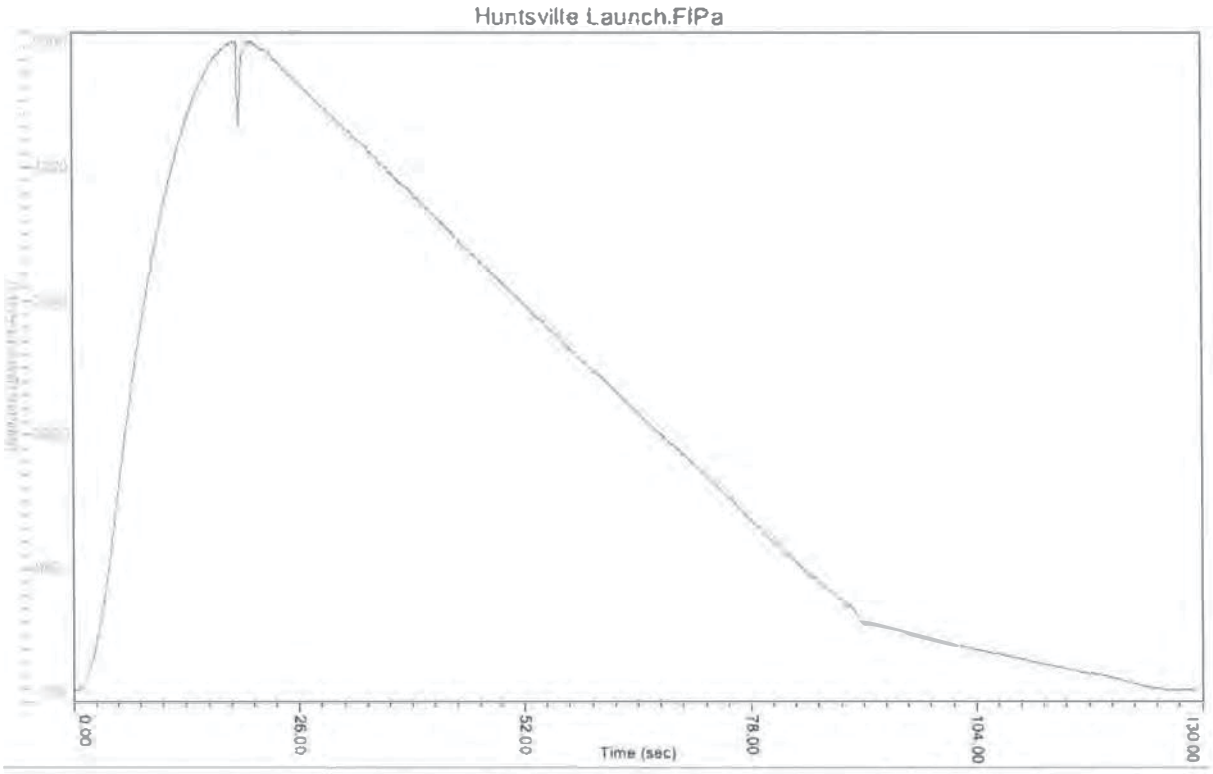


Figure 2: Raven3 Altitude Data

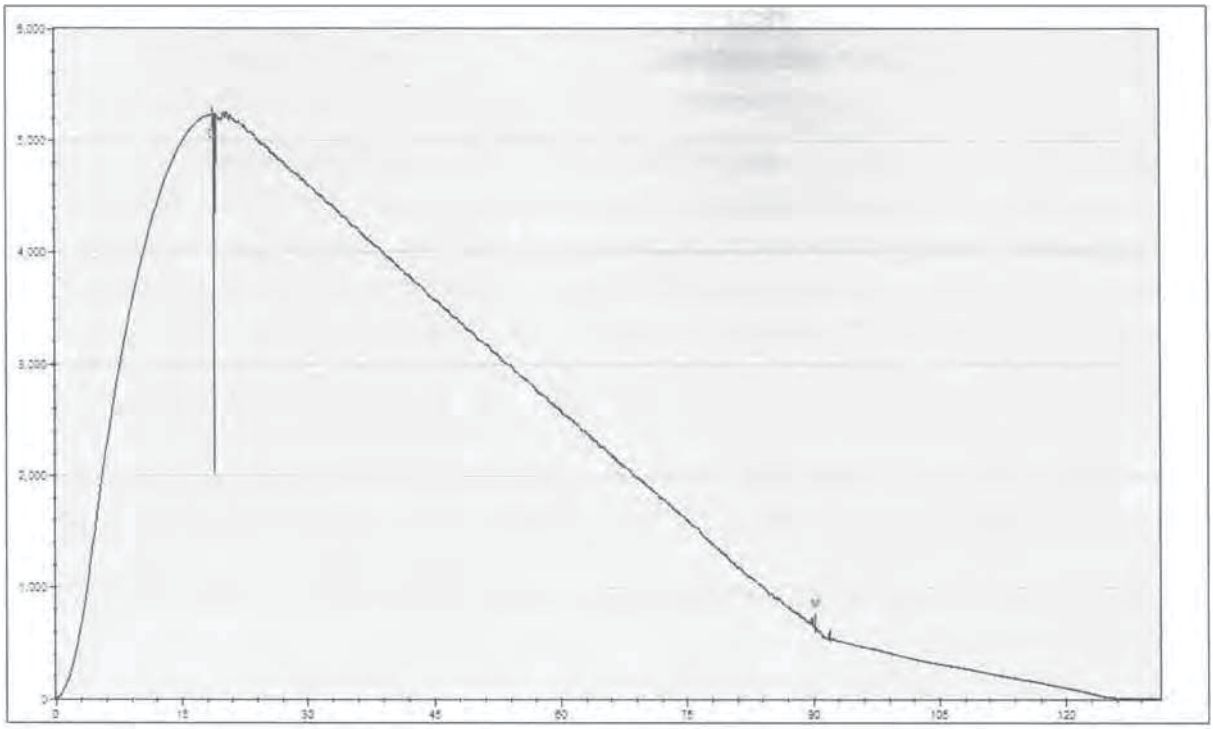


Figure 3: Stratologger Altitude Data

1.4 Drift Data

Drift was calculated using GPS coordinates taken at the launch site as well as at the landing site. Total drift was found to be 1850 feet. Note that the nose separated with the drogue from the rest of the airframe when the two main parachutes were deployed. After separation the nose landed within 50 feet of the airframe.

1.5 Data analysis and Results of Payloads

1.5.1 Energy Management System

Due to the team's inability to achieve a successful launch with the payloads prior to the competition flight in Huntsville, the team has been unable to determine the effect of various spike extensions on altitude. Ideally multiple launches at extensions in increments of 1/2" inch would have been conducted to reduce the effect of variations in motor impulse, wind velocity, and other launch parameters on altitude. For the competition launch the overall drag coefficient for the launch vehicle was determined using altitude data for a previous flight in which no problems were experienced during ascent. Using this data and Rocksim the team determined the rocket possessed a drag coefficient of 0.195. This was considerable lower than the values predicted by Open Rocket and Rocksim. As the team was unable to demonstrate stability at spike

extensions other than 2" due to recovery problems and general time contraints, the extension flown in Huntsville was kept at 2".

1.5.2 Unmanned Ground Vehicle

The UGV was able to walk at a rate of 10 inches per second while drawing a minimum amount of current. The amount of current drawn (averaged over the UGV's walking time) was 2.73 amps. This works out to 5.0505 watt-hours for the UGV's 10 minutes of operation. The batteries utilized in the UGV were capable of providing 6.66 watt-hours for the same 10 minute time frame.

The ultrasonic sensors performed as expected, allowing the UGV to avoid obstacles roughly the same size and larger than itself. The problem came from the fact no sensors were used on the legs, so often the UGV's legs would get stuck on smaller objects that the ultrasonic sensors did not detect. Sensors for detecting objects immediately around the leg and pressure sensors for the feet would have helped a great deal as then the UGV would have a sense of what it's legs might come in contact with, and when it's legs were on the ground.

1.5.3 Science Mission Directorate

Due to problems occurring with the micro SD card, data collection of the sensor values was not completed. The issue we found, during processor sleep, power cycling, and reset events, was that the file was left opened and was never closed if one of the stated events occurred. This prevented new data from being collected and corrupted the currently opened file. To prevent this from happening in the future, we had determined that an interrupt service routine (ISR) was needed to close out any opened files before the processor went to sleep, or reset event. In the event of power cycling, we should have had a "supercap" or "ultracap" as a short term power source. This would have allowed the processor to perform a brown-out reset event which could have been handled like a regular reset and called the ISR to close any open files.

1.6 Payload Science Value

1.6.1 Energy Management System

The potential for science value derived from the Energy Management System was quite high, though due to technical as well as time limitations this potential was not realized to the extent it could have been. The principle behind the EMS, blunt body dynamics, represents an area of aerodynamics whose understanding could aid in the design of aircraft, bridges, and buildings. The behavior of airflow around blunt surfaces is a complicated matter that is rather difficult to model. In undertaking the blunt body influenced EMS the team had hoped to develop a better understanding of how this

airflow was affected by varying conditions through primarily experimental testing. Additionally, the development of algorithms to control such a system would fall right under the field of control systems, an area with numerous important applications.

1.6.2 Unmanned Ground Vehicle

The scientific value of the quadruped rover was to simulate planetary exploration, investigate the use of legs for locomotion, and the power expenditure of a walking robot. Planetary exploration was performed by having the rover traverse the terrain from the landing site back towards the ground station by utilizing GPS. Investigating the use of legs for locomotion was tested by having the rover travel over different types of terrain and several inclinations. Walking speed was measured to identify efficient, yet fast walking gaits. Power consumption was a major concern with the UGV since walking robots use more power, due to more degrees of freedom from a wheeled robot. Power was measure with current sensors and the data was used in determining more efficient walking gaits for the UGV.

1.6.3 Science Mission Directorate

The scientific value of the SMD payload was the simulation of a science package being sent and landed on another planetary body. Several environmental factors were measured that included color light, ultraviolet radiation, and gamma radiation, along with many others. Color light, ultraviolet light, and gamma radiation were chosen because the results of the sensors can determine the suitability of human and vegetation habitation of a planet. The color of light can determine the type of vegetation that would best grow in the environment. Ultraviolet and gamma radiation sensing will inform future explorers how much radiation protection would be required for a human exploration.

1.7 Visual Observations

Ground observations of the launch revealed a perfectly executed recovery of the launch vehicle. All parachutes opened promptly when the airframe separated and at no point did any of the sections of the airframe collide. No Tangling of shock cords or shroud lines was seen. Upon inspection of the landing site it was confirmed that the launch vehicle incurred no damages during descent or landing.

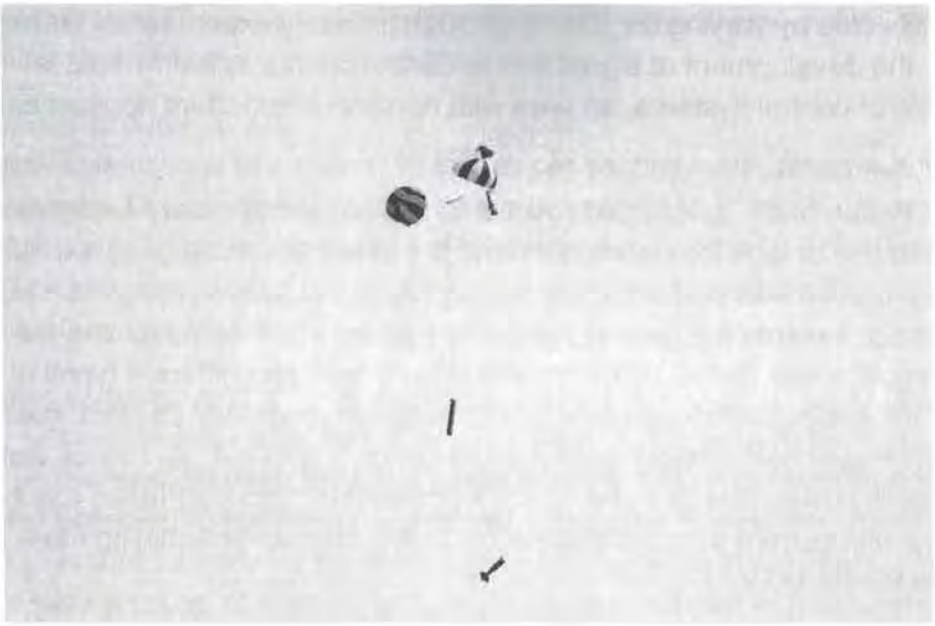


Figure 4: Recovery Phase

Figure 5: Landing

1.8 Lessons Learned

Provectus Automata learned various lessons through the design process of our rocket. The team learned how difficult it is to handle and integrate various payloads into a single launch vehicle following the various restrictions imposed by NASA and NAR. One of the hardest aspects of the project was attempting to communicate between the various subsystem teams to ensure everything went together correctly, and everyone was updated on the various changes that took place.

Attempting to tackle complex issues with little to no experience was also a challenge, which was demonstrated with the EMS. While simulations were run to calculate the CD of our blunt body nose cone, we were getting a coefficient far below a standard ogive nose, even with the simulation run with the average weather conditions and altitude of the launch field at Bragg's farm. After speaking with other teams, it was discovered that even for the most experienced users, CFD rarely finds a realistic coefficient of drag.

The rocket was constructed with almost exclusively with carbon fiber, although it greatly decreased our overall mass, it created quite a few issues. Handling the carbon dust was a concern for the team, which led to the use of HEPA filters and Tyvek suits. This cost was not initially accounted for, and added to the financial burden placed on the team. Attempting to manufacture a launch vehicle was a steep learning curve, with the cost of carbon fiber and the materials required to produce the pieces required high, there was little room for error.

Most of the team members of Provectus Automata were new to rocketry, which aided in a more open mind when it came to designing the rocket, but also issues with recovery. Recovery of a launch vehicle is generally a straight forward process, however, attempting to recover a walking rover adds a large amount of complexity. Initial plans for the recovery included igniters running through the Kevlar webbing to the UGV to release it from the parachute, another called for an altimeter on the UGV to release itself. After experimentation it was soon discovered that although the recovery appeared to work fine on paper, when it was physically tested it often failed. After much deliberation and simplification, the team went with a bag deployment which was suggested by a L3CC rocketeer. This recovery procedure worked flawlessly deploying the UGV mass simulant successfully.

Participating in this competition allowed the team to gather a firmer understanding of the design process, learning the value of communication, documenting and presenting the design and results, and integrating the various parts of the launch vehicle and payloads.

1.9 Educational Engagement Summary

Throughout the year the team compiled an overview of topics to discuss and actively engage students in various educational outreach activities. The majority of these topics were prepared with a middle school audience in mind. These topics included:

1) Basic Rocket Analysis (Center of Pressure, Center of Gravity)

2) Water Rockets (Designing, Building, and Launching)

3) Basic Aerodynamic Principles (Air flow, streamlines)

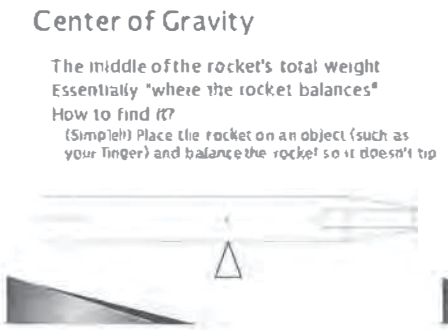
4) Basic Engineering Principles ("The Engineering Process")

5) Model Rocketry and High Powered Rocketry (Estes kits, rocketry basics)

Hands-On Activity Highlights:

Basic Rocket Analysis:

The team constructed a PowerPoint that explained very elementary ideas about rocket analysis to students in middle school. Some of these principles are shown below and also include stability margin, lift, drag, gravity, thrust and computer analysis software. The team engaged the students by having them each find the center of gravity and center of pressure of various rockets by using computer software for the CP and balancing for the CG.



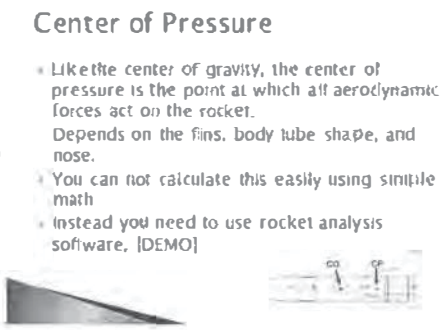


Figure 6: Outreach at Thomas Middle School in Arlington Heights

Water Rockets:

The team partnered with Mead Junior High School in Elk Grove, IL to teach students in their rocket club about water rockets. The team prepared approximately 30-40 sets of fins and 20 airtight seals to help the students with their construction. On three separate occasions the team met with the rocket club to design their rockets, build their rockets, and launch them, all while incorperating "The Engineering Process" into their build. The students chose their fin set and built the rockets using flourescent tube containers.

Figure 7: Mead Junior High Water Rockets

Miniature Wind Tunnel Demonstration:

The team constructed and demonstrated a miniature wind tunnel to students at Mead Junior High School and Barrington Middle School. Originally, the wind tunnel was designed to have students carve their own miniature cars out of foam to help demonstrate that different shapes have different air flow. However, the team did not have enough time to implement this into a 45 minute class, so instead we simply demonstrated the airflow around a miniature car we carved ourselves. The students also learned about the principles behind how a wind tunnel works and certain aerodynamic principles.

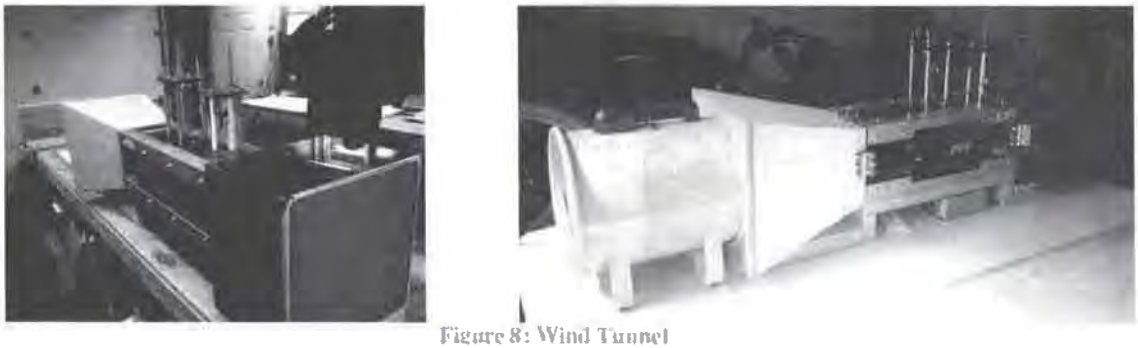


Figure 8: Wind Tunnel

A complete list of all outreach activities completed by the team are included below.

Outreach Program	Audience Makeup	Audience Size	Date	Location
Workshop: Rocket Build	K - 4th grade	12	10/5/2012	Challenger Center
Rocket Launch	K - 4th Grade	7	10/6/2012	Kishwaukee Park, Woodstock
Lecture: USLI and Rocketry	9th - 12th grade	192	11/20/2012	Barrington High School
Workshop: Bristle Bot Build	6th - 8th grade	12	12/22/2012	Rolling Meadows Library
Lecture: USLI and Rocketry	5th – 9th grade	74	1/8/2013	Thomas Middle School
Show and Tell: USLI Rocketry	5th - 9th grade	523	1/26/2013	Barrington Middle School-Station
Lecture: USLI and Engineering	5th - 9th grade	60	2/15/2013	Mead Jr. High
Presentation: USLI Rocket, water rockets	12th grade +	40	2/16/2013	Northern Illinois Rocketry Conference
Demonstration: Wind Tunnel, Aerodynamics	5th - 9th grade	21	3/18/2013	Mead Jr. High
Presentation: USLI, Rocketry	5th - 9th grade	102	3/20/2013	Barrington Middle School-Station
Presentation: USLI, Rocketry	12th grade +	1300	3/23/2013	Illinois Institute of Technology
Workshop: Water Rockets	5th - 9th grade	21	3/25/2013	Mead Jr. High

Grade Level of Participants	Interaction Type	
	Direct	Indirect
K - 4	14	7
5 to 8	806	
9 to 12	192	
12 +	1315	40
Educators (5 - 9)	7	
Educators (other)	6	1
Total:	**2350**	**48**

1.10 Budget Summary

Funding Received	
Source	Amount
DeVry Club Grant (Fall)	$1,500.00
Harper Society of Engineers	$600.00
Harper College Project Funding	$1,000.00
Harper College Educational Foundation	$20,000.00
SMD	$2,780.00
Devry Project Grant	$8,500.00
Donations	$5,197.95
Northrop Grumman Donation	$3,000.00
Total Funding Received:	$42,577.95

Expenditures	
Rocket Motors and Igniters	$2,200.00
Rocket Components (airframe, parachutes, ect.)	$18,000.00
Raw Supplies (epoxy, carbon fiber, ect.)	$4,000.00
Hardware	$1,000.00
Disposable Materials (gloves, sandpaper, ect.)	$400.00
Electronics (servos, microcontrollers, sensors, ect.)	$7,000.00
Tools	$2,500.00
Outreach Supplies	$1,200.00
Workshop Construction (benches, lights, insulation)	$1,500.00
Miscellaneous	$1,200.00
Travel and Lodging	$3,000.00
Total Expenditures:	$42,000.00

1.11 Overall Summary

At the start of the 2012 - 2013 USLI program not a single member of Provectus Automata possessed more than a casual familiarity with rocketry. This lack of experience caused to the team to be more ambitious than we might have been otherwise in selecting our payloads. In proposing to fly three payloads the team recognized that much time would be required to finish designing and fabricating each subsystem by the April launch; however, we failed to take into account many of the realities that lead to project delays. The team had heard stories of the long lead times required by rocket component vendors, though we failed to plan ahead to the extent that was necessary. Lost orders and orders that were placed late caused parts to arrive much later than they were needed. High powered launches came relatively few and far between, causing the team to rush to put finishing touches on the airframe in the days leading up to a launch.

The three payloads the team proposed to fly eventually proved to be more than could be successfully completed given the time available. Had the team elected to fly a single payload we would have found ourselves spread less thinly and able to concentrate our efforts on a single goal. That said, the team is fairly content with the progress that has been made in regard to the payloads as they are now. Much of what remains to be completed for full operation are relatively minor fixes that could not have been implemented due only to time constraints.

Members of Provectus Automata all agree that their overall experience in the SLP has been a positive one. Each of us now possess a much more thorough understanding of the engineering project lifecycle and the various stages of said lifecycle. The numerous design reviews and presentations have provided opportunities to practice the communication and documentation skills that are essential in any type of engineering. For many of our members this project has also served as introduction to CAD, engineering design, and basic fabrication techniques. Although no two members of our team have had exactly the same experience in SLP , we have all taken away some valuable lessons that will certainly influence us in our academic studies and future engineering projects.

Facebook Generation

Rosa Rodriguez
Course: English 100 (Composition)
Instructor: Andrew Wilson

Assignment: *Write a cultural review—a unified critique of some cultural phenomenon—about some aspect of the media, or sports, or a topic that bespeaks a larger truth about the contemporary world.*

Today, there are few people who are not familiar with the word "Facebook." According to Sid Yadav, in his article "Facebook: The Complete Biography," Facebook was created as a way to share information over the Internet. Mark Zuckerberg, with the help of other Harvard students, created Facebook in 2004, and Facebook has far exceeded its original expectations. It was originally created for the use of only Harvard University students; however, today all kinds of people around the world have joined the social network (Yadav). Facebook users are not only adults; Facebook is also wildly popular among younger generations. Facebook has become a cultural phenomenon and is mostly used for communication, interaction, and marketing. It has revealed a new way of communication and a profitable market. Although Facebook is a source of information with regard to the news, advertising, socialization and communication around the world, it is also a means by which users can actually lose their privacy and their interpersonal skills – and even, in some case, their lives.

Facebook has become "one of the most popular network sites globally" ("Top 15"). Like the phone and fax inventions, Facebook has been converted into another method of communication and interaction around the world in the twenty-first century. It offers many people a way to enter into the technological world by means of computers and the Internet. It gives them a way to communicate with others at no cost. According to *EBizMBA.com*, Facebook is the number one social networking site, with over 800,000,000 visitors per month ("Top 15"). Many people rely on Facebook to stay connected with elementary, high school, or college friends as well as to meet new friends. Finding school friends in Facebook is easy, since users can share the schools they attended. If a search is done by the school name, the Facebook search engine populates all the users available from that school as the results. Therefore, there is a high probability of finding that sought-after person. For instance, I have found most of my high-school classmates and some of my teachers through Facebook. We lost contact after graduation from high school in 2005. Thanks to Facebook, I reunited with one of my best friends. She moved away from my hometown after graduation, and I did not have her phone number or an email address to reach her. One day, I received a message from Facebook from some users that I might know (since I *had* listed my high school in my profile). One of those

users was my best friend, so granted, Facebook opens a way of having contact with hundreds of friends all around the globe without having to leave the comfort of home.

The curiosity to use Facebook has encouraged many people to learn new technology skills. People are learning to use technological devices such as computers, iPods, smart phones, devices--something that they did not dare before. As a matter of fact, my own mother is an outstanding example. She believed that technology was for new generations, not for old-school "ladies." She was not attracted to any technology before she knew about Facebook. In fact, she did not even have a cell phone. She would always say, "Cell phones are for the new generation," but after knowing that she could be connected with her sisters in México, everything has changed. Now she is like a teenager, always checking her page to see what is new with her Facebook contacts.

While meeting people on Facebook is exciting and adventurous, it can also turn bad. Facebook does not have much (or often *any*) control over who joins the network under false intentions. Therefore, criminals such as sexual predators are attracted to Facebook to look for their next victims. Facebook is an easy way for them to pick up a victim, especially if users such as teenagers do not take the appropriate precautions. Any user can create a false profile and become "friends" with thousands of people, getting access to personal information such as pictures and addresses. According to the reading "Into the Electronic Millennium" by Sven Bikerts, "The pace of reading is variable, with progress determined by attentiveness and comprehension. The electronic order is in most ways the opposite. Information and contents do not simply move from one private space to another, but they travel along a network" (Birkerts 64). In this quote, Birkerts refers principally to the way in which a reader's sense of focus when he or she is sitting before a computer differs from his or her degree of focus when reading a handheld book. However, Birkerts mentions the loss of control of "information and contents," which "travel along a network." This is what actually happens with the information that Facebook users post; it simply goes from one place to another in the network – and there is too little control with regard to which Facebook users can view those posts (Birkerts 64). In other words, any information posted over the Internet can become public property, accessible to others, and of course this can be sorely misused, and people can be dreadfully harmed. Who can doubt that the information shared through Facebook makes it easier for a criminal to behave in a predatory way?

In addition, teenagers are exposed not only to potential criminals but also to cyberbullying. According to *stopbullying.gov*, "Cyberbullying happens when kids bully each other through electronic technology" ("cyberbullying"). This is very common among the children today; they use sites such as Facebook to accomplish their mischief. Facebook has become a tool for kids to say mean and horrible things. Some children tend to be cruel in their younger age, but through Facebook, these kids seem to be even more cruel due to not having any restrictions from their parents, many of whom *would* perhaps interfere, if only they knew what their children were up to while online. Recently, a teenaged girl, Rebecca Sedgwick, committed suicide. According to Amanda Paulson, Rebecca was being bullied by two other young girls through Facebook. Rebecca was tormented and encouraged to die by the teenage girls. "Drink bleach and die"—this was one of the more cruel messages Rebecca received online before she decided to kill herself (Paulson). Yes, Facebook is a good way of communication and interaction, but it can also affect users negatively by giving others more information, more freedom, and more instant access to private information than reason or logic would suggest.

Furthermore, Facebook is not only a dangerous place for kids, but also, it can affect their interpersonal development. Today, with so much technology everywhere we turn, teenagers especially prefer to communicate with others through technology. Face-to-face interaction, I feel, is certainly no longer the preferred method. People communicate via Facebook because they find it convenient; and sadly, it's a low-risk way to reach out without really reaching out, to be involved...but not really. A serial Facebook-er does not have to spend hours visiting others in their homes or meeting them in any other places. This new way of communication may soon lead us to be less sociable around other people, if it has not already. In the past, perhaps people were more comfortable with friends and family during their free time. Meeting with others is essential to keep our sense of human socialization; otherwise, if Facebook (and texting, etc.) continues to reign supreme, in the long run,

people may become robots of technology, unable to hold a meaningful conversation. This will eventually cause not only a decrease in socialization skills but, frighteningly, a decrease in the nature and number of true friendships.

In conclusion, Facebook has become essential for many people around the world. It has penetrated our culture and become part of our daily lives. It provides an easy way for communication with other people and also a great way to get to know and meet others from different cultures. However, Facebook is also used to steal information, to bully other users, and Facebook (without limits) is arguably the enemy of human socialization. In my opinion, I dare to say that if we keep losing our sense of communication, we will end up being victims of our own technology. I agree with the use of Facebook, to a certain point. For me, it has been a very convenient tool because I live far from my family. I can share pictures of special moments with my loved ones in Mexico within minutes, without any obstacles, such as the frustration of prepaid phone-cards or the delay of "snail mail." However, I believe Facebook's use should not have to be an impediment or an excuse to keep us from visiting others and approaching them personally. And I believe that there is hope: if people are cautious and considerate when using Facebook and follow its original purpose of making real friendships through technology, then maybe the essay you hold in your hands can be read lightly: a gentle warning rather than a dire prediction.

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Evaluation: *Rosa did a great job on this assignment. Her paper is well-organized, well-reasoned, clearly written, and uses a nice blend of sources and personal observation. Her essay is a good model of excellence for writing in English 100.*

Artemisia Gentileschi: Nurture or Nature?

Dorothy Romberg
Course: Art 131 (Gothic Through Romantic Art)
Instructor: Stephany Rimland

Assignment: *The Art History research paper requires students to examine a work of art from the Art Institute of Chicago and develop an original thesis based on a formal and contextual investigation of the object. A careful visual analysis of the work becomes the point of departure for related research and writing.*

Nurture versus nature—which most influences a person's maturation to adulthood? Does Nurture—the people and environment in which a person is reared—most influence his or her development? Or is a person most influenced by nature—one's genetic and personality makeup? This controversy surrounds Artemisia Gentil-eschi and her work. Is her talent as an artist due to her nurturing—her painter father, her instruction from Caravaggio, and the circumstance of her rape—or is it due to her nature—an innate propensity to art?

Although Artemisia Gentileschi was well known in her day, she became virtually unknown until "... the publication of the first book written on her work (1989)..." (Garrard). "[T]he first exhibition devoted to her paintings was held at Casa Buonarroti in Florence, Italy in 1991..." (Garrard). Although most women painting during the Baroque period (seventeenth century) specialized in portraiture, Gentileschi specialized in history paintings—"paintings based on historical, mythological, or biblical narratives" (Stokstad and Cothren 1141). One of Gentileschi's best known works is *Judith Slaying Holofernes* (c. 1620). "It was hidden away in the eighteenth century because the Grand Duchess Maria Luisa de'Medici could not stand to see such a horror; in the nineteenth century the writer Anna Jameson described it as 'a dreadful picture'" (Garrard). Currently, this work is on loan from the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, Italy, to the Art Institute of Chicago in Chicago, Illinois. This work, oil on canvas (158.8 cm by 125.5 cm), is an historical painting which tells the biblical story of Judith and Holofernes.

The story of Judith and Holofernes is told in the Book of Judith from the apocryphal/deuterocanonical books of the Bible:

> The story tells of the Assyrian army laying siege to the Jewish city of Bethulia. When the inhabitants were on the point of capitulating, Judith, a rich and beautiful widow, devised a scheme to save them. She adorned herself "so as to catch the eye of any man who might see her" (Judith 10.5), and set off with her maid into the Assyrian lines. By the pretence of having deserted her people she gained access to the enemy commander, Holofernes, and proposed to him a fictitious scheme for overcoming the Jews. After she had been several days in the camp, Holofernes became enamoured of her and planned a banquet to which she was invited. When it was over and they were alone together he had meant to seduce her, but he was by then overcome by liquor. This was Judith's opportunity. She quickly seized his sword and with two swift blows severed his head. Her maid was ready with a sack into which they put the head. They then made their way through the camp and back to Bethulia before the deed was discovered. The news threw the Assyrians into disarray and they fled, pursued by the Israelites. (Fletcher)

The story of Judith and Holofernes has been an often used subject for painters. "The first paintings of Judith, produced in the Middle Ages, were meant to show an example of virtue overcoming vice" (Fletcher). By the Renaissance, "...Judith was an example of man's misfortunes at the hands of a scheming woman" (Fletcher). During the Baroque, the violence of the beheading was represented in paintings. Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio painted *Judith Beheading Holofernes* (oil on canvas) (145cm x 195 cm) in 1598-1599. And Orazio Gentileschi (Artemisia's father) painted *Judith and Her Maidservant with the Head of Holofernes* (oil on canvas)

(134.6 x 157.5) in 1611-1612. Artemisia Gentileschi's painting of Judith and Holofernes (1620) tells a story that seems to depict "...the triumph of female guile over male force" (Fletcher). A closer analysis of the subject of Judith done by Caravaggio and Orazio Gentileschi shows the influence of these two men's nurturing on Artemisia.

Caravaggio "...dominated art in Rome around 1600..." (Garrard). Caravaggio was "...the ultimate outlaw and anti-Mannerist..." (Loughery 293). In *Judith Beheading Holofernes* (Figure 1), Caravaggio portrays Judith placing the first blow of the sword to the neck of Holofernes. Judith is young and rather small of stature. Her face shows displeasure at the act of murder she is performing. Her maid Abra, an older woman, stands next to her and holds the bag to catch the head of Holofernes. Both women stand back at least arm's length from Holofernes. "[Caravaggio's] beautiful but rather squeamish maiden and the dumb-founded old crone who assist her are female stereotypes" (Garrard). Holofernes, very muscular, is on his bed, his face showing the horror of what is happening, but he is not struggling. The center of the work is the head of Holofernes with the sword at his neck—the actual act of murder. "The colors, harmonious composition and shading of the painting are superb, as we would expect from Caravaggio. But magnificent as the painting is, it does not convey the ghastly horror of the event" (Fletcher).

Orazio Gentileschi, Artemisia's father, provided Artemisia with an apprenticeship in his artist's workshop. She completed her apprenticeship by the age of eighteen years. At that time, "...Orazio boasted in a letter that she was very precocious..." (Garrard). In his work, *Judith and Her Maidservant with the Head of Holofernes*, (Figure 2), Orazio Gentileschi does not show the violence of the beheading. Judith and Abra are depicted as real people (Fletcher) rather than female stereotypes. Orazio's colors—gold, burgundy, and blue—are rich in hue, and the folds of the women's drapery are very realistic and detailed. Although Judith is holding the sword, it appears unused and clean.

But Artemisia Gentileschi's nurturing was not just affected by these two strong male painters. An event in her early life also influenced her work. "Artemisia's [current] reputation, unfortunately, is bound up with her history of

Judith Beheading Holofernes, 1598-1599. Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (Italian, 1571-1610).

Judith and Her Maidservant with the Head of Holofernes. Orazio Gentileschi (Italian, 1611-1612).

victimhood and triumph over difficult circumstances..." (Willcin 46):

> The trauma of her rape at seventeen [some sources--Bissell and Silvers—say at nineteen] by a painter-friend of her father with a long history of deceit and sexual abuse [Agostino Tassi] and her subsequent relationship with the man, the prolonged public trial that was more humiliating for the accuser

> [Artemisia] than the accused [Tassi], her marriage to a nonentity for the sake of recovering her reputation, and his eventual flight from the marriage do explain something about the force behind [these] paintings. (Loughery 295)

The influence of this event on Gentileschi's art is debatable. The art historian Francis Haskell argues "[t]hat Artemisia's rape caused her anguish is an admissible hypothesis about her...but it is not thereby a fact about her art. The story of the artist is not the story of the artist's art" (qtd. in Silvers). But Mary D. Garrard argues that Artemisia

> ...was able to use that experience as emotional raw material for the creation of radically subversive images of the biblical character...whose story gives full vent to the principle of violent punishment for a violent act....Yet we need not advocate murder as an appropriate punishment for rape to recognize the psychic catharsis provided by Artemisia, for herself and for all women who live in male-dominant cultures, in her images of strong, self-motivated women who—unusually in art—take physical action upon men rather than being acted upon by them.

So clearly the nurturing of Artemisia by Caravaggio and her father along with her experience of rape were crucial to her development. But what about her nature—her genetic and personality makeup? How did they affect her art?

Artemisia seemed to have a genetic talent in art. In 1610, at the age of seventeen, Artemisia started painting a piece whose subject was a woman and a lute. "The level of Artemisia's artistic skill by 1612 can be seen in *Woman Playing a Lute*, a work that demonstrates her full command of the visual language of the early Baroque style" (Garrard).

But genetics also played another part in Artemisia's talent. She was a female. During her lifetime, "...females who wished to study art formally were not allowed to draw from the live nude (male) model..." (Garrard). But also, women were the only ones who could paint using live nude female models. This allowed women artists to paint females in a very realistic way.

Nurture or nature? Both have seemingly contributed to the development of Artemisia Gentileschi as an artist—sometimes more of one, sometimes more of another. But the real answer to the debate is in her work, *Judith Slaying Holofernes* (c. 1620) (Figure 3).

Judith Slaying Holofernes was painted when Artemisia was twenty-seven years old. The painting (oil on canvas) contains three figures: the Jewish widow Judith, her maidservant Abra, and the Assyrian general Holofernes. The background is black—void of any objects or people.

The nurturing of Caravaggio is evident in this work. Caravaggio was known for his realism and for his use of tenebrism—"the strong use of chiaroscuro and artificially illuminated areas to create a dramatic contrast of light and dark in a painting" (Stockard and Cothren 1145). Earlier versions of this theme were not realistic. Artists such as Titian in *Judith with the Head of Holofernes* (1515), Lucas Cranach in *Judith with the Head of Holofernes* (1530) or Cristofano Allori in *Judith with the Head of Holofernes* (1613) portrayed Judith after the gruesome deed was completed. Caravaggio actually placed the sword in Judith's hand and in Holofernes' neck, even though negative black space exists between them. But Gentileschi went one step closer to realism in her *Judith Slaying Holofernes*. Judith and Abra are next to and over Holofernes. There is no negative space between them. Judith is in the act of beheading Holofernes. Rich, red blood flows down the covers of the bed and spurts up out of his neck. Holofernes struggles against the women, pushing his right hand up into Abra's face. Judith's face shows the determination she has in completing this beheading: "...we can feel the blade digging through bone and cords of flesh..." (Loughery 295). "Artemisia's paintings are saturated in the harshness, toughness, and raw physicality of [the] world" (Loughery 295).

Artemisia's work also uses tenebrism. Shades of light and dark help define the drapery of the cloth. The sheeting on the bed varies from the light white of the top sheet to the middle and bottom gray sheets. This shading makes the blood on the top sheet more prominent. Judith's face is partially in light and partially in shadow. This shading seems to make her face more sinister and determined. The flesh of each person in the painting is

light. Judith's forearm above the sword is cast in light, emphasizing the strength of her arm and drawing the viewer's eyes to the sword and the violence.

The early nurturing of her father is also evident in *Judith Slaying Holofernes*, as Orazio Gentileschi also painted this subject. John Loughery notes: "In Orazio's paintings of the event, the deed is done, the women are nervously looking about to make good their escape, and the head in the basket might as well be the morning's laundry" (295). Orazio was a colorist—"an artist who excels in the use of colors; one to whom coloring is of prime importance" ("Colorist" 289). Artemisia also used color--rich dark burgundy for the spread covering Holofernes' lower body, for trim on the lower part of the sleeves of Judith and Abra (connecting their arms to Holofernes and the blood), and for the blood dripping and spurting from Holofernes' neck. Judith's gown is a rich gold, and Abra's dress is blue. The remainder of the picture is either flesh-colored, black, or white. The flesh, black, and white allow the rich colors to stand out and accent the deed being done.

The final element of Artemisia's nurturing was her rape. Much debate exists about how much this event directly affected Artemisia's work. Many critics believe that the violence of rape is evident in *Judith Slaying Holofernes*. "This painting was made at about the time that Artemisia Gentileschi was raped by her tutor, the Tuscan painter Agostino Tassi. There is obviously a certain amount of personal relish in the painting, with underlying themes of castration and impotency. The story of Judith doubtless appealed to Gentileschi, depicting as it did the triumph of female guile over male force" (Fletcher).

Nature--one's genetic and personality makeup--are also evident in *Judith Slaying Holofernes*. The compositional element of this work shows her talent. A multitude of diagonal lines direct the eye to the sword and blood in the foreground. Judith's and Abra's arms create diagonal lines pointing to Holofernes' neck. And Holofernes' body—both his arms and his raised leg—create diagonal lines pointing to his neck and the sword. The black background and the white foreground support the fan-like composition of the people who fan out across the horizontal plane of the canvas. In fact, this fan-like shape extends beyond the canvas because Holofernes' left leg disappears on the left side of the canvas. This fan-like composition is very balanced with implied diagonals. Judith's body, Abra's body, and Holofernes' right leg are balanced diagonals. If the bed creates a straight line across the canvas, then Abra's body is placed at about ninety degrees (nearly perpendicular) to the bed, Judith's body on the right is at about forty-five degrees to the bed, and Holofernes' right leg is at about forty-five degrees to the bed on the left. The sword is also at a nearly ninety-degree angle to the bed. But the sword cuts through the horizontal line of the bed just like it cuts through the neck of Holofernes.

Judith Slaying Holofernes. Artemisia Gentileschi (Italian, c. 1620)

Furthermore, the composition of the work contains minimal images. Only a bed and three people are in the work. There are, however, two objects in the painting. One is the bracelet on Judith's wrist. This bracelet does not appear in all of her versions of this subject. The bracelet appears to be gold filigree with small blue stones.

This bracelet might symbolize the wealth of Judith. The other object in the painting is the sword. The quillon, or cross guard, of the sword forms a cross with the hilt and blade.

Artemisia's gender is also evident in this work. Since she could use live nude female models, her women are very realistic. In *Judith Slaying Holofernes*, Gentileschi has lowered the décolletage (neckline of the dress cut very low in front, exposing the top of a woman's breasts) of Judith's dress. This exposes Judith's right breast. Gentileschi has painted that breast with a fallen fullness—what would happen to the breast if the right arm is held close to and pressed against the body. Gentileschi probably gained this understanding of how a woman's breast would move from her nude live female models.

Nurture or nature? "[Thus] documentation of her [Artemisia's] history as an artist, as distinct from her history as a person, lies in her works themselves. Artemisia's rape [and environment] is relevant to her history just in virtue of its having happened to her, but it is relevant to her art only through the additional demonstration that it is manifest in her paintings" (Silvers). Karen Wilkin states: "Yet however poignant or inspiring Artemisia's biography may be, it is on her work that her place in history of art really depends, and if her story is familiar, her work is not" (47). The answer to the question of nurture or nature lies in an analysis of *Judith Slaying Holofernes*.

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Evaluation: *Mrs. Romberg provides a thoughtful analysis on an infamous feminist work in the European history of art. Her thorough scholarship and careful reading offers the reader with an exegesis on the connection between art and context.*

"I'm Right Here; The Time is Right Now": Exploring Thich Nhat Hanh and the Beauty of Mindfulness

Ben Slotarski
Course: Humanities 105/History 105
(Great Ideas of World Civilizations)
Instructor: John Garcia

Assignment: *For one of the papers for the Honors Humanities 105 course, students are asked to come up with a living person and defend the claim that they deserve the title of "great thinker." Students must present criteria for what it is that makes someone deserving of such a distinction and then argue that their chosen thinker meets these criteria.*

When one considers the "great thinkers" in history, the first thought that comes to mind is someone who went beyond the accepted way of thinking; in this sense, that person stands out from other thinkers. A "great thinker" is thought to be someone who utilized a unique idea that influenced society to change for the better. It was the power of their minds, their words, and their actions that make us glorify their standing in history. Of the many past "great thinkers," the one main criterion that captures the title is as follows: To be a great thinker is to think beyond accepted ideas with the goal of improving the quality of life. The idea need not be the thinker's own; if the thinker enlightens others as to how his or her idea accomplishes this goal, then he or she is truly "great." Thich Nhat Hanh is worthy of the title of "great thinker." Influenced by principles of Buddhism, he thinks beyond accepted methods to deal with large-scale issues such as sexual abuse, violence, and divorce by illustrating the simple method of mindfulness to effectively combat such issues when put into practice. His idea is specifically targeted toward Western culture; this is important, because it reveals a better way to handle inner suffering and, in turn, conflict in intrapersonal relationships. True happiness in society comes down to peacefulness at the individual level. The influence of the individual's mindful practice branches out; collectively, society becomes a better place to live.

Thich Nhat Hanh was born in central Vietnam in 1926, where he joined the monkshood at age sixteen. At the time of the Vietnam War, Nhat Hanh and fellow monks continued to meditate as destruction ran rampant. Inspired by the suffering he observed in the Vietnamese citizens, he founded "engaged Buddhism" which, in his own words, "means we practice mindfulness wherever we are, whatever we are doing, at any time" (*Good Citizens* 3). The idea was to maintain their practice while helping ease the suffering caused by the war. The influence of "engaged Buddhism" in Vietnam inspired him to later bring the idea to the West. In the early sixties, Nhat Hanh founded the School of Youth Social Service, an organization that rebuilt bombed villages, set up schools and medical facilities, and provided general relief for victims of destruction caused by the Vietnam War. The mission of the School of Youth Social Service is based on the Buddhist principle of "loving-kindness." On a peace mission to the U.S. in 1966, he is noted for persuading Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to publicly oppose the violence in Vietnam. It was not long before King nominated Nhat Hanh for the Nobel Peace Prize as a result.

In 1982, Nhat Hanh founded the Plum Village, where he currently resides. The Plum Village serves as a Buddhist community, where Nhat Hanh currently helps alleviate the suffering of people of Third World countries, Vietnam War veterans, and citizens of Vietnam. Immediately following the September 11 attacks on America, Nhat Hanh addressed non-violence, peace, and forgiveness at the Riverside Church in New York City. He continues to lead meditation retreats today, encouraging others to perform the practice of "walking meditation," where one walks to be aware of his or her consciousness. He actively speaks with government officials, encouraging nonviolent solutions to conflict. He has published many works such as *Call Me by My True Names*, *Touching Peace*, *Living Buddha Living Christ*, and *Anger*, all of which pertain to the application of Buddhist principles as the key to enriching one's life and the lives of others. The

main reason for his popularity in the West is the appeal he makes to the lifestyle of Western culture. Nhat Hanh stresses the importance of applying Buddhist principles to alleviate the suffering associated with the Western approach to problem-solving.

To better understand Thich Nhat Hanh's approach, the Buddhist principles that it is born from must be noted. Buddhism follows a strict guideline, analogous to what the Ten Commandments is to Christianity: These are the Four Noble Truths, and they are: 1) All beings experience suffering; 2) Suffering is caused by "clinging" – holding onto thoughts and emotions; 3) The cessation of suffering is possible: This is enlightenment; 4) It is possible by following the Noble Eightfold Path, which serves as a guideline as to how one should conduct him- or herself in order to alleviate suffering. The Buddha says we suffer because we are attached to our views and let our emotions control our thinking. Thich Nhat Hanh discusses "suffering" in the same sense as the Buddha as he illuminates the suffering that is characteristic of Western culture. Also characteristic of Buddhism is the idea of internal transformation leading to external transformation. Buddhism is stressed as a practice: The individual learns the teachings of the Buddha, such as those discussed above, but he or she is more focused on the application of the teachings. Practitioners are pursuing enlightenment while spreading their influence so that others are encouraged to follow. As the Buddha does, Thich Nhat Hanh stresses internal transformation as the first necessary step to alleviate suffering.

Little by little, positive thoughts and actions collectively improve the well-being of society. Nhat Hanh explicitly points out that positive social change is not possible unless the change begins with the individual: "There is a lot that needs to be done in society – work against war, social injustice, and so on. But first we have to come back to our own territory and make sure that peace and harmony are reigning there" (*You Are Here* 65). This idea is indisputable: without changing the individual, society cannot possibly be changed for the better. The subsequent question is: "How does one transform her inner self?" One must first be aware of current issues in order to be motivated to change. In Buddhism, and as Thich Nhat Hanh asserts, the change in the individual that is responsible for greater change involves inner peace, understanding, and compassion; all three are achieved through mindfulness.

At its core, mindfulness is allowing oneself to be wholly absorbed in the present moment. Here in the now, we do not regret actions of the past nor fear the future. To be mindful is to be fully aware of our bodies, thoughts, feelings, and environment. It is achieved through conscious breathing: "As we breathe in, we know we are breathing in, and as we breathe out, we know we are breathing out. As we do this, we observe many elements of happiness inside us and around us. We can really enjoy touching our breathing and our being alive" (*Touching Peace* 3). A clear benefit of mindfulness is the inner peace and joy that the present moment brings to the individual. Without the stress and anxiety caused by thoughts of the past or the future, we appreciate the ability to breathe, the beauty of the environment, and other things taken for granted when one is not mindful. For instance, the benefit of being mindful of the environment makes us less inclined to do it harm by littering or destroying foliage. We preserve nature, because we are mindful of its beauty and our dependence on it. This is crucial, because we then preserve precious natural resources so that a greater number of them are available to us.

In another sense, being absorbed by the present moment gives much value to us being alive. In other words, our minds are "truly here" versus being caught up in a thought, a memory, or a fear of what is to come. Thich Nhat Hanh encourages us to live the present moment as if it is going to be our last, and asks a profound question: "Are you ready to arrange your schedule in such a way that you could die in peace tonight? .... If you don't want to suffer, if you don't want to be tormented by regret, the only solution is to live every minute you are given in a deep way....The only way to deal with insecurity, fear, and suffering is to live the present moment in a profound way" (*You Are Here* 117). This question *speaks* to people of Western culture: We are so busy planning ahead, deferring our happiness for a later date when a reward arrives (e.g., retirement); however, Nhat Hanh strongly opposes this because we are not truly ready to die right now if we are living for later. The connection to mindfulness lies in the fact that when we are aware of our breathing and touch the present moment deeply, we are truly living: The body and mind exist in harmony. This is important, because when we are living for the future or are stuck in the past, we are never truly satisfied; our bodies are merely shells as the mind wanders. This depresses and distracts us without us even being aware;

Student Reflections on Writing: Ben Slotarski

For me, writing truly is a process. What begins as a few ideas jotted down on scratch paper blossoms into a perfected final product, as evidenced by "I'm Right Here; the Time is Right Now." But the road to the finished product involves revisions upon revisions **upon revisions.** The point cannot be stressed enough; allow me to elaborate.

In its inception, "I'm Right Here" did not begin as words being typed onto the computer screen; rather, the essay started out as ideas or catchy phrases that I jotted down to reference once I was ready to type a rough draft. One of my strengths as a writer is that I have a clear vision of how I want the essay to be structured; then, the process of composing a rough draft is like putting together the pieces of the puzzle that were originally scattered in my brain.

When the time came to write a rough draft, I stood by one of my strongly held beliefs about writing: Just get the words/ideas out onto the screen; **do not** focus on perfecting the essay (time for this comes later). Thus, my "rough" draft truly lives up to its name; it's not even *close* to what I intend the finished product to be, and that's OK!

Like with any of my other academic essays, I take a short vacation from writing after the rough draft is completed and revisit the essay a day or two later. With a fresh mindset, I approach my essay as a critic, meticulously scanning it for awkward phrasing, overused words, etc. I also contemplate more judicious ways of structuring the essay to make it flow better, putting myself in the shoes of my reader. I continue this process several times before the final due date; every day returning to the essay with a fresh mindset for further revision.

I define the "final product" as the essay that *I* am completely satisfied with. If I lack conviction in what I have written, how can I convince my audience that what they are reading is a successful piece of writing or worth their time? I believe a talented writer is one who possesses the unyielding "itch" to work hard to revise the essay until he or she is completely satisfied. This produces the best writing.

If I had to give advice to less experienced writers, I would tell them to remember three things:

1. Take the writing process in chunks; don't overwhelm yourself by trying to pound out a perfected draft the first time around. You **will not** be satisfied, I can guarantee it.
2. Anticipate **several** revisions made by you or others. On that note, seek feedback from others, because remember: these people are your *audience*. Your goal is to impress *them*!
3. Satisfy yourself before anybody else. If you lack confidence in what you have written, it will certainly show when you present the final copy to your audience. Have conviction and your audience is that much more likely to be impressed by your work.

how can we improve ourselves if we are not aware of the happiness that is accessible at the present moment? Thicb Nhat Hanh presents this question, and he is right to do so. We cannot possibly begin to improve society as a whole if we ourselves are not "living" in the first place. When we practice mindfulness – being absorbed by the "now" – our happiness improves. Subsequently, this peace of mind we achieve is noticed by others.

By being "truly there" in the present moment, we improve our interpersonal relationships. In other words, we free our minds of the past and future in order to free up our attention to devote it to our loved ones. Doing so brings about profound emotional impact in those close to us, as Nhat Hanh describes:

> You can say this mantra a few times a day: "Dear one, I am here for you." And now that you have the ability to recognize the presence of the other person, you can practice a second mantra: "Dear one, I know that you are here, alive, and that makes me very happy." This mantra enables you to recognize the presence of the other person as something precious, a miracle....When people feel appreciated this way – when they feel embraced by the mindful attention of another – then they will open and blossom like a flower. (*You Are Here* 93)

Not only do we benefit in this case, but our loved ones feel great joy from two things: our peacefulness that is salient

from our practice and our mindfulness of them. The greatness in being a mindful lover lies in its simplicity: Practicing mindfulness improves relationships, because it shows great dedication to another – a quintessential quality of a healthy relationship. Not only do we earn greater respect from our loved ones, but we also learn more about them when we practice mindfulness in social interaction. This is important, because our loved one's happiness is a direct result of our own. By us practicing mindfulness and achieving inner peace, we influence our loved ones to feel more peaceful as a result. Then they are happier and carry their happiness with them to others. This is the beginning of the road to improving society with mindfulness. When we are not "truly there" for our loved ones, the emotional toll that it takes is devastating.

The root cause of a failed relationship is the lack of understanding between both parties. In Western culture, "breaking up" and divorce are common solutions when conflict arises between partners. Nhat Hanh hits the nail on the head when he observes, "When we fell in love, we constructed a beautiful image that we projected onto our partner, and now we are a little shocked as our illusions disappear and we discover the reality. Unless we know how to practice mindfulness together, looking deeply into ourselves and our partner, we may find it difficult to sustain our love through this period" (*Touching Peace* 48). In this case, we must use mindfulness to examine our feelings toward the other person. Nhat Hanh goes beyond the Western-type thinking by proposing that we use mindfulness and practice caution when we meet somebody whom we consider to be a potential mate. Indeed, it is common to excitedly jump into a relationship without truly knowing the other person. The importance of being mindful when getting to know a potential partner is obvious: We can eliminate the suffering that will inevitably rear its ugly head in the relationship down the road.

Despite mindfully engaging in a relationship, conflict is inevitable between two partners: Differing opinions of issues set the stage for disagreement in any relationship. What is not inevitable, however, is the suffering caused by the conflict. When we are mindful when an issue arises in relationship, we are simply aware that negative emotions are present; we are then to breathe and acknowledge the emotions so that we do not cause any unnecessary suffering in ourselves or in those close to us. Consider, for example, when one partner is suspicious of the other "cheating." The common response is the suspicious partner allowing emotions to engulf his or her consciousness without speaking to the other partner about the subject, because that person may feel "too proud" to express his or her true feelings. Like divorce, this is normative in Western culture. Nhat Hanh offers mindfulness of emotions followed by mindful communication as the solution that can be applied to such a situation:

> [This mantra] is more difficult to practice because of the negative energy habit we call pride... when this person notices that something is wrong and tries to approach you about it, you might rebuff him or her. "Leave me alone," you say. "I don't need you."... This is exactly the opposite of what you should do. You should practice mindfulness of the breath with your body and mind in union, and with this total presence, go to the other person and say the mantra: "Dear one, I am suffering. I need your help. I need you to explain to me why you did this thing to me." (*You Are Here* 95)

In this sense, we practice "being there" for our loved ones by letting them know that we are suffering. We do the right thing by being aware of our suffering and communicating this instead of suppressing the emotions, ultimately creating more suffering in ourselves and the other person. Leaving pride behind and being mindfully aware of negative emotions is great, because we are then well-equipped to reach a resolution in the most peaceful way possible; verbal abuse or physical violence do not arise if we remain in the present moment, constantly in pursuit of that inner peace that mindfulness brings. Although relationship conflicts deter us from the path to improving society, mindfulness effectively controls bursts of pain and suffering that tend to result from these types of conflict; thus, we can stay on track to achieving the ultimate goal.

Aside from using mindfulness to appreciate our surroundings, enhance happiness in our relationships, and resolve conflict with those close to us, we can apply mindfulness to examine the root causes of our suffering. In doing so, we are well-equipped to minimize the effect that our suffering has on our thoughts and actions. In Western culture, we are surrounded by numerous sources of

distraction, including the wide availability of the Internet, music, and television. We use these distractions to avoid facing the true causes of our suffering; thus, we are averse to our problems. Nhat Hanh asserts that we must do the opposite by running *toward* our suffering and doing so lovingly: "Armed with the energy of mindfulness, you can cradle your pain like a baby. You can say, 'My pain, my distress, I am here. I am back, and I am going to take care of you'... You should embrace your suffering in order to soothe it, calm it, transform it" (*You Are Here* 54). Facing our suffering directly is the only way we become happy. Otherwise, the pain or unsatisfactory feeling lingers, and achieving true happiness is impossible. Distractions only provide temporary comfort. Looking deeply into personal pain is an extremely difficult task for some. The great thing about Nhat Hanh's approach, where we face our suffering in a gentle manner, is that we do not harm ourselves with ill thoughts or ill actions in the process, such as thoughts of doubt or putting ourselves through physical pain. If we approach our suffering by self-loathing, we only create more suffering and become even more averse to our problems, and this is counterproductive. When we cultivate the habit of mindfully "coming to the rescue" for our suffering and others notice us exhibiting increased peacefulness, we can influence them to do the same.

Actively living in the present moment benefits our relationships; practicing mindfulness of our own suffering also positively impacts others. Nhat Hanh proposes mindful meditation as the key to looking deeply into our suffering and calling it by its true name. Diligent meditation enables us to develop an insight into our suffering. With this insight, we cultivate the ability to understand others' situations before judging them. For example, it is a common belief in Western culture that a sex offender is intrinsically immoral, so we choose to immediately isolate him from social circles. By looking deeply into his situation, we may see the scars of his past influencing perverse behavior. Instead of isolating the individual that makes us uncomfortable or angry, we can use mindful concentration to see that he needs our help: "When you practice this mindfulness training, you commit to protecting children and also those who sexually abuse children. The ones who cause suffering must also become the objects of your love and protection. They are the product of an unstable society, and they need our help" (*Touching Peace* 87). That insight is extremely valuable in helping others heal the wounds of their past as we ourselves become more mindful in our practice. This approach is great, because we do an enormous service to ourselves and society: showing compassion and mindfully understanding them helps reduce the destruction and suffering they cause because they do not know how to effectively handle their suffering; but, we do. That is why we must greet that person's suffering warmly. Those individuals need our help – our compassion – just as we need them to contribute positively to the well-being of society. Instead of isolating them, we must be mindful of their situation so that we can understand them with compassion; we give their lives meaning so that they can start to change their ways and help us advance toward our goal of improving the overall quality of life.

Another application of mindfulness is being mindful of what we consume. Nhat Hanh defines mindful consumption as "not bringing toxins into our bodies and minds, not consuming TV programs, magazines, films, and so on that may contain poisons such as violence, craving, and hatred" (*Good Citizens* 104). The issue with violent media displays is nothing new for Western culture. Children commonly watch violent films and play violent videogames. As a consequence, they develop the thought process that violence is the solution to real-life problems. The overplaying of violence in the media is not unheard of, but Nhat Hanh takes a unique perspective: To truly understand the effect of refusing to consume toxic material, one must use mindful insight to deeply appreciate the benefit of his or her decision. Mindfulness is what makes a decision feel truly valued not only for ourselves but for those around us as well. Nhat Hanh illustrates this point with the following example:

> It's like being a vegetarian. When you experience how wonderful it makes you feel to not harm animals or the environment, you're happy to eat vegetarian food. You don't suffer because you're not eating meat. Instead, you feel lucky to be able to eat in such a way that you don't cause suffering to other living beings. There is joy; there is insight; and there is compassion and spirituality in your eating. (*Good Citizens* 117).

The same can be said for alcohol and drug use. Those who refuse to take drugs or drink alcohol feel healthier because they refuse toxins; however, without mindfulness,

they do not get in touch with the joy that comes from deeply understanding the suffering they alleviate in those who care about them, for example. Refusing to consume violent media has a similar effect: when we refuse such material, we are protecting our loved ones by being mindfully aware of the value of our decision. Those close to us experience the benefit of our decision. Then, they are influenced to do the same; they in turn influence others, and so on. The idea of mindfully refusing toxic materials and substances is great, because we understand the value of our decisions on a visceral level so that we are fully aware of the right decision that betters ourselves, our loved ones, and society.

The overarching idea of mindfulness is that positive internal transformation leads to positive external transformation. Another great thinker, Mohandas Gandhi, shares this theme in his philosophy of *satyagraha*, or "love force." It is centered on the theme of inner transformation, where one cleanses herself of impulsive desire to retaliate against injustice with violence; rather, she displays only unyielding compassion toward her unjust opponent. What makes Gandhi's *satyagraha* so great is that it proved to be effective when he broke the will of the British Empire to harm innocent Indian civilians, using this non-violent measure. *Satyagraha* and mindfulness illustrate that compassion is more effective than violence as the solution to conflict in the following sense: Why create *more* pain and suffering using violence to handle the problem? If we display compassion and understanding for those who cause suffering onto others, it is possible to achieve our goal of ending injustice but with much less suffering in the process. Putting Thich Nhat Hanh's mindfulness in line with Gandhi's *satyagraha* makes a compelling argument for the former, since Gandhi's nonviolent approach has proven to be effective.

Mindfulness is the key to improving oneself and society as a consequence. Thich Nhat Hanh's method is better than traditional methods of handling suffering in Western culture, because it inspires us to return to the present moment and achieve inner peace before going about handling larger-scale issues. With a clear mind, we are poised to achieve the greatest amount of good for ourselves and for others based on our decisions. What is also great is the simplicity and wide availability of mindfulness: With practice, we *all* have the ability to be mindful. This fact is captured by Nhat Hanh writing in such a way that inspires confidence in readers: by using the term "we" and instilling the idea that mindfulness is non-discriminatory, he illustrates that all of us have the ability to be mindful. With this, we are motivated to join him on the path to improving the world in the most peaceful way. His primary message is captured in the following statement: "When you produce a thought of compassion, of loving kindness, of understanding, that is peace... If we have some peace within ourselves, in our way of thinking, speaking, and acting, we'll be able to influence people and inspire them to go in the same direction" (*Good Citizens* 111). This is the key: Changing the world for the better starts at the individual level through the practice of mindfulness. Thich Nhat Hanh inspires this idea through his teachings and shows the effect it has on a larger scale, thus making him a "great thinker."

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Evaluation: *Many students have trouble getting past the conveyance of biographical information when they take on this assignment, but Ben does not confine himself here to chronicling the main accomplishments of the thinker he chose to write on, the Vietnamese Buddhist monk, Thich Nhat Hanh. Instead, Ben gives a detailed analysis of the ways that Thich Nhat Hanh has taken the Buddhist idea of mindfulness and shown a new audience how to apply the concept to several important social problems of our age. By going beyond a listing of the empirical effect a thinker's work has had, and looking instead at the potential impact the thinker can have for all of us. Ben provides a good model for the "Great Thinkers" paper.*

"Technology Will Make or Break Us": The Art of Jenny Holzer

Zachary Sprenger
Learning Community: Artists and Authors
Courses: Art 105 (Introduction to Visual Art)
and English 102 (Composition)
Instructors: Stephany Rimland and Kurt Hemmer

Assignment: *Choose a contemporary artist and write a research essay exploring a particular aspect of the artist's work.*

In 1917, a urinal was saved of its inevitable fate of becoming permanently installed in the construction of another male public restroom, to be pissed upon for years to come. The captor was an artist by the name of Marcel Duchamp and (although he remained anonymous by signing the piece "R. Mutt"), he tried his best to provide the urinal with a new home in the art community. Although the required fee was paid that was said to guarantee a place in this particular exhibition, the Society of Independent Artists declined showcasing the work and refused to even acknowledge the piece, which had been titled *Fountain*, as art. After being rejected by the Society of Independent Artists exhibition committee, *Fountain* went on to being exhibited at other art studios, ultimately proving Duchamp's experimental submission a success. Although the original has since been lost, it is still one of the most influential (and controversial) pieces of art to have ever been made, ultimately challenging the very definition of art. Many consider this piece to be the birth of what is now known as "Conceptual Art." Conceptual art, according to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, is a style of art that values ideas over the finished product and thus overall aestheticism. Although it was necessary for Duchamp's *Fountain*, conceptual art is not necessarily required to be exhibited in a studio or gallery. In fact, one of the most current and influential conceptual artists today has preferred for a large amount of time for her work to be exhibited outside in public space. Jenny Holzer, a renowned torchbearer of the conceptual arts, creates her conceptual art using only words relating to ideas of war, sex, and death. In fact, chief curator at the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas, Michael Auping, views Holzer "as an artist with a profound respect for Duchamp's strategies" (42). Auping holds a Master's in art history from California State University, is a prominent figure in the modern art community, and has had the privilege of witnessing Holzer grow as an artist while working in museums from the Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art, to the Albright-Knox Gallery in New York, to his current position. Most notably, Holzer is known for her series of truisms and has exhibited her work in public space where it blends into the urban surrounding on benches, t-shirts, condoms, and especially with the currently preferred mediums of mass media advertising, such as posters, billboards, and massive light-emitting diode (LED) signs in anywhere from Times Square in New York City to Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas. Because of the challenge of using only words and the inevitable change in a viewer's perception in different settings, Holzer's choice of environmental context is by far one of the most dominating and defining characteristics of her art. Why she puts her art where she does ultimately determines who will view it, how long they have to view it, and what they may take away from it by how much thinking the work demands of the viewer in a given space. The perceived commercial aspect intruding on something so sacred as art may scare many artists, but to Holzer it is an invitation.

Jenny Holzer was born in 1950 in Gallipolis, Ohio. Holzer's academic career brought her from a private school in Fort Lauderdale, Florida to Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, after being eligible for early enrollment and being admitted. Because she was dissatisfied with the liberal arts program at Duke, she transferred to University of Chicago in 1970 and then eventually completed her undergraduate degree at University of Ohio in 1972. Her formal academic career and interest in art eventually led her to the Rhode Island School of Design, where she entered the Master of Fine Arts program, emphasizing her focus on abstract painting. However, her focus on abstract painting began taking a new form when she started introducing what she personally describes in her April 1993 interview

with the left-wing magazine *The Progressive* as "found" language and words into her works (30). This "found" language is described by Holzer as something that is "not particularly relevant," and it is not until later that she begins writing on subjects that mattered to her (30). After experimenting with public displays of her works while in graduate school, she soon concluded that this type of "found" language was, again, not "relevant" enough. On the matter, Holzer says, "When I was in graduate school I had done some public things, but they were unsuccessful. They didn't mean anything, they were abstract" (30). This is when the significance of environment began affecting the relevance and success of her work. She was experimenting with context and beginning to understand that setting ultimately alters what a signifier signifies. She was also clearly beginning to understand that the fast-paced agenda of most people's lives brought them outside in public spaces mainly to commute and for transportation purposes. This, unfortunately for her initial efforts of abstract "found" language paintings, was not an ideal or promising setting where viewers can stop and ponder the relevance and meaning behind the abstract work. It was not until 1977 when her entire approach to art was altered dramatically to accommodate the introduction of words in her work as she moved to New York City and abandoned abstract painting for what she considered a more promising artistic venture: language.

Upon her arrival to New York, Jenny Holzer continually experimented with her newly found language-based approach to art. By then, she was working on her infamous series of *Truisms* (1977-1979), which included quick, politically driven phrases and aphorisms that often contradicted each other from multiple perspectives. Described in a review by writer and critic Nick Obourn in *Art in America*, of the more recent word-based series *Protect Protect,* which was exhibited at the Whitney Museum of American Art, Holzer's original *Truisms* series are "Nietzsche-like" (149). What Obourn meant by this comparison is that her politically driven phrases and quick aphorisms are often comparable to Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophical ideas pertaining to perspectivism and particularly his idea of "The Will to Power," which was expressed by him as being synonymous with "the will to life" (259). This innate motivation and drive in humanity to seek power and control of one's surroundings is indeed acknowledged by Holzer's *Truisms*, which, written by her, began being secretively postered at night around Lower Manhattan. Not normally considered a street artist, she did indeed resort to urban guerilla tactics used by graffiti artists while in New York City to deliver her works successfully to the diverse and densely populated public. Of the hundreds of original short truisms written between 1977 and 1979, some of them read, "ABUSE OF POWER COMES AS NO SURPRISE," "MONEY CREATES TASTE," "PROTECT ME FROM WHAT I WANT," and "SELF-AWARENESS CAN BE CRIPPLING." Holzer introduced these truisms in an effort to be explicit, demanding the passersby to acknowledge the quick blurbs of cynical, often frightening, but always honest words about the environment in which they live. She had officially left her formal abstract painting techniques in the dark and was in the public spotlight, successfully shedding light on some of the most difficult and unaddressed social issues humanity faced (or for that matter, refused to).

After her successful experimentation with somewhat small-scale public space, throughout the mid-1980s, she took her use of space one step further to insure the authoritative power of her message would be felt throughout New York City. Rather than posters, marble benches, or even billboards, Holzer displayed her *Truisms*, as seen in Figure 1, on the Spectacolor electronic sign in the iconic center of Times Square, New York, ultimately changing the way she approached her work. In *The Progressive* interview, Holzer explains that her 1982 project on the Spectacolor screen in Times Square "started the addiction to electronic signs" (Flynn 30). Soon, Holzer was browsing the *Yellow Pages* in search of more accessible electronic LED signs that she could use more frequently than the Spectacolor screen in Times Square. Her truisms and other series still rooted in strictly word-based art soon became flashed on LED signs, similar to that which construction workers will use to forewarn commuters of traffic congestion. The appearance of being official as coming from a source of authority as well as appearing on a medium made for cautionary messages fueled the impact Holzer's words had in public. The political content of her work is said by Holzer to be a product of growing up in the 1960s, where she was "weaned on some kind of an activism" (30). The flashing yellow lights of her publicly displayed

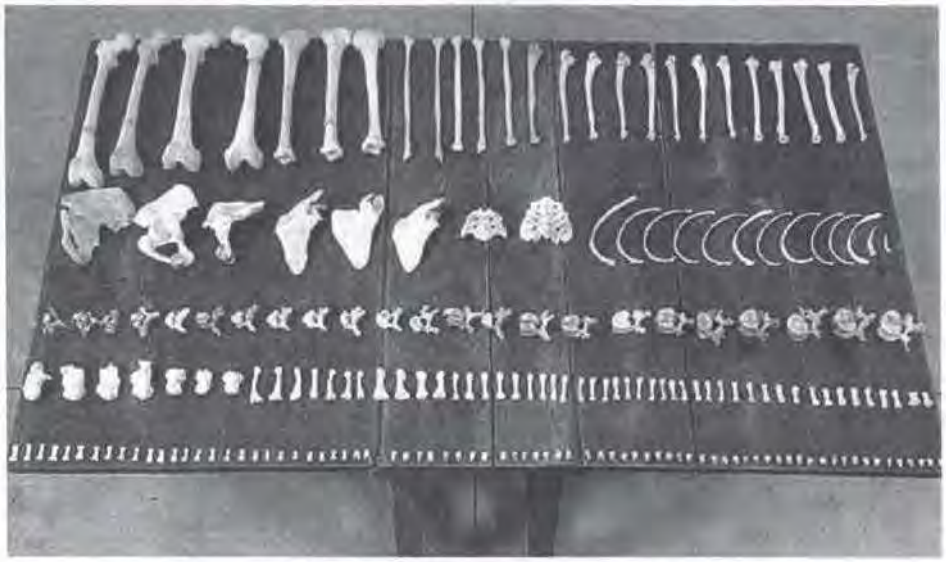
Figure 1. *Truisms,* Jenny Holzer, 1977-79.

LED signs, almost like public service announcements, were messages to those that quickly passed by and had the time to read her one-liner truisms alerting them of the dangerous ideologies and implications of war, sex, and other politically driven ideas relating to American culture and successfully expressed in one of the most iconic spots of American culture.

Once Holzer conquered the public arena of New York, and even established an exhibition spot in the Guggenheim Museum, her artistic influences and achievements quickly spread beyond New York. She was the first woman to represent the United States of America in what Michael Brenson of the *New York Times* once called "the most prestigious international exhibition of 1990," the Venice Biennale. Her achievements as a woman and sociopolitical views toward gender inequality quickly caused her to be associated with feminism and other artists such as Barbara Kruger, whose work can be seen in Figure 2. Holzer does not deny her association with feminism and actually admits being a woman has helped her, as she says, to "write from the vantage point of the victim" (30). However, she counters the claim by saying she has been an "overprivileged white woman," but still makes the effort to clearly portray inequality with truisms reading, "SEX DIFFERENCES ARE HERE TO STAY" (30). What makes her truisms so powerful about such controversial subjects in the space they are viewed is the directness and honesty of the content, almost as in the sense of a how a child can be seen as rude when they are merely being direct and honest and calling it how they

Figure 2. *Untitled (I Shop Therefore I Am),* Barbara Kruger, 1987.

Figure 3. *Lustmord*, Jenny Holzer, 1994.



see it because they have not fully learned social norms. Except, instead of a child, there is a massive LED sign violating viewer's expectations as to what should be being displayed. Of course, her relative anonymity remains a great contributor to the success of these public works, especially being a woman addressing gender inequality.

On the eye-opening matter, Holzer says, "I find that showing horror is more effective than preaching about it. I think pointing to someone's pleasure in beating the hell out of somebody is useful" (30). In this instance, Holzer also references some of her works involving violent sex-crimes as a consequence of war. One example is her *Under a Rock* series which describes, from the perpetrator's perspective, a rape, reading, "CRACK THE PELVIS SO SHE LIES RIGHT. THIS IS A MISTAKE. WHEN SHE DIES YOU CANNOT REPEAT THE ACT. THE BONES WILL NOT GROW TOGETHER AGAIN AND THE PERSONALITY WILL NOT COME BACK." Undoubtedly, works like this act to both express and evoke an uncomfortable emotion, especially while in a public space or, as this one was, carved on a bench. More specifically, in her 1994 *Lustmord* series, exhibited, again, in New York, this time at the Barbara Gladstone Gallery, she focused on genocidal torture and rape of women in Yugoslavia at the time. The series derives from the German word for sexual murder involving rape: "lustmord." In such a case as this, Holzer had to develop a different approach to gallery exhibitions than her widely accessible public displays. In *Lustmord*, she had a pitch-black room with LED signs with different-colored text flashing across a glass dome detailing from the perpetrator's perspective what it was like to gruesomely rape and murder a woman during this genocidal war. Like her *Truisms*, the text also included short poetic phrases from other perspectives such as the observer and the victim. The texts differed from her public displays as Holzer learned viewers were willing to invest more time to understand the text provided in a gallery space. The consequence of this knowledge was that the text grew longer, more detailed, and according to a 1994 review of the exhibition in the *New York Times*, the words were "vintage Holzer" but "keyed up a notch" and more "aggressive" (Holland). Holzer even added a second room to the exhibition where, branching from her traditional embracement of LED displays, included a table of human bones with particular gruesome details displayed on the LED signs carved into metal bands attached to the bones, visible in Figure 3. To further emphasize the feeling of power the perpetrator had, Holzer invited the viewers to physically handle the skeletal remains, which was often necessary simply to read the text on the metal bands. This was, according to the same exhibition review, to bring to light "issues of power and its abuse, into subtle, intimate focus" (Holland). Ultimately, this understanding of intimate space has caused Holzer to make the viewer

Figure 4. *Redaction Paintings*, Jenny Holzer, 2005.

feel helpless, forcefully cornering them into feeling the same pleasure and will to power the perpetrator had experienced while fatally raping the individual victimized woman, which Holzer's text stresses in grave detail. Also note the cultural relevance of her truisms being displayed publicly. Although the *Truisms* can be uncomfortable. in this instance, the more foreign phenomenon of war crimes is being brought to American soil, and Holzer is forcibly providing them with an intimate rendezvous in a far more exclusive space.

Cultural relevance clearly plays a significant role in both content and placement of Holzer's works. The effects some of her works bad on the viewers were far different than when displayed in the United States. Still relating to war, sex, and death, the interpreted English texts, which now were read in Portuguese while in Brazil, were programmed onto massive LED signs that hung symmetrically in a circular building with benches provided to gaze above, and with xenon projectors where the text was projected onto buildings throughout Rio De Janeiro in 1999. Holzer acknowledges a flaw of her linguistic approach, which is that she is not the most poetic and advanced writer. Sometimes criticized for this by writers who have spent their entire lives perfecting the craft, Holzer resorted at times to using texts found elsewhere, such as in poems for example, to express her ideas fueled by the activist within. Even so, with this combination of new and old text, the linguistic barrier would be broken as translations were displayed publicly in Brazil and Japan. Holzer observed the difference in how her work resonates as it moves in cultural context. For instance, while in Rio De Janeiro, the aphorisms and texts mentioning war did not resonate with the majority of the public because, as Holzer explains in the 1999 documentary *Protect Me From What I Want*, while being interviewed by director Marcello Dantas, "In Brazil, some of the war texts are not resonant because you all are smart enough not to be in wars with any great regularity (laughs)." She continues to note another cultural difference, "When I was in Japan the texts of mine that I thought were pretty bland were inflammatory because people are more polite than they are in New York." This ultimate experimentation in other countries signifies the quest to understand the dependency her intended content has on the relationship with the environmental setting a particular work is displayed in.

Since then, Holzer continues her politically driven content, and since 2001 has abandoned her own words for others due to not being able to adequately express what it is she would like to say. However, some of her most recent works, such as her 2005 *Redaction Paintings* (Figure 4) have abandoned words altogether at times. Intended to serve as a protest to the American wars in Iraq

and Afghanistan. Holzer has obtained old documents from the National Security Archive, which contains documents released by the Freedom of Information Act, and she also has directly obtained documents from the FBI's website. That being said, these most recent works stand in stark contrast to her traditional use of words because more than anything, these documents lack words. Before they have been publicly released, the documents were blackened and crossed out by the government for security purposes. In an interview with *Art21*, Holzer describes this change as "a relief to come to pages that are wholly blacked out because then, for at least a page or so, you don't have to read what was there." Although her xenon projections may still be cast upon the outer walls of buildings, her *Redaction Paintings* can be found in a gallery setting rather than in a public display. Holzer has understood the importance of intimacy, as well as understanding the significance of being able to successfully convey a message to a select few who have already stepped foot into a gallery setting and may even expect for any of their conventional cultural ideologies to be challenged.

Holzer had stepped away from traditional mediums such as abstract painting while in graduate school due to the challenge faced of not being able to convey her ideas explicitly. She had a longing for public displays of her work and also realized her abstract "found" language paintings were unsuccessful attempts at capturing the attention of those in that setting. Holzer has experimented, grown, and proven that she can adapt to a variety of environmental settings, ultimately being successful in her explicit approach no matter where she is in the world. She even has found a way to resort back to non-word-based works and still capture a feeling of victimization of being lied to, as her *Redaction Paintings* serve as a direct political protest to war and government oppression. Where media bombardment has tantalized consumers to falsely chase a self-identity, Holzer has stood beside these advertisements with her work, using the same media as these massive media conglomerates that pursue profit and openly express their will to power. It may seem that political activism in America has been dulled down since the peace movement and protests during the 1960s, but Holzer has kept the humanistic passion for equality and progress alive as she has adapted her ideas to the changing technological environment. Her work is intended to get the viewer to think of why the content was presented in the environmental and cultural context it was. Holzer expresses her activism, commenting on her intent, saying, "Thinking is a good basis for action." Her work is indeed an exceptional basis inciting thought regarding sociopolitical issues. How does Holzer's work seek to direct our actions for progressive change in the political arena, and what are we to do now with the information provided? If anything, she has challenged the art community, as did Duchamp, this time not as to what is considered art, but where the influence and power of conceptual art can go.

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Evaluation: *Zachary does a remarkable job guiding his readers through the symbolic environments of Holzer's provocative works.*

The Crab and the Serpent

Nick Stahl
Learning Community: The Universe in Science and Science Fiction
Courses: Astronomy 100 (Astronomy Survey) and Literature 115 (Fiction)
Instructors: Bhasker Moorthy and Pearl Ratunil

Assignment: *Each student in this learning community wrote an original science fiction story employing scientifically accurate astronomy, then prepared a literary critical analysis of the story, comparing it to two science fiction stories read for class. The science related to a supernova that occurred in the year 1054 is interwoven in this student's work of fiction.*

"BEEP.....BEEP.....BEEP.....BEEP."

Omri Miller slapped the snooze button of the jarring alarm clock again as the illuminating rays of light cracked through the blinds. The morning beams struck a golf ball-sized crystal, which dangled in front of the half-closed flimsy plastic screens covering the window, and then scattered brilliant rainbows across the bedspread and over the walls. "What time is it?" an irritable, sleep-laden voice echoed from beneath the sheets as they pulled the covers away from Omri's body, exposing his lithe naked self to the lingering cold morning of the apartment.

"It's seven." Omri sighed, knowing full well he wouldn't be getting the covers back.

"Go, put some coffee on, would you?" the voice moaned.

"Alright." He obediently removed his exposed body from the bed and plucked his underwear, which had been wildly scattered amidst two sets of clothes, from the chilly hardwood floor. As Omri slipped on a pair of dark blue briefs, he noticed they too were cold, and the morning nip sent quivers along his skin, raising the hairs on his limbs. Omri scratched himself and stretched in the dark of the room. Before heading to the kitchen, he stopped for a moment and tugged at the single beige cord against the wall, which swiftly raised the thin plastic blinds. The bright light flooded the room, obliterating the remaining darkness. The mass of writhing flesh and bone groaned beneath the covers, drew the sheets in tighter, and recoiled beneath the heavy down quilt like a snail retreating into its shell. "Son-of-a-bitch," said the muffled voice, barely audible, but no less scathing.

In the kitchen, Omri started the pot of coffee, a robust roast, which immediately began permeating the tiny apartment. He sat and flipped open his computer and clicked back and forth between his favorite blogs and news sites. One headline in particular occurred on several of them, but in different forms.

"NEW STAR ON TH HORIZON!"
"BRIGHT STAR APPEARS SUDDENLY IN NIGHT SKY."
"WHILE YOU SLEPT: DYING STAR ILLUMINATES THE SKY!"

Quick investigation led Omri to more scientifically oriented websites and blogs, which explained the sudden galactic phenomenon more succinctly. The supernova had been heralded around the globe within an hour of its stellar occurrence. It had appeared while he had been dreaming and was now visible in the morning sky.

"...60,000 times brighter than Venus..."
"...50 times brighter than a full moon..."

Omri had perused websites for over an hour, and the coffee had grown cold by the time the shambling body enveloped in a large blanket walked into the kitchen from the bedroom.

"What time is it?" the voice grumbled.
"8:30...," Omri began.
"This coffee's cold."
"Sorry about it."
"Why didn't you wake me up sooner?"
"I tried," Omri stated as he looked up from the computer, "When the blinds failed, I assumed you still wanted some rest. I didn't want to rush you today." Omri shifted in his chair and watched as the old coffee was dumped down the drain and a fresh batch was started.
"Anything exciting happen since yesterday?"
"A star exploded, its guts spread across space, pretty

close to home, too, scientists say only about 5,000 light years away," Omri replied.

"That doesn't mean much to me, where did it happen?

Omri paused. "In the sky," he said, casually risking the smart-aleck response.

"No shit; *where* in the sky?" the voice inquired further while grabbing a coffee mug from a nearby cabinet and slamming it shut.

Omri's eyes dropped to his computer and he hesitated, "In the center of Cancer."

"*No shit?*" the voice lilted, from beneath the shambling covers, and turned to pour a cup of coffee.

* * *

In the car ride to the radiation clinic, Omri stole quick glances out the window from the driver's seat. The supernova could indeed be seen during the daylight hours. The dead star twinkled more profusely and strongly than any living star, but it was much brighter and resisted being washed out by the sun's rays. The two drove mostly in silence before Omri turned on the radio. The supernova, which had been on the front page of every website, was all anyone could talk about on the airwaves, too. Scientists were thrilled, none more so than astronomers, by its sudden appearance, and much had already been discerned since its advent. Astronomers reported the star died near δ Cnc, commonly called Asellus Australis, in the constellation Cancer. Its death marked the second type-II supernova in the Milky Way to have occurred and been visible with the naked eye in more than 1,600 years since the birth of the Crab Nebula, and closer to Earth by roughly 1,500 light years.

"That star died about 5,000 years ago. Can you believe that?" Omri said.

"I'll believe just about anything someone else tells me these days."

"Do you believe the radiation treatments are working?" Omri inquired but received no response. He turned up the radio. A female voice came over the radio waves, and the host of the show introduced her as Madam Alzubra. Her voice was sickly ethereal, and she paused between questions, you couldn't tell if it was the delay in connection or the way she spoke. Madam Alzubra talked about how the appearance of the supernova was foretold by many ancient cultures, including the Hopi and the Mayans. She said the star would usher in a new dawn and bring great fortune to all the star signs, but especially Cancers as long as it remained bright.

"This woman is so full of shit." A hand sprang from the passenger's seat and slammed the off-button of the car's center console. "Why are you listening to this garbage?"

"I don't know, I just like hearing about it. They say it's a once in a lifetime chance to witness an event like this."

"La-dee-da, fortune my ass," the passenger mumbled softly as the two pulled into the parking lot of the clinic.

* * *

That night Omri dreamed that he was in China along the Great Wall. In the morning sky, there was a great star outshining even the crescent moon. It rose slowly above the horizon. Omri watched it in silence. He heard shouting and swords clanging against shields. As he looked over the wall, he saw two massive armies, one clad in vibrant emerald green and the other shrouded in crimson red. Both sides carried banners displaying giant serpents. Omri opened his mouth to scream, but nothing came out. Suddenly, amidst both armies, two massive serpents, a red one and a green one, the size of trains, smashed through the clambering and screaming men, sliding over them, crushing the tiny figures with their massive muscles and vibrant scales. Omri stared, transfixed at the horror as the snakes intertwined. They bit each other and constricted their bodies with great force, their massive fangs bore holes between the scales and gushed golden-red blood across both armies. He watched as the supernova overhead began to fade and the horizon lit up with fire and smoke. The giant emerald green serpent had felled his crimson foe and proceeded to swallow its enemy and warriors in red.

Omri awoke in bed, sweating profusely. He rolled himself quietly from the covers, careful to not rouse the sleeping giant next to him. He walked over to the window, stark naked, and observed the supernova in the night sky.

Its light had washed out the center star, Asellus Australis, and become the focal point of the Cancer constellation. To Omri, the fixed pattern of stars looked nothing like a crab—not a crab the likes of which he had ever seen. But he supposed if he stared long enough, the crab would reveal itself to him. A faint whisper from behind him lingered on his ears. "Come back to bed," the voice said. Omri turned to face the call, his body vulnerable and illuminated by the brightness of the supernova. Its cosmic rays poured in through the window. He began to weep. "Don't be sad." The voice was of little consolation. "Come back to bed? Alright?" Omri wiped the remaining tears from his face and crawled beneath the sheets.

* * *

The supernova shined during the day and night for 29 days. The drive to-and-from the radiation clinic was dripping with different perspectives every few minutes. Many religions saw the bright star as the foretelling of a new messiah, and babies born on the day it had first appeared became immediately famous. They were called Star Babies and were revered as having come riding in on the cosmic waves of the supernova. Astronomers had been bombarded with questions about the nature of the Milky Way galaxy and the universe, and about the likelihood of other stars closer to us, within 20 light years, dying, and, what the effects would be on Earth. The answers to these questions were nothing short of speculation but were guaranteed to be dazzling. After 29 days, the supernova could only be seen during the evening, and the world went back to normal. News coverage of the supernova had run its course. The websites, news channels, and radio stations had grown weary of the galactic coverage and favored newer headlines. As Omri listened, a hand would slam against the center console, effectively ending the radio transmission.

* * *

Once again, Omri stood on the Great Wall. The sky had darkened, and the supernova had faded. The bodies of red- and green-clad corpses lay strewn across the battlefield. The lights above him twinkled and emerged from the inky blue velvety darkness. The large snake slithered amidst the battlefield. Its long pink tongue flicked over the corpses, searching for any signs of life. Omri, once again aghast, and paralyzed with fear, watched as the snake's gleaming yellow eyes blinked amidst the darkened battlefield. When all had been destroyed, Omri watched as the emerald serpent began to devour itself.

* * *

Over the next year, the supernova had faded from the night sky altogether. Sometimes, you would hear about it, but not often. The trips to the radiation clinic had become more and more frequent, but to little avail. The medications had ceased their effectiveness, and the body had grown tired. The hair had long since fallen out, disappeared, and Omri watched the body waste away more quickly. The lengths the two of them had gone to. The silent battles they had both endured at one another's expense. The emotionally taxing car rides had been riddled with scientific theory. Omri flipped on the radio. It had been some time since any news had been made about the supernova. The astronomer had said there was much more to be discovered in the wake of its great death. Left behind, they said, was now a pulsar. It was small and so energized that it provided a great deal of energy for the leftover remnants. It spun around in the vacuum of space like an immense lighthouse, emanating massive quantities of electromagnetic radiation. The words had resonated deeply within Omri. The death of a star, a supernova, and the birth of a pulsar, they were one and the same. Life and death were cyclical. At one time, he had wanted to believe the appearance of the supernova was a sign of good fortune, buying into the words of people like Madam Alzubra.

* * *

He was there, once more on the Great Wall, a stone snake which extended from horizon to horizon. Dawn encroached on the battlefield, the royal blue sky dissolving into shades of periwinkle. The stars continued to twinkle over the skeletal corpses and pools of dried-up blood. Omri saw the skeletal remains of the giant emerald

serpent. Its bones had formed a perfect circular archway in the center of the battlefield: a grim biological cathedral, grotesque and beautiful in its ghastly image. Omri made his way into the center of the battlefield, passing between the massive bony archways. The skeletal remains of the snake encircled him, and above him the stars of Cancer appeared, and a faint glow emanating from its center grew brighter and brighter before its light consumed the entirety of the constellation. It appeared to outshine even the Sun. It twisted and formed into the shape of a great Crab and descended upon the battlefield. The crab's great yellow and blue carapace was encrusted with barnacles. Its eyes flicked back and forth, and its great maw clicked and clacked. Omri stumbled back and fell over the remains of fallen soldiers. He heard the bones crack, and suddenly he found himself naked before the giant Crab.

* * *

The nurse in the ICU had come over and pronounced the time of death at two p.m. Omri had collected the remaining belongings in a clear plastic bag and walked slowly down the long hallway. He had dropped off his nametag and signed out of the hospital registry. He exited through the revolving doors and stepped into the sunlight. Feeling the warmth on his skin, Omri sat on a bench and held the plastic bag of worldly possessions close to his chest, and he wept.

* * *

Omri rose slowly amidst the bones and tattered banners and stood to face the giant crab. Unsure of his own actions, Omri's feet, one in front of the other, carried him to the crab's side. The behemoth crustacean lowered its body on the battlefield to one side. Omri understood and he climbed onto the back of the crab, latching onto barnacles and various jagged outcroppings of the yellow and blue carapace. Atop the crab, Omri stared across the battlefield and looked back to the Great Wall, and down at the bone archways of the once great serpent. The hard exoskeleton shifted, and he could feel that they were floating. The two floated off into the sky, rising higher above the stratosphere, into the great vacuum of space. They traveled for an indefinite amount of time, out of the solar system he called home, and far off into the regions of space. They passed a bright orange star he assumed was Asellus Australis. It was more beautiful than the scientists had described. In the wake of the supernova, the entrails of the star had sprawled out against a vast expanse of space. Its breadth was great and sinuous, and it appeared to fold in on itself a great blue and glowing serpent made of gas and held together by great electromagnetism. Nestled within the great coils was the nebulous serpent's head, and in its eye a great flashing orb that flickered quickly and at great velocity. It was another great beacon in the night sky, the still beating heart of a great corpse.

Literary Analysis of "The Crab and the Serpent": On Dreams of Death and Dying

Many cultures from around the globe have rituals in which they honor and remember their dead. Few rituals, aside from last rites, truly prepare the body and mind emotionally for all of life's inevitable fate. Science fiction writers use a number of literary devices to convey their characters' growth to the reader. In Nick Stahl's "The Crab and The Serpent," in the wake of a supernova, the main character, Omri Miller, comes to terms with man's inescapable fate of death. As Omri visits the radiation clinic and listens to news coverage of the supernova, he dreams of a great battle of epic proportions. Stahl uses sequential dreams and the motifs of the supernova and the serpent and crab to convey Omri's acceptance of death when confronted with human mortality. These motifs are similar to the ones in "Slow Life" by Michael Swanwick and "A Walk in the Sun" by Geoffrey Landis.

To illustrate this, we look first toward a comparison of "Slow Life," by Michael Swanwick, and "The Crab and The Serpent," in which Stahl uses the similar literary device of sequential dreams in order to illustrate Omri's acquiescence of mortality. Swanwick writes:

> There's a perfectly logical reason for that. Okay, it's a little strange, and maybe it won't sound perfectly logical to you initially, but...look, I've been having sequential dreams. I think they're significant. Let me tell you about them. (20)

In the context of Swanwick's story, the main character, Lizzie O'Brien, describes her "sequential" dreams to her crew. Within these dreams, the alien life form is able to make contact with Lizzie O'Brien. The word "sequential" is important because it is used to establish a significant series of events. "Sequential" implies that things happen

in an order, and this order implies a greater reason for their particular occurrence. "Sequential," used to describe the dreams, is critical in conveying the ongoing development of the protagonist in which they learn something about themselves. Swanwick uses "sequential" dreams to convey Lizzie's growth and understanding of the alien life form establishing contact with her, while Stahl uses the "sequential" dreams to establish Omri Miller's struggle to comprehend death. Stahl writes:

> Once again Omri stood on The Great Wall. The sky had darkened, and the supernova had faded. The bodies of red- and green-clad corpses lay strewn across the battlefield. The lights above him twinkled and emerged from the inky blue velvety darkness. [...] He was there, once more on the Great Wall, a stone snake which extended from horizon to horizon. Dawn encroached on the battlefield, the royal blue sky dissolving into shades of periwinkle. The stars continued to twinkle over the skeletal corpses and pools of dried-up blood. (6-7)

In the sequential dreams used by Stahl for Omri, the continuations of the dreams show Omri is still coming to terms with mortality. The words "once again" and "once more" are important with establishing the sequential dreaming on a literal level. On a symbolic level, the word "extended," used to describe the recurring motif of the Great Wall, is important in establishing "sequential" dreaming. The word "extended" implies bridging a connection between one dream sequence and the next. Stahl's use of sequential dreams is similar to Swanwick's and conveys Omri's mental growth and development as he struggles with the penultimate concept of death.

Stahl goes on to use a supernova and specific animal motifs, including the snake and crab, as a metaphor for Omri's ability to accept death as part of the natural order of things. Specifically, Stahl's use of the supernova is similar to Landis' use of the Moon's sunset terminator and conveys the overall thematic emphasis on death and acceptance throughout the story. The snake and crab in Stahl's story are animals used to emphasize the symbolic nature of death, while the encroaching darkness of Landis' sunset terminator represents similar fears of death. Landis writes:

> Her landing had been close to the sunset terminator: the very edge of the illuminated side of the moon. The moon's rotation is slow, but inexorable. Sunset would arrive in three days. There was no shelter on the moon, no place to wait out the fourteen-day-long lunar night. Her solar cells needed sunlight to keep her air fresh. Her search of the wreckage had yielded no unruptured storage tanks, no batteries, no means to lay up a store of oxygen. And there was no way they could launch a rescue mission before nightfall. (14)

In this passage, Landis puts his character Patricia Mulligan's dire situation into perspective. She has crash-landed on the moon, near the edge of the "sunset

Student Reflections on Writing: Nick Stahl

Creative writing and literary analysis are codependent; you cannot have one without the other. Creative writing allows writers to explore multitudes of themes, including life, death, and the nature of existence, which preside over daily life, but are manifest below the surface of an individual's daily routine. Writing a short story or a novel with such themes in mind might be a calculated endeavor, a carefully constructed labyrinth, by the author for the reader. The reader writing a literary analysis is tasked with exploring that labyrinth and uncovering its deeper meanings. Perhaps one of the best ways I learned to critique a piece of literature was by using close reading and word analysis to go beyond the superficial presence of the words and extrapolate greater meaning within an author's work. Likewise, close reading and word analysis are tools that help me construct the foundation of a story and fine-tune the important details toward the end. For instance, I will stop and ask myself, "Why am I using this particular symbol?" "What connotations does this symbol carry with it?" and "How can I convey one meaning of this symbol over another one of its meanings?" My favorite piece of advice for writers is to read, read often, and read outside your creative forte. And, read literary analyses of works you like by your favorite authors; you might just learn something you would not have stopped to consider on your own.

terminator." He uses the hard science surrounding the "sunset terminator," that, when it catches up to Patricia, will strand her in a "fourteen-day-long lunar night." The word "night" is a key concept because it essentially hints at the possibility of Patricia's death if she cannot charge her solar panels to ensure she keeps her "air fresh." The world "night" implies an encroaching darkness brought on by the sunset terminator. While being rooted in hard science, it also symbolizes that death is at Patricia's heels. Convincingly, Stahl employs a similar astrological concept of the supernova to convey his main character's struggles. Stahl writes:

> The astronomer had said there was much more to be discovered in the wake of the great supernova. Left behind, was now a pulsar, small and so energized it provided a great deal of energy for the leftover remnants. [...] Omri understood, and he climbed onto the back of the crab, latching onto barnacles and various jagged outcroppings of the yellow and blue carapace. Atop the crab, Omri stared across the battlefield and looked back to the Great Wall, and down at the bone archways of the once great serpent. (7-8)

Stahl uses the "supernova" to explain the overarching theme of the story. The "supernova" is rooted in hard science, and it is used to describe the ultimate theme of death, while the "snake" and the "crab" are the symbolic allusion to dying. Both the "snake" and the "crab" represent animals of renewal and death. The "snake" and the "crab" both shed their skins in favor of a new one. The snake's old skin and the crab's shed carapace are the remnant skeletons that represent death. However, the same process affords them the ability to renew themselves as they obtain a new skin, which ultimately represents Omri's newfound appreciation for death. Essentially, from death comes new life, and the two concepts are ultimately indistinguishable from one another.

Stahl's character Omri struggles with the concept of death and uses sequential dreams, the supernova, and the images of the snake and crab to help grasp the concept of mortality. In order to explain this, we look to similar stories, including "Slow Life" by Michael Swanwick and "A Walk in the Sun" by Geoffrey Landis. Stahl draws influence from Swanwick and Landis in the way he constructs his story, including sequential dreams, such as Swanwick's character Lizzie O'Brien experiences, and the hard science surrounding a supernova. The motifs of the snake and the crab are comparable with the darkness encroaching on Landis' character Patricia Mulligan and Omri's struggle with the concept of death. The three literary devices Stahl employs aid in understanding the human condition and the acceptance of death. Omri finds solace in the supernova and subconsciously confronts death within the dreamscape. We see that Stahl has Omri come to understand death in light of the pulsar remains of the supernova. In the final dream sequence, Omri visits the pulsar and invites the reader to appreciate life and death with him.

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Swanwick, Michael. "Slow Life." *Lightspeed Magazine* 27 (August 2012). *Lightspeedmagazine.com*. Web.

Evaluation: *This assignment to write a science fiction story was actually requested by the students in this learning community course. The assignment was to balance the fictional component of the paper with an analysis. The result is Nick's hybrid paper of fiction and literary analysis. In the astronomy portion of the learning community, students explored the lives and deaths of stars. When massive stars die, they can explode; the outer layers are expelled, revealing a dense core made entirely of neutrons. A newly formed neutron star rotates several times per second and emits bright beams of light from its magnetic poles. When viewed from Earth, this can appear like a rapidly flashing light bulb. Such objects are referred to as pulsars. Nick skillfully incorporates all of these concepts in his story and has brilliantly interwoven cancer the disease and Cancer the constellation.*

Bees and a Being in a Garden

Amy Jo Streuter
Course: English 101 (Composition)
Instructor: Andrew Wilson

Assignment: *After reading some nature-related essays, students wrote their own "observation of nature" essays, addressing our connection or disconnection with the natural world in the twenty-first century.*

In any modern-day city, there is obvious discord between man and nature. Too often, we rely on other people or machinery to get the job done or to get what we want. Though it may be extremely difficult—and seemingly impossible at this point in time—to shell ourselves away from the power-hungry, politically driven, industrialized, urbanized, and media-obsessed world that has spread around Earth like cancer, it is surely possible to find some sort of balance in the chaos. One may agree that nature is chaotic, too. Would it not be wise to find a harmonious way of living between the two wild worlds?

I started gardening this year, and I feel a new connection with nature. I've become aware that nature is actually similar to our work-force world. Both nature and the manmade world would fall apart without team effort. It is not a one-man job. Presidents, vice presidents, senators, governors, blue-collar and white-collar workers, mechanics, plumbers, and every other person in between, play a part in their own system. Sunlight, air, water, oxygen, minerals, animals, insects, etc., all play a role in what makes Earth. In the one collective consciousness that we all share, every unique being does what they were designed to do to make life harmonious, if chosen. I find, though, in politics, the obsession with control of *power* overwhelms the actual goal that people are trying to achieve. I also find in politics that *teamwork* has lost meaning. Working with nature, specifically working in my garden, the concept of *power* and *teamwork* is different. Nature exemplifies those terms in a respectable, harmonious fashion.

I often ponder what gardening means to me. Is it so much what I'm doing for the garden or what the garden is doing for me? Is it a hobby? Or has it become a duty? The definition of hobby in *The Oxford Dictionary* is: "an activity done regularly in one's leisure time for pleasure." This obviously holds some truth to me; I take pleasure from this regular activity. But since I started growing my own garden this year, it has become much more than a leisurely hobby; it has become an obligation to Earth.

Encapsulating the front and back yard of my home are flowers and plants, none of which would exist if I didn't learn to coexist with nature. Although my yard doesn't compare to pictures you see in garden magazines, that's no matter to me. Those plants are like my children; I am proud of my garden regardless. The process of creating my garden was a minor difficulty; nevertheless, it was rewarding. I de-rooted old plants that didn't revive from the winter. I turned the dirt with a shovel and added nutritious soil to holes that would later be the new homes for my colorful, diverse children. I dispersed a variety of flowers around my home and sectioned off an area of land for crops nestled behind a wooden deck in the backyard. It's about 16 feet long and 4 feet wide, with a short, wrought-iron fence surrounding its border to block out hairy thieves like rabbits, or my dogs. In this designated area, I delicately planted from left to right. Starting with tomatoes, I worked my way to chili and cayenne peppers, spicy oregano, basil, zucchini, and mini-cucumbers. My tiny garden slowly but surely started coming together. Working in the hot sun and brisk air, I'm naturally stimulated using only bare hands and simple tools in the cool, damp soil. The pleasure I get is utterly enjoyable. When my feet don't require the protection of shoes to help stomp a shovel into tough ground, I choose to work barefoot. I love feeling the soft green grass between my toes and even the occasional poke of a stick or rock that I step on. The feeling of perfectly soft, moist dirt covering my feet and hands, creating a cast over my kneecaps, and finding its way into each groove under my nails grounds my body and lifts my spirit. The nature around me seemed to be just as happy. While I was preparing my garden, I noticed I was attracting bees. This gladdened me, since I knew bees and I would be great coworkers. When I finished planting and felt like the garden was set and ready for action, I stood there in blissful silence; the bees buzzed in approval. I breathed in new smells: fresh dirt,

clean oxygen, and new greenery. Everything about my backyard looked and smelled different. With gleaming eyes, I gazed upon a land of new opportunity for me and any inhabitants that chose to share the land.

Since this was my first year tending a garden of my own, and since I wasn't sure if the virgin soil would be fertile enough for bearing flowers and crops, I was concerned about my harvest. Consequently, I sought help from nature. No pesticides, no insecticides, and no weed killers for my garden. I trusted the basics—earth, water, sunlight, and air—to help give life to the plants just as they give life to me. I also asked for help from bees to pollinate my garden and the garden of Earth. I intentionally placed marigolds in between the spaces of plants because they attract bees. Likewise, I placed a large pot of lavender in the center vortex of the garden because that also attracts bees. Bees are crucial to sustaining plant life; henceforth, I wanted them around.

My appreciation and acknowledgment of bees has grown since I began gardening. I learned that there is an average 30% decline of honey bees happening each year. Bee keepers are noticing bees abandoning their hives or dying and named this mysterious mass disappearance colony collapse disorder. Many people have been making an effective effort to try to save the bees. Although I didn't fully realize it at first, I am also helping the bees by growing a healthy, insecticide-free garden. Coincidentally, they are helping me.

Working in my garden, it's inevitable that I come in regular contact with this tiny creature. Enthralling, yet a little frightening each time, a familiar buzzing sound circled around me one day. A bee! It landed on my lavender bush and began doing its pollinating dance. I observed this fuzzy black and yellow insect up close; the behavior seemed a little sexual. The bee stroked its abdomen on top of the buds of the lavender and then proceeded to mimic the same routine on my other plants. This became a daily occurrence. Now, when I go outside to water the

Student Reflections on Writing: Amy Jo Streuter

Mr. Wilson, my English 101 professor, assigned our class to write a paper about *anything* we wanted regarding nature: animals, a sunset, a flower, a person, the rain, the seasons changing. Our options to speak and connect with nature were seemingly endless. I chose to write about gardening and the harmonious work between *all* because there is no hierarchy when one lives harmoniously: humans are not greater than plants, plants and bees are no better than humans, and so on.

The freedom in writing, in my opinion, is greater than in verbal communication. Verbal communication differs due to the sole fact that outside stimuli can disrupt or disable one from fully having freedom to express themselves, contrary to writing. Sometimes when I talk, I find myself rambling, losing train of thought, forgetting points I want to say, or find myself having difficulty truly *hearing* someone when they are talking or even *hearing* myself. Again, my point in delving into the differences between these specific forms of communication is because I am a passionate person who thoroughly enjoys talking to people and noting their verbal expression and truly *hearing* someone, as well as observing the difference in their communication through writing. I believe when one writes, their verbal communication skills increase.

Harper College, the Honors Program, and the professors who inspire me influence me to become a better student and human being. I am forever grateful for the freedom to write and express myself and feel comfortable enough to write, write, and write, as these wonderful professors— whom I will always cherish—read my work, not skimming through "just another paper" or grading without full attention to detail; instead, the professors I've met through Harper College actually care and give intimate, intelligent, personable advice that has helped and will continue to help me blossom into the person I am today.

plants, I hope to see bees. I scope around the border of my yard where flowers are in bloom and smile anytime I see bees flying about. It pleases me to work coexisting with bees. We are both being dutiful laborers in the work-force of nature. They are my co-workers and my friends. Even though a part of me still fears when a bee comes too close to my body, I've never been stung. I wonder what they think of me? Do they see me as some god-like figure that brings water to their flowers when there is drought? I don't think so. I think bees, as well as other creatures of nature, do what they can with what they've got. I think that's admirable. Nature doesn't glorify things or other beings the way people do to get our wants and desires. The bees and I work in accord with nature to give life to the land we share. If I were to stop watering the flowers to keep them in bloom for bees to do their work, or if I were to call pest control to kill their hives, the bees wouldn't go on strike, bomb my house, curse my name, de-friend me from Facebook, or deliberately harm me in any way like some people do when they stop working together or when they stop getting what they want. The bees would be left to travel to another plot of land to do their work, and as a result of having to start anew, would jeopardize their chances of survival. I'm happy my yard became the home to some bees.

Now that the season is coming to yet another cycle, I sit and reflect on comments George Orwell makes in his essay "Some Thoughts of the Common Toad." Perhaps if we simplified our lives by ridding politics, economics, glorified celebrities, flashy cars, senseless television, and brainwashing advertisements—to name a few—from our daily lives, we'd find more pleasure and appreciation in the subtleties of nature. Orwell says, "How many a time have I stood watching the toads mating, or a pair of hares having a boxing match in the young corn, and thought of all the important persons who would stop me enjoying this if they could" (400)? To think of the times I've deliberately dug my fingers and toes into the earth, dirtying them more the deeper they go; to think of each time I broke ground with a shovel, nervous if I was harming earthworms or any other underground inhabitants; to think of each time a little frog would surprise me, hopping out from its perfect camouflage to say hello; to think of the blossoming of each flower and witnessing each crop ripen to perfection; and at last, to think of the times I've watched the bees arouse themselves on the pistils of flowers and felt the frequency of their *buzz* vibrating throughout my garden and into my body. These things and more bring me to a state of Zen.

It's harvest time now, and between the team efforts of myself, the bees, and the forces of nature, I had a better harvest than I predicted earlier in the season. It's a bittersweet time of the year. I'm slowly noticing fewer bees in my garden. Flowers are dying and leaves are falling. As the season begins to change, I take comfort knowing Earth benefited from both the bees and me. We all worked in a harmonious manner, never expecting too much or too little from the other. There was no fight over power or lack of teamwork between the bees and me. Politics, economics, and people in general could learn what it means to work harmoniously by just observing nature. Some days it was cloudy, and some days the sun shined; sometimes there was drought, and sometimes there was flood. There was no crash of power, no overthrow of leadership. Although such are times when natural disaster does occur, as hurricanes or earthquakes will continue to do, there is still purpose and meaning to nature's chaos. Revival is inevitable. The sun will still shine, and the bees will still pollinate. Yet, the day may come when Earth ceases to exist, and the bees are not going to fight against it or find scientific data to prevent it from happening. In Buddhism, one of the focuses is to live harmoniously with nature. Gardening helps me move in accord with the cosmic flow. One day I will die, and so will the bees. We will fall back into the earth, decomposing and becoming fully immersed as one. We will become food for the plants, continuing to care for and nurture them. It is a beautiful cycle of life, indeed.

Evaluation: *In this essay, Ms. Streuter reminds us with lyrical prose that nature still abounds, if only we'd pay a little attention.*

Broken Promises and Politics: Wislawa Szymborska on the Twentieth Century

Heinz Tempelmann
Course: English 102 (Composition)
Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

Assignment: *Write a literary research paper incorporating effective use of at least seven secondary sources.*

Every day in the media, it seems there is another story about the inability of Democrats and Republicans to compromise or make positive resolutions. Our nation spirals into bankruptcy, and the powers that be are impotent, too busy squabbling to fix anything. The late and brilliant poet Wislawa Szymborska could relate to our governmental dysfunction. She lived through World War II, communism in Poland, and Poland's transition to a free market economy. Hirsch writes, "Szymborska came of age during World War II, and spent much of her life under Stalinism. Thus she saw her country twice destroyed" (110). She knew that when our political leaders fail, the people suffer. In the poems "The Century's Decline" and "Children of Our Age," Syzmborska writes that politics infiltrated the lives of twentieth-century people. The political powers made many unfulfilled promises. The world is an imperfect place to live. Humans are just that, human. We should be very suspicious of anyone claiming to have an absolute truth or fool-proof solution to life's issues. Szymborska's anonymous narration and the universality of her subject matter and her comprehensive understanding of the human condition create works of brilliance that educate as well as inspire. Again, these poems illustrate the increased role of politics in the lives of modern people, the harm and suffering that follows, and humanity's will to survive any miserable circumstance.

What sets Szymborska apart from other twentieth-century poets? The number one factor is the universality of her work. "Her poems, with all their local linguistic liveliness, adhere to a determined simplicity of narration. They are also resolutely 'anonymous': their speaker is identified only rarely by gender, and never by age or nationality or ethnicity or local habitation" (Vendler 36). Are her poems written by Poland, for Poland, and about Poland? No—but one can't deny that the political climate Szymborska lived in influenced her work. "Born in 1923, she had the bad luck of having to launch her literary career at the worst possible historic time: during the first decade of Communist rule....Any work that dared be either innovative or candid was doomed" (Baranczak 252). Regardless of this situation, Szymborska's poems speak of humankind as a whole, not just one time and place. The poem "Children of Our Age" not only speaks of the political climate of Poland, it also speaks of suffering and the prevalence of politics in life. As Cavanagh points out, "It might have taken the pitfalls of current ideological criticism as its starting point. But the urge to explain the world in political terms is not new" (177). Another poem, "The Century's Decline," speaks of the incredible suffering within Poland and Europe through World War II and the Cold War, and the tendency to assume that the current generation is the most enlightened and "humane." Both of these poems are excellent examples of Szymborska's work, and they both have a common moral and subject matter.

A brief glance needs to be given to the effect of translation on Szymborska's poetry. If it is not already clear, all of Szymborska's work was initially written in Polish. In the anthology *View With a Grain of Sand,* "Stanislaw Baranczak and Clare Cavanagh make her poems read like excellent English poems" (Osherow 222). Some might say that the essential meaning may have been lost in Baranczak and Cavanagh's translation. On the other hand, translation may add another layer of relevance to the poems. Whatever the case may be, the translators deserve some credit for allowing the English-speaking world to enjoy and learn from works of art such as "Children of Our Age" and "The Century's Decline." Szymborska says of her work, "'I would like everything I write to be clear, intelligible, and I worry a lot if

something proves incomprehensible to the reader" (qtd in Rosslyn 14). In effect, every piece of media a person absorbs is translated through the filter of their experiences and personality traits. It must be said that no one can come to exactly the same conclusion about any piece of work; therefore, we must have faith that Szymborska's poems were translated to the best of the translator's ability, and that they convey Szymborska's intentions of clear, relatable, and easily accessible poems.

Why have Szymborska's words been read and analyzed in numerous languages all across the world? At the surface, the work is of top quality. Gajer writes, "Wislawa Szymborska won the Nobel Prize for Literature for poetry that with ironic precision allows the historical and biological context to come to light in fragments of human reality" (140). In general, Nobel prizes are not given to things like *Iron Man 3* or the classic Rom-com *New Year's Eve* starring Ashton Kutcher. Osherow believes that poems are not simply well organized or pretty words, that "there is something essentially poetic that does not inhere merely in a poem's surface" (222). Poetry can help human beings understand themselves. For example, Szymborska "tries to find an outside viewpoint from which to examine human nature. What is it that makes us human, and what is it in us that resists our own humanity? How human can we actually claim to be" (Cavanagh 175)? Poetry also benefits individual nations. Poets expose unjust policies or speak against unjust rulers or give voice to minorities without representation. Poland is renowned for its revolutionary and politically active writers. "Poets took the place of the (Polish) state when Prussia, Austria, and Russia divided Poland between them in the late eighteenth century, erasing it from the map of Europe for over a hundred years" (Cavanagh 174). Also, "'In this fallen modern age,' Shelley laments, 'poets function only as the world's unacknowledged legislatures....Though they stand unfailingly on the side of great and free developments of the national will, they are spurned by the very nations whose interests they seek to serve'" (qtd in Cavanagh 174). As we can see, poetry is not just about reading for pleasure. There are deep truths in poems, and the poets can become agents of the people in a political context.

What was the political climate like when Szymborska wrote these poems? Even if the subject matter is universal, it is not hard to tell that issues of the state were in the poet's mind when she put pen to paper. Szymborska was born in Poland in 1923, with the devastation of the First World War only five years past, The Second World War looming close, the Iron Curtain (Soviet domination in Eastern Europe) about to drop, and let's not forget the rough transition within Poland from a command economy (communism) to a free market economy (capitalism). This orgy of death, destruction, and politics either jaded Szymborska, making her perception of the world dark, or, more likely, it may have illuminated her to the true nature of people and organized nation-states. One must know misery to know happiness. Out of the darkness comes light. Out of the darkness of these situations came the light of Szymborska's brilliant work.

Szymborska's early years were doubtlessly influenced by the global struggles—the World Wars—in the first half of the twentieth century. After she began writing poems, it was a struggle to find her voice and get past the communist censorship. "The fact that after World War II Poland found itself within the so called external Soviet empire, with its sovereignty restricted and subject to outside ideological pressure, meant also new conditions for (literature and other intellectual disciplines)" (Topolski 169). In fact, Szymborska's early work was skewed by her unwavering faith in Marxist-Leninist theory. According to Cavanagh:

> In an interview of 1991, Szymborska speaks of the unexpected benefits she drew from her years as a true believer. "If it weren't for the sadness, the sense of guilt," she observes, "I might not even regret the experience of those years. Without it, I wouldn't know what belief in the one true cause really is. And how easy it is not to know what you don't want to know. And what mental gymnastics you're capable of when you're confronted with other worldviews." Szymborska knows firsthand the very human temptation to impose a fixed and rigid order on a reality, human or otherwise, that constantly eludes our grasp (176).

Her years as a true believer, as the reader will notice later in this essay, may have been the inspiration behind the

"true believer" narration voice in "Children of Our Age." Szymborska's first work, *What We Live For*, was not a critical success. It fit into the socialist realism genre, which has the sole purpose of forwarding the notion of a perfect communist utopia. Szymborska later renounced Marxism. Within the socialist realist genre Szymborska was initially a part of, "There is only one voice in evidence, a public and collective voice, and only one prism through which to view the world: teleological, triumphal, and resolutely Marxist-Leninist" (Cavanagh 176). This was in 1952. By the time 1954 came around, Szymborska had learned a few lessons from her first outing and drastically changed her writing style. According to Baranczak, "Szymborska's second collection, published in 1954, was titled *Questions Put to Myself* – and it is with the title's first word that the genuine Szymborska begins" (Baranczak 252). Notice in the title that the "We" becomes "Me" (myself). "What is perhaps the most significant, the plural 'we' is replaced by the singular 'I'" (Baranczak 253). Her poems were never the same. Was it a mistake for her to begin her career as an ignorant follower tooting the horn of communist glory? No, because she had to learn a lesson. This taught her about the nature of humanity and what blind faith looks like. Szymborska, being a modest woman, considers this period to be a mistake. Again, she is wrong. She would not have been as good of a writer without this experience, or three decades later have written the two great poems "The Century's Decline" and "Children of Our Age."

"The Century's Decline," in the first section, sums up the disappointments of the twentieth century. The second section contains some paradoxes regarding the pain of being aware of our surroundings and the pain inflicted by any government. In the last section, Szymborska is unable to answer a "naïve" question about life, and reminisces on what constitutes an important question.

In the first section of "The Century's Decline," Szymborska states that, "Our twentieth Century was going to improve on others" ("Century's" 1). The author then points out all the broken promises of the twentieth century. For example, "hunger...and war, and so forth" ("Century's" 17-18) were supposed to be solved by the secular state and technology. Baranczak illustrates this phenomenon by writing:

> The initial line, "Our 20th century was going to improve on the others," is actually a quasi-quote; it refers to an easily recognizable and widely shared opinion (in this case, the optimistic outlook of those who in the beginning of our century used to put an equation mark between the notion of technological progress and that of mankind's potential for moral self-improvement). (255)

Szymborska believes the problems of the twentieth century exist because "good and strong / are two different men" ("Century's" 32-33). The twentieth century, with all its innovations in government and technology, could not solve the major problems in the world. For example, regarding World War II,

> Poland had lost almost 40 per cent of its national wealth, several millions of its population, including a considerable number of scholars, scientists, intellectuals, and professionals; and the Nazis had exterminated nearly the entire Jewish population. Moreover, the constant danger during the war to the nation's existence from both Nazi and the Soviet invaders explains why immediately after the war the people, along with scientists and scholars, concentrated attention above all on the reconstruction of the country and the organization of a new life. (Topolski 170)

The line "good and strong / are two different men" ("Century's" 32-33) seems to suggest that the leaders of the twentieth century were sub-par. In fact, decisions made by strong men, as in presidents, dictators, or kings, caused the negative consequences in the poem: "hunger... and war, and so forth" ("Century's" 17-18). In the history of Europe, the complications of war were a direct result of competition for scarce resources by the kingdoms and nation-states of the day. Szymborska is saying that people of the twentieth century believed that these issues would no longer arise, that we were too advanced to ever let "it" happen again. It did happen again. One notable example is World War II. As a result of the war, "The Polish economy was in a bad state....Many cities, including Warsaw, had been reduced to rubble. Over six million Polish citizens had perished and much of the country's industrial capacity destroyed" (Warner 209).

Again, the arrogance of the past was not learned from. Warner writes, of Poland in the 1980s,

> The new workers' state had its own monuments: as well as Warsaw's massive Palace of Culture, the siting of the Nowa Huta steelworks just outside the ancient cultural capital of Krakow can be seen as symbolizing the ideology of industrialization and "progress" of the new order....Life expectancy was falling (in Poland in the 1980s) and worker absenteeism as a result of health problems was rising. Only 20 per cent of municipal waste water received effective (biological) treatment prior to discharge to the river system (209).

From Warner we discover that the suffering described by Szymborska is not unique to war. Economic progress creates suffering not just for humans, but also the environment. Suffering, as noted in the first section of "The Century's Decline" is caused by arrogance of the people (for thinking that current times are too advanced to make mistakes) and arrogance of their leaders (for making policy decisions that hurt the people). Baranczak draws the following conclusion from the first section, "The preceding, much longer part of this poem might be called a sequence of inverted variations upon the theme stated in line 1: 'Our 20th century was going to improve on the others.' I refer to them as inverted, since in each of the variations this past hope is shown as ultimately thwarted by the eternal and, in fact, incorrigible flaws of our humanity" (Baranczak 254).

In the second section of this poem, the author writes that "Anyone who planned to enjoy the world / is now faced / with a hopeless task" ("Century's" 22-24). In the poet's world, "Stupidity isn't funny. Wisdom isn't gay. Hope / isn't that young girl anymore" ("Century's" 25-28). "Stupidity isn't funny" and "wisdom isn't gay" seems to suggest that being *wise* to the *stupidity* of the world is, frankly, painful. The age-old adage "ignorance is bliss" could be considered a synonym to this particular line. Szymborska has no hope for the youth, which symbolizes no faith in a better future. These are the words of someone who lost faith in government and the idea that humans are innately good, especially when organized in large groups. Szymborska stated that it would be a mistake "'to love humankind instead of human beings'" (qtd in Baranczak 253). The scars of the past wars were etched in Szymborska's mind. Poland is now democratic and at peace, but do we really think that there will never be another war in Europe, or that democracy will prevent suffering? This poem would answer back with a resounding "hell, no!"

In the last section, the author writes about a letter she received. In the letter, someone (or possibly, a group of people) asks her "How should we live" ("Century's" 34). To ask such a question, one must be in a difficult or trying situation, with no relief guaranteed in the immediate future. Poland, trapped under the iron fist of the U.S.S.R., could have been a place that would have inspired the question "how should we live." For example, "Szymborska [was] writing in the '70s in a Poland where self-liberation and suicide are hardly distinguishable" (Vendler 38). This line, nay, this entire poem could apply anywhere in the world at any time. It is the human condition. Szymborska's anonymous narration and the universality of her subject matter and her comprehensive understanding of the human condition make this poem a work of brilliance that educates as well as inspires. "Such an ironic attitude is typical of many of Szymborska's poems, which try to provide new answers to old questions" (Gajer 140). In the last lines of the poem, she responds to the question: "the most pressing questions / are naive ones" ("Century's" 39-40). "How should we live" ("Century's" 34) is a naive question because the writer is already alive. If they are breathing, they already know the answer. The author is saying that when people are pushed to their limits, they will always attempt to find a way to survive.

"Children of Our Age" is a poem divided into three sections. In the first section of "Children of Our Age," Szymborska discusses the ways in which all aspects or actions of a woman or man's life could be construed as a political statement. According to Hirsch, Szymborska takes a common assertion—"'We are children of our age, / it's a political age'-- and examines it until it begins to leak and fall apart. She tries to find the human being—the human reality-—obscured by political dogma" (110). In the first section, it seems that the narrator is a true believer in an indiscriminate political faction. After

the opening line that Hirsch cites, Szymborska writes that each person's ethnicity or nationality has a political history. For example, "Whether you like it or not, / your genes have a political past, / your skin, a political cast" ("Children" 6-8). This line is a great example of Szymborska's universality. "Racial division was the one problem Marxist Poland didn't have...but the assertion is stubbornly true of the world at large. In the context of...Yugoslavia, where states are being wrenched onto a purely ethnic basis, Szymborska sounds almost prophetic" (Rosslyn 14). The narrator goes on to explain that during a simple nature walk, "you're taking political steps / on political grounds" ("Children" 14-15). Politics means the interaction between people or the governance of people. We are social animals, similar to overgrown ants. We constantly build both productive and unproductive relationships, and we fit somewhere on a tall hierarchical ladder. In theory, every action we do (work, school, go to the health club) has some context within our groups. According to the poem, even the moon and poetry without an agenda have a political context. Szymborska writes, "Apolitical poems are also political, and above us shines a moon / no longer purely lunar" ("Children" 16-18). Cavanagh comments, "And heaven forbid that you try writing your way out of this vicious circle, since 'apolitical poems are also political'" (178). In lines 17 and 18, Szymborska is most likely alluding to the space race between the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R:

> Space became an area of intense competition during the Cold War as the United States and Soviet Union attempted to compete with one another in their space programs....(Any perceived advantage might give one country or the other) a military or provide a propaganda boost. The Soviet Union dominated the early years of the space race, sending the first satellite, Sputnik, into orbit in 1957....The US were not to be outdone, and President Kennedy declared the intention of putting a man on the moon by the end of the decade ("The Space Race" 1).

In the second section of "Children of Our Age," Szymborska explains the ways inanimate objects take political meaning. For example, "To acquire a political meaning / you don't even have to be human. Raw material will do, or protein feed, or crude oil, or a conference table whose shape / was quarreled over for months: Should we arbitrate life and death / at a round table or a square one" ("Children" 22-29). This section echoes the informal definition of politics, "who gets what, when, and how." When Szymborska writes about the political significance of raw materials, it reminds us of nations competing over scarce materials. Nations go to war over things like oil or fishing rights or water or food or iron. Szymborska is implying that common people pay for these greedy ambitions with back-breaking taxes, sweat, and blood. One example (of many) of war for natural resources is the Japanese invasion of Indonesia in 1942. "The Japanese occupied the archipelago (Indonesia) in order, like their Portuguese and Dutch predecessors, to secure its rich natural resources....To feed Japan's war machine, large amounts of petroleum, scrap iron, and other raw materials had to be (procured) from foreign sources" ("The Japanese Occupation" 1). When Szymborska talks about the "conference table whose shape / was quarreled over for months" ("Children" 26-27), the current political situation in the United States comes to mind. Two groups argue over petty things, trying to make the other look bad. What was true in Poland in the 1980s is true for the United States now, and will still be true in the future. Both "Children of Our Age" and "The Century's Decline" come from a poet who has lost faith in government and the possibility for improvement in the future. Life is beautiful suffering.

In the third section of this poem, Szymborska states the prevalence of politics in people's lives and the way objects assume a political value or context by writing, "Meanwhile, people perished, animals died, houses burned, and the fields ran wild / just as in times immemorial / and less political" ("Children" 30-35). Up until the last section of the poem, Szymborska's writing is matter of fact, objective, and impartial. In a rather dark turn, the poem mentions death twice, destruction of property twice, and then suggests that this suffering has and will go on forever. The phrase "just as in times immemorial" ("Children" 34) confirms the *foreverness* of this situation. The author believes that it is human nature to form political groups, go to war, suffer, starve, kill, and go on living. This pattern is nothing new. In essence,

government and politics in general are hypocritical. "This politics consists exclusively of the ritual repetition of its own name. It has no bearing on the larger reality it purports to explain" (Cavanagh 178). It cannot explain reality because humans are not capable of describing reality (with 100% accuracy) without hidden agendas, bias, or ignorance. After all, as Szymborska's work points out, we are only human.

It was a privilege to read these two vivid and intimate views on the prevalence of politics and disappointment of the twentieth century, written by an author with a unique vantage point: post-World War II communist Poland. Szymborska's "The Century's Decline" is about the broken promises and false optimism of the last century and the human tendency to think that people of the present are somehow more civilized than people of the past. I say false optimism because the author wrote that she was promised capable leaders, happiness, the end of wars, and the end of suffering in the world. She writes that instead, there is no such thing as both a pure and powerful leader; hunger, war, and pain are constant. Szymborska tells us that ignorance of the true nature of humankind is bliss. "Children of Our Age" has similar subject matter. It critiques politics' prevalence in life, which Szymborska blames for the pain and anguish in the world. This poem addresses the way that everything we say or do has some political connotation, and that objects become part of political struggles. With all this going on, the poet writes that suffering is eternal, with or without politics. Politics are not the solution to our problems, but sometimes they are the cause. Both poems may seem dark, but they brilliantly illuminate human tendencies and the human condition. They tell us that man's world is not a perfect place, that we shouldn't be too optimistic. The poems exemplify the needless death and suffering for ideology. According to Szymborska, the human spirit is strong, and the will to survive will take us through any challenging situation. The poet knows suffering and ignorance well. The price we pay for experiencing this beautiful Earth, and the people in it, is suffering. All things considered, "Szymborska's poetry reminds us that human vision is partial by definition: it is both incomplete and partisan" (Cavanagh 180).

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Evaluation: *In this paper, Heinz adeptly uses research and his own insights to illuminate two works by Szymborska, and he carefully explains the cultural and historical context surrounding this poet, making his paper particularly communicative for readers unfamiliar with her work.*

The Coming of Age in the Field of Archaeology

Karen Truckenmiller
Course: Anthropology 203 (Native Americans)
Instructor: Helmut Publ

Assignment: *Synthesize in a book report format, in four pages or less, the main ideas and issues presented in the book* The First Americans, *authored by J.M. Adovasio with Jake Page.*

> It is worth remembering that during the time white Americans were looking for answers about [the Indians], they were also busily shoving Native Americans out of their way—by treaty, purchase, deception, and whenever needed, brute force—in order to achieve America's Manifest Destiny, which was to see white settlers on the land from sea to shining sea (Adovasio 25).

James M. Adovasio's *The First Americans: In Pursuit of Archaeology's Great Mystery* begins with a 1974 radiocarbon dating report that the author claims changed his life (xii). In fact, this report is still disputed by other archaeologists to this day, but with much less antagonism. The dates on the report contradicted a well-established timeline of human settlement at the popular Clovis site in New Mexico where in the 1930s a distinct stone spear point had been discovered with mammoth bones.

Human presence in North America was accepted at around 11,500 years ago. But with the discovery of charcoal fire pits in the Meadowcroft Rockshelter near Erie, Pennsylvania, human presence was now marked at 16,000 years ago. The debate between the "Clovis first" supporters and colleagues who believed that Clovis was *not* first is the story of this book. Adovasio goes on to explain in enough detail without overwhelming the lay reader, that by means of newly developed techniques of collection and controlled methods of dating, his Meadowcroft site is one of a handful of sites that predate Clovis. The Meadowcroft site is considered to be a "Pioneer Phase" of colonization, and the Clovis site is the "Residential Phase," which demonstrates a sustained increase in population in that area, leading to cultural progress (257).

The author admits that working on a dig can be tedious and dull. But the controversies surrounding his discoveries were anything but boring. If you like drama, this book is captivating, humorous, and ultimately maddening in its retelling of forty years of sustained disagreement. Much of the debate is about time and deliberation about what might have happened to the Earth. Should a discovery precede or come after a previous finding based on artifacts or ecofacts? Adovasio says we learn more about history all the time, and we don't have all the answers even today. He comments lightheartedly, that no one knows exactly how humans transferred to the New World; "Perhaps it was simply a matter of timing, which, when it comes to migrations through glacial environments, was as important as it is in show business" (61).

For what, at present, seems like a highly professional field of science, it is hard to understand the reason for so many arguments and bickering over items found (and not found) at the dig sites. Yet, this book is able to show a nonacademic reader why the confrontations were necessary and even beneficial. After absorbing the journey of his career, one can appreciate that other scholars would, and should have, brought forth questions. In the process of trying to answer those questions, new ideas and new methods were developed to prove if he was correct or not. It is his point that those questions, no matter how meddlesome or challenging, ultimately improve the field of study and make it a valuable profession.

It is worth noting that Adovasio is careful to mention the many, many people who both helped him or confronted him, and that can bog down the pace of reading. However, if you pick up another archaeology book or read another magazine article on the subject, it is likely you will recognize a lot of the names of the people he has worked with, either as authors or mentioned in the narrative. It is to his credit that he tried to make the focus of this book about his conviction to compile useful data and not about a seething personal retaliation to disparage his peers. It is also interesting and exciting to see how much

has changed since the 1970s compared to how different research is now with modern computer technology—it is a very encouraging future for an archaeologist. The amount of detail Adovasio put into collecting his artifacts has raised the bar for the many branches of the discipline. For anyone who has been curious about who really was the earliest person to discover this country, *The First Americans* is the story of how archaeology can be used to trace animal and human migrations not merely through how men hunted with stone tools, but also with the discovery of food, clothing, sandals, and baskets—social tasks that are mostly women-oriented. The author concedes at the end of his book that even though he tried to uncover the definitive movement of humans into North America, some details will remain unknown. The past (artifacts) can "still speak to us...and they still have so much more to say" (290). As with the Indiana Jones movies, that great adventure continues.

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Evaluation: *This paper is well organized and well written, with excellent synthesis, covering the main issues and ideas of the book in detailed but economical fashion.*

Allow Your Eyes and Hands to Guide You

Gabriela Valcheva
Course: Linguistics 205 (Language and Culture)
Instructor: Alina Pajtek

Assignment: *Write a research paper that explores any area of linguistic anthropology that interests you.*

Picture yourself deaf. You are sitting in a classroom filled with loud, talking children, who laugh at everything, talk between one another, and when they say something to you, your heart starts beating fast. They wait for an answer, but you point to your ear, then to your mouth, trying to sound out the word "no" with the intention to make them understand about your hearing ability. Then they stare at you and think you're strange, far different than they are. From that point on, they start excluding you from their activities. As you sit there, in a quiet world, you only wish to understand what they were saying. Neither you nor I could say we know of that feeling currently; maybe one day, we will, but not now. The deaf culture is a rich culture that has its own language and heart-filled history, and it contains personal struggles, rooted in the challenges of living in a hearing world.

Who are the deaf people and what do we call them? The deaf people in the United States make up "13% of the population today or 35 million people who report some degree of hearing trouble." The number is known only because people participated in the collection of the study (Reilly and Qi 2); however, it is nearly impossible to get a perfect number of the hard-of-hearing population. Deaf children are born every day, new people become deaf every day, people die every day, and some people prefer not to involve themselves with those statistics. The word "deaf" on its own is a vague way that describes someone based on their hearing ability. There is a difference between calling someone Deaf or deaf (Young and Hunt 1). Deaf with a capital D describes a person who uses American Sign Language (ASL) as a primary tool to communicate, identifies oneself with the deaf culture, and contributes in the deaf community. Deaf with a lower case d describes a person's physiological condition only; they usually are not involved in the deaf community, culture, or even use ASL. Besides being "Deaf or deaf" on a daily basis, a deaf person is called all sorts of names. Labels such as deaf-and-dumb, hearing impaired, and handicapped are the frequently used ones (Holcomb 54). Calling deaf people hearing impaired is one of the worst way to approach them because they are not impaired as visually impaired people are. They are fully capable to communicate fluently through ASL and see everything with their eyes, but they just cannot fully hear or hear at all. They are proud to be deaf; they see themselves as "independent and capable" (Holcomb 4). Being called hard-of-hearing is an in-between way for both the hearing and the deaf culture; compared to the hearing culture, they are viewed more deaf, and to the deaf, they are viewed more hearing. Unlike most people, deaf people want to be known as deaf, not hard of hearing, but deaf. They are proud of themselves and of how far they have gotten with history, and everything they have today is because they had to work hard and fight the government to get those rights.

Along with being deaf and being called by other names, deaf people have to deal with stigmas, too. I was lucky enough to attend a deaf event where I met Father Joseph A. Mulcrone, a priest who has worked with deaf people for over forty years. He shared some of the stigmas he has heard about while he worked with the deaf; for example, hearing people believe the type of person you become is because of the people with whom you spend your time. Therefore, hearing people thought that if they stayed around deaf people for too long, they will also catch the deaf gene, and become deaf. Stigmas are arrogant and negative beliefs that are completely unnecessary, yet people still believe in them.

Culture is defined differently by different people, but Tyler's proposition states, "Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Holcomb 17). When it comes to Deaf people, there are five hallmarks that support this definition of culture: language, heritage,

customs, arts, and family or "cultural players" (Holcomb 17). Language is the most crucial reason for the deaf community to be able to communicate and even create their community. Their language, American Sign Language or ASL, was acknowledged as a language in the twentieth century, and it is their pride and joy. Through ASL, they are capable to express their feelings, thoughts, comments, concerns, and anything on their mind, similarly to how hearing people express themselves in their life (Holcomb 17). Heritage informs us as to why people pledge to certain belief systems and act the way they do. Usually, the deaf gene runs for around three generations, but there are families who have had deep roots into the deaf community (Holcomb 18). The older generations teach the newer generations ways to survive and make it through the hearing world while being deaf or hard-of-hearing. One of these tools for survival is art, which is also one of the most effective ways to display deaf culture in that it portrays the "oppression and ignorance" of the hearing people, as well as the beauty and the pride deaf people have for being deaf. The fifth hallmark of culture is family or "cultural players." The cultural players are considered to be the community members or leaders who guide deaf people in life. The information that is supplied to a deaf person who comes from a hearing family is taught by a cultural player. Sometimes, those players replace family members because deaf people have no support at home, so they seek help and attention among friends. These are the five hallmarks that connect the definition of culture with Deaf Culture.

The deaf culture is not a recent phenomenon, but many people around the world may say it is since the "Deaf Culture" label was recognized in 1980. However, Deaf people had begun fighting for their rights as deaf people in the early 1700s, and they were finally recognized thirty-three years ago (Holcomb 4). All of the negativity toward the Deaf community comes from hundreds of years of misinformation and misinterpretation. Deaf people were seen as "brutes and classified as idiots and treated accordingly" (Groce 98), and as "immature, deviant, socially irresponsible, disabled, or juvenile" by hearing people, while they saw themselves as "not disabled, independent, capable, and not defined by deficit model" (Holcomb 2). Most deaf people are proud of who they are and would not change anything within themselves even if they could. In reality, they are different than the majority, which is the hearing population, but this should not be a source of discrimination. The Babylonian laws were the first laws to not allow the deaf people to do anything (Groce 99). Later on, Talmudic rabbis created laws restricting deaf people from almost all citizen rights by labeling them as, "children and mentally retar[d]ed" (Silverman qtd. in Groce 99). These days, deaf people hope to have a child who is deaf like them because they want to teach them their ways, welcome them in the deaf community, and pass on to them everything they need to know to be prepared for the hearing world. The deaf community, unlike the English community, is found all over the country; they are connected by their knowledge of their language, and try to live where there are more opportunities for a better life.

According to Dr. Jerome Schein, 90% of deaf children are born in hearing families. Almost 90% of parents are unable to communicate with their deaf children, and about 90% of deaf people are not able to develop an understandable speech level. Even though hearing parents do not always believe in sign language at first, 90% of deaf people end up using sign language by a certain stage of their life. Furthermore, 90% do not attend deaf schools, because their parents want them to be "normal" and attend hearing schools, preventing 90% of deaf people from benefitting from the bilingual-bicultural program that is available to them in deaf schools (Holcomb 40).

The hearing culture and the deaf culture are utterly different. It is extremely frustrating for deaf people to communicate with hearing people, so they do not always feel confident or comfortable to speak to them. They do not know what they sound like, and when they try to talk, often times hearing people are disrespectful toward them. For example, if a hearing person does not understand what the deaf person said, they tend to turn their face away from them, and lean forward, putting an ear toward the deaf person's mouth, hoping for them to repeat the sentence. This behavior frustrates deaf people. A more acceptable behavior would be for hearing people to attempt to read their lips and maintain eye contact with them (Holcomb 31). Also, if a hearing person understands that a deaf

person cannot hear, they tend to speak louder, almost yell, thinking they would be heard. Deaf people absolutely despise that, as they can tell when a person is talking louder by their facial expressions and how widely their mouth opens. Deaf people always say hearing people are privileged and do not understand how grateful they should be because they can communicate with anybody, anywhere, or if they are in need of assistance, they can get help anywhere (Holcomb 67). Deaf people usually are isolated and become more isolated and lonely if they do not have somebody to communicate with. An example to show the insensitivity of the hearing culture towards the Deaf community is the 2001 Deaflympics (Holcomb 67). The event was designed for both hearing and deaf people in that the stadium had large screens on each side to display the interpreters, along with loudspeakers for the hearing. The screen systems broke down, so the deaf people were not able to understand what was happening; however, the organizers decided to continue with the event and just volume up the speakers for all hearing people to hear. A deaf person, who was furious, went behind the speakers and unplugged the cables, and turned off all the speakers. His wish was to deliver a message of how they made them feel, and to say that if Deaf people couldn't understand what was going on, neither should the hearing. However, they continued the event and completely ignored the deaf people, although they maintained that they cared for the deaf (Holcomb 67).

Having a deaf child should not be perceived as a burden. Parents with deaf children should learn the language with them and for them. The more involved, accepting, and loving you are with your child, the less isolation and communication challenges he or she is going to experience. There are visual alert systems to help deaf people, lights when someone rings the doorbell, or body alarm clocks when a baby cries. There are videophones now where you can look at each other and sign. There are ways to raise a deaf child. A deaf child is not of any lower standard, he or she just cannot hear. Give deaf children the right to learn ASL, and they will teach you and thank you for the rest of their lives. Try to also modify your communication because only 30% of actual speech uses lips, and the rest is vocal (Holcomb 113).

Deaf culture is intriguing and interesting to learn about. The Deaf people are proud of who they are and are open to teach anyone about ASL or their culture, which they portray through heritage, art, and deaf events. The Deaf community is so welcoming when people attend their events and want to learn about their culture. I am fascinated with Deaf culture and plan to continue being involved both with it and with ASL.

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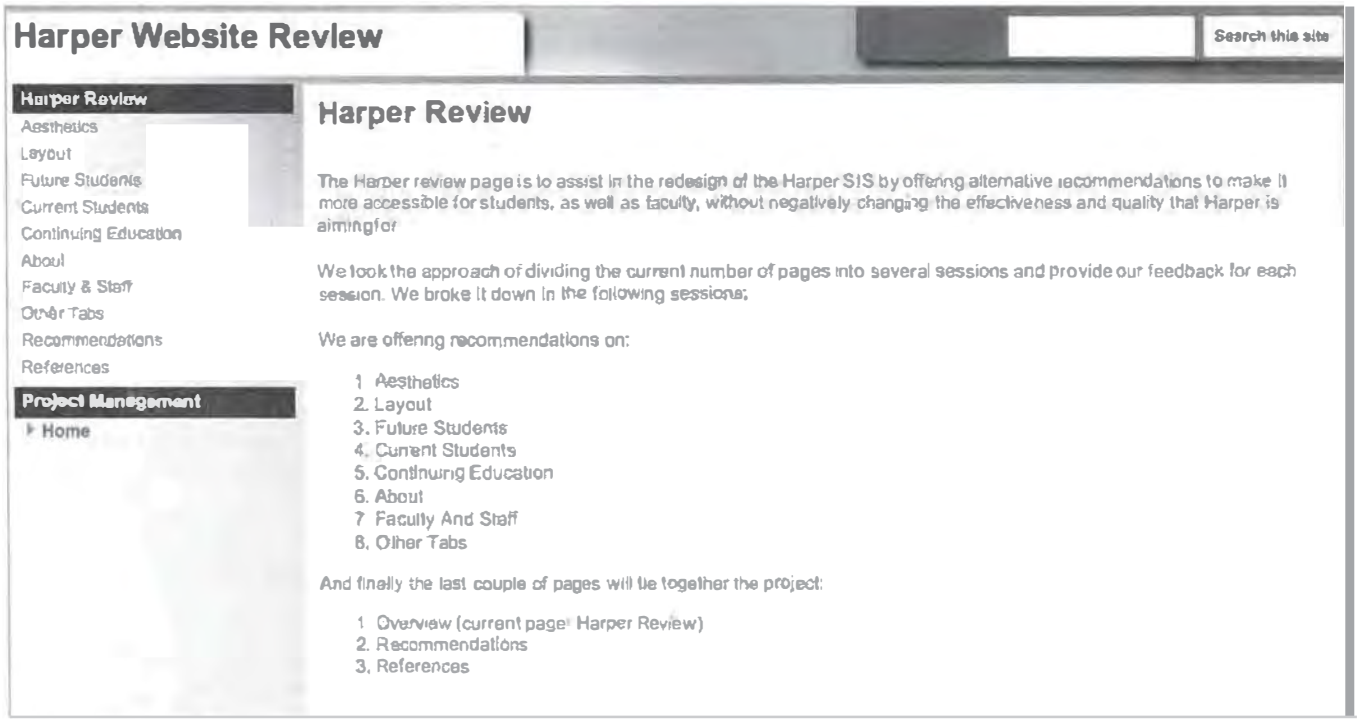
Evaluation: *The strength of Gabi's paper lies in her ability to bring together both factual information on ASL and deaf culture, and a personal perspective on the challenges and stereotypes that deaf individuals face, both at home and in society.*

A Review of the Harper College Website

Eric Velazquez and Eunice Seifert
Course: Computer Information Systems 211 (IT Project Management)
Instructor: David Braunschweig

Assignment: *Students were to collaborate on creating a website to document and inform the Harper College community regarding some aspect of technology. This team of students chose to critique the Harper College website and suggest opportunities for improvement.*

Evaluation: *The website this team developed is outstanding, based on the depth of their evaluation and the clarity of their recommendations. The Harper College marketing department found that the recommendations provide a valuable perspective, and they intend to request similar student reviews in the future.*


Harper Website Review
Search this site
Harper Review
Aesthetics
Layout
Future Students
Current Students
Continuing Education
About
Faculty & Staff
Other Tabs
Recommendations
References
Project Management
Home
Harper Review
The Harper review page is to assist in the redesign of the Harper SIS by offering alternative recommendations to make it more accessible for students, as well as faculty, without negatively changing the effectiveness and quality that Harper is aiming for
We took the approach of dividing the current number of pages into several sessions and provide our feedback for each session. We broke it down in the following sessions:
We are offering recommendations on:
1. Aesthetics
2. Layout
3. Future Students
4. Current Students
5. Continuing Education
6. About
7. Faculty And Staff
8. Other Tabs
And finally the last couple of pages will tie together the project:
1. Overview (current page: Harper Review)
2. Recommendations
3. References

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Aesthetics

Although the Harper College website information is well researched and documented, it does not fully depict the dynamic and innovative character of our scholastic institution. To further attract and supply the viewer with the needed information regarding our school here are some recommendations:

1. Enhance the home page color pallet. Add a bit more sparkle while still retaining the school colors. A more eye catching color scheme can add a world of difference.

2. Adding a slogan under the college logo– Harper College–"Go Forward" or "Your success begins here!" could be implemented across all pages to project consistency and a sense of Harper College's mission or vision. Currently the slogan is only visible when the Future Students tab is on display.

3. The main drop down menu's font and contrast is too low. Bolder or larger font sizes are recommended. There are many students, young and old, who wear prescription lenses. That accommodation would make it easier to explore the website without much difficulty.

4. Consider a gradient fill effect. The whitespace can grow weary on the eyes. The gradient effect also gives a sense of the continuity, endless growth and, innovation Harper College is known for.

5. There is a need for a home base main menu option in the upper left hand corner before the MyHarper drop down menu in each page the website contains. This is also mentioned under Layout recommendations.

6. Consider adding a backdrop of the Harper College campus on the home page. This can either be the background of the home page, albeit faded out as to not distract from the site or on the top section of the page between the blue bar and the middle content.

   This serves two purposes

   1. Get rids of white space if used as background
   2. Gives a glimpse of what Harper College looks like to the viewer

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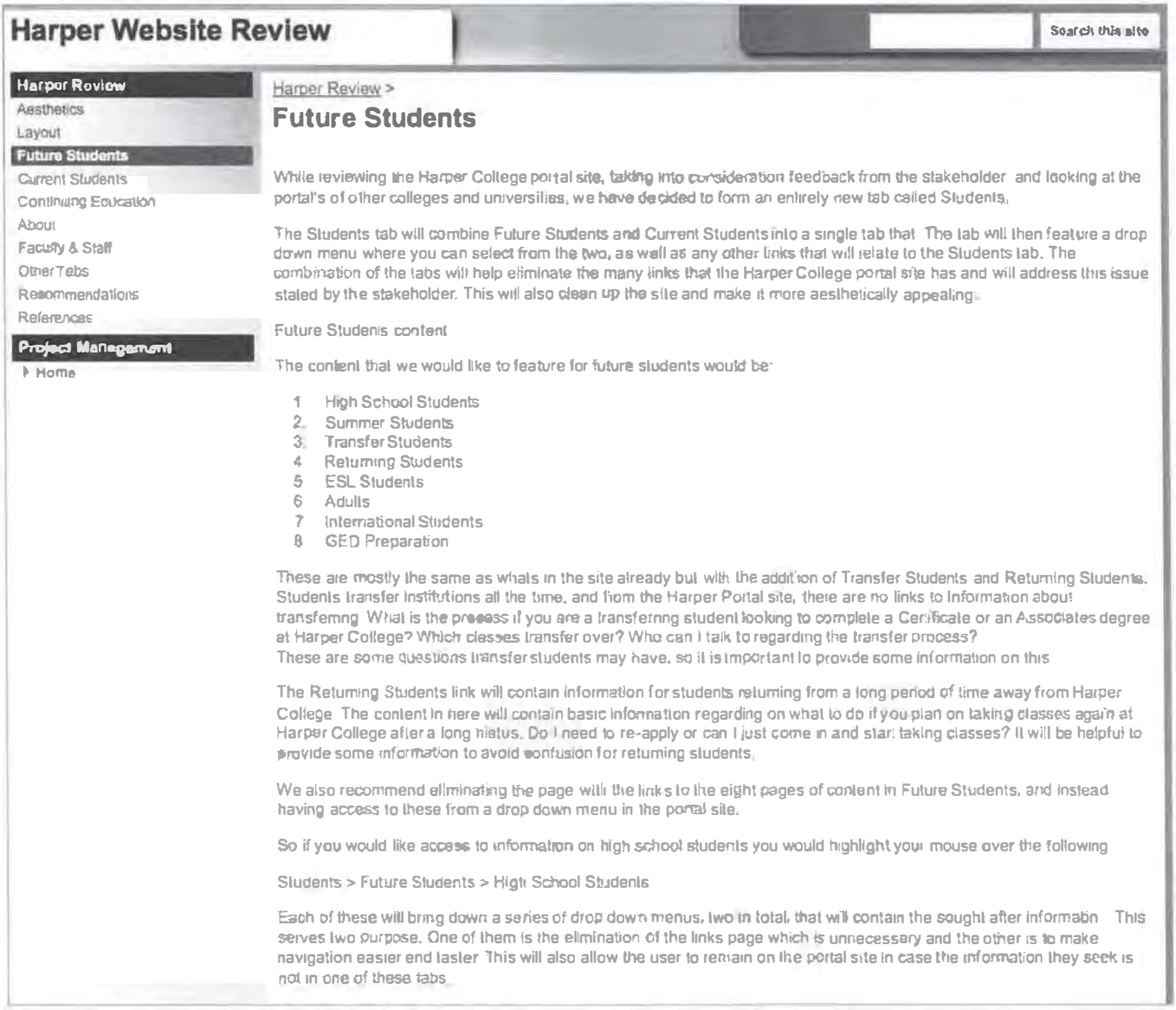
Layout

After reviewing the Harper site for the current layout, these are our recommendations on a new layout. The new layout we are recommending is based on how well the aesthetics are implemented. For layout, we are offering the following recommendations.

1. Insert institution slogan in Home page under the Harper College logo.
2. Expand borders and reformat layout for home page to be consistent with sub pages.
3. Make fonts bolder and larger - Gradient the website ribbon.
4. Insert a Home Button in each page.
5. Add the Harper image to the background or on the top of the page. If added to the top of the page, the image should be approximately the same size of the tab images but wider to cover the whole section.

(Please click on picture below so see larger version of it and where the above bullets apply)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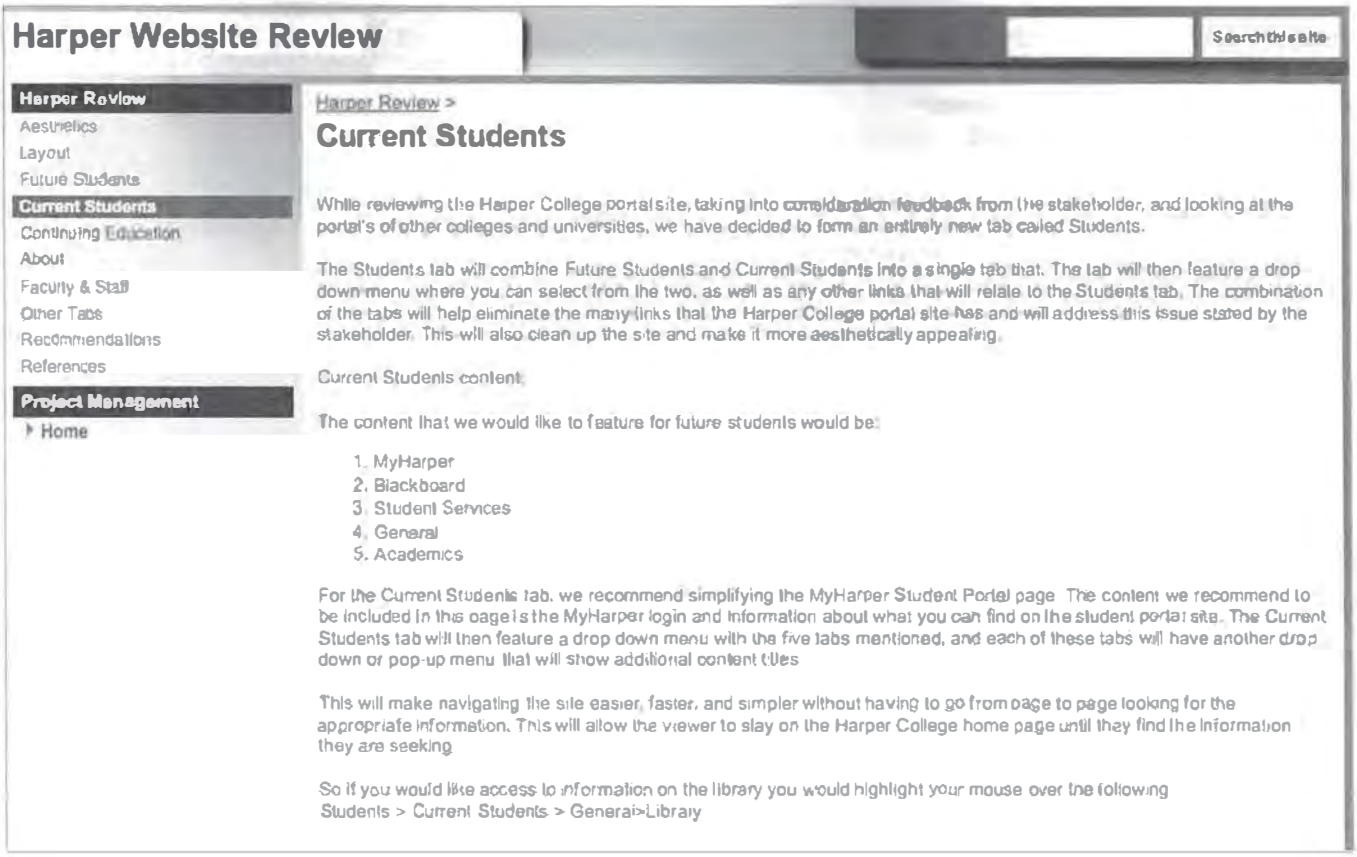
Future Students
While reviewing the Harper College portal site, taking into consideration feedback from the stakeholder and looking at the portal's of other colleges and universities, we have decided to form an entirely new tab called Students.
The Students tab will combine Future Students and Current Students into a single tab that The tab will then feature a drop down menu where you can select from the two, as well as any other links that will relate to the Students tab. The combination of the tabs will help eliminate the many links that the Harper College portal site has and will address this issue stated by the stakeholder. This will also clean up the site and make it more aesthetically appealing.
Future Students content
The content that we would like to feature for future students would be:
1 High School Students
2 Summer Students
3 Transfer Students
4 Returning Students
5 ESL Students
6 Adults
7 International Students
8 GED Preparation
These are mostly the same as whats in the site already but with the addition of Transfer Students and Returning Students. Students transfer institutions all the time, and from the Harper Portal site, there are no links to information about transferring. What is the process if you are a transferring student looking to complete a Certificate or an Associates degree at Harper College? Which classes transfer over? Who can I talk to regarding the transfer process?
These are some questions transfer students may have, so it is important to provide some information on this
The Returning Students link will contain information for students returning from a long period of time away from Harper College. The content in here will contain basic information regarding on what to do if you plan on taking classes again at Harper College after a long hiatus. Do I need to re-apply or can I just come in and start taking classes? It will be helpful to provide some information to avoid confusion for returning students.
We also recommend eliminating the page with the links to the eight pages of content in Future Students, and instead having access to these from a drop down menu in the portal site.
So if you would like access to information on high school students you would highlight your mouse over the following
Students > Future Students > High School Students
Each of these will bring down a series of drop down menus, two in total, that will contain the sought after information. This serves two purpose. One of them is the elimination of the links page which is unnecessary and the other is to make navigation easier and faster. This will also allow the user to remain on the portal site in case the information they seek is not in one of these tabs.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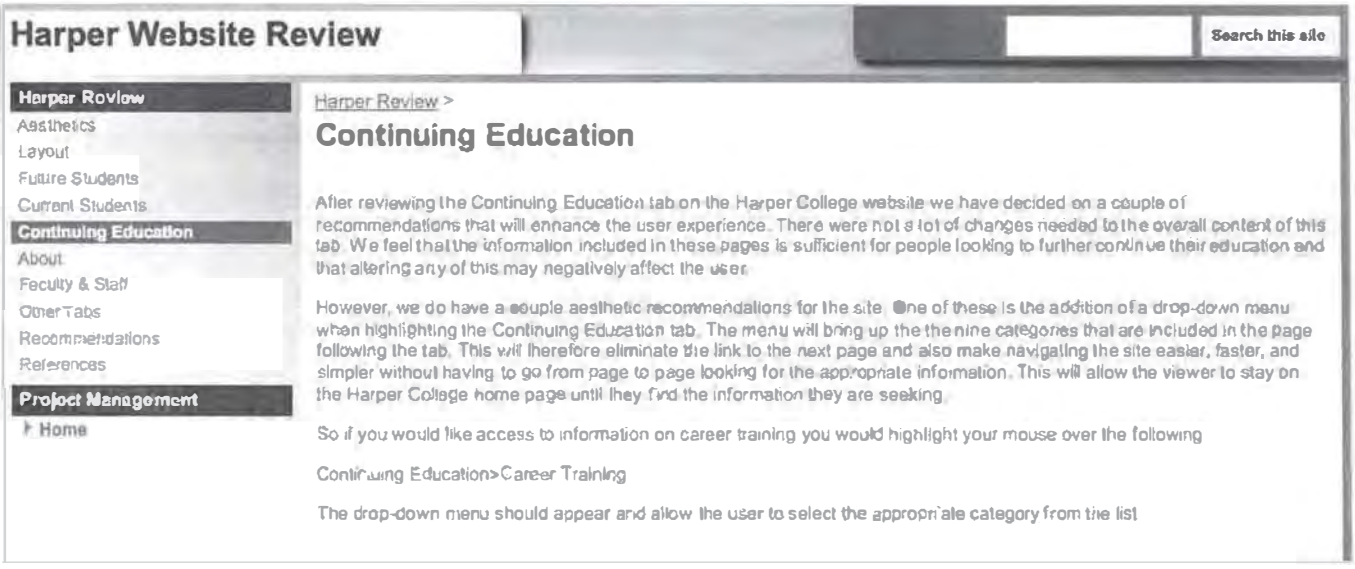
Current Students content
The content that we would like to feature for future students would be:
1. MyHarper
2. Blackboard
3. Student Services
4. General
5. Academics
For the Current Students tab, we recommend simplifying the MyHarper Student Portal page. The content we recommend to be included in this page is the MyHarper login and information about what you can find on the student portal site. The Current Students tab will then feature a drop down menu with the five tabs mentioned, and each of these tabs will have another drop down or pop-up menu that will show additional content tiles.
This will make navigating the site easier, faster, and simpler without having to go from page to page looking for the appropriate information. This will allow the viewer to stay on the Harper College home page until they find the information they are seeking.
So if you would like access to information on the library you would highlight your mouse over the following
Students > Current Students > General>Library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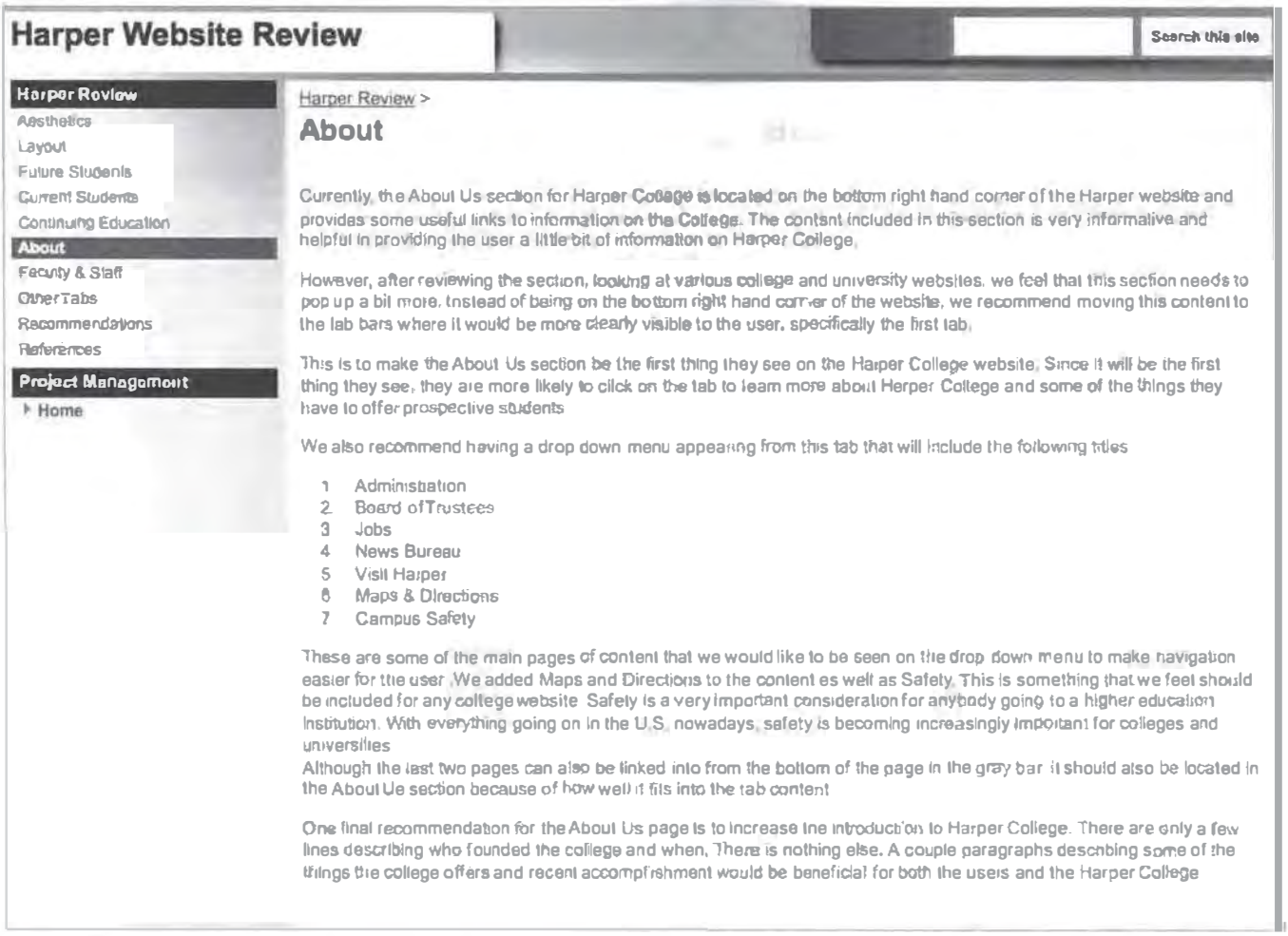
Continuing Education
After reviewing the Continuing Education tab on the Harper College website we have decided on a couple of recommendations that will enhance the user experience. There were not a lot of changes needed to the overall content of this tab. We feel that the information included in these pages is sufficient for people looking to further continue their education and that altering any of this may negatively affect the user.
However, we do have a couple aesthetic recommendations for the site. One of these is the addition of a drop-down menu when highlighting the Continuing Education tab. The menu will bring up the the nine categories that are included in the page following the tab. This will therefore eliminate the link to the next page and also make navigating the site easier, faster, and simpler without having to go from page to page looking for the appropriate information. This will allow the viewer to stay on the Harper College home page until they find the information they are seeking.
So if you would like access to information on career training you would highlight your mouse over the following
Continuing Education>Career Training
The drop-down menu should appear and allow the user to select the appropriate category from the list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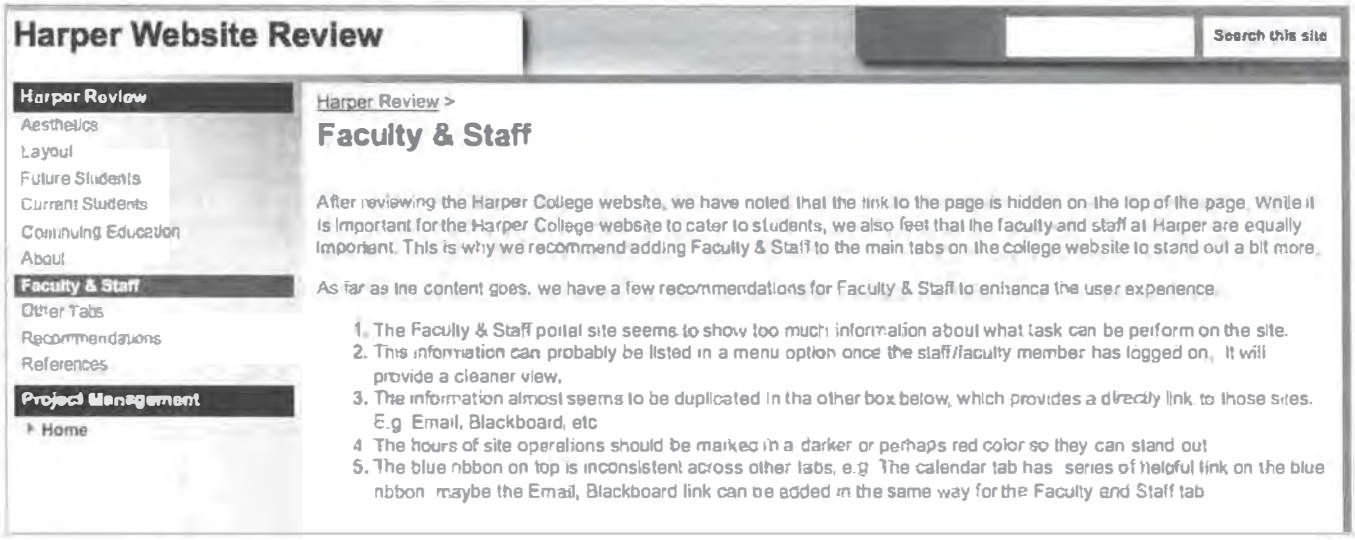
About
Currently, the About Us section for Harper College is located on the bottom right hand corner of the Harper website and provides some useful links to information on the College. The content included in this section is very informative and helpful in providing the user a little bit of information on Harper College.
However, after reviewing the section, looking at various college and university websites, we feel that this section needs to pop up a bit more. Instead of being on the bottom right hand corner of the website, we recommend moving this content to the tab bars where it would be more clearly visible to the user, specifically the first tab.
This is to make the About Us section be the first thing they see on the Harper College website. Since it will be the first thing they see, they are more likely to click on the tab to learn more about Harper College and some of the things they have to offer prospective students.
We also recommend having a drop down menu appearing from this tab that will include the following titles
1 Administration
2 Board of Trustees
3 Jobs
4 News Bureau
5 Visit Harper
6 Maps & Directions
7 Campus Safety
These are some of the main pages of content that we would like to be seen on the drop down menu to make navigation easier for the user. We added Maps and Directions to the content as well as Safety. This is something that we feel should be included for any college website. Safety is a very important consideration for anybody going to a higher education institution. With everything going on in the U.S. nowadays, safety is becoming increasingly important for colleges and universities.
Although the last two pages can also be linked into from the bottom of the page in the gray bar, it should also be located in the About Us section because of how well it fits into the tab content.
One final recommendation for the About Us page is to increase the introduction to Harper College. There are only a few lines describing who founded the college and when. There is nothing else. A couple paragraphs describing some of the things the college offers and recent accomplishment would be beneficial for both the users and the Harper College.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Faculty & Staff
After reviewing the Harper College website, we have noted that the link to the page is hidden on the top of the page. While it is important for the Harper College website to cater to students, we also feel that the faculty and staff at Harper are equally important. This is why we recommend adding Faculty & Staff to the main tabs on the college website to stand out a bit more.
As far as the content goes, we have a few recommendations for Faculty & Staff to enhance the user experience.
1. The Faculty & Staff portal site seems to show too much information about what task can be perform on the site.
2. This information can probably be listed in a menu option once the staff/faculty member has logged on. It will provide a cleaner view.
3. The information almost seems to be duplicated in the other box below, which provides a directly link to those sites. E.g. Email, Blackboard, etc
4. The hours of site operations should be marked in a darker or perhaps red color so they can stand out.
5. The blue ribbon on top is inconsistent across other tabs, e.g. The calendar tab has series of helpful link on the blue ribbon. maybe the Email, Blackboard link can be added in the same way for the Faculty and Staff tab.

Other Tabs

For the Harper College website, we have also briefly review the following tabs/pages of content:

1. Business
2. Community
3. Alumni
4. Admissions and Aid
5. Headlines and Language

With these tabs we are making a more general review compared to the previously completed pages. For the tabs, Business and Community, we recommend adding the drop down menu with the titles of the pages that this will be linking to. This will make navigation from page to page faster rather than relying on the subsequent page from the Harper home page. For Business the drop-down menu would have:

1. Harper College for Business
2. Wojcik Conference Center
3. Small Business Development Center
4. Resources

While Community would have:

1. Partnership Programs
2. Stay Connected
3. Campus Services
4. Job Services

However, Community does contain a lot ofinformation that would make the use of subsequent drop down menus insufficient to show the user all the content. The pages linking from each of the four main tabs might ba necessary to keep all this content if the use of further drop down menus are not implemented.

Currently there is no content on Harper College for alumni and we feel this may be an area that the college could add some information to. This doesn't have to be a big part of the home page, maybe a link from the top of the page. The alumni page could focus on content geared towards students who have already attained their associates or a certificate. Information included could be future campus events, changes to Harper, Harper support, or courses the student could take.

We also recommend moving the Apply and Register information on the bottom of the site to one of the main tabs called "Admissions and Aid". Many, if not most, universities and colleges have this information, or links to, at the top of their home pages. The information included here would be:

1. Admissions
2. Financial Aid
3. Testing
4. Transcripts
5. Tuition and Payment
6. Transfer

This makes the information pop out more as well as adding another nice image to the site. We also recommend adding transfer students here as another link because of the amount of students who do transfer in, and the process they will have to undergo. These six pages will also be linked from the front page through the use of a drop down menu that will appear when you highlight your mouse over Admissions and Aid. This, again, makes navigation easier and quicker without leaving the front page.

The last item we have is Headlines and Language. For this, we only recommend a few things to enhance the main site. What we mean by headlines are the news items on the right-hand side of the home page. The news items appear to be a little on the small size, scaling them up and giving a brief description of the content and help the appearance. We also recommend having the construction update on the bottom corner of the page moved to this location, this will increase the importance to students and faculty alike, rather than having it an afterthought on the bottom of the page. And finally for languages, we suggest, not necessarily recommend, having the option to switch the translation of the site. One suggestion is Spanish since there are a lot of ESL students who are of Hispanic descent and can benefit greatly if the site is already translated, but it will be time consuming to provide different versions of the same site for a, presumably, minority of the student population.

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Recommendations

Based on the separate reviews of the Harper site, we have compiled a few of the suggestions to recommend making. This will hopefully enhance the user experience while on the Harper College website.

Aesthetic and Layout:

- Insert Logo on school site
- Enlarge the over all font size and color pallet - gradient fill effect can really make a difference
- Instead of a centered approach to the page, maximize the space used
- Reduce the amount of information displayed up front. A cleaner look makes the site more attractive to users
- Keep aesthetic format consistent across all tabs

Current & Future Students:

- Combined all Students information under one tab, then separate them by categories: Current and Future
- Incorporate the use of drop down menus for easier navigation.
- FAQ question to guide new and returning students.
- Simplify the MyHarper Student Portal by removing some of the information and links from the log on screen.

Continuing Education:

- Overall content is good, but it seem to repeat itself in the menu on the left side of the screen and down at the bottom
- Remove the one at the bottom to enhance the page to attract traffic
- Font needs to be larger.
- Move Continuing Education Class Schedule closer to the top to make it more visible

About:

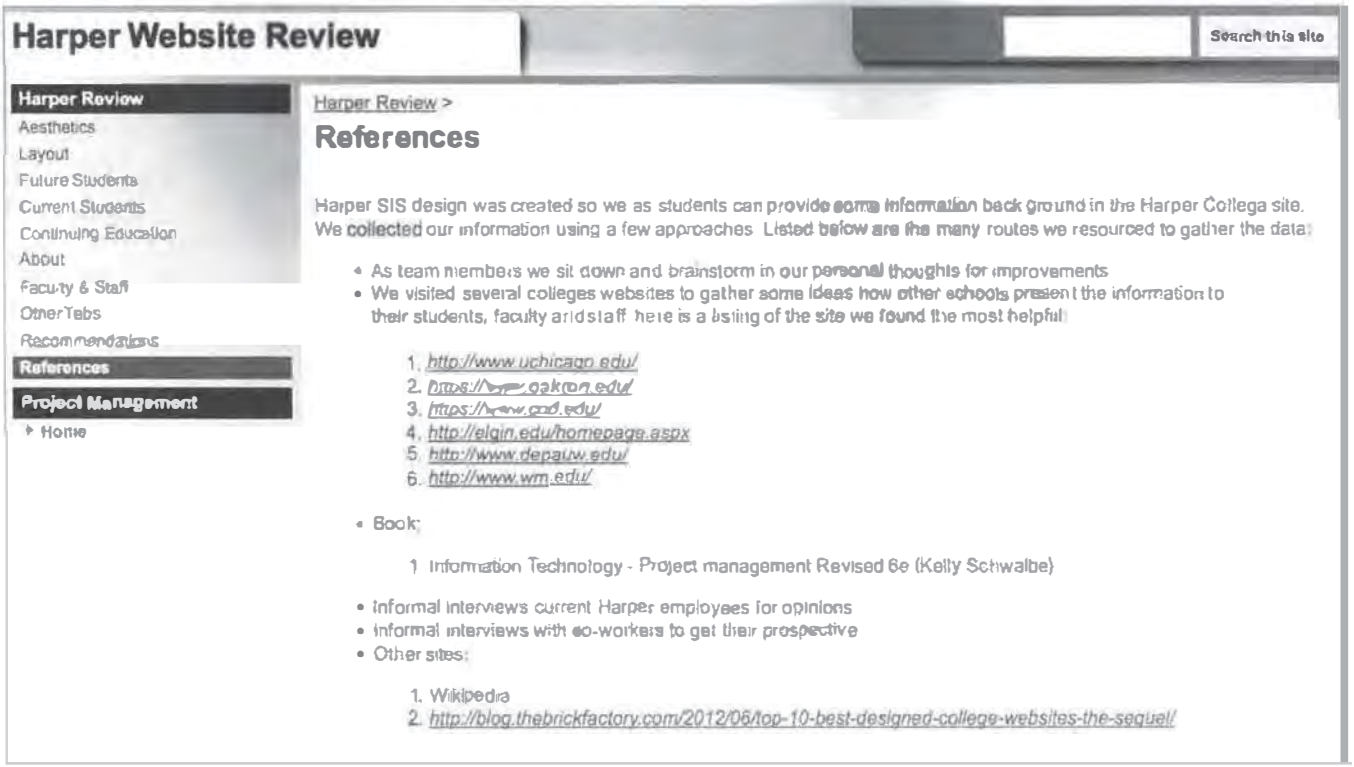
- Move the About section to a more visible place as the information offered is very beneficial.
  1. We recommend the tab bar
- Add a drop down menu in the About page to have the following sections better organized.
  1. Administration
  2. Board of Trustees
  3. Jobs
  4. News Bureau
  5. Visit Harper
  6. Maps & Directions
  7. Campus Safety
- Add a deeper description to the bio of Harper College to describe the highlights and achievements the college has attained.

Faculty and Staff:

- Condense the amount of information first displayed in the portal page
  1. Perhaps an options menu with the information once you have logged on
- Display a bigger long screen a more clean look.
- Remove duplicate info of what can be done in the site
- Emphasize the hours of operations in a strong font, maybe different color.

Other Tabs/Pages

- Overall content is good, but recommend moving Admissions and Aid to the main tabs
- Considering adding drop down menus to make navigation faster for Admissions and Aid, Community, and Business
- Suggest adding multiple site languages for the ESL students
- Add brief synopsis to news items on the right of the page.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Harper SIS design was created so we as students can provide some information back ground in the Harper College site. We collected our information using a few approaches Listed below are the many routes we resourced to gather the data:
As team members we sit down and brainstorm in our personal thoughts for improvements
We visited several colleges websites to gather some ideas how other schools present the information to their students, faculty and staff here is a listing of the site we found the most helpful
1. http://www.uchicago.edu/
2. https://www.oakton.edu/
3. https://www.cod.edu/
4. http://elgin.edu/homepage.aspx
5. http://www.depauw.edu/
6. http://www.wm.edu/
Book:
1 Information Technology - Project management Revised 6e (Kelly Schwalbe)
Informal interviews current Harper employees for opinions
Informal interviews with co-workers to get their prospective
Other sites:
1. Wikipedia
2. http://blog.thebrickfactory.com/2012/06/top-10-best-designed-college-websites-the-sequel/

Daniel

Krystal Villarreal
Course: English 100 (Composition)
Instructor: Kathleen Kazi

Assignment: *Students were instructed to write an exemplification paper about someone who has influenced them.*

My brother Daniel, one of my three siblings, has faced tough challenges, like being bullied, for his whole life. He stutters and is almost deaf in his left ear. With all his challenges, he seems to rise above all the negative remarks, whispers, and bullying. He is a positive role model for me and many others.

Daniel has struggled through his challenges since he was a child. He has had extensive speech therapy, but he still struggles with his stuttering. Daniel goes once a year to get his hearing checked. Doctors recommended that he take sign language classes in case he loses hearing in both his ears. When I first heard that, I was very worried, but I don't worry about it anymore because I know he will take it in stride like he does everything else.

One of the things my brother has had to face through his years is bullying. Daniel is now eighteen years old. In his past years of school, he was made fun of and had smart remarks thrown at him. Teachers, not knowing that he stutters, asked him what his name was. He replied, "d-d-d-d a-a-a-a niel, Daniel." Then teachers said things like, "Did you forget your name?" as the classroom laughed and called him names. People would also get irritated to have to repeat things to him because he couldn't hear normally. When people try talking to him, he has to turn his head to clearly hear what they are saying. He used to come home and tell me things that had happened to him throughout the day. As his sister, I was upset and hurt at the things people would say to him. I wondered how people could be so heartless. It is so easy for people to laugh, criticize, and judge others. That is what was happening to him. As I sat back and watched these things happen to him, or I just heard about them, I felt so bad and helpless. I would ask him how he felt about it. He would say, "I'm used to it." He would just shrug it off and act like it didn't bother him. So he would continue with living life as if it was no big deal. I'm sure it bothered him at times, but he didn't dwell on it so much.

As time passed, I started to feel more helpless. I wished I could just help him speak clearly, and I wished I could fight all of his battles for him. In reality, that wouldn't do anything for him. I would ask myself how he could be so calm, while I was here filled with many emotions. So he continued school, and he made the choice to be successful. Nothing was going to stop him.

He wanted to be a psychologist. Even though he couldn't speak that well, that was what he wanted to become. Out of fear, my parents asked him, "Are you sure that's what you want to be?" That was the day things changed for me. I was no longer sad, upset, and aggravated. I was proud of him. He was going to face the world head on and be what he wanted to be. He was not going to let his challenges choose for him. Wow, how scary it is for those of us with no challenges to face the world.

I watched my brother continue to grow with these challenges in his life. He had such definite goals, and I was going to stand behind him one hundred percent. I made this decision, not just because I was his sister, but because I admire his will and his positive attitude. He changed me in many ways: to be positive and to keep going no matter what.

His last year of high school came, and he came home one day and told me, "I'm entering a writing competition." He told me that if he got picked, he would get an award and would have to present his speech in public. His speech was going to be about his stuttering. I was happy for him that he entered the competition and got picked out of so many other speeches. So, as a family, we all went to his speech and supported him. There must have been over two hundred people there. I was so nervous for him. Daniel presented the speech in front of so many people, regardless of his fear. Everyone sat there patiently, waiting for him to finish his speech. He talked about his hard times and how he felt during his years in school. He talked about how he doesn't like to defile his speech with bad words. He talked about things he couldn't do and wished that he could, like wanting to know how it feels when girls talk so fast or how guys crack jokes or how teachers lecture. He talked about how he appreciates every word that comes out of his mouth. After his speech, I was so proud of him. I was speechless. We take talking for granted. He appreciates words and being able to hear what he can. After his speech, I was in tears. He showed the entire room how he felt. It would help people understand how people with disabilities feel, how they get bullied, and how they may need help with life. We were all so amazed by what he said because he made us realize and appreciate the little things in life. He ended up getting a standing ovation. That day, I knew he would be alright. He left that school with memories of himself and with ways to help people who stutter. He also made them think about suspending judgment.

He is now in his first year of college and has changed his major to something better. He wants to be a psychologist for the deaf. He wants to help people, to give them chances in life. After all he has been through, he is still on top and moving forward with what he has.

I am very proud of my brother. Daniel has taught me to appreciate the simple things in life, such as being able to speak. His speech and hearing deficits do not slow him down for the future. His challenges have changed my perspective on life.

Evaluation: *In this paper, Krystal's admiration and love for her brother lend eloquence to her writing, such as in the sentence, "He was not going to let his challenges choose for him."*

Meaning in Absurdity

Alexandria Vombrack
Course: Philosophy 105 (Introduction to Philosophy)
Instructor: John Garcia

Assignment: *For the final paper in this course, students are asked to take a thinker from the course and craft an original thesis about how the philosopher's ideas are relevant in our lives today.*

Most of us live a life consumed by routine. We repeat these routines with little or no reprieve and with no foreseeable end in sight. As children and adolescents, we wake up, go to school, and come home. Then we do it all again. As adults, we live by routine with some variation. We wake up, go to work, and come home. A rinse and repeat life can seem absurd. In lives filled with monotony, it is hard not to think from time to time that life can feel pointless.

Albert Camus says we can find meaning in the face of absurdity, and through rebellion, we can attempt to overcome meaninglessness. He guides us in finding our own meaning and values in a world that does not appear to have any and leaves it up to us to form values and find fulfillment in our lives. He lays the groundwork for the individual to create their own values, as opposed to other philosophers, who have set limits and values to live by. Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus* takes on the problem that we live seemingly meaningless lives, while in *The Rebel*, Camus explains that we can find meaning in our actions by discovering our own values to guide us in our lives.

In Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus*, he explains that one can create meaning where there appears to be none. Sisyphus is the "absurd hero" in this tale. He is given permission to leave the underworld briefly, to chastise his wife for not complying with his wishes. Upon returning to earth, Sisyphus rediscovers his love of earthly pleasures and decides not to come back. This angers the gods, and Sisyphus is taken back to the underworld. His punishment is to roll a rock uphill for the rest of eternity. So he pushes the rock uphill and reaches the top. He releases the rock and watches as it rolls downhill. As he walks down the hill to meet again with his rock, he has a moment of clarity. Sisyphus becomes aware that his existence is tragic. "At each of those moments when he leaves the heights and gradually sinks toward the lairs of the gods, he is superior to his fate. He is stronger than his rock" (*Sisyphus* 74). Sisyphus realizes this is his fate, but as he walks down that hill, he is content with it.

Sisyphus knows that his punishment is a meaningless task, but it does not make his existence meaningless. He does not become depressed by his seemingly tragic fate. In spite of the gods, he proudly pushes that rock uphill, not disheartened by the fact that when he reaches the top he has to start all over again. Every time he reaches the

top, he rebels against his punishers. As he watches that rock roll downhill, he revels in accomplishment. He accepts his lot in life. Sisyphus is the "absurd hero," and so are we, in our own respect.

Our lives are not much different than his. "The workman of today works everyday at the same tasks, and this fate is no less absurd" (74). We are Sisyphus. We wake up, go to work, and come home. We do it over and over again every day. The joy we can take in a world of monotony is the gratification of completing our daily tasks and doing them to the best of our abilities. "The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart" (75). Whether it is rolling a rock uphill, driving a bus all day, or making latte after latte at a coffee shop, we have to make our days our own. Sisyphus embraces his world and overcomes his punishment by rebelling against the gods by finding meaning in the absurd circumstances in his life. He refused to feel dominated by his rock and by the gods who thought that he was doomed. Each time he reached the top was an act of rebellion. Sisyphus teaches us that even a seemingly meaningless life can in fact be fulfilling if we give it individual meaning. There is meaning, values, and purpose in life, but it is up to us to form them. However, Camus also says that through rebelling, we can give our actions further meaning.

We live in a society where values are not concrete or collective. Even in our own government, the values by which we live are not unified. On both sides, freedom is a value that is agreed upon, but each side has their own opinion of policy that characterizes it. What is reasonable among conservatives is not to liberals, and vice versa. Values on the whole are transient and are always evolving or devolving, which does not give them much meaning at all. When there are no objective values in the world, how do we know that life is important or what is important in life? Camus explains that in a place with no real values, the individual must discover what is valuable by finding our breaking point for what is acceptable in our own lives.

In *The Rebel,* Camus says that rebellion is where we affirm our values. "What is a rebel? A man who says no, but whose refusal does not imply a renunciation" (*Rebel* 77).. According to Camus, a rebel is a person who has come to a point where they cannot accept certain conditions, but does not back down once their declaration is made. Yet, it is when that invisible line is crossed that the rebel also says yes, and that is when values are formed. Camus uses a slave as an example of rebellion in order to explain this apparent contradiction. "Before he rebelled the slave accepted all the demands made upon him....But with loss of patience - with impatience - a reaction begins which can extend to everything he previously accepted" (78). Up until he lost his patience, the slave endured the treatment of his master even though he was becoming increasingly dissatisfied on the inside. He reached a point where he could not remain silent and rebels against his master. "The very moment the slave refuses to obey the humiliating orders of his master, he simultaneously rejects the condition of slavery" (78). The slave, day in and day out, put up with the treatment of his master without protest until he could no longer. He took a stance on what is acceptable and what is not. The slave did not just refuse his master, but a whole oppressive movement. In that moment, he asserts his values and finds his cause. The rebel says no to an oppressive force, and says yes, that there is a limit at which one can tolerate no more.

When one recognizes there are boundaries to what is acceptable and what is not, they say yes. Yes, there has been injustice. Yes, there is a better way than the previous conditions in which they have been living, and stand up against what is wrong. One realizes there is something valuable to uphold when their rights are infringed upon. "In a certain way, he confronts an order of things which oppresses him with the insistence on a kind of right not to be oppressed beyond the limit that he can tolerate" (78). When the rebel says yes, they say how things should be. Forming values is based upon that person's idea of what is right and wrong and how things ought to be. The rebel asserts a right that they are deserving of a more decent form of treatment. They are willing now to face their oppressor and defend what has become valuable to them because it has become a right worth fighting for.

After one awakens to a cause, Camus says they take on an "all or nothing" attitude. "The rebel himself wants to be 'all'—to identify himself completely with this good which he has suddenly become aware and by which he wants to be personally recognized and acknowledged—or 'nothing'; in other words to be completely destroyed by the force that dominates him" (79). A rebel would prefer

death rather than back down from their values. The value becomes bigger than the rebel. It is a reason to live and to go on. When the slave rebelled, he shed his identity of being a slave and became a rebel. Life is worth living if there is something sacred to save, and this applies not only when we ourselves are oppressed but when we see others, or other ideals, that we are willing to fight for. One does not need to be the oppressed to rebel against something one finds wrong.

One can find meaning in fighting for the values of another individual or an oppressed group of people. Knowing there is injustice in the world and doing something about it is another way one can rebel and become fulfilled. "In such cases there is a feeling of identification with another individual" (80). One does not have to experience the pain and suffering of others to know it exists. It does not have to matter if we are the victim or not. Some injustices are too vile to be passive. "When he rebels, a man identifies himself with other men and so surpasses himself, and from this point of view human solidarity is metaphysical" (80). For example, if the problem of food shortage is something that you want to combat, you could volunteer at a food bank. You do not need to see or meet all the people affected and moved by the cause. The cause is what connects you. People can find a sense of community and connectedness in rebellion.

When rebellion begins, as well as suffering, it does start on the individual level. "In absurdist experience, suffering is individual. But from the moment when a movement begins, suffering is seen as a collective experience" (84). In suffering, we find that moment where we say "enough is enough" and may believe that we are alone in our despair. But we are not alone in suffering. We are all oppressed in some way, and through it we are connected. In that shared suffering, we can also overcome together. We discover our values and our inner rebel and say no. When we join with others who share those same values, we can rebel against oppression as one. These values have strength because we find our meaning in them through our own life experiences and the experiences of others. They are yours, mine, and ours, and we can stand up for them alone or together. These values and rights become the reason life can be worthwhile.

Camus does not tell us how to live or give us guidelines to live by. He guides us in a way where we choose to find our own meaning in the absurdity in our everyday lives. Camus has a sort of libertarian approach to life in regard to forming values and what it means to live a fulfilling life. It is a very different and interesting philosophical point of view. He does not assert fundamental values or what makes a life meaningful. Camus also does not state what is the right or wrong way to live. Although the world does not seem to have objective meaning, he also does not believe that life is altogether meaningless. It is up to us to determine meaning in our own experience. We are the ones who establish the values that we live by. His ideas help us form our own philosophical identities. He offers a blueprint to assist us in searching for meaning and values in our lives, but he lets us be the architects.

Works Cited

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Evaluation: *Alex's essay epitomizes my hopes for students in their final paper, as it is driven by a concern about an issue in our lives. The explanations of the philosophical ideas, in this case, those of Albert Camus, are presented as a way to help us think about and deal with this issue. In her paper, Alex takes on the experience many of us have when we stop one day and ask, "What's the point of all of this?" The sense that there is no "point" is what Camus calls absurdity, and Alex does a wonderful job explaining how Camus helps us deal with this experience of the absurd. Not only is the paper well written, but, more importantly, it has something to say.*

Live and Learn

Artur Wojnarowicz
Course: English 101 (Composition)
Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

Assignment: *Write an autobiographical essay describing a personal struggle with forces much greater than yourself, somehow revealing some common human tendencies.*

When I was nineteen, which was two years after I arrived here from Poland, I went through something I could easily call the hardest time of my life. I felt helpless and clueless. I was looking for answers everywhere. I needed a direction in my life; however, there was absolutely no one out there to give me one. The fact that I was all alone, fresh to this new surrounding with no help, was putting so much unwanted stress on my shoulders. That is how I understood what people meant by saying one of my favorite phrases now: "live and learn."

In late summer of 2005, I had an opportunity to attend college full time and work forty plus hours at Personal Creations, located in Lemont, Illinois, about an hour away, southwest from the city of Chicago. Now, it is a branch of Provide Commerce, based out of San Diego. I was thrilled to have both education and work going for me at the same time. Although it looked a bit risky, I was still up for meeting interesting people, growing some friendships, improving my language skills, and foremost, getting more life experience.

As most of my friends slept late, I had to get up at four in the morning and get myself ready for work. It was still dark, hot, and humid outside. Driving to and from work wasn't bad because I was living with my parents at that time, and it was about thirty minutes' drive. When I arrived at the parking lot, I saw a lot of cars there already. Even though I was there fifteen minutes early, parking was almost full. Under the cover of night, I could see people having conversations, smoking cigarettes, and even enjoying snacks from a little food truck.

During the different seasons, conditions weren't any better inside than outside. Since the company specializes in personalized gifts, we would get more and more people as we would get closer to Christmas time. Just as I guessed it would be, it was close to six hundred people of different ages in one big concrete and metal warehouse with no air conditioning in the summer or good enough heat in the winter. I learned that about ninety percent of workers were hired by an agency that would bring people from different parts of Chicago. Almost all of them were Hispanic, with a few African-American, Polish, and Serbian people. Our job was to make personalized gifts, which consisted of assembling canvasses, putting pictures on mugs, using a laser to write a message on a wine glass or a frame, etching, and sewing, etc. Honestly, every little thing that you can think of as a personalized gift, we did it.

During that time, we were told that if we worked hard for six months straight, the company would see that, and we'd get hired permanently by Personal Creations. Also, we'd get better pay with overtime, insurance, paid vacations, and sick days. Although I was working there for forty plus hours a week already, I had no benefits at all. We all would get paid minimum wage, and we never knew when we were going to finish for that day. It all depended on the amount of expedited and regular orders for each day. I couldn't really plan my day, because I would work four hours one day and fourteen the other.

Eight years later, I still remember how tough it was for me then. We had to stand up on our legs and perform like robots. These monotonous actions of putting pieces together one by one seemed like forever. Every time I would look around and check how much more was left to the end, the pile with new orders would grow bigger and bigger. Our supervisors were told by management to time workers. So, we'd have them come by our tables and workstations with the stoppers and monitor how efficiently stuff was getting done. Even though our lunch room was a big place, we had to take lunch at different times. Some people had their lunch after three hours of work, whereas others wouldn't get their lunch break until the seventh hour into the shift. As a "freshman," I was deceived a lot because I did not know much. Almost everything I touched was new to me. When I asked for help from members of my team, I was given no answer or an unpleasant look. What is more, people were working

so fast that they forgot about quality and teamwork. Mainly because of the above, when the season ended, we received a ton of returns from dissatisfied customers for various reasons: misspelled names on the canvasses and mugs, cases where customers had ordered floor mats and received personalized towels, just plain human errors. I read all of the customers' complaints, and I felt bad for them, but I also felt bad for the fellows on the team, yet I felt powerless to change their thinking philosophy. I learned not to trust anyone but myself. It was difficult staying motivated, looking at it from my angle, and keeping a positive attitude was very challenging.

Although work wasn't an exciting adventure any more, school wasn't going well, either. In order to be insured under my dad's policy, I had to be a full-time student. After staying up for nineteen hours straight trying to make some money, get all my homework done on time, and attend all classes, I realized that I almost had no time for sleep, friends, a girlfriend, or even family. I made a bad choice of skipping one class and then another. Finally, when I went back, I was so far behind that I dropped out. Now I had no insurance, no education, and a job that I hated because of lack of human rights, a negative atmosphere, and a high level of disrespect for one another.

After six months, for many, it was their last day. The truth was that Personal Creations did not need us there after Christmas. This balloon of hope finally exploded. It did not matter how good you were, they just did not need you anymore. The promise we were given was just another lie we'd all bought into. When all the bosses were having a drink at the bar and talked about their profits and how successful the season was for them, most of their workers were thinking about how to provide for their families now. It was our last day there. I don't think I can compare my experience there to slavery, but honestly, can anyone here in the U.S make a living and provide for a family making $6.50 an hour?

Now, any time someone I know is celebrating a birthday or anniversary far away, I promise myself never to buy them any personalized gifts or send them flowers from ProFlowers. That is because I know how much money these companies are all making and how poor the conditions of their workers are. I think that as a customer, it is our responsibility to perform a bit of a background check on firms we all get our products from, mainly because somewhere far away, someone might be a part of a big scandal, getting hurt, disrespected, or living in poor conditions, yet we buy the product and by doing so, we support the big corporation mafias that care about nobody but themselves.

Evaluation: *This is a thoughtful memoir with social significance, looking back on the past from a new perspective, as the author reflects on his experience with the practices of a modern-day American sweatshop. The author describes the situation well and poses meaningful questions.*

Influence and Outcome: Pär Lagerkvist's "Father and I" and Aleksandar Hemon's "Islands"

Olivia Zubko
Course: English 102 (Composition)
Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

Assignment: *Write a literary research paper incorporating effective use of at least seven secondary sources.*

The relationships that adult family members or role models have with young people are unique because they play such large roles in teaching lessons and defining who one might grow up to be. These relationships can impact a child negatively just as easily as positively. Family plays an inimitable part in shaping who one will become, and simple interactions and events can alter the mentality of a child almost in an instant. Both "Father and I," by Swedish author Pär Lagerkvist, and "Islands," by Ukrainian/Bosnian writer Aleksandar Hemon, explore these significant relationships. "Father and I" also causes the reader to contemplate his or her own future and spirituality, while "Islands," a grim but powerful story, evokes a sense of cynicism in the reader and causes one to question existence and the human condition. The father and son in "Father and I" appear to be close, comfortable, and contented with each other's company until one day when they go for a walk, and the boy's view of life and of his father is changed forever. Uncle Julius and his nephew in Aleksandar Hemon's "Islands" barely know each other at all until the boy spends some time with his uncle. It is in that short time that Uncle Julius has a great impact on the boy's spirit and outlook on life. Lagerkvist's "Father and I" and Hemon's "Islands" both discuss the effect or impression that adult male exemplars have on the spirit and outlook of youth.

In Lagerkvist's "Father and I," the narrator recounts an event from his childhood when he was nine years old. He and his father go for a walk near the train tracks where his father works, into the woods to listen to birds. As nightfall begins to creep up, the boy becomes frightened, but his father seems to remain completely calm, which upsets the boy. His father explains to him that the reason why he is so calm is because he knows God is protecting them. This does not help to calm the boy. Then, all of a sudden, a mysterious train appears through the darkness. His father does not recognize the driver, which makes the boy question his father's knowledge and power for the first time. This creates a stir of emotions in the boy. He begins to contemplate his future without the protection of his father. This both frightens and awakens him.

At first glance, the story may seem simple and humble, but after careful analysis, the story becomes the complex psychological telling of a boy who realizes the true nature of the world and his religious beliefs, and through the course of a few hours, he becomes distanced from his father, who, in the end, shares a completely opposite outlook on life as his son. One critic describes Lagerkvist's writing:

> The quest to answer life's eternal questions permeates his writings as he explores the relationship between good and evil, faith and despair, the purpose of life and the meaning of death. The strength of Lagerkvist's storytelling lies in the dichotomy of yearning for the conservative religion of his youth and finding that religion has forsaken humanity in its blind struggle to find meaning in a scientific age. (Argetsinger par. 1)

These complex themes underlie a simple story that begins as a light-hearted walk in the woods. The narrator recounts, "We didn't make any great to-do about this going to listen to the birds, as though it were something extra special or wonderful; we were sound, sensible people, Father and I, brought up with nature and used to it" (Lagerkvist 30). This quote implies a certain level of closeness between the boy and his father. The reader can infer that they are both very comfortable spending time with each other and that it is not a great ordeal to go listen to birds in the woods. It is likely that this is something

that they do often and that these bonding experiences are probably somewhat spontaneous. The boy looks up to his father, noting that his father is very confident and sure of his actions. The narrator says, "Father just looked to see that the semaphore was right—he thought of everything" (Lagerkvist 31). Based on this, the reader can see that the boy thought his father knew everything and could do anything. At this point in the story, the boy still believes this.

The walk along the railway continues, across a stream, and the narrator writes, "We trod carefully on the sleepers, holding each other tightly by the hand so as not to fall in. I thought Father would carry me across, but he didn't say anything; he probably wanted me to be like him and think nothing of it" (Lagerkvist 32). This passage illustrates the father's affection toward the boy but also the hope that his son will gain some confidence and independence. Since this is the boy's own narration, it is obvious to the reader that the boy is aware of his father's feelings and implications and knows that his father wants him to start becoming independent. The narrator also recalls, "Father was so calm as we walked there in the darkness, with even strides, not speaking, thinking to himself. I couldn't understand how he could be so calm when it was so murky" (Lagerkvist 32). This is the first hint of a disconnect between the characters. The boy sees that his father is not even a little bit affected by the darkness. The narrator expresses that he cannot understand why his father is remaining calm, showing a clear distinction between the characters' dispositions. Irene Scobbie discusses Lagerkvist's way of creating tension between the characters and states:

> It is typical of Lagerkvist that he can introduce natural objects and then in simple, deliberately naïve language, turn them into symbols for disturbing emotional and philosophical problems. The realistic childhood setting suddenly opens into a yawning gap between two generations and an angst-ridden view of a world void of religious belief. (par. 7)

Also, the lack of dialogue is beginning to shift from a comfortable silence to a tension that is likely only felt by the boy, creating a complex but subtle distance between the two. But still, at this point in the story, the boy still sees his father as the all-knowing hero of his life.

Only a small bit of information is known about the father's past. It can be inferred that he hasn't told his son much about his childhood, only what the narrator shares here: "He had sat here on the stones as a boy, waiting for perch all day long; often there wasn't even a bite, but it was a blissful life" (Lagerkvist 32). This quote gives the reader insight into the peaceful mind of the boy's father. Even as a child, the father was completely content with life and nature, and to the father, those things seem to be one and the same. He asked nothing of the world but total peace from nature, a very mature mentality for a young boy. Perhaps this is why he is affectionate but does not coddle his son. He wants his son to gain maturity so that he too can enjoy nature as his father did and still does. What the reader does not yet know at this point in the story is that the boy's father not only has a deep connection with nature, but also with his religious spirituality.

When nightfall begins to surround the two, the boy becomes uneasy. A glow-worm shines in the forest, frightening the boy. He recalls, "Hugging close to Father, I whispered, 'Father, why is it so horrible when it's dark?' 'No, my boy, it's not horrible,' he said, taking me by the hand. 'Yes Father, it is.' 'No, my child, you mustn't think that. Not when we know there is a God'" (Lagerkvist 33). This is the first mention of the father's religious beliefs in the story, and it is likely that they have never had that kind of talk before, since this response comes as something of a surprise to the boy. Up until now there was no mention of faith, but it is now very clear that the boy's father believes wholeheartedly that there is a God who protects them. Roy Swanson explains:

> The religion of the father in "Father and I" is, like philosophical formulas for the achievement of happiness, a form of self-deception, so far as Lagerkvist is concerned. The father sees neither the glowworm nor the significance of the baleful glow of the black train's fire, the one representative of life, the other intensified life. The son, who is conscious of both, experiences the anguish (the existentialist's angst) that informs such consciousness. (par. 9)

Now, the reader can understand why the father shows no fear, but as the reader continues, it is clear that the boy and his father do not share the same belief system.

The boy does not react with acceptance to his father's

spirituality; in fact, the boy is upset by his father's answer. Up until that moment, he worshipped his own father like a god, and now, he sees his father as weak for putting all his faith in something so conceptual and intangible. He explains, "It was so strange that only I was afraid, not Father, that we didn't think the same. And strange that what he said didn't help me and stop me from being afraid" (Lagerkvist 33). Here, the narrator further expands upon his feeling of disconnect between he and his father. He no longer feels protected because now he realizes that his father places all of his faith in something the boy does not believe in. There are many who would feel comfort in the idea of a God in a situation such as this, but the boy is more focused on the impending darkness slowly engulfing them. To him, the frightening environment is too real and visceral to excuse on the notion of something that is so intangible to him, like an omnipotent God. He goes on to say, "Not even what he said about God helped me. I thought he too was horrible. It was horrible that he was everywhere here in the darkness, down under the trees, in the telegraph poles which rumbled—that must be he—everywhere. And yet you could never see him" (Lagerkvist 33). He reveals that he does not share the same faith as his father and that he does not even understand the concept of faith. He views God as an evil that lurks in the darkness. He experiences discomfort in the notion that there is a being who watches them at all times but who does not intervene in times of darkness. Swanson goes on to explain,

> Without a god of light or a savior to atone for the evil of life, Lagerkvist saw only endless darkness and the responsibility of an individual to save his own or her own self, not as an immortal soul but as a vitally mortal self. "Father and I" presents a nine-year-old boy's initial awareness of his lonely and fearful struggle. (par. 10)

The boy's fear only grows when a black train hurtles past them on the railway. He recounts, "Beside myself with dread, I stood there panting, gazing after the furious vision. It was swallowed up by the night" (Lagerkvist 34). The boy is both physically and mentally distressed after the black train passes into an endless darkness that symbolizes the dismal anguish that lies ahead for him. His father's response to the mysterious train only serves to solidify his fear and uncertainty. His father remarks, "'Strange, what train was that? And I didn't recognize the driver'" (Lagerkvist 34). Here, the driver is not just one man that his father does not know, but rather, an incarnation of *all* the things that he does not know and cannot protect his son from. And his son goes on to explain this realization: "But my whole body was shaking. It was for me, for my sake. I sensed what it meant: it was the anguish that was to come, the unknown, all that father knew nothing about, that he wouldn't be able to protect me against. That was how this world, this life, would be for me; not like Father's, where everything was secure and certain. It wasn't a real world, a real life. It just hurtled, blazing, into the darkness that had no end" (Lagerkvist 34). Here, the boy calculates the entire situation to formulate the conclusion that life is an endless tunnel of conflict and struggle and that it is now, right at this moment, at which he must transform into a mature individual at the ripe old age of nine because life will never get any easier; it will only become increasingly more bleak as time goes on. One critic concludes, "It is the anguish of the unknown, with which his father is unacquainted; his life will not be like his father's secure existence" (Argetsinger par. 4). This is clearly not the way he imagined this walk with his father would turn out. What began as light-hearted and care-free became a grim and foreboding premonition of what life was to become for the boy.

Lagerkvist takes a complex and personal approach in creating the narration for the story. His own views are very prevalent, and the story is largely autobiographical. Irene Scobbie explains, "Pär Lagerkvist came of traditional peasant stock. His parents were deeply religious, accepting God without question and seeing his hand in the world around them. Although Lagerkvist loved and respected them, at an early age he rejected their religion and their traditions" (par. 1). Lagerkvist's own views on religion mirror the young narrator's, and his parents' view match that of the narrator's father. Roy Swanson also touches on the topic of Lagerkvist's religious values by stating:

> Early in his life, Pär Lagerkvist became aware of his incapacity for upholding and adhering to the stern and uncompromising religion of his forebears

> and of his consequent exclusion from the security and meaning that their religion provided. His estrangement from religious faith engendered his humanism, and his need for the security and meaning denied him produced his anguish and his longing. His humanistic inclination and his experience of angst constitute the theme of "Father and I." (par. 7)

It is clear in this explanation that the story is very personal to Lagerkvist, being that it is very much a tale of his own psychological conflict with religion and humanism.

Scobbie also assesses the approach Lagerkvist takes in the theme of the story and explains, "The story is a study in contrasts, creating a tension between two different worlds, the smiling daylight walk representing a rural idyll with ancient beliefs, and the dark, terrifying homeward journey adumbrating a dangerous unknown outside world soon to be experienced by the boy" (par 4). Recognizing the juxtapositions of mood Lagerkvist makes is important because it helps the reader understand the environmental changes that evoke certain reactions in the characters. Swanson also discusses the various juxtapositions used by Lagerkvist as he states, "The combined perspectives of day and night are interspatial with the combined perspectives of the thirty-year-old narrator and the child that he was at nine. The reactions of the child are genuinely those of a nine-year-old, and they are imperceptibly, almost indistinguishably, deepened by the symbolic content of the mature narrator's recollections" (par. 12).

Swanson touches on a very important fact, which is that the narrator is actually much older now as he is telling the story and though it is nearly undetectable in the writer's naïve way of narrating, his telling of the story is slightly swayed by his own personal experiences that have taken place between the action of the story and his narration of the events. Swanson states:

> After the black train is engorged by the night, the father puzzles over the strange train and the strange engineer, while the son has a presentiment of its significance and a sense that it was for his sake that the train roared past them: Speaking as a narrator about his boyhood experience, he interprets that experience retrospectively as an anticipation of the anguish that he would much later articulate in this autobiographical depiction. (par. 12)

The author is able to fully explore the narrator's loss of innocence, in writing about the past. The narrator has had plenty of time, at this point, to reflect on his childhood and understand the significance to the events. Perhaps if the story were being narrated as it actually happened, the narrator would leave out certain details because they have not had time to unfold and become significant, but since he is narrating it many years later, he can evaluate the importance of even the most mundane interactions.

Hemon's "Islands" is similar to "Father and I" in many respects. It begins with a boy and his family going to visit his Uncle Julius and Aunt Lyudmila on the Island of Mljet, an island on the Croatian coast, described by the narrator as dilapidated, rough, and dirty. His Uncle Julius is described in a similar way, crude and intimidating, but also very warm-hearted and loving. The narrator arrives at the island with a very naïve outlook on life, but through his interaction with his uncle, he gains a high level of cynicism toward life.

In his interactions with his nephew, Uncle Julius seems very straightforward with the boy and explicit in his opinions on life. Towards the beginning, the boy refuses to drink a glass of water because he sees a slug near the water tank, and Uncle Julius exclaims, "'Look at yourself...You don't want to drink the water! What would you do if you were so thirsty that you were nearly crazy and having one thought only: water, water! And there's no water. How old are you?'" (Hemon 9). This quote suggests that Uncle Julius wants the boy to realize at a young age that he must not take things for granted and that there are greater evils in the world than a slug near the water tank. He is very stern in the way that he handles this situation, simply because he has experienced horrible things, as the reader will come to find out, such as a Siberian prison camp, most likely during the 1930s. He talks about the things that went on in the camp. He states, "They didn't know what to do in the camp, so the criminals took the nicest-looking to their quarters and fed them and, you know...abused them" (Hemon 9). Here, Uncle Julius furthers his explanation of what he was going through when he was young in order to explain to

his nephew that the world is unkind to that naïve youth. He does censor himself in a way when he talks about the way the criminals "abused" the boys, and this is to show that he acknowledges that there is no need to be graphic in his explanation. He believes the boy to be mature enough to understand what he is talking about. Though the reader knows that the boy does not really understand what type of "abuse" his uncle is describing, it is evident that Uncle Julius intends to speak to the boy as though he is an adult, in an effort to expose the boy to the true nature of the world.

Another instance of Uncle Julius' grim storytelling is when they are out on one of the island's lakes and Julius tells the boy,

> "These lakes,". . . "used to be a pirate haven in the sixteenth century. They'd hoard the loot and bring hostages here and kill them and torture them—in this very building—if they didn't get the ransom. They say that this place is still haunted by the ghosts of three children they hung on meat hooks because their parents didn't pay the ransom." (Hemon 19)

This is another instance of Uncle Julius' lack of censorship with the boy. Though it may seem like nothing but a ghost story, the narrator is only nine years old at the time, and children can be very impressionable. A criticism of Uncle Julius could be that he is deliberately trying to scare the boy, not taking into account the fact that stories like this could really scare a child of his age, but he most likely justifies himself by remembering the horrible things he had seen by the time he was the boy's age. Despite his straightforwardness with his nephew, Uncle Julius still protects the boy from physical harm as they exit the boat: The narrator recalls, "I slipped stepping out, but Uncle Julius grabbed my hand and I hung for a moment over the throbbing lake with a sodden loaf of bread and an ardently smiling woman on a magazine page, stuck to the surface like an ice floe" (Hemon 18). Here, Uncle Julius takes on the role of protector. Nobody was there to look after him as a child, and this is why he feels the need to watch out for the boy and also inform him of the evil that is to come in the boy's life. This simple instance of him reaching out and saving the boy from falling into the water can be seen as an allegory for the entire story.

Numerous times throughout the story, Uncle Julius explicitly states his philosophy of life. The first instance of this is right at the beginning when the narrator presents Julius' conclusions about life: "So that's how it is, he said, it's all one pest after another, like revolutions. Life is nothing if not a succession of evils, he said and then stopped and took a pebble out of his sandal. He showed the puny, gray pebble to us, as if holding irrefutable evidence that he was right" (Hemon 6). Based on this statement, it is early on that the reader can infer that Uncle Julius has no problem with stating his opinions. He clearly intends to make an impression on the boy, especially when he uses the pebble as "evidence" of the world's evil. Uncle Julius wants the boy to realize early on that the world is cruel and hard and it will always be that way. Scott Trudell states "Forms of authority and kinds of oppression combine, therefore, until the narrator seems to concede Uncle Julius's point that 'Life is nothing if not a succession of evils' perpetrated by those in power. Although the narrator does not necessarily come to believe wholeheartedly in this conclusion, it is clear that it has made a lasting impression on him" (par. 11). The final declaration of Julius' philosophy comes near the end when Julius tells a story from when he was older and witnessed the oldest man alive as part of a lecture at a Soviet university. He described the old man as nothing more than a hundred and fifty-eight-year-old baby. Julius proclaims,

> "I figured out then that life is a circle, you get back where you started if you get to be a hundred and fifty-eight years old. It's like a dog chasing its own tail, all is for naught. We live and live and in the end we're just like this boy…knowing nothing, remembering nothing. You might as well stop living now, my son. You might as well just stop, for nothing will change." (Hemon 10)

Here, it is obvious that Uncle Julius has become bitter and cynical due to his hard life, and he clearly intends to project his cynicism on the boy even though it is likely that the boy will not experience hardship to the extent that Uncle Julius did. He suggests to his nephew that he may as well give up on life and that once one reaches a certain point, they regress, and it makes no difference whether

they lived or died. This type of cynicism is not necessarily a good thing for a boy to be exposed to, but it is the advice that Uncle Julius sees fit to tell the boy, showing that he does not hold back from stating his opinions and being frank and straightforward with the boy.

It is experiences like that one, that Julius had when he was younger, that made him the way he is. As mentioned earlier, he spent time in a Siberian prison camp with real criminals when he was a teenager because he missed too much school. This was very common in the 1930s and 1940s under Stalin's regime. Children who repeatedly missed school were placed in penal colonies for six months to three years. Arkhangelsk, the camp that young Julius was placed in, was filled with children who, because of this law, were detained and subjected to horrible treatment. Many died in the camps. "With the onset of Stalinist terror...the [Siberian] Solovets Islands were packed with prisoners living in severe conditions, subjected to cold, hunger, punishment cells, and beatings" (Zhukovsky par 3). Years later, the prison camp at Arkhangelsk was eventually evacuated and became a naval base.

The narrator speaks of one of Julius' jobs at the camp: "One spring, his job was to dig big graves in the thawing ground, take the dead to the grave on a large cart, and then stuff them into the grave. Fifty per grave was the prescribed amount. Sometimes he had to stamp on the top of the grave load to get more space and meet the plan" (Hemon 4). This is one vignette from a series of traumatic events that make up Julius' childhood. In the labor camp, he was a young teenager forced to perform tasks that would make the stomachs of many grown men churn with nausea, and to be exposed to this sort of morbidity at such a young age acutely impacted Julius' life. Julius is bitter and cynical, and these attributes can be directly linked back to the horror he experienced as a boy. While Julius was carrying out his body disposal duties, he happened upon someone he once knew from a camp he had been at previously. Julius goes into detail about the things that this boy, named Vanyka, had gone through, things even more horrible than Julius had seen. Scott Trudell writes,

> Uncle Julius, who seems to want to make an impression on his nephew, tells the story of Vanyka for his benefit, saying ominously that 'he should know' the story. The fact that he asks how old the narrator is immediately before doing so suggests that Uncle Julius is imparting a cautionary tale in which Vanyka is meant to serve as a double for the narrator. (Trudell par. 2)

Trudell also explains, "Vanyka's childhood trauma brings out the narrator's own loss of innocence, instead of minimizing it or overshadowing it, mainly because his story calls attention to the brutal ways in which authority and society force children to grow up" (par. 1).

In the camp, Vanyka, a boy about twelve years old, survived by preying on weaker prisoners for their food and by also lending himself, most likely sexually (as it is implied), to other inmates for protection. Vanyka began rebelling and shouting anti-Stalin remarks "thanking" Stalin for his "happy childhood," which results in him being beaten by guards and taken away. Young Julius was then sent from camp to camp for a period of time. It is then that one spring, as he is carrying out his grave-filling duties, that he encounters Vanyka again for what would be the last time. It turns out that after Vanyka was taken away from the first camp, he was beaten incessantly for days and was moved to another camp because he continued to rebel. At the new camp, he began killing prisoners, gaining the respect, borne of fear, of the other inmates. He escaped with a few other prisoners by killing two other prisoners and stealing their food and possessions and then setting out on foot. Eventually, they ran out of food, causing Vanyka and the second fugitive to kill and eat the third, and eventually, Vanyka did the same to his co-conspirator. He was caught and thrown into solitary confinement, where he attempted suicide multiple times, begging the guards to let him die, which is the state that Julius ultimately found him in: nearly unrecognizable (emaciated, toothless, and missing an ear), thrown onto a cart, ready to be buried, and begging for death.

As Julius comes to the end of Vanyka's story, the narrator states, "Uncle Julius fell reticent and no one dared to say anything. But I asked: 'So what happened to him?' 'He was killed,' he said; making a motion with his hand, as if thrusting me aside, out of his sight" (Hemon 12). It is likely and implied that Julius had to kill Vanyka or bury him alive. This response by Uncle Julius is an example of how his exposure to trauma as

a child, as frequent as it was, has desensitized him now. He dismisses the haunting story he has just told with a simple wave of his hand. Trudell states, "For his part, the narrator clearly identifies with Vanyka and shows interest in his fate. Since no one else dares say anything when Uncle Julius falls silent, it is a sign of great curiosity that the narrator brings himself to ask, 'So what happened to him?'" (par. 3). Clearly, Vanyka's story strikes a chord in the narrator. The narrator sympathizes with Vanyka enough to break the solemn silence and ask of Vanyka's fate. Vanyka's and the narrator's stories mirror each other in that they are both taught at a young age that they must grow up and recognize the world's cruelties. "It is through the juxtaposition of their stories that Hemon is able to communicate the great tragedy of a young boy's loss of innocence" (Trudell 11). Julius never had time to process death; instead, he was forced to continue on, or he himself would not survive, and he intends to teach the boy about the world's evils through telling Vanyka's story.

Julius tells the boy many other stories during the course of the visit. In the last interaction between Uncle Julius and the boy described in the story, Julius speaks some very vague but haunting words that are explained in this passage:

> At the end of the visit, Uncle Julius points to a spot on an aerial photograph of the island and says, "We are here." But of course the boy and his family are not literally on that spot in the photograph. The photograph is a representation, an artifact that imposes a form, as it were, on the chaotic reality of the island. To say "We are here," is a way of assuring oneself that the chaotic reality represented by the photograph has boundaries and that one's relationship to it has meaning. ("A Succession of Evils" 5)

The "here" that Julius refers to could be interpreted as the state of mind where people are after they come to realize the world's cruelties and chaos.

The boy leaves Mljet, completely changed. In his short time on the island, he has become a new person: a small, cynical, bitter, young adult. When he arrives home to see his cat, he describes, "The cat, having not been fed for more than a week, was emaciated and nearly mad with hunger. I would call to her, but she wouldn't come to me; she would just look at me with irreversible hatred" (Hemon 21). This last paragraph of the story explains perfectly the boy's change in mentality. He has developed a large amount of cynicism by now. He feels the cat's hatred towards him and won't even bother to call out to it because it is a lost cause; he believes their relationship has been marred by irreparable damage. Before spending time with Uncle Julius, he may have tried to win back the cat's affection, but with his new outlook on life, he sees it as futile.

Hemon writes mostly from his own experiences. "Islands" is based on Hemon's own family relationships and experiences, which builds reliability in the narrator. John Wilson tells us,

> The narrator recalls a trip he took as a boy with his family to an island off the coast of Yugoslavia. The Hemons, readers later learn, migrated to Bosnia from Ukraine, and a member of the Ukrainian branch of the family, Uncle Julius, is there on the island. He tells stories about the period during which he was in the gulag under Stalin. (par 8)

The later experiences Hemon had in Bosnia became fuel for his writing. He saw many things that infuriated him enough to write about them in order to spark awareness. Hemon proclaims, "The war in Bosnia made me angry". ..."Injustice makes me angry. You read about the queer festival and you get angry and my fantasy is, I want to beat someone into the turf. I don't do it. But my fantasy is, I want to beat someone" (qtd. in Kaminski par 5). He is referring to the violence that broke out during a peaceful festival in Bosnia in support of gay rights. He writes about the cruelties of the world and is dedicated to exposing these evils, as evident in "Islands." Matthew Kaminski states, "His stories draw deeply on his own life without coming across as autobiography. You never really know what's true" (par 10). He goes on to say, "Mr. Hemon has an especially intimate relationship with his characters. 'It's important to me to like my characters. What I like about Chekhov—one of the many things—is he loves his people. If God existed, that's the way he would love his people. They might be wrong and stupid and evil but never just bad'" (par 10). Hemon takes great care in establishing complex relationships between his characters. His characters are simple and humble, and

the relationship between the narrator and Uncle Julius is one built on a foundation of love and the obligation Julius feels to protect the boy from harm. The characters are not without flaws, and that is what makes the relationships complicated but all the more endearing.

Both "Father and I" and "Islands" are coming-of-age tales where the child becomes drastically mature in a short period of time. In "Father and I," it happens in one day, and in "Islands," it occurs over the course of a few days. The rapid transformation in both stories comes due to interaction with a family member, but in slightly different ways. In the end, the young narrators in both stories show a similar outlook on life that has been impressed upon them by interactions with male familial role models, despite the completely inverse religious values that both male exemplars observe. It is most likely the case that the men's opposite religious stances were brought about by opposite upbringings and life experiences. Ultimately, both narrators are exposed to the evil reality that life is cruel and hard and does not get any easier or better after one leaves childhood. In "Father and I," the world's evil is insinuated by the black train and his father's unknowing, whereas in "Islands," Julius explicitly warns the boy of the world's bleakness. Both boys experienced an eye-opening, life-changing picture of reality through interactions with a significant family member, thus proving that family plays an incalculable role in the development of personal beliefs, values, and views on life.

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Evaluation: *Olivia's work in this paper shows excellent depth of perception, well-integrated sources, and strong clarity of expression. The contexts of the two literary works are carefully explained and explored, and the research sources further illuminate them, providing insight into the sources of the authors' ideas, as well.*

Afterword: Writing and Feedback

Anne Davidovicz

During the first eighteen years of my life, I was a quiet person, excessively shy all the way through high school. I hated this about myself. I contemplated why I never spoke. Was it because I was the youngest of five, very vocal, older sisters? Was it because I was afraid of being wrong? Was it because I was insecure? When I began taking Jackson Community College courses in 1980, something began to shift. The assignments I completed for my writing courses came back to me with genuine feedback that began to lure me from my womb of silence. Putting thoughts on a page and receiving commentary was a type of conversation—academic conversation—that was new to me. I was encouraged to say, to write, to declare. This process was a slow one. When I presented a poem at my first reading at JCC, my legs shook noticeably and my voice arose several octaves; an audience member rescued me with a chair and a glass of water. Still, I recognized that I was moving away from that other, invisible me. The writing and the feedback on the writing had been the catalysts.

Truck Drivers and Trash

"A truck driver could have written that poem. Throw it in the trash!" shouted Diane Wakoski, published poet and creative writing professor at Michigan State University during the 1980s. I do not quote her to critique the assumption that truckers are lousy writers but to emphasize the force of honest feedback. (Her words were not aimed at my workshop submission. Not that time, at least.) It was often a bit scary sitting in her classes, waiting for an often scathing analysis, but such an atmosphere yielded growth. Many of her students wanted to please her and in so doing, pushed themselves to new levels—to more authentic or even experimental poems. She dared us to take risks. She steered a dear friend of mine into writing performance poems (well before the Slam Movement) that used only sounds and iambic rhythm, giving birth to his "Sexual Sonnet" and his "Sickness Sonnet." I'll let you imagine the utterances he used in those two pieces.

In my years studying under Wakoski, she stressed the notion that "form should never be more than an extension of content," an idea posed in Charles Olson's *Projective Verse,* credited to his colleague, Robert Creeley. Content becomes the central generator of the poem. I spent many hours scouring my memory for experiences worthy of poetry. Her teaching urged me to explore the impact of living with a dying grandmother suffering from hardening of the arteries (the symptoms of which are similar to Alzheimer's Disease), of witnessing my bi-polar uncle (a Jesuit priest who had been molested by a priest) abuse my mother, of witnessing my father die of lung cancer, and simply of relishing the beauty of nature. Not everything has to have a negative spin, but pain often motivates and inspires me. Wakoski's approaches to teaching writing influenced my own. I often push my creative writers to explore their sorrows and shadows for authentic content. If attempted with sincerity and craft, such subject matter has what Robert Bly calls "psychic weight," which, along with imagery, are components that "moisten" the writing. Moist is better than dry when it comes to writing. Or cake. Or earthworms.

Politics and Poetry

As this essay suggests, I primarily identify with creative writing; my MFA is in poetry writing—but, what I most often teach is analytical writing. I almost used the word "unfortunately" in that last clause, but that's not entirely true. I realized a long time ago that the practice of poetry writing can influence a person's prose or analytical writing. Working with the most compressed genre helps us shear off the gristle. It fine tunes the writer's eye for words, the most precise, the strongest. It can make flat writing glow a bit more. As a college junior, I worked as an Intern Legislative Aid for a Michigan House Representative. Though I already

foresaw my future in a creative writing program, I was open to any new work experiences to add to my resume. Politics seemed so grown-up, so sexy. I forfeited my poet attire of overalls and a wife-beater for a skirt and blazer, and off to the capitol in Lansing I went. While I wasn't entirely impressed by the political scene (not so sexy), I noticed how my practice with poetry, my attention to individual words, could make my letters to constituents a little more personalized and a little less canned. I would brainstorm lines of the letters just as I would brainstorm figures of speech for my poems.

Pleasure and Meanness

Back to honest feedback. I have taught writing classes for over thirty years, and the older I get the more blunt I get in my speaking and in my writing. This may be a genetic trait as I've seen it occur in my mother as well as my four sisters. More likely, it's just a sign (one of the few good ones) of old age. Some of my students, especially in creative writing or poetry writing classes, have thanked me for being "so mean." (I never even called them truck drivers!) I find it interesting that they equate honesty with meanness. I find it more interesting that they *thank* me for it. Good students and even mediocre ones are hungry for growth. College offers courses that demand writing—in- and outside of liberal arts departments—that can perpetuate such growth. It is not only intellectual growth that these courses stimulate. It's a growth in identity, a link to one's passions, and a generator of authenticity.

Discussing "meanness" makes me think of Flannery O'Connor's Misfit's comment: "No pleasure but meanness." When reviewing "A Good Man Is Hard to Find," I always encourage my students to linger over his remark. Is he suggesting that there is no pleasure in being mean? If that's the case, I would disagree. I find pleasure in being mean if "mean" means honest. If meanness forces students to revise for the better, let it rule the world—or at least the writing class. Maybe the Misfit is suggesting that the meanness in the world outweighs the pleasure. Even worse is the interpretation that pleasure is entirely absent from our world. (I sure hope not.) Speaking of O'Connor, I recently encountered a discussion of her work that announced her role as a master of blending showing and telling in her fiction. While I have used the "show, don't tell" mantra with students for years, I also understand the necessity of telling. As Marrazzo points out: "When a writing solely depends on showing and neglects the narrative that artfully shapes, characterizes, qualifies, or in some other way informs the character's actions, the reader is forced to extrapolate meaning based upon what is observed. . .and the reader, rather than the writer, then creates the story" (205). The richness of O'Connor's work depends upon this blend of showing with highly memorable imagery (hippo-shaped valises, glass eyes, wooden legs, Jesus tattoos)—and telling (such as the Misfit's line discussed above) with lines that ring philosophical. Often the telling lines, too, reveal a story's or a character's insights. I believe young writers must earn the right to tell by mastering the art of showing.

Boundaries and Connections

Lovers of the word may enjoy pushing boundaries. They should, shouldn't they? As one of my previous passages suggests, I am a little less enamored with academic writing than creative writing. I probably shouldn't be admitting that, should I? As a poetry writing major, who also racked up an additional year's worth of women's studies, rhetoric, and literature courses, it was difficult to avoid academic writing entirely, but boy did I try—and sometimes I succeeded. In a comparative literature class at the University of Oregon, I took the short fiction of Clarice Lispector and "translated" it into a series of poems for one of my *essay* assignments. Score. The professor liked it. For a Shakespeare seminar I "substituted" a series of Ophelia's journal entries for the research paper. Fail. Big time. For a course on the Black Mountain poets, I "blended" poetic and analytical responses to highlight the works of Robert Creeley. Super score! The professor for that course was a visiting scholar from Hungary. When she returned to Budapest, she met with Creeley and shared my paper with him. Having graduated by that time, I was working my first teaching job in Bismarck, North Dakota, trying (yes, really!) to teach Creeley's poems. The students hated them. As I was returning to my rental home under the bleak, big sky after another failed class, I noticed the red

and blue borders of an air mail envelope frosting the pile of junkmail beneath. I scanned the return address. Robert Creeley. He had read the essay and was now responding to me with a mix of poetry and critique. Writing can be mystical, oddly synchronous.

This piece knows more than I knew before I began writing it. My focus, I thought, would be more about the harsh critique and its value to the beginning writer, but as I sit here in contemplation of trigger moments from my writing life, this Afterword reminds me how much writers need positive reinforcement (love?) as well as "scathing analysis." In his reply, Creeley quoted *me*—words I wrote decades ago that I no longer remember writing—and he responded: "Your poem is . . . a generous gift—to burn with love, like they say. (I'm thinking of my own head stuffed with candles.) I'm shy of 'talking about' your poems in this instance—or any, just that they make their own way, and have their own conduct and occasion." When I review this letter twenty-five years later, the same sense of awe I felt opening it for the first time returns to me. This master of craft responded to one of my poems. I had never felt so honored. So connected.

Let the conversations continue.

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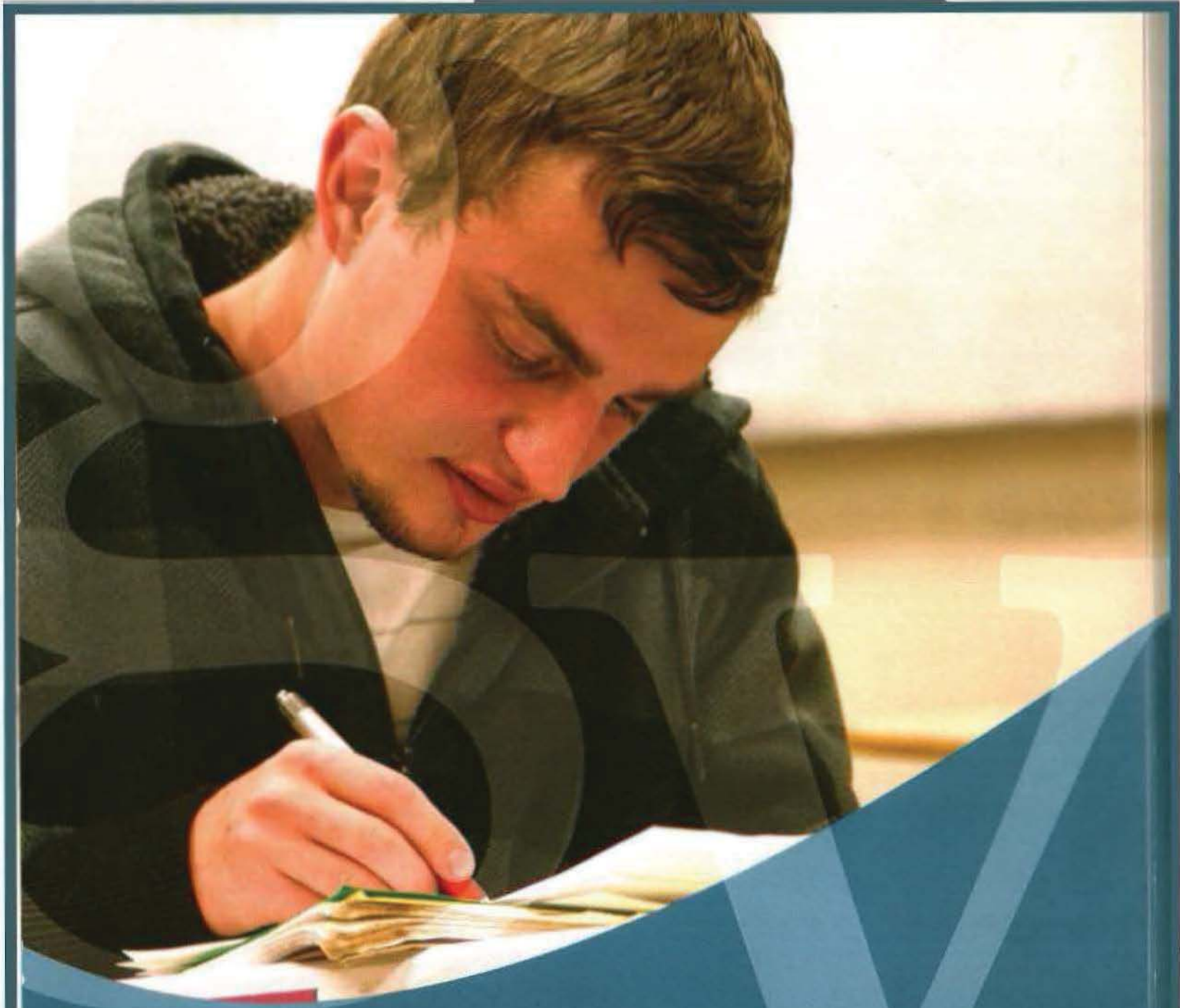

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