

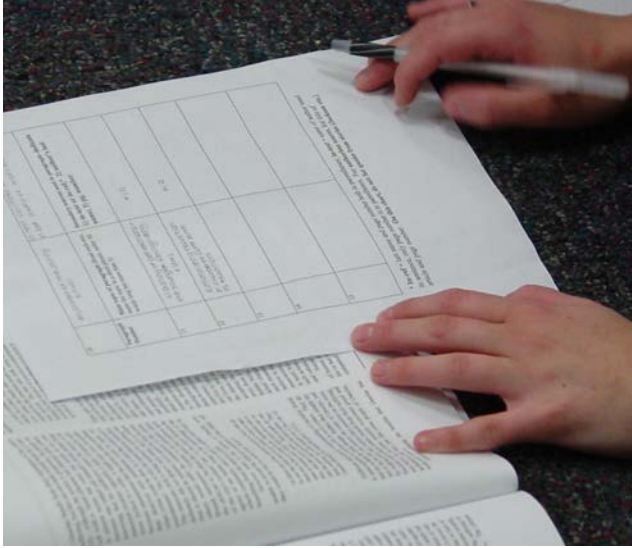
# The Harper Anthology Volume XXVII

2015

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

Prepared by  
The Harper Anthology  
committee

Marjorie Allen  
Keith Jensen  
Meg King  
Maggie McKinley  
Josh Sunderbruch  
Kris Piepenburg, chair



## Submission Information

---

**Submission deadlines:**

**2016 issue: January 25, 2016**

**2017 issue: January 25, 2017**

**Send manuscripts to**

**kpiepenb@harpercollege.edu, or submit a print copy to LIB ARTS, Room L203. Please include student contact information (e-mail, phone number, street address) with all submissions**

**Submission forms are available at the back of this issue; in the Harper College Liberal Arts Office (L203); and at the English Department web site: [dept.harpercollege.edu/english](http://dept.harpercollege.edu/english)**

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

***The Harper Anthology* is also available at [dept.harpercollege.edu/english](http://dept.harpercollege.edu/english)**

**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**

## Table of Contents

---

### **Foreword**

(Kris Piepenburg)

### **Caila Bender**

A Hope That Anchors  
the Soul

(Literature 115) 1

### **Chester Busse**

Weightlifting:

A Road to Emotional Health

(English 101) 5

### **Lisa Croneberg**

The DeafNation Expo  
at Harper College

(Sign Language Interpreting 101) 8

### **Jacob Custer**

I Speak Therefore I Am

(Linguistics 205) 10

### **Sean Dahlgren**

The Unresolved Nature of Military  
Euphemisms

(Linguistics 205) 14

### **Courtney Beth Dohl**

A Divide between Genders: Sefi Atta's

*Everything Good Will Come*

(Literature 208) 19

### **Christopher Dwyer**

White Weddings and Marriage Equality

(Sociology 120) 23

### **Ryan Eberhardt**

Martin Hellman: A Great Thinker  
on Many Counts

(Humanities 105/History 105) 26

**Stephanie Fox**  
A Hero, a Great Thinker, a Survivor: Magda Brown  
(Humanities 105/History 105) 31

**Rachel Freeman**  
The Postmodernist Who Went Back in Time:  
A Study of Walton Ford  
(Art 105/English 102) 37

**George Galetsis**  
The Effect of Housing Discrimination on Education  
(English 102) 45

**Megan Giacomino**  
A Critical Analysis of *Dallas Buyers Club*'s  
Depiction of AZT  
(English 102) 49

**Ala Hashemi-Haeri**  
Through the Prism of de Beauvoir's  
*The Second Sex*: Yuko Mishima's "Patriotism"  
and Jan Morris' *Conundrum*  
(Humanities 105/History 105) 54

**Jasen Jonas**  
Holy "Howl": Spiritual Guidance  
from Allen Ginsberg  
(English 102) 57

**Alifiya Josh**  
Lack of Women in STEM Fields  
(English 101) 59

**Whitney Keck**  
Melodic Memories:  
Nick Hornby's *High Fidelity*  
(English 102/Literature 105) 63

**Kathleen Kurek; Natalie Marski;  
Marie E. Pena**  
A Review of the Harper College Radiologic  
Technology Program Website  
(Computer Information Systems 211) 67

**Rayna Maneva-Stoimenova**  
The Power of Language  
(English 101) 79

**Sunita Mani-Sriram**  
Stuttering: Types, Causes, and Treatment  
(Linguistics 105) 81

**David Modica**  
Arthur Miller's "The Misfits":  
Hegel's Master-Slave Dialectic  
(Literature 112) 86

**Bryan Morris**  
Divinization: A Distraction of the Self  
(English 101) 89

**Leslie Murray**  
"Pen Is Envy": Language, Gender, and Identity  
in *The Handmaid's Tale*  
(Literature 115) 93

**Olga Novikova**  
The Appeal of Dystopian Fiction  
to the Young Adult Reader  
(Literature 115) 98

**William Nutini**  
Madness and Confusion in  
William Shakespeare's  
*Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*  
(English 102) 101

**Kamil Piluk**  
The Examined Life's Obstacle:  
Fighting Conformity  
(English 101/Philosophy 105) 106

**Virginia Pszczolkowski**  
The Working Poor and the Immortal Youth:  
Class Struggle and Escapism in the Novel  
and Film Adaptation of *Morvern Callar*  
(Literature 112) 129

---

**Ben Snively**

The Different Messages in the Literary and Film  
Versions of *A Clockwork Orange*  
(Literature 115) 113

**Aleksandra Stosovic**

Morality and God  
(Philosophy 220) 116

**Eri Svenson**

The U.S. Government and Political System:  
Necessary Changes  
(Political Science 101) 119

**Ronald Tragasz**

The Saint Valentine's Day Massacre:  
Homicide in Heyer's Garage  
(Law Enforcement and Justice  
Administration 230 ) 123

**Hannah Valdiviejas Cohn**

From the Frying Pan into the Fire:  
Ernest Hemingway's "Soldier's Home"  
and Phil Klay's "Redeployment"  
(English 102) 129

**Brenda Ward**

Failures of the Imagination: J.G. Ballard's  
"The Subliminal Man" and William Harrison's  
"Roller Ball Murder"  
(English 102) 136

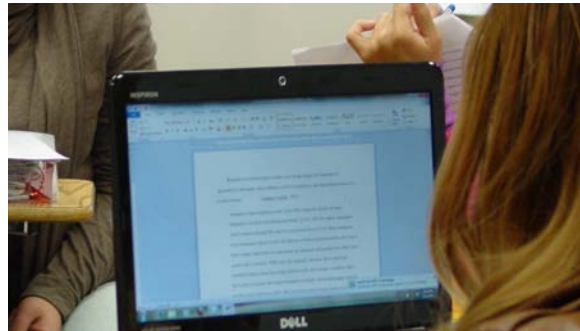
**Afterword**

Efferent and Aesthetic Communication  
(Jennifer Berne) 145

**Submission Form** 149

**Student Reflections on Writing**

**Chester Busse** 6  
**Jacob Custer** 11  
**Sean Dahlgren** 15  
**Courtney Beth Dohl** 21  
**Rachel Freeman** 38  
**Sunita Mani-Sriram** 83  
**Olga Novikova** 99  
**Ronald Tragasz** 126  
**Hannah Valdiviejas Cohn** 131  
**Brenda Ward** 142



**Acknowledgments**

**Marketing and Publishing Services**

**The Harper College Marketing,  
Communications, Advancement,  
and Community Relations Division**

**Printing and technical assistance:**

Maryellen Riley, Matt Nelson,  
Angelina Bonilla, Steve Schwertfeger,  
Tom Gibbons, Tony Garcia,  
Darin Halley, Eppie Perez

**Cover Design:** Jan Elbert

**Liberal Arts Division**

Jennifer Berne, Dean

---

# Foreword

## Can *Anyone* Do It?

---

Kris Piepenburg, Chair  
The Harper Anthology Committee

... anyone can do it, as long as you focus on what you truly want to say.

So says student Hannah Valdiviejas Cohn, on page 131 of this *Harper Anthology*, as she reflects on the process that leads her to writing well. With this comment, Hannah provides an answer to a question posed on page 145 by Dr. Jennifer Berne, Harper College's Dean of Liberal Arts and Sciences, in her thought-provoking Afterword to this volume:

Can 'anyone' write efferently, but only true artists write aesthetically?

Hannah is of the opinion that "anyone can do it" (write a good paper, or maybe, "write efferently"), by just figuring out what needs to be said. As a professor teaching students research skills and methods of writing, it is necessary for me to believe that "anyone can do it," or write efferently, which Dr. Berne defines in her Afterword, as a type or style of writing that serves more utilitarian purposes—to "express ideas," "to discover or uncover what our ideas actually are, to demonstrate knowledge, or to communicate with those who are not in the room with us." Watching rooms full of students peer editing their end-of-term English 102 research papers last week, I was convinced that some sort of success in writing was taking shape for my students, as they had arrived prepared for peer editing and were engaged in a round of proofreading and evaluation, to help each other smooth their papers out a bit. How well "anyone can do this," I guess, is what all professors have to consider after peer editing, though, and when the final papers have been turned in.

Many of our students write well, and in teaching writing, it seems helpful to believe that any of our students can learn to write well, or more effectively than at the start

of a semester of a composition course. What the phrase "writing well" means is constantly under discussion, though, as it should be, as are the means of helping students develop greater command of various strategies of effective writing. Contributing to those discussions has always been one of the prime purposes of *The Harper Anthology*, and that the contributions to the discussion largely come from the students themselves, has, in my mind, always been one of the greatest strengths of this publication, as a resource for helping students write.

As you turn this page, you will encounter a page full of quotations, about writing, from some of the student writers published in this volume. These extracts are from the "Student Reflections on Writing" features interspersed throughout this volume. A few themes emerged from these commentaries, as determiners for success on a given writing assignment:

- Interest in, or passion for, the subject of a paper;
- A thorough research process, if research was required for the paper;
- A systematic approach to the process of writing; and
- Careful "finishing" work, such as proofreading.

Passion for the subject shines through in every one of the papers in this collection, but a few papers really stand out, for me, with regard to this component, after having read all of them three or four times in the publication process. It is clearly evident in Rachel Freeman's outstanding paper on the artist Walton Ford (pages 37 – 44), a painter who takes his inspiration from the work of John James Audubon, reinventing the artist's style and subject matter in a way that questions the negative influence of humanity on the natural world. Rachel's paper is a masterpiece of its own, in the organized, detailed way that it conveys a sense of the person, Walton Ford, and then presents commentary on Ford's work. The accompanying photographs of a few of Ford's paintings are not left to tell the story, either. Rachel interprets them for her readers in a style that allows any layperson to extract meaning and to gain an appreciation of the artist and his message. Reading Rachel's paper will result in what Dr. Berne refers to as "aesthetic reading"—reading for pleasure—as the subject is interesting, and encountering such clear language is a delight—but it also is an application of "efferent reading"—reading for purpose, for information, for meaning. A reader can learn a lot about Walton Ford from Rachel's paper. The high quality of the paper, Rachel reminds us in her commentary, began with her

---

## Can Anyone Do It?

interest in the subject. Of additional interest is the fact that Rachel states, in her commentary on page 38, that she is not artistically talented; her passion for animals led her to the topic for the paper, which she composed for a Learning Community course titled “Artists and Authors.” The paper is a fine example of expository writing from research and would be an excellent model for any instructor teaching research writing skills, in practically any discipline.

Other papers in this collection share this clear passion for the subject. Ryan Eberhardt’s paper for his Humanities 105 course (pages 26 – 30), on the cryptographer Martin Hellman, accomplishes what Freeman’s paper does, just as well, though as a writer, this student faced different sorts of challenges, in that his subject involved very little that was visual. As his professor, Andrew Wilson, acknowledges in the evaluative comment at the end of Ryan’s paper, “one thing he does really well is explain an ultra-complex idea in accessible terms.” Indeed, not every student writer could explain different types of secret codes so clearly. Ryan clearly has a passionate interest in this subject. His list of works cited suggests that he did not want to stop reading about this scientist, and that his immersion into the science and work of Martin Hellman would not end with the publication of this paper. The papers by Eri Svenson, on the U.S. political system, and by Ronald Tragasz, on the St. Valentine’s Day massacre, clearly are also invested with each writer’s passion for the subject.

Exemplary papers such as these, though, might be considered in light of the question that frames this discussion: “Can anyone do it?” Can anyone “write efferently,” or write to convey ideas, explain concepts, advance a position? A student not so interested in cryptography or animals might have a tough time writing a paper on Walton Ford or Martin Hellman. Surely, we are aware that for some assignments, a student might face an uphill battle because of low interest in the subject of the paper. It would be ideal to avoid this situation by allowing students to write only about what interests them; or, in the case of Rachel Freeman, to have a professor who was tuned-in enough to help her, a student who was not so artistically inclined, to find a topic that allowed her to research and write with passion. Our instructional world at Harper College, as it involves hundreds of professors somehow connected with thousands of students writing during any semester, is not always ideal for every student. Sometimes, if passion for the subject is not initially so

high, establishing careful processes for inquiry and writing can be the crucial factor in a student’s success.

Brenda Ward’s commentary about her process (see page 142) for writing a research paper for English 102 points to a number of factors that helped her to arrive at her outstanding and interesting paper, included in this volume. She begins her comments on her process with the following statement:

Any success that I had with my paper is almost entirely due to the focused and thoughtfully developed curriculum. While the research paper was the final output for the class, the process itself was the true reward.

What she describes in her commentary is an accurate description of the curriculum I have developed to help students write about what they read. She gives it much more credit than I ever thought necessary, as I don’t think the process is particularly cutting-edge, but it does lead to widespread student success in English 102. The 16-week course is carefully structured, requiring students to prepare written responses, guided by discussion questions, to everything they read for the course, and to bring those response to class; to allow time for engaging class discussion; to choose paper topics from materials read for class; to re-read and annotate any work being written about in a formal paper; and to develop the end-of-term research paper from a paper written previously, without research, during the semester. Sufficient time is allowed for the development of the research paper; in a 16-week semester, the final six weeks are devoted exclusively to practices and methods for completing this major assignment: the capstone to, as I put it to the students at week one of English 102, “the last English class of your life.” There is nothing fancy in this curriculum, and not a whole lot of technology, either; but the students consistently develop competent, and sometimes, outstanding research papers, such as the one Brenda composed, on pages 136-144, about two short works of science fiction. As instructors, we have all designed processes and ideas for helping students work toward these goals; the design of everyone’s instructional journey is a little different, in some respects, but we always end with a collection such as this, reflecting on our various methods and their results.

Dr. Berne also speaks of process, and passion, as well, in her Afterword, which I hope anyone who has read this Foreword thus far will page ahead to and read. (It begins on page 145, shortly after Brenda Ward’s comments on

## Figure 1. Student Reflections on Writing: A Composite View

### On Choosing a Subject for Writing

**Jacob Custer:** ...you must first acknowledge what you may be passionate about....Research is incredibly satisfying when you are researching something you like.

**Rachel Freeman:** I find I do my best writing when I am genuinely intrigued by the subject of the paper.

### On the Writing Process

**Hannah Valdiviejas Cohn:** . . . anyone can do it, as long as you focus on what you truly want to say.

**Sean Dahlgren:** Spending light-years on a paper takes you to a weird place where the upper limit in length seems too short. At this point, there is a realization that you might actually know what you're writing about. This full immersion into a topic allows the paper to be fascinating and thought-provoking rather than a rudimentary and boring examination.

**Sunita Mani-Sriram:** No matter what the writing is about—journals, reviews, or research papers—the process commands that one puts in the time and effort into researching, organizing, writing, reading, editing....

**Rachel Freeman:** The last thing I do is write the introduction. That may seem backward, but I like to tie the conclusion back to the introduction, but when I start my paper, I'm never sure how the outline of the paper is going to turn out until I'm finished....I proofread my paper; then, I have three other people proofread....

**Brenda Ward:** Any success that I had with my paper is almost entirely due to the focused and thoughtfully developed curriculum.

### On the Outcomes of Research and Writing

**Sunita Mani-Sriram:** Then, Harper happened, and I began a new journey: a journey toward a new career, and in the process, I discovered new interests. I began writing, and I felt renewed.

**George Galetsis:** One can take a look through the history of humanity and see that the most revolutionary ideas came from people writing their thoughts and views down on paper. Writing was their gift that changed the world that we live in today, and it is our gift to change the world that we will be in tomorrow.

**Olga Novikova:** I believe that writing serves a deeper purpose for mankind as well, as it unites us as one, even if only for a short moment. Writing is the thread that links our present and past generations, as it transcends time, nationalities, and beliefs.

**Brenda Ward:** I am grateful for a place where an accounting major can find motivation and inspiration while writing a literary research paper. I recognize and appreciate the great value that an institution, such as this college, brings to our society in times when it seems that we are increasingly embracing a kind of anti-intellectualism. More people should learn how to investigate their own beliefs and how to understand those of others; more people should want to.

## Can Anyone Do It?

page 142, which I also hope you read.) Dr. Berne states, “I am interested in what I am writing because I love the topic, but I am not sure I love the process.” I think anyone who writes, either as a student or professionally, can relate to this. The process is messy, arduous, and unproductive at times; yet, if students, especially, have a process and have some guidance, they can see things through, and perhaps begin to believe a little more firmly that “anyone can do it.” And, time for final “finishing” work, such as proofreading and peer editing, brings students ever more close to feeling completely confident in the strength of their work. I often tell my students, “you don’t have to be a great writer to write great research papers. Mostly, you need to have time for careful research.” This echoes Dr. Berne’s comment, somewhat, about her own writing: “My writing is good in that it can serve to clarify complicated ideas, but it is not fancy and it is certainly not beautiful. Nobody is reading what I write in order to see lovely prose.” I would disagree, somewhat, on this point. A clearly written, articulate piece of academic writing, such as those within this volume, while perhaps not fancy, truly is beautiful and maybe even a little bit lovely. The best of these papers can be read both efferently and aesthetically.

One final theme that emerged during preparation of this volume has to do with the subject matter of many of the papers. It struck me, as I edited and proofread these papers, that many of the papers deal somehow with righteous opposition: to genocide, racism, discrimination, bias, environmental destruction, patriarchy, corruption, conformity, poverty, and misrepresentation. Megan Giacomino’s paper on the film *The Dallas Buyers Club*

(page 49), for example, is an exceptional work exposing how the film misrepresents the situation during the early years of treatment of AIDS with azidothymidine (AZT); Stephanie Fox’s paper on Illinois Holocaust Museum & Educational Center co-founder Magda Brown (page 31) is a detailed account of opposition to fascism, racism, and genocide; Kamil Piluk’s paper, from one of John Garcia’s philosophy courses, exposes the dangers of mindless conformity (page 106); and so on. Muck-raking and careful critical thinking invests many of these papers, showing students sharpening skills that should serve the world well, in identifying injustices and contributing, at least, to more widespread awareness of them, if not toward some sort of disruption of them. It is my fervent hope that all of these writers carry this ability forward into the world, and into their professions. A lot in the world needs fixing, and solutions sometimes begin with the courage of the written word, as student George Galetsis articulates so well in his commentary about writing:

...most revolutionary ideas came from people writing their thoughts and views down on paper. Writing was their gift that changed the world that we live in today, and it is our gift to change the world that we will be in tomorrow.

It is still worth believing, despite the sad shape the world is in, in a number of ways, that “anyone can do it,” with respect to efforts to change those conditions. Writing certainly has a role in that process.

Thank you, students and colleagues, for reading, and for your continued support of *The Harper Anthology*.



---

# A Hope that Anchors the Soul

Caila Bender

Course: Literature 115 (Fiction)

Instructor: Maggie McKinley

*Assignment: Write a literary research paper.*

When a reader experiences a story that contains characters that are extremely thought-provoking and dynamic, one may wonder where the author gathered inspiration for such genuine and original characters. This is the case for a particular novel written by P.D. James. James was so profoundly impacted by her parents, circumstances, and her faith that during her composition of *The Children of Men* her experiences and theology seeped from her soul through the tips of her fingers onto the pages, creating a powerful story. In her novel, James demonstrates a stark contrast between two types of characters, one that has lost all hope and the other that clings to hope, in order to convey and support her personal belief of the importance of a relationship with God, particularly in times of severe distress. Specifically, James illustrates this need for God through the contrast between the hopelessness of the society in the novel and the few who decided to be anchored by hope.

Throughout *The Children of Men*, P.D. James interweaves theological themes and creates characters as a result of her childhood experiences. James' experience with her father and mother manifests in the characters she forms throughout the novel to further support her view on the necessity of a relationship with God and the impact this spirituality has on one's demeanor and nature. The image James describes of her father in certain interviews is that of a cold and hardened man who did not convey much warmth or comfort. She even goes as far as to say that "because we were afraid of my father, it wasn't a very relaxed childhood. Our home was rather austere, and my father often had his meals separately from the rest of the family" (qtd. in McKee). This relationship impacted James so deeply that while writing this novel,

images of her father surface in the character of Theo. James recalls her father deciding to eat in isolation instead of breaking bread with his family and chooses to compose isolating qualities in Theo and his initial desire to be alone. Theo states, "I don't want anyone to look to me, not for protection, not for happiness, not for love, not for anything" (James 26). Theo is a historian who values knowledge throughout the novel, and he considers himself too intellectual to be able to grasp onto faith, as if faith and intelligence are mutually exclusive. One critic points out that Theo "...recalls how the sciences and particularly medicine, which were the people's gods, promised relief but failed to determine why the deadly phenomenon occurred and come up with a cure. 'For all our knowledge, our intelligence, our power, we can no longer do what the animals do without thought'" (Strauss). In addition to the high value that Theo, like James' father, has for intelligence, the qualities that Theo is incapable of providing for others are the same qualities P.D. James observed in her father, showing that James uses life experiences to form her characters in this novel.

P.D. James, drawing from childhood experience, creates a character that contrasts Theo's unbelieving and sober demeanor with Julian who, like James' mother, is the source of warmth, love, and religion. James illustrates the comforting qualities her father lacks while showing the attractive qualities her mother has, by comparing them in an interview, stating that "'she was very different from my father... She was a very loving, sentimental, maternal and religious. He was very intelligent, and colder'" (qtd. in Strauss). In this statement, James describes her mother as religious immediately after describing her appealing and welcoming demeanor, putting her mother's relationship with God in an attractive light and also demonstrating the source of spiritual influence in her childhood. Julian displays her loving and sentimental qualities in the novel through the justice she desires for the mistreatment of those in the lower castes, preaching that "even a small group could help if they arrived in love" (James 108). In addition to displaying love and sentiment, James creates Julian to be a source of religion in the beliefs that she holds and speaks boldly of, and the cross she unabashedly displays around her neck. The maternal characteristic James uses to describe her mother is apparent in Julian's maternal demeanor. Caring for convicts and sojourners

as if they are her own children is highlighted by the plot twist of Julian's pregnancy, transforming her from simply being maternal to being a mother in the flesh.

*The Children of Men* is not only influenced by James' mother and father; she also pulls from circumstances she witnessed growing up, as well as interests and comforts she clung to during her childhood to create the impending apocalyptic world. Growing up with a father who fought in World War I, James was surrounded with the stories her father told about the war, which created a peculiar fascination with death. "I was drawn to the macabre, and for some reason I was very interested, from earliest childhood, in death. I seemed to think about it a great deal. It may have been something to do with the war, which overshadowed my childhood. My father talked about it a lot. It was like a great universal pain'" (qtd. in McKee). James felt as though her childhood was muted and pushed to the side by her father due to the war distracting and robbing his focus, inspiring James to compose a society that also feels a universal pain by being cursed by a tragedy that mutes and eliminates childhood entirely. Yet, despite James' morbid interests, she also found great comfort in spirituality and religion. James states that "one of my earliest loves was the *Book of Common Prayer*. I was seduced by it, by its beautiful words and sense of history'" (qtd. in McKee). James identifies as an Anglican Christian, and this belief she holds so dear is threaded, seemingly intentionally, throughout the novel.

To better understand the Anglican themes present throughout the novel, one must understand certain aspects of Anglican theology. Tyler Sampson, an expert in liturgical studies, writes "...Anglicans give priority to the role of tradition in theology alongside scripture and reason, and often experience" (307). The priority that Anglicans place on scripture, tradition, reason and experience are themes riddled throughout *The Children of Men*. In the novel, during the time the Five Fishes society were on the run and in the wilderness, Luke and Julian, the two Christians, seemingly Anglican, of the group, went off deeper into the woods to be "...totally absorbed" in prayer and meditation (174-175). Even during the most crucial times, times when one would consider it understandable, if not logical, to take a break from daily prayer and devotion, James highlights the importance of prayer by writing about Luke and Julian performing

these rituals despite their current circumstance. The other aspect of Anglican Christianity that author and expert Tyler Sampson highlights is that "...liturgy has special authority in Anglicanism, especially in the *Book of Common Prayer*, that is not present in other traditions" (307). This *Book of Common Prayer* is something that James identifies, herself, as something she found great comfort in, and because she holds so dearly to this book, James could not help but write of her characters reading from the *Book of Common Prayer* during the "makeshift funeral for one who sacrificed his life for Julian and the future," in order to provide comfort for Julian and the rest of the group who mourned (Wangerin).

One final aspect of Anglican Christianity found in *The Children of Men* are the convictions the Christian character Julian holds on to, which parallel the principals found in the *Book of Common Prayer*. Julian's desire for social equality and justice does not only originate from her warm and caring nature but can be attributed to her theology. In the *Book of Common Prayer*, there is an entire sub-section of prayers titled "Prayers for the Social Order," containing prayers that not only bring attention to social injustice but inspire action. Some of the topics in this section are "Prayers for Social Justice, In Times of Conflict, for the Poor and Neglected, for Prisons and Correctional Institutions, and for the Oppressed" (*Book of Common Prayer*). All these topics are addressed and confronted by Julian through her activity in the Five Fishes society.

P.D. James draws from her personal experience to write *The Children of Men* and illuminates her beliefs throughout the novel by creating a stark contrast between a character in her novel that holds on to her faith and Theo, who not only struggles with his belief in a higher power, but rejects God entirely. P.D. James focuses on Theo's lack of belief in a higher power to further support her theology by demonstrating the effects that spiritual apathy has on one's perspective and peace of mind. One critic describes the first half of the novel, Omega, which focuses a great deal on Theo's character, as beautiful with an elegant tone and with a "...sadness for all things left unsaid, undone, forever unredeemed" (Sallis). Omega is drenched with scenes of Theo going about everyday life in the world, isolated, lost deep in his despair-filled thoughts and looking back on his previous years with

such disdain, accentuating the contrast between Theo's world, drowning in apathy without a desire to summon up hope and the perspective Julian holds of the world.

Theo's character is one who is moral and keeps his promises but is consistently pessimistic and anxious, constantly feeling as though there is an impending doom, demonstrating James' opinion that a person lacking a belief in God is not necessarily immoral but riddled with fear and cynicism due to misplaced or absent hope. One example of Theo's anxiety and how he is convinced of imminent calamity is when Miriam is sent to retrieve Theo and she explains to him that the government has captured Gascoigne and that Julian needs Theo. His internal dialogue is "...this visit, although unforeseen, seemed but the natural culmination of the week's mounting anxiety. He had known that something traumatic would happen, that some extraordinary demand would be made on him" (James 143). This anxiety of an inevitable downfall that is ever-present in Theo's heart and this pessimistic world attitude that everybody simply wants something from him is a symptom of his inability to believe in anything that is not proven true by statistical evidence even if there is a possibility of hope. James writes of an attitude of doubt so deeply rooted in Theo's heart, which is particularly evident when Miriam tells Theo the news that Julian is pregnant and his response is immediately one of dismissal and disbelief. Theo says to Miriam, "I won't argue, but I don't believe you. I'm not saying you're deliberately lying, I believe you think it's true. But it isn't" (James 148). His reaction, before even investigating the circumstance, is one full of cynicism and certainty that his unbelief is true. Because Theo's initial reaction is one of unbelief, James is adducing that Theo's resistance to believe in God not only fosters anxiety, but cripples him, preventing him from opening his mind to any possibility of hope he cannot touch. P.D. James' purpose in creating a character like Theo, who lacks faith entirely, is to artfully demonstrate the theology she, herself, pulls from in order to find peace, hope, and endurance

James composes Theo as a character plagued by negative attributes due to his resistance to faith in anything intangible in order to emphasize the positive qualities that Julian, a character who is driven by faith and hope, possesses. During times that one would likely deem appropriate for stress and exhaustion, James

portrays Julian as calm and peaceful. While Julian is laboring, Theo expects Julian to appear stressed, "but he was amazed at her quietness, her calm" (James 226). P.D. James attributes a peaceful demeanor to Julian, the character that holds the closest resemblance to James' own theology, in order to bring to light where this peace originates from. The explanation can be found in the scripture that James believes to be true, the Bible, in which Jesus states, "I am leaving you with a gift-peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give isn't like the peace the world gives. So don't be troubled or afraid" (Jn 14:27) and in Philippians, Paul elaborates on this idea, saying that prayer will lead one to "...the peace of God, which *transcends all understanding*, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (4:7, emphasis added, mine). P. D. James intentionally prescribed Julian an attitude of calmness and peacefulness to creatively demonstrate where James herself finds her peace.

James composes a demeanor in Julian that is not only peaceful and calm in times of trouble but is also amazingly restful. Theo glances down at Julian while she is pushing through her labor and he describes the moments between her pushes that in "...these moments she looked so peaceful that he could almost believe that she slept" (James 227). The restful appearance on Julian's face is James' attempt to display that rest can be found even for those who have no reason to feel anything but depleted and exhausted. Julian's rest reflects James' own theology, which draws from the encouragement that Jesus gives his followers: "Then Jesus said, 'Come to me, all you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle, and you will find rest for your souls'" (*The Holy Bible*, Mt. 11:28-29). Julian's purpose in *The Children of Men* is an opportunity for James to illustrate what she believes to be true, showing her Anglican theology and in order to testify to the gifts James, herself, has experienced as a result of believing in God.

One final facet of Julian that James carves into her character is her compulsion to hope in a better life, even before her pregnancy, her refusal to accept social injustices, and her striving for equality for those lesser than she. This compulsion in social activism is a nod towards the roots that Anglican Christianity has in social activism. Anglican Christians are well-known in being one of the

only denominations that still holds to and utilizes *The Book of Common Prayer*. As previously mentioned, the topics under the “Social Order” section in this book have some of the same principles that Julian’s secret society is working towards improving. The pamphlet the Five Fishes disperse throughout England in the novel has five social injustices that the group strives to address and desire to bring awareness about. When Theo reads this pamphlet, he asks himself why it is that he is so certain and convinced that Julian was the one who had written the pamphlet (James 112). This certainty that Julian is the author is James’ way of artistically revealing Julian’s theology and passion for social justice and equality. One example of the parallels between the Five Fishes’ activism and the Anglican inclination and desire to bring justice for all that can be seen is in the *Book of Common Prayer*, in which there is a gathering of prayers, with one prayer calling those to pray on the behalf of the incarcerated and imprisoned, just as the Five Fishes plead on the behalf of the men who are exiled to the penal colony. Another social injustice this small society attempts to bring awareness about is to grant civil rights for the sojourners, which ties into a prayer in the *Book of Common Prayer* that is the “Prayer for the Oppressed” (826). These similarities between Julian’s desire for social justice and to be concerned for those in the world who are often dismissed due to their lowly nature and how the Anglican theology is absolutely full of mercy and compassion for the entire world is due to James’ desire to reveal to the world where she herself has found hope and the availability of this hope for all who desire it.

In *The Children of Men*, one can see the difference between two mentalities: one character experiences the desolation of the loss of hope and the other refuses to lose hope, clinging to it like a final breath of air before being dragged under by the despair and the depravity of the world. James reveals her belief in the necessity of a relationship with God in order to provide hope to those who would, seemingly, have no reason left to hope. To further emphasize her point, James creates an unexpected pregnancy to twist the plot and gifts this conception to the one character that is the strongest voice of hope in the novel. By Julian bearing the first baby in decades amidst this impending apocalyptic society, James is showing that those who refuse to let go of hope are the same

people who will, in the end, create and deliver a hope that the rest of the world can grasp. In her novel, James demonstrates a stark contrast between two characters, one who has lost all hope and another that clings to hope, in order to convey and support her personal belief of the importance of a relationship with God, particularly in times of severe distress. Specifically, James illustrates this need for God through the contrast between the hopelessness of the society in the novel and the few who decided to be anchored by hope. Not only did James draw character traits she has found in her parents to create the characters of Theo and Julian, but she is also so inspired by her relationship with God that she wrote a novel to demonstrate how crucial she believes this hope to be. In the book of Hebrews, in the Bible, it is written that “We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf” (6:19-20).

### Works Cited

- Book of Common Prayer*. Boston: Wardens and Vestry of King’s Chapel, 1986. Print.
- Holy Bible: New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill: Tyndale House, 1996. Print.
- James, P. D. *The Children of Men*. New York: A.A. Knopf, 1993. Print.
- McKee, Victoria. “P.D. James; A Childhood.” *The Times* [London] 22 May 1993: n. p. *ProQuest Newsstand*. Web. 15 Apr. 2014.
- Salis, James. “The Decline and Fall of the Human Race.” *Los Angeles Times Book Review* (4 Apr. 1993):12. Rpt. in *Contemporary Literary Criticism*. Ed. Jeffrey W. Hunter. Vol. 122. Detroit: Gale Group, 2000. *Literature Resource Center*. Web. 15 Apr. 2014.
- Strauss, Gerald H. “The Children of Men.” *Literary Reference Center*. Magill’s Literary Annual, June 1994. *Literary Reference Center*. Web. 8 Apr. 2014.
- Wangerin, Walter, Jr. “O Brave New World, That Has No People In’t!” *New York Times Book Review* (28 Mar. 1993):23. Rpt. in *Contemporary Literary Criticism*. Ed. Jeffrey W. Hunter. Vol. 122. Detroit: Gale Group, 2000. *Literature Resource Center*. Web. 8 Apr. 2014.

---

Evaluation: *Caila provides a well-researched, thoughtful analysis of P.D. James’ novel, drawing both on author biography and academic criticism to persuasively comment on the novel’s theological significance.*

---

# Weightlifting: A Road to Emotional Health

---

*Chester Busse*

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Elizabeth Turner

Assignment: *Compose an essay that reveals the causes or effects of a significant personal decision.*

Nine months ago I turned my back on the excitedly screaming children and began walking past the front desk, away from Kids' Club. I was suddenly completely alone, and my obligations relented. I confronted this strange feeling, and continued to the locker room. In this hush, I committed to make weightlifting the foundation to my emotional health.

Today, I ditch my gym bag into a locker. I leave my psychology take-home test, my son's kindergarten registration, my pile of bills, my coaching clipboard, and my work belt all zipped inside that smelly bag. I feel present, and focus on how to effectively shred my biceps and pectorals. As I circle around the bench toward the door, I hesitate when I catch my reflection in the mirror. I overlook my tired eyes and check my fashion, but I can't ignore the mirror's challenge. It dares me to come back to my gym bag with an ounce of fear, to return with regret. I notice some whipped cream on my shirt and recall breakfast with my son Josiah that morning.

The toaster ejects two waffles. I snatch the waffles out and shoot them over to Josiah's plate. My son looks up to me, "Dad! Let me spray the whipped cream?" I check the time and hesitate while I calculate how long until his bus will haul him to school. I need forty minutes in the gym to signal my body to rebuild, and improve.

I click the cap off the whipped cream, "Here, kid, open your mouth." I inflate my five year old's cheeks and smile at him trying to keep his lips pressed together. I abandon Josiah with his waffles and sit down at my laptop. My online college courses obligate me to defer his conversation about stormtroopers by nodding my head. Josiah pulls my attention after two minutes of punching keys, "Dad, are we going to Kids' Club before school? I want to show Keegan my new General Grievous Lego." Kids' Club is the babysitting service at LA Fitness, the gym where I weight-lift.

I lift out of my chair, attracted to the buzzing on the kitchen counter. I curl my cell phone to my ear, preparing possible excuses. My boss pressures me to work at Lincoln Park Zoo, over an hour commute from my house. I consider the money, but reply, "Sorry, Bob, I'm coaching gymnastics for two more weeks and I can't get back from the zoo in time for practice." As a construction laborer, my eight hours at work are decided for me. Every time I

**Student Reflections on Writing: Chester Busse**

The act of writing does not make you a writer. The act of writing, done affectingly and effectively, must be honed like any other art form. I am not a writer. I was introduced to the writing process by my English 101 professor: Dr. Elizabeth Turner. After the first assignment, I understood the value of writing as an accomplishment and not as a routine. I've heard it said that you should write with a purpose and that writing is a vehicle for you to share your voice, to be heard. In this assignment for Dr. Turner's English 101 class, I didn't know how to share my voice or my message to the reader, but by working through the process of the assignment, my voice and message took shape and started to come through the pages.

I believe the modern master of the writing process is Chuck Palahniuk. Palahniuk continues to produce writing exemplary of the art form, but also mentors any aspiring writer willing to read the guidelines and writing tips he publishes free online. Since I am not a writer, I consider what he might say when he has been asked to comment on the writing process. Considering the ideas and perspectives of professional writers is a good idea for anyone interested in writing effectively.

Finally, although there is truth to the idea that writing is a vehicle for everyone to share their voices, to be heard, this idea has become perverted. We now have blogs and status updates for everyone to share their voices, and these are considered acts of writing. Modern media have depreciated the act of writing, and our societal standards have bottomed out. Some people might consider these everyday "shout-outs" to be serious acts of writing, to be meaningful ways of being heard and of establishing an identity. However, I disagree. Chuck Palahniuk might put it this way: "You are not your blog, you're not how many followers you have. You are not your status update, you're not how many times you have tweeted. You are not your f---ing Instagram caption."

haul debris, every time I carry a sheet of plywood, every time I lift a shovel full of concrete, I'm motivated by a paycheck. I perform so my family can persevere. My family is just me and Josiah now, and the freezer is full of waffles.

Now I squat back into my chair and peer over my screen at Josiah. I return to jabbing the keys on my laptop. Josiah finds my inattention to him more interesting than *The Adventures of Clutch Powers* on Netflix. He suspends Captain America and The Hulk in front of my screen and asks, "Who wants to be the Hulk?"

I slam my laptop closed and pound the kitchen table, "Hulk angry! Hulk smash puny, blue-tight-wearing Private America!"

Josiah giggles, "No dad, actually you're Captain America and I'm the Hulk." I do not want to do study for my anatomy test tonight. I need to finish tiling the neighbor's laundry room before they get back from Arizona on Wednesday. I must write my speech and finish my take-home test before we leave since I won't be home again until after the 7 pm deadline.

I procrastinate writing my homework by lunging upstairs to get our laundry baskets. I waddle down the stairs with our laundry and pass by a mirror on the way to the washer and dryer. I notice my muscles flex under the weight of our clothes. Is my basket lighter because it only carries the load of two, or because I'm stronger? I imagine if I made time to weight-lift when I was married, I would have had the strength to hold my family together.

I'm listening to Josiah hum the *Star Wars* theme while he plays on my old phone. I am knocked out my historical artifact speech and nearly finished my psychology take-home exam. The beeping of the dryer interrupts Josiah's tune. I reach my hand over the table to touch his arm, "Hey, buddy, let's go get dressed for Kids' Club." Josiah clicks the phone off and pops out of his chair.

I haul the laundry basket up the stairs and heft it above Josiah's head as he zooms past me to the bathroom. I cram a pair of socks, clean underwear, and a pair of shorts into my gym bag. Josiah bursts into my room as I grab a clean t-shirt out of my basket and fold it into the bag. He asks me to fix his bed-head as he proclaims, "I brushed my teeth, changed my lounging clothes, and put away my toys!" I tote my gym bag down the hall and

park it outside the bathroom. Josiah still stands on his step stool even though he could reach the faucet off the floor. Standing behind him, I douse my hands in the sink and moisten his hair. The stool puts him even with the mirror, and I watch his eyes study himself, then look up to me. He sees a father who adapts to challenges and can face adversity with grace. Josiah sees that I can take care of him, and myself.

The kid clasps a General Grievous Lego as he tucks behind the driver seat of my '96 Cougar. I start the engine and reach back to help Josiah click his seat belt. We turn left onto Ela Road and he's singing along with Eminem, "You better lose yourself in the music, the moment. You own it, you better never let it go. You only get one shot, do not miss your chance to blow. This opportunity comes once in a lifetime, yo." I revel in my son's singing talents and lift my head to meet his eyes in my rear-view mirror. This is when I realized that he's the one watching me. Josiah catches me off guard, asking me to turn down the music for a minute and tests me: "Dad, when my mom comes back one day I think she will buy me Dunkin Donuts *and* let me get ice cream." I have the strength to stay present, right here where I'm needed. "No Josiah, your mom will pick you up and give you a big squeeze. You can pick either donuts or ice cream after Kids' Club if you have a healthy lunch."

We park at LA Fitness and I boost my loaded gym bag off the passenger seat. I grip Josiah's free hand and we walk up to the glass front doors. Inside, Josiah drops my hand and runs over to meet Keegan at Kids' Club. Angie scans my membership tag at the front desk and I carry my bag into the locker room. When I exit the locker room, I'm no longer pulled by demands. Laying down on the bench press, I accept the challenge to lose my regret and lift any fear out of my heart. I repeatedly lower the weight to my chest and boost it back up. By breaking my muscles down, my body will rebuild stronger. This enhancing process cascades into my emotional fitness as I train to withstand stress and ignore factors that weigh negatively on my improvement.

---

Evaluation: *Chester's narrative relies on strong details to convey his theme about challenges in a thoughtful and touching manner.*

---

# The DeafNation Expo at Harper College

— Lisa Croneberg —

Course: Sign Language Interpreting 101  
(Introduction to Interpreting)  
Instructor: Joan Fiske

*Assignment: Students were to attend an event that includes deaf individuals and then write a reflection paper highlighting the communication and cultural aspects of their experiences.*

Right up until the morning of the DeafNation Expo at Harper College, the thought of attending the event brought anticipation. I expected to enjoy it thoroughly. It would be an opportunity to connect and mingle with people in a way that was quite literally, familiar and dear to me. As I prepared to go, though, I found I was nervous as well. I am not deaf: this fact alone would put me in the minority, both culturally and linguistically. I expected that within the majority group of deaf people, there would also be quite a range of experiences and demographics different from my own: people of various ages, ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds, educational levels, and signing styles.

To further complicate matters, as a child of deaf adults (CODA), I felt a resurgence of the old sense of duality that marks the CODA experience, and that operates on several levels. My childhood experience of language was to have one at home and another out in the world. My experience of culture was the same: much of what I was exposed to in the hearing world was simply untranslatable in the deaf culture of the family. If there were things my parents were curious about, and I explained them as fully as I could, there was still an inevitable gap in understanding, as the underlying cultural content and context were missing from their experience. Still, I was expected—or at least I expected myself—to be able to bridge these language and cultural gaps for my parents, sensing all the while that my ability to do so was less than adequate.

I also came to realize as an adult that within the sense

of belonging/ not belonging that is part of the legacy of being a CODA was another way in which I straddled two modes: my parents use a signing style that is a mix of conceptually accurate signed English and American Sign Language (ASL). This, I found, left me feeling less than competent in ASL. As one who is considered a trusted insider by virtue of having deaf parents, this seemed like yet another inadequacy.

Mixed feelings: these all brought themselves to bear in a flash at the kitchen sink, and off I went.

Walking across the parking lot, I watched people stream in—singly, in pairs, in groups. I saw friends see each other, greet each other warmly, as if they had not seen each other in a very long time. Once in the company of other attendees, I assumed a signing mode, whether I knew they were deaf or not. If a hearing person spoke to me, it seemed most natural for me to both speak and sign simultaneously (sim-com) in my response.

This was my first visit to DeafNation Expo. As I began to make my rounds of the booths, I paid attention both to the types of interactions I observed and participated in, and to the types of products and services offered. I noticed among the vendors a range of signing styles, from ASL to more English-like. A book vendor answered my book queries briefly, and pointed out the t-shirts and their prices, asking which one—or two!—I would like. He and some other vendors seemed inclined to simply name prices of products, rather than engage in social conversation.

When I noticed the Virginia Association of the Deaf booth, I headed over to it with a curious look. The owner took note of my expression, also assumed a curious look, and asked me if we had met before. We had a chance to chat, and I explained that I was wondering whether he had grown up in Virginia, as had my mother, who attended the Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind. The world, in this case, was not small, as he had grown up in the Chicago area but had lived in Fairfax, Virginia, for about forty years before returning here after retirement. When I said my parents lived in Silver Spring, Maryland, though, he said, “Oh, then they must belong to the deaf seniors group that meets for lunch once a month.” “Yes,” I said, “they do!” This experience reinforced my expectation of the type of greeting behavior typical of deaf culture that



involves identifying one's background in the culture and looking for common experience.

When I ran into some of my classmates, and they greeted me using spoken English, I quickly realized that using my voice only didn't feel right in this environment, so I either signed or used sim-com with them while we were together. I had a chance to meet a couple of sign language interpreters and talk with them about their work. A young woman working at one of the booths, when I asked how she had come to be an interpreter, related her experience of having a deaf family member and being influenced by that experience in making her career choice. As I walked around, I found myself guessing as to who were fellow students of ASL and/or interpreters, based on their signing styles.

At one point I came upon two vendors, a husband and wife team, selling a type of nutritional supplement. The woman was in the middle of describing her own experience that led her to use and become a vendor of the supplements. As I joined her audience of one, she didn't miss a beat in her story, which she told quite vividly in ASL, seemingly in performance mode: I thought she might quickly bring me up to speed, filling me in on what I had missed, but I was a little surprised she didn't even make eye contact. She kept her gaze fixed on the woman she had already engaged, and although I stayed to hear her story for probably a full five minutes, she never acknowledged me. I believe if she had, this might have provided an opportunity for her original potential sale to make a run for it, and though a bit baffled, I was grateful that the lack of eye contact left me free to wander off without any effort to extract myself from the situation. Still, I wondered if there was some other dynamic at work that I was not aware of.

When I think about the range of products and services offered at the Expo, a few categories stand out: services particular to the needs of deaf people, such as deaf community groups, communication technologies, and interpreting; religious organizations with deaf ministries; products particular to deaf interests, such as books and DVDs, ASL and ILY (I Love You) t-shirts, jewelry, and crafts; and a few products and services such as health aids and legal services, whose offerings were not particular to the needs of deaf consumers. When I

considered this and what my parents might think of the Expo itself, I imagined my dad doing a once-around and pronouncing it DULL: that is, too much in the "deafness" vein, and not enough of general interest. It seemed to me it would be nice to shop for jewelry or books in which nary an ILY hand or I HEART ASL was to be found, and to be able to communicate with the vendors and conduct these transactions in one's own language. But I could also imagine that even knowing this beforehand, my dad might be convinced to go simply as a social event, knowing that he would run across deaf friends that he did not often see, and have a chance to socialize at a deaf event where he was in the majority and could expect that all communication would go smoothly and effortlessly. There did seem to be just as much socializing and camaraderie along the aisles and around the stage as actual interest in the booths themselves, which is, I would guess, a large part of the draw to the event.

I came away from the DeafNation Expo with feelings as mixed as the ones I brought with me. It was quite enjoyable, being in the company of deaf people, but all the while, I was acutely aware of not being a deaf person. It was gratifying to be able to observe at the event with full comprehension of the language, but daunting to realize how much I need to learn—both to be able to produce the language and all its variations fluently myself, and to really earn the trust, culturally, into which I was half born.

---

*Evaluation: In this paper, Ms. Croneberg prepared a thoughtful and thorough report of her experience, and she made excellent connections to various topics presented in the classroom.*

# I Speak Therefore I Am: The Literary Effect of Constructed Languages

*Jacob Custer*

Course: Linguistics 205 (Language and Culture)

Instructor: Alina Pajtek

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

French philosopher René Descartes once famously wrote the Latin adage “cogito, ergo sum” or its English translation: “I think therefore I am.” The meaning of this phrase indicates that the simple act of thinking proves one’s own existence. I believe that the same phrase can be applied through the use of constructed languages in literary works, but instead it would be called “dico, ergo sum,” or its English translation: “I speak therefore I am.” The simple act of speaking is what proves and conjures the existence of fictional characters in literature. In other words, what a character says, and *the way* in which a character speaks, is what actualizes and defines not only the characteristics, but the literal existence and identity of characters within the context of a fictional story.

The following essay is an analysis on the power of constructed languages in science fiction and fantasy literary works and how these languages can create characters and worlds within which these fictional stories exist. First, the definition of constructed languages will be established. Then, the literary and linguistic effects of constructed languages will be examined. While all linguistic researchers studying constructed language have stated that there is still much more research to be done in this fascinating field, what is known is that these languages are a dynamic literary tool. Additionally, this new phrase, “dico, ergo sum,” or “I speak therefore I am” serves as a frame and acts as an underlying theme in which all constructed languages are created.

## Definitions of Constructed Language

In the world of constructed languages, or conlangs for short, the elusive conlanger can be found: a person who creates language from scratch. Whether a conlanger has devised a language for fun, or was commissioned to do so, there exists an entire community of people dedicated to the craft of creating new languages. While many constructed languages from fictional works have existed for over sixty years, due to the onset of the modern day Internet, conlangers alike can collaborate much more efficiently to finish or even create new languages at an accelerated pace never before seen (Cheyne 388). There are many terms for constructed language, such as invented language, imaginary language, virtual language and fictional language. The term that will be used is “constructed languages” or CL, as an abbreviation. The reason is that the word “constructed” best illustrates the building process through which CL are established. These languages are purely created for a fictional world and are used to personify the characters in a story. In terms of linguistics, the pragmatic and semantic usages in these languages are all purposeful in the context of these fictional stories.

Richards and Schmidt “define a natural language as a language that has native speakers,” such as English, whereas an artificial language does not have native speakers (qtd. in Barnes and Van Heerden). All CLs would then be considered artificial languages, due to the absence of real-world native speakers. However, in the context of the story, the CL appears as a natural language because in the story there are characters who are native speakers of the CL, making it a natural language in the story, but not in the real world. In terms of actual language construction, there are two main types of languages: priori and posteriori languages; priori languages use symbols entirely created from the ground up, whereas posteriori languages draw their symbols from existing languages, such as using English letters (Lo Bianco 2). For this reason, posteriori languages that use English letters are much more effective CLs in literary works for English speakers. This is because readers don’t have to learn an entire new subset of symbols, as they already have a foundation for acquiring the new CL found in the text, from knowing the symbols being used.

In his book *The Artificial Language Movement*, author Andrew Large points out that artificial languages are often criticized for their lack of objectivity, and while this is a valid observation, this criticism uses flawed logic (Tonkin). In fact, CL can often be extremely objective, as it usually requires a strict subset of linguistic rules that must be followed. A prime example of a CL being overtly objective is Quenya, a CL devised by author J.R.R. Tolkien in *The Lord of the Rings*. After Tolkien's death, the language was analyzed to a microscopic scientific point, as conferences and authoritative conlangers used only the clues that Tolkien left behind to continue the creation of the language (Isenberg). In this situation, the furthered creation and continuation of Quenya was only studied in the most objective style, and the only subjective part to this day that remains is the actual vocal pronunciation. When asked about the authentic pronunciation of Quenya, one "Elvish" scholar stated that its actual phonetic pronunciation can only be guessed, as there are no real world native speakers (Isenberg). What is important is that while the creation of CL is most certainly an art, many objective and scientific linguistic rules are in place so that one can create a successful, impactful language.

### Constructed Languages in Science Fiction

The following section will analyze the first genre of literary fiction where unique CLs can be found: that of science fiction works. CLs are a powerful tool that authors can use to accomplish a multitude of fascinating effects on the reader. According to Barnes and Van Heerden, a CL functions on a primary and secondary level: the primary function is that it creates the fictional world in which it exists, and the secondary function is that CL constructs the meaning and identity of characters. In this section, Ria Cheyne's research on alien utterances in science fiction, found in her 2008 journal article, "Created Language in Science Fiction," will be highlighted. In essence: what an alien says (or doesn't say, for that matter) exactly characterizes the alien creature, and this can be done only by using CL. For example, take an excerpt of Cherryh's *The Kif Strike Back*, pointed out by Cheyne, where two alien languages are featured: "The stsho recoiled in a wild motion of gtst spindly limbs, retreating in a flood of gtst gossamer robes and a warble of stsho language, headed

### Student Reflections on Writing:

#### Jacob Custer

Look at any of the great books ever written, and you'll notice a pattern: there is an undeniable aura of passion that flows from the artist. Note that I say artist here, and not writer.

Here's a little linguistic fact about the etymology of the word "write": in Old Church Slavonic, the word "*pisati*" meant both *paint* and *write*. We should think about writing like we do about painting. Writing is a form of art. What is art, without passion? Writing and painting are artistic processes that are created out of *passion*. It is very clear when passion is apparent in any form of writing or any work of painting.

In order to find your own artistic motivation, you must first acknowledge what you may be passionate about. For me, I discovered what I was passionate about and wrote from there. Research is incredibly satisfying when you are researching something you like. I know what makes me tick, and I think you can feel it in my writing. So these are my questions to anyone: What can you paint? What can you write? What are you passionate about?

full-tilt away from the scene. 'Ni shoos, ni shoss, knthi mnosith nos'" (420)! That is the first Alien language utterance, and the second one of a different alien species: "I will deal with you, hunter Pyanfar. Nankhit! Skki sukkutkut shik'hani skkunnokktt. Hsshtk!" (427)

Both samples imply different qualities and characteristics of an alien language. The first language has much smoother syllables, showcasing this species to be, as referred to in the book, both "fragile and sensitive." This is in contrast to the second language shown, which has more staccato syllables, inferring a much more aggressive and villainous species. In the same way, three observations of alien language can be made: a simple alien language shows less intelligent beings, more complex language displays a being of greater intelligence, and a lack of a language implies a species of unknown qualities. In

accordance to “dico, ergo sum,” what these alien entities say literally creates their physical and mental qualities.

### **Klingon**

In 1984, linguist Marc Okrand was commissioned to create the Klingon language for *Star Trek*, and Klingon is arguably one of the most recognizable CLs in science fiction. According to the Klingon Language Institute, since its published dictionary in 1985, over one thousand people have verifiably learned to speak Klingon. The language was purposefully constructed by Okrand to “be” Alien, and has a grammatically reversed word order compared to English, as it is object verb subject (OVS) instead of subject verb object (SVO). This CL also exemplifies the “dico, ergo sum” concept, as Klingon is guttural and choppy, and not aesthetically pleasing to the ear, which is characteristically synonymous to the Klingon speakers’ warlike traditions and behavior (Isenberg). An important pattern can be observed: the qualities of CL directly translate to the actual character qualities found in a fictional story. This is a repetitive pattern that can continually be found across the literary genres of both science fiction and fantasy.

### **Constructed Languages in Fantasy**

J.R.R. Tolkien was a professor of Anglo-Saxon, and throughout his life, he studied language extensively. Author of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, Tolkien was the ultimate fantasy conlanger and purely loved constructing languages as a passion. Revolutionarily, Tolkien reversed the role in constructed languages, as he *first* created languages, *then* created the worlds so that his CL could run free (Lo Bianco 12). While Tolkien devised many CLs, his most famous one was the previously mentioned Elvish dialect called Quenya, which is often regarded as one of the most complex CLs found in literature. Quenya, according to Tolkien, was influenced by Latin, Greek, and Finnish, it has six diphthongs, and uses the basic vowels of English (Isenberg). An integral aspect to the Quenya language is that it was referred to as the “immortal language” because its native speakers, the Elves, are immortal (Barnes and Van Heerden). Because of this, many of the mortal characters attempted to learn Quenya in hopes that it too, would make them immortal. Therefore,

Tolkien creates an important linguistic observation: characters will attempt to speak certain CLs in hopes that it would give them the characteristic qualities that native speakers receive by simply speaking the language. This reinforces the “Dico, ergo sum” concept, as the language being spoken creates the person who is speaking it (and in this case, the character’s mortality).

Tolkien also liked to evolve languages over time in his stories, which allowed him to accomplish a captivating characterization of his characters solely through language. Moreover, CL not only generates the personalistic attributes of an individual character, but most often, the qualities of an entire group. Barnes and Van Heerden emphasize that CL reinforces both group identities as well as individual identities. In *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, there are numerous examples of how the aesthetic qualities of CL accurately reflect the characteristics of an entire race group. In *Invented Languages and New Worlds*, Joseph Bianco provides riveting observations about the linguistic aesthetic value of various group languages found in Tolkien’s world. The following is an excerpt of Bianco’s observations of three races and the CL that they spoke:

. . . the hard-to-learn language of the ancient tree-like Ents, described as repetitive and poor sounding; the slow-changing language of the Dwarves, with its secret discourses and private speech; and the Black Speech of the Orcs, cobbled together from other languages as if to reflect their lack of virtue. (5)

For the Ents, their slow and poor language qualities exude the physical characteristics of an entity who is of an ancient age. Similarly, the Dwarven language slowly changes because as a race, they are traditionalistic and do not adhere to cultural change; in addition, their “private” speech showcases their group identity as very secretive. Lastly, the Orcs are a race that characteristically lacks virtue, as they assemble their language by “cobbling” fragments of different languages. Furthermore, Tolkien associates the evil behavior of Orcs with their “limited expressive range” as they speak very primitively (Lo Bianco 12). In the same manner, if a character was separated from their original language in Tolkien’s world, it was considered that something tragic had happened to

them; whereas, if a character kept their original language, it implied virtuosity (Lo Bianco 12). Tolkien's works are prime examples of literature that illustrates how complex CLs can reinforce the literal characterization of individual and group identities. Every race contrived by Tolkien exemplifies the "dico, ergo sum" concept, as every way that a character acts is directly influenced by the CL that they speak.

Another example of CL found in fantasy literature is in J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series. In the story, it is explained that Harry Potter, the main character, speaks parseltongue. As a parselmouth, Harry can speak to snakes, and this language was integral to the plot as Harry had to speak this language to access the chamber of secrets (Lo Bianco 5). More importantly, however, was that Harry had a unique CL that he spoke that only a few other characters were capable of speaking. If one were to speak this language, it caused them to be very unique in the context of the story. Attaching prophetic features to a character simply because they spoke another language shows the true power of CL in a story, and that "dico, ergo sum" allows authors to bestow powers to characters simply through the use of language.

### **The Human Condition Reimagined**

Overall, constructed languages are an incredible tool capable of endless possibilities. As was shown in the literary genres of science fiction and fantasy, by ordinarily speaking a constructed language, readers can embark on fascinating journeys. Readers can encounter alien conversation from another galaxy, or even witness a mysterious conversation between a man and a serpent. As important as the "cogito, ergo sum" or "I think, therefore I am" concept is, what truly creates the characters in these fictional stories is the constructed language that they are speaking. "Dico, ergo sum" or "I speak, therefore I am" is the cornerstone of immersive characterization. Solely through the way a character speaks, readers can learn tremendous amounts of information just based on speech and language.

*Star Trek*, *Harry Potter*, and *The Lord of the Rings* are often regarded as some of the most epic fictional literature found today. What is true is that in all of these stories, constructed language was used. There is, in fact,

a direct correlation with the grand success of these stories and the imaginative and revolutionary use of made-up language entirely from scratch. Why is such a concept so appealing to readers? Simply put, language has been engrained in the story of humans. When authors create new languages, readers can experience the human condition in a new, engaging way never before experienced, which is extraordinarily satisfying for a reader.

Constructed language deserves more attention in the field of fictional writing and linguistics. It has the power to challenge the current notion of thought and language, and creative storytelling. Everyone at one point has encountered some form of new and secret language in their lives, and this intense desire to speak and listen exactly defines what is so satisfying about encountering constructed languages.

### **Works Cited**

- Barnes, Lawrie, and Chantelle Van Heerden. "Virtual Languages in Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature." *Language Matters* 37.1 (2006): 102-17. Web.
- Bianco, Joseph Lo. "Invented Languages and New Worlds." *English Today* 78 (April 2004): 8-18. *lib.washington.edu*. The University of Washington, n.d. Web.
- Cheyne, Ria. "Created Languages in Science Fiction." *Science Fiction Studies* 35.3 (2008): 386-403. *JSTOR*. Web. 18 Dec. 2014.
- Isenberg, Robert. "Artificial Languages." *folk.uib.no*. University of Bergen, Norway, Folk Department. Web. 18 Dec. 2014.
- Tonkin, Humphrey. "Review of *The Artificial Language Movement*." *Language in Society* 17.2 (1988): 282-287. *JSTOR*. Web. 18 Dec. 2014.

---

Evaluation: *Jacob's paper explores the relationship between language and identity in his analysis of the ways in which constructed language creates characters and their worlds in science fiction and fantasy literature. Through this study, Jacob brings up thought-provoking issues surrounding the role of language in creating story lines, or even reality, and the relationship between language, thought, and culture.*

---

---

# The Unresolved Nature of Military Euphemisms

Sean Dahlgren

Course: Linguistics 205 (Language and Culture)

Instructor: Alina Pajtek

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

In 146 B.C., the Romans employed the euphemism “to put to the sword” to describe the destruction of the city of Carthage (Malkin par. 2). The phrase means “The mass murder of a conquered people” (Malkin par. 2). “To put to the sword” is probably not the first ever employed military euphemism, but it is a good place to start. Euphemisms are “pleasant words or phrases used instead of one that is unpleasant” (“Euphemism”). Using a euphemism instead of the “mass murder of a conquered people” could make this action no longer seem heartless, and if it is no longer seen as heartless, then it could become easier for someone to carry out a heartless action such as “putting them to the sword”; at least, that is the fear of those who analyze military euphemisms. The fear originates from the belief that military euphemisms might allow people to do unspeakable atrocities. Because of this fear, the nature of military euphemisms should be examined. Fully understanding the nature of military euphemisms requires the understanding of euphemisms in general. Euphemisms have two lines of thinking. The first is that all euphemisms are deceitful in nature, and the second is that not all euphemisms are deceitful.

Beginning with the argument that euphemisms are deceitful by nature, one would only have to look to George Orwell in his essay “Politics and the English Language.” Orwell sees war euphemisms as lying “by using the phrase ‘the Russian purges’ descriptively himself: euphemizing the show trials and mass executions as ‘purges’ was a way of metaphorically justifying them as a purification of the body politic” (Poole). He sees military euphemisms as a way for the military to cloak their actions, allowing them to commit whatever immoral atrocity they want. He continues and “offers other bloodily fine examples from his era: ‘pacification’ of villages by bombing, or ‘rectification of frontiers’ by forcibly ejecting people from their farms” (Poole). However convincing Orwell is, his ideas need to be taken with a grain of salt. He is not a linguist and by his work in the book *1984*, which paints a dystopia where wars never end, he is not a completely objective source. Still, his arguments broadly represent the side that thinks euphemisms are untrustworthy.

Further, linguist Steven Pinker also focuses on the argument that sees euphemisms as a form of lying. One of the examples that Pinker displays is with the

euphemism “revenue enhancement,” which means in general sense “taxes” (Bowers 2). His argument is that “if a politician had meant ‘taxes’ he/she would have said ‘taxes.’” While “taxes” is a straightforward concept, “revenue enhancement” is more ambiguous and sounds like political jargon. Because of its ambiguity, “revenue enhancement” does not trigger the response that “taxes” does. Jeffery Bowers reasoned why euphemisms can be deceitful: “Euphemisms have a different emotional impact simply because they mean different things; this difference allows euphemisms to support lies, as noted by Pinker” (Bowers 2). When a euphemism replaces a word, it gives it a new meaning, causing the initial meaning to be misplaced, thus creating the deception. So when “taxes” is replaced with “revenue enhancement,” the meaning of “taxes” is lost, leaving a previously meaningless phrase in “revenue enhancement” behind.

Even though the euphemisms discussed above may be deceitful, not all euphemisms are meant to mislead, e.g., “The words death, urine and feces are often replaced with passed away, number 1, and number 2 without any attempt to deceive or leave any ambiguity in the minds of the listeners” (Bowers 2). This is the second line of thinking that does not see all euphemisms as deceitful. These euphemisms are used without any of the emotional baggage of the words associated with everyday life and words that are unavoidable. Sure, “death” is an unavoidable part of life, and one can use “death” when referencing a lost relative, but the word “death” can create an amount of unnecessary sadness. In this case, a euphemism solves this problem by allowing the meaning of the word to be said without any of the emotional impact. Euphemisms also become benign when everyone knows what they mean. When someone says “I have to go number 1,” the meaning of the euphemism is not unknown. Everyone knows that person is going to urinate. And if everyone knows this information, how can it be so deceitful?

So far I have presented the debate raging over the meaning of euphemisms, and therefore, the same viewpoints should be used when analyzing military euphemisms: whether or not military euphemisms are deceitful or benign in nature or even a mix of both. The consequences of using deceitful language could encourage people to commit terrible acts of violence. This is because the very nature of war usually requires

#### **Student Reflections on Writing: Sean Dahlgren**

Frankly, I am surprised my writing is even in here. It’s not that my papers are mediocre; it’s just I didn’t think it is worthy of being in the *Harper Anthology*. Part of my feelings of inadequacy is that I take a really long time writing papers. It takes me roughly five hours per page. I don’t want to spend days on papers. Having a social life is nice; but if I don’t work on a paper for decades, it will be a rotting, reeking, radioactive piece of garbage. Now imagine hearing classmates tell you they finished their ten-page paper in one night. Perhaps this trait is what separates me from my peers. Spending light years on a paper takes you to a weird place where the upper limit in length seems too short. At this point, there is a realization that you might actually know what you’re writing about. This full immersion into a topic allows the paper to be fascinating and thought-provoking rather than a rudimentary and boring examination. This is my only explanation of why my writing is part of *The Harper Anthology*. As a parting gift, I would suggest instead of cranking a paper out in one night, slow down and understand what you are trying to convey.

killing and violence, or makes people feel less guilty about committing these acts.

To complicate the matter even more, military euphemisms are not all used in the same way. There are two categories of military euphemisms. The first category includes euphemisms used at the macro level, that is, with large populations during interactions that are more general and less personal. The second category includes micro-level military euphemisms, which are used by individuals who engage in more personal interactions. To make an analogy with the military, macro is the whole army, while micro is a simple soldier.

To start with the macro level, World War II (WWII) is the best place to start. This is because WWII is the last conventional war and the largest war ever which means that the discourse surrounding it has a lot of military euphemisms. The first example is from the holocaust. Even though the holocaust was ordered by the Nazi

## The Unresolved Nature of Military Euphemisms

government, the soldiers carried it out. Here is an excerpt from a memo about “special vehicles” that would take people to death chambers:

Lights could be eliminated, since they apparently are never used. However, it has been observed that when the doors are shut, the load always presses hard against them [against the doors] as soon as darkness sets in. This is because the load naturally rushes toward the light when darkness sets in, which makes closing the doors difficult. Also, because of the alarming nature of darkness, screaming always occurs when the doors are closed. It would therefore be useful to light the lamp before and during the first moments of the operation. (Kalfus 88).

Without context at all, this appears to be a very strange package. Perhaps it could be the transportation of a wild animal judging by the explanation that the “load” can move. However, this transport is a transport for human beings, specifically Jewish human beings (Kalfus 90). It is unnerving that there is not any mention of humans and not even any living thing. The euphemism “load” creates a disconnect because “load” is typically used for inanimate objects. The reason why the people being transported were “screaming” was because they were going to their deaths (Kalfus 90). Screaming is an intense emotional reaction, yet Kalfus raises an important question: “can a load scream” (89)? “Load” simply doesn’t belong here, but its use was meant to make it easier for the Nazi soldiers to conduct genocide. At first, the Nazis actually killed Jews by shooting them, but switched to gas chambers because “mass shootings in front of mass pits had become too emotional...for SS commandos” (Kalfus 90). One cannot help but notice the parallel between the Nazis’ switching to gas chambers and their use of the euphemism “load” for Jewish people: they both remove the emotional aspect of what they were doing. This military euphemism is definitely an example of deceitful language in that it helped the Nazis emotionally to be able to handle the killing of the Jews.

Even though the holocaust euphemisms are deceptive, there is another instance in which a lot of people died in a terrible way (like the Holocaust), and the euphemism was benign. On August 9, 1946, a second

bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, Japan, and nearly 40,000 people died (“Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki”). In response to all the deaths, Emperor Hirohito announced unconditional surrender and said “The war situation has developed not necessarily to Japan’s advantage” (“Making Murder Respectable”). Forty thousand people have died, and his response is “not necessarily to Japan’s advantage”? Emperor Hirohito expertly used the euphemism “Not necessarily to Japan’s advantage” because it is very far removed from all the events taking place at that time. The U.S. had just dropped its second bomb, destroyed Japan’s economy, and was preparing for a full-scale invasion of the Japanese islands. “Not necessarily to Japan’s advantage” in retrospect is quite an understatement. A cursory glance would see his statement as inhumane, careless, and soulless, and one could argue that such a euphemism does injustice to the people who died by mitigating the full emotional impact on the public. However, the context in which it was used helps us understand that the Japanese people were not being deceived, and this was not a cold-blooded statement. The bombing was not a secret to the Japanese people (Selden)—everyone knew what had happened, and there were survivors and witnesses. “Not necessarily to Japan’s advantage” is like the euphemism “Number 1”: everyone knows what it means. Emperor Hirohito’s statement also shielded the public from the emotional trauma of the death of many tens of thousands of Japanese civilians. The American military was preparing the assault of the Japanese islands (“Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki”), so Hirohito was trying to end the war at this point, and an emotional reaction from the Japanese people could indeed have worked against that goal. Hirohito’s euphemism was not callous; instead, it was thoughtful.

It is also interesting to look at euphemisms that are currently used during wars because wars have also changed. The large-scale wars fought with huge armies fighting all at once no longer exist. Instead, wars are fought more at the micro-level, consisting of small battles and skirmishes (Hertzberg), so it is hard to find anything similar to the mass of deaths in WWII. We took a look at euphemisms being used at a macro level in WWII discourse; we now analyze euphemism usage at the micro level in the recent past.



The U.S. government has been known to torture war criminals, usually terrorists; most torture acts take place in a U.S. military base in Cuba. To begin with, the U.S. government uses several euphemisms for torture (Henley). The most famous of all torture euphemisms used by the U.S. government is probably “enhanced interrogation techniques,” which usually means waterboarding (Ackerman). The word choice of “enhanced” makes it sound like the people doing the interrogating use some new flashy technology during the torture process. The real root of this euphemism is the word “interrogation.” The common use of the word is for asking questions, so when the word “interrogation” is used, the mind first thinks of just asking questions, not torturing. At the micro-level, the torturer is interacting with the tortured, meaning the torturer is different than the Nazis’ transporters because they took loads of people from one place to another and never really interacted specifically with one person. This euphemism is more deceptive than it looks because it might fool the public to think that “enhanced interrogation techniques” is not torture. On the other hand, the torturer is torturing a specific person, meaning one of two things: the euphemism must be very deceptive because it makes the torturer sound like he is less removed from the actual torture, or the torturer has nothing against torturing people. The former is much more believable; even in the Holocaust, killing people up front was too personal, so they developed gas chambers (Kalfus 90). So this begs the question: what made the euphemism “enhanced interrogation techniques” so deceptive?

The reason why it is so deceptive is that it sounds extremely legitimate. “Enhanced interrogation techniques” sounds like a legitimate procedure that the police carry out. Regular “interrogation” is a very legitimate way to get information. During waterboarding, they ask questions that are like interrogations. “Enhanced interrogations” is then just then the next step. When the goal is to get information, the process of getting that information is forgotten. The word “torture” is being forgotten as it is replaced with “interrogation.”

Another common euphemism used in the military is “collateral damage,” which sounds like a broken leg or maybe a destroyed house, but which actually means “civilian deaths” (Dochinoiu 74). *Collateral Damage*

was also an action movie with Arnold Schwarzenegger, in which his family is killed by terrorists, and he goes to find them and kill them (“Collateral Damage”). The euphemism “collateral damage” and its history is much less fun than the movie with the same title featuring Arnold Schwarzenegger. The euphemism was first used in the Persian Gulf War, and strangely it was also used in the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing (Page). A veteran from the Persian Gulf War used it to describe the “children who died in a day-care center” (Page). This is a unique euphemism because it was used in a non-military setting, and the results are telling. In a civilian setting, “collateral damage” sounds callous. It is very out of place, yet this veteran used it. If he used it, then he saw the civilian deaths in the Oklahoma City bombing as what collateral damage is: unintentional killing of civilians, except that these people were intentionally killed. This veteran’s statement suggests a military view of killing people that is deplete of emotion or is unaware of the consequences of such actions.

Euphemisms in war have appeared both as deceptive and benign. Other examples of euphemisms range from “non-operative personnel,” which means “dead soldiers” and “friendly fire” which is a euphemism that means “the unintentional causality of a soldier fighting for the same side” (Dochinoiu 75). However, naming examples is not a good argument for either side. One could name a few examples but not represent the actual trend of the euphemisms. Often the very nature of these military euphemisms is used to hide information, making any attempt to find a pattern extremely difficult. Not surprisingly, there are also no recordings or studies of euphemistic phrases being tied to deaths. Since there is a limited amount of euphemistic language use, many of the arguments for military euphemisms being deceptive or benign are based on a cluster of euphemisms. To illustrate this point, one article says euphemisms are sly (Tristam), and another says they are not so bad (Freeman). That is why there is no way to objectively say whether the nature of military euphemisms is deceptive or benign—research has not been able to prove either side.

Even when comparing euphemisms at macro- and micro- levels, it is difficult to determine any analysis that can pinpoint to a clear and specific finding. There are

some findings on the nature of military euphemisms, but not comprehensive studies on this subject. However, I discovered some interesting patterns from the military euphemism analyses that I found: no micro-level euphemisms found were actually benign. This could mean that at the micro level, military euphemisms are deceptive in nature. Even though there weren't any studies arguing that micro-level euphemisms are benign, it does not mean that there is no evidence. It is more likely that micro-level euphemisms are deceptive, but there is not enough evidence.

The Romans used the euphemism "to put to the sword" all the way back in 146 B.C.; two thousand years later, military euphemisms are still used. Ultimately, there is no answer to whether or not military euphemisms are deceptive or benign, and this is because there is not enough data and not sufficient research studies on this topic. There are certainly examples from the Holocaust to the atomic bomb droppings, but there is no objective way to pinpoint a pattern in the use of euphemisms through time. The macro- and micro-level views also did not shed meaningful light on this issue. However, the wide range of military euphemisms means that euphemisms cannot be generalized about and should be analyzed specifically, case by case. Because of this lack of information, there should be compiled studies on the nature of military euphemisms, because such language forms are widely used by the military, and the impact on individuals of the actions euphemisms describe may be considerable.

### Works Cited

- Ackerman, Tom. "The Pentagon's War on Words." *Aljazeera Blogs*. *Aljazeera.com*. Aljazeera America, 12 March 2014. Web. 18 May 2014.
- "Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki." *History*. *History.com*. A&E Television Networks, n.d. Web. 15 May 2014.
- Bowers, Jeffrey S., and Christopher W. Pleydell-Pearce. "Swearing, Euphemisms, And Linguistic Relativity." *Plos ONE* 6.7 (2011): 1-8. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 13 Mar. 2014.
- Page, Clarence. "Shocking and Awesome Euphemisms; Weasel Words of War make it Easy to Live in Denial." *Chicago Tribune* 21. Mar 26 2003. *ProQuest Newsstand*. Web. 18 May 2014
- "Collateral Damage." *IMDb*. *IMDb.com*. IMDb.com, Inc, n.d. Web. 18 May 2014.
- Dochinoiu, Elena. "Stylistic Aspects In The English Military Language." *Revista Academiei Fortelor Terestre* 14.2 (2009): 71-78. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 25 Apr. 2014.
- "Euphemism." *Merriam-Webster*. *Merriam-Webster.com*. Encyclopedia Britannica, 2015. Web. 18 May 2014.
- Freeman, Jan. "Don't Give Euphemisms a Bad Name." *Pittsburgh Post - Gazette* 20 Feb 2011. *ProQuest Newsstand*. Web. 17 May 2014.
- Henley, Jon. "A Glossary of US Military Torture Euphemisms." *The Guardian*. *Theguardian.com*. Guardian News and Media, 12 Dec. 2007. Web. 18 May 2014.
- Hertzberg, Hendrik. "Unconventional Warfare." *The New Yorker*. *Newyorker.com*. Conde Nast, 24 May 2004. Web. 18 May 2014.
- Kalfus, Richard. "Euphemisms of Death: Interpreting a Primary Source Document on the Holocaust." *The History Teacher* 23.2 (1990): 87-93. *JSTOR*. Web.
- "Making Murder Respectable." *The Economist*. *Economist.com*. The Economist Newspaper, 17 Dec. 2011. Web. 18 May 2014.
- Malkin, Lawrence. "Ethnic Cleansing." *The Reader's Companion to Military History*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001. *History Study Center*. *Historystudycenter.com*. Proquest, n.d. Web. 18 May 2014.
- Poole, Steven. "Steven Poole: My Problem with George Orwell." *The Guardian*. *Theguardian.com*. Guardian News and Media, 19 Jan. 2013. Web. 18 May 2014.
- Selden, Mark. "Living With the Bomb: The Atomic Bomb in Japanese Consciousness." *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*. *Japanfocus.org*. The Asia-Pacific Journal, n.p., n.d. Web. 18 May 2014.

---

Evaluation: *The strength of Sean's paper lies in his use of multiple examples of euphemisms from the two existing directions in linguistic research: i.e., one that claims that euphemisms are deceitful and the second one that they are not. What makes Sean's analysis compelling is the emphasis in his discussion on both the immediate and the broader context in which euphemisms are used.*

---

# A Divide between Genders: Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come*

————— Courtney Beth Dohl —————

Course: Literature 208 (non-Western Literature)

Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

Assignment: *An option for the paper on the African literature component of this course allowed for a gender studies evaluation of the twenty-first-century Nigerian novel Everything Good Will Come, by Sefi Atta.*

In the novel *Everything Good Will Come*, by Sefi Atta, the main character, Enitan Taiwo, struggles to adjust to her life according to men. Growing up in a corrupted 1970's Lagos, Nigeria, Enitan watches her parents' marriage fall apart, is subjected to her mother's extreme religious views, becomes close friends with her neighbor Sheri, and is later deeply affected by Sheri's rape. Enitan studies law at a London university, returns home to Lagos to work with her oppressive father, and marries Niyi Franco, a lawyer. Niyi and Enitan fight constantly, mainly over Enitan's refusal to obey him and over her father's imprisonment. After becoming involved as a reluctant advocate for her father and others in prison, Enitan is arrested and spends the night in jail. After her mother's death devastates her and Niyi refuses to allow Enitan to become a part of a wives' group in support of releasing those in detention, she leaves Niyi and becomes a single mother to her newborn daughter, Yimika. In the end, Enitan's father is released from prison, and Enitan sets off for her new and improved life as an activist for women's and prisoner rights. The fact that Niyi demands to be consulted on all issues is what gives Enitan the strength to leave him—she has never accepted that men get to tell her what to do. In the novel, men physically and emotionally abuse women, belittle and insult them, demean and ignore them, and refuse to bat an eye when that is challenged by Enitan. Women are defined by what they can do for men, and how silent they are when their rights are threatened: "In my country, women are praised the more they surrender their right to protest" (Atta 179). Gender roles in *Everything Good Will Come* portray men as abusive and dominant, while women are depicted as weak and submissive reproductive parts.

A woman's worth is placed on her ability to procreate, and even then, it needs to be a son. Enitan's father has a son with another woman, and to excuse it, her uncle tells her: "But you know, an African man cannot die without leaving a son" (Atta 294). He phrases it as if it is worthless to have a daughter, because, after all, how much can women do? Better to have no children at all than to not have a son to carry on the family name. Women are only good for making the man look better and for producing sons. Even as children, women are seen as disposable and men are viewed as the vital citizens. So much pressure is

put on a woman to reproduce that when Sheri becomes barren after giving herself a makeshift abortion, it is unthinkable: "Better to be ugly, to be crippled, to be a thief even, than to be barren. We had both been raised to believe that our greatest days would be: the birth of our first child, our wedding and graduation days in that order" (Atta 102). Perhaps, even better off dead than to be barren? Sheri thinks no man will want her now, and she is probably correct. Reproduction is placed as the highest priority in a woman's life, above love and educational accomplishments. It doesn't matter if a woman marries a man she doesn't love, or if he cheats on her or beats her, as long as she produces an heir for her husband. Enitan doesn't have much of a choice, either: when she is young she tells her mother she does not want children, and her mother won't hear of it. Even when Enitan is expecting Yimika, she tells Sheri she will be a "terrible mother" (Atta 304). When she and Niyi are having fertility problems, she is treated as if she were diseased: "Some scolded me outright. What are you waiting for? My mother invited me to her vigils; my father offered to send me overseas to see other doctors. I asked why they harassed women this way" (Atta 188). It doesn't even matter if Niyi and Enitan are not ready to have a family, or (heaven forbid) they *don't* want children-- that is what is expected of them. Niyi even tells Enitan that she doesn't have "that loving quality" (Atta 214). To not have a child is to become an outcast in their society. Enitan knows in her heart that her worth is so much grander than what men expect: "We were greater than our wombs, greater than the sum of our body parts" (Atta 188). She can do so much more than just produce children. She went to law school and can be a successful lawyer. There are so many possibilities, but it's as if men have blinders on—they only see what women can accomplish for men.

Throughout the novel, Enitan commits what is seen as outrageous behavior for a woman—she takes a stand against her father, her boyfriend Mike, and later her husband. Just standing up for herself is seen as extraordinarily disrespectful, but she doesn't back down: "Then from the opposing side would come an accusation so venomous, I'd almost fall backward from the force of it: feminist. Was I? If a woman sneezed in my country, someone would call her a feminist...I

wanted to tell everyone, I! Am! Not! Satisfied with these options! I was ready to tear every notion they had about women...I would not let go until I was heard" (Atta 200). Enitan thinks a feminist is someone more proactive than her, someone with an even bigger voice: she hasn't considered calling herself that. But if a woman makes a tiny comment, anything small that is so seemingly insignificant, men scream that they are feminists, probably because in Nigeria, the word feminist has a negative connotation. How *dare* women stand up for themselves, how dare they even suggest they are unhappy with how women are treated, how dare they advocate for better conditions? Enitan doesn't care any longer if her behavior is viewed as shameful and unspeakably audacious for a woman, she is going to scream it from the rooftops if need be. This demonstrates that women are viewed as weak and submissive: their opinions don't matter, their behavior is viewed as disgraceful, and their worth is entirely dependent on how much they can do for men, the ultimately superior gender. Enitan is seen as exhibiting despicable behavior when she discovers her boyfriend Mike has been cheating on her: "Through the gate I saw Mike's landlord standing with his mouth open. I could almost read his thoughts: Good women didn't shout in somebody's house. Good women didn't fight on the streets. Good women didn't come looking for men. Good women were at home" (Atta 155). Enitan yells at Mike, destroys one of his art pieces, talks back to him, kicks him, and calls him a bastard. The landlord is probably flabbergasted to see this kind of behavior from a woman, and Enitan fills in the blanks in her head: good women didn't act like she just did. Good women stay at home, not daring to even *consider* committing this kind of disgraceful performance. Infidelity is the limit for Enitan, and she doesn't think about how shameful her act must seem, she is only acting the way she can as an individual. It would horrify her parents to hear of what she did, because it would be seen as shocking conduct, and they tried to raise her better. If the tables were turned, it would be unthinkable that the landlord would blink an eye for Mike doing that to Enitan. Men can do as they please, no questions asked.

A great example of women being expected to be submissive and weak and men being depicted as dominant

is Enitan's relationship with her father, Sunny. Their uneven bond reaches a boiling point when she comes to work for him at his law office: "I've been watching you, he said. Frowning all over the place and I've been very patient with you. Whatever you think is bothering you, never, ever again do that in my presence. You think we're equals? You think we're equals now" (Atta 145)? Enitan is expected to be submissive to her father, even at the expense of her own dignity. Sunny implies that they will never be equals. Enitan and her father got along well when she was younger. He used to encourage her individuality. Now Enitan is older and more knowledgeable, she has experienced this oppression and she won't stand for it. She challenges everyone, she won't stand for what society has dictated she has to become. Enitan being so headstrong causes her to butt heads. Sunny is not used to this side of Enitan, and she begins to see a side of him she would rather not see, as her father was always the one she liked. Sunny is so dismissive of Enitan's issues with the gender roles in society, basically inferring that her stance is not valid because she is on the lower end of the totem pole, so to speak: "My father laughed. Who's oppressed? Are you oppressed? You are not oppressed; you are spoiled. Very. And I hope you're not using an article in *Weekend People* as a springboard for discussing the plight of women in this country...you shouldn't even be discussing the plight of women at all, since you've done nothing but discuss it. How many women do you know anyway, in your sheltered life" (Atta 141)? Sunny sees Enitan as outspoken and sticking her nose somewhere it doesn't belong. He thinks her life has been so much better because she is still under his roof and she works for him. He does not take well to the fact that Enitan is challenging him more and more. Her opinion is dismissed because he tells her she has a "sheltered life" and doesn't know many women at all. He has always been in complete control and is not adjusting well to this new adult Enitan. When Enitan was young, she *was* sheltered, and Sunny still views her as a naïve child, when in actuality, Enitan has now seen more of this oppression, has experienced more, and she refuses to be molded into something she will not stand for any longer. She is questioning everything more, and in Sunny's opinion, she doesn't get to do that, she doesn't get to have an opinion, it just isn't done. Enitan is beginning to rebel, and her father tries to stop that in

### **Student Reflections on Writing: Courtney Beth Dohl**

Writing to me is so much more than an assignment; it is an extension of who I am. It has always been very difficult for me to say aloud how I feel and to express my emotions without fear. When I write, it is a release; it is a voice louder than I knew I possessed. When I write, the words flow without end, and I feel more myself than I could ever give words to. To find meaning deep within the pages is freeing and cathartic. In writing about fiction, it gives me a sense of satisfaction and relief to make the characters and their lives come alive in a paper, because even if I am silent and hurting, I am at peace with the fact that I have perhaps given a voice to someone who needs it—even if they are fictional.

its tracks: "Whenever I stood on my soap box, he wanted me to step down. When he stood on his, it wasn't a soap box; it was a foundation of truth" (Atta 196). Sunny thinks his words are always the truth because he is a man, and his daughter's words are nonsense because she is a woman. He thinks his being a man makes him the boss in all situations, because what right does a woman, even his own daughter, have to question him? When Enitan tries to calmly state her opinion, he views it as a soapbox, implying that what she says is dramatic and inconsequential in his eyes. On the other hand, his opinion is a "foundation of truth," meaning he is inevitably right by default in all circumstances. A woman can't have an opinion if it's detrimental to a man. Enitan challenges it further: "Show me one case, I said. Just one, of a woman having two husbands, a fifty-year-old woman marrying a twelve-year-old boy. We have women judges, and a woman can't legally post bail. I'm a lawyer. If I were married, I would need my husband's consent to get a new passport. He would be entitled to discipline me with a slap or two so long as he doesn't cause me grievous bodily harm" (Atta 140). Enitan knows that all she has seen cannot be how a truly equal society, an equal country functions. There is a major double standard going on, where men can commit

**A Divide between Genders: Sefi Atta's  
*Everything Good Will Come***

all sorts of sickening acts and women are expected to stand for it. She tries to get her father to see her side; to see how disturbing it is that men are allowed to do all these things that women can't bat an eye at. She wants to get others to see how different it would be if the tables were turned, but no one cares.

Women in *Everything Good Will Come* are defined by expectations to produce a son, by how much they can do for men, and for being silent while their rights are threatened. Their roles in society are to be in the kitchen, making men comfortable and raising the children, no questions asked. Men think women are disposable, don't have valid opinions, and must consult with them on all issues. Enitan's best friend Sheri is treated poorly by the man she is with, but Sheri has such low expectations of being with a man: "Which one of our men really treats women well" (Atta 101)? Being physically and/or emotionally battered does not raise an eyebrow, because it's the complete norm of this broken society. Women feel this standard is never going to change, their voices are never heard, so why even waste energy to challenge it? If you're beaten, why would you complain if you have food in your home and a roof over your head? If you're cheated on, why criticize when all men do it? If you have a loveless marriage, why would that matter? What can love do for you in this kind of broken system? "Never make sacrifices for a man," Enitan's mother, Arin, tells her: "By the time you say, look what I've done for you, it's too late. They never remember. And the day you begin to retaliate, they never forget" (Atta 173). Arin has made sacrifices in her failed marriage with Sunny, and does not want Enitan to make this mistake. Women can silence their entire being for a man, even die for a man, and he will never see it as a sacrifice that is worthy enough. This is significant because Enitan ends up sacrificing her marriage for her father. Her mother's words resonate with her. Enitan has become headstrong and defiant, no longer naïve, no longer frightened, no longer subordinate. And while she has always had a voice, she speaks louder, and puts forth the strength to leave Niyi, to finally forge her own path into a new and independent future.

**Works Cited**

Atta, Sefi. *Everything Good Will Come*. Northampton, Mass: Interlink, 2005.

---

Evaluation: *This perceptive paper probes gender relations in the novel in detail, yet remains succinct. Courtney Beth's writing is extremely professional.*

---

# White Weddings and Marriage Equality

Christopher Dwyer

Course: Sociology 120

(The Family in Contemporary Society)

Instructor: Monica Edwards

Assignment: *Write a sociological analysis of the book White Weddings: Romancing Heterosexuality in Popular Culture, written by Chrys Ingraham.*

The purpose of this paper is to examine the true conditions for marriage equality in America. The reasons for expansion of same-sex couples rights' are about economic gain and continuing the class structure that exists. The wedding industry and businesses have split from the historical social "values" they used to support. Same-sex marriage shows little to no impact on society's values, but provides a significant economic boost. By examining the economic reasons for and the widely debunked social arguments against it, marriage equality can be shown as an economic evolution of rights rather than a social evolution of justice.

## **The Economic Aspects of Marriage Equality**

The institution of marriage has long been one of economic importance. Rights and obligations are bestowed upon the wedded couple by the state and the market economy. There are 1,138 specific rights that are granted by the U.S. Federal government to married couples (Ingraham, 2008). The market provides incentives through insurance discounts, better credit scores, favorable loan terms, access to partner employer benefits, and even "family" discounts at businesses (cell phone contracts, special discount nights at restaurants). Up until very recent history, these rights and benefits were only provided to couples of the opposite sex. And if a benefit is given to one group of people, it can rightly be considered a cost, or penalty, for the group of people who do not fit into the definition of the privileged group.

Same-sex couples have been denied the economic inclusion and empowerment that marriage creates. Financial matters are more difficult, with no ability to clearly define inheritance rights, and little to no ability to participate in health and life insurance markets except as individuals. For individuals, these insurance policies are significantly more expensive. Being left out of the economic benefits, both public and private, is widely quoted as costing \$500,000 over a couple's lifetime. In denying these rights to same-sex couples, society has enforced a class system that makes life much more expensive for same-sex couples than opposite sex couples. But the private market has shifted in recent history to push for marriage equality. Business leaders have pushed for marriage rights, and against discriminatory laws such as Arizona's SB1062. Far from an altruistic belief in the acceptance of same-sex couples, business leaders are looking to capitalize on what an inclusive marriage system would unlock.

As stated before, marriage is an economic powerhouse in America. The American culture system portrays the beginning of marriage as a grand ceremony with hundreds in attendance, and then continues with a lifestyle of consumption. The ability for same-sex couples to marry would carry the expectation from the wider culture that they too, have white weddings, with big wedding dresses, formal tuxedos, wedding rings, and all the trappings of glamour and prestige that were once reserved only for the straight, white, and privileged. These ceremonies on their face will seem inclusive, that the romance is now for everybody, but it will really just be a way for the wedding industry to expand their profits into a new pool and shield the institution from scrutiny. With the legalization of same-sex marriage the primary wedding industry would get an expected boost of no less than 1.5 billion dollars in revenue (Solman & Badgett, 2014). While this may seem like a small amount to an industry that's estimated at around 50 billion dollars (Ingraham, 2008), this is an increase for an industry that has been on the decline since the Great Recession.

The wedding industrial complex has maximized its profits at this point in time. Most of the physical products are produced in second- and third-world countries such as China, Thailand, and India. Much of the clothing

at a wedding, for the party and attendees, is made by sumangalis in India, the textile industry titan. Families will sell several children to textile contractors in order to send one child to school. Horrifyingly ironic is that many of these women work in the deplorable conditions so that they may earn enough for a dowry (Liebelson, 2013). The service labor of the wedding industry, which cannot be exported, is commonly low wage or contract work. Wedding reception “help,” such as bartenders, servers, and cooks, are paid minimum wage plus tips. They will spend twelve hours or more at a reception making \$2.13 an hour, but only collecting tips for five, maybe six hours. Photographers, DJs, beauty consultants, and setups (linens, décor) are considered contract workers. There is no hourly wage; instead, they are paid a flat fee for the day. Wedding days will last fifteen or sixteen hours, and the wage paid will most likely fall below a living wage standard. Contract work is given on an as-needed basis with no guarantee, and if a person falls out of favor, the company will just stop using them. Rarely do any of these jobs, foreign or domestic, provide benefits to the worker, such as health insurance or retirement plans. The very low costs for the products and services provided, and the “wedding premium” charged by vendors, ensure a very healthy profit margin for businesses in the white wedding market.

In a capitalist economy, the only way to continue these profits is by expanding, but the marriage rate for heterosexuals has been declining for thirty years. White weddings, which are the most profitable type, are also on the decline. The ability to continue to increase costs, and profit margins, has been met with resistance. Giving way to such things as “ambush” weddings, couples have found ways to get around the typical trappings of the wedding industry. When an industry or product is in decline, business typically looks for a way to “broaden the market.” It’s no accident that marriage equality has gained steam in the past five years. Business groups have split with their typical social conservative partners and begun advocating for marriage equality. While pretending that it’s out of some sense of fairness, it can be assumed that this is not the case. The economics of gain are what is at stake.

### **The Social Aspects of Marriage Equality**

As the conservatives have splintered, the social conservatives have become even more virulent in their words and actions. The social conservatives claim that same-sex marriage will be a pall that spreads social ills and destroys the social stability that heterosexual marriage supposedly provides. The structure of the family as a man, a woman, two children, and a house as “traditional” is misleading at best. At worst, it’s a harmful delusion that can cause psychological damage to most members of society. This image has developed in the past 60 years and only in the context of marketing, television, and movies. A yearning for the family structure that only existed in media during the brief industrial period is a resistance to the evolution of society. The exclusion from the institution of marriage has been premised on the idea that same-sex marriage would devalue heterosexual marriage, raise divorce rates, increase abortions, lead to more children out of wedlock, and increase the number of single parent households (Langbein & Yost, 2009). These points have no real standing and only serve to demonize one portion of the marriageable population (homosexuals), while idealizing another (heterosexuals). They are talking points that serve the imaginary standing of marriage in society.

The case against same-sex marriage as devaluing heterosexual marriage is in ignorance of the fact that marriage has been on the decline for the past 30 years due to other social forces and alternatives to marriage. The rate of marriage between 1990 and 2004 has declined from 9.8 to 7.4 per 1,000 population (Langbein & Yost, 2004). The rates of cohabitation with the end being marriage, has decreased by nearly half. In the 1970s, the proportion of cohabitating couples who married within three years was 60%. By the 1990s, this rate had declined to 33% (Cherlin, 2004). Social acceptance of cohabitation has led to fewer people feeling like they must marry. These changes occurred before marriage equality really entered the public policy sphere. The Netherlands were the first country in the world to recognize same-sex couples through registered partnership in 1998, and then marriage rights in 2001. The first state in America to allow same-sex marriage didn’t occur until May of 2004. So these marriage and cohabitation trends were well established by the time marriage equality came into existence.



Divorce has declined slightly, but steadily, since the 1990s. Groups such as the Family Research Council and Focus on the Family say that the acceptance of same-sex marriage would increase the divorce rate. They believe that not only would same-sex couples then be able to divorce, but it will incentivize different sex couples to divorce. This misses the cultural shift from a companionate marriage to an individualized marriage being the reason for divorce (Cherlin, 2004). The marriage itself is no longer the primary focus, but the individual's happiness in it. No-fault divorces have become commonplace, so if one partner in a marriage is feeling unsatisfied in their personal existence, then all they need to do is dissolve the marriage. Same-sex marriages would not create a new system where divorce is any simpler; they would assimilate into a system that already existed for different sex marriages.

Saying that children born out of wedlock, abortions, and single-parent households would increase because of same-sex marriage further serves the imaginary that the heterosexual family is the only way the labor of reproduction can be properly provided. The number of children being born out of wedlock has been increasing for years because marriage has become less necessary for the acceptance of these children into society. The number of abortions and single parent households has been decreasing over the years largely due to easier access to birth control and the ability to *choose* to have a child. The sphere of family building is no longer a biological phenomenon that belongs exclusively to married heterosexual couples. With medical advances, just about any person or any couple can have a child. And, the divisions of labor appear in homosexual couples just as they do within heterosexual couples. Rather than being based on heterogender role types, they are based upon

ability and time (Cherlin, 2004). For these reasons, same-sex marriage should lend itself to lessening the impact of these "social ills" on children and families. Allowing acknowledgement of same-sex couples with children, and binding them through contract, should secure parental rights and obligations to children.

### Conclusion

It has been empirically shown that same-sex marriage has no impact on the social standing of marriage, and might even have a slightly positive impact on society (Langbein & Yost, 2004). However, the positive impact is so slight that it couldn't be thought of as a reason *for* marriage equality. When a social injustice exists, it isn't enough to prove that it would have no impact to grant those rights. Societies do not bestow rights and privileges without reason to people who historically haven't had them. If marriage equality doesn't provide a positive social impact, then it must provide a sufficient economic benefit to society. This is the crossroads that same-sex couples have come to. Marriage equality isn't truly a development that is intended to include homosexuals in society. It's a change that has developed to provide to, and then exploit, the economic power of same-sex couples that heterosexual couples have historically monopolized.

### References

- Cherlin, Andrew J. (2004). "The deinstitutionalization of American marriage." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 66.4: 848-61.
- Ingraham, Chrys. (1999). *White weddings: Romancing heterosexuality in popular culture*. Second ed. New York: Routledge.
- Langbein, Laura, and Mark A. Yost. (2009). "Same-Sex Marriage and Negative Externalities." *Social Science Quarterly* 90.2 : 292-308.
- Liebelson, Dana. (2014). "Made In Hell." *Mother Jones* Jan.-Feb.: 44+.
- Solman, Paul, & M.V. Lee Badgett. (2013). "The Economic Benefits of Gay Marriage." Retrieved from <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/making-sense/the-economic-benefits-of-gay-m/>

---

Evaluation: *Chris' work is well beyond the introductory course level, especially in his ability to engage in class analysis and to reassess his ideas sociologically.*

---

# Martin Hellman: A Great Thinker on Many Counts

Ryan Eberhardt

Course: Humanities 105/History 105  
(Great Ideas of World Civilizations)  
Instructor: Andrew Wilson

Assignment: Write a research essay that introduces your readers to a “great thinker” who is currently still living.

Every second, people swipe 10,000 credit cards (Provenzano), securely transmitting sensitive information over the Internet in a blink of an eye. In the Internet Age, we take online security for granted, but it is only because of the work of a handful of individuals that the notion of publicly available cryptography exists in any serious light. Martin Hellman, the co-inventor of the Diffie-Hellman key exchange algorithm and one of the fathers of academic cryptography, is one such person. He is a Professor Emeritus of Electrical Engineering at Stanford University and an inductee of the National Inventors Hall of Fame (“Martin Hellman”). Hellman has not limited himself to achievement in the intellectual realm, however; he has proved himself a truly great thinker in every aspect of the term through his additional efforts to promote ethics in technology and to work toward world peace.

Cryptography has existed for thousands of years, used to scramble messages to keep them private. In 100 BC, Julius Caesar used an encryption technique known as the “Caesar cipher” to rotate letters of the alphabet, substituting “A’s” for “B’s,” “B’s” for “C’s,” and so forth (Sidhpurwala). However, the security of these systems, known as “substitution ciphers,” depended on the systems themselves; once the obfuscating method was known, the cipher could be broken for any arbitrary message from any arbitrary sender. In the 16th century, Blaise de Vigenère invented a revolutionary cipher, known as the Vignère cipher, that uses a secret key to encrypt a message. As with the Caesar cipher, the algorithm is extremely easy to understand (though beyond the scope of this paper), but

unlike the Caesar cipher, a message known to be encrypted with the Vignère cipher was nearly impossible for humans to decrypt without the secret key (Sidhpurwala). This marked a turning point in cryptography; for the first time, the security of encryption depended on a key, instead of an algorithm, and messages could remain securely encrypted even when the encryption algorithm was known. The technique was so successful that it was called *le chiffre indéchiffrable*, or “the indecipherable cipher” (“AutoKey or *Le Chiffre Indéchiffrable*”).

Vignère’s cipher is the first known example of “symmetric-key encryption,” which uses a single key to both encrypt and decrypt messages. Let’s say Alice wishes to send a secret message to Bob, and they both have identical keys to a locked box. Alice can place the message in the box and use her key to lock the box; Bob can use his identical key to unlock the box and retrieve the message. Though cryptographers in the following four centuries made many advancements in this category of ciphers, a fundamental issue remained: in order for two parties to securely communicate using symmetric-key encryption, both parties must have previously exchanged a secret key, presenting a chicken-and-egg problem. If a successfully exchanged key is compromised or disclosed, the communicating parties must again find a way to exchange a new key, which may not be possible in situations such as coordinating deployed militaries. Additionally, a person must retain a secret key for each person he or she wants to communicate with, resulting in an extremely large number of keys for networks with many people. In World War II, armies distributed books of their keys to their staff, used to decrypt messages from headquarters. When an officer was captured, an entirely new book would be distributed across the world, with a new set of keys (Ryall).

In 1976, along with Whitfield Diffie and Ralph Merkle, Martin Hellman laid the groundwork for a new breed of encryption algorithms that solved these problems. Known as the Diffie-Hellman key exchange, the algorithm they developed introduced the notion of public and private keys, where each person has a public key, used to encrypt messages, and a private key, used to decrypt messages. The public key may be freely shared with anyone, and the private key must be kept secret. Imagine the previous

scenario, where Alice wishes to send a message to Bob in a locked box. This time, the lock is special, with three positions: “A” (locked), “B” (unlocked), and “C” (locked). The keys are special, too; one can only turn clockwise (from A to B to C), and the other can only turn counter-clockwise (from C to B to A). Bob keeps the first key (the private key), and puts the second key (the public key) on top of the box for anyone to use. When Anna sends a message to Bob, she puts the message in the box and, using the public key to turn counter-clockwise, moves the lock from position B (unlocked) to position A (locked). As the private key is the only key that can turn clockwise, Bob is now the only person that can unlock the box, reading the message. Even though everyone else has access to Bob’s public key, they cannot be used to open the box and read the message. Furthermore, if someone steals Bob’s private key, he can simply discard the old box and create a new one with a new public/private key pair and distribute the new public key; Alice will still be able to send him messages securely without needing to privately rendezvous to exchange a new secret key. This is roughly how public-key cryptography works, and it is mathematically enabled by Hellman’s key exchange algorithm.

The public- or asymmetric-key scheme has another important use in the form of digital signatures. Imagine a friend named Charlie tells Anna that Bob wanted to let her know that he is flying to Germany for a family emergency. Anna didn’t know that Bob even had any relatives in Germany, and she doesn’t believe Charlie. However, Charlie brings Bob’s box with him, which contains a letter from Bob and has been locked to position “C” (locked), using Bob’s clockwise-turning private key. Only Bob’s key could have moved the lock into the “C” position, so when Anna uses the counter-clockwise-turning public key to unlock the box, she knows the letter inside is indeed from Bob. Asymmetric-key encryption’s ability to digitally prove authenticity did not exist prior to its advent, and has enabled many subsequent technologies, from secure software updates to online payments to virtual currencies.

The importance of asymmetric-key encryption cannot be underestimated. The technology is used to secure an estimated \$2.9 trillion in stock market transactions

(Hersh and Erickson) and \$600 million in credit card transactions *every day* (“Financial Sector Overview”). Transport Layer Security (TLS), which implements asymmetric-key encryption, is used both to prove the authenticity of websites and to secure Internet traffic; whenever you visit a website that starts with “https://,” you are using asymmetric-key encryption and the Diffie-Hellman key exchange. Without TLS, all Internet traffic can be intercepted, including passwords, social security numbers, and other private information. Every software update on the majority of computers, tablets, phones, and even microwaves, projectors, and televisions is cryptographically signed using public-key encryption to ensure manufacturer authenticity and combat malware. Asymmetric-key cryptography forms the backbone of information security in the internet age, and the technology we know today could not exist without it.

As important as publicly available cryptography is, it almost didn’t happen. To begin, the mere notion of pursuing cryptographic development seemed absurd outside the space of classified government work. Hellman recalls colleagues arguing that he could not possibly develop something that the National Security Agency, with its multi-billion-dollar budget, had not already created, and even if he did, it would be immediately classified, and he could be arrested for discussing his work. He said that “the almost universal response was that I was foolish to even consider the area,” and “in hindsight, I can see that I was drawn to cryptography in a way that defies rational explanation” (Hellman, “Work on Cryptography”). Even though he overcame the rational opposition, he encountered more hostility when he published the famous Diffie-Hellman algorithm. His interference with the government’s monopoly on cryptography drew the ire of the intelligence community. Months after the algorithm’s publication, he received a copy of a letter from someone named J. A. Meyer, warning that cryptography is “a technical field which is covered by Federal Regulations, viz: ITAR (International Traffic in Arms Regulations, 22 CFR 121-128)” and asserting that he and others might be subject to prosecution under federal laws prohibiting arms trafficking and disclosure of classified information.

Hellman recognized that the United States’ control of cryptography proved extremely useful in World War II,

when they were able to keep their messages secure while breaking the codes of other nations; the Battle of Midway is one example where cryptographic superiority yielded a military advantage. However, he argued that

...there is a commercial need today that did not exist in the 1940's. The growing use of automated information processing equipment poses a real economic and privacy threat. Although it is a remote possibility, the danger of initially inadvertent police state type surveillance through computerization must be considered. From that point of view, inadequate commercial cryptography (which our publications are trying to avoid) poses an internal national security threat. (qtd. in Corrigan-Gibbs)

While Hellman continued his work at the approval of Stanford's General Counsel, his near- encounters with the NSA brought to light a power struggle between privacy-conscious technologists and security-conscious government officials that rages to this day.

Today, the export of encryption technologies is still regulated by the Bureau of Industry and Security along with weapons and biohazards ("EAR Controls for Items That Use Encryption"), and problems with the NSA's struggle to remain the dominant force in online intelligence are more evident than ever. The widespread availability of quality encryption has forced the NSA to develop deeply disconcerting methods of intelligence collection, including the intentional weakening of cryptographic standards, the exploitation of weak cryptographic implementations, and the subversion of privacy standards through legal means. In 2006, the NSA released an algorithm for generating pseudorandom numbers, published in the National Institute of Standards and Technology; they then paid RSA, the dominant asymmetric-key encryption algorithm, to use it as the default random number generator (Green). However, subsequent research revealed that the generator was flawed, and that the NSA could likely predict the generator output, which would enable them to guess the private keys being generated and compromise asymmetric-key cryptography (Schoenmakers and Sidorenko). In 2007, Microsoft researchers pointed out a "weakness that can only be described as a backdoor" (Schneier). Other incidents such as "Heartbleed," the

"goto fail," and "Shellshock" raise suspicions that the NSA is taking advantage of security bugs, rather than alerting the security community to preserve the integrity of cryptography. According to documents leaked by Edward Snowden, the NSA spent more than \$25 million on discovering zero-day exploits ("A Digital Fortress?"), which are vulnerabilities in software that have never been exploited before and are unknown to the developers and the public. While this would allow them to subvert cryptography and break into systems, it also leaves flaws in systems that other governments or organizations could potentially exploit as well. Despite these incidents, security activists, including Hellman (Gilmore), continue to strengthen cryptography in the technical space and advocate for accountability on legal grounds.

In addition to his work in cryptography, Hellman has been a prominent social activist, advocating for world peace and mitigation of the threat of nuclear war. In an interview, Hellman explained how he became interested in the "bigger issues of the world:" "The way I saw it was, 'what's the point in proving theorems — albeit important theorems — if there's not likely to be anybody around in 50-100 years to appreciate them?" (qtd. in Myers) Alarmed by Reagan's discussion of nuclear war plans, Euromissile deployment, and nuclear defense initiatives, Hellman became convinced that "the rapid proliferation of weapons of mass destruction had made war incompatible with human survival" (Hellman, "Work on Technology, War and Peace"). He began advocating for nonviolent resolutions of the tensions between the two world powers. In an essay celebrating Gandhi's 125th birthday (which Hellman actually shares), he advocated for nonviolent resolution of nuclear tensions, pointing out that "[i]n resisting the evils present in communism, the United States built 30,000 nuclear weapons. In resisting the evils present in capitalism, the Soviet Union built 20,000 weapons. These actions created an evil far greater than those being resisted: the real danger that civilization will be destroyed" (Hellman, "Resist Not Evil").

Hellman joined the Beyond War Foundation to work towards the goal of complete nuclear disarmament. Rather than simply spreading fear of nuclear weapons and spreading empty messages of anti-nuclear sentiment across America, he took a direct hand in working to

reduce the issue. When Soviet-American relations temporarily warmed, he visited Moscow with his wife and worked with information theorists there to discuss the issues, striving to achieve a shared understanding of the danger that faced both nations. He sought to “move beyond blame,” changing the foreign policy of both the Soviet Union and the United States, “both of which were too dangerous in a world with 50,000 nuclear weapons” (Hellman, “Resist Not Evil”). The work was very slow and not always rewarding, but when President Gorbachev came to power, the Beyond War Foundation received an endorsement saying, “This collective work of Soviet and American scientists, with participation of Western European experts, represents a valuable experience in the promotion of new thinking. I wish you a fruitful cooperation” (Hellman, “Work on Technology, War and Peace”). Additionally, Hellman used his engineering background to apply a unique, data-driven approach to anti-war activism. He performed a complete risk analysis to quantize the danger of nuclear war, making it a real threat instead of mere speculation; this method earned him the support of Dr. Richard Garwin, former member of the President’s Science Advisory Committee, and Admiral Bobby Inman, former Director of the NSA and Deputy Director of the CIA (Hellman, “How Risky is Nuclear Optimism?”).

Hellman continues to advocate for world peace and the mitigation of the nuclear threat, asserting that it is still very real even though the cold war is over. He argues that a fundamental problem exists in “the chasm between our god-like physical power—the ability to create new life forms and the ability to destroy civilization, things only God is supposed to be able to do—and our emotional maturity level, which as a species is, at best, adolescent” (Myers, “Martin Hellman Becomes a Stanford Engineering Hero”). Though “the risk of a full-scale nuclear war is now less than during the Cold War, nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism have added dangerous, new dimensions” (Hellman, “Risk Analysis of Nuclear Deterrence”), and though no one actively seeks nuclear war, it is an accident waiting to happen. If one nation or terrorist state acts too aggressively, an escalation of tensions could easily result in the accidental detonation of the planet. Hellman also has been active in improving

race relations on the Stanford campus; after working with Beyond War, he noticed that racial disharmony was a different facet of the issue he worked on with the Soviets. He pointed out that “[w]ith the Soviets the fundamental problem in a lot of ways wasn’t nuclear weapons. It was that *we* focused on *their* misdeeds. . . . And *they* focused on *ours*. . . . Neither of us was focused on what we truly had the power to change, which was our *own* misdeeds” (qtd. in Myers, “Martin Hellman Becomes a Stanford Engineering Hero”). Hellman applied the same understanding to work towards easing racial tensions.

Throughout all his work, Hellman has exhibited a commendable show of character. In his cryptographic research, he risked large fines and long jail sentences when presenting his work to the public; when he requested advice from Stanford’s legal team, they told him they would defend him in court, but they also told him “if you’re found guilty, we can’t pay your fine and we can’t go to jail for you” (qtd. in Corrigan-Gibbs). His courage, determination, and careful negotiation skills allowed him to emerge unscathed and begin the era of academic and publicly accessible cryptography. Hellman left a secure job to work towards reducing Cold War tensions, and staked his reputation and freedom to invite Soviet scientists into his home as part of his service. In a talk entitled “The Wisdom of Foolishness,” Hellman talked about how he made sacrifices towards ventures that appeared foolish, but this commitment is what led him to success. Speaking of his aspirations to work with the Soviets to reach a common understanding and eliminate arms, he said, “We knew that was impossible” (Stanford Online), but he tried anyways, and to an extent, succeeded. Hellman constantly sought to critique his arguments, attempting to poke holes in his own theories; when considering the risk of nuclear warfare, Hellman questioned whether the risk was any greater than that of a meteor striking Earth and extinction humans in the same fate as the dinosaurs, and used quantifiable risk analysis to convince himself that it was indeed so. And throughout all his work, Hellman exhibited a great degree of humility. He constantly acknowledges the works of others in his writings, and when he was nominated as a Stanford Engineering Hero, he asked, “why me?” (“Martin Hellman: The Wisdom of Foolishness”)

The term “great thinker” can be interpreted in two distinct ways; in the literal sense, it designates one who is remarkable or exceptional in his thinking abilities — a high-caliber individual. However, we might also construe “great” to refer to someone who is wonderful in the personal sense of “great” — a person valued more for humanitarian contributions than intellectual ones. A truly great thinker should be both great and a thinker, embodying both aspects of the term; while a genius but cold-hearted inventor might significantly advance society in an intellectual way, the greatest of thinkers are those who also exhibit character and humility.

Martin Hellman is a great thinker by both standards; his name evokes respect from nearly every cryptographer, as his work serves as the foundation for many modern encryption algorithms, yet he exhibits humility, bravery, and determination throughout his efforts and continuously strives to improve ethics in technological development. His work on the Diffie-Hellman key exchange algorithm serves as the underpinning of the majority of secure Internet communications today, yet he remains humble and thirsty to improve the world in any way possible. Not limited to technological progress, Hellman has also worked to promote world peace and cultural harmony. Hellman’s work and life truly embody those of a great thinker who is both a great intellectual contributor and a benefactor of society.

### Works Cited

- “A Digital Fortress?.” *The Economist*. The Economist Newspaper, 28 Mar. 2014. Web. 10 Dec. 2014.
- “AutoKey or *Le Chiffre Indéchiffrable*.” *Murky.org*. N.p., 16 Sept. 2004. Web. 10 Dec. 2014.
- Corrigan-Gibbs, Henry. “Keeping Secrets.” *Stanford Magazine*. Medium, 7 Nov. 2014. Web. 10 Dec. 2014.
- Diffie, Whitfield and Martin Hellman. “Exhaustive Cryptanalysis of the NBS Data Encryption Standard.” *Stanford Electrical Engineering*. Computer Magazine, 1997. Web. 10 Dec. 2014.
- “EAR Controls for Items That Use Encryption.” *Bureau of Industry and Security*. U.S. Department of Commerce, n.d. Web. 10 Dec. 2014.
- “Financial Sector Overview.” *Computer Science at Columbia University*. University of Columbia, n.d. Web. 10 Dec. 2014.
- Gilmore, John. “DES (Data Encryption Standard) Review at Stanford University.” *Toad.com*. N.p., 20 Mar. 2012. Web. 10 Dec. 2014.
- Green, Matthew. “The Many Flaws of Dual\_EC\_DRBG.” *A Few Thoughts on Cryptography Engineering*. n.p., 18 Sept. 2013. Web. 10 Dec. 2014.
- Hellman, Martin. “Defusing the Nuclear Threat.” *NuclearRisk.org*. n.p., n.d. Web. 10 Dec. 2014.
- Hellman, Martin. “How Risky is Nuclear Optimism?.” *Stanford Electrical Engineering*. Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 2011. Web. 10 Dec. 2014.
- Hellman, Martin. “Resist Not Evil.” *Stanford Electrical Engineering*. n.p., 2 Oct. 1994. Web. 10 Dec. 2014.
- Hellman, Martin. “Risk Analysis of Nuclear Deterrence.” *NuclearRisk.org*. The Bent, 2008. Web. 10 Dec. 2014.
- Hellman, Martin. “Work on Cryptography.” *Stanford Electrical Engineering*. N.p., n.d. Web. 10 Dec. 2014.
- Hellman, Martin. “Work on Technology, War and Peace.” *Stanford Electrical Engineering*. N.p., n.d. Web. 10 Dec. 2014.
- Hersh, Adam and Jennifer Erickson. “5 Reasons the World Is Catching On to the Financial Transaction Tax.” *Center for American Progress*. Center for American Progress, 25 Feb. 2013. Web. 10 Dec. 2014.
- “Martin Hellman.” *Stanford Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies*. Stanford University, n.d. Web. 10 Dec. 2014.
- “Martin Hellman: The Wisdom of Foolishness.” *Stanford Online*. *YouTube*. N.p., 31 Jan. 2013. Web. 10 Dec. 2014.
- Myers, Andrew. “Encryption Leads Stanford’s Martin Hellman into National Inventors Hall of Fame.” *Stanford Report*. Stanford University, 4 Mar. 2011. Web. 10 Dec. 2014.
- Myers, Andrew. “Martin Hellman Becomes a Stanford Engineering Hero.” *Stanford Engineering News*. Stanford University, 27 Feb. 2013. Web. 10 Dec. 2014.
- Provenzano, Greg. “Merchant Services — Changing the Face of ACN and the Entire Industry.” *ACN News*. ACN Opportunity, 12 Jul. 2013. Web. 10 Dec. 2014.
- Ryall, Matt. “Diffie-Hellman key exchange.” *Matt Ryall*. N.p., 3 Sept. 2008. Web. 10 Dec. 2014.
- Schneier, Bruce. “Did NSA Put a Secret Backdoor in New Encryption Standard?.” *Schneier on Security*. N.p., 15 Nov. 2007. Web. 10 Dec. 2014.
- Schoenmakers, Berry and Andrey Sidorenko. “Cryptanalysis of the Dual Elliptic Curve Pseudorandom Generator.” *Cryptology ePrint Archive*. International Association for Cryptologic Research, 15 Sept. 2006. Web. 10 Dec. 2014.
- Sidhpurwala, Huzaifa. “A Brief History of Cryptography.” *Red Hat Security Blog*. Red Hat, 14 Aug. 2013. Web. 10 Dec. 2014.
- Vryonis, Panayotis. “Explaining Public-Key Cryptography to Non-Geeks.” *Medium.com*. Medium, 27 Aug. 2013. Web. 10 Dec. 2014.

---

Evaluation: *Ryan does everything well in this exceptional essay, but one thing he does really well is explain an ultra-complex idea in accessible terms. This is a highly professional, informative, and engaging essay and is a pleasure to read.*

---

# A Hero, a Great Thinker, a Survivor: Magda Brown

Stephanie Fox

Course: Humanities 105/History 105  
(Great Ideas of World Civilizations)

Instructor: Andrew Wilson

Assignment: *Write a research essay that introduces your readers to a “great thinker” who is currently living.*

I remember when I was young, and my parents told me I could grow up to be anything I wanted to be. I would watch movies and read books about brave heroes that would go on great and exciting adventures, so I told my mother I wanted to be a hero. Looking back, it is a bit funny (now) and maybe equally naïve (again, now) to imagine myself fighting dragons and taking down villains, but at the time, that was what I thought a hero was. But now, a little older, my view on the world and heroes has changed. I realize that there is a difference between fictional characters on a page and real-life intellectual heroes who change lives with their compassion and brains. Being a hero does not necessarily mean using brute force to vanquish evil, but rather being a kind person and a careful thinker. While learning, in college, about great heroes such as Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., I have come to understand that a hero is someone who genuinely considers all paths in life and picks the one that he or she feels will make not only him- or herself but also the entire world a better place. If my reader can be patient, I will, in the following paragraphs, address the idea of a hero or great thinker; and afterward, I hope to show that there are still great thinkers living and breathing in the world today, and one of them, Magda Brown, lives, breathes, and thinks rather nearby, in Harper’s backyard.

## **Heroes: Real and Imagined**

I believe the idea of a great thinker completely coincides with that of an intellectual hero. Even the heroes I admired as a child had a cause worth fighting for. Whether it was the need to rescue a maiden or to save a family from danger, authors for children and Disney-type screen-writers usually found a way to portray heroes as determined and just. But, of course, that was not the whole of it. Heroes also had to be intelligent enough to come up with well-thought-through plans, and even if these plans did not unfold as expected, the characters sometimes had the perseverance to rethink everything and approach the situation anew. Now, and briefly, let’s consider the real-life heroes listed above: Gandhi and King. Did they not also demonstrate these exact traits as well?

Let’s start with Mohandas Gandhi. Gandhi is the among the first-known great thinkers to consider the idea of using peaceful resistance to change an unjust system,

a system obtained through force. He wanted to “do away with despotism and the ever-growing militarism...” (Gandhi 784), which was taking over his nation, but he did not want to use violence, as others had tried, because he thought that “by using similar means [he] could get only the same thing they got” (Gandhi 788) – an unjust system. I have to imagine that when Gandhi began nurturing this idea and bringing it to life, he did not expect for so many others to follow him. He had no desire to hurt anyone during his protests, but in protesting, he inadvertently hurt himself as “his protests took the form of fasts” (Gandhi 782). He weighed the risks of possible death with the need of the country he loved, and he chose to sacrifice himself because he thought it was better for him to bring pain upon himself by choice than to allow his people to be wrongfully attacked.

And by the way, my childhood version of Gandhi was named Babe. Babe, the main character of the 1995 movie *Babe*, is a little misfit pig, taken in by a farmer who has no idea just how special his expected-to-be future meal truly is (Judd). As Babe grows up on the farm, he is cared for by an old sheep-herding dog, who Babe lovingly calls Mom. As Babe watches Mom herd the sheep by yelling at them, calling them stupid, and biting them, he wonders why all the violence is necessary. One day, Mom is tired out from chasing the uncooperative sheep; Mom lies down, so Babe approaches the sheep, respectfully greeting them and politely asking if they would please go where the farmer wishes them to go. The sheep are happily surprised by Babe’s tone and comply. Of course, Babe does not starve himself or protest in order to get what he wants, but Babe proves – as Gandhi did in real life, and with infinitely higher stakes in the balance – that an end can be acquired through peaceful means.

Now let us consider Martin Luther King, Jr. In the spirit of Gandhi, King believed that peaceful resistance was the only way to vanquish injustice. He sought to eliminate the racist double standards of his time by showing those who believed him to be less-than-human how to talk through an issue in a completely humane way. He strongly believed that “[d]arkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that” (“King Quotations”), and with this belief, he was able to clear the path to a more

just society – not perfect, granted, but definitely *more* just. Though Martin Luther King Jr. did not fast in order to gain equality, he did willingly endanger himself, and of course he often found himself in jail. And even when he was put into a prison, he kept his composure and used his circumstance as fuel for his cause. I almost think that getting arrested was one of King’s most well-considered plans, because when he was locked in a Birmingham, Alabama jail cell he wrote one of the most polite letters on ignorance, and one of the most eloquent treatises on social justice, ever recorded: “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” He showed those who tried to oppress him that even when he was caged like an animal, he was still a man – still, in fact, squarely in possession of the most human capacities: respect, dignity, and compassion, even for his adversaries. That, and more, is why I feel that MLK’s efforts were so effective.

Of course I learned about Martin Luther King Jr. in elementary and high school, but the first visceral experience I had with someone who resisted oppressors by not fighting them, but rather by reinforcing her own humanity, was in childhood, when I encountered a Native-American woman named Pocahontas. Obviously, I did not gather the full history of Pocahontas as a girl, receiving instead the Disney interpretation: woefully incomplete and laden with sentiment, yes, but (at least in my view) not altogether bad, either. Difference is difference, Disney’s Pocahontas seemed to say; difference does not make one person better than another. The story Disney presented was one of a Native American girl who meets a British explorer, and the latter, initially, does not understand why she and her tribe do things in ways that he believes to be uncivilized. She shows him that they may do things differently -- but there is beauty in these differences, because they can learn from each other. Even now, she continues to remind me of King: while her tribe prepared to fight the travelers, Pocahontas took the more challenging approach, showing the increasingly open-minded British explorer that if he can look past the varied colors of human skin, there are not only beautiful differences between British explorers and indigenous North Americans; as well, and perhaps more importantly, there are *similarities*.



## **A Living Hero and Great Thinker: Magda Brown**

Those real-life heroes and their fictionalized counterparts taught me a lot about what it means to be a great thinker. And though Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. are no longer alive, I am pleased at the abundance of living people who are doing their best to change the world, like the heroes who came before them. To me, a great thinker is someone who can make a difference in at least one person's life, so in a way, I feel every person has the potential to be one. I realize that this idea may appear to simplify the definition of a hero, but the beauty in this is that it explains how genius or unprecedented courage – while nice indeed – are not necessarily pre-requisites for heroism. That is why, when first considering this assignment, I had so much trouble picking just one great thinker – just one hero. I knew, if only vaguely, the kind of person I was looking for when seeking to choose a great thinker but struggled very much with whom to choose.

On my quest to pick a living thinker, I began by narrowing down the things that are of special importance to me. I eventually stumbled upon my faith – or rather the lack thereof. I was raised to be Jewish, but I have never had a deep connection with the religion. I have always joked around, explaining to others that I am not Jewish: I am Jew-ish. I then considered the Holocaust. How could someone believe so firmly in an intangible idea, faith, that he or she would be prepared to die for it? (Obviously I don't think those who suffered in the Holocaust chose to do so, but some – consider Viktor Frankl, for example – did have warnings from previous disappearances and even public killings of the Jewish people and, still, they refused to flee an increasingly deadly Europe). So I thought about Holocaust survivors. I could not imagine experiencing something as horrible as the death camps; moreover, I cannot comprehend having to live with the memories of a place like Auschwitz or Dachau. I *can* understand why so many Holocaust survivors did not want to talk about their experiences from the camps, and it never ceases to surprise me that some survivors were (and are) strong enough to share their stories. This brings me to my great thinker.

As I mention above, my view on the world and heroes has changed. My great thinker is neither a knight

in shining armor nor a small boy who chucks stones at giants. My hero is a woman who, like Gandhi, chose to put her pain aside – and who, like King, risked the backlash of oppressors – to take a stand, albeit peacefully, against injustice. This woman, with the help of many other great thinkers like herself, worked together to create an extremely influential museum. This woman's name is Magda Brown, and she indeed is a great thinker of our time (Salles).

Magda Brown was born in Miskolc, Hungary on June 11, 1927. She grew up in a safe and loving Jewish home with her family. When Magda was 16, Adolf Hitler had long-since come to power and was, by now, “implementing the ‘[Final Solution](#)’ of the [Hungarian Jews](#)” (“[Telling Her Story](#)”). She and her family were first put into a ghetto with many other Hungarian Jews, and then on Magda's seventeenth birthday, “[they] were crowded onto a railroad box car with 80 other people” and taken to Auschwitz (“[Telling Her Story](#)”). Magda suffered through Auschwitz for two months before being transported to Allendorf (a dangerous women's work camp). But this was not an escape, but rather another kind of hell. When she and the other woman in the work camp were not building bombs with chemicals that “turned their skin yellow, their hair orange and their lips purple” (“[Telling Her Story](#)”), they were sent on death marches, which killed many and weakened the survivors. “[On] March 1945, Magda and her group were sent on a death march to Buchenwald. Magda and several prisoners decided that they were going to attempt to escape... and hid in a nearby barn... Two American Armed Forces then discovered Magda and the other women and liberated them” (“[Telling Her Story](#)”). Eventually, she and many other survivors made it to a little town in Illinois, called Skokie. While in Skokie, she became a member of the National Council of Jewish Women and later helped to create the Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center (“[Telling Her Story](#)”).

I believe Magda to be not only a great thinker but also a hero for an infinite amount of reasons. First, she was able to survive the Holocaust. That in itself proves her intelligence. But she saved not only herself but other women as well. This shows that even when she was in a near-death situation, she could still consider the well-being

of others. I feel that initial kindhearted act led Magda to become the influential woman she remains today.

Second, Magda is one of the key founders of the Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center. Before this museum was built, the Holocaust survivors in Skokie did not want to talk about their experiences from the camp. Though many survivors did seek refuge in areas largely populated by others who had experienced the same awful events of the death camps, few wanted to stir up old memories by recounting what they had seen or felt. Skokie became the home to many of these Holocaust survivors, and while, as I said before, the area was predominantly Jewish, the tortures of the Holocaust were still bottled up. It was not until “neo-Nazis threatened to march in Skokie in the late 1970s, [that] Holocaust survivors... realized that, despite their desire to leave the past behind, they could no longer remain silent” (“History”). Magda was one of these survivors, and though she was scared of the neo-Nazis, she and the others did not violently respond to the threat. “In the wake of these attempted marches, Chicago-area survivors joined together to form the Holocaust Memorial Foundation of Illinois. They purchased a small Skokie storefront and made it available to the public, especially to schoolchildren, focusing on combating hate with education” (“History”). If being a part of this “education-over-hate” movement does not make Magda a great thinker, then I cannot be sure what *would* qualify her.

When the current Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center was built, Magda and the other founders expanded the idea of peace education. Unlike the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C. which focuses largely on the genocide of the Jewish people, The Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center is primarily “dedicated to preserving the legacy of the Holocaust by honoring the memories of those who were lost” (“History”) while *also* spreading awareness of other genocides that have and are taking place around the world: the Rwandan genocide in the 1990s, for instance, and the “ethnic cleansing” campaign that took place during the Bosnian-Serbian conflict, also in the 1990s. For this reason, too, I believe that Magda and the other founders are great thinkers. By including other genocides in the museum, they have given the public the prospect

to understand and to open their eyes to the reality of our present-day world. The museum provides those who visit a chance to learn so that perhaps one day when given the opportunity, they can do something to educate – instead of spreading misunderstanding and outright hate. Just like Gandhi, King, and even my childhood heroes, Magda and the other survivors employ peaceful resistance to end hatred, and they denounce violence, arguing correctly that the latter only serves to bring more hatred into the world.

Magda is also a great thinker because of what she has done for the Jewish historical community on her own. She is on the Speaker’s Bureau at the Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center. Being part of this bureau requires her to discuss her experiences from the death camps for educational purposes. “Although it is painful to remember her horrendous experiences, she believes her story and others have to be told...” (“Telling Her Story”). We live in a time where some people feel they have the right to deny that the Holocaust ever happened, but Magda’s and other survivors’ “stories will reassure those who doubt the Holocaust that it was a very real and frightening period in the 20<sup>th</sup> century” (“Telling Her Story”). Magda does one-on-one interviews as well as gives speeches (which are recorded, so they can be saved and watched again) to auditoriums full of students. She says “[her] hope is that through sharing [her] story, [she] can personally talk about the horrors of the Holocaust to remind this generation of the dangers of hatred, prejudice and discrimination” (Salles). Through her spoken recollections, Magda is able to make huge social difference in our world.

More than anything else, though, I believe Magda Brown to be a hero and a great thinker because her story is much more humble than those of folks like Bill Gates and Donald Trump, though this is not to degrade power and wealth at all, and I say so honestly. But Magda is a survivor. Yes, the Illinois Holocaust Museum & Educational Center and her speeches are great contributions to the cause that remains significant (keeping the memory of the Holocausts alive), but I feel her greatest contribution was and is simply staying alive. Magda, the other founders of the museum, any person that survived – they peacefully resisted and continue to resist the pressures of violence and hate with each breath they take. I cannot speak for any

survivor, including Magda, and I don't know if they think there is anything spectacular about their ability to live, but to me, their existence means everything, in part because for Hitler and his Third Reich, their disappearance meant everything. In surviving alone, they resisted. Brave women and men like Magda Brown provide evidence that it *is* possible to walk through hell and make it out alive, and for that, I believe, they have made a difference.

### **Magda Brown: I Am Grateful**

They definitely made a difference to me. I visited the Illinois Holocaust Museum & Educational Center a couple times while growing up, and each time, I experienced different emotions. I went to the museum with my family when I was in middle school, back when Babe and Pocahontas were my heroes, and at the time, the museum felt so distant to me. I saw the pictures on the walls and my mother crying in the corner, but nothing connected with me. The whole museum seemed like some kind of horrible nightmare that I did my best to forget as soon as I walked out. When I was in high school, again I visited the museum. This time I read some of the stories written next to pieces of clothing and old suitcases. Admittedly, I started walking faster as I got to the middle of the museum. I needed to get out, so I could pretend I hadn't seen any of it. But something changed very recently, when I attended the museum yet again with my Honors Humanities classmates this summer, 2014. I began reading everything that was on the walls, truly listening to the videos, realizing that real people were packed inhumanely into the nightmarish train car placed in the center of the museum. I noticed that some of the people I was with were walking idly through the halls – the way I had in my former visits – and it made me more emotional than I had expected it to. I thought about my mother crying, years before, and I realized suddenly that this time it was me in the corner, and with tears in my eyes.

Every visitor to Skokie's Holocaust Museum knows that the walls are filled with quotations, some of them literally engraved in stone, and a few of them unforgettable. One quotation from a Holocaust survivor, Charlotte Delbo, stopped me in my tracks: "We expected the worst – not the unthinkable," it read, and I swear

that something inside me changed forever. The people I was with: some of them seemed to walk mindlessly past images of skeletal bodies and Nazi propaganda, unaware of the truth of Delbo's words, just as such words (and the museum's accompanying images) had been fairly unimpressive to me during my previous visits. But I did not judge; in fact, I completely understood those who seemed blithely to walk along. Yet again, the museum, before, had not been effective for me, either – because, as the quote states, the Holocaust *is* unthinkable. It took multiple tries, but I finally wrapped my mind around the idea that the ghettos and death camps were not just a childhood nightmare: real people did horrible things to other real people.

At first I was scared. I may not be a practicing Jew, but my mother and father have never let me forget that it was *my* family members who were humiliated and slaughtered in Auschwitz. I walked past the empty train car for the third time in my life, but for the first time I couldn't bring myself to step inside. If I had, then I would have to consider that if the Holocaust happened just a half-century or so later, and in a different location, it might easily have been me on my way to an unthinkable place. Then I was angry. How could I have been to the museum more than once before, failing each time to feel the way I felt now? How could I have allowed myself to block out the memories?

When I finally made it to the last few halls of the museum, again my emotions changed. I was in no way happy, but I felt almost relieved. The walls told stories of survivors and their journey to change the world. My heart was broken, but for the first time, I truly understood the purpose of the Illinois Holocaust Museum & Educational Center. The museum was and is meant to spread love and understanding. I can't say it did that for anyone else that day, and I cannot say that it didn't. But it certainly worked on me, and I am soberly pleased to say that Magda had a enormous part in all of it.

Thinking back to childhood, I don't regret wanting to grow up to be a hero. I have to admit that I have no desire to experience the extreme suffering that Gandhi, King, and especially Magda went through, but if I could grow up to embody some (at least) of Magda's selflessness, I would be happy. Great thinkers are people

**A Hero, a Great Thinker, a Survivor:  
Magda Brown**

who can change lives while also working to make the world a better, more peaceful place: better when they leave than when they entered. Mohandas Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., and Magda Brown all lived through very different experiences, but what they have in common is that they are all heroes, all great thinkers. Gandhi and King were assassinated; Magda lives on, even now, but each of those three is a part of you, and me, and each, therefore, endures indefinitely.

**Works Cited**

- “Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Quotations.” *Love Earth Network*. *drmartinlutherkingjr.com*. N.p., n.d. Web. 25 July 2014.
- Gandhi, Mohandas. “Non-Violent Resistance.” *Ideas in Conflict*. Ed. Donna Haisty Winchell and Mark Royden Winchell. Boston: Thomson, 2008. 783-94.
- “History.” *Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center*. *ilholocaustmuseum.org*. Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center, n.d. Web. 26 July 2014.
- Judd, Rovi B. “*Babe* Synopsis.” *Fandango*. *fandango.com*. Fandango, n.d. Web. 26 July 2014.
- Salles, Andre. “Holocaust Survivor Talks Forgiveness at Aurora University.” *Montgomery Patch*. *patch.com*. Patch Media, 5 Nov. 2011. Web. 27 July 2014.
- “Telling Her Story.” *Magda Brown*. *magdabrown.com*. Wordpress, n.d. Web. 25 July 2014.

---

Evaluation: *This paper is a unique, powerful response to the assignment, and it is a very personal response, leading to a quiet, personal epiphany, especially in the last pages.*

---

# The Postmodernist Who Went Back in Time: A Study of Walton Ford

---

*Rachel Freeman*

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

*Assignment: Research a contemporary artist with a specific research question in mind, and then come to a conclusion based on the research about the artist and how he or she relates to his or her work and the world.*

One of the most beautiful books ever published is John James Audubon's *The Birds of America*. Audubon is perhaps the most well-known natural history artist. He traveled all over the American frontier, sketching every species of bird he could find. Later, he would even travel overseas to sketch species of birds and other animals in more exotic countries. The work of Audubon has kept its popularity over the years because of the majestic way in which Audubon portrays the animals. Completing his work toward the end of the eighteenth century, Audubon's art falls into the category of romanticism. Even though his work is technically scientific, since he was documenting different species and was sketching them in their natural habitats, he viewed his work as art rather than science, because he portrayed his own personal expression in the paintings. Natural history art is just that—it is the combination of science and art together. While science only focuses on the strict facts, Audubon was able to take the image of a bird and paint it in such a way that it presented a heroic and dramatic story (Marshall 144). His paintings showed the beauty of the New World and ignited a romantic view of the American wilderness (Sibley 17). While Audubon's paintings and prints are still considered very beautiful, his traditional style of realist representation is now "out of date." However, artist Walton Ford has taken Audubon's style to the next level. By using the traditional style of realism, and using the same medium that Audubon used, ink sketches and watercolor, Ford has turned natural history art into lessons about various cultures. Instead of telling the animals' stories as he sees them from his own point of view, Ford challenges the way animals are seen and thought about, and tells the story from the animals' point of view. Painting acts as a framework for Ford's own political commentary as well a way to express himself and his ideas. Ford uses the animals in his paintings to satirically critique colonialism, while humorously telling unique stories that both attract and repulse the viewer.

Walton Ford was born in Larchmont, New York in 1960. Artistic ability seems to run in his family, as Ford's father and older brother had a love for art as well. His brother "Flick" received *The Birds of America* by Audubon for Christmas one year, and Ford loved to copy the drawings of birds in his own sketchbook (Tomkins

**The Postmodernist Who Went Back in Time:  
A Study of Walton Ford**

**Student Reflections on Writing: Rachel Freeman**

I find I do my best writing when I am genuinely intrigued by the subject of the paper. That may sound obvious, but it is an important part of my writing process. Even if the topic is in a subject you don't enjoy, there is usually enough freedom in any given assignment to find some aspect of the subject that intrigues you. For example, the assignment of this paper was for a combined English and art history class. I actually ended up enjoying the class exceedingly; however, I am not a very artistically talented person and thus a paper about art history did not sound exciting. My professor suggested Walton Ford, who paints animals. Anyone who talks with me for more than five minutes learns quickly that I am quite the animal lover. I looked him up online, and sure enough, his animal paintings were quite intriguing. So there was my start.

The formal writing process can be a bit tedious, but the steadiness of doing the same process over and over again is what led me to finding my "groove" in how to write a paper. First, I brainstorm all my thoughts. I start with my immediate thoughts, and then write down the secondary, continuing thoughts underneath them. Next is organizing the points into an outline: the immediate thoughts become the main points of the body, and the secondary thoughts become the sub-points. My first outline is never the actual order of my paper, but that is ok because it gives me something to work off of. If I find I have too many thoughts or too many ideas, I check to make sure each thought has enough research and information to create a clear and supported point. While getting myself to actually sit down at the computer and start typing is the hardest part, once the paper gets underway, my thoughts start to flow.

The last thing I do is write the introduction. That may seem backward, but I like to tie the conclusion back to the introduction, but when I start my paper, I'm never sure how the outline of the paper is going to turn out until I'm finished. I usually have ideas about what the attention-getting opening should be, but my thesis is always finalized when the paper is finished. This helps me to get my paper underway because before, I was so stuck on writing the paper "in order" and following the rules, that the introduction always stumped me and I would feel stuck. Furthermore, about this, I'd like to emphasize that papers tend to be more successful when the introduction and conclusion are not only well organized, but also well thought out, wrapping the whole paper up in a neat but clever way. However, it doesn't have to be complicated; sometimes, simplicity is more profound than a complex statement.

Last, but certainly not least, I proofread my paper; then, I have three other people proofread. This not only helps with silly grammar errors, but others can help you re-word awkward sentences or tell you if something is unclear or difficult to follow as the reader. Each person has their own unique process of writing, but hopefully, some of my ways can be helpful to others. Nevertheless, I still think – and I believe many professors would agree – that writing is most successful when the author is truly interested and/or intrigued about the subject.

51). This is where Ford's admiration for Audubon's style began.

As Ford continued to grow, his artistic ability became stronger and stronger, while his interest for schoolwork diminished. He was known for ditching class and rarely doing his homework. "I did my fair share of smoking pot," he tells New York interviewer and art journalist Calvin Tomkins. According to Flick, all he cared about

was art and being in the woods (qtd. in Tomkins 52). Ford's artistic ability saved his educational career when his mother got him into the Rhode Island School of Design's summer art program. He did so well that his portfolio was big enough, and good enough, for him to be accepted into the school's college program in 1978. Ford says, "I knew I was going to be O.K. then. From the time I was six, I'd wanted to be an artist" (qtd. in Tomkins

53). Ford had always loved story-telling; thus, he thought filmmaking would be the best medium for his art work. In his senior year, Ford was chosen to go to Rome for an honors semester. It was in Italy that Ford realized exactly what he wanted to do; they went to Assisi and saw Giotto's cycle of paintings on the life of St. Francis (Hirsch 135). "It made the biggest impact on me of anything that happened at RISD," Ford says. "The storytelling is so clean and clear. It's unbelievably emotional without being overblown, like in the Sistine Chapel. I was supposed to make a film in Italy, but I couldn't finish it, because I just started painting and drawing again. I realized I was going to be a narrative painter" (qtd. in *Art21*). He loved how "stripped down and perfect" the narrative was and how easy it was to follow the story line (Hirsch 135). Ford realized that he did not need film to tell a story, but rather his own unique skills could better tell stories through painting.

Now that Ford had a vision for what he wanted to do, he needed the funds to support his ideas. The beginning of Ford's career was a rough one. He started out by picking up random jobs here and there, since he did not have the money to be totally devoted to art. Ford joined a group of older RISD graduates that started remodeling houses; during his free time, Ford worked on large-scale oil painting on wood and attempted some illustrative work for the *New York Times*, but neither of these were successful (Tomkins 53). Even though Ford's taste in art did not seem to fit in with the current style, he managed to get his first shows in downtown New York with Bess Cutler and Nicole Klagsbrun (Tomkins 53). Later, Ford's work caught the attention of Marcia Tucker, director of the New Museum of Contemporary Art, and she put some of his work in a few different group gallery displays (Tomkins 53). In 1992, Irving Blum was sent to scope Ford's art for Bill Arning's White Columns gallery and ended up buying a work for himself. Blum thought that people currently would not like the art, but he did like Ford's work; he said he found it "conservative, yet oddly beguiling" (qtd. in Tomkins 53). Ford had just started doing his "Audubon-knock-offs" of birds, and Blum continued to buy several paintings for about fifteen hundred a piece. This was Ford's first significant success.

Since the Audubon-like paintings were doing well,

Ford decided to continue studying the style of Audubon. In 1994, he went on a six-month trip to India with his wife and daughter. The trip influenced him greatly as he was able to see so many exotic birds and see a culture that was totally different from his own. India had such an impression on him that he turned into a natural historian himself, documenting different birds he discovered and painting them as he saw them. When he got back, he described his trip to friend Jeffery Eugenides:

India was so astounding... that the only way I felt I could deal with it was to paint through the things I know something about, which is natural history. Everything's so outsize and extreme over there, even the wildlife. We've got one kind of kingfisher in the U.S. and they've got like thirty. Ours is this somber blue like somebody in a business suit. Their kingfishers have red bills and hot pink legs, totally mad. . . .That is how the whole country felt for me. (79)

Soon after that, Ford realized that Audubon had done all of his paintings of birds in life-size scale. The accuracy of the size amazed Ford and also gave him an idea. If Ford wanted to paint large animals, such as tigers, but still use Audubon's "notebook" method of drawing animals in the field, he would be creating something that was never done before (*Art 21*). Drawing animals in the field was done very quickly; to draw large animals in life-size proportions in this "on-the-go" method seemed contradictory. That is what got Ford excited, because he was about to paint something completely original (*Art 21*).

The subject matter of his paintings comes from two aspects of his life. The first, and most important, is his love and admiration of natural history artist John James Audubon. Secondly, both sides of Walton's family come from Southern plantation owners. His family was from Georgia and Tennessee, and although his parents had abandoned the South to start a new life in New York, Ford's family still held onto the "gentleman sportsman" ideals of the old Southern ways (Ford 62). Enfield Berry Ford, Walton's father, often took the family on fishing trips in summer, and so from a young age Ford was immersed in wildlife. Also, his father was a big hunter and fisher all his life, and so pictures of Audubon's wildlife was

**The Postmodernist Who Went Back in Time:  
A Study of Walton Ford**



Figure 1. (Left) *Condemned*, Walton Ford. Copper plates, hardground etching, aquatint, spit bite aquatint, drypoint, scraping and burnishing on white Rives paper, 2006. Paul Kasmin Gallery. (Right) *Carolina Parakeets*, John James Audubon, watercolor on paper, 1825.

very much a part of his childhood (Ford 62). Since the age of five, Ford has loved going to the Natural History Museum, and still visits before every painting he does to get an accurate representation of what each animal looks like (Kazanjian 62). Walton wanted to use the traditional style of watercolor realism to depict animals, but to depict them in a way that no one else had done before. Instead of painting a simple picture of an animal in its natural habitat, Walton wanted to attack the ideals of colonialism, slavery, and other political issues. He wanted to take the traditional style of illustrative natural history and fudge the line between illustration and art (Tomkins 51). In an interview with *Art21* he says, “They were like fake Audubons, but I twisted the subject matter a bit, and got inside his head, and tried to paint as if it was really his tortured soul portrayed. As if his hand betrayed him, and he painted what he didn’t want to expose about himself.”

The goal of using watercolor was literally to mimic Audubon (*Art21*). In Figure 1, the resemblance of Ford’s style to Audubon’s style is shown clearly. According to Ford, Audubon had a darker, neurotic side to him; in order to paint all these animals he had to kill them, pin them in a certain position, sketch them quickly and fill it in with water color, meaning that he probably killed more animals than he painted. Ford’s watercolor paintings look like beautiful, peaceful pictures of majestic birds and mammals, until the viewer looks closer, deeper into the painting, and notices the tiny details of a fire in the distant landscape or a bird being squished by the giant foot of a rhinoceros. But behind each painting, there is a very specific story being told. In order to find these interesting stories, Walton does a lot of research, and through his research, he is inspired to make art about certain stories.

For example, Ford researched the life of Richard





Figure 2. *The Sensorium*, Walton Ford. Watercolor, gouache, ink and pencil on paper, 2003.

Burton, who was an officer in India when the British Empire ruled there. Unlike most of the English in India at that time, Burton had a curiosity about the Indian culture that did not have an ulterior motive, and he was determined to learn about it. Burton was a brilliant man and knew many languages, and was always striving to learn more. In his home in India, he had about forty pet monkeys of various species and ages so that he could learn the language of monkeys; his favorite was a female monkey that he called “wife” who would sit next to him at dinner in a high-chair (*Art21*). Burton actually successfully documented sixty words, but all his notes were lost in a house fire (*Art21*). That is the part which Ford likes because it is so strange and so far out that he had to make art about it. Figure 2 shows the end result of the painting Ford did to depict this story. The painting consists of nine monkeys eating at a large dining room table placed on a rock ledge in the middle of the jungle. The dinner is not portrayed as pleasant, but chaotic and savage. The “wife” monkey sits in her high-chair at the head of the table with paper in her hands, while four other

monkeys are on top of the table making a mess. A fifth monkey has just been pushed off the table by the fourth monkey, and is pulling down the table cloth as the two are quarreling over a plate of fruit. Two younger monkeys are sitting on the floor, looking up at the table as if to devise a plan of obtaining food without getting in the middle of the brawl. The last monkey is walking away in the shadows with his back toward the rest of the group, almost as if to say, “This is crazy and I am out of here.” The whole scene is rather humorous, and the fact that the background is painted as a lovely, calming sunset adds a distinct contrast to the madness happening on the table. His goal was to show colonialism, how the British were possessing everything they could, including the culture, and how it all collapsed and “went up in flames,” just like the British Empire did in India (*Art21*). Ford loves the combination of the natural history of animals with the political history of human culture.

Another one of Ford’s paintings, called *Falling Boughs*, tells the real story behind how passenger pigeons became extinct. His painting at first glance looks like a

**The Postmodernist Who Went Back in Time:  
A Study of Walton Ford**



Figure 3. *Falling Bough*, Walton Ford. Watercolor, gouache, ink and pencil on paper, 2002. Paul Kasmin Gallery.

floating mob of birds, which it is in a sense, but the birds are actually swarming all over a large broken tree branch. Again, a deeper look shows the nasty things happening within this mob of birds (see Figure 3). There are baby birds falling out of nests, eggs being eaten as they are being laid and falling out, birds killing each other, and birds excreting on each other. The story comes from some research Ford did which said that these pigeons were in such great numbers that trees would break and fall from the weight of a flock resting on the branches (*Art21*). There could be up to two million birds just in one flock, so many that it seemed to be raining poop wherever they flew. In the background of his painting, it looks as if Ford has painted a storm coming in, but really it is a detailed swarm of passenger pigeons coming in. This sets the mood for how these birds were viewed: as nasty nuisances that needed to be destroyed. Again, the softly painted sunset and peaceful river in the background make the chaos of the birds stand out even more. Ford uses this to show the tension that he wants to portray in

his paintings: a tension between the beautiful and the disturbing. His paintings come across as so pleasant, and then at a closer look there is something wrong, something violent or troubling.

Although Ford has established himself as an artist through primarily watercolor painting, more recently, he has been working on some prints. Because Ford has already been doing mock styles of nineteenth century methods of art, he felt it was only natural for him to also do prints because Audubon did them (*Art 21*). The first person Ford talked to was David Kiel, the curator of prints at the Whitney Museum, who had been waiting for years to hear this news (*Art21*). Kiel followed Ford's work and knew that he would eventually do prints. Ford says, "That was cool to hear. He's quite knowledgeable about the history of printmaking. And it just makes total sense; it would almost make no sense not to make them" (qtd. in *Art21*). It was encouraging for Ford to have someone else see the same vision for his artwork that he did. To make things even more real, Ford and

his partner, Peter Pettengill, even use the old-fashioned print-making methods that people such as Rembrandt used over a hundred years ago (*Art21*). One of the first prints Ford worked is called *Compromised* (see Figure 4). In this print, he illustrates two types of wading birds: one is a glossy ibis, which lives in Europe or America, and the other is a sacred ibis, coming from the Nile region in Egypt. The two ibises are intertwined together in a somewhat sensual way but also in a combative manner (*Art21*). Ford describes it this way: “So, the glossy and the sacred are fighting. The sacred and the profane are locked in battle in this image. But they can’t get away from each other; there’s an attraction and a repulsion” (qtd. in *Art21*). This story comes from Ford’s annoyance with the fact that American culture today seems to have no room for middle ground, that “you’re either for us or against us” attitude (*Art21*). The message is that people should try to understand both sides, without feeling “compromised” for doing so. Eventually, Ford would publish limited edition, large-scale books, like Audubon, of all his prints, called *Pancha Tantra*. Benedikt Taschen, the publisher of the book, understood that Ford needed the elaborate size to resemble the old books of Audubon, but also designed in such a way that it still showed the messages Ford wanted to convey (Hirsch 134). The *Pancha Tantra* truly demonstrates the “attraction-repulsion” view with its decorative exterior and prints full of symbols and jokes.

While Ford is purposely using traditional, representational styles of art to tell stories about culture, he is also unintentionally influencing another area of life: education. Art professor and journalist Julie Marshall, from San Francisco State University, views Ford’s work and other natural history art as vital information regarding education. She says that viewing natural history art provides two ways of learning: a) by studying how the art itself is made and why it is made, and b) figuring out the message behind the painting and digging through the layers of meaning (149). Because Ford does imbue so much deep meaning through his art work and strives to tell a whole story through one still-frame picture, his watercolors could definitely be used in education to learn about different historical, political stories. Also, since his stories are sometimes hidden in a way, causing the viewer to have to look carefully at each detail, the paintings do



Figure 4. *Compromised*, Walton Ford. Six-color hardground and softground etching, aquatint, spit-bite aquatint, drypoint and roulette on somerset satin paper, 2002.

teach one how to inquire and interpret information that is portrayed through images. Marshall also describes postmodern natural history art as reflecting the traditional natural history illustration, but taking political or cultural issues and “juxtaposing forms and ideas from areas outside of art to reframe them in a critical light” (151). Seeing how Ford’s work has essentially evolved from Audubon’s work is a great picture of how art builds upon itself from generation to generation. Instead of reacting against traditional ways of painting and completely rejecting them, Ford has taken that method to make a point. He uses the very style of the period he is making fun of, and through his intellect, he creates art that has deeper meaning beyond the surface beauty of animals.

## The Postmodernist Who Went Back in Time: A Study of Walton Ford

While Audubon is definitely the cornerstone of Ford's work, and he will admit that himself, Ford's work has a conceptual madness that fits more with postmodern characteristics (Marshall 147). Ford has taken what he loves—the woods, birds, and art—and someone he admires, Audubon, and combined them into pieces of art that make a difference in the world. Ford takes stories that have been left in the past, forgotten, and brings them back to light. Like Audubon, Ford uses his love of animals and his talent in watercolor to express himself, but the difference between the two is Ford's motive is to expose certain cultural issues that interest him and attack certain political issues in society.

### Works Cited

- Art21: Humor*. Perf. Walton Ford. PBS Online, 2007. *pbs.org*. Art21, Inc. Web. 1 May 2014.
- Eugenides, Jeffrey. "Walton Ford." *New Art Publications* 61: 78-79. *JSTOR*. Web. 1 May 2014.
- Hirsch, Faye. "King of the Beasts. (Cover Story)." *Art In America* 96.9 (2008): 132-203. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 1 May 2014.
- Kazanjian, Dodie. "A Conversation with Walton Ford." *Tigers of Wrath, Horses of Instruction*. By Walton Ford. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2002. 62-67. Print.
- Marshall, Julia. "Articulate Images: Bringing the Pictures of Science and Natural History into the Art Curriculum." *Studies in Art Education* 45: 135-52. *JSTOR*. Web. 1 May 2014.
- Sibley, David. "Audubon Plate." *Smithsonian* 41.7 (2013): 17-21. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 4 May 2014.
- Tomkins, Calvin. "Man and Beast." *New Yorker* 84.46 (2009): 50-57. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 1 May 2014.

---

Evaluation: *Rachel does a remarkable job of analyzing the specific details of Ford's work and what inspires him as an artist.*

---

# The Effect of Housing Discrimination on Education

George Galetsis

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Tiffany Crawford

---

**Assignment:** Write a research paper on *A Raisin in the Sun*, incorporating research on the contemporary effects of housing discrimination.

What would you do if someone told you that every single decision you make in your life will be determined by how you look, how financially stable you are, or by what you believe in? Would you be frustrated? Would you be offended? The answer most people would respond to questions like these is obvious; it is immoral for one's life to be determined by factors of race, financial situation, belief system, or gender. The sad truth is that the United States has had a guilty history of discrimination and racism, specifically towards people of color. The most prominent group of people that have been discriminated against is African-Americans, whose discrimination can be seen in numerous examples, ranging from the era of slavery to the present day. Though there are other groups of people that have faced different forms of discrimination, one common form of it is housing discrimination. For those who are doing the discriminating, the solution to their intolerance is to keep the people as far away as possible, often in separate neighborhoods. It is this ideology that motivated segregation and the Jim Crow laws that allowed people of color to be denied access to "white" neighborhoods. Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* realistically portrays the struggles of an African-American family trying to cope with poverty and housing discrimination. As much as current society would like to think that housing discrimination has diminished, the lingering truth is that it is still occurring today. So why does this matter? The presence of housing discrimination

drastically affects the quality of education that children and adolescents receive in America.

One factor of housing discrimination's negative effects on education is the living conditions it provides. The period of time between the end of the Civil War and before the Civil Rights Era was an extremely harsh time for African-Americans. Though slavery had legally been abolished by the federal government, its spirit never left. African-Americans would not easily integrate into society as previously envisioned. Instead, the concept of segregation arose and divided cities, towns, and neighborhoods by racial barriers. It is common to think that the South was guilty of this the most, but in reality the North was just as notorious for establishing heavily segregated communities as well. J.S. Fuerst, a Director of Research and Statistics for the Chicago Housing Authority, explains how the city of Chicago essentially packed a region of the city known as the "Black Belt"

## Student Reflections on Writing:

### George Galetsis

I have always seen writing as both an art and a tool. It is an art for the writer, and for readers, in the sense that it can be admired and inspiring. Every day, people read through articles, literature, and other pieces of writing for entertainment, out of curiosity, or for inspiration. Writing is also a tool, though, because it can be used in powerful ways to introduce new ideas and ways of thinking. One can take a look through the history of humanity and see that the most revolutionary ideas came from people writing their thoughts and views down on paper. Writing was their gift that changed the world that we live in today, and it is our gift to change the world that we will be in tomorrow.

Good writing cannot be rushed. Just as a sculptor would take his time paying close attention to detail, a writer perfects his or her work this way instead of rushing through it. Attention to the smallest details in a paper helps create structure and allow the message to be brought forth.

with great numbers of people of color. Fuerst states, “During a second and much larger migration after 1940, new arrivals [of African-Americans] had few choices but to crowd into the existing Black Belt, straining the housing stock” (Fuerst and Hunt 101). The restrictive location of where African-Americans were limited to made it difficult to live comfortably. Overcrowding of these neighborhoods likely made disease more prominent and sanitary conditions nearly obsolete. Even after segregation became illegal, society was not quick to integrate. Segregation was the social norm and left many acting as if it was still around. This kept neighborhoods from being mixed with people of different races. The disease, filth, and poverty continued to reside within the racial barriers.

Hansberry’s play captures the essence of what the living conditions could be like in neighborhoods like these. She describes, in *A Raisin in the Sun*, the living space the Younger family is limited to. The family’s apartment is small, and there is not enough room for everyone to have some personal space. Every morning, the family finds themselves in a rush to get ready for the day’s plans. The morning rush often leads to yelling and arguing among the family. Hansberry describes the tension between Walter and Ruth: “Ruth watches both of them [Travis and Walter] with murder in her eyes. Walter stands and stares back at her with defiance, and suddenly reaches into his pocket again on afterthought” (Hansberry 31). It is clear that the atmosphere around them is a prominent factor in why the characters find themselves in so much conflict with each other. The family, in a way, is being closed in by their apartment walls. All the members of the family are in close vicinity with each other, leaving them with a lack of privacy. When this occurs, it is easy how something small can become a big annoyance.

So how do the living conditions of a socially segregated neighborhood relate to the quality of education? The answer can be found in where the focus of a child in poverty lies. Travis Younger can be used as an example. Every morning, Travis needs to be woken up early to get cleaned up in the bathroom that the Younger family shares with other families in the apartment facility. In addition to that, Travis must also deal with the morning rush of all his family members yelling at each other while trying to

get ready. If that was not hectic enough, he is left with the uncertainty of whether his parents will provide him with the things he needs; the fifty cents his teacher told the class to bring is an example. What could Travis be thinking by the time this is all over and finally heads off to school? It is reasonable to infer that he could be somewhat worn down from the morning drama he recently encountered. This would then determine his performance in his school activities. A worn-out Travis may not be able to do math problems or read and write as well as somebody who was woken up in a more tranquil atmosphere. This is one of the adverse effects housing discrimination has on the education of children in America. The atmosphere of harsh living conditions can stray the focus of an individual student away from the learning environment.

Another factor that shows the effect of housing discrimination on the education of children deals with money and economics. Previously, the poor living conditions of socially segregated neighborhoods were described and how they affect education. Why are the living conditions described to be so terrible? The answer to that question resides in the incomes of the people living in those communities. After the abolition of slavery in America, African-Americans started to integrate into the work force. While it was not bad enough that they were put off into racially constructed communities, they were also severely underpaid for the type of work they did. Though this sounds appalling, it is still occurring today. One writer, Azure Gilman, reports that, “As of 2010, black men in America earned 74.5 percent of a typical white man’s wage; black women earned 69.6 percent” (Gilman). As ridiculous as this racial wage gap seems now in current times, the wage gap in the past would have been even wider. The unequal pay did not allow African-Americans to purchase the necessities of a decent living. Partnering with racial wage gaps are physical and servant jobs. Since there was also discrimination in the work force, some African-Americans were not hired for certain jobs simply because of the color of their skin. This led them to rely on the physical labor force.

Hansberry captures the difficulty of the economic conditions in *A Raisin in the Sun*. The characters of Walter, Ruth, and Mama all have a job that requires some sort of physical labor or servitude. Walter frustratingly

describes his job to Mama, “Mama a job? I open and close car doors all day long. I drive a man around in his limousine and I say “Yes, sir; no, sir; very good, sir; shall I take the Drive sir?” Mama, that ain’t no kind of job... that ain’t nothing at all” (Hansberry 73). Being stuck as a chauffeur has cornered Walter, making him want more for himself and his family. The fact that society has allowed for Walter to be in the situation that he is drives him to dream of owning his own business. Walter, like almost any parent, wants to see the life of his son, Travis, to be better than the life he is currently in. He is confused when Travis tells him that his goal in life is to be a bus driver. A job of servitude is not what Walter wants for his son because it reflects the kind of life Walter currently has.

This relates to education because the amount of money put in schools, more often than not, determines the type of education a student will receive. Public schools obtain money through property taxes. Seeing the wage gap that was previously mentioned, along with the low-income and physical jobs available to African-Americans, the ability to invest in a good education is very difficult. To put this in the story’s perspective, it is almost impossible for the Younger family to invest in Travis’s education because of how much they need the money for other things. The rent the Youngers need to pay to the landlord monthly goes towards bills to maintain the apartment complex. It is inferable that the property taxes for the complex are relatively low because of its poor condition. This prevents enough money from going into the schools that need it. A real-life example can also be seen in the city of Chicago. Pat Garofalo, author of the article, “How Illinois’ Flawed Funding System Shortchanges Chicago’s Students,” states how the schools in poorer neighborhoods receive an underwhelming amount of money than the schools in wealthier neighborhoods. Garofalo states, “The 6,413 students who started elementary school in Evanston [a suburb north of Chicago] in 1994 and graduated from high school in 2007 had about \$290 million more spent on their education than the same number of Chicago Public Schools students.” This is a staggering statistic and shows how the economic factor of housing discrimination can take its toll on students. By allowing conditions that let poverty consume a group of people with low incomes and difficult jobs, housing discrimination has wounded the investment in education for children.

A prominent factor of housing discrimination is violence because it has devastating effects on communities. These socially segregated communities have two types of violence occurring at the same time. The first type is external violence. External violence is what created communities like these in the first place, likely due to the threats and attacks from oppressive white people. Paul L. Street, author of *Racial Oppression in the Global Metropolis*, provides a good example of the type of violence African-Americans faced if they lived in white communities instead of the black ones. Street states, “When a black bus driver rented an apartment in the white working-class suburb of Cicero in 1951, to give another example, 3,500 angry whites destroyed the apartment building before he could move in” (103-104). Extreme violence like this would convince almost anyone that moving into a neighborhood populated by a different race is a bad idea. The external violence is the reason African-American communities started to become overcrowded. The second type of violence is internal violence, which exists within these socially segregated neighborhoods. This type of violence most likely manifested because of the external violence and the economic conditions mentioned previously. The increased wage gap between whites and blacks led to poverty among African-Americans. Poverty led to difficult conditions of survival. It would be challenging for one to provide food, shelter, and a decent living for his or her family under these conditions. The difficulty would then lead to desperate measures such as stealing and, in some cases, homicide. The violence would remain within the community due to the containment of the socially constructed racial barriers. The terrifying sense of inescapability can plague the minds of people in these neighborhoods.

*A Raisin in the Sun* provides an example of the foreshadowed violence that could occur when the Youngers move into their new house. The character of Karl Lindner, a white representative of the Clybourne Park Improvement Association, comes to the Youngers to persuade them not to move into the house. Lindner states, “It is a matter of the people of Clybourne Park believing, rightly or wrongly, as I say, that for the happiness of all concerned that our Negro families are happier when they live in their own communities” (Hansberry

118). Although it is stated in a nonviolent manner, this statement by Lindner clearly shows the opposition of the intolerant people of Clybourne Park. The character of Lindner is symbolic of the external violence. Though he is calm, his demands of reconsideration and exile are strong. The symbolism of external violence is strongest with Lindner's final words to the Youngers: "I sure hope you people know what you're getting into" (Hansberry 149). By stating this, Lindner guarantees the Youngers of the forthcoming opposition and conflict they are about to encounter when they move into the house.

The relation of this consequence of housing discrimination and the quality of education is almost proportional. Violence is a steep barrier between children and schools. If a child has to worry if he or she will be able to walk to school safely in the morning, this worry is more concerning to the child than what he or she will be learning that day. This will then pose a question to whether getting a quality education is worth it at all in the long run. Why risk life to go somewhere? Questions like these are prominent in these types of communities. *A Raisin in the Sun* ended in a high note for the Younger family; they decided to move into the house, Mama gets to grow a garden, and Walter and Ruth's marriage seems to have been rejuvenated. The story does not continue to tell of what the family will do once they move into the house. Lindner forewarned the Youngers of the coming storm of conflict. That being said, what will the outcome be for Travis? Will he attend the same school as the children in Clybourne Park? Will Walter and Ruth allow Travis to continue walking to school by himself? We do not know the answer to these questions. It is likely that there will be difficulty for Youngers trying to get Travis the education he deserves. It is obvious how the violence created by housing discrimination affects the quality of education young people receive.

This is why the factors of housing discrimination affect the education of children in America. Education is usually not one of the first thoughts that come to mind when the subject of housing discrimination arises. More prominent things like Civil Rights, racism, and the struggle of people of color shrug this off from the spotlight, but the quality of education received by victims of this matters just as much. People of all races, beliefs, and genders

should all be entitled to a good education. The fact that housing discrimination still exists and alters the quality of this necessity is an embarrassment to the United States. Though this nation has come a long way from things far worse than this, the country that has been proclaimed the land of freedom and equality has still not lived up to these titles. Housing discrimination is illegal, but there are still social patterns and behaviors that keep it alive and prevalent in our lives. Education is the key to eradicate these behaviors. With education comes knowledge about the brutality of this on people, and with knowledge we can strive to create a better society.

### Works Cited

- Fuerst, J. S., and D. Bradford Hunt. *When Public Housing Was Paradise: Building Community in Chicago*. Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2003. Print.
- Garofalo, Pat. "How Illinois' Flawed Funding System Shortchanges Chicago's Students." *ThinkProgress*. [thinkprogress.org](http://thinkprogress.org). Center for American Progress Action Fund, 12 Sept 2012. Web. 05 May 2014.
- Gilman, Azure. "Explaining the Black-White Wage Gap." *Freakonomics*. [freakonomics.com](http://freakonomics.com). Freakonomics LLC, 06 Oct. 2011. Web. 05 May 2014.
- Hansberry, Lorraine. *A Raisin in the Sun*. New York: Vintage, 1994. Print.
- Street, Paul Louis. *Racial Oppression in the Global Metropolis: A Living Black Chicago History*. Lanham, Mass: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007. Print.

---

Evaluation: *This paper has a clear and focused thesis and a good balance of textual and external research support.*



---

# A Critical Analysis of *Dallas Buyers Club*'s Depiction of AZT

---

Megan Giacomino

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Maggie McKinley

Assignment: Write an argumentative research paper on one of the films or texts we have studied this term.

The sudden onset of the acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) epidemic in the 1980s left millions of people desperately fighting for their lives as the mortality rate continued to dramatically increase year after year. An unprecedented number of people were dying from this mysterious, merciless disease, and by 1993, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection had become the single most common cause of death for people ages 24 to 44 (“Update: Mortality Attributable to HIV...” 121). It seemed as though azidothymidine (AZT), being the only FDA- approved medication in America for the treatment of HIV/AIDS at the time, was simply not enough. Some actually blamed AZT for the death sentence of HIV/AIDS, as portrayed in a recent film called *Dallas Buyers Club*; however, the film leaves out a significant detail that in the 1990s, AZT was an essential component of the highly successful combination drug therapy known as highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART), which has prolonged the lives of millions to this day. The purpose of this essay is to critically discuss how the film *Dallas Buyers Club* inaccurately depicts the effectiveness of AZT and its value to the treatment of HIV/AIDS, ultimately contributing to society’s suspicion about the competence and motives of our government in medicinal science.

In order to properly dispute the accuracy of *Dallas Buyers Club*'s representation of AZT, thorough research on the history of AZT will be explored, but first an analysis of the film and how it depicted this drug from the viewpoint of HIV/AIDS patients in the 1980s will be provided. *Dallas Buyers Club* strategically begins with a physician named Eve, who strongly opposes the newly proposed AZT trial at her hospital, because of its failure to be successful as an anti-cancer agent years prior. Soon after this scene, the main character, Ron, suddenly drops unconscious and needs a blood transfusion after taking AZT he obtained on the streets. These initial events send a clear first impression that AZT is dangerous. Desperate to save his own life, Ron flees to Mexico to see an underground doctor, who tells him, “What, do you want to poison yourself? ... The only people that AZT helps is the people who sell it. Kills every cell in your body.” The doctor who explains this theory to Ron is a character whom the audience finds to be a genuine and charitable man, fleeing to Mexico after losing his medical

## A Critical Analysis of *Dallas Buyers Club*'s Depiction of AZT

license to help people like Ron. These facts make the doctor's advice about AZT much more influential than if he were seen as a cold, money-driven physician. In a different scene, Ron refers to AZT as poison when he tells Eve he's giving her patients "everything but that poison you're hawking." The repeat use of the word poison in this film is purposely used to convince the viewer that the incredible toxicity and inevitable deadly effects leave very little room for questioning the benefit of taking AZT, strongly setting the tone for the audience.

*Dallas Buyers Club* continues to use cinematic devices such as narration and characterization throughout the film to further convey its harsh view of AZT. Ron's main motive is to get experimental drugs approved, or at least available, so that people's lives could be saved; however, instead of collaborating with higher powers for progress in research, he relentlessly fights against the use of AZT as if it's the sole reason for the epidemic. Referring to the drug, Ron tells his club members to "flush that shit down the toilet, that's bad news," and blatantly blames AZT for the death of his friend Rayon, asking Eve, "Anemia, cancer, bone marrow depletion, seizures, fever, hearing loss... Sound like AIDS to you? That there comes inside a box of AZT, a list of side effects." Ron shares a research study with Eve that finds AZT alone is too toxic and doesn't have a lasting effect on HIV levels. After reading this study, Eve immediately lowers all her patients' dosages to the minimum allowed in their trials. The narration in these particular scenes conveys a powerful message that AZT alone was to blame for the deaths of innocent patients.

Characterization is particularly employed to create a villainous image of AZT by associating the medication with Dr. Sevard, a physician who supports the administration of AZT right from the beginning of the film when he allows the trial to be run at his hospital. Eve argues with him about the decision to give people a drug that hasn't been tested on animals first, but he resists her logical reasoning, saying "this is a business." Dr. Sevard later wants Eve to resign when she isn't complying with the trial due to Ron's influential advice, which consequentially paints Dr. Sevard as the villain of the film, because Eve is a character the audience finds to be sensible, compassionate, and concerned only for the welfare of her patients, rather

than for money. Furthermore, Ron calls Dr. Sevard a "murderer" when his friend Rayon dies under his care, during participation in the AZT trial. Using the word murderer sends a direct message to the viewer of just how angry and frustrated HIV/AIDS victims were, with their suspicions about AZT and its effectiveness on their fatal disease. In these scenes, *Dallas Buyers Club* questions the effectiveness and toxicity of AZT in a way that is overly critical and directly blames the medication for the deaths of HIV/AIDS patients as if they could have been prevented without the use of AZT.

The creation of a villainous association between AZT and healthcare providers does more than just give AZT an evil image, but is an indirect representation of the uncertainties people have of their government's motives. For example, the extensive lengths that Ron took in the film to personally research scientific studies and retrieve alternative medicines conveys the immense amount of mistrust toward supposed healthcare and governmental effort to help the victims of HIV/AIDS. For example, Ron flies to several foreign countries in order to obtain his drugs, which are actually legal in those countries; therefore, the United States is seen as unreliable and downright destructive to those dying of AIDS. Moreover, Ron had to become his own physician in order to treat himself, which severely diminishes the role of authoritative figures such as physicians and governmental agencies during an epidemic. This scheme is further displayed in the film when Ron picks up beef at the grocery store and says in disgust "this is the shit that'll rot your insides. What a surprise, FDA approved." The Federal Drug Administration (FDA) is referred to as being on the bad side in connection with AZT multiple times, such as when Ron wants to file a restraining order against "the government and their FDA," as well as when they confiscate all of Ron's alternative medicines that he is using for himself and those he sells them to, to stay alive. These direct accusations toward the FDA demonstrate the film's purposeful intent to craft an opposition between the audience and the government for their malicious creation of AZT. *Dallas Buyers Club* fails to explain to the viewer the reasoning why AZT was approved for the treatment of HIV/AIDS, or to show how many people it did help, but instead portrays the approval of the drug as a criminal

act in American history and the root cause of unfounded death.

For the purpose of providing evidence that *Dallas Buyers Club* misguided their audience about the history of AZT, the truth will now be explored through relevant research regarding the drug's implementation, effectiveness, and undeniable value to the treatment of HIV/AIDS. "The History of Zidovudine (AZT): Partnership and Conflict," written by Mark Yarchoan, thoroughly explains how the drug came to be and why it was approved for use. Zidovudine, also known as azidothymidine, is most commonly abbreviated to AZT and was actually created in 1964, long before the AIDS epidemic, by Dr. Jerome P. Horwitz at the Michigan Cancer Foundation, while in search of anti-cancer medications; however, since it failed to show positive results in leukemic mice, AZT was deemed a failure (Yarchoan 4). Little did Dr. Horwitz know at the time, his creation was in fact very far from being a failure, as it would eventually become a hero in the face of a global crisis, saving millions of lives. With the onset of a mysterious new disease in the early 1980s, Dr. Samuel Broder, a researcher for the National Cancer Institute (NCI), sought a collaboration with pharmaceutical companies to find a drug that could possibly be the answer for thousands of waiting people inflicted with this new disease named AIDS (Yarchoan 4). This proved to be a difficult task because the cause of AIDS was a type of retrovirus called HIV, discovered by two separate researchers named Robert Gallo and Luc Montagnier, and retroviruses were known to be very difficult to effectively control and treat (Yarchoan 1-2). Surely, the immense feelings of fear and concern that patients diagnosed with HIV were experiencing was also felt by the medical researchers in their quest for a cure for a disease they didn't fully understand yet. Many laboratories refused to even attempt development of the drug, but Burroughs Wellcome Co. agreed to partner with Broder and the NCI, and this partnership eventually led to the revival of AZT, an anti-cancer failure that had been shelved for years until it miraculously showed promising success in combating the new retrovirus (Yarchoan 5). Pressured by the growing number of AIDS cases, and the lack of any other answers, AZT was submitted to the FDA, sped to trial just seven days later, and on July 3, 1985 the

first human received AZT for the treatment of HIV/AIDS (Yarchoan 6). AZT's safety and effectiveness in humans was successfully established in phase I trials as the 35 patients were looking and feeling miraculously better, with the side effects being tolerable (Yarchoan 6). Phase II proceeded with a total of 282 patients, which resulted in only one death among the 145 receiving AZT, compared to 16 deaths among those receiving a placebo. With these results, the trial was stopped, and the placebo patients were provided with AZT as a chance to save their lives (Yarchoan 7). The math was simple, less patients taking AZT were dying than those not taking it, so the initial human trials of AZT proved to be successful. By 1987, it was overwhelmingly evident that AZT was both safe and effective; therefore the FDA rightfully approved the use of AZT for the treatment of HIV/AIDS (Yarchoan).

It must be noted that *Dallas Buyers Club* gives a fair argument to back up their claims about AZT when Ron reveals an actual French research study to Eve, which makes her lower her patient's dosages of AZT. It is not absolutely certain, but it is possible that the study being referred to in the film is one published in *The Lancet* in 1988, which describes how AZT was found to be effective for patients during the first initial months, but not after 6 months, and the reason for these results was thought to be due to the haematological toxicity of the drug (Dournon et al). This study certainly has a valid point that proved to be useful in *Dallas Buyers Club's* objective to discredit AZT; however, there are many studies following this one that directly contradict its finding. In 1992, the *New England Journal of Medicine* published a lengthy article in which researchers studied the effects on the survival of AIDS with early treatment and found that AZT not only slowed the progression of the disease but also drastically reduced the mortality rate for individuals at all follow up periods of 6, 12, 18, and 24 months of treatment (Graham et al). The most conclusive analysis of research studies done on AZT monotherapy was by the U.S. National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), which describes several published studies that support the beneficial role of AZT in prolonging the lives of those with HIV/AIDS and ultimately disproves any correlation between the drug and the progression of HIV to AIDS as well as the fatal effects of the disease, because the life expectancy for

## A Critical Analysis of *Dallas Buyers Club*'s Depiction of AZT

AIDS victims undoubtedly increased after the approval of AZT ("AZT and AIDS"). These findings most definitely confirm that *Dallas Buyers Club*'s accusatory view of AZT's effectiveness and causation of death as well as its assertions about AZT being a dangerous, deadly "poison" that "kills every cell in your body" are all unfounded claims.

AZT played an invaluable role in the development of the most optimal treatment plan, called HAART, comprised of multiple anti-retroviral drugs, which is what HIV/AIDS patients primarily use today to stay alive. Samuel Broder explained that AZT confirmed to scientists that this frightening new retrovirus called HIV wasn't completely impervious to medical intervention, instilling hope and most importantly, progress, in a situation that was riddled with uncertainty (Broder 228). Most notably, AZT, combined with a new antiviral called lamivudine, was used as a part of HAART for nearly 10 years, and in the first two years alone between 1996 and 1998, HAART dropped the global mortality rate of AIDS by an astonishing 80% (Matthews). Even though AZT is only used in small amounts today, and as *Dallas Buyers Club* points out, has "largely been replaced by safer, newer therapies," the growing epidemic in the 1980s demanded a quick, effective answer to save lives, not necessarily a perfect long-term solution which would be an impossible feat for FDA to accomplish. The usual development time for new medications is seven to ten years, but development of AZT took just two years from test tube to patient (Broder 226). It is evident with this statistic that the government and healthcare industry took this crisis seriously, doing all they could with the immediate knowledge and resources they had, as safe and fast as humanly possible. Their efforts should absolutely be commended, rather than condemned like *Dallas Buyers Club* spent 2 hours of film doing, convincing audiences that our government is insensitive, unreliable, and downright deceitful when it comes to medicinal science; however, it is actually the film that is being deceitful by failing to show the audience that a diagnosis of HIV is no longer a death sentence thanks to AZT and its successive anti-retroviral medications that we use today. As long as a person has access to health care, there is no reason that one with HIV/AIDS cannot live a long and flourishing

life, and this is only possible because of AZT and the progress that stemmed from it.

*Dallas Buyers Club* spends much of the film refuting AZT with the idea that alternative, experimental medicines are really the answer to the AIDS epidemic; however, research says otherwise. Ron travels all over the world for these alternative drugs and even sells his Cadillac at one point in order to provide his poor club members with the supposed life-saving medication. This tells the viewer that Ron created his buyers' club to give people access to the drugs they really need, not for the purpose of profit, which ultimately convinces the audience about the validity of the alternative medicine. An article in the *Washington Post* titled "What *Dallas Buyers Club* Got Wrong about the AIDS Crisis" is an intriguing response to the film and comments specifically on how its claims about alternative medicine leave a false impression with the viewer because they ended up being useless in reality (Matthews). The drug that Ron was selling the most of, DDC (dideoxycytidine) was approved in 1992 but is no longer used due to its highly toxic effects (Matthews). Furthermore, Peptide-T was the drug that appears to have helped Ron in the film, but as Peter Staley explains, "it never panned out. It's a useless therapy, and it never got approved and nobody uses it today" (qtd. in Matthews). Compound Q, another drug Ron was promoting as a replacement for AZT, was linked to deaths by the FDA, so the government demanded that buyers' clubs stop selling it, and "everyone did... except Ron," said Staley (Matthews). These facts are deceitfully left out of the film, practically making fools of the audience about American history and the efforts of our government to save lives. What the film tries so hard to convince us to believe, about AZT being useless, is ironically only true of the drugs they endorsed.

The unquestionable validation that medical research provides with regard to *Dallas Buyers Club*'s depiction of AZT confirms that the message is distorted and incredibly misleading. Perhaps the most credible source of truth comes from *The Lancet*, one of the oldest and most highly esteemed medical journals in the world, in a professional response to *Dallas Buyers Club*:

... a number of studies demonstrated unequivocally that most patients who took AZT benefited. It is

true that many people started AZT monotherapy too early and developed resistance. If they had delayed antiretroviral treatment until 1997 they would have had more treatment options, but this is a different issue that has no bearing on the question of whether people with HIV who took AZT monotherapy in the late 1980s and early 1990s did better or worse at the time than people at the same clinical stage of HIV who took nothing. (Mullard 592)

This statement by *The Lancet* refutes any question of AZT's value to society during one of the scariest and deadliest times in history. *Dallas Buyers Club*'s crafted deception wrongfully placed blame on the government and their drug AZT as being responsible for the senseless mortality of the AIDS epidemic. Perhaps the attempt to make sense of the immense confusion and loss that humanity experiences during times of pandemic is what really fueled the fire in *Dallas Buyers Club*'s plot. Loss of control and uncertainty often results in anger toward the very thing that is trying to help you, and unfortunately, in this case, it was AZT.

### Works Cited

- Dallas Buyers Club*. Dir. Jean-Marc Vallée. 2014. Film.
- "AZT and AIDS." *National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases*. nih.gov. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 23 Mar. 2010. Web. 14 July 2014.
- Broder, Samuel. "Progress in Drug Therapies for HIV Infection." *Public Health Reports* (1974) 103.3 (1988): 224-29. *JSTOR*. Web. 15 July 2014.
- Dournon, E., et al. "Effects of Zidovudine in 365 Consecutive Patients with Aids or Aids-Related Complex." *The Lancet* (1988): 1297-302. Web. 14 July 2014.
- Graham, Neil M.h., et al. "The Effects on Survival of Early Treatment of Human Immunodeficiency Virus Infection." *New England Journal of Medicine* (1992): 1037-42. Web. 14 July 2014.
- Matthews, Dylan. "What *Dallas Buyers Club* Got Wrong about the AIDS Crisis." *The Washington Post*. washingtonpost.com. The Washington Post, 10 Dec 2013. Web. 29 July 2014.
- Mullard, Asher. "Underground Drug Networks in the Early Days of AIDS." *The Lancet* (2014): 592. Web. 14 July 2014.
- "Update: Mortality Attributable to HIV Infection Among Persons Aged 25-44 Years - United States, 1994." *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*. cdc.gov. Centers for Disease Control, 16 Feb. 1996. Web. 30 Jul 2014.
- Yarchoan, Mark. "The History of Zidovudine (AZT): Partnership and Conflict." *Scribd.com*. 2 May 2012. Web. 14 July 2014.

---

Evaluation: *Megan wrote an organized, well-supported, and articulate essay, in which she deftly weaves together sound research and analysis to provide a persuasive criticism of Dallas Buyers Club.*

---

---

## Through the Prism of de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*: Yukio Mishima's "Patriotism" and Jan Morris' *Conundrum*

---

Ala Hashemi-Haeri

Course: Humanities 105/History 105  
(Great Ideas of World Civilizations)

Instructor: Andrew Wilson

Assignment: Write a response to Simone de Beauvoir's  
The Second Sex.

Simone de Beauvoir's book *The Second Sex* came to define the second wave of feminism after it was published in 1949. Instead of exclusively focusing on practical matters such as women's suffrage and property rights, the themes introduced in de Beauvoir's work asked the reader to examine the social order that had led to women being seen as second class and inferior to their male counterparts. In light of the book's impact on how we examine the role of gender in society to this day, it is interesting to look at Yukio Mishima's "Patriotism" and Jan Morris' *Conundrum* through the prism of de Beauvoir's work. While Mishima's piece serves to confirm all the ways in which women are overshadowed by men in a patriarchal society, Morris' work seems to throw some doubt on de Beauvoir's claim that gender identity is wholly an artificial societal construct.

In *The Second Sex*, de Beauvoir contends that men essentially oppress women by characterizing them as the "other"; therefore, women are defined exclusively in opposition to men. In doing so, man is in effect denying her humanity. In the patriarchy, man occupies the top tier, the "First Sex," and he is essential, absolute, and transcendent. The woman is defined by her mutilation of not having a penis and is therefore incomplete and inessential, hence the book's title. The eternal male extends out into the world and imposes his will on it, whereas the eternal feminine is fated to what de Beauvoir calls "immanence"

and subservience to him. Whereas he creates, acts, and invents, her only purpose is procreation and therefore she can only be complete if a man saves her. De Beauvoir sees no physiological reason that these differences should exist and concludes that gender is a social construct that is designed to maintain the patriarchy. Women are made to think they are valuable only because of their ability to give birth and be a mother. Women are afforded a false sense of respect and adulation that prevents them from realizing the injustice that is being done to them and serves to further their enslavement. De Beauvoir also places at least some of the blame on women themselves because they have helped perpetuate this unequal system to a certain extent. She advocates for a genderless society, which in her view, is the only way to true equality.

In Mishima's "Patriotism," we are introduced to Lt. Shinji Takeyama and his new bride Reiko in a news-like introduction that informs the reader that they had committed ritual suicide, or *seppuku*, together. After the introduction, the story is told in a very insular fashion where we are only provided with the perspectives of Shinji and Reiko. While Shinji leaves the house and has a life in the military to which he is very dedicated, Reiko's entire life revolves around her devotion to her husband, who had become "the sun about which her whole world revolved." She has completely abandoned any sense of identity she had before they were married. She has cut off contact with all her high school friends and even her once cherished collection of ceramic figures no longer holds any meaning for her. De Beauvoir would point to the fact that Reiko's identity has been erased, and she only exists for the sake of her husband, as proof of how deeply patriarchy has warped her sense of self.

Even though their relationship is quite passionate, as Mishima takes great pains in describing their carnal activities, it is not one between equals. Reiko consistently prostrates herself before her husband and even though he loves her, it is the same way a master loves his obedient slave. Even when at the moment of unbridled passion and happiness, Reiko decides to ask Shinji permission to commit *seppuku* with him, all he can think of is what a good job he has done in training such an obedient wife. Reiko is honored when he asks her to witness his suicide to make sure that there is no doubt in the way the deed

was done. She thinks he holds her in such high esteem to ask such a thing of her, but in reality all he wants is an audience. She has completely bought into the false praise and in de Beauvoir's terms, Reiko is convinced she is a queen, when in reality, she is treated as a slave.

Reiko's wedding gift from her mother serves to illustrate de Beauvoir's point that women themselves have been complicit in perpetuating their own enslavement. Reiko's mother had given her a suicide knife as her wedding present because cultural expectations demanded that the wife of a soldier should follow him into the other world by killing herself. This expectation was not something that had only been revealed to Reiko upon her betrothal to Shinji. Rather, she must have been taught this from early childhood since she expresses no shock about her mother's gift. She does not flinch when Shinji makes it implicitly clear to her that he expects her to commit suicide if he were to die in the line of duty. Even when she does commit the act in the end, she binds her legs together so that she dies in a "dignified" pose. Reiko was told all her life what the world expected of her, and she was never asked to think what she should expect from the world. The degree of cultural brainwashing that Reiko has been subjected to her by her mother her entire life had made her fate all but an inevitability.

Even Shinji can be seen as a victim of conforming to what society expects of his gender. He is ordered to do what he sees as a dishonorable act, an order that in his capacity as a soldier would be dishonorable to disobey. The only solution to this conundrum for him is to commit ritual suicide in protest, although the degree of enthusiasm he shows for the act casts some doubt on the purity of his intentions, as if he were merely looking for an excuse to bask in the glory that he associated with *seppuku*. It is for this reason that one could find it difficult to have sympathy for Shinji as another victim of the oppressive expectations of a patriarchal society. De Beauvoir believed that society brainwashed both sexes into accepting and conforming to expected gender roles. Men, she argued, have an easier time buying into this way of thinking because it places them in a position of power. For Shinji, societal expectations, or at least his perception of those expectations, were not seen as oppressive. Rather, his obsession with conforming to and meeting those perceived expectations became his *raison d'être*.

So far, Simone de Beauvoir stands vindicated in her blistering assessment of society and patriarchy. However, upon reading Jan Morris' *Conundrum*, one cannot help but question de Beauvoir's main contention about the artificial nature of gender identity. De Beauvoir believed that "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman," in that one becomes a woman through and as a result of societal intervention, where female children are indoctrinated into feminine gender roles. But Jan Morris, having been born a man, was never subjected to this type of indoctrination. Before her sex reassignment procedure, Jan Morris lived an accomplished, albeit a very unhappy life, as James Morris. Despite all his accomplishments as a writer and historian, James Morris felt like he was living a lie since he knew, deep down, that he was really a woman born in the wrong body.

James Morris, at a very early age, had realized that his male body did not match his notion of his true female gender. This self-identification as a woman was not something that would have been necessarily forced on him through indoctrination or societal pressure. If anything, things would have been more confusing for Morris, as everything he was being taught would have been the opposite of what he felt. Research into gender dysphoria indicates that in addition to psychological and behavioral factors, there is a strong biological basis related to genetics, the wiring of the brain, and prenatal exposure to hormones (Heylens 751-757). Therefore, one could reasonably accept Morris' assertion that his gender identity was to a large extent innate and not a direct result of societal indoctrination. This largely repudiates de Beauvoir's assertion of gender as a mere social construct. In de Beauvoir's defense, at the time she wrote *The Second Sex* in 1949, not much was known about the psyche of transgendered individuals. History was replete with examples of men and women acting like, and considering themselves as a part of, their opposite gender, but even the notion that such transgendered individuals can exist as a separate category did not come into wide acceptance until the 1950s. Instead, such "anomalies" were explained away as degenerates or homosexuals. Jan Morris details how, in her former body, she went from doctor to doctor trying to figure out exactly what was wrong with her, to no avail. Only upon meeting Dr. Harry Benjamin did she find a sympathetic professional who didn't try to blame her

**Through the Prism of de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*:  
Yukio Mishima's "Patriotism" and Jan Morris'  
Conundrum**

condition on a mental or physical deficiency. Since being transgendered was an "immutable state," Dr. Benjamin said, then it would be only logical and merciful that "if we cannot alter the conviction to fit the body, should we not, in certain circumstances, alter the body to fit the conviction?"

Jan Morris' story and that of countless others like her show that gender identity is something innate. It is undeniable that de Beauvoir does an excellent job at dissecting the overbearing gender identities imposed upon us in a patriarchal society. De Beauvoir's point about social indoctrination is true when one looks at the oppressive practices that exist in a patriarchal system, but we can no longer accept her assertion that gender identity is an exclusively social and therefore artificial creation. Yukio Mishima's story serves to highlight the warped reality that the pressure of conforming to societal gender expectations can create among men and women. The dynamics of the relationship in "Patriotism" were exactly the reasons why de Beauvoir would have argued for a gender-neutral society as a way to achieve gender equality. However, it appears there is another path to achieve that goal, one that embraces the innate nature of

gender identity and seeks to expand it. In this way, gender equality is achieved not by elimination of one gender role or another, but by creating many more ways for people to find their own gender identity. One could argue that this would be gender equality through dilution since if everybody is different, then nobody can be dominant and become the oppressor. After all, it would be hard to imagine de Beauvoir objecting to such diversity because to do so would be to force someone to live in "bad faith," which went against Simone's core beliefs. While some may find this type of wide-ranging inclusiveness as bewildering, I think it is only a much overdue recognition of the diversity and complexities of the nature of human identity.

### **Works Cited**

- De Beauvoir, Simone. *The Second Sex*. Trans. H. M. Parshley. 1953. New York: Bantam, 1961.
- Heylens, G., et al. "Gender Identity Disorder in Twins: A Review of the Case Report Literature." *The Journal of Sexual Medicine* 8 (3): 751-757. Print.
- Mishima, Yukio. "Patriotism." *Death in Midsummer and Other Stories*. Trans. Geoffrey W. Sargent. New York: New Directions, 1966.
- Morris, Jan. *Conundrum*. New York: Harcourt, 1974.

---

Evaluation: *Ala's filtering of Mishima's "Patriotism" and Jan Morris' Conundrum through the lens of de Beauvoir results in a well-written, succinct, truly thoughtful critique.*



---

# Holy “Howl”: Spiritual Guidance from Allen Ginsberg

---

*Jasen Jonas*

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Kurt Hemmer

---

Assignment: *Write a four-page argumentative essay about the fourth section of Allen Ginsberg’s “Howl.”*

Allen Ginsberg’s controversial poem “Howl” paved the way for a great deal of the Beat Generation’s literary works. Yet, its crude and vulgar language enraged much of society. “Howl” was put on trial as obscene and pornographic—unworthy of a place in poetic history. However, Ginsberg’s words resonated within the minds of many people, fulfilling the very purpose of poetry: to reach deep down within readers and bring to the surface that which makes us human, to open our eyes and see the world from a different light. Sixty years later, Ginsberg’s words still are still very much alive. Part I beautifully illustrates the frailty of the human mind by examining the insanity that had befallen Ginsberg’s companions. The cause of this devastating madness resided in Moloch, described as an all-encompassing evil in Part II. Ginsberg’s mantra “I’m with you in Rockland” in Part III provided a way of surviving Moloch by highlighting the strong empathic link that humans sometimes share with each other. Yet, the “Footnote to Howl” provides us with a greater purpose. While some debate the relevance of “Footnote to Howl,” whether it was simple ramblings of a madman or the ending necessary to conclude “Howl,” Ginsberg offers a way to defeat Moloch by not only embracing the spirituality of humankind but the holiness of Moloch as well.

In the beginning of “Footnote to Howl” Ginsberg repeats “Holy!” fifteen times in succession, mimicking the chanting often seen with some religions, such as Buddhism. Perhaps he was trying to induce a trancelike state to help

clear the reader’s mind, allowing the reader to be more accepting of Ginsberg’s point of view that everything and everyone is holy. Throughout the “Footnote,” he challenges much of what society deemed as undesirable and found holiness within it. Ginsberg sees sacredness in jazz and the middle class, marijuana hipsters, and Midwestern grandfathers. He writes, “holy the unknown buggered and suffering beggars” (118), giving the downtrodden a more elevated status than society usually does. Ginsberg also writes that even “the tongue and cock and hand and asshole” (114) are holy. Some would say this was written for mere shock value, while others would argue it displays Ginsberg’s homosexuality, which is true, but it alludes to the greater problem that much of society deems the naked human body as shameful. This idea had been propagated throughout the centuries and has been engrained into our very psyche, but it was not always this way. There have been many artistic depictions throughout history that captured the beauty and purity of human nakedness, both the feminine and masculine. Ginsberg urged us to reclaim the sanctity of our natural form and embrace our sexuality, not to feel ashamed of it.

Accepting that we are sexual creatures has become easier over the years, but believing that there is holiness to be found in Moloch, on the other hand, is a much harder concept to grasp. Ginsberg proclaims, “holy the railroad holy the locomotive” (125), the very machines that allowed Moloch’s influence to spread. And Ginsberg shouts, “holy the Angel in Moloch!” (124). For him to believe there are redeeming qualities in Moloch, whom Ginsberg blamed for destroying the “best minds” of his time, is quite endearing. There is some good within the capitalist machine in the form of advanced medicine and technology, but these advancements are still used to manipulate society, to make it more obedient and compliant to the ways of Moloch, the very aspect that Ginsberg yearned for humankind to overcome. By suppressing our greedy tendencies for money and power, perhaps we can allow Moloch to coexist with the altruistic society that Ginsberg sought.

The final lines of “Footnote to Howl” illustrate the building blocks of this more humane society, which, consequently, allows us to find the holiness in Moloch. Ginsberg emphasizes the points many religions try to

## Holy “Howl”: Spiritual Guidance from Allen Ginsberg

convey: “Holy forgiveness! mercy! charity! faith! Holy! Ours! bodies! suffering! magnanimity!” (126). All of these things truly make one holy. Ginsberg wanted us to break free from the soullessness of society and embrace these aspects of humanity. He believed that every human should attain this state of being. One only has to look inside “the supernatural extra brilliant intelligent kindness of the soul” (127), insists Ginsberg. This final line of “Howl” gives the reader the notion that there is an awe-inspiring, and truly holy, power within us all. We need to only recognize it.

The “Footnote to Howl” brings us hope for humanity’s salvation. We need only to accept the advice of Ginsberg. “Howl” leads us through the problematic underbelly of our society, opening our eyes to a world filled with desperation and insanity. Humans have often sought the unobtainable, which has allowed us to break barriers once thought unbreakable. Yet, we shy away from this holiness that Ginsberg preached about. Some people do in fact try to reach this plane of existence, to help their fellow people, but most of us seem to be concerned about serving Moloch. We pollute our bodies and minds with insignificant and problematic desires. The stress caused by this is immense, and some crumble beneath the pressure. We confine ourselves to such strict guidelines, molds formed by society, so that it drives us to the brink of insanity. If we could only see ourselves as this holy entity that Ginsberg witnesses, then maybe we could begin caring more for others than we do for ourselves. Society has come a long way from Ginsberg’s time, accepting what was once considered taboo, but we still have such a long way to go before expelling the evil in Moloch altogether. We must let go of the ignorant past and cling to our humanity, if we truly strive to be a great society. Humanity must triumph over itself and embrace its holiness, so that we might find the redemption and salvation that we truly seek.

### Works Cited

Ginsberg, Allen. “Howl.” *Howl and Other Poems*. 1956. San Francisco: City Lights, 2014.9-28. Print.

---

Evaluation: *I was impressed with Jasen’s ability to see what Ginsberg might have intended in an extremely difficult section of a difficult poem while keeping his argument in the context of the entire poem.*

---

---

# Lack of Women in STEM Fields

Alifya Josh

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Joshua Sunderbruch

Assignment: *Identify a problem and propose a solution grounded in research.*

Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) are important modernizing forces in the world today and help create the new innovations we are so dependent on. However, most of these necessary items are mainly devised and produced with the ideas of men. Women still don't have the same opportunities to make their mark on STEM research and jobs. They are forced to work much harder than men just to get a chance to contribute in these fields. Many programs have been created to make STEM jobs easier to obtain for women, but they are not given the prospect of competing equally with men because they aren't considered to be at the same level. Social stereotypes still surround women trying to get into the STEM field, and women are discouraged by these stereotypes. Science has always been seen and portrayed as a masculine turf, and women haven't totally broken that barrier yet. They have achieved many feats in the STEM areas, but the problem is that they're still not seen as a norm; a woman working in these areas always sticks out against all the other men. Although women have advanced in many areas that they were unable to in the past, they still don't receive equal opportunities as men do in STEM careers. As one source states, "Although women fill close to half of all the jobs in the U.S. economy, they hold less than 25 percent of STEM jobs. This has been the case throughout the past decade, even as college educated women have increased their share of the overall workforce" (Beede et al). This issue can be resolved in many ways, but must be dealt with early on. If the stereotypes surrounding girls in this area can be

diminished at an early age, these same women wouldn't have to deal with the issues later on. The problem starts with an early age and progresses in higher education.

Starting from elementary, middle, and high school, both girls and boys take math and science courses in roughly the same numbers, and about as many girls as boys leave high school prepared to pursue science and engineering as their majors in college. According to an article in *Science News Magazine*, "Girls are earning high school math and science credits at the same rate as boys and are earning slightly higher grades in these classes" (Bower). This means that merit cannot be used as a reason to reject women from STEM fields, since they earn the same grades as boys and in many cases even higher grades. Also, "among first-year college students, women are much less likely than men to say that they intend to major in STEM" (Bower). As the education gets more specific and job-worthy, the decline of women is more and more. Women's representation in science and engineering declines further at the graduate level and yet again in the transition to the workplace (Bower). As women get deeper into the studies of STEM, they start realizing that if they want to prosper in life later on, it's best to choose a career that they will have an equal chance in. They don't want to work in an area that has been made taboo by men.

One interesting way to look at the gender gap is the way women are in the midst of breaking barriers while men have long passed them and are moving on to newer and exciting avenues. Even in the past, women have always achieved something after a man has. The first astronaut was a man, the first cancer researcher was a man, the first patent was received by a man, and there still hasn't been a woman president. Women are seen as being capable to achieve something, only after a man has already broken records. In the article "What Gender is Science?" it says, "Women engineers get the job on site once a man has either turned it down, or found it not feasible to waste his time on" (Charles). This proves it all: if men decide that a job or task is not worthy of their effort, then women are considered to carry it out.

The stereotypes of women in STEM areas affect women themselves and others that work in the area. Science being a masculine field is always in the

## Lack of Women in STEM Fields

subconscious because everyone has always thought it so. STEM women have to deal with these notions throughout their lives, and have to acquire the courage to persevere. These beliefs also negatively affect them and lower their aspirations. Claude Steele, professor of educational and social psychology at New York University, researched the idea of “stereotype threat” or “the threat of being viewed through the lens of a negative stereotype or the fear of doing something that would confirm that stereotype” (Hill). Steele did an experiment to prove that stereotype threat affects performance; he recruited 30 female and 30 male students for a math test and equally divided them into two groups (Hill). One group was told that men would do better than women on this test (threat condition); the other was told that both genders had an equal opportunity (non threat condition) (Hill). The bar graph accompanying the article illustrates that women with the threat condition got a 5/30 on the test whereas women without the threat performed much higher and got a 17/30 on the test (Hill). This proves that if women were not constantly reminded of the fact that more men are in STEM fields, or that men are better at STEM fields, it would allow them to do much better. Not only would it allow them to do better, but it would also allow much further pursuit of the career.

Another study about gender stereotypes experimented with the notion that “girls don’t do math” and got similar results. An experiment was done where young girls and boys took the IAT (Implicit Association Test) and were asked math questions mixed with questions that would test what they correlated the subject of math to. The study found that “elementary school girls showed a weaker identification with math than boys on both implicit and self-report measures (math self-concept). This suggests that the math–gender stereotype develops early and differentially influences boys’ versus girls’ self-identification with math *prior* to ages at which differences in math achievement emerge” (Cvencek, Meltzoff, and Greenwald). Both studies show that gender stereotypes are established at a young age and affect women negatively. The experiments prove that the difficulty of math has nothing to do with the mindset since younger children were tested at an age where everyone is at the same level. They are raised with the idea that men are meant to excel in math and science areas and don’t really

connect women with that atmosphere. This causes an even stronger ideology as they get older. The importance of changing this principle early on is also seen with the studies.

Once women obtain the hard and strenuous education that STEM fields usually demand, they are, yet again, put second to men in acquiring jobs. According to the National Research Council, “Although recent research found that when women do apply for STEM faculty positions at major research universities they are less likely than men to be hired, smaller percentages of qualified women apply for these positions in the first place. Employers are choosing men over women enforcing the stereotypes that women don’t have the abilities like men causing fewer women to be hired, and in turn causing low rates of women in STEM fields” (Gross). Also, “55 percent of women begin in lower-paying, entry-level positions, compared to 39 percent of men, according to the report. In addition, 84 percent of women in their first post-MBA job were less likely than men to strive toward a CEO-level position, compared to 97 percent of men” (Gross). So even if women studying STEM subjects in college and the graduate level increase, there is no guarantee that they will eventually add to its workforce. Actually, they will have useless degrees that won’t help the country in any way.

Women are, in addition, differentiated from their counterparts in the workforce. Many women leave midcareer due to dissatisfaction in the workplace. Catherine Hill says this occurs because they “cite feelings of isolation, an unsupportive work environment, extreme work schedules, and unclear rules about advancement and success as major factors in their decision to leave.” Once women have actually gained the education, competed with men, and gotten jobs in the STEM fields, they still have hurdles to overcome. The workplace doesn’t get any easier for females even after they get job, which may times causes them to drop out and go other ways. Women are 35% more likely to leave STEM areas because of workplace bias than are men, according to the Society of Women Engineers, signifying that the bias in the workplace must be so demeaning that women just give up on their futures. STEM education is the hardest area to study in; after achieving professional status, women still

give up. The bar of success is set so high for women, that many times it becomes unreachable.

Female scholars in STEM have to work much harder than males to be accepted into the environment of its field. This is proved in *Science News Magazine*, where “Researchers found that a woman had to be twice as productive as a man in publishing research and in other areas of scientific achievement in order to be judged equally competent” (Bower). For fellow staff members to be fully pleased, women have to go above and beyond what is asked for. They have to again and again prove that they are able and belong in this area and are not permitted to make mistakes. This is again shown in the article “Why So Few?”: “Doing what men do, as well as they do it, does not seem to be enough; women must additionally be able to manage the delicate balance of being both competent and communal” (Hill). This means that women have to compete with the stereotypical world of men, go through many obstacles to get to the same place where men are, and work twice as hard to get there, so, when will women be seen as equals and at the same rank as men?

The best way to bring up the number of women in STEM is to tackle the problem early on. In junior high school and high school, counselors and teachers should push women that they see with engineering and math characteristics. According to *Forbes Magazine*, “The problem starts as early as grade school. Young girls are rarely encouraged to pursue math and science, which is problematic considering [studies show](#) a lack of belief in intellectual growth can actually inhibit it” (Huhman). If the importance of women doing engineering and mathematics is instilled at an early age, it will be easier to push women in the field. The earlier girls have a strong base and passion for STEM, the more embedded it can get throughout the years. An interest in science and technology needs to be fostered at a young age, but many times it is seen that women are not participating as young boys are. K-12 educators should work to encourage young girls to pursue opportunities in STEM by offering more hands-on workshops for girls to learn about science and technology.

There are many organizations and projects in place to help with this issue. “For instance, the National

Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the Girl Scouts of the United States America (GSUSA) developed a Memorandum of Understanding through which the two organizations work together to achieve common goals: motivating and encouraging girls to do their best” (“Women in STEM”). These programs help motivate girls and women to pursue careers where men dominate. Also, it is important for women to see that these fields not only need them but that women can gain from this, too. Women in STEM earn considerably more than those in non-STEM occupations. “On average, men and women earn \$36.34 and \$31.11 per hour, respectively, in STEM jobs – higher than the \$24.47 that men earn and \$19.26 that women earn on average, in other occupations” (Beede et al). This should be made more apparent to girls; they should be educated on the fact that engineers also make a lot of money and that engineering is a field of science to consider as a profession.

The lack of role models for young women also causes these discrepancies. “Mentorship is an important key to increasing and keeping women engaged in scientific and technical careers. By connecting established role models with nascent STEM professionals, mentoring works to address the preconceived notions of these careers as inflexible or male-dominated that may discourage many girls from participating in STEM fields” (“Women in STEM”). Schools should consider bringing in women engineers to speak and educate young girls about all the opportunities that STEM fields have to offer.

The majority of the responsibility lies on schools and the education system. A program where girls are separated and taught and educated about the benefits of STEM fields would be very beneficial. If once a month, young girls, K-12, have women in the field come in and talk to them about their jobs and the environments they work in, it would help entice the young girls to pursue these fields, as well. Also if this were an ongoing program, it would be something the girls would get used to over the years and learn to actually get involved with. It is imperative that the program begins at an early age, starting from kindergarten through high school, and is consistent so that the negative notions that are set within these years can be erased or at least lowered.

Women are underrepresented in many areas, one

## Lack of Women in STEM Fields

of the largest being STEM fields. Compared to in the past, women are progressing in STEM careers; however, a gender gap is still evident that shows that there is still a lot of room for improvement of the system and that women still have many hurdles to overcome. Women are prevented from achieving high-level STEM jobs due to social stereotypes about men in STEM fields. Women are not treated equally within these jobs and are subject to bias because they are expected to work harder than men just to be seen in the same caliber. Their capability is constantly questioned in the workplace, and they are judged at a much higher level than their counterparts. The problem starts at a young age and must be worked at from that age. Young girls need to be empowered to pursue STEM fields and keep with them as a career. Having strong role models and programs that constantly show by example the success of women in STEM can help lessen the gap. Science, technology, engineering, and math are the bases of the most fundamental to the most intricate of systems, and without women's input, those processes will continue to have glitches. Progress in STEM fields will always have setbacks when lacking input from women.

### Works Cited

- Beede, David, et al. "Women in Stem: A Gender Gap to Innovation." *Esa.gov*. U.S. Department of Commerce, Aug. 011. Web. 08 Dec. 2014.
- Bower, Bruce. "Showdown at Sex Gap." *Science News* 172.21 (2007): 328. *MAS Ultra- SchoolEdition*. Web. 05 Dec. 2014.
- Charles, Maria. "What Gender is Science?" *Context* 10.2 (2011): 22-28. Web. 06 Dec 2014.
- Cvencek, D., A.N. Meltzoff, and A.G. Greenwald. "Math-Gender Stereotypes in Elementary School Children." *Child Development* 82 (2011): 766-779.
- Gross, Samantha. Report Reveals Problems, Barriers Women Face in STEM Fields.»*The Daily Free Press*. N.p., 24 Oct. 2014. Web. 07 Dec. 2014.
- Hill, Catherine. "Why So Few?" Washington, D.C.: AAUW, Feb 2010. Web. 05 Dec. 2014.
- Huffman, Heather R. "STEM Fields And The Gender Gap: Where Are The Women?" *Forbes*. Forbes Magazine, 20 June 2012. Web. 07 Dec. 2014.
- Kevles, Bettyann Holtzmann. *Almost Heaven: The Story of Women in Space*. New York: Basic Books, 2003. Print.
- "Statistics." *National Girls Collaborative Project*. National Girls Collaborative Project, n.d. Web. 05 Dec. 2014.
- "Women in STEM." *The White House*. The White House, n.d. Web. 06 Dec. 2014.

---

Evaluation: *Alifiya takes a simple assignment and turns it into an opportunity to discuss a major issue of deep importance to her and to society. The way she takes apart the issue and addresses what is already in place while still pressing for more to be done shows how completely she embraced the assignment. Her ability to place her concern in a real-world context makes her essay particularly worth reading.*

---

# Melodic Memories: Nick Hornby's *High Fidelity*

---

Whitney Keck

Learning Community: Rock and Roll  
Courses: English 102 (Composition)  
and Literature 105 (Poetry)

Instructors: Kurt Hemmer and Maggie McKinley

Assignment: Write a research essay about one of the major themes found in Nick Hornby's *High Fidelity*.

Nick Hornby's novel *High Fidelity* centers around a thirty-five-year-old antihero named Rob Fleming—a college dropout who owns a record store called Championship Vinyl that specializes in selling secondhand records. Rob, our unreliable narrator, is a confused, insecure, and needy romantic who is feeling stuck in his unfulfilling life. Throughout the book, we follow Rob on his journey of self-exploration. The book centers around his recent break up with Laura, his girlfriend, and Rob's attempt to emotionally mature. As critic Joanne Knowles explains, "Rob's adolescence has been considerably prolonged, but his experiences during the novel are clearly recognizable as part of the journey towards adulthood and maturity" (23). Rob explores his past relationships with Alison, Penny, Jackie, Charlie, and Sarah to try and understand what may have forced those relationships to be unsuccessful and why he has such a deep feeling of rejection. While Rob can be an annoying narrator at times because of his constant dreary views on life, he maintains a sense of dark humor throughout the book, giving some comic relief. He is honest with the reader and always says what he means, which creates an intimacy with his character. He also has a serious passion for music, which many people can share. He relies on music to mold and create his whole world and cope with his feelings. Even the way the book is written can be compared to the format of an audio cassette. Critic Mikko Keskinen points out, "*High Fidelity*, is divided into two sections, titled 'then...' (iii-32) and 'now' (35-323). It would be alluring to regard the two sections as the obverse and reverse sides of a record or a cassette... (4). I can relate to Rob throughout the book, though I am not a thirty-five-year-old man, because I can understand his connection with and passion for music. Music has been a central part of my life since I was six and first tried to play the violin. I have played instruments throughout my life and, like Rob, use music as an escape from reality. I remember as a kid listening to Elvis records with my dad, going to jazz concerts with my parents and asking for a new instrument every Christmas. Rob uses his record collection to reflect on the events of his life through memories and emotions; music connects Rob's internal world with his surrounding reality.

Rob uses his record collection to establish an emotional link between himself and the artists he

admires. Rob states, "Well, I'd like my life to be like a Bruce Springsteen song" (158). He believes the artists and the songs they write depict what he would consider the "perfect" life: simple, easy, and enjoyable. Rob understands the concept that music provides the emotion to life and self-growth. As Joel Douek, a film and television composer, writes, "music is a path to enlightenment, it is 'food for the soul'. In ancient shamanic traditions, it is a vehicle to travel into the deeper realms and heal a person" (3). Rob uses his music collection to create and shape his perfect reality because he is so unhappy with the life he is currently living. He feels stuck in his monotonous life, owning a record store that can barely stay open, and he misses the heart-racing nights of dj-ing at the club. Near the end of the book, Laura pushes Rob into exploring careers that would make him happy. The first one Rob chooses is to be a music journalist (290). He dreams of a life where he can become completely immersed in music and enjoy the magical life it appears to be.

Rob also uses his music collection to feel like he is in complete control over something in his life. Sorting his record collection is a way for him to set his own rules and boundaries for his world. Music is his comfort zone; he feels as though music is a safe place for him. After his traumatic break-up with Laura, he reorganizes his record collection yet again. He explains, "Tuesday night I reorganized my record collection. I often do this at periods of emotional stress. There are some people who would find this a pretty dull way to spend an evening, but I'm not one of them. This is my life, and it's nice to be able to wade in it, immerse your arms in it, touch it" (54). He reorganizes his record collection in autobiographical order this time, isolating himself from the others, immersing himself into the past, and, as Rob would say, prolonging the "bad day in his head." Rob rearranges his record collection obsessively, and when that does not do the trick, he rearranges his relationships with women just so things will feel right again. When Douek asked other composers how they created and wrote music, the answer was simple: They all agreed that they had no idea how they created the music. It becomes an experience that is fueled by intuition or reflex. He states, "The core of creating and articulating musical ideas seems to be 100% instinctive" (4). For Rob, rearranging

his collection and searching for more becomes a pattern or habit and intuition: his primary coping mechanism. Douek goes on to explain how creativity can be sparked by certain experiences in life: "Crisis and creativity are strange yet promiscuous bedfellows: perhaps it is because crisis demands a directness of experience. Maybe the raw emotions of duress clarify the path from emotion to musical expression" (5). Rob has a hard time confronting his emotions directly and relies on his music to emote for him. Rob often makes mixtapes or compilations of music during times of complications or excitement and uncertainty in his life to feel like he has control over the situations. When he first met Laura, he immediately created a mixtape of his favorite music to express his feelings directly to her, to control the way she would feel about him and what he liked. It was a difficult process that had to be precise:

A good compilation tape, like breaking up, is hard to do. You've got to kick off with a corker, to hold the attention (I started with 'Got To Get You Off My Mind', but then I realized that she might not get any further than track one, side one if I delivered what she wanted straight away, so I buried it in the middle of side two), and then you've got to up it a notch, and you can't have white music and black music together, unless the white music sounds like black music, and you can't have two tracks by the same artist side by side, unless you've done the whole thing in pairs, and . . . oh, there are loads of rules. (89)

Rob uses his knowledge of music to boost his self-esteem and the relationships around him. It is the one thing that he finds himself confident about, as Barry Faulk, a professor at Florida State University says, "his connoisseurship of rock" (1). Rob mainly surrounds himself with people, like Barry, Dick, and Marie, who also have a passion for music. Rob sticks with only a very specific taste of music that he can mold his world with best. Robert Christgau explains:

But even if Fleming were a pop polymath he'd be stuck in the same developmental cul-de-sac. He'd still be a collector, and over informed media



connoisseur, a snob of demotic who judges people by what they like rather than what they do. And he'd still be somebody who spends 25 years savoring songs of love without learning anything useful about it. (2-3)

Rob's record collection reflects his life, his whole being. It is the way he shows and explains himself to the people around him. It is clear at times that Rob is proud of his job and knowledge: "I have a little glow on, maybe because this is after all my work, and it's going OK, maybe because I'm proud of us, of the way that, though our talents are small and peculiar, we use them to their best advantage" (97). Though he is proud, he chooses not to grow in life and remains stagnant in his monotonous life, using his record collection to calm him and trick him into thinking everything will be alright.

Music is part of our everyday life. When we are traveling, working, shopping, spending time with one another, music is in the background. Music engulfs our lives; there is an emotional connection to music. Hearing a familiar song can rehash every detail of memories and emotions that were long forgotten. Most married folks remember their first dance with their significant other and the exact song that played. Most people instantly remember and recall how they felt and everything about that exact moment. Rob uses his record collection to represent and remember parts of his life. Rob expresses this attachment to his record collection, stating, "sentimental music has this great way of taking you back somewhere at the same time that it takes you forward, so you feel nostalgic and hopeful all at the same time" (63). Rob uses his music to reminisce about his adolescence and dream about the future, hoping he will never have to grow up. In Douek's article about music and emotion, written from the perspective of a composer, he states, "We are immersed and we can relive an experience in vivid depth and feeling: the song that played when we first fell in love, or that fueled the wild antics of a summer vacation. Music can transport us to a place or geography—the twang of a sitar, a mountain yodel or an African polyrhythm—each encoding a cultural longitude and latitude" (14). Douek makes a valid point. There are many times throughout the day I will be at work, a song comes on, and somebody

says, "Man this song brings back a lot of memories." In a recent study conducted by Dr. Amee Baird, a clinical neuropsychologist at Hunter Brain Injury Service in Newcastle, Australia, and Séverine Samson, a professor at the University of Lille and La Salpêtrière Hospital (Paris), it was discovered that songs evoked strong memories in both healthy control subjects and patients with acquired brain injuries. In the abstract of their case study, they state, "The findings suggest that music is an effective stimulus for eliciting autobiographical memories and may be beneficial in the rehabilitation of autobiographical amnesia. . ." (1). It is understandable why Rob thinks of Laura every time he hears Solomon Burke's "Got to Get You Off My Mind." Hearing the song triggers his amygdala (which is involved with processing emotions) and the hippocampus (which is important for memory and learning) to bring him back to that exact moment when he met Laura. Music triggers emotions within us that can be hard to access or remember. Douek points out, "In a film, the dialogue and action tell us what the characters are thinking and doing, but the music can tell us what they are feeling" (3). Rob would agree with this sentiment; music helps Rob gauge his emotions and helps him cope with the situations he encounters. Douek explains:

While most people possess the capacity to feel emotions and have them triggered or enhanced by musical cues, composers need to have a kind of open conduit between feeling and fingers, a channel to move a complex, wordless inner experience toward an outward expression. We draw out these feelings from our well of experiences and influences, from what moves *us*. And we must take care to refill our well with new life adventures lest it run dry. (6)

Studies show that while music has no specific intrinsic value, people still use music to help boost moods and make the day more enjoyable. In a recent study published in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, Fabrizio Di Muro and Kyle Murray discovered that "when consumers are in a negative mood, we find they prefer products that are incongruent with both level of arousal and the valence of their current affective state" (574). Rob would pose the same questions he did in the book, "What came first—the music or the misery? Did I listen to music because I

was miserable? Or was I miserable because I listened to music? Do all those records turn you into a melancholy person?" (24-25). I guess we will never know the answer to Rob's questions.

I can identify with Rob and his struggles over growing up and finding self-esteem. It is difficult to let go of adolescence and the freedom of being young. Growing up is scary, having to come to terms with the idea that eventually you are going to die and each day you are closer. It is frightening and for some people, like Rob, disabling. However, by the end of the book, Rob's outlook becomes more optimistic as he realizes there are always different ways to create firsts in his life. Ultimately, Rob just wants to be accepted and loved like everyone else. He wants to know where he fits in the world. It can be difficult feeling like your life is slipping away and everyone around you is growing and becoming so successful and happy. Feeling like that and then putting on a good song can make the whole world stop and feel a little bit safer. Music brings a beauty into the world that cannot be experienced or expressed in any other way. I have found myself many times being at work putting on music of the 1990s just to dance my way through the day. The first song you put on in the morning will set the mood for the rest of your day. Rob would agree with me when I say Maya Angelou puts it best: "Music was my refuge. I could crawl into the space between the notes and curl back into my loneliness."

### Works Cited

- Baird, A., and S. Samson. "Music Evoked Autobiographical Memory After Severe Acquired Brain Injury: Preliminary Findings From A Case Series." *Neuropsychological Rehabilitation* 24.1 (2014): 125-43. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 13 Dec. 2014.
- Christgau, Robert. "Boys Will Be Men." *Village Voice* 19 Sept. 1995: n. pag. *Robert Christgau: Dean of American Rock Critics*. Web. 8 Nov. 2014.
- Di Muro, Fabrizio, and Kyle B. Murray. "An Arousal Regulation Explanation of Mood Effects on Consumer Choice." *Journal of Consumer Research* 39.3 (2012): 574-84. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15 Oct. 2013. Web. 2 Dec. 2014.
- Douek, Joel. "Music and Emotion—A Composer's Perspective." *Frontiers in Systems Neuroscience* 7 (2013): 82. *PMC*. Web. 8 Nov. 2014.
- Faulk, Barry. "Love, Lists, and Class in Nick Hornby's *High Fidelity*." *Cultural Critique* 66 (Spring 2007): 153-76. *Omnifile Full Text*. Web. 8 Nov. 2014.
- Hornby, Nick. *High Fidelity*. 1995. New York: Riverhead, 2005. Print.
- Keskinen, Mikko. "Single, Long-Playing, and Compilation: The Formats of Audio and Amorousness in Nick Hornby's *High Fidelity*." *Critique* 47.1: 3-21. *Omnifile Full Text*. Web. 8 Nov. 2014.
- Knowles, Joanne. *Nick Hornby's High Fidelity: A Reader's Guide*. New York: Continuum, 2002. Print.
- Moore, Suzanne. "Slipped Discs." *The Guardian*. *theguardian.com*. Guardian News and Media Ltd, 28 March 1995. Web. 8 Nov. 2014.

---

Evaluation: *Whitney impressed us with her use of secondary sources to defend her astute argument.*

---

# A Review of the Harper College Radiologic Technology Program Website

*Kathleen Kurek, Natalie Marski, and Marie E. Pena*  
Course: Computer Information Systems 211 (IT Project Management)  
Instructor: Dave 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 Radiologic Technology department website and suggest opportunities for improvement.*

---

*Evaluation: The website this team developed is outstanding, based on the level of detail in their recommendations, the quality of writing, and the impressive integration of graphics in the final product. The Radiologic Technology department was very pleased with the recommendations and intends to apply them to the website.*

---

# The Power of Language

Rayna Maneva-Stoimenova

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

Assignment: *Write a summary of and personal response to one of the essays we have read for class. Carefully explain what the essay has to say, and quote from it, and include meaningful details in your response.*

In “Mother Tongue,” Amy Tan describes her experience and feelings living in a world with different Englishes. The first of them is the proper English, with “carefully wrought grammatical phrases,” “with nominalized forms, past perfect tenses, conditional phrases” (76), and the second is the language she uses with her mother, which she calls a “language of intimacy, a different sort of English that relates to family talk” (77). The author is “fascinated by language in daily life” and its power to “evoke an emotion, a visual image, a complex idea, or a simple truth” (76). For Amy Tan, her mother’s English is “perfectly clear, perfectly natural,” it is “vivid, direct, full of observation and imagery” (77). This is the sound that she grew up with. The author describes it as “broken or fractured” (77), and for untrained ears, it can sound incomprehensible, but this English allows her mother to read something as specific as the *Forbes Report* and listen to the financial news. However, this “limited English” (77) reflects on her mother, and she does not receive “good service” at banks and stores, and she is not taken seriously; moreover, it brings embarrassment for her daughter Amy, in her youth. One of the situations is when the author pretends to be her mother on the phone and argues with her mother’s stockbroker, but in front of him, sits “red faced and quiet,” because of the “impeccable broken English” (78) of her parent. Yet some of the situations are not funny. The author recalls how her “limited English” brings her mother worries at the hospital, and she does not receive “apologies for any suffering” (78) when they lose her CAT scan, but when the daughter with the perfect English calls, everything is changed.

Amy Tan cogitates about how “the language spoken in the family, especially in immigrant families, which are more insular, plays a large role in shaping the language of the child” (79). This family language reflects on

the children’s grades and achievements; moreover, it stigmatizes them and often determines their future. One of Amy Tan’s main points seems to be that people judge and treat others on how they speak and express themselves, and that the proper use of English brings power and respect in certain settings.

For many immigrants, the situations with the author’s mother are something common. I felt it in my past, how knowing a language could open doors in front of you. The English that I came to America with was only about one hundred words. I knew how to say the names of some fruits and vegetables and how to greet people. I felt mute, or like I had a broken leg. I was a sociable person, but then I could not talk as I used to do. When I was exposed to the English language on TV, I had a constant headache. I had my husband to help me, but one day I was wandering at the store, and a man approached me and asked me something. I was scared and decided to not go to the stores anymore, but this happened to be only a salesman asking a routine question about help. After this situation, I knew that I needed to know much more, if I wanted to live here. My first ESL classes were two weeks after we arrived. My notebooks were filled with drawings, because this was the only way for the assistant teachers to explain me some unfamiliar word. “Adopted” was a word from a text we read, and I could not understand it, because I saw it on a road sign: “adopt a highway.” They gave me an example of “a mother had two children, and gave one to another family” to explain the word for me, and I finally learned what the meaning was. Some drawings of cubes were the explanation of what “more” and “most” meant. My answer to a question “Can you follow directions?” was that I could not, because I thought they asked me for road directions, not related to work situations. I started work, because I knew other languages, but my husband needed to come with me to the office to talk with my supervisor. Then, I learned some phrases and used them on the phone, but for something with more explanations, I called my husband, and he called her. During my workday, my daughter was at a day care center. A few years later, she said how the teachers talked to her with irony, and how they left her alone, because she did not speak English. I could not do anything, because I barely understood them, and they did not respect me.

My last job was at a center for plasma donation, and the start was very difficult for me, because this was the first time when I needed to talk with customers. Even

though I had my documents, I did not have a chance to practice my English. I tried to avoid direct contact as much as possible, but often this was impossible. One day, a donor came, and I needed to write his name, but he was impatient and made some rude comments about my accent; furthermore, he asked me if I knew English at all. I was ashamed, and at the same time frustrated with myself that I could not talk as fast as he did. After a while, at the same place, clients were coming and making inappropriate and vulgar comments about some of my co-workers, but because of our “limited English,” we could not out-talk them and defend ourselves. However, my English brought me not only troubles, but good moments, too. One of the times when I felt the power of the language and the respect that it could gain was when we had an inspection, and the observer watched how I worked. He asked me to explain every step of the procedure, and I did it. His recommendations were for other things, but my supervisors were pleased with my work and explanations.

For me personally, knowing a language is an asset, but the proper use of it brings freedom, because we can help ourselves. At the beginning of our life here, my husband was a translator for my doctor’s visits. It was confusing, because every word was translated, and I could not ask what I wanted. Now, my doctor makes jokes about that time and asks me where my translator-bodyguard is, but for a friend of mine, his hospitalization was an ordeal. He did not speak English, and neither did his wife, so they needed a translator during the night; as a result, his surgery was postponed to the morning. Other of my friends did not have the time, or they did not want to learn English, and they very often used us for favors. A recent situation was when some of them were paying more for their cell phones, but could not change their plan by themselves, so we went to the office to negotiate for them. The representative explained what their options were and what they could do. After a few interruptions for discussions, they switched their plan, but it was time-consuming for us. The same people, when they were alone, upgraded their membership for Sam’s Club, without understanding what they signed. These are only a few examples of how “limited English” can limit us. I know a doctor that works as a truck driver, and an engineer that cleans houses, because of limits that the language sets for them.

The proper use of English gains respect in certain

settings and brings more possibilities. With my “broken English” before, I needed to complain in some situations. Calling my landlord was very frustrating, because very often she did not have the patience to hear me, and I did not receive what I wanted. I felt the difference in her attitude last week when I called her to ask why we did not have heat and it was cold in the apartment. She, as always, started to talk with me as if I did not understand, but this time I interrupted her and answered her. She probably was very surprised, because she changed her voice and started to explain to me what the reason was. The next day, she called me again to ask if we still had problems with the heat. My “new” English helped me to explain about my country to a woman whose grandfather was from Bulgaria. She was curious about her ancestor’s country, and she listened to me, not only to be polite, but because I was able to explain things. Another difference I have felt is at my daughter’s school. Before, I was quieter, and I only greeted the people there, yet sometimes I recognized embarrassment in my daughter’s behavior, because of my imperfect English. Now, I can see altered treatment not only coming from parents or teachers, but from her, also; of course, she makes funny comments about my “previous” English.

My English is still not as perfect as I want to be; therefore, the most important respect I have gained is for me. After four years of different kinds of classes, taken for free as much as possible, I am able to follow my goals and express my thoughts better. My experience and situations with my friends makes me put more effort into learning English, because I know how the proper use of it brings respect and gives freedom; moreover, this is the reason to encourage other people to learn the language. I do not want to be accepted as “limited” or “imperfect” because of my language abilities, and I try to become a friend with the English language.

### Works Cited

Tan, Amy. “Mother Tongue.” *75 Readings: An Anthology*. Eds. Santi Buscemi and Charlotte Smith. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2013. 76-80. Print.

---

Evaluation: *Rayna’s summary of Amy Tan’s essay is effective, with good management of quotations, and her response, drawing on relevant personal experience, is meaningful and interesting.*

---

# Stuttering: Types, Causes, and Treatment

---

*Sunita Mani-Sriram*

Course: Linguistics 105

(Introduction to Language and Linguistics)

Instructor: Alina Pajtek

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

Imagine a second grade classroom. The classroom teacher believes that read-alouds by the students will help them in improving their reading and in building fluency. She, therefore, encourages students to take turns to read from their text. One student is very uncomfortable and is unable to articulate the sounds clearly, especially when she has to begin a new sentence or continue after a pause. After many attempts, she is able to utter the word and then reads fluently until the next period or comma appears, following which the struggle begins again. She is in tears as classmates snicker and she hears others make fun of her. Though the teacher patiently waits for the student to take her time, the student feels more self-conscious and is slowly developing hatred towards reading as well as the teacher. This student is among several thousands who suffer from a physical speech disorder called stuttering. What is stuttering? What are its causes and how is it treated?

Stuttering, which affects approximately three million Americans, is “a disruption in the fluency of verbal expression characterized by involuntary, audible or silent, repetitions or prolongations of sounds and syllables” (Buchel and Sommer 0159). Stammering or disfluent speech are other terms that refer to stuttering. During stuttering, the individual may appear to be out-of-breath, and sometimes it is accompanied by rapid eye blinks or lip tremors. In addition, speech may become blocked, i.e., “the mouth is positioned to say a sound, sometimes for several seconds, with little or no sound forthcoming” (“Stuttering”). According to Sandak and Fiez, stuttering normally occurs during paragraph reading, typically at the beginning of a sentence. It rarely is noticed when single words are read or spoken (445). Unfortunately, there is no known cure for stuttering; individuals learn to manage their stuttering through treatments.

There are two types of stuttering: persistent developmental stuttering (PDS) and acquired stuttering. Persistent developmental stuttering occurs before puberty—between two and five years of age—and is seen in almost 1% of the population. There does not seem to be any obvious brain damage or any known cause for its sudden onset. It seems to appear suddenly after a period of normal and uneventful speech development, around the time children start forming simple sentences (Onslow and

O'Brian E113). According to Buchel and Sommer, PDS is quite prominent "at the beginning of a word or phrase, in long meaningful words, or syntactically complex utterances, and the associated anxiety and secondary symptoms are more pronounced" (0160). The authors go on to state that the stuttering tends to decline with repeated readings, i.e., through adaptation, and are seen to occur at the same syllables, exhibiting consistency (0160).

Acquired or neurogenic stuttering, on the other hand, is caused by brain damage (stroke, head trauma, or hemorrhage) due to "lesions in a variety of brain areas" (Buchel and Sommer 0159) or even due to injury or disease to other areas of the central nervous system, including the spinal cord and neural pathways (Molt and Yaruss). Seen predominantly in adulthood, its highest incidence is among the older population. Molt and Yaruss state a few differences between PDS and neurogenic stuttering. Neurogenic stuttering may occur at any point during the utterance of a word, unlike at the beginning as in the case of PDS. Another feature is that neurogenic stuttering is seen to occur in any kind of vocal behavior, including singing and repeating passages. Adaptation does not seem to have any positive effects on neurogenic stuttering, neither is there any sign of consistency.

Though scientists have been unable to pinpoint a single cause for stuttering, research has led to many theories as sources for stuttering: a genetic basis, a central nervous system abnormality, a neuroanatomical basis, and a neurochemical basis. In addition, fMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging) and PET (positron emission tomography) studies on the brains of stutterers revealed abnormal hemispheric dominance as well as neural abnormalities in Broca's and Wernicke's areas (areas involved in speech production); MEG (magnetoencephalography) studies shed light on neural timing issues while electroglottographic studies displayed abnormal laryngeal movements.

Genetic basis for stuttering is evident from the fact that almost "two-thirds of those affected, or their parents, report a family history" (Onslow and O'Brian E112). Charles Darwin stuttered, and he may have inherited the gene from his grandfather Erasmus Darwin (Buchel and Sommer 0160). No particular gene has been isolated, and further sequencing studies are yet to be conducted on this

condition. Lisa Scott is of the opinion that there may be many genes that contribute to the disorder instead of a specific one.

In their article "What Causes Stuttering?," Buchel and Sommer touch upon stuttering being seen as a learned behavior due to families' reaction to, what they consider, childhood issues. These external debilitating influences could cause nervousness, arousal, and other factors in the child, thereby resulting in a structural or functional central nervous system abnormality (Buchel and Sommer 0161). As in many cases, PDS seems to increase in severity when the individual is nervous or apprehensive (as in the case of the student in the classroom being in the limelight during the read-aloud session). This theory explains why arousal causes severe stuttering, though it cannot explain the primal causes of stuttering.

Another theory to explain the cause for stuttering uses diffusion tensor imaging (DTI) on individuals with PDS. When compared to images from a control group, scientists found that there was a structural anomaly in the brains of people who stuttered. DTI can safely be used in children. Studying their brain activity soon after stuttering begins can possibly display a neuroanatomical basis for stuttering, where there is a "presence of structural anomalies in the speech-language areas (that) is consistent with much of the data about stuttering" (Packman and Onslow 656). In addition, abnormalities were also noticed in the gyrification process. The authors go on to state that this could be the reason "why stuttering does not appear in the earliest one-word and two-word utterances of young children, but begins only when the speech system is taxed by more complex, in the motor sense, utterances later in the course of language development" (Packman and Onslow 656).

The similarity of symptoms seen in stuttering and Tourette's syndrome had scientists look at neurochemical imbalance as a cause for both. Tourette's syndrome is characterized by involuntary tics and body movements in addition to stuttered speech. Studies have exhibited increased levels of the neurotransmitter dopamine to be associated with Tourette's, which is controlled by antidopaminergic medications. When neuroleptic medications such as haloperidol, risperidone, and olanzapine were administered to individuals with severe

PDS, there was a marked improvement in their stuttering, but treatment through these medications is not preferred due of their ill-desired side effects. This caused scientists to believe that “a hyperactivity of the dopaminergic neurotransmitter system contributes to stuttering” (Buchel and Sommer 0161).

Sandak and Fiez shed light on neuroimaging studies that have been conducted on stutterers and non-stutterers. These studies have shown that there does not appear to be any lesions or abnormalities that are seen in individuals with dyslexia. There also does not seem to be any difference with regard to blood flow to the cerebrum, between stutterers and non-stutterers. But, PET scans have displayed variations in brain activity during read-alouds and spontaneous speech. Stutterers show “hypoactivity in cortical areas associated with language processing (e.g., Broca’s area) but hyperactivity in areas associated with motor function (e.g., primary motor controls)” (Sandak and Fiez 445). In addition to this, stutterers do not have left-hemisphere dominance for speech that is normally seen in nonstutterers—suggesting abnormal hemispheric dominance. Buchel and Sommer refer to a PET study which showed, in stutterers, increased left-hemisphere activity during stuttered speech, but increased right-hemisphere activity during fluent speech. This clearly supports the view “that the primary dysfunction is located in the left hemisphere and that the hyperactivation of the right hemisphere might not be the cause of stuttering, but rather a compensatory process” (Buchel and Sommer 0161).

Magnetoencephalography, technology that provides timing and precise temporal data about brain activity, has uncovered critical information pertaining to the neural networking between the speech and motor areas in the brain. In the case of non-stutterers, the pathway employed to reading a word begins with activation in the occipital area (visual region of the brain), followed by left inferior-frontal area (Broca’s area for linguistic and articulatory processing) and lastly in the motor and premotor cortex (motor movement to articulate the word). In the case of stutterers, this pathway varies slightly. Though the occipital area is activated initially, the motor cortex is next, followed lastly by the left inferior-frontal area. This indicates that motor programs are initiated before

### **Student Reflections on Writing: Sunita Mani-Sriram**

Writing was not an activity that I indulged in— it was time-consuming and required one to put an effort into it. Plus, there was nothing concrete or substantial that I could see in the end—just a bunch of words on paper, “black on white.” I am a physically active person who likes to see results immediately—writing was not for me. I just could not see myself sitting at a computer or at a table with a paper and pen and jotting things down. Disgusted with something or someone, peeved at things not going the way I planned for them to? I’d rather take a walk, do the dishes, or just talk and shout to myself.

Then, Harper happened, and I began a new journey: a journey toward a new career, and in the process, I discovered new interests. I began writing, and I felt renewed. I felt energetic and at peace with myself. Where I used to talk aloud earlier, I now write in silence. But I can shout in my writing. I can rave and rant and nobody needs to know. I love this. I love this quiet medium of self-expression, of letting go. I love the way thoughts run in my head when I am writing them. But most of all, I love the silence!!

Many have mentioned that writing is a process, and I agree; in fact, it’s a cyclic process. No matter what the writing is about—journals, reviews, or research papers—the process commands that one puts in the time and effort into researching, organizing, writing, reading, editing, until finally producing a well-written, grammatically correct paper. I am honored that my research paper on stuttering was considered worthy enough to be published in *The Harper Anthology*, and I offer my sincere thanks to Professor Alina Pajtek for her confidence in my abilities and her guidance throughout the semester.



the articulatory code is prepared (Sandak and Fiez 445). Buchel and Sommer refer to this as timing issues between Broca's area and the motor cortex, which also accounts for "slight abnormalities in complex coordination tasks" (0162) seen in stutterers.

Last but not least, electroglottographic studies indicate abnormal laryngeal movement in individuals who stutter. Sebastian, Benedict, and Balraj conducted electroglottographic recordings on stutterers and nonstutterers, which examine the degree of contact between vocal cords by measuring opening time, open time, closing time, and close time during speech. Their findings are published in their article "Laryngeal Movements in Stutterers," where the above mentioned parameters differed in the case of stutterers. They found that vocal cords opened abruptly and had a less open time - indicating abrupt closure. Furthermore, the closing time was also more, and they displayed a greater closed time. These abnormalities "are indicative of difficulty in the adjustment of laryngeal gestures for speech in stutterers" (Sebastian, Benedict, and Balraj 16).

Whatever the cause may be for stuttering, the effects of stuttering are multifold. During childhood, peers' reaction to a child's stutter can cause anxiety and result in an avoidance to speak or participate in the classroom. This can result in feelings of social ineptness and an internalization of others' attitudes that questions one's intelligence. In later school years, children who stutter become victims of bullying. In adults, it leads to antisocial behavior as well as job competence issues, where colleagues and superiors question the success rate of individuals who stutter. It is therefore of utmost importance that stuttering not be taken lightly and measures are in place to address the disorder before it worsens. Though there is no known cure for stuttering, early intervention in the case of PDS is known to reduce and even eliminate stuttering in a high percentage of situations.

Blomgren, in his article "Behavioral Treatments for Children and Adults who Stutter: A Review," highlights the various treatment options currently employed for children and adults. A combination of indirect and direct treatments is seen to help children. Indirect treatment includes involving caregivers by educating them on the

disorder and having them implement techniques that would reduce their child's stuttering. The most popular is the Lidcombe Program for children five and younger, which utilizes an operant conditioning approach—the child is aware of his/her stuttering and receives feedback from the caregiver both when fluency is exhibited (in the form of praise or acknowledgement) and when he/she stutters (in a neutral tone with a self-evaluation question). Parents also constantly remind their child to use "easy, relaxed speech...and provide a reassuring communicative environment" (Blomgren 12-13). Onslow and O'Brian also encourage reduction of the stressors in the child's daily environment, which may cause stuttering (E113).

In the case of adults, a combination of stuttering management and speech restructuring is employed. These approaches, once again, do not cure stuttering. Stuttering management helps adults "develop acceptance to stuttering, reduce fear and anxiety associated with stuttering, and teach them to stutter with decreased effort" (Blomgren 14). It utilizes cognitive behavior therapy elements to reduce avoidance and anxiety by promoting self-control and self-concept. Blomgren also provides information about speech restructuring, also called "fluency shaping" or "prolonged speech" treatment, which focuses on altering stutterers' existing speech pattern. Adults are "taught to make speech motor movements with less articulatory pressure and to initiate vocal fold vibration in a gradual and controlled manner" (14) through stretching syllables and controlling or slowing their rate of speaking. They learn to exert conscious control over the muscles involved in speech.

For school-age children and adolescents, treatments include approaches used for children as well as those used for adults. In addition to operant conditioning techniques, as children age, they should be taught stuttering management techniques that are more proactive and help in building their self-concept. Once school-age children begin developing metalinguistic awareness, it is the perfect time to teach them speech production strategies like prolonged speech, where they can exercise "conscious control over speech motor mechanisms" (Blomgren 17). Blomgren also opines that it is important for all stutterers to be comfortable and disclose that they stutter, and this is where stuttering management plays an important

role (16). As the severity of stuttering varies from one individual to another, it is critical that all treatments be tailored to each individual.

In conclusion, persistent developmental stuttering, a common physical speech disorder, is prevalent among more than 55 million people worldwide. Due to the presence of multiple abnormalities in individuals who stutter, research has been unable to narrow down the exact cause of the disorder; however, problems with neural functioning resulting in stuttered speech production is the widely accepted view (Blomgren10). Even though there is no known cure for stuttering, early childhood intervention through family involvement and speech pathologists has proven to reduce its occurrence into adulthood. Other treatment options include stuttering management techniques that employ cognitive behavior therapy elements and speech restructuring methods. These aim at maintaining individuals' levels of self-concept and self-esteem by helping them manage their stuttering. As a speech disorder, stuttering can be overcome, as we see in successful celebrities who stuttered during childhood—Winston Churchill, Bruce Willis, King George VI, Joe Biden, and Marilyn Monroe, to name a few.

## Works Cited

- Blomgren, Michael. "Behavioral Treatments for Children and Adults who Stutter: A Review." *Psychology Research & Behavior Management* 6 (2013): 9-19. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 21 Oct. 2014.
- Buchel, Christian, and Martin Sommer. "What Causes Stuttering?" *PLoS Biology* 2.2 (2004): 0159-0163. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 21 Oct. 2014.
- Molt, Lawrence, and J. Scott Yaruss. "Neurogenic Stuttering." The Stuttering Foundation, n.d. Web. 30 Nov. 2014.
- Onslow, Mark, and Sue O'Brian. "Management Of Childhood Stuttering." *Journal of Paediatrics & Child Health* 49.2 (2013): E112-E115. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 21 Oct. 2014.
- Packman, Ann, and Mark Onslow. "Searching For The Cause Of Stuttering." *Lancet* 360.9334 (2002): 655-656. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 21 Oct. 2014.
- Sandak, Rebecca, and Julie A Fiez. "Stuttering: A View from Neuroimaging." *Lancet* 356.9228 (2000): 445-446. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 21 Oct. 2014.
- Scott, Lisa. "Genetic and Neurological Factors in Stuttering." The Stuttering Foundation, 2006. Web. 30 Nov. 2014.
- Sebastian, Swapna, Anto Suresh Benedict, and Achamma Balraj. "Laryngeal Movements in Stutterers." *Journal Of Laryngology & Voice* 3.1 (2013): 14-17. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 21 Oct. 2014.
- "Stuttering". *American Speech-Language-Hearing Association*, n.p., n.d. Web. 30 Nov. 2014.

---

*Evaluation: Overall, Sunita shows a thorough understanding of this topic and presents her ideas in a very clear manner. She offers a multidisciplinary perspective on this topic, so that, in addition to describing the psycholinguistic aspects of this disorder, she discusses how social interaction may aggravate stuttering and may negatively impact the quality of life of those who stutter. Sunita's research and writing process resulted in a very professional, informative paper.*

---

# Arthur Miller's "The Misfits": Hegel's Master-Slave Dialectic

---

David Modica

Course: Literature 112 (Literature and Film)

Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

Assignment: *The final paper for the course required students to analyze and discuss a short story that had been expanded into a film. Arthur Miller's short story "The Misfits" was one of the options.*

Arthur Miller, a prominent playwright and fiction author, had the privilege of adapting his own short story, "The Misfits," written in 1957, into a screenplay under the same title. Despite the fact that the original author wrote the adaptation, a number of scenes were added to the film, which drastically altered the significance and direction of the narrative from one medium to the other. The additions, which feature Roslyn as a primary character, instead of her "off-screen" presence in the short story, alter the nature of the plot from one of intentional stasis to dramatic dynamics. In doing so, Miller omitted what one might consider the original theme in order to increase the depth of his characters and spin the ending into a more positive, favorable conclusion.

The original plot written for the short story surrounds three men living in the area of Reno, Nevada—Perce Howland, Gay Langland, and Guido Racanelli—on an expedition to capture wild horses to then sell to a company that processes them into dog food. All of the action takes place in the desert, and dialogue is used as the primary means of character development, in addition to a number of facts that the narrator scatters throughout the narrative about each of the character's pasts. Roslyn exists as a minor character talked about among Perce and Gay, though she never directly appears in the narrative.

The plot is static in that, despite the fact that each of the men—excluding Guido—express unhappiness about the current trajectory of their lives, they follow through

with the plan and express that they will continue to live as they do. Starting on the very first page of the short story, the characters repeat to one another that their work is "better than wages" (Miller 293). This line of dialogue is also featured in the film, though not as prominently, as the length of the film compared to that of the short story is much greater, and therefore, the line gets a little lost in the film. The men cling to the comfortable niche that their lives rest within, as well as to one another. Near the end of the story, the narrator vocalizes this need: "Gay felt more peaceful now that the younger man [Perce] would not be leaving him. There was a future again, something to head for" (Miller 306). The irony of the sentiment of course is that the future that the narrator mentions is the same as the present, and that Gay takes comfort in this state of stasis.

The movie, on the other hand, is incredibly dynamic. Each of the characters changes drastically at the conclusion of the film. The manner in which the movie is able to accomplish such an incredible, and different, progression is through its expansion of Roslyn's character. The German philosopher/literary theorist Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel is perhaps most famous for his master-slave dialectic. In general terms—drawn from what I remember in my undergraduate understanding of a complex theory—Hegel states that in order for an individual to reach a point of self-identity, they must first interact with another within this dialectic. In each relationship, one individual serves as master, and another as slave. The slave is able to reach this conclusion through the work they commit for their master, while the master must draw their identity from their interaction with the slave.

The masculine identities within both the film and the short story insist that Roslyn acts as slave to the three men. The misogyny is perhaps more readily apparent in the short story, such as in Gay's statement, "Just because a woman's educated don't mean much. Woman's a woman" (Miller 295). The view that the men have towards women suppresses Roslyn into a submissive role, but that does not mean by any means that she is actually inferior to them. As mentioned prior, the men are directly dependent upon her in order to reach a state of self-identity and therefore progress as individuals.

Roslyn's relationship with Perce, the younger man, played by Montgomery Clift, is perhaps the easiest to explain. In both the film and the short story, she fulfills the role of his mother. Though Gay is jealous of Perce at times in the short story, the jealousy is unfounded in that any interaction between the two is highly paternal, which is why Perce did not directly acknowledge Roslyn's actions toward him, as described by the narrator: "Roslyn had taken to calling Perce cute, and now and then she would bend over and kiss him on the back of the neck when he was sitting in the living-room chair, drinking with them" (Miller 196). Her actions, mistaken for romantic by Gay, are actually common actions that a mother might apply to a son.

The maternal nature of their relationship is further emphasized in Perce's relationship to his own mother. In the short story, Perce says near the conclusion, "I want to phone my mother. Damn, I haven't called her all year" (Miller 306). The reader could easily witness through this bit of dialogue that he was estranged from his mother. Though this is altered in the film, the impact is not. In the film, the viewer sees Perce talking to his mother on the phone, asking her if she is proud of his accomplishments as a rodeo rider, a request which receives a negative response. One could also note the presence of a step-father adds to the estrangement.

In either case, Perce's distance from his biological mother is significant. In adding scenes in which Perce is in direct contact with Roslyn, the viewer is able to see that she fills the role of his mother, such as in the way she worries about him after the rodeo scene in the movie, in which Perce is injured. He wants her to be proud of his accomplishments, which is ultimately what leads him to set the wild horses free, going against Gay and Guido, but trying to please Roslyn, at the end of the film. Though he does not directly state it, Roslyn's disapproval of his lifestyle—she was extremely distressed by the rodeo—ultimately leads him to give up the style of life that he has adopted.

Gay, played by Clark Gable, in his last film role, is also directly altered through his interaction with Roslyn. In both the film and the short story, the viewer is made aware that his wife cheated on him: "Only when he had discovered his wife with a stranger in a parked car did he

understand that he had never had a stake to which he'd been pleasantly tethered" (Miller 296). The betrayal is further emphasized in the film with the alteration of the stranger to a best friend and the addition of a scene in which the audience is informed that Gay has been having sex with multiple women without gaining any sort of emotional attachment.

The viewer becomes aware of Gay's transition before he is. After convincing Roslyn to stay in Nevada with him, in Guido's half-built house in the desert, Gay performs many domestic chores for Roslyn's benefit and takes to fighting for her honor when it is threatened. In addition, one could also note that he does not take on any other lovers. When Gay is forced to choose between his "cowboy" style of life and her at the very end of the film, he chooses her and dramatically recaptures and releases the wild stallion (after it had been set free by Perce) in a moment of high symbolism. He realizes that he has transitioned to a man of domesticity and that he is in love with Roslyn. He is given an out to his life as a misfit through the clutches of love.

The most difficult transition to note without a doubt belongs to Guido, played by Eli Wallach. Despite choosing the life of a misfit at the end of the film, one should note the intentionality that is involved in his decision-making at that point, which is different from the short story, in which they all choose to continue living as they always have without much reason other than a fear of conformity. Both narratives inform the reader that Guido lost his wife during childbirth: "His wife dying in childbirth had been like a gigantic and insane ocean wave rising out of a calm sea" (Miller 301). The film furthers this story by informing both Roslyn and the viewer that her life could have been saved if Guido hadn't been too stubborn to seek help sooner. His denial of responsibility for her death is exemplary of pre-Roslyn Guido.

From their first introduction, Roslyn serves as a symbol of the domestic life that he can no longer have. The abrasive nature of the manner in which she makes Guido gain responsibility is key to his ability to come to self-identification. He sees the way that she fixes up his house with Gay and realizes that he could never live there again. Ultimately, it is this realization which makes him a man of responsibility and allows him to finally conclude

## Arthur Miller's "The Misfits": Hegel's Master-Slave Dialectic

that his wife is really gone and that he cannot fall in love with another. The fact that he chooses the life of a misfit at the end of the film is significant in that he must actively choose this lifestyle, and can no longer simply exist within it.

As mentioned earlier, the individual who serves as slave—Roslyn—reaches a state of self-identity through the work that she completes for her master(s). Roslyn therefore also progresses in the film. In the beginning of the film, she is seen as easily influenced. The viewer sees her passed between dancing partners as well as dancing quite sensually with Guido. When Gay drives her to town after their first visit to Guido's house in the desert, he attempts to make a pass at her, and she informs him that she does not like him like that, but he insists that she will soon enough. The very next scene, a cut to the morning, is one of post-coital canoodling between the two characters, insisting that Gay was able to do just as he had stated he would be able to.

One can note that her pliability is altered at the end of the film in the scene in which she runs away from the three men and declares that she hates them, while they are tying down the horses they have captured. Though she has disagreed with their actions before this point, she has

always been supportive, and the manner in which she acts at this point of the film is therefore emphasized in that it is quite different from her normal, submissive nature. One can therefore conclude that she reaches a state of self-identity in that she is able to break away from her traditional actions in the climactic emotional explosion.

The plot of the story differs from that of the film not only in the actions that take place, but in the significance of the actions, as well. The addition of Roslyn transforms the narrative from an intentional static nature to that of progression. Her interaction with each of the men serves to provide them with the adequate stimulation that they need in order to reach a state of self-identity and therefore move past any psychological barriers. Arthur Miller undoubtedly understood her significance in the film, which comes as no surprise when one takes into account that he rewrote the narrative for his wife, Marilyn Monroe, to star in.

### Works Cited

- Miller, Arthur. "The Misfits." 1957. *American Short Story Masterpieces*. Ed. Raymond Carver and Tom Jenks. New York: Delacorte Press, 1987. 293-307.
- The Misfits*. Dir. John Huston. Perf. Clark Gable, Marilyn Monroe, Montgomery Clift. United Artists, 1961. DVD.

---

Evaluation: *Dave provides a strong sense of how Miller himself expanded his short story into a full-length film, and he applies Hegel's theory of the master-slave dialectic to portray how the character development in the film is radically different from that in the story. This is an enlightening essay.*

---

# Divinization: A Distraction of the Self

Bryan Morris

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Pearl Ratunil

*Assignment: Students were to apply Albert Einstein's ideas regarding science and religion to at least two of the other essays we had read for class, and then write about Einstein's ideas in relation to their readings of the essays. Specifically, students were to address how and why science can be seen in spiritual essays, and why spiritual writers would include science in their essays. The thesis was to argue how Einstein's ideas can be seen in the other essays.*

While the concept of a higher power has been—and will continue to be—debated for some time, no one has been able to provide definitive evidence one way or the other. In lieu of a conclusive answer, many people unconsciously end up idolizing people, objects, or ideas that have no business being worshiped. Likely a part of human nature, the idea of holding something in high-enough esteem that it becomes an almost religious experience has been around for decades, showing up in such famous times as the development of the atomic bomb in the early 1940s, the drug-induced haze of the 1960s, and even the beginning of the digital age during the early 2000s. Throughout these periods, many authors have noticed and reported on the existence of this unchecked idolization, and any benefits, damages, or other effects it may have on the human race, both on an individual and societal scale. Perhaps the most prolific of these authors is Albert Einstein, who carefully and specifically cautioned against excessive divinization for fear that it would lessen one's personal growth. Einstein's concept of divinization also appears in the essays "Altered States" by Oliver Sacks and "Is Facebook Making Us Lonely?" by Stephen Marche, because they both give an example of objects that are routinely glorified, often leading to a decreased

self-awareness and obstructing the path to true happiness through individuation.

This excess glorification serves only to make the separation between one's self and the external world more prominent. In his essay "Science and Religion," Einstein writes:

There is no room in this for the divinization of a nation, of a class, let alone of an individual. Are we not all children of one father, as it is said in religious language? Indeed, even the divinization of humanity, as an abstract totality, would not be in the spirit of that ideal. It is only to the individual that a soul is given. And the high destiny of the individual is to serve rather than to rule, or to impose himself in any other way. (46)

While "divinization" may initially seem like a positive action insofar as it can provide some example of an ideal toward which to strive, Einstein views it as simply another tool people use to separate themselves from one another. Giving another individual—or even a group of people—the kind of importance that comes with being "divine" only helps to cement the idea that those who are not "divine" must be inferior. Instead, Einstein urges his audience to remember that everyone is essentially the same—all "children of one father"—and that claiming superiority over someone else does nothing more than erect an artificial barrier between oneself and others. In fact, he goes so far as to assert that this service to others is not only the best action one could take, but humanity's "high destiny" – the entire reason one was even created in the first place. Einstein claims that glorifying a singular part of humanity's existence does not lead to a more connected world, but actually stifles both societal and personal growth as well as the happiness that said growth brings.

The stream of digital information people are constantly receiving in today's technologically advanced world makes slipping into divinization, as well as feeling its negative effects, easier than ever. In his essay "Is Facebook Making Us Lonely?" author Stephen Marche recalls a conversation with Moira Burke, a research scientist studying Facebook users:

I mention to Burke the widely reported study, conducted by a Stanford graduate student, that showed how believing that others have strong social networks can lead to feelings of depression. What does Facebook communicate, if not the impression of social bounty? Everybody else looks so happy on Facebook, with so many friends, that our own social networks feel emptier than ever in comparison. (296)

Marche observes that, while Facebook is thought of as a means to quickly and easily bring people together, not only can it fail to do so, but it has often been shown to make the problem worse. Logging into Facebook, a user is immediately bombarded with pictures and descriptions of parties or other monumental moments in their friends' lives, giving these friends the "impression of social bounty." That person, though, is only seeing a highlight reel of others' lives – after all, few people post updates about how much fun they are *not* having – which gives one the perception that these friends are constantly having fun, idealizing them as some kind of paragons of sociability. This is an example of Einstein's divinization – claiming someone or something as an absolute, when the reality is much more intricate and complex. This in turn "can lead to feelings of depression," because it is impossible to compare oneself to something divine: one will simply never stack up. In fact, Marche claims, it makes one's own social networks feel "emptier than ever." It is this disconnect between one's actual self and the glorified version of others that one sees that exemplifies Einstein's concern over divinization: believing that someone or something is superior to one's self serves only to make one feel less connected to it.

Some of the easiest objects to glorify, but also some of the most dangerous, are drugs, as discovered by Oliver Sacks in his essay "Altered States." In reference to his drug use, he writes:

I would take the stuff on Friday evenings after getting back from work and would then spend the whole weekend so high that images and thoughts would become rather like controllable hallucinations, imbued with ecstatic emotion. I often devoted these "drug holidays" to romantic daydreaming... (181)

Sacks' wording in this passage shows just how sacred the use of drugs became to him. While describing his previous experiences, he would typically include a specific range of dates. When he details his actions at this point, however, his actions have become so ritualized that the time of occurrence is listed merely as "Friday evenings." Furthermore, instead of a listing of specific substances, he just begins referring to these forays into his mind as simply "drug holidays." Calling them "holidays" – here used in the British sense, meaning "time spent off work" – further illustrates the extent to which his extreme use of drugs was beginning to affect him: he had begun taking vacations from his existence, instead choosing to spend his weekends in "controllable hallucinations." Sacks' overindulgence and glorification of hallucinogens obstructed his ability to become self-aware and led to him taking time off from his unconscious mind, the very thing he wanted to connect to when he began taking them.

While Einstein begins by warning against divinization of physical objects – countries, social groups, and people – he continues on to claim that glorifying God himself will also do more harm than good. On this subject, he says:

Nobody, certainly, will deny that the idea of the existence of an omnipotent, just, and omnibenevolent personal God is able to accord man solace, help, and guidance; also, by virtue of its simplicity it is accessible to the most undeveloped mind. But, on the other hand, there are decisive weaknesses attached to this idea in itself, which have been painfully felt since the beginning of history. That is, if this being is omnipotent, then every occurrence, including every human action, every human thought, and every human feeling and aspiration is also His work; how is it possible to think of holding men responsible for their deeds and thoughts before such an almighty Being? In giving out punishment and rewards He would to a certain extent be passing judgment on Himself. How can this be combined with the goodness and righteousness ascribed to Him? (50)

Einstein begins by acknowledging that the belief in an all-powerful God may have utility insofar as it can give one a sense of "solace, help, and guidance." His use of these

words describes the type of connection that the believer feels with God: the feeling that one is not alone in the world. Even though he is capable of seeing the benefits of this conviction, he worries that divinizing God to the point where he has complete control over every aspect of existence changes all of human “thought,” “action,” and “feeling,” from an original creation into those of a single deity. If this is the case, then humans are not liable for their own actions, God is. The implication of this thought is, at best, a general apathy towards the consequences of one’s own behavior and, at worst, a devolution from social obligation to complete selfishness and chaos. Furthermore, being the originator of all actions, God must accept liability for the evil ones as well, which directly clashes with “the goodness and righteousness ascribed to Him.” Einstein states that, though the concept of an absolute, omnipresent God protecting humanity may seem appealing, in the long run it will lessen one’s sense of individual responsibility, which will only damage society as a whole.

In fact, the divinization of abstract concepts can be just as futile as the divinization of specific objects, as shown in Marche’s “Is Facebook Making Us Lonely?” He writes:

People who are married are less lonely than single people, one journal article suggests, but only if their spouses are confidants. If one’s spouse is not a confidant, marriage may not decrease loneliness. A belief in God might help, or it might not, as a 1990 German study comparing levels of religious feeling and levels of loneliness discovered. Active believers who saw God as abstract and helpful rather than as a wrathful, immediate presence were less lonely. “The mere belief in God,” the researchers concluded, “was relatively independent of loneliness.” (290)

Here, Marche brings up the institutions of marriage and religion to provide examples of ideas that many people would think always decrease loneliness. This might not initially seem like an instance of divinization, but it is simply the same process applied in a different way: instead of something being viewed as an epitome of holiness, marriage and religion are commonly viewed as epitomes of connectedness. Mirroring Einstein’s warning that

divinization, while initially thought of as a way for people to feel closer to each other, can easily lead to separation, Marche also states that these customs that are thought of as the epitomes of inclusion can, at times, exacerbate the problem even more. Certainly, these tools have the potential to be used to decrease loneliness, but one must use them in the right ways. Marriage only impacts loneliness if one’s spouse is a “confidant and religion only if one views God as “abstract and helpful.” Throughout this passage, Marche provides his own take on the same sentiment Einstein espoused: claiming something as so all-encompassingly perfect that its goodness will benefit oneself regardless of the way in which it is used will only lead to negative repercussions when it becomes apparent that this is not true.

Even in the cases when an idea has the potential for utility, one must be careful not to believe that must hold true in all circumstances. Oliver Sacks describes his first use of opiates in “Altered States”:

I had never taken morphine or any opiates before. I used a large syringe—why bother with piddling doses?... I had injected the morphine at nine-thirty, and now it was ten. But I had a sense of something odd—it had been dusk when I took the morphine, it should now be darker still. But it was not. It was getting lighter, not darker, outside. It was ten, I now realized, but ten in the morning. I had been gazing, motionless, at my Agincourt for more than twelve hours. This shocked and sobered me, and made me see how one could spend entire days, nights, weeks, even years of one’s life in an opium stupor. (178)

Though he had never tried morphine before this point, Sacks had been experimenting with other hallucinogenic drugs for years, so much so that he had come to the conclusion that, holistically, using them would benefit him. This belief was so deeply engrained into his mind that he decided to forgo what he thought of as “piddling doses” and throw caution to the wind. It was also this belief, however, that led to him being “shocked and sobered,” when he came to the realization that he had wasted half a day in a hallucination. In his essay, Sacks provides a frightening real-life example of Einstein’s belief that the process of divinization not only has no application in the



nuanced existence of one's personal life, but can lead to unexpected and dangerous results.

Using the examples of Facebook and drugs, Stephen Marche and Oliver Sacks perfectly echo Einstein's warning against divinization: glorify something too much – even something that has potential as a tool for individuation – and one will end up destroying the self instead of empowering it. Obviously, Einstein was not the last person to write on the concept of unchecked glorification, and he presumably was not the first – the occurrence of divinization has likely been around as long as humanity itself. In general, humans will take the path of least resistance to achieve their goals, and divinization is a perfect example of this phenomenon. It is much easier to paint something as “absolutely good” than it is to accept that, like everything else, that object is

complicated and nuanced, with effects both beneficial and harmful. Having the presence of mind to contemplate and accept the many different aspects of a situation, group, or idea instead of choosing the easy way out and falling prey to absolutism may require greater effort, but it also provides a greater reward – a stronger attunement to one's self, one's society, and one's life.

### **Works Cited**

- Einstein, Albert. “Science and Religion.” *Ideas and Opinions*. New York: Modern Library, 1984.
- Marche, Stephen. “Is Facebook Making Us Lonely?” *Best American Science and Nature Writing*. Ed. Siddhartha Mukherjee. Boston: Mariner, 2013.
- Sacks, Oliver. “Altered States.” *Best American Science and Nature Writing*. Ed. Siddhartha Mukherjee. Boston: Mariner, 2013.

---

*Evaluation: This assignment, which asks students to connect Albert Einstein's famous essay “Science and Religion” with two other writers, is by far one of the most challenging assignments I have done with students. Bryan has written an exemplary essay which responds to two elements of the assignment: an astute reading of Einstein and a strong connection to other writers. He focuses on Einstein's concept of “divinization” and applies it to two contemporary writers: Oliver Sacks and Stephen Marche. The result is a compelling analysis of Einstein's concept as well as an application to the other writers. Bryan's thesis is clear, and his analysis is precise. He is also adept at explaining the more complex ideas in Einstein. This is undoubtedly one of the strongest papers I have read for this assignment.*

---

# “Pen Is Envy”: Language, Gender, and Identity in *The Handmaid’s Tale*

---

Leslie Murray

Course: Literature 115 (Fiction)

Instructor: Maggie McKinley

Assignment: *Write a literary research paper.*

Rape is not a solely physical issue: it is a problem that violates women’s social and personal rights through an oppressive social structure. Perhaps no novel shows the dangers of sexism in rape culture better than *The Handmaid’s Tale*, Margaret Atwood’s account of a woman who is forced to partake in a ceremonial act of acquaintance rape. As an exaggerated example of rape culture, the fictional Republic of Gilead expresses its oppression and violates women’s identities through the use of language. Issues of infertility lead to the overblown expression of sexism, causing Atwood’s narrator to be stripped of her identity in order to support her society’s male-dominated needs. By showing the oppression of identity in the expression of sexism, Margaret Atwood’s narrative reveals language’s powerful role in rape culture.

In *The Handmaid’s Tale*, the violation of personal rights is evident in the use of language to objectify women’s identities. The Republic of Gilead is consistent with the social control of “male supremacy” defined in the article “Men and the History of Rape,” which states,

Most men don’t rape, yet historically they have denied women basic civil rights, excluded them from power, erased them through language, passed laws requiring them to wear movement-restrictive clothing, institutionalized female servitude, theorized female inferiority—all of which amounts to men’s metaphorical rape of women, and all of which creates the circumstances that make physical rape possible. (Sere 3)

The events leading to the creation of the Republic of Gilead are eerily similar to these examples of “metaphorical rape”; they render women inferior to men and allow for the continued violation of their rights. While such restrictions range from the “economic slavery” of refusing women access to their bank accounts (Atwood 175) and the “prescribed issue” (Atwood 8) of uniform clothing, Atwood most significantly represents this transgression of rights as the erasure of women’s identities through language. The emphasis on language in *The Handmaid’s Tale* exposes the structure of rape culture, revealing how the restrictions imposed on women damage women’s integrity by subjecting them to subservience. The effects of enforcing female servitude are especially evident in

the patrilineal names given to Handmaids. Names such as “Offred,” which literally means “Of Fred,” inform women that they belong to men and that their sole purpose is to meet men’s needs. By reducing women’s identities to the roles they fulfill, this objectification serves as the foundation for Gilead’s situation of acquaintance rape, known as “the Ceremony” (Atwood 93). Offred recognizes that in the subservient role Handmaids provide for Commanders, “We are for breeding purposes: we aren’t concubines. . . . On the contrary: everything possible has been done to remove us from that category” (Atwood 136). Handmaids’ personal identities are essentially erased and reconstructed according to the purpose they serve. By having their personhood removed, Handmaids are no longer individuals but objects whose consent to sexual acts is inconsequential. Altogether, the names given to Handmaids emphasize the effect of male superiority on women’s identities and support the possibility for physical rape.

Furthermore, the titles in *The Handmaid’s Tale* promote the sexist attitudes on which rape culture is founded. Ambivalent sexism, which motivates rape culture by idealizing a traditional feminine stereotype and giving men license to use force against women who transgress that stereotype, consists of the “complementary ideologies” (Abrams et al 112) of benevolent and hostile sexism. The authors of “Perceptions of Stranger and Acquaintance Rape: The Role of Benevolent and Hostile Sexism in Victim Blame and Rape Proclivity” explain, “Ambivalent sexists reconcile their hostile and benevolent feelings by classifying women into *good* and *bad* subcategories. Thus, benevolence is directed at women who conform to traditional gender roles, and hostility is reserved for non-conforming feminists” (Abrams et al 112). By suggesting that women are “good” or “bad” according to whether or not they fit a sexist stereotype, these ideologies make it possible for men to control a woman’s fate. The Republic of Gilead upholds benevolent sexism by labeling women according to the submissive duties of their gender, such as “Wives” who fulfill the role of marital subservience, “Marthas” who fulfill the role of domestic subservience, and “Handmaids” who fulfill the role of sexual subservience. Women in these roles are protected to a degree; they are given “freedom

from” (Atwood 24) the dangers of unregulated sexism. Women who do not maintain traditional gender roles are labeled “Unwomen” (Atwood 118), indicating their defiance of an acceptable stereotype, and are subjected to the dangers of hostile sexism. Because their identities oppose the servitude implicit in the benevolent sexist stereotype, Unwomen are condemned to work in fatally toxic environments. The threat of a slow and undignified death as a consequence of Unwomanhood propels women such as Offred to acquiesce to the position of inferiority favored in ambivalent sexism. Altogether, the manipulation of pronouns endorses ambivalent sexism by asserting that women who adhere to sexist expectations are rewarded and women who do not are punished.

By reconstructing the responsibilities and expectations of their gender, Handmaids are forced through their use of language to internalize ambivalent sexism. As a woman named Janine speaks in an event called “Testifying” (Atwood 71) about being gang-raped in adolescence and having an abortion, the rest of the Handmaids in training are instructed to chant that it is “*Her* fault,” that she “led [the rapists] on,” and that the event happened in order to “Teach her a *lesson*” (Atwood 72). The language used in Testifying stresses the feminine pronoun “her,” implying that Janine is personally responsible for the attack on her gender, and the word “lesson,” implying that she must be disciplined for her supposedly immoral behavior. Victims of rape, such as Janine, are often held responsible for their abuse because people high in benevolent sexism, such as the Aunts instructing the Handmaids, believe the woman must have behaved in a way that warranted sexual assault. Because benevolent sexism stereotypes women as needing protection, “such a belief also implies that women must behave in ways that allow them to be protected” (Abrams et al 113); furthermore, these “perceptions also place most of the responsibility for sexual morality on women” (Abrams et al 112). It is no surprise, then, that benevolent sexism has been proven to mediate victim blaming: if a woman is assaulted, surely she has acted in a way that removed her from the protective goodness of a benevolent stereotype. Complementary to this correlation, studies have also shown that hostile sexism mediates rape proclivity. Because its implied gender role standards make it possible to punish women who break the

traditional female stereotype, benevolent sexism creates an environment in which men are given license to act on their hostile sexism. With rape as a perceived consequence of transgressing gender roles, a victim of sexual assault is considered sexually immoral and is subsequently blamed for the event. Victim blaming and the language used in victim blaming emphasize a woman's part in sexual assault over a man's, and it is because of this attention to gender that the role of responsibility is shifted. As members of a "male-dominated culture," the socialization of ambivalent sexism "may encourage women to accept their role as 'gatekeeper' of sexual interaction, rendering them responsible for their own victimization" (Thomae and Tendaya Viki 25). Indeed, the blame attributed to Janine in her act of Testifying teaches Janine and the rest of the Handmaids that they must see themselves as sexual objects. Furthermore, they are taught that, as objects of men's desire, their sexuality determines their moral standing. The language of victim blame in Gilead's rape culture indicates that the quality of a woman's sexual identity is defined by her sexual conduct.

While these examples may seem unrealistically oppressive, they go unquestioned in Gilead because the casual expression of sexism in language activates a nonserious mindset that increases tolerance of discrimination. The conversational rule of levity, in which a person "[switches] from the usual serious mindset to a nonserious humorous mindset for interpreting the message" of a conversational exchange (Ford and Ferguson 81), is the key function of disparagement humor. By expressing a sexist attitude in a nonserious way, recipients of these statements of casual discrimination are encouraged to accept the message without criticism. The joking nature of these humorous exchanges informs the recipient that the implied message is acceptable and that the members of the conversation are given a context where the expression of otherwise controversial prejudice is appropriate. This then "expands the bounds of appropriate conduct, creating a norm of tolerance of discrimination" (Ford and Ferguson 19). Essentially, the use of nonserious language to carry messages of prejudice conveys discriminatory attitudes in a way that seems appropriate; this in turn causes more direct displays of discrimination to be accepted as normal. Although there are not many examples of sexist jokes in

*The Handmaid's Tale*, sexism is nonetheless expressed in casual forms of conversation that promote tolerance. Slogans such as "Pen Is Envy" (Atwood 186) activate the conversational rule of levity because, similar to proverbs, they are "a short, repeated, witty statement or set of statements of wisdom, truth and experience...used to further a social end" (Yusuf 1). These slogans convey the message of ambivalent sexism through playful phrasing and repetition, implicitly forcing Handmaids to embody the purpose of the message—that they must forfeit their rights to bodily autonomy and personhood so that men may maintain their superiority over women—without question. Like disparagement humor, these proverbial slogans are a form of "social control, allowing members of the dominant group in society to maintain their privileged position" (Ford and Ferguson 80) because they provide people with the opportunity "to use that external norm as a source of self-regulation—a standard defining how one ought to behave" (Ford and Ferguson 82). By this argument, it makes sense that men, the people in Gilead whose perceptions of power are most threatened by infertility, would benefit most from the reinforcement of sexism. The implementation of proverbs that carry sexist messages teaches Handmaids and other members of Gilead's society to behave according to the sexist stereotypes they promote. By encouraging the tacit acceptance of discriminatory attitudes, these slogans reinforce the norm of male domination in language.

Furthermore, the monopolization of language in Gilead echoes the dominating nature of male supremacy in that they both prevent women from fully claiming personhood and defending their rights. Rape culture is not upheld solely by men; it is also given power when women passively allow and even endorse the oppression of their gender. The silencing tactics used in Gilead cause women to view themselves as complicit in their sexual acts rather than as victims of rape. After being taught that she is an object for men and that the issue of infertility justifies the Ceremony, Offred processes her role in the Ceremony according to the norms purveyed in Gilead's manipulations of language. She decides she is an accomplice in the sexual act, saying, "Nor does rape cover it: nothing is going on here that I haven't signed up for. There wasn't a lot of choice but there was some, and

this is what I chose” (Atwood 94). Offred believes she is complicit by allowing herself to become a Handmaid; however, she does not actually have much of a choice. The threat of becoming an Unwoman propels her decision to concede ambivalent sexism, and this submission is evident in her thought process. Like other women in rape culture, she is “socialized to believe that men have a right to women’s bodies” and “might not perceive certain situations as rape” (Hill and Fischer 47). Through the victim blaming expressed in Testifying, the patrilineal names, the proverbial slogans, and the title of Handmaid, the role of language in Gilead has shaped Offred’s understanding of what constitutes rape in a way that has impaired her ability to think critically and objectively. In particular, the proverb “Pen Is Envy” best represents the way language has brought her to this acceptance of her oppression: the phrase cleverly mimics the term “penis envy,” implying that women desire masculine power; furthermore, the slogan separates the word “penis” to emphasize “pen,” implying that this masculine power is manifested through a writing implement or, more specifically, the utilization of language to express oneself. Through these implications, women are taught that only men have a right to personal expression, and that this segregation is socially acceptable. Women are prohibited from the use of writing utensils and reading materials, causing them to lose their grasp of individual thought. Without access to the full use of language, Offred is unable to adequately criticize her perceptions, let alone her circumstances. This restriction of language keeps women suspended in a state of tacit acceptance, thus maintaining the structure of rape culture.

It can be argued that Margaret Atwood’s commentary on the power of language in perpetuating the sexist oppression of women in rape culture is relevant even in today’s society. Jessica Valenti comments on the ability of sexist language to impose on women the objectifying stereotypes of ambivalent sexism. In her article “In Rape Tragedies, the Shame is Ours,” Valenti specifically addresses the dangerous power of words such as “slut.” She explains, “Calling a woman a slut sends the message that it’s open season: you can harass her, malign her, ruin her forever. It’s the same kind of dehumanization that assumes women aren’t people, but bodies for men’s

enjoyment—whether they consent or not” (Valenti 1). Like the titles of Handmaids and Marthas in *The Handmaid’s Tale*, slurs such as slut are a “designation” (Valenti 1): they indicate that a woman fulfills a certain role on the behalf of men and eliminate a women’s personal identity. Once designated as a slut, a woman’s actions are inevitably informed by the role implicit in her designation, in this case the belief that the woman is sexually immoral and available for men’s sexual use. These words encourage victim blaming, implying that a woman who is raped deserves her harassment because she must have done something unacceptable that warranted sexual assault. Similar to the internalization of Gilead’s proverbial slogans, Valenti explains that men in rape culture have “learned” (1) to demean and objectify their female peers. She notes that although rape is a serious subject, “in reality, rape jokes are still considered funny... and the definition of rape is still not widely understood” (Valenti 1). When a nonconsensual sexual act occurs between acquaintances and does not seem to be violent, people high in benevolent and hostile sexism are left to their prejudices to determine the nature of the assault. The norms they build through sexist jokes and slurs encourage the belief that women who dress in a certain way or expose themselves to potentially sexual situations defy an acceptable stereotype and therefore are not qualified to legitimately decline sexual acts. Indeed, any refusal a victim of acquaintance rape may express can be perceived as ingenuine, and people in rape culture will tend to believe this refusal was merely an act. Because they foster rape myth acceptance, the norms implied in sexist humor and slurs make it difficult for victims of rape to be validated as people rather than objects. The structure of male supremacy to which rape myth acceptance contributes values men over women, giving them what the feminist writer Thomas MacAuley Millar describes as a “‘social license to operate’: ‘the social circumstances [rapists] use to conceal, justify or excuse their conduct, that make it seem grey or borderline or unknowable when in fact their conduct is intentional’” (qtd. in Valenti 1). Just as the circumstances in the Republic of Gilead are used to justify the ceremonial rape of women, modern rape culture uses the instruments of ambivalent sexism to excuse rape, thus perpetuating the rape culture and enabling the continued

violation of women's rights. Sexist jokes and designating terms such as "slut" further the tolerance of sexism so that factors such as infertility in Gilead or incapacitation in modern society can be used to dismiss women's identities and justify their objectification. Truly, language has a powerful role in the construction and reinforcement of oppressive social structures such as rape culture.

In a society where women are objectified and stories of acquaintance rape are rampant, Atwood's portrayal of language is crucial to the modern understanding of rape culture. With such terms as Handmaid and the Ceremony, the character Offred finds the objectification and justification of ambivalent sexist attitudes. The proverbial slogans taught in the Republic of Gilead further promote the complementary ideologies of benevolent and hostile sexism by encouraging the belief that women must fit a specific stereotype. Ultimately, Gilead finds its parallel to modern society in the response to behavior that defies a benevolent stereotype. Although the parts of language responsible for activating the conversational rule of levity and designating a woman's objectification differ, the attitudes that support the violation of a woman's rights are the same. In both Gilead and today's society, women are defined by their sexuality and blamed for the violations committed against them. The role of language bridges this parallel, showing that it is through the expression of sexism and the oppression of identity that rape culture is perpetuated.

## Works Cited

- Abrams, Dominic, et al. "Perceptions Of Stranger And Acquaintance Rape: The Role Of Benevolent And Hostile Sexism In Victim Blame And Rape Proclivity." *Journal Of Personality And Social Psychology* 84.1 (2003): 111-125. *PsycARTICLES*. Web. 14 Apr. 2014.
- Atwood, Margaret. *The Handmaid's Tale*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1986. Print.
- Ford, Thomas E., and Mark A. Ferguson. "Social Consequences Of Disparagement Humor: A Prejudiced Norm Theory." *Personality & Social Psychology Review* 8.1 (2004): 79-94. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 16 Apr. 2014.
- Hill, Melanie S., and Ann R. Fischer. "Does Entitlement Mediate The Link Between Masculinity And Rape-Related Variables?." *Journal Of Counseling Psychology* 48.1 (2001): 39. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 14 Apr. 2014.
- Hogsette, David S. "Margaret Atwood's Rhetorical Epilogue In The Handmaid's Tale: The Reader's Role In Empowering Offred's Speech Act." *Critique* 38.4 (1997): 262. *Literary Reference Center*. Web. 14 Apr. 2014.
- Sere, Adriene. "Men and the History of Rape." *Said It. saidit.org*. Said It Feminist News, March 2000. Web. 14 Apr. 2014.
- Thomae, Manuela, and G. Tendayi Viki. "Why Did The Woman Cross The Road? The Effect Of Sexist Humor On Men's Rape Proclivity." *Journal Of Social, Evolutionary, And Cultural Psychology* 7.3 (2013): 250-269. *PsycARTICLES*. Web. 14 Apr. 2014.
- Valenti, Jessica. "In Rape Tragedies, The Shame Is Ours." *Nation* 296.18 (2013): 10. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 14 April 2014.
- Yusuf, Yisa Kehinde. "Rape-Related English And Yoruba Proverbs." *Women & Language* 21.2 (1998): 39-42. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 14 Apr. 2014.

---

Evaluation: *Leslie's paper offers a clear, well-researched, and insightful argument about Atwood's commentary on gender. Leslie deftly weaves an astute analysis of the language of the text together with a commentary on the larger cultural problem at stake.*

# The Appeal of Dystopian Fiction to the Young Adult Reader

Olga Novikova

Course: Literature 115 (Fiction)

Instructor: Pearl Ratunil

Assignment: *Students were to evaluate claims made by a news article, pertaining to the attractiveness of dystopian fiction to younger reading audiences, in light of at least two dystopic fictional novels read for class, quoting from all works referred to and providing close readings of all quotations.*

Dystopian science fiction, with its grim universes, bleak landscapes, and apocalyptic events that lead to subpar living conditions, had always been the favorite genre of the philosophers, the thinkers, the political majors, and the nonconformists. In recent years, the dystopian science fiction genre saw the emergence of a new kind of a protagonist, a young teenage girl, who is taking on the oppression of the government as she is simultaneously finding her self-identity and her place in the adult world. In her *Forbes* article “Why Young Adults ‘Hunger’ for *The Hunger Games* and Other Post-Apocalyptic Dystopian Fiction,” Debra Donston-Miller addressed the intriguing new audience for dystopian science fiction: a young adult. Debra Donston-Miller theorizes that the young adult reader is drawn towards the dystopian genre because the obstacles that the protagonists of such novels face echo with the issues the readers face in the real world, including pressures of growing up too soon, changing family dynamics, and the lack of privacy.

Debra Donston-Miller’s *Forbes* article addresses the adult pressures that today’s youth are presented in the face of the current uncertain times. Thanks to the modern media and its influx of information, the teens are bombarded from a young age with information about issues like terrorism, climate pollution, economic recession, and civil rights compromise. Donston-Miller quotes an assistant professor of film and media studies at Santa Fe Community College, in her article:

“In almost all dystopian worlds, young people hold the values that the adults have forgotten. Against all odds in the horrible world that the adults have left them, the children know what is important. They love, survive and struggle to make sense of their own personal power. They learn to define sexual love and moral choices.” (Anair).

The quoted professor, Monique Anair, brings up the ideas of “value” and “moral choices” because the protagonists of the young adult dystopian fiction turn back to the original “pre-apocalyptic” set of morals that helps them see the wrong in their wrecked world. The dystopian fiction is an exaggerated version of the current world, where young adults are bombarded by the news of ecological disasters, wars, economic upheaval, and social

issues on an everyday basis. Anair also brings up the concept of “personal power” of the teenaged characters, which hits a raw spot with the young public today. In a world where kids are bullied, young girls are sexualized, and young adults grow up in a world of uncertainty, the idea of having your own identity and “personal power” is a refreshing novelty. Despite the grim universe of dystopian science fiction, the protagonists of these novels serve as an inspiration for the young adult public in the unpredictable world of today.

Suzanne Collins’ *The Hunger Games* tackles the issue of the broken family that young adults can relate to due to the high divorce rate, dropping employment rate, and the need for the older siblings to step up and raise younger children in the family. In *The Hunger Games*, we see Katniss defiantly try to keep her family together, attempting her best to preserve the innocent childhood of her young sister as intact as possible. The Capitol had driven a wedge between the children and their parents, as parents, helpless against the Reaping, grow emotionally distant and leave their children “orphaned” and vulnerable to the perils of the world. Katniss turns into a mother figure for the younger sister Prim, giving her physical and emotional support: “They’re not our kids, of course. But they might as well be. Gale’s two little brothers and a sister. Prim. And you may as well throw in our mothers, too, because how would they live without us” (Collins 9)? Collins uses the term “kids” in a metaphorical sense, appointing Katniss as a mother figure to both Prim, their mother, and later, Peeta. In a society that is no longer dominantly patriarchal with both parents out in the workforce, more and more older children shoulder the responsibility of helping their parents raise their younger siblings. Katniss’ situation is one they can relate to and draw strength from. Collins’s Katniss also talks about her mother as one of the “kids,” since she steps up to be the primary provider for the family after her mother sinks into depression and leaves her children to waste away. With the current state of the economy, older siblings have stepped up to help earn income when their parents were laid off. The following parallels are what Donston-Miller hypothesizes helps young adults relate to the dystopian science fiction they read. If their favorite heroine can fight the tyranny of the Capitol and raise her younger

#### **Student Reflections on Writing: Olga Novikova**

To me, writing represents the ultimate freedom through self-expression. When I write, I am no longer myself, constricted by the limits of everyday mundaneness and anchored by my location. Instead, I am the Middle Eastern girl struggling to obtain an education; I am the orphan embarking on his magical journey to live out his destiny; I am the soldier in World War II, writing letters to his beloved. Writing helps our imagination spread its wings and fly, as it embodies our hopes and dreams. When I write, I am capable of healing people and slaying dragons, of finding the cure for the gravest of deceases, and of unlocking the mysteries of the Dark Ages. I believe that writing serves a deeper purpose for mankind as well, as it unites us as one, even if only for a short moment. Writing is the thread that links our present and past generations, as it transcends time, nationalities, and beliefs. To me, writing is what sets the human race apart from the rest of the animal world and makes us special; it is what makes us humane.

sister, then surely they will be able to help take care of other children in the household and step up to the role of breadwinner in the family.

Orwell’s *1984* is another example of a dystopian world where science fiction imitates the real life of young adults. Despite the fact that *1984* lacks a young rebellious female protagonist that would appeal to the young adult audience Debra Donston-Miller describes in her *Forbes* article, it is a prime example of the absence of privacy that the modern society and its children are subjected to. The booming development of technology brought forth speed-of-light Internet connections, gadgets the size of a palm that are chock full of cat memes, and an increased inability to be anonymous and private. Orwell’s Winston is subjected to round-the-clock surveillance, and nothing in the world of *1984* is confidential: “so long as he remained within the field of vision which the metal plaque



## The Appeal of Dystopian Fiction to the Young Adult Reader

commanded, he could be seen as well as heard. There was of course no way of knowing whether you were being watched at any given moment” (5). Orwell uses the phrase “you were being watched at any given moment” to describe the depressing truth of Winston’s world: no matter what he did or where he went, he was always being observed. The parallel between Orwell’s dystopian world and the modern society is clear, especially in light of NSA surveillance leaks exposed last year by Edward Snowden. The GPS signal of any Smartphone is easily traceable, and that fact is not lost on the young generation. The youth is told that being watched and tracked (hello, iPhone tracking applications!) by their parents is normal and safe, whilst also being warned against the perils of social media exposure and cyberstalking. The feeling of constant surveillance endured by Wilson in *1984* will ring a familiar bell with the youth of this generation.

In her article “Why Young Adults ‘Hunger’ for *The Hunger Games* and Other Post-Apocalyptic Dystopian Fiction,” Donston-Miller argues that the obstacles

faced by the current youth are reminiscent of the adversary faced by their fictional young adult dystopian counterparts. When a young girl from a broken home reads about Katniss’ plight, she feels a connection to her, which accounts for the popularity of dystopian science fiction among the young readers. Despite their youthful age, the teens today are faced with a darker and more somber future than generations past. They are confronted with the bleak reality of growing up on a polluted planet, with debts of their parents placed on their shoulders, surrounded by wars started years past. The gravity of their situation is reflected in the literature that is prevalent among their peers.

### Works Cited

- Collins, Suzanne. *The Hunger Games*. New York: Scholastic Press, 2008. Print.
- Donston-Miller, Debra. “Why Young Adults ‘Hunger’ for *The Hunger Games* and Other Post-Apocalyptic Dystopian Fiction.” *ForbesBrandVoice*. *forbes.com*. 20 Nov. 2014. Web. Dec 2, 2014.
- Orwell, George. *1984*. 1948. *Planet eBook*. *planetebook.com*. Web. 2 Dec 2014.

---

Evaluation: *Olga’s paper is a fine example of literary criticism as it intersects not only with novels but also the magazine article. Her paper is also enlivened with astute observations on our contemporary world (recession, terrorism, violence) and its influence on the novels that are created for young adults. Olga’s characterization of our modern world is equal in insight to her reflections on the novels The Hunger Games and 1984. For this reason, her paper is engaging not only as literary criticism, but also social criticism.*

---

# Madness and Confusion in William Shakespeare's *Hamlet,* *Prince of Denmark*

---

William Nutini

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Elizabeth Turner

---

Assignment: *This research paper is the culmination of the skills taught in English 102, applied toward composing, revising, and editing an interpretive essay on William Shakespeare's Hamlet.*

Confusion is the loss of orientation, or the ability to position oneself spatially within an environment by place, time, and personal identity. Mental confusion is accompanied by the loss of linear thinking and the ability to validate new knowledge. Confusion fosters feelings of deception and mistrust between people. Confusion breaks down societal rules and is considered to be a betrayal of expectations. There is a fundamental expectation to be logical most of the time. If the expectation were contrary, conversations would be uncontrolled and random, and communicating with others to acquire reliable knowledge would be impossible. According to the first sentence of Aristotle's "Metaphysics," as translated by W.D. Ross in Jonathan Barnes "Complete Works of Aristotle," "All men by nature desire to know." In *Hamlet*, the need to know true identities is apparent from the onset. As Eric P. Levy points out in "Hamlet and the Madness in Reason," "Perhaps no play in literature more effectively dramatizes the cognitive urge than *Hamlet* – a play that opens on a perplexed world, where the need to know is urgent but frustrated." The characters in *Hamlet* are driven by self-serving motives, using misdirection to enhance or protect their interests or learn truths that might not otherwise be revealed. *Hamlet* is perceived as a more serious transgressor, as his madness is fabricated for selfish

reasons rather than for the common good. *Hamlet's* acts of feigning madness are the recipe for creating confusion. The consequences of obscuring knowledge are taken to the extreme in *Hamlet*, resulting in the deaths of all who were kept disoriented.

*Hamlet's* attempts to create confusion begin immediately after speaking with the ghost of his father and learning of his murder by poisoning. Knowing that his uncle will have to kill him to prevent him from avenging his father's death at some point in the future, *Hamlet* adopts a persona of a madman to divert attention from his activities of effecting justice and revenge against Claudius. *Hamlet's* words to Horatio and Marcellus are those of a raving lunatic as he ushers them around the woods, swearing their secrecy about the Ghost. Horatio is first to verbalize his confusion caused by *Hamlet's* madness: "These are but wild and whirling words, my lord" (1.5.139). Horatio is dizzied by the deranged behavior as they run in circles. *Hamlet* attempts to convince Horatio and Marcellus of his sanity and that his actions are a facade. Providing advance notice to Horatio and Marcellus, *Hamlet* states that his behavior, going forward, may appear to be that of a madman: "How strange or odd soe'er I bear myself – As perchance hereafter shall think meet / to put an antic disposition on" (1.5. 181). He is saying that he is going to adopt behavior of outrageous insanity. *Hamlet's* assurance does little to convince Horatio that he is not mad. Horatio remains dubious of *Hamlet's* explanation: "O day and night, but this is wondrous strange!" (1.5.173). Observing a demeanor that is out of character for *Hamlet*, Horatio is bewildered. *Hamlet's* type of self-confession, as noted in "Queen Gertrude: Monarch, Mother, Murderer," by Harmonie Loberg, is a "self-report or confession that goes against a primary goal of indirect aggression: to remain unidentified." *Hamlet's* actions go to the extreme of notoriety in his passive-aggressive interactions with those who are being confused.

Demonstrating a graphically disturbed appearance, *Hamlet* visits Ophelia while she is sewing in her room. Ophelia is engaged in a solitary activity in the comfort and security of her room only to be assaulted visually and physically by *Hamlet's* littered appearance. His mind, like his clothing, is weakened and unraveling, unable

to carry the load of thoughts weighing upon it" "Lord Hamlet, with his doublet all unbraced, / No hat upon his head, his stockings fouled" (2.1.80-81). Being a proper young lady in her own private space, Ophelia would never condone the unchaperoned visitation of man in her room: "But truly I do fear it" (2.2.87). Hamlet continues his assault physically by grabbing Ophelia's wrist. By grabbing Ophelia's wrist rather than taking her hand, Hamlet is displaying physical aggressive behavior to which Ophelia is unaccustomed: "O my lord, my lord, I have been so affrighted" (2.1.77). Ophelia is pleading for Hamlet to understand that she is scared witless. Terrorized by Hamlet's appearance, Ophelia equates her fear to that of seeing a ghost, "As if he had been loosed out of hell / To speak of horrors – he comes before me" (2.1.85). Ophelia is greatly distressed having taken Hamlet's behavior to heart. In her hysteria, never seeing Hamlet appear this way before, Ophelia surmises that he is losing his mind. Hamlet looks Ophelia up and down at length with a piteous stare until finally releasing her and wandering away from her room, and "He falls to such perusal of my face" (2.1.92). He scrutinizes her as though carefully examining her for flaws. Ophelia, thinking that Hamlet has come to speak with her, is now utterly confused at Hamlet's appearance and mad behavior. She says, "He raised a sigh so piteous and profound / As it did seem to shatter all his bulk / And end his being. That done, he lets me go" (2.1.97-99). Hamlet is taking a deep breath as if it is the last breath he will ever take. Dejected, his entire being disintegrating, he exhales as though expelling the pieces. Alison Findlay suggests the following explanation for Hamlet's conduct to Ophelia in "Ophelia: Women in Shakespeare": "Perhaps his reported appearance in her closet where he takes her 'firmly by the wrist' and gazes into her face is a silent appeal for her help." Clearly, this is not the case, as Hamlet's lack of speaking adds to Ophelia's confusion as to the purpose of his visit. He seemed to find his way without his eyes, / For out o' doors he went without their helps, / And to the last bended their light on me" (2.1.100-103). Hamlet's behavior displays a lack of coping skills to deal with what is going on in his life and express his pain. He is unable to ask for help or confide in Ophelia. "By recalling the classical theories of seeing and knowing, the reference

to light emanating from Hamlet's eyes associates him with abstractive reason which illuminates the universal in the particular. But Hamlet's eyes are also associated with awareness of unique and singular pain, which no universal can comprehend" (Levy 117). Ophelia does not proffer any aide or affection to Hamlet but rather seeks clarity from her father, Polonius, who assesses the situation as madness caused by the ecstasy of love: "That hath made him mad" (2.2.113). Polonius is the first to declare Hamlet mad, thinking it is because Ophelia has repelled his love.

Hamlet turns his attentions toward confusing Polonius with mad talk when Polonius questions if Hamlet knows him. Replying that he knows Polonius all too well, Hamlet calls him a fish monger: "Excellent well. You are a fish monger" (2.2.171). Using wordplay, Hamlet is depicting Polonius as a keeper of a house of prostitution. He sees him as a pimp prostituting Ophelia by means of psychological intimidation and manipulation. As M.A.Shaaber notes in "Polonius As Fishmonger," "'fishmonger' may be used in a sense which it appears sometimes to bear, of a seller of women's chastity". . . "A fishmonger's daughter was a cant term for a prostitute." Hamlet continues his wordplay with Polonius, suggesting that Ophelia will be transformed into an undesirable being given her current manipulation by Claudius and Polonius: "For the sun breeds maggots in a dead dog, being a good kissing carrion / Have you a daughter?" (2.2.178-179). Hamlet is referring to spontaneous generation, which is the belief that pestilence could arise from the sun shining on dead flesh, his point being that Polonius's treatment of Ophelia, no matter how good and pure she is, cannot avoid turning her to evil. Continuing to pretend that he does not know Polonius, Hamlet asks if he has a daughter, thus keeping the conversation maddening, and he tells Polonius, "Let her not walk in the sun" (2.2.181). Hamlet is accusing Polonius of whoring out his daughter. "His eagerness to fasten the sense 'bawd' on fish-monger is due to the fact that this interpretation supports his idea that Hamlet has overheard Polonius saying "'I'll loose my daughter to him'" (Shaaber 181). The digressions Hamlet displays are so confusing to Polonius that, instead of evoking paternal rage, the conversation solidifies his belief that Ophelia is the cause of Hamlet's madness:

“Though this be madness, yet there is method in’t” (2.2.197). The old chancellor is convinced that Hamlet is mad, but at the same time, he cannot figure out Hamlet’s riddles or the fact that Hamlet is toying with him.

Knowing that Polonius is using Ophelia to get to him, Hamlet directs his madness onto Ophelia while under the suspicious watch of Polonius and Claudius. Ophelia, attempting to return remembrances to Hamlet, finds him in a psychological state unwilling to acknowledge truth. Hamlet emphatically denies having ever given anything to her: “No, not I, I never gave you aught” (3.1.97). Hamlet confesses to Ophelia that he loved her once but no longer. Ophelia admits that she was taken in by Hamlet’s confusing deception: “Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so” (3.1.115). Ophelia is unable to tell how much of what Hamlet is saying is sincere honesty and how much is an act: “You should not have believed me, for virtue cannot so inoculate our old stock but we shall relish of it. I loved you not” (3.1.116-117). Hamlet is implying his inability to love Ophelia is a familial trait not unlike Gertrude’s inability to show love for King Hamlet. Ophelia is foolish for thinking that she would be immune from Hamlet’s behavior or that of his family. He is telling Ophelia that what felt like love to him before now feels false and repulsive. Hamlet continues to denounce his love for her while cursing her chastity: “Get thee to a nunnery” (3.1.119). The irony, in Hamlet’s disparaging direction, is that a nunnery is Elizabethan slang for a brothel. He is implying that Ophelia is a whore and should return to her brothel. Joseph Sterrett touches on relationships in “Confessing Claudius: Sovereignty, Fraternity and Isolation at the Heart of Hamlet”: “One can imagine how there might have been diffusion of the particular concerns an individual might have had for their own significant sin – grievances that harmed their relationships with others within their community and uncertainty about the manner that these were to be resolved.” Hamlet, suspecting that he is being observed, adds to the mania by asking her father’s whereabouts.

Hamlet informs Ophelia, that if she does marry, he will ensure that her reputation is ruined: “thou shalt not escape calumny” (3.1.131). Taken aback by what she believes is Hamlet’s utter madness, Ophelia cries to the heavens for help: “O, what a noble mind is here o’erthrown!”

(3.1.142). Ophelia believes Hamlet is no longer able to organize his thoughts. “In fact, the unexamined irony of this outburst is that the madness which he supposedly there manifests lies, not in his particular mind, but in the rationalist way of thinking which he there adopts” (Levy 104). Hamlet is projecting his anger for womankind onto Ophelia.

Hamlet keeps Ophelia convinced of his madness with repeated conversations where he interjects sexual innuendo. Prior to the play beginning, Hamlet suggested that rather than lying down at Ophelia’s feet, he would prefer sexual relations: “I mean my head upon your lap” (3.2.93). Not knowing what to think, Ophelia attempts to change the topic of conversation. Not soon after the play begins, Ophelia compliments Hamlet on his ability to explain the play. Hamlet’s replies to Ophelia are worded to imply that he is aroused and desires her sexually: “it would cost you a groaning to take off mine edge” (3.2.217). Ophelia is completely confused by Hamlet’s sexual suggestiveness after having previously called her a prostitute and telling her that he is no longer in love with her. “Under the diametrically opposed pressures of sexual invitation from Hamlet and the need for chastity, it is not surprising that Ophelia’s sanity collapses” (Findlay 311). Ophelia responds to Hamlet’s inappropriate overtures by pointing out that he changes people’s words around with witty wordplay, but in doing so, he is being offensive: “Still better, and worse” (3.2.218). Ophelia is saying that, while Hamlet is eloquent in speech, his treatment of women is less than desirable.

After the play, Hamlet’s madness is extended to Gertrude in her room. Hamlet knows she is upset with him for making a scene at the play by inferring that Claudius murdered King Hamlet. The tone is nervousness as Hamlet shouts for her while he approaches, “Mother, Mother, Mother!” (3.4.6). Hamlet meets Gertrude’s scolding with a scolding of his own, as he “...controls and dominates his mother’s responses at every turn through his words and physical violence” (Sterrett 751). Gertrude finds herself being attacked by Hamlet, verbally stabbing at her with her very words: “You go not till I set you up a glass / Where you may see the inmost part of you” (3.4.20-21). She is confused by Hamlet’s frenzied dissemination of her misdeeds while she feebly attempts

**Madness and Confusion in William Shakespeare's  
*Hamlet, Prince of Denmark***

to defend herself. She asks, "What wilt thou do? Thou wilt not murder me? / Help, ho!" (3.4.22-23). Gertrude doesn't yet understand why exactly Hamlet is acting the way he is.

Terrified that Hamlet has come to murder her, Gertrude cries out for help. Her cry is echoed by foolhardy Polonius from behind the tapestry. Thinking the King has followed him into the room, Hamlet spins around and thrusts his sword into the tapestry, piercing Polonius. Hamlet continues to attack Gertrude with insults and accusations of being a hypocritical harlot. Gertrude is visibly distressed by Hamlet's furious assault as she begs him to have mercy, but he is relentless, telling her, "Leave wringing of your hands. Peace, sit you down, / And let me wring your heart, for so I shall" (3.4.35-36). The Ghost, who has before expressed his concern for Gertrude, appears before Hamlet, reminding him to take pity on the Queen. Gertrude is in a state of unrest due to her inner conflicts that Hamlet has drawn out of her. Gertrude is bewildered. The ghost is asking Hamlet to aide her with her innermost struggle: "O, step between her and her fighting soul!" (3.4.117). Hamlet's speaking with the ghost serves only to reinforce Gertrude's belief of Hamlet's lunacy. "Gertrude seems unaware of the reality her son is pressing upon her" (Sterrett 751). Gertrude is convinced that it is madness that has allowed Hamlet to skillfully create this kind of hallucination, saying, "Alas, he's mad!" (3.4.109). Gertrude makes a vain attempt to convince Hamlet that he has an overactive imagination. Hamlet's retort is that he is as sane as her: "Lay not that flattering unction to your soul / That not your trespass but my madness speaks" (3.4.152-153). Hamlet gives Gertrude explicit instructions of atonement for her sins by performing good deeds, practicing decency and abstinence: "Make you to ravel all this matter out / That I essentially am not in madness, / But mad in craft" (3.4.193-195). Confessing to Gertrude, as he did to Horatio, Hamlet claims that he isn't truly mad but merely pretending to be mad as part of his plan. Cautioning Gertrude again to not be tempted by Claudius's lechery, Hamlet tells her that if she has to explain, she can say that his instructions are not because he is mad but only acting mad, and "by this means, he contaminates Gertrude's own perspective on her condition, with the result that she plunges into a state

of despair" (Levy 109). Morally condemning Gertrude, Hamlet has impressed his madness onto her.

Hamlet and Laertes quarrel over their love for Ophelia in the churchyard at her funeral, with Laertes claiming that he is so grief stricken he is willing to be buried alive with Ophelia. The two jump into Ophelia's grave, each attempting to prove his greater love for Ophelia, with Hamlet saying, "I loved Ophelia. Forty thousand brothers / Could not with all their quantity of love / Make up my sum" (5.1.222-224). In reality, Hamlet and Laertes show little regard for Ophelia as they grapple atop her body in the grave. Since Laertes most likely would not have allowed himself to be buried alive, Hamlet asks him what he is willing to do for Ophelia: "'Swounds, show me what thou'lt do. / Woo't weep? Woo't fight? Woo't fast? Woo't tear thyself? Woo't drink up easel? Eat a crocodile?" (5.1.227-229). Hamlet is overemphasizing that Laertes is a melodramatic hypocrite, telling him, "I'll rant as well as thou" (5.1.237). Hamlet is overwrought with emotion to the point of making ludicrous claims. "*Hamlet* is a play that is obsessed with observing behavior and the reading of external signs as indicators of a fixed internal truth, a truth that is forever elusive" (Sterrett 749). Laertes and Hamlet are separated as Hamlet declares he will fight over the disagreement of who loved Ophelia more. Hamlet reinforces the idea that he is mad by rambling words of madness that appear to convince the King and Queen. Claudius and Gertrude are unable to conceive Hamlet's actions are anything other than utter madness.

Hamlet, no longer displaying his antic disposition, expresses his regret to Horatio for his outrageous behavior. As he converses with Horatio, he explains how his instincts helped protect him from Claudius's plan to have Rosencrantz and Guildenstern escort him to England to be executed. Hamlet confesses that he replaced the name on the death warrant with those of the courtiers, which demonstrates that there is a god who ultimately decides a person's fate: "When our deep plots do pall, and that should learn us / There's a divinity that shapes our end" (5.2.9-10). Admitting that he knew his fate, Hamlet devised the plot to change the orders and forge the seal. He explains the downfall of the courtiers was a result of their interloping in matters that they did not fully comprehend. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern chose to

align themselves with Claudius rather than with Hamlet, allowing Hamlet to declare that their deaths are not on his conscience: “They are not near my conscience. Their defeat / Does by their own insinuation grow” (5.2.58-59). Rosencrantz and Guildenstern caused their own deaths when the plot they were involved in was turned against them.

Hamlet rationally tells Horatio that Claudius has killed his father, whored his mother, stolen the throne, and attempted to kill him. Hamlet claims that it is logical to kill Claudius at this time rather than letting him live to continue these evil acts: “And is’t not to be damned / To let this canker of our nature come / In further evil” (5.2.68-70). Horatio reminds Hamlet that Claudius will seek revenge when he soon learns of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern’s fates in England. Hamlet remains calm stating the moment is his. Apologizing to Horatio for acting mad toward Laertes, Hamlet explains that it was Laertes’s overly pretentious grief that put him into his rage: “But, sure, the bravery of his grief did put me / Into a tow’ring passion” (5.2.79-80). Horatio is Hamlet’s only true friend throughout the play. Yet not even Horatio can be completely certain of Hamlet’s sanity. As Tenney L. Davis notes in “The Sanity of Hamlet” “His own testimony could not be regarded as conclusive – for, if he were truly mad, we could hardly accept his word for it; while if he seemed mad merely, we could hardly believe a present protestation that the appearance was all a sham.” Hamlet, knowingly or unknowingly, is still acting mad.

As the play moves toward its conclusion, Hamlet and Horatio are informed by Osric of the duel that Hamlet is to have with Laertes. Horatio voices his concern to Hamlet that he will lose. Self-confident, Hamlet reassures Horatio that he will win since he has been practicing his swordsmanship the entire time Laertes was in France. Hamlet does admit to being apprehensive. Horatio tells Hamlet that he should follow his instincts and decline to duel. Hamlet states that he is prepared to die. If death comes now, it won’t come in the future, and if not in the future, then now: “There is a special providence in the fall of a sparrow” (5.2.182). Referencing Matthew 10:29, Hamlet is saying that there is a divine guidance at work that we know nothing about, yet it determines everything. He is suggesting that God will determine his

fate. John Lee states in “Distracted Subjects: Madness and Gender in Shakespeare and Early Modern Culture,” “Neely’s Hamlet is ‘freed from melancholy and passivity’ in the fifth act, and is finally able to show ‘philosophical detachment,’ to carry out his revenge, and so to prove himself ‘worthy of a spiritual epitaph and a soldier’s funeral.’” Hamlet is mentally prepared for the coming battle: “*The readiness is all*” (5.2.184). He ends the play achieving the action he has been reluctant to take.

### Works Cited

- Aristotle. *Complete Works of Aristotle*. Volume 2: The Revised Oxford Translation. Ed. Jonathan Barnes. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014. Ebook.
- Davis, Tenney L. “The Sanity Of Hamlet.” *The Journal of Philosophy* 18.23 (1921): 629-634. Web. 30 Nov 30 2014.
- Findlay, Alison. “Ophelia.” *Women in Shakespeare* (2010): 311-312. *Literary Reference Center*. Web. 19 Nov 2014.
- Lee, John. “Distracted Subjects: Madness and Gender in Shakespeare and Early Modern Culture./Shakespeare and the Origins of English.” *Modern Language Review* 101.3 (2006): 822-824. *Literary Reference Center*. Web. 19 Nov 2014.
- Levy, Eric P. “Universal Versus Particular: Hamlet and the Madness in Reason.” *Exemplaria* 14.1 (2002): 99-125. *Literary Reference Center*. Web. 5 Nov 2014.
- Loberg, Harmonie. “Queen Gertrude: Monarch, Mother, Murderer.” *Atenea* 24.1 (2004): 59-71. *Literary Reference Center*. Web. 5 Nov 2014.
- Shaaber, M. A. “Polonius as Fishmonger.” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 22.2 (1971):179-181. Print.
- Shakespeare, William. “Hamlet: Prince of Denmark.” 1600. *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, Drama, and Writing*. Eds. X.J. Kennedy and Dana Gioia. 11<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Longman, 2010. 1354-1464. Print.
- Sterrett, Joseph. “Confessing Claudius: Sovereignty, Fraternity and Isolation at the Heart of *Hamlet*.” *Textual Practice* 23.5 (2009): 739-761. *Literary Reference Center*. Web. 6 Nov 2014.

---

Evaluation: *William’s essay is a well-focused interpretation that uses evidence from both primary and secondary sources to prove its effective thesis.*

# The Examined Life's Obstacle: Fighting Conformity

*Kamil Piluk*

Learning Community: The Examined Life  
Courses: English 101 (Composition) and Philosophy 105  
(Introduction to Philosophy)

Instructors: Kurt Hemmer and John Garcia

*Assignment: For the final paper in this course, students were encouraged to make an argument about the value of an idea from one of the thinkers in the course.*

The man stood with his fellow soldiers in a long line and held a machine gun tightly in the palms of his hands. Opposite his gun barrel stood a group of enemies lined up against a brick wall, waiting for the inevitable. A quick pull of the trigger, at the command of his superior, would grant him the power to take the lives of his enemies. At that moment, he was a hero ready to fulfill his duty to his country and finally become the man everyone always wanted him to be. As the command was given, the Aryan race, the soldier believed, was that much closer to ridding the earth of impurity.

Looking at World War II from a Nazi soldier's perspective helps us realize that collective thinking is a dangerous occurrence. We cannot ignore the fact that a whole country was convinced into accepting a way of thinking that allowed for the genocide of an entire group of people along with the death of countless amounts of innocent civilians throughout Europe. But if we know that group mentality can be devastating in many different ways, why is it still so prevalent today in the way we think about ideas in politics, social issues, and how we perceive actions of people in our everyday lives? Greek philosopher Socrates believed that many people do not question their lives. This failure to question leads to conformity which is a product of living an unexamined life. In *The Apology*, Socrates is forced to testify in court and defend himself as

he is facing death. What he does in addition to his defense is lay out a foundation to his beliefs and voice his concern with many problems in his society. One of the problems that Socrates pointed out is one that faces our society even today: complacency. The problem with many people is that they are complacent and do not see that challenging beliefs is important. This kind of thinking is one that leads to conformity. Socrates believed that in order for one to live an examined life, one will have to strengthen one's beliefs and stand by them, regardless of what the majority thinks. Socrates' view on living an examined life is important because, by examining life, one will be able to resist the need to conform to thoughts, actions, and ideas simply because they are the voice of the majority without fearing the consequences that may result.

Socrates' arguments help show that accepting a majority belief without challenging it is a negative symptom of the unexamined life. The foundation of Socrates' belief is the idea that, "The unexamined life is not worth living" (*Apology* 38a). Socrates helps us overcome the problem of group mentality by urging us to examine our lives and question ideas and actions that are accepted as the status quo. He advocates challenging accepted beliefs and through questioning and examining life, one will be closer to truth because one has thought about what is important. In his testimony, Socrates began explaining to the jury a metaphor which connected very simply to the lives of many Athenians: "I was attached to this city by the god—though it seems a ridiculous thing to say—as upon a great and noble horse which was somewhat sluggish because of its size and needed to be stirred up by a kind of gadfly" (*Apology* 35e). In this metaphor, Socrates is the gadfly waking the horse (Athenian people) from its sleep. Socrates felt that his purpose in life was to help others ask questions about their lives and truly examine them. The main idea of this awakening is to help encourage people to have their own beliefs that help bring them closer to the truth. By looking for the truth and questioning ideas, one will have beliefs that have been thought through and strengthened. If these views are challenged, one will have the ability to argue for them and the courage to act upon them. One of the reasons why people conform to widely held beliefs is because they do not actually think about the questions themselves. Instead, they are

a “sleeping horse,” completely incapable of standing by beliefs because none of the beliefs they have are their own. This problem has been very common in our society today. Many people mimic opinions from others and are easily swayed by what they read and hear from news and media sources. People do not think critically about what they are being told. They are given one perspective of a story, and it will be the only side argued. Instead of thinking of their own opinions, they will see an idea from one side and not think deeper into something that does not coincide with the accepted narrative. For example, many people hold the belief that torture is wrong and will go their entire lives basing the belief on the idea that torture is wrong and conforming to that idea. But what happens when circumstances change? When there is a threat to you or your country and all you hear is that the only path to being safe is torturing those who are trying to harm you? One living an unexamined life will suddenly and irrationally change one’s belief because the beliefs are not strong enough to stand on their own. Instead, they are weak and prone to being exposed. The easiest thing to do is change beliefs to the ones shared by the majority; with the majority, there is no fear of having beliefs challenged. It is easier to avoid all critical self-examination and only conform to the accepted beliefs; in this case, the sudden acceptance that torture is justified. But Socrates did not want us to take the easy route. He wanted us to think, challenge, and *live* our beliefs.

One of the reasons why people do not examine their lives is because of laziness. Complacency is at the root of conformity. Many people simply do not take the time to reflect on what they believe and why they believe it. For example, Socrates was put to trial because he angered many high-ranking officials of Athenian society. When Socrates questioned the greatest poets, politicians, and artisans very simple questions about their beliefs, they could not answer why they believed what they did. This angered the wisest of Athens because it looked like Socrates was challenging their expertise, and they felt threatened. What Socrates was really doing was asking *how* they knew the answers to such difficult questions but they could only answer with lies. Socrates says to the jury, “And surely it is the most blameworthy ignorance to believe that one knows when one does not know”

(*Apology* 29b). They could not answer the questions and neither could Socrates; but what separated Socrates from Athens’ wisest was the fact that he did not pretend to know the answers. The problem that Socrates points out is that even the experts in their respective fields cannot answer simple questions about their own lives. But it is the general population of people who looks to these experts for answers to the difficult questions. What happens then is that there are many uninformed opinions about beliefs that have not been examined, and those beliefs turn into the commonly accepted ideas that everyone lives by. As a result, everyone adheres to those beliefs even though they have not questioned them for themselves and blindly follow the group. In the end, one’s whole life is predicated on uninformed views. This is the danger of accepting the majority opinion. Regardless, one thing that Socrates argues is that there is a right answer *despite* what the majority believes. Socrates shows that the majority will not always be right. It is important to think about why something is right or wrong and not gauge the opinion on whether others agree or not. Many times, people have beliefs that reflect upon their culture, family, and contemporary beliefs of their peers. They will hold those beliefs only because they were taught to believe them or they have learned to never question the ways because “that is how it has always been.” When people begin to mindlessly accept beliefs without challenging them critically, the result is a society that is based on the status quo and a society where no one has the ability to explain with extreme certainty why particular beliefs are true. Looking back at early America is a great example of this. Many people accepted slavery as a part of a normal society when, in reality, it was a horrific and brutal part of an accepted majority view. People grew up learning and having to accept other people as property and lesser than them. Except eventually, more and more people began to realize how messed up it really was. The only reason slavery is not a problem in America anymore is because many years before anyone even thought about the idea of freeing black people, there was someone who firmly held the minority opinion against slavery. This idea would begin to grow and follow into a time where slavery would no longer be accepted. The one with the unpopular opinion may sometimes be the one to know the



## The Examined Life's Obstacle: Fighting Conformity

real truth. But the ones who follow the majority opinion only have the illusion of truth, for nothing was examined, and things were only brought to relevancy by a mob mentality. The only way to build towards the future is not to stay in the beliefs of the past and in the beliefs of one's contemporaries, but to find reasons to find truth because only then can one avoid conforming to the uninformed views that society may hold.

Conformity is one of the obstacles to living an examined life, because many fear the consequences if they speak against the common belief. Socrates is an example of someone who is willing to overcome obstacles for what he believes. He was a man who believed in what he did so strongly that he was willing to *die* for his beliefs. The death of Socrates shows us that no matter what obstacles (in Socrates' case, death) stand in the way, people must examine their lives in order to overcome those obstacles. By accepting his death, Socrates is showing that his values were challenged and despite the result, he is still willing to stand by them. Socrates says, "To fear death, gentlemen, is no other than to think oneself wise when one is not, to think one knows what one does not know. No one knows whether death may not be the greatest of all blessings for a man, yet men fear it as if they knew that it is the greatest of all evils" (*Apology* 29a). It is apparent that Socrates has thought a lot about what death may be. He came to the conclusion that he just *does not know*. What he does not know should not induce fear. Socrates' obstacle is death, but through rational reasoning and examination of what is important to him, he will accept whatever the repercussion of his belief is. Today, many people fear consequences if they speak up against a wrong opinion. They fear that they will lose friends, lose respect, lose their jobs, destroy their reputations, or even be killed for expressing their beliefs. Socrates shows us not to fear those consequences. If one used rational inquiry to strengthen and challenge one's beliefs, one will have the courage to persevere regardless of the consequences. If one stands by beliefs that were questioned thoroughly, there will be no reason to fear anything, not even death. Instead, one will be more courageous and be willing to face the consequences of one's beliefs. One of the problems in Nazi Germany was that a lot of people did not bother challenging the radical ideas of the Nazi party

because of fear. They feared for their lives and decided that it would be better to avoid conflict and quietly recede to living their daily lives in ignorance. But, as we know, no good can come from an entire populace stepping aside and allowing evil to happen. In order for the world to be a place brought together by truth and understanding, evil and confusion must be eradicated through self-examination. Only then will the world be closer to truth and further from the damaging forces of ignorance.

Human beings are social creatures. We depend on one another to reaffirm our place in the world, and we often take that too far because we are afraid of breaking away from the group. Just to clarify, not all majority opinions are wrong. What is wrong is following them mindlessly and allowing for evil to be a part of the world because, sometimes, the majority can be wrong. But it is up to ourselves to decide which beliefs are true and which only misguide us from the truth. We need to be able to *recognize* when something is not right and be able to *act* on those beliefs, like Socrates showed us. If we do not, we allow lies and evil to control the world.

### Works Cited

Plato. *Five Dialogues*. Trans. G.M.A. Grube. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002. Print.

---

Evaluation: *Kamil does an excellent job showing the relevance of Socrates' claim that the "unexamined life is not worth living" to our world today. He gives a systematic treatment of the various obstacles to examining our lives that are treated in Plato's Apology and then goes on to discuss the dangers of conformity and the way in which philosophical self-examination creates a kind of courage within us that makes us less likely to give in to this danger.*

---

# The Working Poor and the Immortal Youth: Class Struggle and Escapism in the Novel and Film Adaption of *Morvern Callar*

Virginia Pszczolkowski

Course: Literature 112 (Literature and Film)

Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

Assignment: *For the midterm paper in this course, students were to compare a film adaptation with its literary counterpart, for one of the works we had read, viewed, and discussed in class. Virginia chose to compare the mid-1990's Scottish novel Morvern Callar with its later film adaptation directed by Lynne Ramsay.*

Alan Warner's *Morvern Callar* is a beautifully written, adventurous novel about a young woman living in a poor Scottish port town. The story opens to Morvern discovering that her long-time boyfriend, left unnamed throughout the book, has killed himself, leaving Morvern with his inheritance and his yet unpublished novel. She takes the money – and the novel – for herself, sending the novel off to be published in her own name and spending the money on a vacation and eventually extended travel and partying through Spain and Western Europe. The film follows an overall similar story, although it ends much more abruptly: whereas in the novel Morvern returns from traveling for a final time to search for work after falling pregnant, the film ends *as* she is leaving to travel, having suffered no consequences from poor decision-making and very well-off from the money she made by publishing her boyfriend's novel. These endings exemplify the differences between the novel and the film adaption of *Morvern Callar*. The novel is, at its core, a serious discourse on the struggles, hopes, vices and virtues of the working poor. The film, however, does not follow those same ideas, and instead focuses in on the desire of young people to find adventure and excitement, regardless of their social status.

Morvern's foster father, Red Hanna, is a secondary character who very obviously represents the socioeconomic issues presented in the novel. He is a working man who cares a great deal for his foster daughter, even though he does not expect that she will do much of anything with her life. He is an important character with important things to say. During one conversation with Morvern, Red Hanna gives a monologue on the sadness and reality of being a laborer in the poor port town in which they live:

“The hidden fact of our world is that theres no point in having desire unless youve money. Every desire is transformed into sour dreams. You get told if you work hard you get money but most work hard and end up with nothing. I wouldnt mind if it was shown as the lottery it is but oh no. The law as brute force has to be worshipped as virtue. Theres no freedom, no liberty; theres just money. Thats the wold we've made and no one tells me to find more to life when I've no time or money to live it. We live off each other's necessities and fancy names for

**The Working Poor and the Immortal Youth:  
Class Struggle and Escapism in the Novel and Film  
Adaption of *Morvern Callar***

barefaced robbery. Yet what good is all the money in the world to me now when all I want to do is stare out the bungalow window at the mountains? Money would destroy what I've learned to accept over the years. In plain language, I'm fifty-five: a wasted life." (47 - 48)

This is a very important scene in the novel; all of the class struggles and issues that so far were only shown, Red Hanna now spells out, making it impossible to ignore that these issues are an integral part of the story. Red Hanna is more than just a symbol for the righteous struggle of the working class, though. Later on in the story, after Morvern has returned for the first time from vacationing and meeting with the publishers for her late boyfriend's novel, she discovers that Red Hanna is having an extramarital affair with Morvern's best friend Lanna, another important secondary character in the novel. This revelation, while unpalatable due to Lanna being his daughter's age *and* him being married, is not altogether surprising. Multiple times before Red Hanna and Lanna got together, he mentioned to Morvern how "... that Lanna's blossomed into a fair wee ginger-nutted cracker," (115) suggesting that he finds her to be attractive. The affair between Morvern's foster father and best friend adds conflict to the story, prodding Morvern just a little bit more to leave town again, but it also adds complexity to Red Hanna's character. He is not simply a speaker for the class struggles represented in the novel, but a person actually living through those struggles, with faults and actions all his own. He becomes more real through this affair, further solidifying for the reader that the ideas presented in the novel are issues that affect real people.

The film, however, paints a very different picture with Red Hanna – that is, none at all. Ostensibly, he appears in the film once, for a few moments in a pub where he and Morvern have an almost unintelligible smalltalk conversation. Duncan McHardy is listed as the actor who plays him, so it must be true that the man in the pub is in fact Red Hanna, but he might as well not be there at all. Red Hanna's absence in the film parallels very neatly with the absence of the working class struggles that he represents. Without his speech and his actions sprinkled throughout the story, all that is left is Morvern and Lanna,

two young people without the context of a fifty-five year old man who has been working all his life to just barely scrape by.

In fact, much of the content of the novel that supplies the socioeconomic context is absolutely absent from the film, which is the heart of differences between the novel and the film. *Place* is another notable example of this context and is one of the first things that the viewer will notice is different between the novel and the film. Through novel-narrator Morvern's eyes and words, the port town she lives in is a sad place, rife with government-supplied housing, dead-end jobs and alcoholics: this is her environment. The town is easy to picture, and it is obvious that the people who live there are not well-to-do. Early on in the novel, after Morvern and Lanna spent a night out at a local party, Morvern pays a visit to Red Hanna and his wife at their flat in "The Complex," her childhood home. When Morvern goes to her old bedroom to sleep off her hangover, she looks under the bed to find "the big coiled escape rope that Red Hanna kept in case of fire," and Red Hanna brings in a portable space heater, the "bar fire" (44). The public housing apartment complex that her foster father lives in is so cheaply built that there are no fire escape stairs, no central heating.

Morvern's description of her job, too, is indicative of her socioeconomic status in the novel, through her description of the work and how she began that dead-end career. She describes how she has been working at the superstore since she was thirteen years old, as the owner made no attempt to determine if she was of legal working age. She goes on to lament the dirt under her fingernails from her work in the superstore, symbolic of her status as working poor, and later important in the novel when she finally has enough money (albeit temporarily) to not have to work and so is able to grow out her fingernails and not worry about dirt accumulating under their length.

That she is working at this store does not in itself suggest that she is born of a lower class; even an upper-middle class young adult is likely to work in retail or food service at one point in their life as a supplement to their parents' money or even as a "starter" job, and since the film gives no indication that Morvern has worked at the superstore throughout her teenage years or can expect to work there as her sole source of income, with

no advancement, until she reaches retirement age, there is, again, no context in the film to show that there are economic issues at work in Morvern's life or the lives of those around her.

Removing the context of class in the film in this way opens the door for a very different motivation for Morvern's desire to travel and party. That is, the much more universal desire of the young to find adventure, to *escape* the the humdrum lives they lead at home, whether that home be government housing in a secluded port town or their parents' McMansion in the suburbs.

In comparing the scenes of escape and adventure in the novel and the film, this difference in motivation for similar actions becomes apparent. Morvern's motivation to seek a change in her life in the novel is shown through the sad state of her home, and through her own descriptions of that desire. She does not want to spend the rest of her life working in a grocery store, and so when she finally obtains the opportunity to spend her days as she wishes—relaxing on the beach and swimming in the sea during the day, getting drunk and high at raves at night—she deeply appreciates it. Near the end of the novel, before a three-year time jump to her return to the Scottish port, Morvern makes this appreciation abundantly clear: "I closed my eyes there in the quietness just breathing in and breathing in. I hadn't slept for three days so I could know every minute of that happiness that I never even dared dream I had the right" (222). *That* is why she has sought escape through travel, drugs and alcohol: because she has not, and believes she *can* not, find happiness in her life in the port.

The film is much less clear on her reason for traveling and partying through, again, the lack of context. This lack of context, though, sheds light on why the film as a whole has no socioeconomic context. Morvern and Lanna are classless examples of youth, perpetually seeking excitement and adventure. There is no need for the film to have the context of the novel, because, although the novel and film are based upon roughly the same characters and roughly the same sequence of events, the stories they tell are utterly different. Morvern and Lanna exist in the film with only the context that they are young and adventurous, and so it becomes possible for any young viewer to relate to the characters. The story is not about

the issues surrounding the working poor, but about young people in general.

In the endings of the novel and the film, the differences in purpose of the two stories bring each to their own inevitable end. The novel, as a narrative description of economic hardship, ends with Morvern returning to the port town after at least three years of travel funded by her late boyfriend's inheritance, unable to truly escape. She'd fallen pregnant and run out of money, and so she is forced to return in search of work. She finds, through conversation with another young woman in a bar, that by and large nothing much has changed in the sad little town. She has come back to nearly exactly what she had left, only now with no job and a child on the way. Her inability to be responsible with the money she acquired has left her worse off than she was before.

Morvern does, however, seem to experience a rebirth of sorts in the final scene of the novel. While sleeping in the Tree Church – a topiary church in Morvern's late boyfriend's town, where she had chosen to spend the night after returning from her travels – she wakes up and vomits, most likely because of morning sickness. As she nods off in the Church in the wake of being sick, she is brought around by snowmelt dripping down through the Church's porous ceiling:

After a bit my head started to nod-nod forward. Then I felt the icy cold drop on my scalp. Then another. One dripped down my cheek and brought me round. I felt less poorly. I put out my tongue and a lovely freezing drop landed there. I swung feet down and, missing the sick, I stood up straight.

The snow was thawing and drops of melty water were falling through the thatched roof and making me better (241)

Considering that she is in a church, this scene screams rebirth and renewal; she is being baptized, freed to begin her life anew. Even though she has been forced to return to the sad, poor town where she will likely spend the rest of her life, she is still *trying* to do something more. The time she spent living "the good life" did change her, and she is going to make the best of what she is left with. It is a sad but hopeful message; perhaps, with a lot of

**The Working Poor and the Immortal Youth:  
Class Struggle and Escapism in the Novel and Film  
Adaption of *Morvern Callar***

effort, the next generation may be able to escape from the grasp of poverty, even though Morvern herself will remain there.

The film paints an entirely different picture at its end. There is no rebirth, no showing that Morvern has grown as a person and is ready to begin living a responsible life now that her free money has run out. Instead, the film ends just as she has received a £100,000 check from the publishing company that bought the novel they believe she wrote. Morvern has decided to take this money and run away, similar to how she had taken her late boyfriend's inheritance in the novel, although now the consequences of that choice are never shown. All that is seen is her *escape* – the story is over before the money runs out, and so it never does.

### **Works Cited**

*Morvern Callar*. Dir. Lynne Ramsay. Perf. Samantha Morton, Kathleen McDermott. Palm Pictures, 2003. DVD.  
Warner, Alan. *Morvern Callar*. New York: Anchor Books, 1995.

---

Evaluation: *Virginia communicates clearly with her readers about this work, establishing the context of the novel and film in her first paragraph. Her writing about the text and film is detailed, very sharply focused on a substantial difference between the two, showing how the film version is nearly devoid of the social class commentary presented in the novel.*

---

# The Different Messages in the Literary and Film Versions of *A Clockwork Orange*

---

Ben Snively

Course: Literature 115 (Fiction)

Instructor: Maggie McKinley

---

*Assignment: Write a literary research paper.*

During Anthony Burgess' life, he was an incredibly prolific writer (Clune 1). Despite having over fifty books to his credit, he is mostly known in the public consciousness for one single work: his 1962 novella, *A Clockwork Orange* (Burgess, "Resucked" v). Taking place in a version of England that is continually terrorized by gangs of rabid youth, the book chronicles the exploits of Alex, a sociopathic and depraved teenager, and his transformation from a horribly destructive adolescent to a man looking to be a constructive member of society. Although Burgess later looked down on this particular book, it has remained his most well-known work. *Clockwork's* vast popularity is due in no small part to a film adaptation, directed by Stanley Kubrick and released in 1971. Since its release, the movie has had a deep impact on popular culture and has developed a cult following. However, unbeknownst to many viewers, Kubrick's creation differs greatly from its source material. Due to the changed point of view, the director's artistic changes to Burgess's dystopian vision of England, and the exclusion of the novel's twenty-first chapter, the message of the *Clockwork Orange* film is fundamentally different from its literary source.

Alex, the protagonist of *A Clockwork Orange*, is not a character that would generally receive an audience's sympathy. He is a violent gang member who assaults, robs, and rapes people purely for enjoyment. There are a number of scenes in the film and the book where Alex's menace is seen as he terrorizes the people around him.

To help portray Alex in a less damning light, Burgess writes the story from Alex's perspective and has him use a unique type of slang in order to mask the severity of his actions and bring the reader into his world (Semansky 1). Constantly addressing the audience as his "brothers" and himself as "your humble narrator," Alex's narration breaks down the barrier of separation that permeates other dystopian novels. Works like Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* have the reader examining a world from an outsider's perspective, looking into a different society while firmly cemented in their own. Alex's direct communication eliminates this type of voyeurism by treating the reader as his equal, allowing for a level of sympathy generally unachievable by a sadistic sociopath such as himself. This effect is greatly aided by the protagonist's use of language.

The world created by Burgess has all the youth using a type of slang called Nadsat. This dialect uses over two hundred words and phrases, most derived from Russian, and at first is completely alien to the reader. Words such as "devotchka," "malchick," and "glazzy," while initially unknown to the audience, are quickly understood as meaning girl, boy, and eyes by examining the many context clues written into the text (Cullnan 1). This learning of the language develops while the reader is simultaneously learning about Alex and the world he inhabits, allowing the audience to further assimilate into the society and disconnect from their own. The language also has an effect of cushioning the violent scenes of the book (Olsen 5). Take for example one of the most disturbing scenes in the text, the invasion of the house called HOME. In this scene, Alex and his gang break into a couple's home, destroy their belongings, and then violently assault the man and gang-rape his wife. Undeniably savage and awful, the scene's degree of depravity is suppressed by being filtered through Alex's eyes and his Nadsat dialect. Reading the description of someone "strong-manning the devotchka" who was "creeching real horrorshow" does not have the same effect on the reader as reading that someone was "forcing down a woman who was crying hysterically" (Burgess, *Orange* 23). In this way, the scene, along with the rest of the book, has its harshness masked by being described through another world's lens (Olsen

5). This is one of the reasons the book's message does not translate well to a visual medium. Kubrick's film does not have this same filter, despite the presence of Nadsat. While in the book Nadsat was a way of masking graphic violence, the movie cannot use this function. That same HOME scene, when translated to film, while containing the same content present in the book, has a very different effect on the audience. The violence loses its disguise and what's left is an incredibly disturbing and brutal sequence (*A Clockwork Orange*, 09:16-12:50). Unable to show the violence in a non-graphic way, the cinematic portrayal of Alex contains a much darker quality than its literary counterpart. This effect ultimately removes most of the sympathy that the book allows the audience to feel for Alex, making his brainwashing lose much of its horror and instead making the audience identify with the tyrannical government.

To compensate for this loss of pathos towards the protagonist, Kubrick makes a few artistic changes to the environment where Alex resides. While Burgess' vision of England mostly resembled its actual 1960s existence (i.e., familiar environments, fashion, etc.) Kubrick shows a much different world. Brightly colored sets, extravagant costumes, and bizarrely sexual paintings are all seen perennially throughout the film's run time, effectively giving the impression of an alternate universe devoid of conventional social constructs. However, the most notable change Kubrick adds is the way the rest of the people in the world interact with each other. In the literary version, it is only the teenagers that exhibit violent tendencies and general sociopathic attitudes. Kubrick's film keeps the adolescent depravity intact but adds a menacing quality to many of the older characters as well. For example, examine the change in demeanor of P.R. Deltoid, Alex's Post-Correctional Officer. Burgess originally portrays this man as a regular government worker, arriving at Alex's home to make sure that he is not stirring up trouble and acts like any normal man would (Burgess, *Orange* 37-39) However, Deltoid's presence in the film foregoes this atmosphere of uniformity and instead Kubrick portrays him as a type of sexual predator, meeting Alex in a bedroom and grabbing at the boy's hair and groin (*A Clockwork Orange*, 22:15-24:45). This aura of menace and sexual perversion is shared amongst the

other authoritative figures and the general public as well. Kubrick adds this quality to the population as a way to suggest Alex is simply a product of his environment, a monster bred out of a dysfunctional society. While this change fits into the narrative of the film, it actively detracts from Burgess' intended message of human growth, a message entirely ignored by Kubrick due to one drastic change.

The film of *A Clockwork Orange* is based upon the American edition of Burgess's book. Unlike the English version, this book excludes the 21st and final chapter and, much to the author's dismay, eliminates the intended ending as well (Olsen 3). Due to Kubrick only having read this shortened version of Burgess's text, the movie ends with the events of chapter twenty, with Alex in a hospital bed, recovering from a suicide attempt caused by one of his former victims. Shortly after speaking with the Minister of the Interior, giant speakers are hauled into Alex's room along with a host of journalists all snapping away at the protagonist. As the music of Ludwig van Beethoven begins to play, Alex starts to have visions of himself having sex on a snow-covered ground, surrounded by a cheering crowd. This is the concluding image of the film, shown in slow motion while the boy sarcastically exclaims, "Oh I was cured all right" (*A Clockwork Orange* 2:07:10-2:08:08). Ending on this note makes the story out to be a statement on the inability to destroy evil, a parable on how original sin is irrevocable and how mankind is forever inclined towards violence. This ending message is the polar opposite of what Burgess actually intended the book to be about. After the events in the hospital occur in the literary version of *A Clockwork Orange*, Alex is back on the street with a new gang, freshly devoid of his anti-violent conditioning and back to his old habits of robbing, raping, and assaulting the citizens of England. However, this older Alex finds these activities not as compelling as he used to. Disillusioned with the allure of destruction, Alex gives the flimsy excuse to his new gang that he has to sort out some personal issues, leaves them at the milk bar, and proceeds on his own to a tea house. While drinking tea and pondering his future, Alex spots Pete, one of the "droogs" he used to be in a gang with. As the two start to talk about how Pete is now a well-adjusted, married, government worker, Alex starts to realize how

childish his behavior has been. Thinking to himself “perhaps I was getting too old for this type of jeezny,” he looks to two of his idols, Mozart and Felix M. Warburg, and reflects on how much they had already accomplished by his age (Burgess, *Orange* 189) Alex then vows to leave behind his destructive habits and instead, focus on starting to build a legacy, whether it be through creating music or children. Burgess makes Alex experience this abrupt change in demeanor in order to make his overall point that the “human propensity for violence is perversely childish” and that people naturally grow past the destructive tendencies of youth (Cullinan 2). This more optimistic ending holds true to Burgess’s belief that novels need to show character development, otherwise the story starts to fall into the field “of the fable or the allegory” (Burgess, “Resucked” viii). Despite Burgess’s intended aversion to creating an allegory, Kubrick takes his work and twists it into one. While Kubrick’s resulting fable is indeed a cinematic masterpiece, it fails on many accounts to deliver the author’s desired message.

Anthony Burgess does not hold *A Clockwork Orange* in a high light. He claims in his essay “A Clockwork Orange Resucked” that he would “be glad to disown it for various reasons, but this is not permitted” (v). He writes about how he does not enjoy the book because it overshadows the rest of his catalog, a catalog filled with books he finds much superior. This view is understandable, especially when the book’s famous film adaptation is so different from its source material. Kubrick succeeded in making a fantastic movie, but what he failed to do was carry on Burgess’s message of growth. Rather than show a boy grow into his world by gradually maturing and learning, he instead emphasizes his sadistic personality, gives him an excuse for his behavior, and leaves him forever stuck in his psychopathic ways. This lack of a character arc fundamentally alters what Burgess was trying to point out in his novella. With the two dueling ideologies of the literary and cinematic versions of *A Clockwork Orange*, it is easy to see why Burgess would not enjoy being remembered almost exclusively for this work. Despite these differences, the two versions of the story have one major thing in common: being classics in their respective fields. Both of these products are widely regarded as masterpieces and both deserve this distinction. While

they might end with two widely different messages, they still both remain artistic achievements.

### Works Cited

- A Clockwork Orange*. 1971. Dir. Stanley Kubrick. Perf. Malcolm McDowell, Patrick Magee, Michael Bates. Warner Brothers, 2013. DVD.
- Burgess, Anthony. *A Clockwork Orange*. New York: Norton, 1986. Print.
- . “A Clockwork Orange Resucked.” Introduction. *A Clockwork Orange*. New York: Norton, 1986. N. pag. Print.
- Clune, Anne. “Anthony Burgess: Overview.” *Reference Guide to English Literature*. Ed. D. L. Kirkpatrick. 2nd ed. Chicago: St. James Press, 1991. *Literature Resource Center*. Web. 28 Apr. 2014.
- Cullinan, John. “Anthony Burgess’ *A Clockwork Orange*: Two Versions.” *English Language Notes* 9.4 (June 1972): 287-292. Rpt. in *Contemporary Literary Criticism*. Ed. Brigham Narins and Deborah A. Stanley. Vol. 94. Detroit: Gale Research, 1997. *Literature Resource Center*. Web. 4 Apr. 2014.
- Olsen, Bruce. “A Clockwork Orange.” *Masterplots, Fourth Edition* (2010): 1-3. *Literary Reference Center*. Web. 15 Apr. 2014.
- Semansky, Chris. “Critical Essay on *A Clockwork Orange*.” *Novels for Students*. Ed. David M. Galens. Vol. 15. Detroit: Gale, 2002. *Literature Resource Center*. Web. 11 Apr. 2014.

---

Evaluation: *Ben provides an interesting and astute comparison between Burgess’ A Clockwork Orange and Kubrick’s film adaptation of the novel, using convincing evidence from both sources (and outside research) to comment on the film’s altered message.*



---

# Morality and God

Aleksandra Stosovic

Course: Philosophy 220 (Philosophy of Religion)  
Instructor: John Garcia

Assignment: *For this paper, students were asked to provide an answer, based on the texts covered in class, to the following question: Are there good reasons to believe in God?*

Sir Isaac Newton observes an apple as it falls from a tree. As the apple is moving towards the ground, it gains acceleration. According to Newton's second law, the force that causes the apple to accelerate is called gravity. Unlike this scientific realization of the Universal Law of Gravitation, there is no experiment that can be performed to prove that there is a God. Yet, does a lack of evidence for God mean that there is no good reason to believe in God? Some may say that the lack of evidence for the belief in God makes the belief in God irrational, and that we should not hold beliefs that are not supported by evidence. However, the true reason to believe in God is not based on evidence but on the fact that such a belief is morally valuable and can bring meaning to life.

A distinction that has to be made from the start is that a lack of evidence in God does not mean there is no good reason to believe in a God. Philosopher Soren Kierkegaard poses a question between faith and rationality. According to Kierkegaard, what is important is not whether you can prove God exists, because there is no way to prove such a thing. The key to religion is to have faith. Kierkegaard writes about two types of thinkers: the objective thinker and a subjective one. An objective thinker is one that merely confirms or disproves a hypothesis. A simpler way to understand this is to think of a scientist in a laboratory. On the other hand, a subjective thinker is one that is passionately and intensely involved with the

truth. For a subjective thinker, the question of God "is not just a process of accumulating evidence to justify a view, but a matter of intense personal concern" (Kierkegaard 254). When falling in love, an objective thinker would say, "Here I am at that point in my life where social obligations demand that I have a mate" (Kierkegaard 254). The objective thinker is not actually falling in love. Using the word "mate" suggests that marriage is simply fulfilling the construct of society. Meanwhile, a subjective thinker may say, "I can't live without you," and phrases of this sort (Kierkegaard 254). According to Kierkegaard, "there may not be much rational thinking behind this act; in fact, there is a certain nonrational quality about love" (254). What drives a person that falls in love is not rationality. There is nothing scientific about it; it is all about faith. As with love, religion and the belief in God requires an individual to have a relationship with God. Because the objective thinker attempts to prove something that cannot be proven, he is left with only an opinion. The subjective thinker does not see "the question of God [as an] intellectual problem, but a matter of intense inwardness, and faith is a commitment to a relationship that defies objective analysis" (Kierkegaard 254). Science can only explain the existing world, not the meaning of life. A lack of scientific evidence for why two people fell in love does not mean that the couple does not love each other. Just the same, a lack of scientific evidence does not prove a God does not exist.

After one understands that scientific evidence is not important for a belief in God, it is important to address the question of morality. In David Hume's "Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion," there are two philosophers, by the names of Cleanthes and Philo, who begin a fascinating debate. According to Cleanthes, religion serves "to regulate the heart of men, humanize their conduct, infuse the spirit of temperance, order, and obedience, enforce the motives of morality and justice" (Hume 248). Philo disagrees, saying that the only reason people agree to being moral is to end up in Heaven. It is not a question of being a moral person for the greater good, but rather avoiding punishment in Hell. What Philo is saying is certainly true. There are individuals that go to church every Sunday, pray to God, and then go home to abuse drugs and alcohol. Yet, he dismisses those

individuals that pay attention to the sermon and come home to spend valuable time with their families. But, Philo also blames the injustice in the world, such as warfare, on religion. Injustice cannot be blamed on religion, because people are the ones that make immoral decisions. There are immoral people, whether they believe in a God or not. What Cleanthes is getting at is that religion is there to teach basic principles of morality such as not to cheat, lie, or kill. Of course, there are people that blame religion for the terrorist attacks all around the world. Once again, these crimes are not what God teaches, but what people misinterpret.

When reading a novel for English class, each student has a different opinion of what the author has to say. When it comes time in the semester to write an analysis of that same novel, the professor receives various ideas that are all valid due to the way the students explained their thought process. The same can be said for a person reading a religious text. The way one person interprets it can be completely different than the person standing right next to them in the same church, at the exact same service. The different types of analyses of the novel do not mean the professor is doing his job wrong. Likewise, Islam, for example, cannot be blamed for terrorist attacks. Of the millions of Islamic followers, only a small amount commit those horrific crimes. In reality, Islam is a peaceful religion whose aim is not to cause harm. As Christianity tries to teach morals to those that feel like they have lost their way, Islam does the same. They reach out to help people understand what is the right way to behave and act.

Philosopher Kai Nielsen offers a completely different point of view, suggesting that humans can reason, and therefore, a belief in God is not necessary to be moral. Nielsen writes, “human society requires that all members restrain their selfish interests, for if everyone acted only out of self-interest, we would find that human society is impossible” (73). He goes on to mention philosopher Immanuel Kant, who stated that “respect for persons can be known and defended by human reason alone and apart from religion” (Nielsen 72). The claim that Nielsen is trying to get at is that, “our own self-interests should be modified to include concern for the welfare of others” (73). Nielsen argues that a utopian society is

possible, one where he believes people are not selfish and do not act out of their own self-interest, but rather for the good of their community. Even though this is a hopeful way of thinking, in reality, people are selfish, and they do not always make moral decisions. Of course, there are individuals in society that are very willing to donate to charities, volunteer at animal shelters, and so on. Meanwhile, there are many people that only think about themselves and how to excel in society, no matter how immoral that path may be. So, what to do with the people that do not concern themselves for the welfare of others? Religion can serve as a teacher of moral behavior to eventually decrease harm in society.

In the case that a father does not have enough money to put food on the table for his wife and children, he may resort to doing immoral or illegal things for the benefit of his family. While this could be considered an act of sacrifice and dedication, that father may have to steal from someone that has even less money than he does. In another example, he may have to resort to selling drugs, which is indirectly harming somebody else for the benefit of himself and his family. This illustration may seem as if it is taken to the extreme, yet sometimes, people truly believe that there is no other way than to turn to violence to get what they want. In order to at least try to reduce the amount of violence in the world, many religions teach the same basic principles like not to steal or harm others. While Nielsen argues that people are naturally inclined to do what is best for society, sometimes they need a push to show them what is the right thing to do.

For individuals that do not have a sense of morality, believing in God can guide them through life, as it did for author Leo Tolstoy. “A Confession” was not a fictional work, nor was it written from a philosophical perspective. Tolstoy’s “A Confession” was his personal search for meaning in his life. Money, land, and fame were all things that came with Tolstoy’s writings, such as *Anna Karenina* and *War and Peace*. Yet, these materialistic things could not bring him happiness. What was disturbing was that neither his family nor friends brought him happiness, either. Tolstoy writes, “I say that that search for God was not reasoning, but a feeling, because that search proceeded not from the course of my thoughts—it was even directly contrary to them—but proceeded from the heart” (68).

Once Tolstoy realizes that God exists, it gives meaning to his life. It answered his question of why he was on Earth in the first place. While Nielsen believes happiness is in the little things, such as freedom from pain and want; enjoyment, security and emotional peace; human companionship and love; meaningful work; art, music and dance,” for some people, the amount of happiness does not matter if they cannot find meaning in it (71). If one cannot find a meaning in life, than how can he or she be moral? The agony of not knowing whether there is a point for them being alive can drive people to a confused state. Because they do not see the meaning in life, people may choose to do whatever they want, leading to careless decisions. Even though religion is not necessary for a person to be moral, it does serve as a tool to teach morality to those that might have lost their way. Having faith in God encourages moral behavior, and it is up to the people if they will follow the teachings of the church or not.

For example, a medical student has to have a great drive and dedication to go through so many years of schooling. It is certainly not pleasant to stay up countless nights and sometimes even question if it is all worth it. For a student to dedicate him- or herself to such a time-consuming profession takes more than being smart. Rather, it means he was able to find a meaning in the work he will be doing for the rest of his life. Meanwhile, if the

same student is forced into the medical profession just because of his parents, then just like Tolstoy, no amount of money in the world can make him happy if he does not find meaning in it. Everybody has a different definition of what meaningful means, because each person is motivated by different things. For those that cannot find what motivates them to be better people, religion is there to strengthen and inspire the best in them.

Philosopher Henry David Thoreau writes, “Aim above morality—be not simply good, be good for something.” For some, it may seem as if reason alone can guide a person to make moral decisions. However, for others, they need someone to show them the difference between right and wrong. While some may learn from their parents or teachers, others rely on God to demonstrate what moral behavior is. There is nothing wrong with turning to God to teach you what you should and should not do. Moreover, for some, they cannot be moral if they do not find a meaning to life. Instead of being lost and confused, God can serve as an answer. Just as some individuals turn to science to explain certain phenomena, others rely on God for an explanation. No way of thinking is more accurate. As soon as people begin to accept and respect the opinion of others, there will be less problems of injustice in the world.

---

*Evaluation: The goal of this assignment was to get students to think beyond typical “proofs” of God’s existence by philosophers over the years and think about “reasons to believe” more broadly. Alex did this remarkably well, especially in such a short paper. She uses Soren Kierkegaard’s discussion of faith and the role of rationality to make the case that religious belief can be profoundly important even if it is irrational, and then she goes on to argue that there are moral benefits that can come from religious belief. This was an extremely ambitious undertaking, and most students could not cover so much ground in such short space, but Aleksandra pulled it off admirably.*

---

# The U.S Government and Political System: Necessary Changes

---

*Eri Svenson*

Course: Political Science 101  
(American Politics and Government)

Instructor: Bobby Summers

Assignment: *The essay assignment asked students to write about what changes they would make to the U.S. government and political system.*

In an otherwise ideologically divisive political environment (“Political polarization,” 2014), there is at least one position that most Americans can seemingly agree on; the system, as it is operating now, is not working and needs to change. According to a poll conducted by Gallup, 81% of Americans are dissatisfied with how the nation is being governed, the lowest approval rating since they began collecting data in 1971 (Wilke, 2013). Similarly, trust in all three branches of the federal government has been in consistent decline and, with the exception of the judicial branch (at 61%), is below 50% of the electorate (Jones, “Americans’ trust,” 2014). Furthermore, most Americans report that neither the Democrat nor the Republican Party does a good job representing them, and wish for an alternative option (Jones, “Americans Continue,” 2014). Given that the United States was founded on the belief that government should be representative “by the people, for the people,” as Abraham Lincoln famously recited, these results, which demonstrate a clear incongruence between the actions of those in power and the will of the electorate, are particularly concerning. If the U.S citizenry does not believe that their government represents them, what does that indicate about the health of the nation’s democracy?

According to research conducted by professors at Northwestern and Princeton Universities, not much good. Their study demonstrated that, within the current political system, “policies supported by economic elites and business interest groups were far more likely to become law than those they opposed” (Clark, 2014). Perhaps most troubling, the positions of the middle class electorate made little to no difference in the outcome of a bill, even when that position differed from those in control of the means of production, i.e., the economic elite and their interest groups. In other words, lawmakers are not making policy decisions based upon the will of the majority of the citizenry, but based upon the demands of a wealthy, powerful minority. While the study authors did not explicitly name it as such, this system of government can be most accurately described as an oligarchy, or a system of government in which control is held by a powerful economic or political minority: at minimum, it can certainly no longer be considered a democracy, as it was intended to be.

Given this state of affairs, then, it is understandable

## The U.S. Government and Political System: Necessary Changes

why Americans are dissatisfied with and distrustful of their nation's government: despite its claim to empower them to control the trajectory of their own country, it in actuality has systematically disenfranchised them. Unfortunately, the response to this marginalization has been wide-scale disengagement. According to poll data from *USA Today*/Suffolk University, respondents who reported not voting in elections, despite being otherwise able to, reported high levels of disillusionment, with the majority reporting that they believe the political system is corrupt and that their vote is meaningless with regard to its ability to influence outcomes ("Why 90 million Americans," 2012). In addition, voter turnout has been consistently declining and is at record lows, meaning that this demographic of non-voters is ballooning in correlation with declining satisfaction and trust (Alter, 2014). Combined, these data suggest that, as Americans increasingly see their government become nonrepresentational, the more likely they are to see citizen engagement as pointless.

While understandable on an emotional level, this response ultimately functions to reinforce the oligarchic power of the nation's capitalists. In a hegemonic system such as the United States', power is maintained primarily through coercion, ideology, disempowerment and complacency, not through direct acts of violence. Thus, those in power depend upon people buying into the system, including into their own powerlessness, to maintain that structural position. For example, if the majority of people feel that neither the Democrats nor Republicans represent them, why are they still electing them? Though an admittedly simplistic explanation, the lack of mass action to elect a third-party candidate is in part rooted in the belief of its impossibility; because people believe that it is not probable that it will happen, they continue supporting the "least of all evils" party line, even when it is not an accurate reflection of their sociopolitical will. Collective disengagement, therefore, is in actuality the most dangerous response to capitalist oligarchy, because it produces the exact form of false consciousness that it desires. Consequently, the first thing that needs to change about the U.S government and political system is the electorate itself; rather than apathy, it needs to inspire mass organized political engagement.

Once engaged, the electorate needs to develop a

conscious sense of solidarity with each other. Presently, this is lacking because the two-party system produces ideological division, when in actuality, both parties are producing policy for the economic elite. While the means through which they seek to support that elite may be different, both are ultimately parties by the wealthy and for the wealthy; both accept donations from capitalists, both vote in accord with businesses and their interest groups, and both are made up predominantly, if not exclusively, of other upper class people. The social issues that the parties devote most of their public platform to, though important and worthy issues, are a smokescreen for this reality. If one believes that the Democrats, the Republicans, the LGBTQ community, people of color and/or poor folk are their true enemies, they are less likely to look up from this conflict to see who is pulling the strings. In actuality, regardless of whether someone is a Democrat or Republican, they are likely being exploited and disenfranchised by the same group: the oligarchic-capitalist elite who own the vote. Until the electorate realizes this, however, they will continue to focus on oppressing each other rather than liberating them all.

Once this consciousness has been developed, while they can recognize that there will (and should) continue to be productive variance in belief among the group, the electorate should identify core structural changes to the U.S government and political system that they should organize around. Given that their disenfranchisement has originated from within the profit and expansion motives of capitalism, constructing an alternative to that motive is arguably where they should start their deliberations. What would it take to build an anti-capitalist system of governance? First and foremost, if the purpose of the United States is to establish a government "by the people, for the people," to uphold a truly representative democracy, then the vote of "the people" is the only one that should be valued, and their will should be prioritized above all other. Corporations, therefore, should be given no vote or speech within political system, and their interests should never be served at the expense of the people.

Given how entrenched capitalist influence in government is, however, this will take a series of uncompromising, liberatory policy changes. In addition to overturning Citizens United, the ruling that granted

corporations free speech in the political process via their monetary contributions, money will have to be removed from the system altogether, and a bottom-up system of deciding power constructed in its place. Elected positions should be treated as respectable, representative public service positions and compensated at the rate of the average American salary. Attempts to obtain them should not be treated as contests and, consequently, no outside money should be allowed to be utilized during campaign efforts. Instead, the U.S government should provide a modest stipend for the duration of the election season that covers the cost of living in its entirety, and multiple public, easily accessible forums for addressing issues. Once elected, officials should only be allowed to meet with lobbyists that represent organized citizen coalitions, and not those that represent corporate interest. Combined, these steps should encourage prospective candidates and incumbents alike to consider the will of the citizenry as they conduct themselves.

In deciding how many officials to elect, the demographics of Congress should consistently reflect the demographics of the electorate. Consequently, the number of working class laborers, women, people of color, queer people and the like in Congress should reflect the number that actually exists. To achieve that end, rather than political parties, there should be mandatory participation social positioning coalitions. Each coalition's membership would be made up by those who are categorized into and/or identify with that position at any given point in time, and each would be given a representative number of seats in government. The people from within those coalitions who would fill those seats would then be decided via within-coalition elections. In deciding elections for which there is only one position nationally, such as the presidency, each coalition would hold an in-coalition vote, and their decision would count for a demographically representational number of votes nationally.

To ensure that the voices of historically marginalized groups are not being silenced by privileged majorities, an intersectional human rights advisement coalition would be established to review all policies, elections and judicial proceedings. This coalition would be made up of members from oppressed demographics. In addition to

protected time to speak during congressional and judicial proceedings, they would be allocated a certain number of "equity votes" to submit to all actions requiring a vote. These "equity votes," of which the quantity will be determined by social scientific research, would function to mitigate the effects of systemic inequality. Thus, the amount of equity votes would be equal to the number of votes that would be needed for each minority to hold equal political influence in government. In cases of extreme injustice, the council would have the power to veto an action and submit it for further revision and deliberation.

Finally, as citizen participation in government is key to the strength of any democracy, the U.S government should commit itself to ensuring that all citizens can participate fully and equitably. This would mandate a massive systemic restructuring to tackle class, racial, gender, sexuality, cultural-religious, and ability inequalities. First and foremost, this would require a fully-funded, prioritized public goods and services system that ensured access to quality education, housing, basic needs, health care, and cultural capital as human rights. From there, as these inequalities have been generationally produced, reparations should be made to subjugated groups (Ta-Nehisi, 2014), even if individual members of the dominant groups may be innocent, their success and wealth was measurably built upon the exploitation of others, and justice therefore requires redistribution proportional to those abuses. To protect against further stigmatization and oppression, furthermore, strict labor protections should be established. Laborers and their families should be legislatively conceptualized as the primary source of goods and services and, consequently, should be in control of and the primary beneficiary of the means of production.

While these proposals only address initial steps that should be taken to reform the U.S government and political system, they are steps that are foundational. Presently, the United States is controlled by and serves a small group of capitalists in charge of an oligarchic capitalist system. The voice of the citizenry, who labor to produce the nation, are marginalized and exploited. For that to change, as the root of their oppression is within the profit and growth motivation of capitalism, the electorate of this country must collectively organize for a new,

## The U.S. Government and Political System: Necessary Changes

equitable, anti-capitalistic system. Only then, with the citizenry fully supported and engaged, will the United States see a return to a truly representative system of governance, if not, perhaps, for the first time in its history.

### References

- Alter, C. (2014). "Voter turnout in midterm elections hits 72-year low." Retrieved from <http://time.com/3576090/midterm-elections-turnout-world-war-two/>.
- Clark, M. (2014). "U.S. more oligarchy than democracy, study suggests." Retrieved from <http://www.msnbc.com/msnbc/the-us-no-longer-democracy>.
- Coates. Ta-Nehisi. (2014). "The case for reparations." Retrieved from <http://www.theatlantic.com/features/archive/2014/05/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>.
- Jones, J. (2014). "Americans continue to say a third political party is necessary, views little changed from last year." Retrieved from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/177284/americans-continue-say-third-political-party-needed.aspx>.
- Jones, J. (2014). "Americans' trust in executive, legislative branches down, trust in all branches of government at or near record lows." Retrieved from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/175790/americans-trust-executive-legislative-branches-down.aspx>
- "Political polarization in the American public." (2014, June 12). Retrieved from <http://www.people-press.org/2014/06/12/political-polarization-in-the-american-public/>.
- Wilke, J. (2013). "Americans' satisfaction with U.S. gov't drops to new low: Democrats remain most likely to be satisfied, but much less so than in September." Retrieved from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/165371/americans-satisfaction-gov-drops-new-low.aspx>.
- "Why 90 million Americans won't vote in November." (2014, Aug 15). Retrieved from <http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/politics/story/2012-08-15/non-voters-obama-romney/57055184/1>.

---

Evaluation: *Eri's essay demonstrates a remarkable and deliberate search for the underlying conditions and processes of the American political system. Eri's proposals challenge the reader to begin a foundational analysis of the changes that may be needed to resurrect American democracy.*

---

# The Saint Valentine's Day Massacre: Homicide in Heyer's Garage

Ronald W. Tragasz

Course: Law Enforcement and Justice  
Administration 230 (Organized Crime)

Instructor: Wayne Johnson

*Assignment: Research a topic in organized crime and write a paper that places the topic within a historical context, while also examining the underlying motivation of the criminal organization and the organization's effects on society.*

The following paper is an account of events that preceded and followed the slayings in Heyer's Garage, in Chicago, on February 14, 1929: The St. Valentine's Day Massacre. It does not specifically address organized crime or Chicago's mob connections with the police or city and state officials, but implicit in the complete story of the massacre is anecdotal evidence to support a legacy of endemic corruption as well as a claim that the massacre was a "crime nobody wanted solved." J. Edgar Hoover avoided pursuing the case by finally giving the Chicago police a legally worthless summary of questionable statements made by a bank robber named Byron Bolton, who named the gunmen and claimed to have been a lookout for the killers (Eig 250). Hoover had his own agenda for not pursuing the case. He dreaded "tangling with Chicago's and Cook County's well-oiled Kelly-Nash political machine....The latter working quite efficiently with an organized-crime syndicate whose very existence would not be acknowledged by Hoover until the Senate investigations of the 1950s" (Helmer and Bilek 240-241). Toleration together with a dearth of ethics stiffened when the political machine encountered Capone's Outfit (Walker). Following Hoover's lead, from the mid-1950s on, Chicago's mayor Richard J. Daley

impassively ignored a mob that cleaned up its act enough to render it nearly invisible. After Daley's election in 1955, Chicago alderman "Paddy" Bauler earned himself an enduring place in local history by dancing on a table in his combination tavern and ward office, declaring "Chicago ain't ready for reform" (Helmer and Bilek 240-241). Daley's son, Richard M. Daley, looked the other way in the 1980s and later, first as state's attorney and then as mayor, denying that organized crime even existed in Chicago. The criminal activities of the Outfit disclosed during the Family Secrets trial were completely ignored during that period. The political organization tolerated the Outfit, and Chicago mobsters grew wealthy and ultimately succumbed to suburbanization. They moved to mansions in bedroom communities, lived lavishly, and abandoned the vice districts and troublesome Chicago wards that often transmogrified into urban slums whose underground economy was then reclaimed by African-American supergangs: gangs with a corporate-like structure. The unsavory relationship between organized crime and the Chicago political machine has continued into the twenty-first century: "The record is clear that it is the Chicago Political machine that has brought Illinois to its present intolerable state of corruption," as 130 officials of the Daley administration received felony indictments (Walker).

## The Events of the Day

Her breakfast dishes washed, Jeanette Landesman puts down the heavy iron, and the thirty-four-year-old housewife takes a break from the drudgery of removing wrinkles from her freshly laundered clothes. She has just heard knocking sounds coming through the wall of the building next door, home to the SMC Cartage Company at 2122 N. Clark Street (Helmer and Bilek). The 6,000-square-foot garage (Hollatz) fronts on Clark Street. Tall doors in the rear yawn to trucks entering from the alley. Unknown to Mrs. Landesman, the garage is leased to convicted felon, Adam Heyer (Gomes, "Massacre Victims' Statistics"). Heyer, forty years old, lives about five miles away with his wife Mame. He's inside and dead or dying in the building he leases. According to the autopsy report of Dr. Paul Schmitt (Gomes, "Massacre Victims' Statistics"), Heyer had been shot 15 times. It is



## The Saint Valentine's Day Massacre: Homicide in Heyer's Garage

10:30 A.M. on Thursday, February 14, 1929 and a typical winter day in Chicago's Lincoln Park neighborhood, on the near North side of Chicago. The air temperature struggles to reach 18° F. A numbing westerly wind drops the "real feel" even lower. The sun barely peeks over a veil of clouds. Coal soot floats down, dusting four inches of snow on the ground. Cinders cover many city sidewalks.

Mrs. Landesman scans the street below through her living-room "window to the world" (a street-facing double-hung window with a chair nearby), peering between the snow flurries. She's just being "neighborly," but she, like others in the Irish-German neighborhood, suspects bootleggers use SMC Cartage to cache illegal alcohol, and she is acting, without knowing it, as neighbors in close, socially organized neighborhoods do, as an "informal agent of social control" (Triplett and Gainey). She wonders if she's just heard gunfire as she sees several men get into a police detective's touring car and race past Diamond's Delicatessen and Grocery toward Armitage Avenue. Her elderly mother, seated nearby at the window, says a second detective's squad car stopped briefly at the garage as well. Landesman lives above Sam Schneider's Tailor Shop, and Mr. Schneider also hears the noise. He's ironing, too, but he suddenly stops. There is a steady metallic rat-a-tat-a-tat for a few seconds, then two heavy blasts. At first, the tailor thinks it is a truck backfiring, not uncommon for that time period, but then he sees the touring car and assumes there has been a police raid (Helmer and Bilek).

More intrigued now by the sound of a howling dog inside the garage, Mrs. Landesman rushes down two flights of stairs to the street. She looks into the grimy front window of the garage, but she cannot see beyond a partition stationed behind the plate glass. She tries to open the door, but it protests, so she runs back to her building and asks a fellow tenant, Clair McAllister, to try and get into the garage. McAllister forces the door open. Gun smoke drifts lazily in the air, and the sulfur-tinged odor of burned gunpowder fills the garage dimly lit with only a 200-watt bulb hanging overhead. A coffee pot percolating on an electric hot plate offers the sole expectation of warmth in the unheated building sometimes called Heyer's Garage (Hollatz). A box of

crackers completes the breakfast menu. It's not exactly a "happy meal." Moving cautiously toward the sound of the howling dog, McAllister finds the bodies of seven slaughtered men lying on the dirty concrete floor like pic-up-stix™. Their collars are up; it is cold inside. He goes for help.

Sergeant Thomas Loftus, the first police officer to respond to the crime scene, enters the garage and finds one of the shooting victims is still alive. He has known the young bootlegger, Frank Gusenberg, since he was a paperboy. Loftus asks, "What happened, Frank?" Gusenberg refuses to reply at first but then says, "Cops did it." It takes less than ten minutes for police to drive Frank Gusenberg to the Alexian Brothers Hospital, at 1200 Belden Avenue, but Gusenberg dies early that afternoon. Other victims are pronounced dead at the scene; Coroner (Dr.) Herman Bundesen arrives to have the bodies removed to the Drake-Braithwaite mortuary, at 2219 N. Lincoln Avenue, which serves as an unofficial annex to the Cook County Morgue (Helmer and Bilek). Relatives identify the dead.

The dead are as follows: Frank ("Hock") Gusenberg is an enforcer for Bugs Moran, a north-side Chicago Prohibition-era gangster who had been incarcerated three times before the age of 21 ("Moran, George [Bugs]"). He's married to two women simultaneously, Lucille and Ruth. Incredulously, neither one knows of the other even though they are sisters. Peter ("Goosey") Gusenberg is Frank's brother and also a hit man for Moran. Peter comes home from school one day and finds his mother dead on the kitchen floor. The twelve-year-old pries the wedding ring off her finger and pawns it. Albert Kachellek is Moran's second-in-command and his bodyguard. Adam Heyer is Moran's accountant and business manager. Police think he is the "brains" of the Moran gang. Albert Weinshank owns a speakeasy called the Alcazar Club. He is also an official of the Central Cleaners and Dyers Association. The fact he resembles Moran and dresses like him possibly saves Moran's life. (Dr.) Reinhardt Schwimmer would be classified as an optician today. He has no medical training. Schwimmer is a gambler who associates with the Moran gang so he can brag he is a bootlegger. John May owns the Alsatian Shepherd, Highball, howling inside the garage. Despite a

shady past reflecting two arrests but no convictions, May, an auto mechanic, is trying to find legitimate work. He desperately needs money to support his wife and seven children, so he takes a job keeping Bugs Moran's trucks in good running order. Moran pays him \$50 a week.

### 1920s – Chicago Style

The Valentine's Day killers were never brought to trial, despite public outrage. Even the FBI demurred. It was, after all, a state crime. No one alive today knows with absolute certainty who gave the orders to kill these men, but there is much we do know. The 1920s allowed Chicago gangs to amass fortunes from consensual crime including illegal liquor, prostitution, and gambling. These were not street gangs, but organizations singularly devoted to a specific ideology: to make money, lots of it. Despite sharing a common goal, however, animosities were plentiful, and discord was resolved through a common denominator: violence. Bugs Moran himself has been credited with popularizing the act of driving by a rival's hangout and spraying it with gunfire, now referred to as a "drive-by shooting" ("Moran, George [Bugs]"). Angst prompted gang leaders to protect themselves by eliminating the competition. When one leader was killed, another stepped in and swore revenge. This atmosphere served as a precursor to the murders in Heyer's Garage. Johnny Torrio tried to establish order. He craved *sistemazione*, or "systematization," the legacy of Torrio and Al Capone, as author Luigi Barzini defines it: "Italians have a peculiar passion for geometrical patterns...and symmetry in general," manifest in everything from the way peddlers stack fruit on their carts, to the layout of city streets, to a fascination with bureaucracy (qtd. in Schoenberg). Three months after the massacre, Capone would meet with other gang leaders including Frank Costello, Meyer Lansky, and Lucky Luciano in Atlantic City, New Jersey, to organize crime as a business. Capone admitted he told them there was business enough to make them all rich. Gangsters across the country in the 1930s followed Al's lead and began to organize according to Chicago's system of affiliation and coexistence (Kelly).

From 1902 until his death eighteen years later, James "Diamond Jim" Colosimo served as the sole head of organized crime in Chicago, building his criminal empire

principally on vice. When the Black Hand, a syndicate established by Italian immigrants beginning in the 1880s, tried to extort money from him—a typical Black Hand tactic—he invited his nephew, a New York enforcer, named Johnny Torrio, to town to help him confront the extortionists. Torrio arranged to have the men killed. Pleased with Torrio's work, Diamond Jim made him part of his gang and gave him more authority. Once Prohibition became the law, however, Colosimo claimed he was content to make his money the old-fashioned way and refused to become involved in illegal alcohol. Torrio was not pleased with Uncle Jim's decision. A bullet in the head ended Colosimo's life May 11, 1920, and Johnny Torrio took over as boss and bootlegger, but he needed help. He invited a New York thug named Al Capone into town. Capone needed something, too: a place to hide. He was wanted in the Big Apple for murder.

With his flair for organization, Torrio syndicated a dozen or more neighborhood gangs and bribed politicians and police to ensure business flourished. He made millions, and his easy style encouraged the neighborhood hoods to negotiate territorial boundaries equitably. By 1923, however, the "honeymoon" was over, and rival gangs were at it again, settling their differences the old fashioned way, with guns and violence. Dean O'Banion, a local gangster who rose from mugger to murderer, was particularly ambitious and not content to just deliver Torrio's beer and buy shares of his breweries. O'Banion wanted to operate on his own, and he became a big thorn in Torrio's side. O'Banion viewed Torrio's crew with disdain, referring to them openly as "Greaseballs." He grabbed any chance to humiliate Torrio, occasionally hijacking his trucks, but more notably swindling Torrio out of \$500,000 in a feigned business deal that resulted in Torrio's arrest and a jail sentence. Torrio got even and had O'Banion killed. Hymie Weiss (given name, Henry Earl J. Wojciechowski; he was from a Polish Catholic family) later assumed control of what became known as the North Side Gang ("Hymie Weiss"). Weiss was described by one of his former colleagues as "a regular go-getter. He got to the top of the alky racket just the way a young bank clerk gets to be cashier – by tending to business" (qtd. in Eig).

By November 1924, Weiss was the kingpin of a well-run criminal organization generating millions of

## The Saint Valentine's Day Massacre: Homicide in Heyer's Garage

### Student Reflections on Writing: Ronald Tragasz

As a "DIY" enthusiast, I have acquired a wide array of tools over the years. Many serve a singular purpose, while others are not quite as specialized and can be adapted with proper attachments. Large tools, some marked "heavy duty," are powerful and address more substantial tasks. While some are intended for casual work and require no specialized handling, others are designed only for very precise or intricate work. Words are much the same.

As I grew older, I came to consider writing to be akin to creating a sculpture or a painting. The sculptor begins with malleable material and uses various tools to create an object to be admired. Occasionally, the work is ephemeral. (For many years I watched a neighborhood artist create magnificent wintertime snow sculptures only to sadly see them go the way of "Frosty" as spring approached. Sidewalk artists do as much with colored chalk.) For more enduring works, the sculptor often begins with a block of stone. The painter typically chooses canvas as the medium, and the author fixates on a blank page. And so it begins.

The sculptor, painter, and the author mentally form projections of their work. The sculptor carefully measures and then uses large chisels and heavy hammers to define the sculpture's outer edges. The painter may prepare a rough sketch using a graphite pencil, and the author initializes a computer program and develops an outline using general purpose words that convey only a sense of what is to come. As work continues, larger sculpting tools give way to smaller point and flat chisels, roundels, mallets, and sometime needle files. The painter changes brushes in concert with perspective and uses a pallet of colors often, but not always, blended to depict the image in his (or her) mind's eye. A full moon may limn the whitecaps in white phosphorescence. Like Vincent van Gogh, who famously used dramatic brush strokes to express emotion and add a sense of movement to his works, the author portrays characters with lifelike vividness, adds drama, documents or depicts events or conveys an idea by carefully selecting the "right" words. As the sculptor and painter use depth, light, and shadow, the author conveys similar imagery by selecting from a lexicon of word classes (parts of speech) and verbals (participles, gerunds, and infinitives.) Adding suffixes and prefixes, changing adjectives into adverbs, using nouns as verbs or verbs as nouns, etc, allows the author to adapt his or her tools (words) to fit the need. Why write? Why go to the trouble? Is it intended to be lasting form of communication? Do you want to convey specific ideas and feelings or is it "just" a lingering personal interaction? The motivators vary, but even the simple letters can demonstrate a facility with words.

Vincent van Gogh's letters alone are considered to be works of art. Some, because they include sketches of his completed works as well as drawings of those he envisioned, but the Dutchman's letters are equally prized because his words provide an insight into his life, especially when he experimented with his impressionist technique. An avid reader, his letters also reflect his literary pursuits as well as a uniquely authentic literary style and offer a periscope into the different facets of this personality.

While one's writings may not be works of art, they certainly can be the work of a craftsman. Do we not craft cover letters, novels, resumes, recipes and the like? Of course. So perhaps it is not so surprising to know that I collect the tools of this craft. We all do, to some degree. We need a vocabulary to communicate and acquire knowledge, but I look for uncommon words that mimic the craftsman's artistry. Have you ever watched a young girl marvel at the color, pattern, and shape combinations of the sea shells she carefully collected while vacationing? I try to be equally as selective. I note special words when I find them and store them for appropriate use, much like a woman who brings out her grandmother's prized lead crystal and her "silver" on special occasions. I use these words in order to gain significance, sincerity, and authenticity. These are special words, not *unique* because that would imply they were just interesting or atypical, but truly *sui generis*. They help me craft my work. They represent the finishing tools of the sculptor, the fine camel's hair brushstrokes of the artist, and they allow me to put out my shingle: *Wordsmith*.

dollars in revenue annually, but he was intent on avenging O'Banion's slaying. He and O'Banion had been friends since they were teenagers, and Weiss wanted blood: Capone's and Torrio's. Capone and Weiss entered into a type of Hobbesian Trap. Fearful of being killed, one tried to murder the other. Weiss tried to kill Torrio, too. On January 20, 1925, Weiss, Bugs Moran, and Vincent Drucci—"The Schemer," an American-Sicilian mobster and a North Side gang member, later known as the only American organized crime boss to be killed by a policeman ("Vincent Drucci")—ambushed Torrio in front of his apartment building. Seriously wounded, Torrio survived only because Bugs ran out of ammunition, or perhaps because, as some accounts claim, Moran's .45-caliber Colt 1911 jammed. Afterwards, Torrio decided to leave Chicago and turned the gang over to Al Capone (Helmer and Bilek).

Capone realized that Weiss would continue to be a threat. It was not the money. Weiss wanted Capone dead for personal reasons. Weiss had to go; Capone tried again. Big Al's henchmen rented an upstairs room across from the North Side Gang's headquarters and mowed down a total of five members of the Gang through an open window, perhaps as a precursor to the multiple Valentine's Day slayings in Heyer's Garage. Weiss and his driver were killed, and three other gang members were wounded. Bugs Moran eventually took control of the North Side Gang.

Moran and Capone then reached a stalemate. Each decided enough was enough – well, at least for a while. Capone called for a peace conference, and Big Al and Bugs met together with other gang bosses. Capone characterized Chicago as a big pie and said each gang should be entitled to a piece. He probably meant it. Capone was weary of the fighting and fearful of additional assassination attempts. Frustrated, he said, "If I knew I was gonna deal with this, I'd never would've left [Five Points](#)," (qtd. in Eig) his neighborhood in the central lower region of Manhattan Island. Moran, however, had a pathological hatred for Capone, often referring to him as 'The Beast.' He continued to "bug" Capone by hijacking his liquor shipments, but the last straw was drawn when Moran ordered the deaths of two of Big Al's personal friends: Antonio Lombardo and Pasqualino Lolorado. Both were chieftains in the [Unione Siciliana, a fraternal organization and a secret criminal group at the heart of](#)

[the city's criminal organization \(Eig 60\)](#), the base of Capone's power. Capone mourned the loss of his pals and contemplated revenge. Capone knew Moran had to be eliminated - but when? How about Thursday, the 14<sup>th</sup>, Valentine's Day? (Helmer and Bilek). It is generally believed that the lookouts working for the massacre team probably mistook another North Sider—perhaps Albert Weinshank, one of the other victims—for Moran, who (legend now has it) saw the phony detective car and ducked into a corner coffee shop to avoid the massacre.

### Epilogue

Moran went into hiding following the Massacre but remained head of the North Side Gang into the 1930s. With the passage of the twenty-first amendment, however, the gang's fortunes declined, and he left town. The chief of the Federal Prohibition Bureau first blamed the Chicago Police for the massacre, but the police were later exonerated. Police officers and police vehicles reportedly seen by eyewitnesses at the scene of the murders were fake.

The man many believed planned the massacre, Jack McGurn (Vincenzo Antonio Gibaldi, a key member of Capone's Outfit) had a "blonde alibi," Louise Rolfe, who "was the perfect image of the gangster girl: long-legged, pouty-mouthed, and luscious, the kind of voluptuous siren who would drive even the toughest mug nuts" (Eig 201). McGurn had checked into the Stevens Hotel the morning of February 14 and stayed there the entire time with Miss Rolfe, described by one source as a "twenty-two-year-old former St. Louis cabaret entertainer" and another as a "tournament-level golfer" (Kelly). McGurn and Louise Rolfe were later married, to "seal the deal," affording McGurn greater protection from prosecution via marital (or spousal) privilege, as even today, in Illinois, the privilege is a matter of statute. The rule allows one spouse to testify for or against the other in criminal cases, with one exception: [neither] may testify as to any communication or admission made by either of them to the other or as to any conversation between them during marriage, except in cases in which either is charged with an offense against the person or property of the other ("Spousal Privilege").

Al Capone was in Florida when the seven men were murdered, but there was public outrage following the

## The Saint Valentine's Day Massacre: Homicide in Heyer's Garage

massacre, and he was generally blamed. The Chicago Crime Commission authored a "Public Enemies List" and named Capone Public Enemy Number One. Capone acquired a gruesome image. The massacre put an end to any significant gang opposition to Capone, but it also sounded the death knell to the Capone criminal empire. The criminal infestation in Chicago was said to be out of control, and the public wanted an end to the bootleg wars. Often cheered at sporting events, and openly regarded at one time to be a "modern-day Robin Hood," Capone was later reviled. On October 3, 1931, forty thousand people gave "Scarface Al" the "Bronx Cheer" (ridiculing and opposing him) at Northwestern University's stadium in Evanston, Illinois. Some people suggested the U.S. Marines be brought in to patrol Cook County (Kelly). The U.S. government had other ideas. The "Untouchables," a group of federal law-enforcement agents led by Elliott Ness, cost the Outfit a million dollars in the first six months of 1930, but the hammer really came down on Capone the following year. In 1931, he was prosecuted for income tax evasion. At thirty-two, Capone received an eleven-year prison sentence and became an inmate in Uncle Sam's brand new maximum-security prison: Alcatraz. Capone refused medical treatment for the sexually transmitted disease he acquired from his teenage mistress during the previous decade, and it invaded his nervous system. He was released from prison in 1939, his mind and body ravaged by syphilis. Big Al died on his lavish Palm Island estate in Miami Beach Florida in 1947. The .7 acre property sold for \$7.4 million in 2013 (Erwert).

### Works Cited

- Eig, Jonathan. *Get Capone—The Secret Plot that Captured American's Most Wanted Gangster*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010. Print.
- Erwert. Anna Marie. "Al Capone's Florida Mansion Sells at Deep Discount." *On the Block*. *ontheblock.com*. August 6, 2013. Web. 3 October 2014.
- Gomes, Mario. "Massacre Victims' Statistics." *My Al Capone Museum*. *myalcaponemuseum.com*. Mario Gomes, 2001. Web. 3 October 2014.
- Helmer, William J., and Arthur Bilek. *The Saint Valentine's Day Massacre*. Nashville: Cumberland House, 2004. Print.
- "Henry Earl J. Wojciechowski." *Wikipedia*. *wikipedia.org*. Wikipedia. Web. 3 October 2014.
- Hollatz, Tom. "The Art of Turning Vacation Time into the Perfect Alibi." *The Lakeland Times*. *lakelandtimes.com*. The Lakeland Times, Sept 7, 2012. Web. 3 October 2014.
- "Hymie Weiss." *Wikipedia*. *wikipedia.org*. Wikipedia. Web. 3 October 2014.
- Kelly, Jack. "Gangster City." *American Heritage* Apr. 1995: 65+. *U.S. History in Context*. Web. 3 October 2014.
- "Moran, George (Bugs)." *Wikipedia*. *wikipedia.org*. Wikipedia. Web. 3 October 2014.
- Schoenberg, Robert J. *Mr. Capone—The Real—and Complete—Story of Al Capone*. William Morrow, 1993. Print.
- "Spousal Privelege." *Wikipedia*. *wikipedia.org*. Wikipedia. Web. 3 October 2014.
- Triplett, Ruth A., and Randy R. Gainey. "Understanding Neighborhoods and Crime." *odu.edu*. Web. 3 October 2014.
- "Vincent Drucci." *Wikipedia*. *wikipedia.org*. Wikipedia. Web. 3 October 2014.
- Walker, Dan. "In My View: Why Is Illinois So Corrupt?" *State Journal Register* June 13 2009. *Illinois Review: Crossroads of the Conservative Community*. *illinoisreview.typepad.com*. Dennis G. LaComb, 2014. Web. 3 October 2014.

---

Evaluation: *In this paper, Mr. Tragasz brings great perspective to a popular topic, using research carefully to reconstruct the details and personalities of the St. Valentine's Day Massacre, as well as providing a historical context for the events, which resonates still today, as Mr. Tragasz wisely points out.*

---

# From the Frying Pan into the Fire: Ernest Hemingway's "Soldier's Home" and Phil Klay's "Redeployment"

————— *Hannah Valdiviejas Cohn* —————

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

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

And there was a bouncy castle. A fucking bouncy castle” (Klay 3). This is how Sergeant Price, from the story “Redeployment,” by Phil Klay, describes his homecoming scene from the War in Iraq. Coming straight off of the plane from a war zone to a bouncy castle, he is bluntly annoyed by the irony and lack of empathy at the coming-home cookout because he is somewhat dealing with culture shock. In fact, this describes how both Sergeant Price and Krebs from Ernest Hemingway’s “Soldier’s Home” react to coming home from being soldiers. They are both completely out of their element; however, they handle this stress in two completely different ways. “Soldier’s Home” is a vague, but very meaningful story that leaves the reader feeling somewhat empty and helpless when imagining where soldiers put all of the emotion they experience when in the war, while “Redeployment” is an eye-opening and uncensored story that creates shock when peering from a new perspective into what many soldiers experience after their deployment. Krebs, from “Soldier’s Home,” is a conscious but disconnected person who cannot nor does not want to feel any emotion toward anything. He is a changed man and it is unknown how, or even if, he will ever be his old self again. Like Krebs, Sergeant Price, from “Redeployment,” is an impressionable and surprisingly emotional man who finds it similarly difficult to come home from war. However, unlike Krebs, he still feels all of the aggression and wrath from combat and does not know how to switch it off fast enough. Due to these men’s inability to cope with life after war, they become outcasts from their surrounding worlds. Overall, with respect to post war psychology and the effects of war on human behavior, it seems that “Soldier’s Home” shows one type of common difficulty veterans face when returning home and trying to cope with emotional stress, while “Redeployment” creates a graphic image of another common difficulty soldiers face when returning from war: turning off the war brain and turning on the everyday brain.

In order to fully understand why these characters behave abnormally, there needs to be a complex understanding of what exactly their dilemmas are. For Krebs, a veteran coming home from World War I, the basic instinct to protect himself from all the pain he feels from the contrast of the two environments and coming

## From the Frying Pan into the Fire: Ernest Hemingway's "Soldier's Home" and Phil Klay's "Redeployment"

home to the feeling of something lost, is to shut down emotionally. The knee-jerk reaction to defend himself is clearly demonstrated when Krebs explains how he would like to have a girl, but the emotional baggage that comes with it makes him shy away from the whole idea. The author states, "He would have liked to have a girl, but he did not want to spend a long time getting her. He did not want to get into the intrigue and politics. He did not want to have to do any courting. He did not want to tell anymore lies. It wasn't worth it" (Hemingway 70). When Krebs returns home from war, he does not want to form a relationship because he does not want to develop any feelings, perhaps because of the risk of getting hurt and stirring up unpleasant emotions, which would trigger those same feelings of loss and emptiness from his combat days; however, perhaps for Krebs, more than the horrible experiences on the battlefield that ruined him, it is the drastic change from one lifestyle to another and the pain that stems from losing something that could be causing Krebs to protect himself by shutting down. As said by Tateo Imamura, a well-known Hemingway critic, "Both the physical distance between Krebs and the girls and his role as onlooker give him a sense of security. While Krebs remains in a safety zone 'on the front porch,' he is protected. The girls walk 'on the other side of the street'; nothing can touch him" (2). In order to avoid raw feelings that he has bottled up inside of him, he would rather avoid all human relationships in order to remain constant with his emotion. For Krebs, flat-lining on emotion in order to avoid the low feeling of pain and loss trumps possibly feeling good in a genuine and intimate relationship because of the risk of returning to the low he wants to forget. Krebs values mind very much over matter and heart.

This is different from Price, a veteran from the present war in Iraq, because his dilemma is not avoiding emotion, but figuring out which emotions to let go of and which emotions to "turn on" now that he is at home and no longer in combat. As Price describes the dramatic extremes he is going through, he states "You don't see or hear like you used to. Your brain chemistry is changed. You take in every piece of the environment, everything. I could spot a dime in the street twenty yards away" (Klay 7). The military training that Price has gone through is

so vigorous and serious, his brain chemistry has changed to that of a hunting animal. This was a great mindset for combat; however, when Price gets home, it hinders him greatly. He can no longer function as a regular person because he is constantly worried and looking over his shoulder or seeing things he would have never normally seen before war. This is explicitly demonstrated in "Redeployment" when after coming home, Price takes a very usual trip (for civilians) to the mall with his wife and cannot wrap his mind around the fact that he does not have any back-up to look out for people trying to kill him. He explains:

Last time you walked down a city street, your Marine on point went down the side of the road, checking ahead and scanning the roofs across from him. The Marine behind him checks the windows on the top levels of the buildings, the Marine behind him gets the windows a little lower, and so on down until your guys have the street level covered, and the Marine in back has the rear. In a city, there's a million places they can kill you from. It freaks you out at first but you go through like you were trained and it works (Klay 6).

In this scene, the reader is shown how Price struggles intensely to come back to the level of calmness necessary to function correctly in a society that is not at war. He is extremely alert because as a soldier he had to be and because he had to keep up this behavior for so many months on end, nonstop. Price shows some signs of vividly digressing back to his combat days and with that said, it can be speculated that he suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder. According to M. Garca Pereira, Susana Pedras, And Cristiana Lopes, "There are three sub categories to diagnosing PTSD: Reexperiencing the event (having nightmares where you are at war), avoidance (trying to avoid anything that triggers feeling similar emotions to those had while serving), and arousal (having trouble falling asleep at night, being extra alert)" (55). Price most definitely exhibits signs of being intensely on guard and highly energized after coming back from Iraq, which could be signs of this disorder. Price is in combat in his brain but not physically and cannot adapt to the peaceful home life. This causes him cognitive dissonance,

or mental stress caused by one's own contradictory beliefs or situations. Because these men have trouble adjusting to the normal ebb and flow of traditional society, they find themselves in similar circumstances: alone.

When both of these veterans come home, they must face huge obstacles in order to feel themselves again. Thus, coping does not come easy. When they find themselves dealing with issues that people who have not fought in war cannot possibly understand, a metaphoric wall is created between them and the people whom they related to before. The narrator describes Krebs' feeling of isolation: "all of the times that had been able to make him feel cool and clear inside himself when he thought of them; the times so long back when he had done the one thing for a man to do, easily and naturally, when he might have done something else, now lost their cool, valuable quality and then were lost themselves" (Hemingway 69-70). As Krebs has grown to only know what soldiers do best, he now believes this is the only way man can live. It is implied that the "one thing" that he is explaining is killing or fighting in combat. There is a sense of uselessness in the narrator's tone, when he describes how Krebs feels; what Krebs saw as something with worth and full of pride in combat is not I seen as pride-worthy at home:

Krebs' combat experience was remarkably "positive": it was something he was proud of; it gave him a sense of masculinity, which, combined with his uncomplicated sexual encounters in Germany, enabled him to grow beyond the cookie-cutter sameness of his prewar identity (as imaged in the first photo of Krebs in a fraternity)... (Cohen 163)

For this reason, he finds it that much more difficult to accustom himself to the fact that everything that was drilled into his mind—all of the morals, the mindset, the way of life in the military—must all be thrown away now, and it is simply not natural for Krebs. In the military, that was the only thing they had to do, and now that the soldiers are home, where the only thing they know how to do is not valuable and has no place in everyday society, this makes Krebs feel lost and out of touch with reality and himself.

Price shares this feeling of being out of place by explaining how he feels when he sees his hometown for

**Student Reflections on Writing:  
Hannah Valdiviejas Cohn**

What makes writing the most extraordinary subject for me is that anyone can do it, as long as you focus on what you truly want to say. The rest can be organized, edited, and constructed (with dedication, of course). By writing, not only do you reach an external goal as in a grade, but you also accomplish internal goals like learning the strength of your own opinions and how you express yourself. I believe a good writer is a good communicator, which is a critical trait to possess in life. When creating my own writing, focusing on what I want to put in the piece is the most important part. After that, the organization of the piece is essential. By brainstorming anything that comes to mind on a piece of paper, my true thoughts are laid out and easy to organize once they are tangible and visible on that sheet of paper. If I am ever stuck, I listen to a poetic song and listen to how the artist begins, giving me insight to good attention-getters. Ultimately, the reader of the piece distinguishes good writing. For this reason, without the perspective of the audience in mind while writing, the words on the paper are powerless.

the first time since he had been away. He states, "Looking out, I sort of knew where I was, but I didn't feel at home. I figured I'd be home when I kissed my wife and pet my dog" (Klay 3). Price looks out to his old stomping grounds and feels strange. He does not feel at home despite living there before he left to serve his term. Something as familiar as his hometown has become distant to him due to his time in Iraq. Like Price, when many soldiers come home, they feel like they are in somewhat of a no-man's-land because they can't stand being soldiers but they cannot fathom being civilized people in their small



## From the Frying Pan into the Fire: Ernest Hemingway's "Soldier's Home" and Phil Klay's "Redeployment"

towns. This is explained by Dexter Filkins in the article "The Long Road Home," when he says:

The most powerful sections of *Redeployment* are the ones that reflect not on Iraq but on the United States, which the Marines begin to see, even when they are still deployed, as a place nearly as incomprehensible as the country they are fighting in. The soldiers may loathe Iraq...but their experiences have rendered them unable to go home again" (2).

This wall between what was home to him before and what is home to him now creates a solitude for Price. This serves as a rude awakening to what lies ahead for him, for his homecoming, and just solidifies how hard this process will really be.

It is almost expected that these soldiers become outcasts because while they were away, everyone's lives went on. This is where the distance between civilians and soldiers is created. The two groups of people are living in two entirely different world, and after an amount of time, they are expected to come back together and live in perfect harmony, as if nothing ever separated them. The narrator explains why Krebs has grown to learn he does not need nor want emotion when it comes to women: "He learned that in the army. Then sooner or later he always got one. When you were really ripe for a girl you always got one. You did not have to think about it" (Hemingway 72). The horrific scenes of what Krebs had to go through are the main contributing factors as to why Krebs lacks emotion as a veteran. However, military culture is also largely to blame. These soldiers were trained to not have feelings toward anything because if they did, they would not be able to kill innocently. Their commanding officers had to cut out anything and everything that would cause them to feel, in order for them to not have to think about anything related to sensitivity. This mindset, however, cannot be turned off when not in combat, so it is transferred to everything surrounding the soldiers. In describing what it is like for a soldier to go against what they believe in (for example, the Bible) in order to follow the commands of their generals, Tony Dokoupil explains, "It is the tale of disintegrating vets, but also of seemingly squared-away former soldiers and spit-shined generals shuttling between two worlds: ours, where thou

shalt not kill is chiseled into everyday life, and another, where thou better kill, be killed, or suffer the shame of not trying. There is no more hellish commute" (2). Like many other veterans, after everything that was taught to him as a soldier, Krebs cannot return to his old morals. Krebs sees women as objects, because that is how he is trained to see all people. Because of this, he now cannot feel anything for anyone back at home. Another possible factor to blame for Krebs' struggle adjusting to home life is how his family treats him. After arguing about why he cannot feel genuine emotions anymore, Krebs admits, "It wasn't any good. He couldn't tell her. He couldn't make her see it" (Hemingway 76). As a mother, Krebs' mom feels that it is her duty to know and share what her child went through, but she does not have the genuine concern for his experiences or what he is going through. Krebs knows that his mother does not mean any harm and is not a bad person, but only another soldier could know the significance of his stories. His mother tries, but she cannot relate; therefore, Krebs would rather save his breath, and not harm her with the harsh reality. To add to this, we know of Krebs' father in the story, but we never *actually* encounter any dialogue between him and his son. His father sends messages through his mother—for example their opinion on whether Krebs can take the car out or not, or his desire for his son to get a job already—but his father never actually takes the courtesy to come out and communicate this to Krebs, probably making him feel like he was not worth his father's time, despite Krebs risking his life for his country as a soldier. As Steven Trout explained in his critique of the story:

Mr. Krebs, an aloof presence (or, rather, non-presence) in the household, is never once seen *talking* with his son, let alone attempting to understand the ex-marine's experience. Indeed, one of the marvels of "Soldier's Home" is the way that Mr. Krebs emerges as a palpably forbidding character—hectoring, conventional, and workaholic—without ever making a single direct appearance (4).

Mr. Krebs completely avoids confrontation with his son by hiding away in his office, which gives the reader an idea of where Krebs gets his coping mechanism of avoidance, exemplifying how Krebs does not get the

support he needs as a veteran. With no one to affiliate with, the people that are supposed to be closest to him just pressure Krebs, hindering him from moving forward. Once again, as analyzed by Steven Trout, Hemingway's depiction of Krebs' family is a microscopic diorama of what society was like for those veterans. He claims:

Hemingway's presentation of the Krebs family, for example, takes on a new dimension if we consider its grotesque dynamics in relation to the cultural preoccupation that underlay much of the national indifference to veterans—namely, the United States' post-war desire for a return to normalcy, a fundamentally backward looking, escapist impulse....(3)

The nation's strong desire to be "normal" is exactly what makes these veterans feel isolated and out of place.

Similar factors contribute to Price's dilemma, such as what he experiences at war, mixed with a lack of societal concern, causing him emotional turmoil. Price explains the mental battle he has when trying to maintain normal thoughts when he says, "You try to think about home, then you're in a torture house. You see the body parts in the locker and the retarded guy in the cage... Doc saying they'd shot mercury into his skull" (Klay 1). This demonstrates that a large reason for Price's inability to switch gears from his war mentality to his regular mentality is because of how graphic and barbaric his experience was in Iraq. Here, he explains how he tried to have normal thoughts while being a soldier, but they were always disrupted by the disturbing images of him in a torture house, something that he experienced firsthand. With such memories that Sergeant Price has engrained in his brain, it is no wonder that he cannot balance out the two mentalities healthily. Another commonality between the two is that they lack any societal support for what they are suffering. In "Redeployment," Price's wife is not depicted as unsupportive, but unknowledgable on how to deal with a veteran at home. Price explains the conversations with his wife by describing, "Sometimes she'd ask little questions. Sometimes I'd answer. And glad as I was to be in the States, and even though I hated the past seven months and the only thing that kept me going was the Marines I served with and the thought of

coming home, I started feeling like I wanted to go back. Because fuck all this" (Klay 6). When attempting to talk about Sergeant Price's time in Iraq, the conversations between the two seem to be bleak and short. "His wife would sometimes ask and he would sometimes answer" describes how seldom they talk about it, and if they do, it is not a very satisfying conversation. Price appreciates that he is back home; however, he copes with his disturbed mindset by wishing he was back in combat, or away from his current social setting. While explaining the background on the war in Iraq, George Packer from the article "Home Fires" states, "Without a draft, without the slightest sacrifice asked of a disengaged public, Iraq put more mental distance between soldiers and civilians than any war of its duration that I can think of" (3). The public that does not really care about the war and its soldiers (because they really are not affected) is a huge factor as to why these veterans are so alienated from people when they return home. Both Krebs and Price cannot stand, nor understand, how extremely ordinary and strange their lives became overnight, and without the slightest help from the people surrounding them, there is a mutual desire to flee the scene and go back to combat where emotions were all so "simple" to comprehend.

In an attempt to be honest about how complex his feelings are, Krebs makes his mother cry after telling her he does not love her because he no longer loves anybody. He then takes it back and later lies to her and tells her he in fact does love her. Later, the narrator comments, "he had felt sorry for his mother and she had made him lie. He would go to Kansas city and get a job and she would feel alright about it" (Hemingway 77). Because Krebs can no longer mask his inability to feel emotion by being surrounded by other soldiers who have the same issue, he clearly sees that he is letting people down by being emotionless and ruined by the war. In order to maintain the status quo that his mother desires, he copes by conforming to what she finds normal. He still wants to please his mother despite him supposedly not loving her anymore. This is why he is willing to make changes to his life, even though he does not yearn to make them. In order to continue functioning in a society that demands receptivity, he gives in to the image he must portray, which can be compared to Price's coping strategies.

## From the Frying Pan into the Fire: Ernest Hemingway's "Soldier's Home" and Phil Klay's "Redeployment"

This seems to be a common theme, because Price also gives in to what he believes he is supposed to do in order to somewhat deal with his inability to leave his war mentality and come to terms with his everyday life mindset. Unfortunately, even when Price gets home to his wife, he does not find the comfort that he thought he would find because of his inability to transition smoothly from his war brain to his regular brain. When he and his wife have their first interaction, he kisses her and describes it as, "I figured that was what I was supposed to do. But it'd been too long and we were both too nervous and it felt like just lip on lip pushed together, I don't know" (Klay 4). It is not that Sergeant Price lost his love for his wife while being in Iraq, it is that he forgot how to show love and how to communicate sweet emotions with people while he was gone. This is why their first kiss during their celebration for the soldier's homecoming is a bit awkward. Price explains that he really only kissed her because that is what he thought he was supposed to do, not because he really felt like kissing his wife. When asked what his thoughts are on the homecomings of veterans, Phil Klay himself (the author of this story and a veteran from the war in Iraq) answers Ruby Cutulo in her article "War is Hell" by stating, "People have expectations about what your return means and there are dominant modes for thinking about war experiences and what those experiences meant—and they're not sufficient" (57). What is expected from veterans when they return home and what they actually go through are two completely different concepts that families and friends of veterans back at home get confused. This implies that like Krebs, Price is dealing with his inability to switch mentalities by doing what is viewed as politically correct or what is expected of him, not because it comes naturally. In this case, it was showing physical affection.

Although most of the main concepts of these two veterans are very comparable, there are unique aspects with regard to how Krebs' story ends and how Price's ends. For Krebs, the scene is closed up by him doing what he desires—not going into his father's office to speak with him, despite his father's command to do so, and going off to get a job in Kansas City—exemplifying a spark of the ability to cope in the near future. In contrast, the last images the reader gets from Price's story are those of a helpless dog dying due to Price shooting it. Price's

thoughts while shooting at his pet dog Vicar, are hauntingly similar to those of a soldier in combat. He states, "I pulled the trigger, felt the recoil, and focused on the sights, not on Vicar, three times. Two bullets tore through his chest, one through his skull, and the bullets came fast. Too fast to feel. That's how it should be done, each shot coming quick after the last so you can't even try to recover, which is when it hurts" (Klay 8). Although it is not extremely uncommon in some parts of the United States to put your own animals down when they are ill, it is uncommon how Price plays out the act. When he does the physical action of shooting his dog Vicar after deciding with his wife it was finally time, the way he describes it brings the reader into a scene on the battlefield. This is alarming because it shows the main character's inability to separate the two settings, war and home, and therefore also the inability to somewhat conform to a brighter future, like that of Krebs. Although this is a depressing idea, it is the sad reality for many veterans.

Although soldiers are treated as if they were action figures, they are far from it. The mind is an extremely powerful tool for good and bad, meaning just because soldiers step out of combat, does not mean the battle is over. The mind cannot simply erase unpleasant memories, leaving these veterans to carry the weight of the world on their shoulders. It is no secret that war is a brutal place to survive; however, it has become a taboo throughout the years to delve deep into the internal effects this fighting has on soldiers when returning from that brutal place, and these stories demonstrate it to us first hand. Also, although it is not directly said, it is very likely that these men suffer from one or more symptoms of PTSD, because according to Amiram D. Vinokur et al, authors of the article "Effects of War Exposure on Air Force Personnel's Mental Health, Job Burnout and Other Organizational Related Outcomes," "Studies have repeatedly found that military personnel that engage in direct combat are at increased risk for experiencing elevation of post-traumatic stress symptoms" (3). As if returning back home were not hard enough, many veterans do have to face the daunting events in their mind repeatedly. In these stories, two men suffer remarkably as a result of being exposed to the rough life of a soldier, leaving one unable to feel emotion and the other unable to turn off his emotions associated with war. This left them to become somewhat segregated

from the people they were once close to, by explaining how different things were when they came back. In order to handle their abrupt homecomings, they conformed to what they thought they were supposed to do, putting aside what they wanted to do. From these stories we see that like Krebs and Price, it is possible to outlive the merciless and heartless battlefield; however, that does not necessarily mean they have survived.

### Works Cited

- Cohen, Milton A. "Vagueness and Ambiguity in Hemingway's 'Soldier's Home': Two Puzzling Passages." *Hemingway Review* 30.1 (2010): 158-164. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 16 Nov 2014.
- Cutulo, Ruby. "War is Hell." *Publisher's Weekly* 261.11 (2014): 56-57. *Literary Reference Center*. Web. 16 Nov. 2014.
- Dokoupil, Tony, and Alison Snyder. "Moral Injury." *Newsweek* 160.24 (2012): 40-44. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 20 Nov. 2014.
- Filkins, Dexter. "The Long Road Home." *The New York Times Book Review* 9 Mar. 2014: 1(L). *Literature Resource Center*. Web. 30 Oct. 2014.
- Imamura, Tateo. "'Soldier's Home': Another Story of a Broken Heart." *The Hemingway Review* 16.1 (1996): 102+. *Literature Resource Center*. Web. 30 Oct. 2014.
- Hemingway, Ernest. "Soldier's Home." *In Our Time: Stories by Ernest Hemingway*. First published, 1925. New York: Scribner's, 1970. 69-77. Print.
- Klay, Phil. "Redeployment." *Redeployment*. New York: Penguin Press, 2014. 1-16. Print.
- Packer, George. "Home Fires." *New Yorker* 90.7 (2014): 69-1. *Literary Reference Center*. Web. 16 Nov. 2014.
- Pereira, M. Graca, Susana Pedras, and Christian Lopes. "Posttraumatic Stress, Psychological Morbidity, Psychopathology, Family Functioning, and Quality of Life in Portuguese War Veterans." *Traumatology* 18.3 (2012): 49-58. *PsychINFO*. Web. 16 Nov. 2014.
- Trout, Steven. "'Where Do We Go from Here?': Ernest Hemingway's 'Soldier's Home' and American Veterans of World War I." *The Hemingway Review* 20.1 (Fall 2000): 5-21. Rpt. in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*. Vol. 203. Detroit: Gale, 2008. *Literature Resource Center*. Web. 30 Oct. 2014.
- Vinokur, Amiram D, et al. "Effects Of War Exposure on Air Force Personnel's Mental Health, Job Burnout and Other Organizational Related Outcomes." *Journal Of Occupational Health Psychology* 16.1 (2011): 3-17. *PsychINFO*. Web. 16 Nov. 2104.

---

Evaluation: *Hannah's comparison of these two stories published nearly 100 years apart is perceptive and well-researched, with good attention to the details of the stories. Her discussion of what the war veterans of the stories experience when returning to America is poignant and meaningful.*

---

---

## Failures of the Imagination: J.G. Ballard's "The Subliminal Man" and William Harrison's "Roller Ball Murder"

---

*Brenda Ward*

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

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

"Hello, darling, sorry not to have a drink ready for you" (Ballard 416), says Judith Franklin to her husband as he arrives home after working an exhausting day at the hospital. It's a stereotypical picture of a 1960s housewife and conjures up images of June Cleaver standing at the front door with an inviting smile, frilly apron, and pearl earrings. One may not guess that this scene is playing out in the short story "The Subliminal Man," by J. G. Ballard, in the midst of a futuristic world: one where individuality struggles to exist and the corporate government is controlling the minds of citizens through a massive subliminal messaging program and manipulated consumerism. Conversely, one might expect that in such a science fiction future world, a robot may be playing bartender, or that the house itself may have a computerized system to properly time the delivery of the evening cocktail automatically, or that simply visualizing a cocktail would cause one to appear. Unfortunately, there is more than one example in the science fiction genre, filled with feats of imagination, where there is a failure to imagine life without a mom in the kitchen. "Roller Ball Murder" by William Harrison is a science fiction short story that takes place within a dystopian society of corporate control and sponsored violence. It paints a picture of a nationless world where all allegiance is paid to corporations who are controlling every aspect of life for most average people. The women in the lives of Jonathan E, the main character, are beautiful and desirable but seem more like robots than women. They are strategically placed into and removed from his life by the executives as a way of controlling him and keeping him focused on the professional sport of Roller Ball Murder, in which he is a huge superstar. In 1971, Joanna Russ, famed feminist science fiction author and 2013 inductee into the Science Fiction and Fantasy Hall of Fame, wrote:

One would think science fiction the perfect literary mode in which to explore (and explode) our assumptions about "innate" values and "natural" social arrangements, in short our ideas about Human Nature, Which Never Changes. Some of this has been done. But speculation about the innate personality differences between men and women, about family structure, about sex, in short about gender roles, does not exist at all. (qtd. in Lefanu 13)

In response to this article, Poul Anderson essentially concedes the premise, but defiantly shot back: “The frequent absence of women characters [in science fiction] has no great significance, perhaps none whatsoever” (qtd. in Lefanu 18). Years earlier, Isaac Asimov, one of the most important science fiction writers of his time, wrote that authors “can’t bring the ‘feminine interest’ into a story without getting sloppy. There is an occasional good one . . . but for every exceptional one there are 5,739 terrible cases” (qtd. in Larbalestier 124). Perhaps other writers of the time took this as a word of caution and maybe it’s also true that, as Brian Attebery wrote: “No writer can concentrate on every aspect of the imagined world at once . . .” (5). Either way, “The Subliminal Man” and “Roller Ball Murder” are two examples of science fiction works that demonstrate a failure, whether by oversight or refusal, to portray their near-future societies with a distinctively imaginative and evolved presentation of gender roles for women.

“The Subliminal Man” follows the life of Dr. Robert Franklin in a future London, described by H. Bruce Franklin as a “monopolist capitalist society . . . successfully reducing each person to an automaton of mindless consumption, endlessly working, purchasing, and driving back and forth to jobs and supermarkets in a shiny new automobile on vast expressways . . .” (par. 15). The doctor is continually cornered by the “crazy beatnik” (Ballard 421), Hathaway, who persistently tries to convince him of the corporate government’s plots to control the lives of the citizens. The latest conspiracy, as Hathaway emphatically describes one night, is the erection of gigantic metal signs along the highway, surging with high-voltage electricity, that are being used for subliminal advertising. Franklin tries to shake off the absurd notions while heading home on the newly completed super-highway, as he makes the sudden decision to pull off and stop at the automatic machines (automats) to purchase cigarettes, only to realize he already had three unopened cartons in his glove box. Later, at home, while his wife is frantically chasing bargains that are being advertised on the television, and trying to convince him to replace appliances that are practically brand new, “to save at least 5 pounds” (Ballard 417), through his living-room window, he recognizes one of Hathaway’s signs being

constructed nearby. He went closer to investigate the next morning and became more convinced; the closer he got to the sign, and the more he looked directly at it, the stronger became his desire to go purchase more cigarettes (that he still didn’t need). When they met again, Hathaway could sense that Franklin was starting to believe him, and he asked: “If you can’t believe your own senses what chance have you left?” (Ballard 419). Franklin asks why the government would resort to such drastic measures, and Hathaway explains:

The fear of a slump. You know the new economic dogmas. Unless output rises by a steady inflationary five per cent the economy is stagnating. Ten years ago increased efficiency alone would raise output, but the advantages there are minimal now and only one thing is left. More work. Subliminal advertising will provide that spur. (Ballard 420)

Franklin asserts that people wouldn’t tolerate an economy that would require a seven-day workweek to keep up with production, and then he gives Hathaway a final dismissal, and heads home. On his way, he recalls that his own job has been extended to Sundays, “but instead of resenting this incursion into his already meagre hours of leisure he had been glad. For one frightening reason -he needed the extra income” (Ballard 421). A few weeks, and multiple purchases later, in a halting traffic jam, Franklin watches in horror as a person whom he recognizes as Hathaway has climbed to the top of one of the signs. He is attempting to blow up its circuits when corporate government police officials shoot him with sub-machine guns and send him plunging 150 feet to his death, but not before everyone for miles could clearly see: “BUY NOW BUY NOW BUY NOW BUY NOW BUY NEW CAR NOW NEW CAR NOW NEW CAR NOW YES YES YES YES YES YES YES YES YES YES” (Ballard 424), in bright letters emanating from the sign.

“The Subliminal Man” was written in 1963, and Peter Brigg describes Ballard as an author who “seeks to use the language of science to isolate and demonstrate the meaning of modern reality” (par. 31), and further that he “was trying all of the wildly imaginative reaches available to an adventurous mind playing with the infinite possibilities of science fiction” (par. 8), but what we find

**Failures of the Imagination: J.G. Ballard's  
"The Subliminal Man" and William Harrison's  
"Roller Ball Murder"**

in this story is that these reaches are a bit shallow in that men are still playing the role of breadwinners, and women are still the homemakers. Ballard writes the following scene describing Franklin's arrival:

Judith was in the kitchen when he reached home, watching the TV programme on the hand-set over the cooker. Franklin climbed past a big cardboard carton, its seals still unbroken, which blocked the doorway, kissed her on the cheek as she scribbled numbers down on her pad. The pleasant odour of pot-roast chicken – or, rather a gelatine dummy of a chicken fully flavoured and free of any toxic or nutritional properties – mollified his irritation at finding her still playing the Spot Bargains. (Ballard 421)

Ballard allows his imagination to describe this future where chicken has been replaced by a gelatin blob, but stops short of replacing the chef in the kitchen. Even in the speculative world where this blob of food exists, there is still a woman in the kitchen to prepare it. Further, he implies that she is so overwhelmed by her duties of bargain hunting and gelatinous chicken cooking, that she can't even keep track of the items that she has purchased. When Franklin asked her about the package blocking the doorway and she didn't know what it contained, he opened it and discovered that it was a new TV, and then Franklin and his wife argue:

"A TV set? Judith, do we need another one? We've already got three. Lounge, dining-room and the hand-set. What's the fourth for?" "The guest-room, dear, don't get so excited. We can't leave a hand-set in the guest-room, it's rude. I'm trying to economize, but four TV sets is the bare minimum. All the magazines say so." (Ballard 421)

At this point Franklin is already agitated, as he is becoming increasingly conscious of the corporate control in the world around him, but Judith, a "representative consumer dupe" (Luckhurst par. 4), is busy watching TV and keeping track of social expectations as dictated by the magazine rack in the grocery store. Ballard has Judith "standing in for a wholly distracted culture" (Luckhurst par. 8); she is incapable of thinking independently and

is absorbed in the fast-paced world of TV commercials. Judith is the only woman who makes an appearance in the story, but her behavior is more robotic than human in most of her interactions. In contrast, her husband is described as being thoughtful and emotional, and he has the presence of mind to be skeptical of the perceived conspiracy as it unfolds around him.

The relationship between Judith and Franklin is explored in a few different exchanges throughout the story. In one case, Judith is obediently monitoring a televised opportunity to purchase a new appliance with a limited availability discount code when Franklin gets home from work. Judith wants to go out urgently to make the purchase. The narrator says, "'Judith, please, you probably took the wrong number down anyway'. As she shrugged and went over to the bar he called: 'Make it a stiff one'" (Ballard 417). Franklin is being condescending and dismissive by insinuating that she cannot be trusted to have copied down the correct number, simply because he doesn't want to go back out after he got home from work. Even so, Judith does not make any attempt to argue or object, rather just moves along with her duties, suggesting that this is the treatment she is accustomed to, which makes the male dominance in the home quite apparent. Ballard doesn't suggest that Judith would object or defend herself upon this charge of incompetence from her husband; however, he seems to go out of his way to describe a woman who has no capability of assuming a more meaningful role in society. In another exchange, Franklin attempts to explain to her a simple summary of the conspiracy theory that he is considering: "So much of what Hathaway says makes sense. These subliminal techniques are the sort of last-ditch attempt you'd expect from an over-capitalized industrial system" (Ballard 422), but the author describes the response from Judith as:

She stood in the centre of the carpet, hands folded limply, her sharp, intelligent face curiously dull and blunted. He followed her gaze out over the rooftops, then with an effort turned his head and quickly switched on the TV set. "Come on," he said grimly. "Let's watch television. God, we're going to need that fourth set." (Ballard 422)

Judith's inferior mind has already started to display

signs of atrophy at the hands of the subliminal message campaign, yet the only concern that Franklin can muster is exasperation.

Ballard was exploring the future repercussions of the 1960s economy with this story, but he had many opportunities to add vision, depth, and imagination to his piece by incorporating progressive societal roles for the women. In one conversation, Hathaway is explaining to Franklin the motivations and consequences behind the corporations' attempt at subliminal mind-control: "What would supply that extra spending power? A big increase in production. Already they've started to raise the working day from twelve hours to fourteen. . . . Can you visualize it, Doctor – a seven-day week, everyone with at least three jobs" (Ballard 420). With this depiction, Ballard explores the social implications of governmental subliminal advertising to fuel economic activity, but this type of economy would have undoubtedly led to a world in which a dual-income home was a necessity. For the time, a more dramatic depiction of a hyper-consumer economy would have been one where both husband and wife are working full-time jobs; instead, men are being forced to work endless hours while women just spend the husbands' money like mindless robots. This seems more apparent now, when women and men more equally divide the labor force and routine housework, but in 1963, this would have added a new dimension and provided further depth into Ballard's exploration of economic consequences.

"Roller Ball Murder" tells the story of Jonathan E, who is the "lone socially mobile man" (Vanderwerken 40) in a future nationless society that is controlled by the executives of the six corporations: ENERGY, TRANSPORT, FOOD, HOUSING, SERVICES, AND LUXURY. He calls himself a "corporation child" (Harrison 637) as he barely has any memory of life before joining the ENERGY team of the blood sport of Roller Ball Murder, where he is the world's biggest star. He introduces himself: "I was Jonathan E, no other, a survivor and much more in the bloodiest sport" (Harrison 632). David L. Vanderwerken describes the sport of Roller Ball Murder as "a frighteningly plausible amalgam of lacrosse, roller derby, hockey, motocross, track, and alley mugging" (40). The corporations control the women, who randomly appear and disappear from Jonathan's life,

similar to the way they control the rules of Roller Ball Murder, which are changed throughout the story to make the game more dangerous, violent, and deadly. Jonathan says: "They'll change the rules until we skate on a slick of blood, we all know that" (Harrison 632). The longer the season goes on, and the more maniacal the fans get, the more unhinged Jonathan becomes. With every rule change that is announced, like sending more cannon balls tearing around the track at 300 miles per hour, or helmets being removed as a penalty, Jonathan becomes more nostalgic. He begins searching for meaning, and finds that he is missing memories and knowledge, which have been systematically taken from everyone, but as Elizabeth Anne Hull explains: "The world depicted in the short story is one in which Jonathan can place full trust in no one, not even those he's closest to" (164). Hull further explains that the sport of Roller Ball Murder was created so that "the masses displace their anger at their awful, frustrated lives through the vicarious violence of the game" (168), but Jonathan has started to desire more. Through his boss and mentor, Mr. Bartholemew, an ENERGY executive, he begins a search for fulfillment through recovering knowledge, but he isn't even sure he understands precisely what that means. Mr. Bartholemew weakly offers to allow him access to books or movies, but his only true concern is that Jonathan continues to play the game. As the final game of the season approaches, his friend Cletus warns him that it is to be played with no time limit, a literal fight to the death. Understanding that it may be his last request, he asks Cletus that his ex-wife, who left him long ago, before he was a star, be brought to him one last time, and when they meet, he learns that the meeting is in vain: "I realize, seeing her, that I have only a vague recollection of being alive at all, and that was a long time ago, in another century of the heart when I had no identity except my name, when I was a simple dock worker, before I ever saw all the world's places or moved in the rumbling nightmares of Roller Ball Murder" (Harrison 640). He has determined that nothing in his life is meaningful because his memory and knowledge have evaporated. After a few days of romantic reminiscing, Ella leaves him coldly, and shortly thereafter, he arrives at the final game.

"Roller Ball Murder" was written in 1974, a time



**Failures of the Imagination: J.G. Ballard's  
"The Subliminal Man" and William Harrison's  
"Roller Ball Murder"**

in America when women were beginning to rise above and out of the shadows of men, during what is considered a second-wave of feminism. In the time since "The Subliminal Man" was written in England, the laws in the U.S. were altered so that women were legally allowed to have abortions, have credit cards, and refuse sex with their husbands. Progressive change was definitely in the air, and readers can see a difference in "Roller Ball Murder" when compared to "The Subliminal Man" with respect to the roles women play in these futuristic societies, but Harrison still didn't quite free the reigns on the possibilities for women in his story. Jonathan's thoughts give us a sense of this when he explains: "Mackie, my present girl, takes our dinners out of the freezer and turns the rays on them; not so domestic, that Mackie, but she has enormous breasts and a waist smaller than my thigh" (Harrison 632). In Harrison's world, women aren't necessarily expected to slave over a hot oven all day, but they are still providing the evening's fare. Women also continue to be objectified by men, as Hull bluntly states: "There is no doubt that Mackie is simply a sex object to Jonathan" (Hull 170). In another example of how the women in "Roller Ball Murder" behave, Jonathan is trying to get help from his boss at a meeting in an exclusive restaurant. He challenges his boss about the amount of power he really has in society. The question of Jonathan's power is then posed to his new girlfriend, Daphne, and she begins the following exchange, narrated by Jonathan: "'He definitely has power,' she answers with a wan smile. Somehow the conversation drifts away from me; Daphne, on cue, like the good spy for the corporation she probably is, begins feeding Mr. Bartholemew lines and soon, oddly enough, we're discussing my upcoming game with Stockholm" (Harrison 637). Although she is playing the part of a beauty on the arm of a famous athlete, her true place in this situation is calculated rather than casual, and even Jonathan detects something more sinister in her words and robotic actions.

Men control every woman in this story. Women are pawns in the corporate game of complete societal control, and their use is to help control Jonathan by distracting him with their sexuality. As Jonathan explores his trepidations, and tries to understand the underlying cause for his lack of personal fulfillment, he often reverts back to thoughts of

his former wife, Ella. They were married young, and she abruptly left him before he had become famous for Roller Ball Murder, for a high-powered executive. Although he complained earlier to Mr. Bartholemew that he felt a lack of power, his power over women is apparent when he commands his friend Cletus: "'I want you to bring Ella to me,' I tell him. 'After all these years, yeah: that's what I want. You arrange it and don't give me any excuses, okay?'" (Harrison 640). As requested, she shows up for a few days at his villa in France, even though she is married to another man in another part of the world. Jonathan describes the last morning that he has with Ella after their rendezvous: "On our last morning together she comes out in her traveling suit with hair pulled up underneath a fur cap. The softness has faded from her voice and she smiles with efficiency, as if she has just come back to the practical world" (Harrison 641). It is clearly understood that she has performed her part, and now she is clocking out.

In a substantial distinction from "The Subliminal Man", Jonathan exhibits vulnerabilities to a woman, his former wife, Ella. It began one evening at home with his current woman, Daphne, as he explains:

My Daphne is tall and English and likes photos – always wants to pose for me. Sometimes we get out our boxes of old pictures (mine as a player, mostly, and hers as a model) and look at ourselves, and it occurs to me that the photos spread out on the rug are the real us, our public and performing true selves, and the two of us here in the sitting room, Gaelic gray winter outside our window, aren't too real at all. (Harrison 635)

Jonathan feels entirely surreal. The photographs of people performing in public are more vibrant and alive than his physical body is. This solidifies his feelings that his entire life is out of his control, and that he lacks the power to change his trajectory. All of the money and power that he has amassed cannot make him feel like a real person with real dreams and real emotions, and he sees Daphne the same way. She too is completely controlled; the pictures of her modeling are what whoever is in control wants her to believe that she is. This epiphany is what eventually leads him to the perception that Ella has

power over him, and that she has the ability to control his destiny. He commanded her presence in desperation, and when she arrives he thinks: "Come to me, Ella. If I can remember us, I can recollect meaning and time" (Harrison 640). Momentarily, he believes that if he can resurrect the emotion and passion that would come with retrieving memories of her and their time together, then he can start to remember what it is to have self-directed meaning in life. With no memory and no true passion, he knows no time. He has no future and no past without her; however, in the end, he recognizes that she has no more power than he does. He has money and fame, but everyone outside of the executives is equally powerless to control their own will; in these moments, she is required to be with him, as he is equally required to be with her.

Harrison created a world where the corporations have complete control of the citizens by systematically removing knowledge and memory, and Jonathan describes the current power structure as: "The most powerful men in the world are the executives. They run the major corporations which fix prices, wages, and the general economy, and we all know they're crooked, that they have almost unlimited power and money . . ." (Harrison 634). He didn't have to jump many imaginative hurdles to describe a world where men have all the power, and where women are pawns, using their sexuality to control hyper-athletic men, but there was opportunity for his imagination to expand; after all, if a man like Jonathan is so easily distracted, who is to say that women wouldn't have risen to ultimate power under the same premise? If women have any control at all, perhaps in a truly science fiction future, they could have all of the power. The story could carry all of the same meaning and warnings if women were the powerful executives, but would have an added layer to contribute a significant component to the speculative quality of the piece.

"The Subliminal Man" and "Roller Ball Murder" both end when their respective protagonists give in to the forces controlling them, with their desire to withstand and overcome the invisible corporate power effectively being extinguished. Gregory Stephenson describes the common theme in Ballard's fiction: "The erosion of human intellectual and spiritual autonomy through forms of social systemization, manipulation, and control" (par.

77), which properly summarizes both stories. In "The Subliminal Man," Franklin succumbs to the mind control and ultimately overlooks what transpired in the violent final moments of Hathaway's life. He heads out with his wife to shop for a replacement for his two-month-old car, which Stephenson said: "Suggests the unchallenged ascendancy of a general state of death-in-life . . ." (par. 82). Franklin's was not a violent and literal death like Hathaway's, but a death of spirit and humanity, and both are at the hands of the corporations. Together, Franklin and Judith drive out of their neighborhood in "the shadows of the signs . . . sweeping over the heads of the people on their way to the supermarket like the blades of enormous scythes" (Ballard 425). Jonathan is last seen where we first found him, standing with his teammates, "as the corporation hymn is played" (Harrison 641), awaiting the start of the final game. His meeting with Ella was allowed and arranged to keep him in line long enough to ensure his appearance at this game, willingly walking into the arena where they will all play to the death in a bloody and suicidal extravaganza.

For one to honestly critique these stories and explore the lack of imagination or consideration paid to the female gender roles, one must also review the male roles that have been cast. It can be said that the roles that the men are playing in these stories aren't stretching the imagination beyond current realities either. In "The Subliminal Man," Ballard describes the evening rush hour scene that Franklin is navigating: "The auto-mart was packed with cars, each of the five purchasing ranks lined with tired-looking men hunched over their wheels" (Ballard 416), specifically describing the long line of men wearily heading home from their corporate jobs, dutifully exhausted. In "Roller Ball Murder," Jonathan is worshipped by the crowd, and he describes walking through the crowd to the final game: "Wherever I go people are reaching for my hands, pushing my bodyguards away, trying to touch my sleeve as though I'm some ancient religious figure, a seer or prophet" (Harrison 641). He is an icon to the troubled masses, and they desperately cling to him when they have nothing else of any consequence to live for. We can easily recognize these male roles in our societies today, but more importantly, both of these men have dimension and a distinct character, and they both display power over

**Student Reflections on Writing: Brenda Ward**

It is a proud moment for me, indeed, to be included in this collection of student writing, especially given the positive and memorable personal experience that I had while writing it. If one subscribes to the idea of fate, I would suggest that the obligatory literary twist of it brought me to this English 102 class, nearly 20 years after I completed English 101; a time in my personal and professional life when I necessarily needed to improve my ability to listen to and hear others and to more effectively communicate through first seeking to understand, both with my colleagues and with my family at home. I tend to keep busy and don't slow down for much, but in Mr. Piepenburg's class, I was forced to shift into a slower gear.

Any success that I had with my paper is almost entirely due to the focused and thoughtfully developed curriculum. While the research paper was the final output for the class, the process itself was the true reward. We carefully read and analyzed several pieces of literature and learned to think about them critically, in an environment that was designed for the free-flow of expression and primed for intellectual discourse. Through the course, we had to assemble our thoughts and impressions into a format that would allow us to analyze them alongside the creative works that brought them to light. We sought to understand the intent of the author's words. As we dissected the material and themes, we learned, through questioning, to process and justify our emotional responses, which led us to exposing what was hidden beneath and between the words on the page. Whether what we found was personal or abstract, we all gained perspective, and the shared perspectives in the class served to add dimensions to the interpretations.

As a curious person and an avid reader, I appreciate an educated and detailed analysis, but rarely felt qualified to develop or express my own. But now, after weeks of reading and analysis, I had to intentionally organize my conclusions into a purposeful thesis and to systematically support my idea through examination and research. I found myself with many typed passages in response to some of the instructor's pointed questions, and I had also filled several pages with quotes from the reading followed by my free thought response to them. It was both exhilarating and overwhelming to know that something was there, and I just had to find it. What was my thesis? What important thing did I possibly want to say? The pressure almost got to me and I nearly quit, but with more guidance from the instructor, I was able to navigate my way to an exploration into the bias and stereotypes hidden within the texts, notions that my instincts could sense but without careful attention, I had a tendency to skim past and ignore. Once I understood the emotions driving my intuitive responses, I could finally develop my thesis. From that point, the research was easy and exciting. Ideas—parallels and epiphanies—woke me up in the middle of the night. The result feels like a part of me, a true piece of what I am, or who I want to be.

The experience stays with me because I believe in the importance of learning how to think critically and analytically and in acknowledging the perspective and experiences of others. I am grateful for a place where an accounting major can find motivation and inspiration while writing a literary research paper. I recognize and appreciate the great value that an institution, such as this college, brings to our society in times when it seems that we are increasingly embracing a kind of anti-intellectualism. More people should learn how to investigate their own beliefs and how to understand those of others; more people should want to.

their female counterparts. Gwyneth Jones wrote: “It is extremely difficult for a writer to accuse, or to question, gender roles without first awarding them a powerful presence in the narrative” (124), and the men in these stories definitely have a powerful presence, but their roles are not questioned, they are the same as they have always been; however, the women’s roles suffer from a total lack of dimension or color. None of the women have distinctive personalities or emotions; they are more like cardboard cutouts of women, left flat and monotone. There is actually more care and description paid to a billboard along the highway in “The Subliminal Man” than there is to the actual women in the stories: “Many of these were as high as four-storey houses, elaborate three-dimensional devices in which giant housewives with electric eyes and teeth jerked and postured around their ideal kitchens, neon flashes exploding from their smiles” (Ballard 419).

Both of these stories do strike a familiar chord in modern society with their ideas of a corporate takeover of government and society. Ultimately, the true control in these worlds does not lie with any of the average men or women, it lies exclusively in the hands of the corporate behemoths because they control all of the money; therefore, they have all of the power. As Jonathan begins his story: “The game, the game: here we go again. All glory to it, all things I am and own because of Roller Ball Murder. Our team stands in a row, twenty of us in salute as the corporation hymn is played by the band” (Harrison 630), demonstrating from the first sentence that complete allegiance is paid to corporations. This is similar to huge stadiums and worldwide events that are sponsored by corporations today, and the ubiquitous logos that are more recognizable than the flags of most countries, like The Superbowl sponsored by Anheuser-Busch, The World Cup sponsored by Coca-Cola, The Olympics sponsored by McDonald’s. In “The Subliminal Man,” the narrator ascribes Franklin’s lack of autonomy to the corporate control of consumerism:

The ability to react to stimuli, even irrationally, was a valid criterion of freedom. By contrast, what freedom Franklin possessed was peripheral, sharply demarked by the manifold responsibilities in the centre of his life – three mortgages on his home,

the mandatory rounds of cocktail parties, the private consultancy occupying most of Saturday which paid the instalments on the multitude of household gadgets, clothes and past holidays. (Ballard 414)

Both stories describe a world where nearly everyone is trapped, not only in their gender roles, but also in the loss of their ability to think critically and freely, and to exist outside of the corporate power structure. Today, there is little one can do to escape the long-reaching tentacles of the power and influence that money buys so freely in our economy and politics. Those with little money, and those working tirelessly for enough money to maintain the lifestyle they have achieved, just like Franklin, have a diminishing capacity to decipher the difference between wants and needs, as the social and media pressure has so deeply and disturbingly blurred the lines between them.

Perhaps it appears simple, or even futile, to critique Ballard and Harrison in hindsight for their depiction of women in these stories in what Russ has defined as “a failure of imagination” (qtd. in Lefanu 3). Indeed, the genre itself eventually branched out to a few different sub-genres in the years during and since the writing of “Roller Ball Murder” and “The Subliminal Man” to counterbalance the mysterious lack of the feminine in both subject and authors. In fact, the first annual James Tiptree Jr. Memorial Award was given out in 1991 to recognize stories that challenge gender stereotypes and that imaginatively expand the possibilities of human gender roles. Justine Larbalestier explains:

James Tiptree Jr., [was] a science fiction writer who began publishing in 1968. Tiptree, revealed in mid-career as Alice Sheldon, writing under a pseudonym, was the winner of multiple Nebula Awards and helped break down the imaginary barrier between “women’s writing” and “men’s writing.” (2)

It is important to understand the nuances found along the road from whence we have come in order to properly appreciate, navigate, and blaze new trails ahead. As Jones remarks: “The open structure of science fiction . . . has always offered an ideal medium for radical experiment” (127), yet the possibilities of the evolution in gender roles have often been overlooked or ignored. The genre

**Failures of the Imagination: J.G. Ballard's  
"The Subliminal Man" and William Harrison's  
"Roller Ball Murder"**

is perfectly suited to explore any facet of humanity, and Kingsley Amis has challenged, "Science fiction's most important use . . . is a means of dramatising social enquiry, as providing a fictional mode in which cultural tendencies can be isolated and judged" (qtd. in Lefanu 4). Both Harrison and Ballard take advantage of the medium to posit strong warnings about our economic future in post-capitalist societies in compelling and interesting ways, but they both failed to imagine what the future could have in store for women, and the fascinating effects that could have had.

**Works Cited**

- Attebery, Brian. *Decoding Gender in Science Fiction*. New York: Routledge, 2002. Print.
- Ballard, J. G. "The Subliminal Man." 1963. *The Complete Stories of J. G. Ballard*. New York: W.W. Norton and Co, 2009. 412-425. Print.
- Brigg, Peter. "Early Short Fiction, 1956-1969." *J. G. Ballard*. Mercer Island, Wash: Starmont House Inc., 1985. 19-42. Rpt. in *Short Story Criticism*. Ed. Lynn M. Zott. Vol. 53. Detroit: Gale, 2002. *Literature Resource Center*. Web. 30 Oct. 2014.
- Franklin, H. Bruce. "What Are We to Make of J. G. Ballard's Apocalypse?" *Voices for the Future: Essays on Major Science Fiction Writers*. Ed. Thomas D. Clareson. Vol. 2. Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1979. 82-105. Rpt. in *Short Story Criticism*. Ed. Laurie Lanzen Harris and Sheila Fitzgerald. Vol. 1. Detroit: Gale Research, 1988. *Literature Resource Center*. Web. 9 Nov. 2014.
- Harrison, William. "Roller Ball Murder." 1974. *The Many Worlds of Literature*. Ed. Stuart and Terry Hirschberg. Boston: Pearson, 2000. 620-41. Print.
- Hull, Elizabeth Anne. "Merging Madness: Rollerball as a Cautionary Tale." *Clockwork Worlds: Mechanized Environments in SF*. Ed. Richard D. Erlich and Thomas P. Dunn. Westport, Conn: Greenwood, 1983. 163-80. Print.
- Jones, Gwyneth. "THE REVIEWS: 9: In the Chinks of the World Machine: Sarah Lefanu on Feminist SF." *Deconstructing The Starships: Essays & Reviews* (1999): 123-130. *Literary Reference Center*. Web. 9 Nov. 2014.
- Larbalestier, Justine. *The Battle of the Sexes in Science Fiction*. Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan UP, 2002. Print.
- Lefanu, Sarah. *Feminism and Science Fiction*. Bloomington, Ind: Indiana UP, 1988. Print.
- Luckhurst, Roger. "Mediation, Simulation, Recalcitrance: Crash to Hello America, with Detours." *The Angle Between Two Walls': The Fiction of J. G. Ballard*. Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 1997. 119-140. Rpt. in *Short Story Criticism*. Ed. Lynn M. Zott. Vol. 53. Detroit: Gale, 2002. *Literature Resource Center*. Web. 9 Nov. 2014.
- Stephenson, Gregory. "The Dimension of the Disaster: The Early Short Fiction." *Out of the Night and Into the Dream*. New York: Greenwood, 1991. 13-40. Rpt. in *Contemporary Literary Criticism*. Ed. Jeffrey W. Hunter. Vol. 299. Detroit: Gale, 2011. *Literature Resource Center*. Web. 9 Nov. 2014.
- Vanderwerken, David L. "Roller Ball: Sport and Society in the Future." *Arete: The Journal of Sport Literature* 2.2 (1985): 39-45. Print.

---

Evaluation: *Brenda's analysis of these stories is an advanced literary critical study of their social relevance, and she also convincingly argues that these works suffer from oversimplified, stereotypical gender roles, when much greater could have been expected, for the times in which they were written. Brenda's argument is informed through an in-depth research process that uncovered quite a few enlightening commentaries on gender portrayals in science fiction, which she deftly applies in her discussion. This paper is outstanding.*

---

## Afterword: Efferent and Aesthetic Communication

*Jennifer Berne*

---

Jennifer Berne, PhD, is Associate Professor and Dean of Harper College's Liberal Arts Division. She holds a BA in English from the University of Michigan, an MA in English from Northeastern University, and a PhD in Teacher Education from Michigan State University. Her research interests are in the teaching of writing, comprehension strategy instruction, and teacher education. Her research has appeared in various professional journals including *The Reading Teacher*, *The Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, *Writing and Pedagogy*, and *Reading Psychology*, and she has published texts on reading and writing instruction and literacy. Prior to her work in postsecondary administration, Dr. Berne spent fifteen years in teacher education, working with pre-service and in-service teachers both in and out of classrooms on contemporary practices in reading and writing.

I had already graduated from college with a degree in English before I truly understood that there were different ways to read. My university alma mater was firmly etched in the tradition of New Criticism. This meant that the faculty taught undergraduates to read a text as if it were free of context, suspended in time and space, and as if nothing else in the world mattered: No history, no society, no reader. While it seems bizarre to me now that I could have thought such a thing, I didn't know anything else. I learned to look at a text in one way only, and I thought that all the knowledge in the world was contained in those closed worlds of books and poems. I was overwhelmed and thrilled when William Carlos Williams' iconic poem "The Red Wheelbarrow" was shared and I understood that I was to make meaning out of a scant 16 words:

so much depends  
upon

a red wheel  
barrow

glazed with rain  
water

beside the white  
chickens

My classmates and I were taught to consider and reconsider every word as, we were assured, so many scholars had done before us. I was in love with the idea that everything I needed was in front of me, and I was enthralled by the intellectual pursuit of looking at those very few words and arriving at some meaning that maybe could unlock the mysteries of the world. I was not taught to pursue the background of the author, the context of the production of the text, the history of literature, the social position of the discourse, or to even consider that I might bring something different to a reading than someone else might.

When I got to graduate school, things changed. Students from colleges all over the country gathered in a Master's Program in English, and unlike me, they knew about deconstructing texts, about historical and Marxist readings, about feminist criticism, and about reader

response. I felt like my whole education had been a fraud at worst, an insular indoctrination at the very least. I learned, slowly, that people read differently because of who they are, where they are, and how the text is situated. I learned that I had not been taught this for a very particular reason related to the politics of the field. It wasn't that my professors weren't cognizant about this greater conversation, but rather, that they were intentionally keeping their undergraduate students steeped in the tradition of text-based readings, new critical approaches, so that this perspective didn't get completely lost in the new preoccupation with contemporary literary criticism. At least that was the reading of my new graduate school colleagues and professors. Clearly, this interpretation was a reading unto itself.

Everyone's agenda aside, the notion of broad ideas about literary criticism opened up my thinking about "The Red Wheelbarrow" to considerations of genre and to considerations of what I brought to the text. It was an opening of the world that I never expected, and though I fought it initially, I began to appreciate the breadth with which someone could consider a text. The notion that there were multiple "readings" replaced the notion that there was a singularly contained textual truth.

After recovering from that trauma, I began in earnest to see myself as someone who read actively and who exerted power over a text. I loved that notion. I also loved the notion that even I read differently, that reading is something that varies with audiences and purposes and with the kinds of texts to be read. Louise Rosenblatt, a literary scholar interested in the role of the reader in literary criticism, offers the idea that there are two distinct categories of reading, efferent and aesthetic. In efferent readings, we use text to solve problems, to complete a task. This kind of reading is often considered as highly end-driven and purposeful. By contrast, aesthetic readings are those that we do for the pleasure that they offer. It is not true that purpose and pleasure must always be at odds, but Rosenblatt believed that reading as a purely aesthetic experience was fundamentally different than reading to gather something. She writes, [in efferent reading] "the reader's attention is primarily focused on what will remain as residue after the reading—the information to be acquired, the logical solution to a problem, the actions to

be carried out," while "In aesthetic reading, the reader's attention is centered directly on what he (or she) is living through during the relationship with that particular text." Though certainly there may be an overlap in these distinctions, there is also clearly a difference. This difference helped me to be a stronger reader, but maybe, even more importantly, to use this to consider my work as a writer.

I have taught writing long enough to know that a familiar refrain resounds related to analyzing both audience and purpose before writing. It is no great mystery that we use different discourse styles for different audiences and that sometimes our purpose dictates our genre. Certainly, we sometimes write for efficiency, to communicate a point. Other times, we might write to discover what we think, still others for the pure pleasure of putting words together. However, I also wonder if these varied ways of writing can define the term "writer," and in what ways that might be important. I am always a reader, from whatever perspective and for whatever reason I am reading. Am I always a writer? Are there times when I am writing as a means rather than an end, and in those times, what am I?

My sister and I both write books. She writes because she loves to, and she only writes about subjects she loves. She tosses out anything that doesn't make her happy, and she easily rejects any editorial comments that don't jibe with her opinion of her own work. When she is writing, she is absolutely absorbed: The dishes don't get done, the laundry piles around her. She writes alone, accompanied only by her head and the words that dance and buzz, and sometimes bother. For my sister, writing is an aesthetic experience. Sometimes I read what she writes and am overwhelmed by how beautiful it is. Though her topics don't always coincide with my interest, it is about the experience of the language, far more than the subject. I, on the other hand, write so that I can express ideas. I may feel very passionate about the ideas in my book, but, generally, I would be just as happy if I had three hours in a room with an audience and could just say everything I want to share. I like writing just fine, but I am seldom intrigued by my own language choices. I have co-written most of my books, and I am very happy to give over a chapter to my co-author and let her have at it. I can

write for a few minutes, then check my email, make a sandwich, pull some weeds, and pick up where I left off. I am interested in what I am writing because I love the topic, but I am not sure I love the process. My writing is good in that it can serve to clarify complicated ideas, but it is not fancy and it is certainly not beautiful. Nobody is reading what I write in order to see lovely prose. And I am pretty sure that nobody who had no interest in the topic, would ever push through my books because they found reading them to be joyful experiences.

In a creative writing class and sometimes in English classes as well, it can be easy to succumb to the pleasures of writing. Part of the beauty of these classes is that there is space to note language and syntax and form as topics unto themselves. The aesthetic qualities of writing can be valued along with more efferent interests. You might write a beautiful narrative in your English class that uses vocabulary not just as a vehicle for ideas, but as an end in itself.

This is less so the case, however, when writing in other parts of the academy. In those contexts, we use writing to get an idea across, sometimes to discover or uncover what our ideas actually are, to demonstrate knowledge or to communicate with those who are not in the room with us. We don't often fall in love with the words in these writing experiences. The vocabulary and syntax that was our focus in English certainly helps make this writing more elegant or more precise, but it is not the center of the activity.

There is some lovely writing in this anthology of Harper Writers. Though purposes and outcomes of the work may have varied considerably, here we find all kinds of texts written by all kinds of students. Some, I bet, never considered themselves writers until now. Others have been using the moniker since kindergarten. Are writers those who work on the craft of it and the rest of us something else? Can "anyone" write efferently, but only true artists write aesthetically? I have left these questions to ponder further, and I hope you will ponder them as well. Talking about writing may not make a writer either, but it is often really interesting.

We may decide that we all are writers because our words are appearing in this publication for many to see, read, learn from, and enjoy. I remember going to a lecture

once, given by the brilliant novelist Toni Morrison. She was asked what she thought her strength was as a writer. Her answer was two words—"hard work." She went on to say that producing a spontaneous piece of gorgeous or brilliant prose does not make the writer. It is what comes after the first draft that is the key.

No matter what draft your piece represents, and no matter how you define yourself, it is wonderful to share writing in publications of this sort. This anthology is a place of celebration. We can celebrate it as readers and as writers. Those who contributed, congratulations. Those who are reading it, to you as well.

### Works Cited

- Rosenblatt, Louise. *The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of Literary Work*. Carbondale, IL, 1978.  
Williams, William C. "The Red Wheelbarrow" (1962).





Harper Faculty:  
Help Your Students Publish Their  
Excellent Writing!

# Submit it to *The Harper Anthology*

**ESSAYS      REPORTS      RESEARCH PAPERS**  
**STUDIES      INTERVIEWS      LETTERS      RESPONSES**  
**SPEECHES      ANY ASSIGNMENT THAT REQUIRES WRITING**

SUBMIT YOUR STUDENT'S WRITING (A HARD COPY) AND THIS COMPLETED FORM  
(BOTH SIDES) TO KRIS PIEPENBURG (6513), LIB ARTS,  
OR SEND AN ELECTRONIC FILE OF THE PAPER  
ON A DISK (BY CAMPUS MAIL) OR BY E-MAIL ATTACHMENT  
TO [kpiepenb@harpercollege.edu](mailto:kpiepenb@harpercollege.edu)

SUBMISSION DEADLINE FOR 2016 ISSUE: January 25, 2016  
SUBMISSION DEADLINE FOR 2017 ISSUE: January 25, 2017

TITLE OF PAPER: \_\_\_\_\_

STUDENT: \_\_\_\_\_ INSTRUCTOR(S): \_\_\_\_\_

COURSE NUMBER AND TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

DESCRIPTION OF THE ASSIGNMENT:

INSTRUCTOR'S EVALUATION OF OR RESPONSE TO THE STUDENT'S WRITING—WHAT MAKES IT  
OUTSTANDING?

## WILLIAM RAINEY HARPER COLLEGE

### *Harper Anthology Release\**

The undersigned hereby grants to William Rainey Harper College one-time rights to publish the following in *The Harper Anthology of Academic Writing*. The undersigned also grants to William Rainey Harper College the right to publish the following in a second publication for use only in courses at Harper College to be sold at cost to students.

The undersigned further releases and holds harmless William Rainey Harper College, its board members, staff, faculty, and students as to any matter which may arise relating to its publication. The college may, but need not, copyright this work. The college shall, upon the written request of the undersigned contributor thereof to that effect, relinquish its rights, if any, directly to the undersigned contributor. I certify that this is my own work and to the best of my knowledge that it does not infringe on any existing legal copyright or the privacy rights of others.

---

(Title of Paper)

---

Date

---

Student Name (printed)

---

Student Signature

---

Mailing Address

---

City, State, Zip Code

---

Telephone #/e-mail address (very important)



# Alternate Table of Contents

<b>Art</b>		<b>Literature</b>	
Rachel Freeman	37	Caila Bender	1
		Courtney Beth Dohl	19
<b>Computer Information Systems</b>		David Modica	86
Kathleen Kurek; Natalie Marski; Marie E. Pena	67	Leslie Murray	93
		Olga Novikova	98
<b>English</b>		Virginia Pszczolkowski	129
Chester Busse	5	Ben Snively	113
George Galetsis	45		
Megan Giacomino	49	<b>Philosophy</b>	
Jasen Jonas	57	Kamil Piluk	106
Alifiya Josh	59	Aleksandra Stosovic	116
Whitney Keck	63		
Rayna Maneva-Stoimenova	79	<b>Political Science</b>	
Bryan Morris	89	Eri Svenson	119
William Nutini	101		
Kamil Piluk	106	<b>Sign Language Interpreting</b>	
Hannah Valdiviejas Cohn	129	Lisa Croneberg	8
Brenda Ward	136		
		<b>Sociology</b>	
<b>History</b>		Christopher Dwyer	23
Ryan Eberhardt	26		
Stephanie Fox	31		
Ala Hashemi-Haeri	54		
<b>Humanities</b>			
Ryan Eberhardt	26		
Stephanie Fox	31		
Ala Hashemi-Haeri	54		
<b>Law Enforcement and Justice Administration</b>			
Ronald Tragasz	123		
<b>Linguistics</b>			
Jacob Custer	10		
Sean Dahlgren	14		
Sunita Mani-Sriram	81		

**THE HARPER ANTHOLOGY NEEDS PAPERS!!**

**SUBMISSION FORM: PAGE 149 OF THIS ISSUE**

**Submission deadlines**

**2016 issue: January 25, 2016**

**2017 issue: January 25, 2017**

**Send manuscripts to**

**kpiepenb@harpercollege.edu,**

**or in print form**

**to LIB ARTS, Room L203**

**Please include student contact information**

**(e-mail, phone number, street address)**

**with all submissions**