

The Harper
ANTHOLOGY

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

Volume XXVIII



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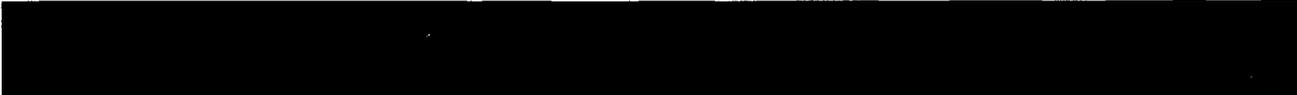
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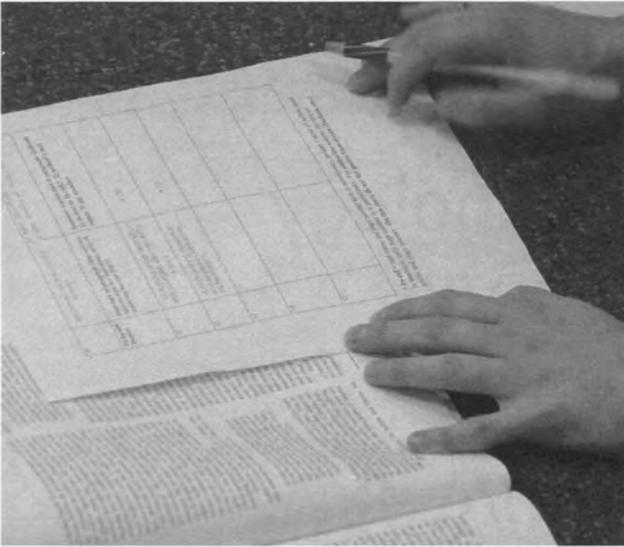


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the best academic writing, campus-wide,
by students at Harper College, Palatine, Illinois

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The Harper Anthology
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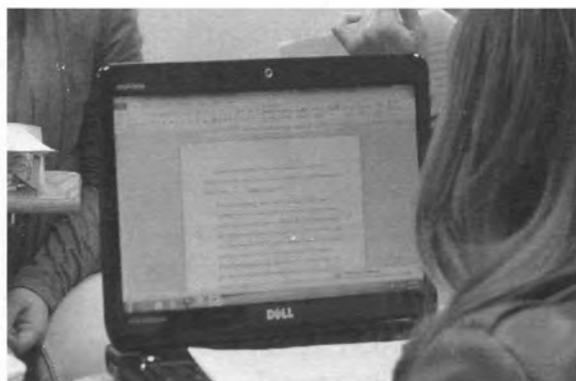
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Foreword:

At the On-Ramp to Literacy

Kris Piepenburg, Chair
The Harper Anthology Committee

After a long delay, I am excited to present Volume 28 of *The Harper Anthology*. The papers in this issue were chosen in the spring of 2016—and this issue should have been in print at the end of that year or the beginning of 2017. In a normal academic year, producing this journal demands extra effort and sufficient time to attend to the many associated details, but these past two years have not been normal. The death of my father in August 2016 and of my mother in April the following year drained me of not only a lifetime of personal love and connection, but of the simple availability of time and energy, and the co-chairing of the English department at Harper College during this time, while somewhat less draining of love and connection, certainly had similar effects on time and energy. I apologize for the delay, but it was a necessary one, and I trust that the patience of students and faculty alike will be rewarded, as they read through this volume of essays honoring excellence in scholarship and a wide variety of practices in writing instruction.

Editing a volume like this always stimulates reflections about what I am encountering in the group of papers, as a result of having worked with them so closely, and also about what I am encountering in all sorts of student papers through the course of a semester of teaching. In editing this volume, thoughts about literacy gradually began to occupy my mind, stimulated no doubt by the Afterword for this issue, written by Dr. Alina Pajtek of the ESL Department, and also by some past experiences in the classroom and some of the papers in this issue.

Helping students develop advancements in academic literacy takes time and careful structuring of assignments. This issue of *The Harper Anthology* reflects a wide range of literacies and assignments, from shorter papers written for ESL and Adult Education courses to longer investigative and argumentative research papers for a variety of college-level academic courses. In my courses and in many others, *The Harper Anthology* serves as a touchstone for excellence in academic writing, a lot of

which cannot be accomplished without well-developed abilities to make sense of advanced academic texts. The reading of essays written for *The Harper Anthology* helps students see how other students have developed understandings of texts and formulated their own—reading these papers some sense of how they arrived at and presented for others.

There are some unusual, provocative papers on compelling subjects in this issue, and the delay in publication provided opportunities for the authors to view their writing from the distance of time, in their contributions for the “Student Reflections on Writing” feature that accompanies each issue of this publication. As I read and re-read Patrick Lingen’s paper on the work of American artist Jeff Koons, written for a Learning

Student Reflections on Writing: A Few Excerpts

Jazzy Celindro

That long, boring, English 102 essay you’ve been grumbling about is important....

Patrick Lingen

Now with the great wisdom of the years that comes with being 25, I wonder not how I will surpass my current standards, but rather I wonder at what my writing will be like in a decade or two; I have come to see that there is no upper limit....

Kenji Omura

...the more I write, the less power it has over me.

Catherine Sanchez

...rereading this paper was a fresh reminder that both my writing style and the ideological frameworks I use now have their roots at Harper.

Sequoia Selah

As I’ve continued on in my academic career, I have found that writing, again and again, has served as a respite for me, not only from the stark facts and formulas of many of my other classes, but also from the chaotic nature of being a college student. I have been inexhaustibly grateful for the writing skills I obtained at Harper and beyond....

Foreword: At the On-Ramp to Literacy

Community incorporating Art 105 and English 102, I was impressed, repeatedly, with the certainty in Patrick's writing and in his assessment of Koons' pieces, which seem to be the antithesis of art—yet Patrick, in rereading and reflecting on his paper nearly two years later, felt the distance in time that he has traveled since writing the paper, and his “student reflection” is a beautiful piece that leaves open the possibility that perhaps his “critique of Koons' work overlooked a possibility that (while remote) has the potential to unravel [his] entire argument....” I still feel the correctness of Patrick's views on the artist's work, when I read his paper, but that he later arrived at a place where he sees the paper as “quaint, innocent even, in its naïve passion and self-certainty” is a beautifully honest statement that seems to say something very true about perception, thought, and writing, if forward progress is happening. Patrick has “come to see that there is no upper limit” in what his writing (and by extension, his thought) can become.

Other students also accepted the invitation to reflect on their writing after nearly a two-year removal from it. Both Sequoia Selah and Catherine Sanchez, now pursuing baccalaureate degrees at universities on the west coast of America after completing their studies at Harper, saw something of the writing skills they currently employ in their studies as having some of their genesis in their time at Harper—which should be happening, if the academic experiences students are having at Harper are truly of any value. These students believe, in the most convincing of ways, that those experiences did give them something lasting. A few months ago, they re-read their work from very distant perspectives, in time and place—one at Stanford University and the other at a university in Oregon. For some Harper students, the experience here is transformative, and the transfer experience is even more so. The writing of some exceptionally advanced students certainly appears in the pages of this volume, alongside the writing of students who perhaps have just begun to feel the academic success that the Harper College experience can bring about.

Catherine Sanchez's paper in this volume, “*Consuming Kids and In Defense of Food*,” written for Monica Edwards' Sociology 101 course, is a convincing work of social criticism, focused on the intertwining and often contradictory goals of democracy and capitalism, and how often, as Catherine puts it, “the good of the public has come second to the good of the producers.” In her paper,

detailed exploration of one example of this focuses on the commercialization of childhood through the advertising that the free market allows—and how “the basic parts of [children's] existence—food, play, friendship, love—have been manipulated to become commerce.” Catherine concludes, “the sociologist's job is to look impartially at evidence and point out connections.” I feel somewhat better about the current state of the world, knowing that Catherine is at Stanford, furthering her education. Her and other sociologists' perspectives of her generation will hopefully have an effect, someday, on the government-business relationships that affect social constructs such as the public education, criminal justice, and health care systems in this country.

Dr. Alina Pajtek's Afterword to this volume, “Reading and Writing Words and Worlds,” on page 163, traverses the subject of literacy from the starting point of her grandmother's life in Romania, to a finishing point of the importance of writing as social action: “critical thinking and constantly challenging the status quo,” writing about “how things *should* be” when things are not (or have not been) as they should be. Between thoughts on her grandmother's illiteracy and her commentary on writing as social action, Dr. Pajtek reflects on various topics and incidents pertaining to writing and the teaching of writing, but her comments about literacy and its development really resonated with me. She refers to an article “Graduated but Not Literate,” from 2003, which points out that in The National Assessment of Adult Literacy that year, just 25% of college graduates scored high enough on the tests to be considered “proficient” in “document literacy,” and just 31% had scores of proficient for “prose literacy,” meaning “using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential” (Lederman). These statistics are sobering, and I guess, not surprising, considering the difficulties many of our students have with college-level reading and writing tasks.

That 70% to 75% of students in “a study of 19,000 Americans aged 16 and up” (not all participants were college graduates) who had *completed* college degrees did not possess literacy at a “proficient” level (as opposed to “basic” or “intermediate”) is more than a little alarming, and this study predated the “college completion” and acceleration movement that has swept the nation, in the past decade—so we can only wonder what the future will bring. However, the future is already here, in our

Harper College classrooms. In a recent semester of teaching English 102 here at Harper, I had the unfortunate experience of encountering a small “plagiarism ring” of students who had shared either a purchased or associate-written paper and then segmented it, rearranged it, and modified it enough to make it into a few different-looking papers, unfortunately (for them) with the same inventory of roughly sixty advanced word usages sprinkled liberally through all of the different versions of the paper. The lexicon spread across the different versions of the paper included “retrogressive,” “assuage,” “unpalatable,” “vis-à-vis,” “antithetical,” “wayward,” “wanton,” and forty or so other words that I knew would have no place in the students’ reading or writing vocabularies, from having seen many previous writing samples.

To make certain of what I believed I was encountering in these students’ papers, I created a surprise vocabulary quiz using twenty-five of the suspiciously used advanced words from the suspect papers. The entire class of twenty English 102 students took this quiz, on which they were asked to write definitions of the twenty-five words, using synonyms or short phrases (there was no definition bank to choose from). Students had a full thirty minutes to complete the quiz, with instructions to give full attention to every word and to leave blank any word they were completely unsure of, but to do their best with all of them.

In reviewing the results of the quiz, I was not surprised to discover that the students involved in the plagiarism ring could define only one or two of the twenty-five words, but I was a little surprised that *none* of the twenty students who took the quiz could define more than five or six of the words correctly. Of the 500 total possible chances for word definition, represented by 20 students possibly defining 25 words, only 15.8% (79 of 500) were correct definitions. Incorrect definitions were given 29.8% (149 of 500) of the time, and in 54.4% of cases, (272 of 500), students offered no response or attempt at defining a word (Table 1). So, for all of the chances to define a word correctly, 84.2% ended up with either an incorrect definition or no response at all. Samples of some of the incorrect definitions are provided in Table 2.

I am not a statistician, nor am I designer of research studies; certainly, the impromptu quiz cannot be considered to be hard research, nor can I ignore the fact that the words to be defined were removed from any reading context that might have helped students be able to understand them.

Also, some of the words, such as “retrogressive,” “vis-à-vis,” and “assuage” seem uncommon even in college-level texts, so it would not be surprising that college freshmen are not familiar with them—but, of course, they did appear in the papers “written” by the aforementioned plagiarism ring. Also, the quiz did not identify whether a student could actually read the word to be defined—a point well made in Angelica Lazarin Hernandez’ paper on reading instruction in this issue, about how the lack of phonics instruction in American schools has limited students’ capability to decipher unfamiliar printed words by breaking them down into sound units. Despite all of these caveats and cautions with respect to these results, this small piece of informal research seems to warrant further investigation of whether college-level literacy deficits are widespread in the classes we teach.

So, what else can be carried forward from this small, informal, and likely flawed bit of research? Dr. Pajtek states, in her Afterword, that “It is essential for students to develop the habit of reading a lot, of using reliable sources....Such practices can have a positive cumulative effect on students’ literacy levels and their future academic and professional success.” Dr. Pajtek also points out the value of students’ reading of challenging academic sources, such as journal articles, as a means of improving literacy and building “self-confidence in emerging scholars.” I could not agree more, with her—and I am sure that from her experience teaching ESL and Linguistics courses, that she knows the challenges some students face, as they attempt to read and understand such articles. In my twenty-two years of teaching at Harper, it has been my experience that only the most capable students in a section of English 102 can really read and understand an article from an academic journal, and that ability is becoming even more scarce. The reading literacy of many students in English 101 or English 102 is nowhere near where it needs to be, to successfully process these types of materials.

As I have already stated, it is a sobering thought, to realize, that in a study of 19,000 Americans in 2003, only 25% to 30% of college *graduates* had proficiency in document or prose literacy—and it is even more sobering to encounter, in academic courses at Harper College, the raw matter that feeds into these dismal results of studies on the literacy of college graduates. Developing proficient literacy takes time, which increasingly has become an undervalued commodity in higher education,

Foreword: At the On-Ramp to Literacy

as the “acceleration agenda” spreads through colleges and universities like a hastily built expressway system, with on-ramps to here and off-ramps to there, to a credential, to a degree, to a transfer institution, to a job, but with what result in proficiency or literacy, we might ask. In the

study Alina cites, having a college degree in 2003 did not equate with college-level literacy; and, based on the 20 students in my English 102 course, who had finished high school and passed English 101 and other college-level courses, progressing that far had not equated with much

Table 1—Results of English 102 Vocabulary Quiz (One Section of Students, n = 20)*

Word	Correct Definition	Incorrect Definition	No Response
Dilemma	14	4	2
Unsavory	11 n	7	2
Tycoon	6	10	4
Escapade	3	7	10
Antithetical	1	5	14
Vis-a-vis	0	6	14
Bonafide	1	12	7
Retrogressive	5	7	8
Abode	4	1	15
Unpalatable	5	5	10
Wayward	2	3	15
Precipitate	7	8	5
Supersede	2	7	11 n
Goad	1	2	17
Mete	1	4	15
Fraught	1	8	11 n
Nostalgia	11 n	2	7
Assuage	0	2	18
Succinctly	0	3	17
Piety	0	8	12
Ascetic	0	5	15
Conspicuously	0	17	3
Adherence	4	7	9
Wanton	0	5	15
Deride	0	4	16
Total	79/500 (15.8%)	149/500 (29.8%)	272/500 (54.4%)

*Words were chosen from an inventory of roughly 60 words that appeared in a plagiarized paper shared and altered by a few students. The entire class took the quiz, with no definition bank provided.

development of college-level literacy, either, at least, based on some students having resorted to plagiarism and most of the class being unable to define the “advanced” words that appeared in those papers. Such simple questions arise in my mind: What are we doing about the problem of declining literacy, and what can be done?

The many factors, trends, and social forces figuring into why a student or group of students at a certain point in time may have less than proficient literacy

Table 2--Student-Written Definitions for Some of the Commonly Misdefined Words on the Quiz

Tycoon	Conspicuously	Unsavory	Piety
“a storm”	“something very interesting”	“hard work”	“pretty, good”
“a symbol”	“doubtedly”	“which cannot be saved”	“for-giveness”
“hurricane”	“eagerly”	“something that cannot be saved”	“group”
“an exciting place or object such as a roller coaster”	“can’t wait for something”	“not brave”	“to feel pity on someone”
“a big thing”	“secretively”	“not savory”	“small or cheap”
“something game like”	“slyly”	“not a good business”	“small, sad feeling”
“mission”	“confused, suspicious”		“adventure”
“a type of disease”	“doubtly”		
	“suspiciously”		
	“with doubt”		
	“to hide something”		
	“continuously”		
	“spying, something you show interest to know more”		

while attending or finishing college are a tangled mass of threads, really. Maybe, the best we can hope to do, as educators on the front lines, in the classrooms, is to deal with the symptoms of this mass—the students in our classrooms, whose literacies are still developing—in ways that help them develop greater literacy, from where they are. That *is*, unfortunately, a situation of triage, forced upon educators who are at the interface with reality, beyond well-funded educational foundations’ theories about reducing barriers and hurrying barely literate students to completion or graduation, and beyond policy decisions that remove important coursework and support services, like developmental education and sufficiently staffed writing and tutoring centers, from students’ actual progress toward literacy.

In the past decade, external pressures certainly have fed into the transformation of postsecondary instruction, toward a quantity- rather than quality-focused model. In the response to external pressures to show evidence of results, the City Colleges of Chicago seem to have resorted to some thoroughly hollow measures to increase graduation and completion rates, including the retroactive awarding of thousands of Associate Degrees in General Studies during the current decade, according to a Better Government Association investigation (Kidwell). Also, one of the system’s colleges, Kennedy-King, even earned the Aspen Institute’s first-ever Rising Star Award, before a Better Government Association probe pointed out that the college’s markedly increased graduation rates were grossly inflated by the inclusion of students at the French Pastry School, which rents space from the City Colleges and which is accredited through Kennedy-King College (Smith). For years, students at French Pastry School were not counted in the data related to completion and graduation, but suddenly, in 2011, they were, tripling the numbers. This pressure has been felt here at Harper College, as well, through educational foundation-driven initiatives to reduce students’ time spent in developmental coursework, to relax placement standards, and to reduce numbers of hours in associate degree programs to the absolute minimum allowed, in the interest of speeding up academic progress and increasing numbers of graduates. Assessment practices exist to ensure quality of educational programs, but in the end, probably all of us who actually teach are faced with the problem of increasing numbers

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of underprepared students, and increasing the pace and removing instructional time and content for such students will not help them be more prepared or actually literate by the time they complete a college degree.

The mania of the past decade for increasing numbers of college graduates and “completers” looks very similar to what happened in China during the first decade of Communist rule, when the country entered into its first Great Leap Forward, in 1958, in a country-wide attempt to increase industrial and agricultural production in all sectors. For example, across the country, under pressure from Party officials, agricultural villages and communes promised future outputs that were far beyond their actual capabilities, causing state shares of the output to be taken based on these inflated totals, leaving nothing for the families of the villages to eat. As a result of these policies, millions of Chinese people starved to death. In addition, in a naïve attempt to increase steel production, with the Western world, the Party launched a countrywide creation of steel furnaces and smelting operations, but the technology for these operations, across communes and villages, was actually more nineteenth-century than twentieth. These countrywide efforts did indeed produce steel, but most of it was of inferior quality—in a word, useless. Postsecondary education in America has begun to look similar to these efforts—though American education is not Chinese agriculture of the late 1950s, the similarity is there, in colleges pressured to promise greater numbers of graduates and completers, then fudging statistics to make the numbers look good; and, though American education is not the homegrown Chinese steel industry of the late 1950s, the results—arguably useless degrees and graduates without college-level literacy—are similar. The Great Leap Forward was a serious lesson for the Chinese Communist Party, which they did not learn from, as it was soon followed by another misguided and frenzied political campaign that lasted into the 1970s. It took a long time and a lot of struggle, and opening up to Western investment and Western technology, before China became headed in the direction to where it is now, and certainly, there are disturbing aspects of the current situation, as well—senseless overproduction to increase GDP, with more useless products and projects, only on a much more massive scale, with associated environmental degradation.

I am not here more here than I ever intended, and I know that, but I see in what I have written a desire for educators and educational administrators alike to stop a moment, take a breath, and consider where we are at, in 2018, in the middle of this race to accelerate and deliver more graduates, and to consider whether and how what is happening may be resulting in graduates who really may not be so well prepared to succeed in professions, because, while they have earned degrees, some have graduated college without some of the basic proficiencies needed for further success. Increasing numbers of underprepared students and the challenges in teaching them also point to a reassessment of where we are at in terms of support services. Students working through their courses at accelerated paces often need additional assistance, to master material that is more of a reach than before. Demanding ever-increasing developmental coursework to keep up with the acceleration path without providing the necessary support services may result in leaving students with greater desperation and susceptibility to repeated failure. For those of us who teach classes, now, it may be more commonly necessary to adjust and accommodate, but we must continue to challenge, as Alina advises, to help students develop college-level literacy. Greater focus on reading comprehension seems needed, along with greater focus on vocabulary to build reading comprehension skills. We might say, we shouldn't be having to do that, in a college-level composition course such as English 102, but it seems that is where we are at, for too many reasons, a few of which I have examined here, and many that I have not.

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

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The Willow

Imad Al Salhane

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Andrew Wilson

Assignment: *The students spent a few weeks reading nature-related essays: Orwell's "Thoughts on a Common Toad" and Dillard's "Living Like Weasels," for example.*

The hope with this assignment was that such readings would prompt students to enter a natural space, record their observations, and then write an essay examining nature in a meaningful, unique way.

I sometimes feel so lucky just to wake each day: the lily's smell mixes with my coffee, and when I drink this coffee in the humid shadow of a willow, in a place where nature has long ago claimed its presence, beauty touches the scene. My house's garden is nature's gift; each part of the garden works with the other to increase the garden's gracefulness. The lilies beside the house's windows, the willow in the middle of the garden, and the bees that represent diligence are working hard to maintain the place to keep it wealthy and healthy. It was one of the fascinating days when I woke in morning, aiming to sit with my dog beneath the tree that we both love, to enjoy the last moments of the autumn. The birds' sounds beside the rustle of trees created an invaluable moment. Peacefulness comes always when we know the value of life, and nature is the best thing that can teach us these lessons.

The willow is the affectionate part in my garden since it constitutes a connection between the sky and the ground, and it creates a pleasurable, tender shadow for anyone who wants to enjoy nature. The willow shows its love to the earth by spreading its roots through the soil; its old furrows of twigs that incline toward the ground show its shyness and kindness. Many people describe willows in different ways. Some people say that willows looks like green hills in the horizon, and some people describe a willow as the head of a woman when her hair covers her face, but the willow for me is just a joy to look at. The willow has a distinctive shape that differs from other trees, and always beauty comes from diversity. Breaking through the ground, and by creating a cupola under its stem, the willow shows its will to live and to spread its grace. The notches at the stem show the war's scars against death and the roughness of life. The willow's limbs have designed a comfortable throne to sit on while its branches with helix leaves are swinging with each breeze. The squirrels' avocation is to play and jump between the willow's limbs, and the willow is the best milieu for many different kinds of birds to be part of the orchestra that plays natural symphonies. My dog's passion is to sit under the willow to enjoy the amusement of nature, and he keeps scratching his back with the willow's stem to express his love for it. Furthermore, the willow doesn't expect to be anything other than the main part of the garden, like the

nucleus in a cell, by spreading its twigs everywhere to give each surrounding plant a share of its shadow.

My room's window is the screen that shows me the climate changes through the year, and it shows me the fall of the small kingdom in my house's garden through the winter. The autumn leaves us, and the winter always comes with death. The small lilies crumble because they are not able to stand against the greediness of winter, and the bees disappear. The fresh green grass takes on a pale-yellow color, and the sky begins to lose patience. There is something as tenacious as life, and this is death. I consider Virginia Woolf's "Death of the Moth" and understand that my garden fights death, as Woolf's moth does so bravely, when winter knocks on its door: "One's sympathies, of course, were all on the side of life. Also, when there was nobody to care or to know, this gigantic effort on the part of an insignificant little moth, against a power of such magnitude, to retain what no one else valued or desired to keep, moved one strangely" (Woolf 605). The willow, though, possesses more strength than that moth; it is by far the strongest part of my garden and cannot be defeated. Winter crashes against the willow's strength, but the tree is firm and wise; perhaps it is a part of winter. The green-inclined twigs turn white like the bride in her wedding, and the snow weighs its sprigs until they touch the ground. The willow won't die: it knows how to suffer and can hold on until spring.

At the end of the winter, when spring comes with blossoms, the willow is the heart that pumps life through the garden. The dark age is over, and it's time for sun to rise up. The dead will leave their graves, and the budding lilies will start to rift through the soil. The bride takes off its wedding dress, and it teaches the others how to live with dignity. Although the willow is nice through all the year's seasons, it exhibits its best appearance in the middle of the spring, when it has the light green color. At night, the intimacy between the moon and the willow gives darkness its perfection. The moon touches through the twigs of the willow; the tree reaches and rises toward the middle of the sky, reflecting toward earth the pale white light that feeds our souls.

We look at the willow from a small slot that pleases our minds, because selfishness is sometimes our human nature. We take the pleasure offered to us by the willow, but we ignore the wistful soul that lives in the willow. The

weeping willow, with the beauty of its limbs, hides its grief and sadness. It won't show anyone its pain because its kindness prevents it from hurting anyone. It could wail; it could whine through the years beneath its shadow— and it might, if it had a mouth to speak. Winter won't be able to kill a willow, but darkness born from human neglect may be able to break a willow's bones, or it may even be able to kill it. Things are not always the way they seem; the willow smiles at you, but who knows what you might discover if you look beneath this smile.

Through the forked roots, through the budding sprouts, and through the swinging twigs, we should contemplate the meaning of life. Going deeper through life's ocean, we should know how to wrestle fear, sadness, or weakness. The University of Nature teaches us how to survive a dilemma through our lives or how to strive against death; otherwise, we could be smashed between the hammer and the anvil of anger. Nature is a humble speaker that needs a listener, and by listening, we reach a higher level of meditation, an understanding of our mortality. Nature has no middle ground; it either shatters the lily's bones or teaches the willow how to live with dignity. A willow is a small branch of nature's school. It teaches the meaning of bestowal by giving shadow and peace to please others while rarely getting anything in return. The willow is a pursued warrior in the middle of the battlefield, striving against toughness of life, teaching us that the world is not an easy place. We should be wise; we should listen to the willow's stories and learn how to live from its infinite experience. We should kindle our knowledge with the willows' flames, letting them light our paths, so we can live our lives as willows.

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Evaluation: *There is a second-language flavor in this paper, and for me, that enhances rather than obstructs the experience of reading Imad's essay. I am impressed by the poetry in his writing and the maturity of his vision, and by the many miles his writing has traveled since I first met him in June 2015.*

Mark Doty's "Homo Will Not Inherit"

Alexander Alvarez

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Maggie McKinley

Assignment: *Provide a close reading of a poem assigned in class, analyzing it specifically for its implicit message about gender and/or sexuality.*

When the terms poet or poetry are uttered, certain names usually come to mind: Edgar Allen Poe, Emily Dickinson, Langston Hughes and, of course, William Shakespeare. Yet one name is often forgotten, overshadowed by his poetic peers. His works have been awarded the T.S. Eliot Prize and the National Book Award for Poetry, and he was recently elected a chancellor of the Academy of American Poets. His name is Mark Doty; his works include themes like the impact of family, identity and grief. While most of his writing is centered on identity, they pertain to a male's identity—specifically, a homosexual male. His poem, "Homo Will Not Inherit," is a gritty portrayal of a homosexual man's life and how society views his kind. This poem, part of a larger collection titled *Atlantis*, was published in 1995. This was a time where the political and religious realms, especially Catholicism, targeted homosexuals, making them seem inferior and strange to everyone else. This was also the period haunted by the AIDS epidemic, a sickness that struck down the gay community's numbers and also took the life of Mark Doty's partner. "Homo Will Not Inherit" offers a stark, unabashed insight into a gay man's troubles. Using imagery, metaphors, allusion, and repetition, Doty captures the sociopolitical and religious plight of a homosexual male.

Through imagery and metaphors, Doty illustrates the narrator's environment. The unnamed narrator refers to his domain as "downtown anywhere," suggesting that the perils of a gay man occur in any city, anywhere. Although

he lives in the city, he inhabits an area sectioned off by police: "The borders of this shadow-zone...are charted / by the police, and they are required, some nights, to redefine them" (29-32). This separation creates a divide between the gay and straight people. As the narrator says, he lives in "the margins / which have always been mine" (22-23). This further shows the social strife the homosexual community has endured. They are ostracized by society. Yet the lives of the straight folk--and the police--are brought into analysis here as well. One line mentions them as those "who must resemble what they punish" (58). They exist in a reality where they believe they are on a path of righteousness. Just because they don't engage in acts that homosexuals do, they consider themselves pure, clean of sin. Doty is calling them out as hypocrites, phonies scolding licentious homosexuals when they themselves can exhibit similar tendencies. How is a man finding in another man "fifteen minutes of forgetfulness incarnate" (39) any different when a woman finds it in a man, or a man in a woman?

An allusion is a word or a phrase that is making an indirect reference. Doty's poem contains multiple references to Catholicism, a religion infamous for its stance on homosexuals. The title of the poem, "Homo Will Not Inherit," is a direct reference to a verse in Catholicism's holy book, the Bible:

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals... will inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Cor. 6.9-10)

Homosexuals are barred from receiving the kingdom of God (i.e., Heaven); this is another example of the alienation they are dealt. They are ostracized because of their sexual preference, regardless if they live a moral life. But for the narrator, that's okay. He says "What I'll inherit, [is] not your pallid temple/but a real place" (64-65). He not only accepts that he won't get into Heaven but also chooses something more real, more concrete than the kingdom of God. Another biblical reference he makes is to "Babylon's scrawl" (96). Babylon's scrawl was a piece of writing that materialized before King Belshazzar's eyes, on a wall of his city, Babylon. Unsure

Mark Doty's "Homo Will Not Inherit"

of its meaning, the king brings the prophet Daniel to interpret the writing:

And this is the writing that was inscribed: MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN. This is the interpretation of the matter: MENE, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end; TEKEL, you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting; PERES, your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians. (Dan. 5.25-28)

This inscription is condemning Babylon. In MENE, God has foreseen the end of the kingdom—their days are limited. TEKEL says the citizens have been judged and they are wanting. In other words, they have been seen as deficient, inadequate in their lives. And PERES will separate their kingdom, amongst those who remain. The narrator embraces this conviction:

...I'm not ashamed
to love Babylon's scrawl. How could I be?
It's written on my face as much as on
these walls.... (95-98)

He explicitly states he's not ashamed to admire the writing on Babylon's walls. MENE, TEKEL and PERES were written on Babylon's walls and the walls of "downtown anywhere." Those three words that condemned Babylon are condemning the city of the narrator and his people, suggesting God has judged them, their end will come. Yet the narrator embraces the words convicting the kingdom: "It's written on my face as much as on / these walls" (98).

Throughout "Homo Will Not Inherit," a phrase is repeated over and over. Though the title suggests what a homosexual will not receive, the narrator states what he, as a gay man, will receive. "I'll tell you what I'll inherit," he says, "the margins / which have always been mine" (22-23). He's always been on the outskirts of society and will continue to reside there, an outcast that accepts the separation society has imposed on him. "I'll tell you what I'll inherit," he continues, "steam, and the blinding symmetry of some towering man, fifteen minutes of forgetfulness incarnate" (37-39). For him, an encounter

with another man is inevitable; he'll receive those "fifteen minutes" until the end. He goes on: "I'll tell you what I'll inherit: / Stupidity, erasure, exile / Inside the chalked lines of the police" (55-58).

While ending up in exile, the narrator sees a potential end for him (and the homosexual community). Erasure: to erase, eliminate, eradicate. The purge of his community has already begun, with zones closing them off from society. The scorn and hate they receive from pious hypocrites is only the beginning. Hate leads to anger, anger leads to violence, and violence leads to death. Through this suffering a question arises: where will homosexuals go in the afterlife? Heaven, or Hell? For the narrator, it's neither: "I'll tell you / what I'll inherit, not your pallid temple / but a real place" (63-65). Doty uses repetition, in "Homo Will Not Inherit," to remind us of what life can hold for a homosexual man, with the phrase: "I have my kingdom" (99).

Through his use of imagery, metaphors, allusion and repetition, Doty brings the life of a gay man into clarity. Doty's work has been acclaimed by the homosexual community. Mark Doty's "Homo Will Not Inherit" was published in 1995, a time of turmoil for the homosexual community. It portrayed a bleak future for homosexuals. But 20 years later, they have inherited a life less harsh, less hurtful. They have reached an unprecedented level of acceptance in society, becoming more apparent in the media as well. America now allows same-sex marriage in all 50 states. The world is changing, and our past stigmas against people are diminishing. Same-sex marriage was a step toward equal tolerance. Let's keep walking in that direction.

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Evaluation: *Doty's poem is a lengthy and complex narrative, rife with symbolism and nuance. Alex does justice to this complexity by thoughtfully and carefully unpacking the work's central symbols and allusions in order to draw out meaning.*

The Timeless Dilemma of the Female: Simone de Beauvoir and Gloria Steinem

Mohit Bhatti

Learnin Community:

Existentialism— aning
Courses: Engl ion)
and Philosophy 105 (Introduction nilosophy)
Instructors: Kurt Hemmer John Garcia

Assignment: *Write an expository essay on the most important statements in Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex that made a claim similar to Gloria Steinem's call for "unlearning."*

As we are now officially in the age of the Internet, feminism has transgressed the borders separating our societies and brought together the vast distances that once stood as chasms between us and others overseas. Within moments, heated discussions flare up from site to site as men and women of all factions and races hotly debate with one another the future of women in society; the misrepresentation of women; female infanticide, which is still painfully prominent in certain countries; women of color; sexism in the media; the unequal pay gap; rape and consent; the impact of conservative ideas regarding women; trans-sexuality; Planned Parenthood; videogames; movie tropes; and the ever-prevalent gender roles—all issues that are still ever-so-present as obstacles that societies will have to tackle, not only in the United States but around the world. Just decades earlier, women's rights to vote and obtain contraceptives were the hot button issues of the Western world; many protests broke out on the streets and became the subject of landmark cases, such as *Roe v. Wade*. Within the second wave of feminism, popular twentieth-century female philosophers rose to challenge the arbitrary mindset of the vast majority regarding a woman's role in domestic life, women's sexuality, and the rights of women in academia and the workplace.

Existentialist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir is among one of many women who led the second wave of feminism. In fact, her most popular book, *The Second Sex*, is believed to be the basis and starting point of the movement in the twentieth century. First published in 1949, it triggered a strong response among the French bourgeoisie—and an even stronger, effective reaction in the United States—for the contents of the book unreservedly explored the condition of women in Beauvoir's time which, for the most part, consisted of problems the general public was much happier with sweeping underneath the carpet. Beauvoir's book was considered way ahead of its time; it had such a huge success that it provoked women worldwide to rethink the complacency of the roles society forced upon them and continued to affect them from birth and beyond, which then further affected the offspring of those women in the same vicious cycle. With her book as the spark that ignited the sequel to the first outcry for

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equal rights, Beauvoir became, and is still known as, a popular existentialist and feminist icon.

Less than twenty years after the publication of *The Second Sex*, another icon rose to challenge the norms that affected women within academic environments, the workplace, and beyond. Gloria Steinem began as a freelance writer for various magazines such as *Esquire*, *Playboy*, and *TW3* in the early 1960s, when she wrote about relevant topics such as contraception and the treatment of women in *Playboy*. Soon after her abortion in the early 1970s, she pursued political activism and began actively advocating for various concerns of warfare and women's rights. Since she read and enjoyed the comics as a child, she helped restore the Wonder Woman comics in 1973 ("Gloria Steinem"). Her activism and feminist ideologies continued to spread throughout various disciplines and media, and she still continues on today, as she recently joined the walk across the Korean peninsula as a way to try and bring about the demilitarization of the war zones (Costa-Roberts).

Steinem and Beauvoir are two striking icons who originated from the twentieth-century wave of feminism and still remain relevant today. While some of their ideals do not necessarily resonate completely with today's technology-centered times, their work still provokes readers and observers to have a shift in their perspectives, and to look more into the importance of the feminist movements. Steinem's essay "Unlearning" and Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* resonate with each other, having many similar ideas regarding the issues women faced in their societies in the twentieth century. Beauvoir's philosophical stance on feminism and Steinem's reflection of her observations as she transitioned from her life in Toledo, Ohio to Smith College both discussed the troubling ways in which women, at many stages of their lives, end up stagnating and deprived of their desired freedom, from their days of youth and on into their domestic lives in marriage.

At the beginning of "Childhood," Beauvoir states her famous line, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (267). She is saying that a woman's behavior and disposition is something which is taught to her through her upbringing. Our society creates the ideal "eternal feminine"—Beauvoir's pet name for the norms, traits, and regulations society imposes upon women—

and then has us raise our daughters to adhere to the "eternal feminine" in order for them to grow up to be "proper women." The same society would argue that the "eternal feminine" is a part of a woman's nature; she must become it and will, some way or another, eventually act as expected of her. She then goes on to describe some of the ways in which young girls are raised differently and eventually taught to be more submissive than their male counterparts. She talks about how little boys are raised to be more self-reliant, distant, and independent. Their emotional separation from their parents is established at birth, as the male is expected to be just as emotionally separated later on in life. Beauvoir describes the little boy as "[a]n autonomous subject, in transcendence toward the outer world; but he encounters himself only in a projected form" (269). The little boy can already see himself as an actual human being, a person to be reckoned with. He is self-aware and superior, ready to take on the world. The little girl, on the other hand, "continues to be cajoled, she is allowed to cling to her mother's skirts, her father takes her on his knees and strokes her hair" (270). The little girl, unlike the boy, is coddled and made to grow emotionally attached to her parents. The boy, on the other hand, is discouraged of such an attachment. When a little girl gets hurt, her parents will rush to her rescue and tend to her scrapes and wounds. The boy will be told to "stand up and brush it off" and "stop crying like a girl, you will be fine!" The girl depends on her parents for support and care when she is hurt; the boy realizes he must fend for himself since emotional attachment is an undesirable trait, one that is not expected from him at all. With this continued treatment, the boy grows up to be an autonomous, independent young man while the girl grows up to be a woman, constantly depending on others for support and being needy. The boy can think for himself and identify with many things associated with his aloofness. He can dare to dream and achieve many things on his own. The little girl is dressed to look pretty and given dolls to dress up, too. For a girl, as she is growing up, the only thing that will matter is for her needs to be met and for her to be very pretty. She only had the doll to identify with, after all, and nothing else to provoke her imagination to think about anything beyond herself. The girl is taught to behave properly in order to earn praise and

material goods; she is taught to be a “servant and an idol” (282): a doll for the men to blow up and use. Even as the girl grows up and becomes a woman, she will project the same ideals onto her own daughters:

When a child comes under their care, women apply themselves to changing her into a woman like themselves, manifesting a zeal in which arrogance and resentment are mingled, and even a generous mother, who sincerely seeks her child’s welfare, will as a rule think that it is wiser to make a “true woman” of her, since society will more readily accept her if this is done. (284)

Throughout this comparison of the upbringing of both sexes, Beauvoir exposes to her audience that the silencing and weakening of women does not start later on in life, but rather right at the very beginning through her upbringing, deliberate or not.

Steinem’s view of adolescence and childhood is slightly different. Surprisingly, the harsh environment in Toledo, Ohio, actually provoked the women to demand better treatment. Steinem begins by describing the environment, saying,

Certainly, my teenage self had been totally consumed with escaping. If I had written any book then, it would have been titled *Getting Out*—and most of my friends felt the same. Our dreams of escape from the neighborhood kept us from focusing on our probable fates as lifetime factory workers who rebelled only on weekends, or homemakers who played pinochle, went bowling, and sometimes got a beating on Saturday nights. (27)

Following that description, she talks about women from different situations who grew up one way or another and ended up in a place, for better or for worse. To Steinem, as much as it is one of the more obvious contributing factors to a woman’s disposition in life, it is not necessarily one’s economic background or condition—a woman will find some form of oppression in her way; the upbringing, whether it is the lofty sweet promises of material wealth whispered into the ears of more well-off girls or the “Saturday night beatings” administered to them by their husbands and fathers with anger management issues,

combined with the pointless toiling at nine-to-five jobs which provided miniscule pay, will determine how she fares later on in life, for all that affects a woman’s actions, way of thinking, and determining whether it is actually ideal for her to even consider fighting for her own rights or if she should go with the flow and succumb to a life of repressed desires. Steinem would agree with Beauvoir’s statement that it is the faulty upbringing—taking into account the economic standing and teachings of the parents—which weakens the child, but she would argue that taking those other variables into consideration, the little girl would not always remain little, as is the case of the Toledo women who feared succumbing to the same fate their mothers did. That motivation drove the majority of them to rise beyond their restrictions and behaviors taught to them in childhood.

After Beauvoir talks about the female’s disposition in childhood, she moves on to talk about the effects of that upbringing that later on reflects itself in a grown woman’s life, from the day she desires love to the day she becomes a mother. Through her neediness which was instilled to her through her childhood, the woman had learned that “[t]o be happy she must be loved; to be loved she must await love’s coming. Woman is the Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella, Snow White, she who receives and submits. In song and story the young man is seen departing adventurously in search of woman[. . .] the woman waits” (291). As a child, when the girl felt pain, she had waited for her parents to pick her up and comfort her; now, as an adult, she anguishes for someone’s love and affection; she refuses to take the initiative or to believe that there is a world beyond the romantic fairy tales she grew up listening to. The woman believes that one day her Prince Charming will arrive and get rid of her anguish; little does she know that she will be greatly disappointed.

Then, according to the way her life is set up, Beauvoir goes on to explain that it is time for the woman to get married. Because women are generally considered a burden on their parents, it is a huge relief upon the family once she is taken away. As Beauvoir says, “Marriage is the destiny traditionally offered to women by society” (425). The society believes it to be the most important event in a woman’s life; it is all she has been preparing for from her days of doll coddling and fairy-tale day-dreaming.

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The woman expects her husband to earn money and treat her every day with love and affection, but little does she know, according to Beauvoir, she is trapped—trapped by her belief in marriage to be the ultimate gratification of all desires; trapped in the hopes that her husband will provide for her emotionally and financially, to be the perfect Prince Charming she had always anticipated; trapped in the hopes that now that she has obeyed society, she will finally be happy. But, Beauvoir says, that is not true. According to Beauvoir, “Marriage enslaves her to a man” (430). Marriage is a trap which a woman falls for every time, when convinced enough by her parents and society. She is made to feel like a parasite on her brothers, her father, and everyone else until she, the “burden,” is moved to the next household—the household of her husband.

Quite like how Steinem points out how some women she had met ended up settling rather than working due to the success of their husband’s careers, Beauvoir agrees that such a phenomena exists. She says, “In certain middle-class circles, the young girl is still left incapable of making a living....Even when she is more emancipated, she is led to prefer marriage to a career because of the economic advantages held by men: she tends to look for a husband who is above her in status or who she hopes will make a quicker or greater success than she could” (430). Steinem observes the same thing in regard to otherwise well-educated women from Smith: “As a group, they seemed less strong, funny, joyful, and free. . . . If divorced, they were most likely to have lost their identity along with their husbands. If married, they seemed more identified by their husband’s careers” (29). Both writers make the case that through the pressure added onto women from earlier on, they end up getting married and instead of pursuing their own interests and working like their spouses, they either became inactive and settled down as housewives or, after divorce, became lost since most of their identities were attributed to their husband’s success. These women, due to their faulty upbringing and instilled neediness, could not support themselves without the presence of a man in their lives.

Both Beauvoir and Steinem, throughout their works and career, always tried to express the importance of a woman to unlearn the neediness her parents had instilled within her as a little girl; to them, a woman is truly free

if she were to educate herself and become financially independent so that she would not necessarily need a man in her life to mooch off of and accept abuse from.

For the most part in our society today, women have increasingly become more self-reliant, as is evident through the rising number of women in various parts of the workforce, whether in blue-collared or white-collared jobs, intellectually or physically inclined jobs—you will not see a place in Western society where a woman cannot find work. While we are still moving toward equal pay, in comparison to Beauvoir’s days, a woman is raised to believe she has more choices in life than marriage and subservience: to be more than just her looks and what archaic norms may demand of her. Through technology, we are no longer silenced and unaware of issues that need fixing in both our society and societies throughout the world; with this widespread awareness, we are able to freely discuss it. While this world is not yet the perfect equality Beauvoir, Steinem, or any other venerable feminists of the past may have imagined, it can be said that we are much better off in the sense that we are now more independent and able to demand more changes than our past generations could. The woman of today, while still unlearning her own undesirable traits instilled from previous generations, finds more ways to adapt. The woman of today, for the most part, anyway, is independent.

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Evaluation: *Mohit did an exceptional job finding common ground between these two authors writing decades apart.*

The Limiting Nature of “Born This Way” and Bromances: Heteronormativity in the Interest of Capitalism

Jazzy Celindro

Course: Sociology 230
(Sociology of Sex and Gender)
Instructor: Monica Edwards

Assignment: For the final paper, each student was to expand a previously written shorter paper and apply the sociological perspective to the gendered world, to explain some specific aspect of gender through the lens of sociology. The paper was to be as much about the discipline of sociology as about gender, in part, by sticking to analysis of the macro- level of society and the social structure that creates social organization.

Writing the expanded version of the paper required delving into more issues and more connections, with re-exploration of previously used sources, to find more complexity and expand previously formed connections, and the use of new sources to explore new connections. The paper needed to be organized around a sociological theme that is structured as an arguable thesis.

While pop culture has been more inclusive to queer sexuality over time, heteronormativity continues to run rampant in the media. As reflected in larger society, heterosexuality continues to earn privileges while other sexualities garner varying degrees of stigma and oppression or erasure. With notions of individuality and romance perpetuated in media, sexuality is commonly framed as an inherent, static identity. Generally, this ideology applies to all sexualities, whether it is heterosexual or on the LGBTQIA spectrum. However, sexuality is more than just an individual’s personal or romantic identity: it

is a fluid construction that is institutionalized from birth and heavily policed throughout the course of one’s life through the media and the capitalist economy it serves in order to secure future consumers in the capitalist market of heterosexuality.

What is Sexuality?

The Essentialist Discourse—In common discourse, homosexuality and heterosexuality alike are framed as natural identities (with the exception of “pray the gay away” camps and ideology). Even high school boys amidst a world of heavily institutionalized heteronormativity believe that “gay [is] a legitimate, or at least biological, identity” (Pascoe 58). Sexuality is seen as unchanging and natural, and not a category that is continuously socially constructed. Scientific talks about research to find the “gay gene” permeate the essentialist discourse on sexuality. Emotional notions of sexuality as an aspect of individualism and true love further frame sexuality as inherent. This ideology is aided by songs like Lady Gaga’s “Born This Way” and the “love is equal” message used in the fight to gain the right for lesbian and gay marriage.

Feminine and Masculine Requirements—However, “homosexuality as a social category is much more than the fact of one’s sexual or affectional attraction” (Ingraham 197). In addition to having an attraction to opposite-sex partners, one must also adhere to feminine and masculine personalities and appearances for females and males, respectively. Women are expected to be docile, sexualized, and attractive objects for men. Women may purchase products such as expensive lingerie or makeup to fit into this role, creating a highly lucrative market in the interest of heterosexuality. Yet, women must also be caring and emotional. Men are expected to be rational thinkers who display dominance and have a lesser interest in care and romantic love than women.

The Constructed and Changing Nature of Sexuality—Furthermore, labels of “gay” or “straight” connote a type of person rather than a genetic sexual or romantic interest, illustrating the constantly changing, constructed nature of sexuality and gender. Pascoe calls the temporary nature of holding the “fag” identity a “hot potato” (61). What causes

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and Bromances: Heteronormativity
in the Interest of Capitalism**

someone to be constructed as a fag varies across factors such as race, context, and time—it is not a static label and can be quickly distributed elsewhere. For example, caring about one’s appearance used to be a factor in calling a man gay, but the rise of the “metrosexual” as the norm (straight men who painstakingly groom themselves and their wardrobe) has eliminated that factor (Pascoe 63).

Playing With Sexuality: Changes in the Media—The definition of heterosexuality and its requirement of masculinity for males in the realm of pop culture is experiencing a change. The recent development of the “bromance” between heterosexually marketed male band members allows for the members to grope, sit in each other’s laps, and flirt publicly with one another on screen and in print. Aside from the masculine marked realm of physicality and sex (albeit still seen as gay when between same-sex males), boys can be seen comforting one another emotionally and being affectionate through playing with each other’s hair or by giving hugs. This is a far departure from the emotionally cold and lack of affectionate physicality that once described heterosexual masculinity. Songs and their music videos that depict female same-sex, physically sexual acts and attitudes are on the rise as well. With the absence of male figures in this type of media, songs like “I Kissed a Girl” are believed by the consumer to liberate women from having to act as sexual objects for men.

Romance and Identity—Sexuality as a changing, yet still romantic and individualistic notion can be illustrated through online scenarios where people who had identified as straight entered relationships with same-sex partners, even after their partner’s sex was revealed. There are plenty of self-identified heterosexual women and men who find members of the opposite sex attractive or may find some emotional pull to them, although they will defend their heterosexuality in some way after admitting so. Men are quick to add the phrase “no homo” literally or through actions (such as showing off a girlfriend) to demonstrate and reaffirm their supposed stable, sexual identity as masculine, heterosexual men. The unstable nature of inhabiting a rigidly defined sexual identity and notions of individualistic identities and true love as what constitutes sexuality rather than social categories are notions that capitalism easily earns profit from.

Institutionalized Heterosexuality

Heterosexuality is institutionalized from the moment a child is born. This early socialization process strengthens compliance to the heteronormative processes that continue throughout one’s life in order to ensure the sale of heterosexuality. Birth certificates include information sections that assume a child will be raised by both a cisgender mother and father, with implications that this pattern is the best for raising a child. “Culture installs meaning in our lives from the very first moment we enter the social world” (Ingraham 197). Heterosexuality is institutionalized and prioritized through a legal document in the health care system before an infant has a chance to open their eyes.

High school education is an especially influential period for heteronormative socialization that occurs during the formative years of adolescence. “Schools that convey and regulate sexual meanings are often organized in ways that are heteronormative and homophobic” (Pascoe 26). School rituals such as prom use heteronormative language in the school-wide election of a prom king and prom queen. Even if students do elect a same-sex couple to be on the homecoming court, it is still under the categories of prom king and prom queen, depending on which partner is deemed to be more masculine or feminine.

Textbooks, and subsequently, the lessons they are framed around also use heteronormative labels. For example, biology and psychology courses use “mother” and “father” in describing “normal” familial patterns in textbooks and class examples, such as “when Mom holds her baby for the first time, a bond is created...,” assuming that a child will be raised by a heterosexual couple, just like birth certificates do. Additionally, institutionalized sex education focuses solely on heterosexual sex. This is evidenced in sex education’s framing of sex as a “danger” because of the always-assumed risk of pregnancy and in the construction of condoms as birth control rather than a means to practice safe sex. Teachers who resist school policy, especially in regards to sex education, run the risk of getting fired (Pascoe 34). Punitive processes (or lack thereof, when it aids heteronormativity, such as the bullying of an LGBT student) help to ensure the sale of heteronormative lessons. These lessons then manifest tangibly through profits from heterosexual media like

recreational books, cosmetics, weddings, and ticket sales to concerts that rely on the sale of their stars as potential, heterosexual products and partners.

The Limits of the “Bromance” and “I Kissed a Girl”

Even the seemingly leisurely and progressive realm of pop culture is still an institution with a heteronormative education agenda. “The “gaying” of the straight guy, ironically, increases his effectiveness as a heterosexual... straight men need not be threatened by the blurred boundaries, since...[it] ritualistically demonstrates that the reward of becoming gay-ish is the affections of a good woman,” Gamson writes of the reality television show, *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* (2005: 15). The progressive nature of the bromance and acting in femininely coded and queer ways is not as far reaching as it appears, as it still functions to serve masculine heteronormativity to capture women as a prize. While it has become acceptable for male boy band members to play with gayness, it is only acceptable if it is constantly reinforced that they are “truly” heterosexual, such as through contractual closeting. Ignoring a member’s self-identified sexuality, paparazzi photoshoots with members of the opposite sex are frequently planned and released, often with highly expensive “signifiers of romance” such as designer rings and dresses for their marketed female love interests (Ingraham 201). The constant marketing of “true love” as receiving purchasable, tangible items creates a lifelong loyalty to the heterosexual, capitalist market. All of these practices assume that their future/current consumers are heterosexual, teaching and reinforcing that being heterosexual is the prized norm early on. Additionally, the differentiation in the term “bromance” versus just “romance” delineates a clear line between joking about femininity and homosexuality in a fraternal matter versus an actual homosexual romantic relationship, which producers believe do not sell.

This “gaying” process described with the reward of an opposite-sex partner applies to women as well and falls short of any progressive potential. “Such depictions can have the effect of trivializing and depoliticizing same sex sexuality by portraying it as a fashionable ‘add on’ to otherwise conventional heterosexuality” (Diamond 105). “Add on” is a marketplace term, such as add-ons in online

shopping carts. Women may “add on” to their value as heterosexual objects by engaging in sexualized physical acts with other women in the presence of men. In the media, there are “numerous depictions of presumably heterosexual women hinting at or experimenting with same-sex sexuality” (Diamond 104). The term “experimenting” does not fully place a woman into the category of lesbian, just in the way that “bromance” prevents a male from being truly classified as “gay.”

However, the bromance and “I Kissed a Girl” dynamics are marketed in different ways, although they reinforce heterosexual masculinity. Bromances are a component of boybands, which are marketed as a female area of interest. With their high levels of caring affection displayed in a bromance, it is constructed as a feminine act,

Student Reflections on Writing:

Jazzy Celindro

Many of us gain our consciousness of social justice issues when we go to college. But how do we translate our newfound awareness into practice? As a shy student, I was discouraged; I could never make a difference without a voice. However, with the help and encouragement of my professors (special thanks to Dr. Edwards!), I found that I *could* make a difference—I found that I had writing. Although it may seem inconsequential, that long, boring, English 102 essay you’ve been grumbling about is important: written words are just as powerful as verbal speech.

So, make a habit of writing. Make a habit of viewing it as an integral—and enjoyable—part of your life. Forget about page length for a moment, forget about poetic prose and fancy words—in a world where those in power are the ones who usually control narratives, just being able to write your *own* piece is highly empowering in itself. And if you want to make bigger waves? Just look at #blacklivesmatter—even writing something as short and simple as a hashtag has the potential to ignite societal-level change.

The Limiting Nature of “Born This Way” and Bromances: Heteronormativity in the Interest of Capitalism

as it is believed that women are inherently more emotional. In society, rationality is prized over emotionality and is constructed as a sign of intelligence. “It is really difficult for gay men to be [at my workplace].... It is dyke-friendly [not gay-men-friendly],” one respondent says in Schilt’s comparison of workplace stigma of men and women (134). While bromances do have public visibility, they are delegitimized in the larger music industry and public beliefs about “real careers” and “real music.”

Beyond the fan base, in broader society’s eyes, anything feminine is seen as negative. Feminine appearance and acting cause women to be seen as incompetent in their traditionally occupied female jobs are seen as less important and requiring less skills, and therefore a job earns a wage), such as singing. Additionally, the negativity of feminism is seen in the media’s coverage of trans women as opposed to trans men, which may partly be due to the shock factor that media outlets choose, to play upon society’s disgust of /humor toward “men in dresses.” Pop culture songs still pander to masculine heteronormativity by valuing “girl power” groups and songs that emphasize androcentric traits, yet devalue male performers who are seen as feminine.

Creating and Maintaining the Heterosexual Market

“Commercial television producers....are clearly driven by two major interests: avoiding financial risk and providing an environment that advertisers perceive as friendly to consumption” (Gitlin qtd. in Gamson 7-8). The media serves as powerful tools to create a market of loyal consumers to the purchase of heterosexuality. Producers use highly selective, glamorous editing to create a sought-after conservative product, despite how progressively inclusive pop culture has seemed to become of all sexualities. Corporations believe any angle too far from the “safe” norm of heteronormativity is a financial risk, and thus even LGBTQA coded realms that have potential to have social change fall back on methods to assure the consumer of the product’s heterosexuality—all in the interest of garnering profit. In this, the media is a “resistant institution” (Gerson) that does not meet the rising cultural value of sexual and gender equality and prohibits the true potential for social change.

“Firms train new artists to work within highly-codified performance conventions” (Lena and Peterson 705). People are seen as highly individualistic beings that will show their emotions in interest of creating a secure identity. “Heterosexuality is best accomplished when packaged – and sold – as freedom and sexual choice” (Diamond 109). As in the way that framing sexual identity as liberating individualism and romance mask the way heterosexuality is privileged, the authenticity (misunderstood by the public as how one “truly” identifies) of a pop culture icon obscures the fact that they are a product to the resistant corporation they are contractually signed to. Consumers come to view the heteronormative material they are presented with as the icon’s freedom of choice to be happily heterosexual rather than as a result of structural influences. Heterosexuality in the media is painted in glamorous, romantic ways, and consumers themselves come to believe that their own heterosexuality, riddled with inequalities, is a result of their own quest for romance and identity, rather than following the structural patterns of the icons they are presented with.

Ingraham calls this “way of thinking that relies on romantic & sacred notions of heterosexuality in order to create & maintain the illusion of well-being & oneness,” the “heterosexual imaginary” (1994). This notion is socialized earlier on than exposure to young/adult pop stars, with seemingly harmless romantic fairytales featuring heterosexual princesses and princes. This early start is continuously reinforced through “compulsive heterosexuality: ritualized interactions continually affirm masculinity as mastery and dominance” (Pascoe 87). Constant displays of “no homo” are reinforced at an early age. Children’s media regularly incorporates heterosexual love stories as plotlines, even if their characters are babies or animals! They also rely on anthropomorphized gendered markers (such as female animals having curves or wearing makeup) in their media as well. Heterosexuality must be constantly reminded of, even in realms of beings that are not seen as sexualized. These constant, compulsory reminders starting early on ensure future consumers in a heterosexual market. Any form of resistance is met with institutional punitive actions (such as a teacher being potentially fired) or may be barred, such as when the episode from Marc Brown’s children’s television show *Postcards from Buster* depicted

a child with two mothers was not aired. Subsequently, on a micro level, individuals who do not follow the way heterosexuality has been defined may face stigma. To avoid the negative ramifications, one complies to heteronormative society. As such, framing sexuality as an individual, romantic identity is harmful because it is not acceptable in society to question one's emotions and "true love." These notions mask the purpose of and inequalities rampant in the capitalization of sexual categories and prevent important analysis of the true processes at play.

"The engine driving the wedding market has mostly to do with the romancing of heterosexuality in the interests of capitalism" (Ingraham 201). People often look to economic institutions to make sure that they are clearly defined in the "good" male or female category. In this heteronormative society, part of what constitutes being a good male or female requires conforming to heterosexually gendered consumer practices. This is evidenced in the \$35 billion dollar per year wedding industry (200). The notion of love relies on expensive, excessive displays of love through the rings, dresses, and weddings, such as in the highly televised and often envied extravagant wedding of pop culture figures Prince William and Kate Middleton. Since they are elite, heterosexuality and the heterosexual gendered way people should act and strive to be is then reinforced by individuals wishing to achieve this elite status.

Conclusion

Sexuality is a constructed concept that relies on constantly constructed requirements. While there has been an increase of visibility of homosexuality in the media, heterosexuality remains the privileged sexuality. Progressive pieces of media are either barred or have limits in their potential for change. The common discourse of sexuality as an expression of romance and individualism for both heterosexuals and the LGBTQA community alike ensures the maintenance of a heteronormative society and capitalist market.

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Evaluation: *When I re-read this paper, I remember why I was so impressed with it the first time around—Jazzy expertly handles sociological arguments about the social construction of sexuality. Grappling with essentialist theories and deconstructing them is difficult work, but Jazzy has a handle on this material as well as any graduate student. Her unique exploration of the "bromance" really caused her work to stand out, as she was engaging in analysis that wasn't even fully theorized in academic works. Her ability to situate all this within the context of capitalism and heteronormativity, again, feels like graduate-level work. I haven't often encountered such sound sociological analysis after only two sociology classes.*

America's Ailing Education

Eric Christiansen

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Maggie McKinley

Assignment: Write a paper that addresses a specific aspect of segregation in the American education system and proposes a potential solution to that problem.

Living in the United States, one will frequently hear about the opportunities available to all of its citizens and our unprecedented freedom of choice in our pursuits in life. It's an idea that is ingrained into most Americans and even propagated around the world as a symbol of who we are as a nation. It certainly is a lovely idea, but, more often than not, it is no more than an idea. When held up to further scrutiny it is at times difficult to see this supposed equality of opportunity, perhaps much less so in contrast to third world nations being ravaged by civil war and poverty, but this is no fair comparison. Compare the United States to developed European countries, and you'll struggle to justify this country's supposed greatness. This becomes particularly glaring when you look at education in America. Some might find this to be surprising given the fact that no matter what news organization or study you consult, the United States frequently has around fifteen of the top twenty universities in the world. The quality of higher education in this country is not in doubt, though. It's the public school system that needs to be given a closer look and ideally, changed. This country lags behind in education due to many issues that are an unfortunate hallmark of our racially segregated and biased past. Today, this has led to schools being underfunded, segregated, and full of gangs and violence. These underperforming schools cannot be blamed and must be helped to rise above the challenges they face. Recognition of racial segregation, no matter

how unintentional, is crucial to combating the inequality in schools and putting stereotypes and incorrect perceptions to bed. In addition to this mental shift we must have as a society, we must embrace charter schools and integration of our public school system, and we must find a better approach to dealing with misbehaving students.

In a country founded on principles of equality and one that underwent one of the most significant civil rights movements to date, you would not expect segregation in schools to still be an issue. These are, after all, children, the least likely of any of us to be prejudicial of others for their race. Despite this, it remains one of the biggest problems today. Public school districts will typically fall into one of two categories: they are often either well funded and highly rated or underfunded and on the brink of being unaccredited. The underfunded schools are typically found in low-income areas largely populated by minorities. One of the most poignant examples of this is the Normandy school district on the border of Ferguson, Missouri. This is the school Michael Brown attended before his tragic passing. The racial makeup of the school is 98% black, and of the 520 school districts in Missouri, it is among the poorest and sits at the very bottom in terms of academic achievement. In the year 2014, Normandy was ranked 520th, and according to Nikole Hannah-Jones, "It seems impossible, but in 11 of 13 measures, the district didn't earn a single point. 10 out of 140 points was its score." She compared the 10 points it received to getting "points on the SAT just for writing your name" ("The Problem We All Live With: Part 1"). The categories that then school missed out on include math, English, social studies, science, and college placement. Also, approximately half of the male black students do not even graduate. This is tragically emphasized by comments made in an interview by Michael Brown's mother shortly after his death. She said, "Do you know how hard it was for me to get him to stay in school and graduate? You know how many black men graduate? Not many!" She struggled to get her son through school, knowing that not many men did, and that it was her best chance at getting him a good life. All of this points to one of the biggest issues with education in this country. Yes, there are many highly performing public districts with great scores. However, they are often mostly white and in economically privileged areas. The

districts from low-income areas pale in comparison, and we have seen a growth in the achievement gap between black and white students.

Underperforming and underfunded schools clearly lead to lower graduation rates and a less educated student body. With school districts like Normandy only graduating half of its male student body, you will end up with many young men on the streets, with very few opportunities. Unfortunately, many of them will turn, in desperation, to gangs and drug dealing as a source of income. The current state of these districts has created the school-to-prison pipeline that is too often seen in areas like Ferguson. According to the ACLU, this lack of funding leads to “overcrowded classrooms, a lack of qualified teachers, and insufficient funding for ‘extras’ such as counselors, special education services, and even textbooks.” This in combination with extremely harsh zero-tolerance policies will almost groom students to become accustomed to the justice system. Al-Jazeera America found that “Black students without disabilities” are “suspended or expelled three times as often as white students without disabilities” (“By the Numbers”). This was from a study by the Department of Education and points to a clear racial bias against a minority of the population. That’s a shockingly high number for a group that makes up only 12.6% of the general population (Humes et al). All these factors contribute to the number of uneducated youths on the streets of this country, which greatly increases their chances of being involved in illegal activities.

As mentioned previously, we need to acknowledge the existence of segregation within our public school system. I hope by now there has been sufficient evidence to prove that and show the detrimental effect it has had on the education of our youth. While this would be good progress, we must have practical solutions we can apply to our school system in order to fix it. Obviously, a good place to start would be integration, as in “old fashioned, *Brown versus Board of Education*, 1954 technology, load kids on buses?” as Ira Glass so eloquently put it in the radio show *This American Life*. Loading kids on buses is exactly what needs to be done. The Hartford School District in Connecticut has done just that, with resounding success. The district managed to go from just 11% of

its students being minorities to 50% through this program (“The Problem We All Live With: Part 2”). This has been the result of a lot of hard work. There was the difficult legal battle as well as the battle in public. For integration to succeed in Hartford, the support of the public was necessary. In time, both were won over, and integration soon followed. A big part of this publicity campaign was in exposing the poor schools for how under-qualified they really were, and this is exactly what needs to be done today. There must be a realization that young students in underprivileged neighborhoods are getting the short end of the stick. The schools they have to go to are often physically falling apart and have underqualified teachers with little motivation teaching them. With integration, we can at least get those students into better schools for the time being so they don’t suffer while the schools undergo improvements.

The last point leads me to the next step in fixing our currently unequal education system. Money makes the world go ’round, and it is no secret that schools in underperforming districts are seriously lacking in funding when compared to other schools. Per pupil spending varies greatly across the nation from \$6,555 in Utah to \$19,818 in New York (“Per Pupil Spending”). Obviously, there will be gaps in spending, but this gap is far too great. Students should be on average receiving the same education around the country, and that should not change depending on where in the country they live or their socioeconomic status. The issue with funding lies with the fact that public schools draw their money from taxes. If a district is situated in a much more affluent area, it will in turn have access to greater funds. There needs to be a mechanism for spreading the wealth a bit more, or the poor areas of this country will only continue to get worse and suffer. Residents will be poorly educated, with limited prospects for their careers. If we were to get these underfunded schools properly funded, then we could begin the process of improving them while students are integrated and the overall quality of school districts across the nation is upgraded.

Finally, there is the issue of discipline in schools. Too often, we are seeing students dropping out and being swallowed up by the justice system. This occurs because they are unequipped to support themselves and often

struggle to find a job, which will in many cases lead to the student resorting to criminal activities. They will then end up in jail, and with the rate of recidivism within 5 years at 76.6% (“Recidivism”), the odds of this becoming a perpetuating cycle are great. In order to prevent this, we need to change the way in which we discipline students. The “zero tolerance” policy that is favored by most inner city schools does much more harm than good. Jeff Deeney refers to John Paul Jones Middle School as a perfect example of this. It’s your typical inner city school with security guards, grates over the windows, and metal detectors at the entrances. This kind of environment makes the students feel as if they are already in trouble or doing something wrong. It’s oppressive and has an impact on them psychologically. When the school was taken charter and renamed Memphis Street Academy, all the extra security features were removed in favor of a more nuanced approach. Incidents would be mediated and conflicts resolved by counselors and teachers. Initially, there was concern by the police department that this would only result in more problems, but they were soon proven very wrong. “The number of violent incidents dropped 90 percent in a single year” (Deeney). This is exactly the approach that schools need to take with students. You cannot treat young students like criminals in a prison. This will stifle their creativity and desire to learn.

Some might not deem minority students suffering and the poor standards of education to be a problem. They might suggest that we have plenty of successful students already, and this is just the way things are. To do this would be patently wrong. One need only look at where the United States falls in terms of academic achievement

globally: seventeenth of 40 countries. This is completely unacceptable for a nation of our resources and ability. We must not let the strength of our post-secondary education system fool us. This country is slowly slipping down the pecking order in influence and competitiveness globally. This is due in no small part to the widespread segregation and lack of care given to low-income Americans when it comes to their education. Changes must be made.

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Evaluation: *Eric's paper offers a clear, researched, and well-organized explanation of some of the dimensions and consequences of racial segregation in American schools—a difficult problem to discuss—followed by suggestions for change that are also bolstered by compelling evidence.*

A New Dawn for Activism

Ivan Cruz

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Maggie McKinley

Assignment: *Write an essay that analyzes an aspect of contemporary feminism and explains why it is necessary or why this issue should take precedence.*

After two waves of movement and major reforms, the fight for women's rights in America can be said to have made great progress. There is solid proof for this progress in the many court cases like *Roe v. Wade* and the nineteenth amendment. Despite this, modern American culture has still often been difficult on women. Most of the history of women's rights activism has been one told and shaped by the organizations of traditional media. The flaws of traditional media have contributed to the distorted perspective of women in America, but the rise of social media in the past decade has shown an opportunity for that to change. Although there has been vast progress in the fight for women's rights through use of legislation and organizations, there is still much work to be done in addressing the social norms that prevail in our society. The issues that were once intractable to both feminists and American culture are best addressed through the individual engagement that social media can provide and not through divisive activism that traditional media thrives on. The rise in the number of celebrities embracing what is sometimes called "straw-man feminism" has become an issue that illustrates the need for a new approach to feminism in a world that is more socially connected than ever before.

The prevalence of traditional media has become a hindrance on the understanding of women's issues. Throughout the many representations of women in traditional media, there are still reflections of the distorted view of women in American culture. In movies, there still exists a limitation of participation and personality when it comes to women. According to Jennifer Siebel Newsom's documentary, *Miss Representation*, "Between 1937 and 2005, there were only 13 female protagonists in animated

movies. All of them except one had the aspiration of finding romance." This lack of protagonists brings to mind not just the obvious fact of inequality in movies, but also the realization that such media organizations have a part in creating the culture that perpetuates this problem. In reality television, women are portrayed as "catty, manipulative, vindictive, not to be trusted, especially by other women" (*Miss Representation*). By attempting to gather the most viewers for their shows, media organizations further entrench the perspectives that are known to be troublesome on American society. Even in the news produced by traditional media, there commonly exists a distortion of women. Katie Couric tells us, "I look on the cable news channels. I see women wearing very low-cut shirts and lots of make-up, and, you know, their hair is kind of tousled, and they look like they're working as cocktail waitresses instead of newscasters" (*Miss Representation*). By choosing such tactics to retain viewers, media companies are themselves implicitly acknowledging that these distortions of women exist and that they are numerous enough to garner views. These problems are further instilled into the minds of people by the nature of these types of media. Traditional media are monolithic and instructional. The media are always right, and to suggest otherwise is impossible, because you cannot interact with them in any meaningful way. For over a century, media such as movies and television have lacked this ability while still being a major source of so-called discourse in American culture. A seat at the conversation with the media proved to be difficult for feminists with the perpetual opposition of the profitable majority.

The difficulty of making a point about women's rights in the world of traditional media has resulted in a phenomenon known as "straw-man feminism." Music celebrities have made their name in media, and many of them have chosen to use their celebrity status to influence their fan base and wider public, but by participating in the cause for feminism through their public personalities, they often tend to create the same problem that traditional media cause. The celebrities' endorsement of an idea or movement can rarely be an accurate depiction of its precise cause without conflicting with the great power of the majority who has not yet accepted it. Therefore,

the depiction advocated by the celebrity is almost always distorted. Rose Courteau tells us in her article in *The Huffington Post* that “the same misguided understanding of the rights at stake for American women today underscores how perfectly that philosophy aligns with those beliefs in bed with corporate interests.” We see that there is a clear connection between the profitable majority and the established views of women in America today. Celebrities often tend to overcompensate on the tone of their advocacy in order to reach the largest amount of people. One example of this is the singer, Miley Cyrus. Her sexually provocative music videos and recent vocal advocacy for feminism are some of the ways she attempts to get her points across. One of the points she talks about involves a double standard: “I mean, guy rappers grab their crotch all fucking day and have hos around them....But if I [do the same thing], I’m degrading women?” Nowhere would such a comment thrive and reach more people than in the world of media. While one might think that such provocative exposure to these issues starts a discussion about the issues of women in America, it often creates a divisiveness that precludes it. The “shock culture” created by celebrities like Miley Cyrus does not help advance the cause of feminism, but instead favors only the media organizations that thrive on bringing divisive issues to the minds of the most people at the cost of a meaningful discussion or honest consideration of a side.

There are many people who believe that such a media system may never change and that cultural progress will always be as difficult as it has been. However, the world of activism has changed greatly since the advent of social media. The Internet has become an important medium for creating change in the world not just because of its efficiency, but because of its personal impact. When large marches are organized and issues are brought to the attention of Americans today, they are no longer brought to us only by the perspective of monolithic and impersonal news corporations, but by the constant waterfall of personal accounts of people on the Internet. This new opportunity of engagement offers a hope for a new approach to feminism. One example where we see a current obstruction that can be solved is in the slogans for the sides on the issue of abortion. Tara Culp-Ressler tells us that “...many people actually describe themselves as both pro-choice *and* pro-life.” She then ventures to ask: “what’s the opportunity for connection between these

people, and how can that potentially bridge some big divides at the political, cultural, and social level?” The opportunity for such discussion is now more possible than ever before because of the Internet. Unlike traditional media, in the world of social media, there is a bigger influence than profits at play: the individual. When an individual approach is taken to issues like abortion, better discussions can be had because there are no longer the black-and-white perspectives that media regularly must assume in order to maintain an effective flame war between the sides, ensuring more viewers. When one initiates a discussion about women’s rights through social media, each individual person can contribute and address each other’s points at the depth they want to. One’s voice for feminism does not have to be altered or exaggerated in order to make a splash; it only needs to be honest and convey an idea to the person you are talking with.

Although there are still many obstacles that persist in our society in regard to solving women’s rights issues, there now exists a new option to allow more people to change society. The need for a more individualistic approach to feminism is more apparent today amidst the rise of “straw-man feminism.” With the help of social media, the damaging influence that traditional media have had in dividing us will one day be less potent and allow us to not “blame the people that are playing the only game that exists” (Courteau).

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Evaluation: *Ivan takes a unique approach to this assignment, not only analyzing an aspect of contemporary feminist discussion, but also critiquing the media’s role in this conversation. His essay offers a thoughtful appraisal of the problems, supported by evidence, as well as a proposal for change.*

The Importance of Loss in Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*

Jorge Cruz

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Maggie McKinley

Assignment: Write an essay analyzing any aspect of
Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*.

It's an incredibly difficult situation whenever we lose anything or anyone. It is said that during a breakup not only do your emotions become affected, but so does your body. And how couldn't it? Letting go of someone who you loved, or even someone that you feel like you never got the chance to know, is almost like letting go of someone who was part of your being. The essence of the dependency and the passages that you navigated with another have to begin to become nothing but memories, and you have to realize that the person will most likely never be there again. After the breakup, our lives go on, with an aching heart and a struggle to understand how to move forward—even if we're hurting, even if our core aches and yearns for the familiarity of the love and warmth of that other person. But sometimes what we can't understand during the beginning of the process of letting go is that our lives may become better, or at least that the future may even bring us better and more fulfilling memories and narratives. What Tony Kushner creates in *Angels in America* is a study and portrait of what losing means. Through characters of Joe, Harper, and Hannah, Kushner defines for us that the path of loss will lead us all to better places.

Kushner opens *Angels in America* with a funeral. The funeral is a symbol for what the rest of the play is going to be like. It's witty, dark, and omniscient in tone. It is in the very beginning that Kushner pries open the door slowly into understanding that losing is a natural part of life, one that propels us forward. In the example of the old immigrant woman, Kushner paints a story of a woman

who lost her home only to earn a new one in New York, and because of her actions, she was able to spawn the story of the generation that followed her. It's in this small piece that Kushner uses the speech from the rabbi to soften us into the space of action and consequence: "But every day of your lives the miles that voyage between that place and this one you cross. Every day. You understand me? In you that journey is" (16). Kushner here is beginning to describe how this immigrant woman's actions have not only been good for her, but also ultimately for those that came after her.

The idea of how our consequences affect each other is most prominent in the relationship between Harper and Joe. While Harper is a woman who of course is broken, and has been broken for a while, it can be argued that Joe uses her frailty for his advantage. Instead of finding Harper any help for her addiction, Joe continues to let her be who she is, because by her becoming an aware person would lead to him having to live his actual life. Because Joe is a closeted gay man who is pretending to be straight and in love, or at least committed to Harper, he is keeping her from finding any actual help for her own issues while at the same time blocking her from finding her own happiness. Even though Joe thinks he is being a nice person by sticking it out with his wife, what he doesn't realize is that his actions are leading to her misery. Kushner delivers this point when Harper says, "People who are lonely, people left alone, sit talking nonsense to the air, imagining" (22). It isn't until Harper and Prior meet in a vision that she begins to finally get the chance to take back part of her life. While one could argue that she could have done that on her own, her own love and commitment to her marriage and her religion are a great example of her own ability to try.

Through Joe's narrative, we are able to explore the loss of his pretenses, and we see what he gains from it, and what this means for Harper and his mom. When Harper "outs" Joe, we see the spiral of uncertainty and discomfort that Joe goes through when his lie crumbles. In the beginning, Joe takes a bit of time even admitting to himself what and who he is, and when his mom finds out about his homosexuality, she is less than thrilled about it. She says to him, "You're being ridiculous" (82) and then tells him to go back home to his wife. But soon

**The Importance of Loss in Tony Kushner's
*Angels in America***

after this, he realizes that he can't, and without a phone call, a heads up, or any announcement, he leaves both his mother (Hannah) and Harper to just figure themselves out, even though he had responsibilities to both of them. One of those responsibilities was picking his mom up at the airport, which he does not, ultimately leaving Hannah stranded on the streets of New York.

It's through the journey of his abandonment of both characters that leads to both of their own self-discoveries. First, we see that Harper does not take too well to Joe being gone. It is through these times that she spirals into different visions and some of the most difficult times in understanding what her life is about. For example, Harper says, "I don't understand why I'm not dead. When your heart breaks, you should die. But there's still the rest of you. There's your breasts, and your genitals, and they're amazingly stupid, like babies or faithful dogs, they don't get it, they just want him. Want him" (150). But it is through her lowest point in the story, her vision with Mr. Lies in Antarctica, that makes her understand how much of her life has been hung up on clinging onto things (her religion's views on marriage, and her love for Joe) that have led her to chewing pine in the middle of the winter in New York. Later, Harper is still grappling with what to do with herself in the story, but that's realistic because not many people can just figure everything out from day to night. And that's what begins to happen with Harper and with Hannah through their times alone with each other. Hannah begins to see partially, through Harper, the cracks in her own façade.

Hannah arrives in New York scared and alone at first because Joe did not pick her up from the airport, which leads her to fend for herself from the beginning of the play. It can be said that this opening of her character foreshadows what her new life is going to be like. At this point, she had already renounced her life in Salt Lake and was coming into the city to save her son, and his family, in the name of what needed to be "righted," but as her narrative begins to unfold, we begin to see that all the things that she came to salvage didn't need her anymore, which left her without much to do, and this is probably why she even began working at the Mormon center. Hannah's narrative begins to peak the moment she renounces her position as savior and places herself as the student. While

her role as a motherly figure did help people out, like Harper and Prior, she learned from not only being with them, but also by facing all the experiences they went through with an open mind. Had she not helped out Prior, she never would have experienced the vision between her and the angel, nor would she have been able to fully see a gay people as any other person like herself, which can be said ultimately makes her understand her own son better, and accept him for who he is.

Both Hannah and Harper learned that letting go of their preconceptions ultimately led to their own individual liberation. What begins to occur is that Harper ultimately learns that she needs to drop everything and go off to move to San Francisco, even if she isn't completely stable enough to make a move, but the significance of her dropping everything altogether symbolizes her ultimate ability to let go of someone who will never love her the way she needs to be loved and to finally face the scary world on her own, which is important, because by doing so, she will be more prepared for life. What occurs with Hannah is that she begins to see that her own sheltered worldview only applied to a very specific geographical place, and that ultimately she needed to understand that life is not just Salt Lake-centric. Her growth is most intense because she already had a full life that she was living, one that had a house, a place she called her own for years, and a mindset that did her just fine. But by her moving to New York, she admits that even she was bored with her own life, and that she was questioning things that needed to be answered. What occurs to Hannah and Harper are the destructions of their previous lives, and what they gain from it is never actually presented; rather, we see a glimpse of the light that they are about to walk on.

The importance of Joe's character is that he is used for us to understand how his actions ultimately damaged people around him, and that some of the damage inflicted almost became permanent. Even Joe's character has his own growth, but Kushner has no actual intense focus on him like he does with Hannah or Harper. Rather, Kushner uses his character to teach us the moral of living true to ourselves so we don't cause pain to others. Yes, Joe begins to feel comfortable with his own sexuality, but that is self-serving. Ultimately, by him accepting who he is, he is

able to let the people around him know that they need to let go to save themselves, and to find their own happiness. By his leaving, he was able to cement his sexuality and his decisions in his wife's and mother's minds.

Sometimes, losing seems like such a blow to our ego; it seems like we lost the game, and like we lost in life. But in *Angels in America*, we see that the real winners are the losers, those who are brave enough to let go to gain. It is during the times of the AIDS epidemic that the gay community too had to say goodbye to preconceived ideas of what homosexuality meant. It was AIDS that highlighted for many gay people that perhaps life cannot simply be a bathhouse party, or an orgy on Fire Island. While Kushner himself is not criticizing those activities, he calls us to question the substance in our lives. Kushner asks us, the readers, to ponder whether we are putting up with a life because it is easy and self-serving, or are we having lives that are actually healthy for everyone involved. He uses the characters of Louis and Prior in this regard because it touches on Louis' inability to commit to life when it becomes less glamorous, less easy. Even though it hurt Prior to end living with the person that he loved, and to face his sickness alone, he was able to understand and grow at least a little more because of it. It's in these examples that make me reevaluate my own perceptions of what it means to lose, and why I'm so afraid to lose and what I'm actually losing by not letting go.

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Evaluation: *Jorge offers a well-supported, insightful, and compassionate analysis of Kushner's play, taking a unique approach to the work and demonstrating an impressive understanding of the play's darker subject matter as well as its more uplifting themes.*

Looking for a Vocation

— Anna Dondajewska-Jaksina —

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Richard Middleton-Kaplan

Assignment: *Narrate a significant decision you have made, focusing primarily on either causes or effects.*

“I am running through a train station; I am winded. Where is my train? There is not much time left. I am getting nervous, I cannot find my train. My heart is almost in my throat, my breath is getting faster and shallower. I am looking around in panic, the platform is full of trains, but where is mine? Where is my train, where is a train, where is my...?”

I do not remember how many times this nightmare had afflicted my sleep before I made one of the most important decisions of my life. I was just finishing high school, so I had to decide what was next, but I really did not know what this “next” was supposed to be. I felt like I was standing at a crossroads and considering which way to choose. It was exactly like watching a lot of trains in front of me, yet having no idea which one to get on.

I was always jealous of people who were sure about their future, about what they wanted to do, or who they wanted to become, about which train they wanted to board. I myself did not know. The only thing I was conscious of was the fact that I needed to further my education to obtain an occupation, so I had to find out what job I would like to do. It was almost the end of high school, but my future life’s plan was undefined. It was terrifying, and I did not have much time left to make a decision because the registration period for higher schools was short. With every day I delayed, I felt like the trains were going away, and soon there would be none of them left. I had to hurry up.

I was desperately looking for any hint what to do. Unfortunately, no one could help me or tell me which way I should follow. Also, my excessive ambition did not make the choice easier. I wanted my father to be proud of me, like I was proud of my parents who have their master’s degrees—mom in chemistry, and dad in art. That was why I needed to accomplish some university as well, to be like them. I had no chance to ask my mother about her choice; she died very early, and my father’s occupation was rather explicit; he had inherited a gift of painting. I frantically tried to figure out what my calling was. And because it was not so obvious, I had to analyze many questions that I put toward myself. I ascertained that I was interested in biology, so my study was supposed to be based on this subject. Moreover, I realized that my work should be tied with people; I could not imagine myself sitting all day in front of some microscope and analyzing some samples. No way! Also, I needed to be in action, to move; a stagnant job would be the death of me. Finally, I thought that it would be nice to help people. Medicine was not an option, because my knowledge in physics and chemistry was not sufficient for the entry exam to the medical university. My vocation was still unknown. Again, the nightmare came back; people from trains were waving me goodbye.

Because my dilemma took time to be solved, during the days, I prepared for the assessment for the certificate of secondary education. I was attending English school to improve my skills in this subject, which was included as one part of the exam. Once, we were talking about some woman who had suffered from multiple sclerosis. While reading the article about her daily schedule—her regular fight to get up, to dress herself, to prepare meals—I suddenly stopped at the paragraph about her rehabilitation. And I was enlightened. Of course! At that moment, I realized who I wanted to become: a physical therapist. This occupation certainly is based on biology, guarantees contact with people, and requires physical involvement. I was so absorbed with my thoughts that I did not even respond to a question the teacher asked me. You should have seen that hilarious scene: the teacher who was hovering over me with a quizzical look and a begging hand waiting for an answer, against me, cheerfully grinning with no reply. I do not know what

he was thinking about my behavior, but it did not matter. I had just discovered my destiny. I wanted to jump and clap my hands, like a little child who had just gotten a new toy. Finally, the green light started flashing above my train.

When the first euphoria settled down a little, I began to look for the right school. I found one that interested me in Poznan. That city is located on the opposite side of Poland from Mragowo, my hometown. Suddenly, thinking about leaving home, the place where I was safe, made me feel anxious. I thought, "I must be crazy, I will be alone in the city that was thirty times bigger than my haven, without any friends and family." That thought bothered me a lot; however, I had to test myself.

I registered for the first semester, and afterwards, I successfully passed the entry exam; I was eligible to start my studies at the Sport University in Poznan. At the beginning, it was not easy. I felt small and burdened in that big, crowded city. I pined for Mragowo and my father. I even started to count down the days left until my trip home for the holidays. As soon as I came back, I immediately marked that day in my calendar and started to count again.

Nevertheless, missing home was not the only result of my decision. I remember well the first afternoon when I was in a mood for stuffed cabbage in tomatoes that my grandma used to prepare for me. I was shocked with the discovery that I could not make it by myself. Moreover, I realized that I could not cook at all. Well, at that moment, at least I knew what I was going to do in my free time. Throughout the seven years I spent in Poznan, I could serve not only stuffed cabbage, but also many different dishes. I invited my friends for dinner without worries that the meal would be burnt or over-salted. I really liked to cook for them; it was really satisfying to see that they were as pleased as Punch after eating. It was quite frustrating to prepare food only for myself, so gathering around the table with my friends was one of my favorite things to do then.

But what would school have been like, if there were no mates? Happily, during my stay in Poznan, I met many good friends; one of them, especially, became my kindred spirit. I met Kinga (this soul mate) at the university. We stood by each other during our education;

we learned together, we had fun together, and we even cried together. However, what is more important, our friendship is still going on. Although it has been almost ten years since we graduated from the university, we keep in touch. The different lifestyles that we are leading and the different continents that we are living on do not disturb our fellowship. Often, we reminisce about our school years together, we laugh at events that we both went through, and we always conclude that the studying was the funniest time we ever had had, although it demanded determination and hard work.

It is known that a train does not move with the same speed for its whole way; it sometimes slows down and even stops before it reaches its destination. So, like a train, my studies decelerated and accelerated from time to time. Now and then, it was really challenging to accomplish some requirements of my professors because they often exacted facing phobias. I remember clearly one such event. Once, our assignment involved total submersion and swimming through 25 meters without emerging. "I was burnt out," I thought to myself. Not that I was afraid of the water, but being under the surface for more than five seconds was terrifying. At the time of the test, as soon as I went into the water, I got paralyzed, and a horrible memory came back. It was not the school pool any more, but the lake from my childhood. I am fighting to gulp the air, then I am under the water again. I am pushing with my arms and legs to get to the surface. The water is coming into my throat and lungs. I am choking, my lungs are burning. I am losing my power and I am getting slower. I am starting to lose my consciousness. Suddenly, I feel someone's touch---thank God, the rescue. It was Kinga, who was shaking my arm. "It is time for your test, swim!" she shouted out. I was back in the pool again, I took a deep breath in, and went under the water. It was the longest 25 meters I have ever experienced. But I did it. I fulfilled the assignment. I beat my phobia.

I consistently had to fight with something, but eventually I passed the final exam and obtained my MA in physical therapy. Not only did I gain an occupation I was seeking, but also I became the same sort as my parents. I was bursting with pride, and I felt like I had grown a couple of inches. That day, everything was just perfect. The crowded, polluted streets of Poznan

Looking for a Vocation

suddenly transferred into the streets of the Rio de Janeiro carnival, the “big city” from my arrival day frightened me no more, and finally, I could buy a one way ticket to Mragowo. Though carrying additional luggage—a bag of experience—my train finally reached the destination.

I often recall the memories about the time I spent in Poznan, and I am glad that I once chose to study physical therapy. Now, with almost ten years of practice, I cannot imagine another occupation. This job provides me plenty of satisfaction; on the one hand, I am pleased that I can help people, while on the other hand, I learn a lot from my patients. They teach me to appreciate what I possess, and how to find those little things that I can enjoy. Although observing severe illnesses is sometimes depressing, I would not exchange my profession. It is, indeed, my real vocation. By the way, the nightmare has never returned.

Evaluation: *Anna's paper is written with lively verbs and precise descriptive language. She adds flair and èlan to her essay by having the train dream travel throughout it with her, until they both reach their destination, at which point the train, no longer needed, fittingly disappears.*

An
“Appeal against Short Rations”:
Charles Dickens’
Oliver Twist

Virgil F. Fairchild

Course: Literature 232

(English Literature 1800 – 1914)

Instructor: Jessica Walsh

Assignment: *Examine how Oliver Twist voices concern about appropriate treatment of the poor and juvenile delinquents, focusing on the debate over deprivation versus overindulgence.*

Beneath the engaging story of a poor orphan in nineteenth-century England, *Oliver Twist*, by Charles Dickens, is a complex novel that subtly criticizes numerous social issues of the day. The overall basis for much of Dickens’ commentary in *Oliver Twist* was his belief that the poor-laws and the practices of the parish workhouses tore families apart and forced individuals into lives of crime (Gissing 421). Within this context, Dickens was also critical of the philosophy underlying the poor-laws, which asserted that poverty was the result of laziness and that efforts to assist the poor should err on the side of deprivation of services rather than overindulging individuals and eliminating the motivation to be productive citizens (Engel 495-97). In *Oliver Twist*, Dickens voices his concern regarding the philosophy of deprivation inherent in the poor-laws by using wit, sarcasm, and realism to expose both the ugly arrogance of such a welfare approach and the tragic impact upon the poor.

In attacking the deprivation of services premise, Dickens presents a number of vignettes in the early chapters of the novel that put conceivable attitudes of workhouse administrators on display and shows the potential consequences of such beliefs. Workhouse administrators in various positions of authority are shown to have contempt for the plight of the poor and seem

Student Reflections on Writing:

Virgil F. Fairchild

Some essays are more difficult than others. In that regard, I find evaluating issues within literature to be among the easier assignments when I approach the task in an organized manner. An organized approach for me includes keeping the issue being evaluated in the forefront at all times as I do the reading; noting appropriate evidence within the text on both sides of the issue as I read; formulating an argument based upon the strength of the findings; and preparing a straightforward narrative that defends the position that I have taken with relevant references and quotations.

An “Appeal against Short Rations”:
Charles Dickens’ *Oliver Twist*

quite content to deprive the poor of even permissible levels of assistance, especially when such deprivation can be turned to their own personal benefit. A branch-workhouse is portrayed as a place “where twenty or thirty other juvenile offenders against the poor-laws, rolled about the floor all day, without the inconvenience of too much food or too much clothing....” The institution is managed by an elderly matron who uses a large portion of the weekly food budget for her own good because “she knew what was good for children; and she had a very accurate perception of what was good for herself.” In this case, the narrator notes that she was concerned that the weekly food allowance might overload the stomachs of the children and make them uncomfortable. The narrator then goes on to sarcastically compare the caretaker’s actions to a ridiculous tale of an “experimental philosopher who had a great theory about a horse being able to live without eating.” In this discussion, the narrator closes by mentioning that unfortunately for the matron, just when “a child had contrived to exist upon the smallest possible portion of the weakest possible food...,” most children died (Dickens 20).

Also examined in the novel are the attitudes and opinions of a second more senior workhouse administrator, Mr. Bumble, the parish beadle. He is described as “a fat man” who seems to relish the best in life, including “genuine port wine” that the workhouse board ordered for the infirmary while the orphans are fed “three meals of thin gruel a day, with an onion twice a week, and half a roll on Sundays” (21; 158; 26). Mr. Bumble expresses his opinions on two occasions, the first occurrence in a brief discussion with Mrs. Sowerberry, the wife of the parish undertaker. In this conversation regarding Oliver’s bad behavior, Mr. Bumble attributes Oliver’s actions to overfeeding with meat which “raised a artificial soul and spirit in him,” a trait seen as undesirable in a poor orphan. Here, Mr. Bumble’s recommendation is to put Oliver in the cellar “till he’s a little starved down” (56-57). Later, in a conversation with Mrs. Corney, another workhouse matron, Mr. Bumble first comments upon the ungratefulness of a poor man with a large family, who, after being given a quarter loaf of bread and a pound of cheese, went on to ask for a few coals. In this case, Mr. Bumble pontificates, “What would he do with coals?” Toast his cheese with ‘em, and then come back for more. That’s

the way with these people, ma’am; give ‘em a apron full of coals today, and they’ll come back for another, the day after to-morrow, as brazen as alabaster” (157). Next, Mr. Bumble and Mrs. Corney have a discussion and a hearty laugh regarding the story of “a obstinate pauper” with “hardly a rag upon his back” who died on the street after being denied entry to the workhouse from the overseer. And at the end of this conversation regarding the poor, Mr. Bumble describes relief given outside the workhouse, saying that “The great principle of out-of-door relief is to give the paupers exactly what they don’t want; and then they get tired of coming” (158).

And finally, the novel presents the inherent prejudices of the highest level of the workhouse authorities: the administrative board. The members of the board are described as “eight or ten fat gentlemen” governed over by a “particularly fat gentlemen with a very round, red face” (24). These individuals are further portrayed as “very sage, deep, philosophical men” who believed that the workhouse in an earlier time period was considered “a regular place of public entertainment for the poorer classes; a tavern where there was nothing to pay; a public breakfast, dinner, tea, and supper all the year round; a brick and mortar elysium, where it was all play and no work” (25). Given this belief, the board changed the regulations and made the workhouse a place where citizens would have the alternative “of being starved by a gradual process in the house” as opposed to starving on the streets. The new approach was considered a great success although “It was rather expensive at first, in consequence of the increase in the undertaker’s bill, and the necessity of taking in the clothes of all the paupers, which fluttered loosely on their wasted, shrunken forms, after a week or two’s gruel” (26).

In addition to the portrayals of the workhouse administrators and their attitudes toward the poor, the novel offers two brief narratives depicting the fate of the poor trying to survive within a system ruled by a deprivation philosophy. The common outcome for orphans within the workhouse system is told by means of a conversation in which Mr. Sowerberry tells Mr. Bumble that “there’s no denying that, since the new system of feeding has come in, the coffins are something narrower and more shallow than they used to be,” but that a fair profit might be made in the anticipated quantity of funerals in the long-run

(37). The common outcome for poor living outside the system is told by means of a brief story associated with Oliver's short stint as an apprentice to Mr. Sowerberry. In preparation for a funeral, Mr. Sowerberry visits a poor family whose child has just died. The Bayton family is described as having no fire in the hearth and an empty stove. Mr. Bayton tells the heartbreaking tale of how he attempted to provide for his daughter by begging in the streets and how he was punished for begging by being sent to prison. He further relates that upon his return he saw that his daughter was dying and ends by claiming in a wail, "They starved her!" (48).

In conclusion, the wit, sarcasm, and realistic commentary directed toward the poor-laws and the workhouse system in *Oliver Twist* created a tale which argued that a program of aid for the poor that is designed to discourage participation certainly doesn't aid or assist the poor. Under the existing poor-laws and the workhouse system, the poor will either avoid the institutions and die in their homes as did the Bayton child, die on the street as did the obstinate pauper, or die in the institutions as did many orphans. In such a system, only unscrupulous administrators such as the elderly matron, Mr. Bumble, and workhouse board members who take advantage of their position and steal from the poor reap a benefit. The illustration of this social problem in *Oliver Twist* was Dickens' way of expressing his concern regarding the treatment of the poor in a phony and narrow-minded manner inherent in the poor-laws of the English welfare system of the early nineteenth century.

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Evaluation: *This essay demonstrates great skill, both in interpretation and in sociohistorical analysis. Virgil works in Dickens' world but creates a clear picture of how literature remains relevant and topical.*

Old Faithful Phonics: A Spelling Success

— Angelica Lazarin Hernandez —

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.*

For over a century, phonics has been taught at school with significant academic outcomes. However, for the past few decades, reading and writing instruction have diverted from phonics and have focused on teaching whole-word recognition strategies, leaving students to learn to decipher the alphabetic code on their own (Wente). Unfortunately, this new trend has indirectly given rise to literacy deficit—many students fail in decoding the sound-letter relationships (phonics) and struggle in developing adequate reading and writing strategies. Literacy deficit particularly affects at-risk students, such as low-income students and those with hearing loss or intellectual disorders. Moreover, this vicious cycle may ultimately contribute to low academic achievement and difficulty gaining a college or university degree. To circumvent literacy deficit, numerous studies have been done to explore phonics implications in literacy success. The results have consistently proven that phonics intervention programs are an invaluable source of literacy instruction for at-risk students. Therefore, as a preventive and remedial measure, it is essential to incorporate systematic phonics instruction into the literacy curriculum.

Learning to read has several implications. It implies articulating a written word correctly, identifying words as well as their meanings, and decoding along with understanding the meaning of a text. However, the current literacy instruction practices fail to provide at-risk students with the necessary tools to master reading, which eminently has negative effects on their writing skills. In 2015, a staggering thirty-two percent of fourth graders nationwide scored below the reading standard level on “The Nation’s Report Card.” It is important to note that this percentage does not reflect the individual numbers of the various demographics of the students. Nonetheless, having poor literacy at such an early stage of life may have long-lasting effects on the students’ academic achievements. According to Jeannine Herron, “students who are not at least moderately fluent in reading by 3rd grade are unlikely to graduate from high school.” In Ontario, the high-school dropout rate is nearly thirty percent (Wente). This percentage might be higher or lower in the United States. Nonetheless, regardless of the differences in percentages, “illiterate dropouts” have a greater difficulty finding employment than individuals

with higher literacy skills (Wente). Therefore, it is paramount that at-risk students receive early reading intervention to avoid literacy deficit.

Fortunately, phonics instruction may successfully help remedy literacy deficits. Since English is a language with a high degree of orthographic inconsistencies, it is difficult for many students to learn to read. To remediate reading deficit, at-risk students should receive phonics interventions to assist them in developing reading and writing skills. For instance, an article, “The Proof is in the Phonics,” reports a seven-year study that followed the academic performance of three hundred children. It states that those who received a sixteen-week course of systematic phonics instruction were able to read “three-and-a-half years above their chronological age.” Moreover, Margaret Wente contends, witnessing this “miracle [in]...inner-city schools with high-risk populations... [The] reading scores [of students, who were taught to read through phonics instruction,] matched some of the most affluent neighbourhoods in the city.” However, in spite of the evidence, critics deem phonics instruction as ineffective. According to Marie Emmitt, David Hornsby, and Lorraine Wilson, early readers best learn how to read through authentic text—a text written for language learning (3). The authors also contend that authentic text “has meaning and grammatical sense, which are essential for determining how the letter-sound relationships work” (3). The authors’ claim is partly correct—intermediate readers are more likely to decode the correlation between letter-sound than beginner-low readers. Therefore, reading instruction for early readers and weak readers should not entirely be based on authentic text, but should also be supplemented with phonics instruction.

Emmitt, Hornsby, and Wilson’s recommendation ignores one fundamental reading principle: a person must be able to read the words of a text in order to decode the meaning of the text. In the article “Determining Adolescent Struggling Readers’ Word Attack Skills With The Core Phonics Survey,” authors Kristin L. Nelson, et al., contend that “to be fluent and capable of comprehending text, students must first be able to consistently identify isolated sounds and patterns,...segment words into isolated sounds, and transfer these skills to the reading of words in connected text” (333-334). If a reader struggles to

read one or several letters in a word, the word might look similar to this sample: “s_o_h____ed” (stouthearted). Now, if the missing components extend at a sentence level, the sentence sequence might look similar to the following sample: “a _____ is a very _____ child” (a prodigy is a very smart child). These examples provide an insight into how early and poor readers experience reading. It also illustrates how challenging it is to read a broken sentence or paragraph for emerging readers, as well as struggling readers, to keep reading forward without stopping constantly, and to reread a sentence or paragraph several times. Additionally, the absence of several key words in a sentence or paragraph might result in poor understanding of a text. Consequently, these readers might lose focus or interest in their readings. Therefore, phonics awareness may assist early readers, as well as struggling readers, to improve their reading skills, allowing them to better focus on decoding the meaning of the text.

Apart from being beneficial for early and struggling readers, phonics or phonological instruction also benefits students who are deaf or are hard of hearing (DHH). Typically, when hearing at-risk students struggle in acquiring phonological awareness skills, they receive specific intervention to help them develop these skills to improve their reading skills. However, DHH students who struggle with reading do not enjoy this kind of accommodation. Due to DHH students’ hearing loss, it is widely believed that other instructional methods, such as authentic literature, specific vocabulary instruction, and word identification strategies, are more appropriate than teaching phonological awareness skills (Friedman Narr 53). Hence, DHH students are not taught these skills. One deaf itinerant teacher (Mikela) mentioned in a research article, “Teaching Phonological Awareness with Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Students,” reported struggling with assisting students who have low reading achievement and enrolled in a “general education curriculum in reading and language arts” (Friedman Narr 53). Eventually, she succeeded in improving her students’ reading and spelling skills by providing a language model through American Sign Language and language input (53). Mikela’s reading intervention approach shows that conventional reading remedial intervention for DHH students is effective. However, phonological awareness skills can yield better reading and writing results.

Although phonological instruction for DHH students may be regarded as futile, many of these students have auditory access that can be enhanced through oral/aural training (Friedman Narr 54). According to Rachel A. Friedman Narr, most hard-of-hearing students, along with some deaf students, have residual hearing that allows them to process internal phonological representations—a fundamental factor for writing skills (54). Moreover, Friedman Narr contends that DHH students who develop this skill “are presumed to process, store, and later recall sound-based information using a mental image, or an internal representation” (54). She also states that phonological awareness is important for enabling hearing students as well as hard-of-hearing (HH) students to “internalize the sound-based properties of words that allow sound-letter association...to create new words” and decode unfamiliar ones (54). Thus, phonological awareness is a “critical building block for successful reading achievement” (55). This is not just for hearing students, but also for DHH students. For these reasons, phonological representations should also be an integral part of reading and language arts curriculum for DHH students.

Additionally, students with Down Syndrome may also benefit from phonics instruction. With learners of this demographic, the cause of literary deficit is the “use of logographic [pictograms representing an idea or meaning] rather than alphabetic [or] phonological reading strategies” (Fletcher and Buckley). This reading impairment can be corrected through phonics intervention programs. In the article “Code-Breaker: Developing Phonics With a Young Adult With an Intellectual Disability,” Michelle Morgan, Karen B. Moni, and Margaret A. Jobling assert that, through proper motivation, individualized evaluation, and customized intervention, students with Down Syndrome show “improvements across time in word recognition, reading fluency, comprehension, writing, spelling, and oral language” (52). These literacy skills may be achieved through customized phonics intervention programs. In designing these kinds of programs for students with Down Syndrome, it involves assessing formally, along with informally, the phonological and literature skills of a student. A separate informal interview is also carried out to

determine the individual’s personal interests and hobbies (55-57). Once the data are collected, the information is used to design a customized phonics intervention program based on the individual’s personal interests and needs. Then, literature learning based on the student’s personal interests and hobbies is used to introduce the missing phonics (57). The results of this program are quite significant. Students with Down Syndrome not only improve their literacy skills, but they do so in a relatively short amount of time.

For example, a seventeen-year-old student with Down Syndrome, Gordon, who attended a phonics-teaching program designed for young adults with intellectual disabilities, made impressive reading and writing progress in one semester after being placed in a customized phonics intervention program. Upon assessing his phonics knowledge and reading skills, it was determined that Gordon had a fragmented and scattered knowledge of phonics—he would properly use some vowel blends, such as “bl,” and would correctly spell “Blackie.” However, he would have difficulty applying other vowel blends, such as “ie,” and would spell “feeld” instead of “field” (57). It was also determined that his oral language was six years five months, and his matching reading accuracy level was of six years ten months; fluency, eight years six months; and, comprehension, seven years (55). Moreover, it was also discovered through informal interviews that Gordon had a playful black Labrador, called Blackie, who enjoyed catching sticks and softballs (55). After gathering his academic and personal information, a customized framework of literature learning was designed to build upon Gordon’s phonological knowledge. For example, Gordon would use end sounds, such as “-oon, -ch, ink, -oke, -y,...[to create] a family photo album with captions” (59). This intervention program enabled Gordon to develop an “almost complete knowledge” and application of phonological awareness skills, which significantly reinforced and expanded Gordon’s literacy skills, at the end of the semester (62). Gordon’s achievement shows that it is feasible for students with Down Syndrome to improve their literacy skills. Therefore, to eradicate literacy deficit in these demographics, students with Down Syndrome should receive customized phonics instruction to improve their literacy skills.

Another demographic group with intellectual disabilities that can benefit from developing phonological awareness skills is students with dyslexia. According to Sally E. Shaywitz and Bennett A. Shaywitz, a person's reading ability can be revealed through brain imaging (74). In "What Neuroscience Really Tells Us About Reading Instruction: A Response to the National Reading Panel," the authors assert that reading involves the activation of three regions in the left hemisphere (Shaywitz and Shaywitz 74). Moreover, the authors also contend that brain imaging through functional magnetic resonance imaging, shows low activity in the reading brain regions of proficient readers. However, in children with dyslexia, this activity fails to "function properly" and the brain regions when reading (Shaywitz and Shaywitz 74). Nonetheless, these activation patterns can be corrected by implementing a phonics intervention program to improve reading impairment.

Normally, young children acquire phonological awareness at an early age. According to Shaywitz and Shaywitz, "a child...develops the insight that spoken words can be pulled apart into elemental particles of speech...and that the letters in a written word represent these sounds" (75). However, this awareness is usually absent in children and adults with dyslexia. Nonetheless, phonics intervention programs help students with dyslexia to increase their reading levels as well as correct the brain's reading patterns (Bower). Findings from a study in "Brain-Based Help for Adults with Dyslexia," revealed that ten of nineteen participants involved in the study showed a correction in reading patterns within the brain. At the commencement of the study, the nineteen adults with dyslexia showed a low neural activity during the study trials. After evaluating their brain activity, the participants were divided into two groups. Ten participants were placed in eight weeks of phonics-based training, and the rest did not receive any kind of intervention. At the end of the study, those who had undergone phonics instruction "displayed greater activation in the reading regions of the left hemisphere" (Bower). The results also indicated an increase in a reading-related area in the right hemisphere (Bower). This study proves that proper phonics intervention programs, for individuals with dyslexia, enable the brain to self-

correct activation patterns. Therefore, phonics instruction should be prescribed to individuals with dyslexia, at the earliest possible opportunity, to enable their brains to self-correct their neural reading patterns as a remedial and preventive action.

Current teaching of a whole-word recognition method is somewhat efficient. However, these strategies fail to assist poor readers and deter literacy deficit. In the quest for a literacy deficit remedy, many researchers have turned their attention to phonics and have performed an ample body of research to determine the effectiveness of phonics instruction in various at-risk demographic groups. The findings show that phonics intervention programs help at-risk students increase their phonological skills, having a positive impact on their literacy. Phonics intervention programs help struggling, non-disabled readers meet or even surpass literacy standards, DHH readers develop phonological awareness and literacy skills, young adult students with Down Syndrome expand their fragmented phonological knowledge as well as literacy skills, and individuals with dyslexia correct their neural reading patterns. Therefore, systematic phonics instruction should be reintroduced into the reading and writing curricula in order to prevent literacy deficit.

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Evaluation: *Angelica’s paper offers a passionate and well-supported argument for the value of phonics instruction. Specifically, this paper discusses the distinct benefits of such type of instruction, especially among early and struggling readers, students who are deaf or hard of hearing, students with Down Syndrome, and students with dyslexia.*

Illuminations for Nizami

Oleg Kovalenko

Course: Art 133 (non-Western Art)

Instructor: Karen Patterson

Assignment: This assignment was a semester-long inquiry into a single non-Western artwork that the student viewed firsthand at a Chicago museum. The project was broken into four small papers that were assembled into a larger paper at the end of the semester. For the first step, students collected their assumptions and questions about the art object, without doing research. In the second portion, students visually analyzed the artwork. Part three introduced research. Last, students summarized their discoveries about the learning process as a result of the project.

My father, born and raised in Soviet Baku, a culturally Islamic state, was baffled when I first expressed interest in maqam music. He told me that he was once so desperate to get away from Azerbaijan and everything to do with it that he climbed over a twelve-foot barbed-wire fence into a restricted military airbase in the dead of night and ran down the first plane he saw taking off. After he pleaded with the pilot to help out, a very bored and estranged “russkei tovarish,” the captain, also eager to get out of Baku, allowed my father to stow away in the storage cabin in the interests of taking off as soon as possible. Myself, I’m taken to the Persian spin on music and fantasy. My favorite video game is *Prince of Persia*, and my favorite Disney film is *Aladdin*. Something about the idealized body of Persian myth enchants my imagination in a way that no other collection of stories has. Given this, I was excited for the possibility of a Persian miniature artwork as a writing topic. I chose to study the copy of *Farhad Carrying Shirin and Her Horse* and the *Khamsa* it appears in, from the Everett and McNear collection, housed nearby at the Art Institute of Chicago. Before I saw the artwork in person, I compiled my thoughts on it based on

classwork and a first impression from a photograph, in preparation for a first-hand viewing.

What I already did know was that the purpose of the Persian miniature is to create a beautiful visual portrayal of a scene described in the epic; the manuscripts were very ornate and created by the finest artisans and painters of the time as fine gifts to exchange between royalty and aristocrats. These works were a demonstration of wealth in that it could be afforded to decorate a book with such craftsmanship. From an online viewing, I could see it is a fine painting; there are tiny flowers decorating the grass, the texture of Farhad’s shin guards is on a miniscule scale, and the pigments used are vibrant and expensive. The illumination fulfilled my expectations of intricacy.

The setting of the work also appeared to me as expected. Persian myth describes epic happenings, and so do the miniatures that pair with them; *Farhad Carrying Shirin* is no exception. Bold and powerful natural elements in the painting make up the setting for its events. The characters are encompassed by natural barriers encroaching on them from all sides. These barriers make up one of the themes of the painting; Farhad and Shirin are encircled by wind, storm, and water, which represent the forces gathering to undo them. The rivers are notably abstract in the painting, painted flatly and in multiple colors to emphasize the artist’s thematic device of nature encircling Farhad. Most interesting is the great storm that is imposing in the sky. During my initial online viewing, I thought that the storm seems to foreshadow ill fortune following Farhad. I now know it represents Farhad’s fate at the hands of jealous Khosrow’s deception, which led to Farhad’s romantic suicide. The natural elements surrounding Farhad do represent his ill fate, as I had thought. Little did I know, that there was a lot left to discover about *Farhad Carrying Shirin* with a closer look.

After viewing the painting online, I formed a lot of correct ideas about it, but I still had no sense of the accompanying story it tells, or the relationship between the two depicted persons. I wrapped up my initial thoughts with a question: who really are Farhad and Shirin? Admittedly, I wasn’t sure how experiencing the artwork in person would help me to answer that question. I’d already seen a photo of the artwork, so I was tempted to think that there was merely novel value in actually

going out to see it in person. I visited the Art Institute of Chicago with some such skeptical expectations, but I was quickly engrossed in the experience. Upon entering the museum's lower levels, where the Islamic art gallery had been stowed away, the plywood flooring let out shrill staccato stutters beneath my feet; out of the high-ceilinged darkness, I moved upon the dimly lit display case containing *Farhad Carrying Shirin and Her Horse*, from a copy of the *Khamsa* of Nizami.

I had to breathe glass and squint cross-eyed to appreciate Farhad and Shirin. My eyes were immediately drawn to their faces, which contrast one another; Farhad's face is finely detailed with unique features and dimensionality, whereas Shirin's face is simple and nondescript, portraying her as a largely abstract and contextually defined character. In the space of a few centimeters: the painter equipped Farhad with eyes widened nose-side and narrowed ear-side, a furrowed brow, a complex outline of a nose, and the set of finely combed mustache coupled with goatee and complemented by short beard of varying density. Shirin's face, on the other hand, bears far less detail: her face is flat, her nose is a simple two lines of a triangle, her eyes and eyebrows are crescents, and her lips are very tiny. Shirin does have a unique mark between her eyebrows. This imbalance of content and variety between the faces of Farhad and Shirin conveys the relative activity of Farhad and Shirin; the painter seems to imply that at least in this scene, Shirin is less of an active character than Farhad.

The placard bore the title of the piece, and it reflected on Shirin's reliance on Farhad as context: Farhad is enacting a verb upon Shirin and her horse, as if Farhad is the actor of the scene and Shirin as well as her horse are passive objects to be acted upon. Shirin and her horse are both composed in a manner that their limbs bend limply toward their respective bodies, with Shirin's arms hanging down from her shoulders to join hands at her waist, mirrored by the horse's head and tail hanging down and bending towards one another. Both Shirin's and the horse's heads hang in dejection, featuring nondescript faces. Both are colored dully, in black, goldenrod, and purple, as compared to the rich and vibrant reds and blues of Farhad, who has his hands and legs in active motion, with his head held high and a richly detailed face. The

painter's coloring and composition of Shirin and her horse depict them as limp, inactive figures that do not enact anything in this scene, but rather are enacted upon by the active character Farhad (Figure 1).

Amidst the meaningful differences between the figures, there are compelling similarities as well. Although Shirin and her horse possess simpler composition and variety, the three characters are painstakingly equalized in their adornments. There is unity among all three, resulting from balanced variety, repetition of patterns, and thin, transparent brush strokes detailing each figure's clothing. Where there are fine strokes showing the folds and creases in Farhad's clothing, there are fine strokes showing folds and creases in Shirin's clothing as well, and the horse, too, has hanging charms on its saddle as well as ornate reins demonstrating the same fine strokes. Where Farhad's clothing has vertical lines with bold value difference lines, Shirin has the same effect on her undershirt, and the horse wears a saddle with the same design. The fine detail of the horse's reins, its mane, and its tail are all similarly shown in Farhad's left shinguard's clasps and Shirin's buttons. This leaves the viewer with a sense of unity among all three figures. Whatever Farhad's repetitious, varied, vibrantly colored and contrasted, richly textured clothing is indicative of, it seems that Shirin and her horse are somehow entangled in it.

When the painting is viewed from afar, it is clear why a closer viewer's eyes might glue themselves to the faces of the figures and then look at the figures individually, before seeing the artwork as a whole. The whole painting is set up to provide that rhythm for the viewer. The figures are geometrically symmetrical; the figures are plus-shaped centered in a plus-shaped panel, so the eyes naturally drift to the center to inspect Farhad and Shirin, and the miniature has few other details to distract from them. There are dully colored streams encompassing Farhad and Shirin in a dully colored landscape detailed with tiny flowers and a single tree. They fit snugly into the panel's shape and impose their central importance through centered composition, rich colors in contrast to dull background colors, a higher level of variety, taking up more space of the panel than any other set of elements, and proportioned with one another as to form a unit for viewership; this ultimately instills a union of focal point



Figure 1. *Farhad Carrying Shirin and Her Horse*, from a copy of the *Khamsa* of Nizami, 1485 (890 A.H.). 11 x 7 in., opaque watercolor on paper. Everett and Ann McNear Collection, 1981.214. On display at the Art Institute of Chicago.

between the figures, conveying their central importance to the viewer.

In the fringes of the work, the background does contain some elements that draw the eyes after their departure from the central theme of the figures. The rivers surrounding Farhad and Shirin may not be exceptionally vibrant in comparison to Farhad, but they are still blue, pink, and orange. They're detailed with tree branches, stones pockmarking their landings, and lines and color contrasts indicating flow and rapids. The rivers are shown to be important through this use of variety, repetition, color, texture, and fine brushstrokes of long curving lines, but their relevance to Farhad is shown by their composition relative to him. The rivers literally engulf the central characters on all sides except from the sky, but even in the sky, an imposing looking swirl of gray clouds gathers in a spiraling shape, seemingly to challenge the

trio. The tree in the background is weakly rooted by the river and is bent at a high degree from the ground, as if there is a strong wind blowing as a storm approaches. The sky is painted in a shiny gold, indicating some kind of importance, and drawing attention to the gray clouds by value contrast with the entire rest of the piece. By surrounding distressed Farhad with rapid flowing rivers and brewing clouds, the artist impresses a sense of foreboding unto the viewer.

After the museum announced closing, I realized how much more I had learned from the artwork by viewing it in person, and how much more yet could be learned. With a painting so minutely detailed, it would take a microscope and ample patience to completely analyze *Farhad Carrying Shirin*. Some details are always going to be missed in a photograph, and miniature painters tell their story using such fine details. Seeing *Farhad*

Carrying Shirin firsthand, I could see the painter's story more clearly; Farhad is acting his volition against some will, be it nature or otherwise, that has targeted him through the crosshairs of the panel itself.

After experiencing the illumination firsthand, I did some research on the story the art piece accompanies, which set the context for my understanding of *Farhad Carrying Shirin and her Horse*. The epic of Khosrow was originally recorded in the *Shahnameh*, the *Book of Kings*. In it, Khosrow's exploits as a Sasanian king and conqueror are recounted and celebrated, but the story did not proliferate until it was re-envisioned by great poet, Nizami Ganjavi, adopting classic Persian heroes five hundred years after the Islamic conquest of Persia. An orphaned but educated man who lived a simple life, Nizami did not partake in any courts, and he wrote his poems out of love of language and the human experience. It's no surprise then, that his rendition of the epic yielded the fantastical romance Khosrow and Shirin. NYU Professor Peter Chelkowski, in his book *Mirror of the Invisible World*, writes that "Nizami was the first to fulfill all the prerequisites of romance—far-off times and places, with giants, dragons, and heroic exploits; sentimental and idealistic exaggerations that still preserved the individual events so dear to the Near Eastern reader; and reflection on the human condition" (47). Lavish illuminated manuscripts of the *Khamsa* were commonly commissioned in following Islamic dynasties, and considerations had to be made to reconcile the romantic and characteristically experiential fashion of Nizami's writing with the de-individualizing themes of Islamic miniature painting illuminations. *Farhad Carrying Shirin and her Horse* is a copied illumination from one such manuscript. Nizami wrote these vivid characters in fantastical settings, contrary to the flat style of Persian miniature illuminations, so *Farhad Carrying Shirin and her Horse* in Nizami's *Khamsa* was painted in an adapted style of Persian miniature painting to be better suited for illustrating Nizami's amorous scenes.

Persian poetry after Nizami is characterized by strong themes of individual experience, and the *Khamsa* defines that style; in our illumination, there is much individual detail present on Farhad and Shirin that suits this style. However, Nizami does at first pay homage to his revered

predecessor, Ferdowsi, author of the *Shahnameh*, and his version of the epic tale opens by describing Khosrow as a prodigious prince and lists some of Khosrow's exploits. Shortly after that passage, Nizami continues on to write a sharp deviation from the classical Persian epic. Khosrow immediately finds himself accidentally undermining his father, the king. This is not something that would be recorded in the Book of Kings, where great exploits are recorded for posterity, and shortcomings are overlooked. Instead, Khosrow is introduced as great but flawed, whereas the kings of the *Shahnameh* are more akin to gods than people. Nizami's portrayal of Khosrow is as a flawed and romantic protagonist. Chelkowski translates the *Khamsa*: "Khosrow was brought before the king at once... The penalties were harsh" (23). After accidentally destroying a peasant's crops, right after the King had decreed that property would be protected by law no matter the perpetrator, Khosrow drapes himself in a shroud and offers his sword to his father for forgiveness: "'Here is my sword, and my submissive head...' [Khosrow's father] kissed Khosrow and forgave him" (23). By having Khosrow incite the wrath of his father, followed by his display of great humility, Nizami crafts Khosrow into a relatable human being, as opposed to a demigod, as other tellings in the *Shahnameh* do. This form of romanticized individuals is thematic in Nizami's writing, and of the miniatures that accompany it, such as *Farhad Carrying Shirin and her Horse*.

In our miniature, the characters are painted to be by far the most important elements on the page; the figures form a plus shape while they are encompassed within a plus-shaped panel, acting as a unified focal point to pull the viewer's eyes right to the finely detailed individuals. By organizing the painting this way, the painter is immediately inviting the viewer to connect with Farhad and Shirin on a personal level, just as Nizami achieves this effect in his writing. In this particular scene, Shirin's face is painted passively, because she and her horse are exhausted and asleep. Farhad's face is painstakingly detailed to express genuine concern. Shirin and her horse's body language is indicative of their tiredness after a long journey. The characters are all finely detailed in their expressive clothing, featuring radiant red and blue on active Farhad and duller goldenrod and purple on

Shirin and her horse. As a result, a viewer will instantly recognize the prominent figures as unique individuals, just like themselves. A viewer will naturally aim to understand Farhad's concern by recalling a similar experience of caring for someone, and likewise, the viewer may understand Shirin's exhaustion by remembering a long, hard task that was completed with great effort. The fine details and descriptive, unique faces are how the artist leads the reader to see Farhad and Shirin as relatable people. Like Nizami's romantic style of writing, this style of painting assigns unique value to its characters, despite that contradicting classical Persian miniature painting style, where de-individualization is a prominent theme. Our illumination mirrors the theme of individual importance Nizami sets as precedent in his telling of the story of Khosrow and Shirin by providing enough detail in the characters to allow viewers to compare themselves and their own experiences against Khosrow and Shirin, recognizing those characters' value as individuals.

The characters also value one another in both our illumination and Nizami's *Khamasa* for which it was painted; unifying and complementary styling in the artwork suggest an emphasized romantic compatibility between Farhad and Shirin, much like Nizami focuses his vision of the epic of Khosrow on the intimate relationship between Khosrow and Shirin. In the *Khamasa*, just after the prince Khosrow is forgiven for his human mistake, he is visited by a ghost ancestor promising him, for his humility, the fastest horse, the throne of thrones, and a replacement minstrel. Lastly, and with the greatest emphasis on relative importance, the ghost promises Khosrow that he will have the love of his life to sustain him: "... you shall ride Shabdiz...you shall sit on Taqdis...Barbad the musician shall play it beyond all these, you shall have Shirin, your destined love, whose sweetness and beauty will sustain you for days" (22). Nizami places true fateful love above material possessions, power, servants, and even above life itself. When Farhad is incorrectly informed that Shirin is dead, "Without a word... he threw himself from Mount Bisutun to his death" (38). That's an idea that would be sorely out of place in a classical Persian tale from the *Shahnameh*, where lasting achievements and the ensuing legacies are the only thing that matter. This is a very clear and explicit appeal to relationships

as the primary driving force of all men. Themes of love are present in our illumination as well, although they are more implicit in this particular scene. Farhad loves Shirin and courts her, so the jealous Khosrow gives him an impossible task. Loyal to his king and his love, Farhad carves reliefs of both between labor. "...[He] paused only to gaze upon the likeness of Shirin...or to climb to the mountain top and call out to Shirin and plead his love" (37). Shirin heard of Farhad's occupation, and traveled long to meet him where he worked and return his love. The visit's "passion" coupled with the journey left Shirin exhausted, so "Farhad lifted both horse and rider onto his shoulders and did not set them down again until he reached the gates of Shirin's residence" (37). This scene is what our illumination depicts, where we can see worried Farhad take care of his beloved exhausted Shirin and make sure she gets home safe. Caring for a lover is one of the more powerful expressions of love, and the scene does justice to Nizami's central theme of love in his rendition of the classic epic. The artist indicates Farhad and Shirin as a couple through unifying textures and patterns present throughout their attire, and the figures complementing one another by forming a plus shape, as well as by having the active Farhad fitted with the passive Shirin, balancing one and the other. In the painting, clearly they are to be seen as one item, as the artist conveys through thematic texture, organization, and balance. An illumination from the classical Persian time period would never centralize its characters, who would instead be drawn all the same and as auxiliary elements of a composition focused on nature. The theme of love triumphing above all other values is expressed in our illumination by being the central theme, just as love is explicitly written as the most important virtue in Nizami's *Khamasa*.

Before *Romeo and Juliet*, there was *Khosrow and Shirin*, the original epic tragic suicidal love legend spun by famous Persian poet Nizami Ganjavi. In order to do the lavish manuscripts of the *Khamasa* justice, the miniature illuminations in it had to be painted in a style contradictory to the conventional Persian style and communicate the central love and the characters' uniqueness effectively. Where Nizami succeeds in telling this by writing it explicitly, the painters had to paint liberally to suggest the meaning to viewers through means

Student Reflections on Writing:

Oleg Kovalenko

I sometimes wonder where thought comes from. We are not privy. Thoughts form somewhere deep and base to a concept of self that is remote and austere, and our conscious self is riddled to interpret the atoms of experience into things that may cohere, be collected, and be communicated. And there is sure to be a harsh lack of empathy between the two modes of self at times! To write is to bridge this divide for another, and the form of our writing reflects the form and integrity of our bridge. As another walks upon this bridge, they will notice the obvious forms and perhaps pick up on the subtler forms. The other steps over these forms as they appear, as words, and sentences, and cobbles them together into sense. The walker may feel something about the brick layer as they step. The walker may well *find that the stones they're stepping on make no sense, and believe the bricklayer mad. Perhaps the stones are cut quickly, such that the walker may feel skeptical as they cross, or finely, that each step feels sure and true.* The stones may be bare for their purpose, or ornate for the pleasure of the mason, or posed laterally, to show the mason's true direction; wherein we empathize, because we have all laid bridges too rapid, too bare, too fancy, or too dimensional, that the destination seems lost. Yet nothing is worse than a bridge too boring to cross, nor anything as regrettable as a bridge grand with no fashion for alcoves. I take pride that in walking again my "Illuminations for Nizami," I feel sure of the footing each step, I write naturally without fear, and I recognize myself. I took pleasure in assembly, and pain in concessions. "Illuminations for Nizami" is a personal achievement, and I hope it is engaging and relevant. Immense thanks to Karen Patterson and the Harper faculty for maintaining such an impactful course in Nonwestern Art. It cannot go unrecommended.

of style, such as highly detailed unique characters and their uniformity coupled with complementary composition. Our illumination, *Farhad Carrying Shirin and her Horse*, is an excellent example of exactly that. Poet Nizami Ganjavi romanticized Persian artistic expression, both in written art and in painted art.

My sister visited Baku with my father some years ago, and I unfortunately could not come along. I nagged her with questions when she returned, asking her what it was, after all. She was taken aback firstly by the cleanliness of the city; one could not spit without a thousand needle eyes stinging. The subways were spotless and odorless. A lack of color shone the city white, awash in grandeur. Yes, there were hijabs, and my sister dressed conservatively; still, angry men gave her sharp looks. Despite this, there remains something great somehow contained in the wholeness of their world, which awes and humbles foreign eyes. The art delivered by their great poets and painters captured the fantasy of Middle Eastern romance and imagination, and this is what my sister was overwhelmingly aware of, as it was more

pressing than the needle eyes staring at her. Perhaps, an appreciation of that enlightened age can act as a shield against these other lines of thought.

I thoroughly enjoyed and took seriously the investigative process to examine *Farhad Carrying Shirin and her Horse* critically and earnestly in a methodical, incremental fashion. Learning of this kind does not happen often, where the lack of knowledge is first fostered, before attainment of it. I became more engaged in learning and investing myself into this topic when the learning process was made personal in this way. A lesson I've gleaned from this is that if I find ways to connect myself to the topics I'm learning about, I will enjoy myself more, learn more, and learn more readily.

After the second phase of this interactive learning arch, I realized the value of my experience of seeing the artwork in person. After seeing the artwork again at the Art Institute, the painting made a lot more sense to me. Maybe that's just because a second exposure after some processing time helped clear up some finer points. However, I can't shake the feeling that there was a value in

just seeing the piece itself. The context of its presentation, perhaps not adding content to the material itself, did make the content clearer. I feel that viewing the actual art on display was invaluable in developing an understanding of it. More tangibly, I could make out a lot more fine details in the miniature with my eye pressed against the glass case, details that were lost in the medium of pixels.

When I first saw *Farhad Carrying Shirin* online, I couldn't make sense of some of the elements in the painting, and I never would've seen many of the details that subtly connect Shirin and Farhad. Those are details vital toward attaining a complete understanding of the artwork. I wouldn't have experienced the work genuinely; I certainly hold the artwork in higher regard after being able to see it in the correct setting. I'm convinced that some part of an artist's message is always going to be missed in lieu of a firsthand experience, and that the part of the message that does get across will not be as valuable to the reader without a proper presentation.

I think I could tell so much about what the artist wanted to communicate through the artwork by knowing that the author was a human being, just like I am. I can understand much of what he expressed five centuries ago based on a shared human experience; I understand the importance of art now that I've experienced how it can connect any two humans across the ages like this. It has the potential to connect people across any barrier, no matter how much bad blood there may be. Formal analysis serves as the common tool to facilitate that process. It does have to be performed with care, though. I misled myself when I concluded that the subjects were both royal, and that Farhad was rescuing Shirin. Placing non-Western artwork into my Western context was a mistake: namely, the idea of a damsel in distress most likely never occurred to the painter at all, and the focus needs to be on connecting myself to the painter, rather than the painter to myself, to avoid tempting but flawed conclusions. With that in mind, art has an incredible power to unify and pacify people who will be able to see themselves in others' artwork.

After conducting my research, reading an English translation of the story of Khosrow and Shirin in the *Khamsa* and the commentary on it, as well as reading several biographies about Nizami Ganjavi and some

about his predecessors who influenced him, I have developed a rounded understanding of this particular story. This activity has impassioned me to continue reading the *Khamsa*, because I honestly could not have anticipated how beautiful and complex this thousand-year-old epic could be, along with the painstaking artworks that accompany it. I'm starting to think there's more human truth to find in a fantasy poem, than in any part of the world; we interpret the world we live in out of the materials at hand, be it led by love, as per Nizami, or legacy, as per Ferdowsi. Especially given current events, I think it will be important to remain sympathetic and connected with people around the globe.

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Evaluation: *This paper's strengths include Oleg's careful observations and vivid descriptions as well as his perceptive and insightful conclusions.*

Nursing Home Abuse

Ashley Lindahl

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Stephanie Horton

Assignment: This essay was written as a final research essay for English 101. Students were asked to write a proposal essay on a topic of their choice. They needed to include a statement and description of the proposal, an assessment of current efforts on the topic, address at least two counterarguments, and provide a conclusion that calls the audience to action. Their essays also needed to include research from at least four different sources.

The generation of the baby boomers is growing older, and the demand for sufficient caregivers is in high demand. While this may be good for the economy, providing many new jobs, the adequate training needed is not being given. Due to lack of experience and full understanding of their patients, new employees often unintentionally abuse or neglect their elderly patients. The word “unintentional” often is paired with “accidental,” but how many accidents need to happen before action is taken to prevent them? This is a serious issue within the nursing home environment, often preventing families from putting their loved ones in a facility. It is evident that elderly abuse is a problem within the country, and the measures that need to be taken to prevent it are not happening. With the benefit of further intense training with new employees and requiring workers to have a better understanding of the psychological factors of their patients, unintentional abuse and neglect within nursing homes could be substantially reduced.

As Kasia Backman states in her article “Quality of Institutional Care of Older People As Evaluated By Nursing Staff,” “There is no comprehensive definition of maltreatment of older people...maltreatment refers to any intentional or unintentional behavior involving either a physical or psychological force that causes an insult on an elder’s personality or property and makes him/her suffer” (2). As Backman mentions, maltreatment in a nursing

home facility can be any act that fails to meet the needs of a patient. With the definition being so vague, there is often a gray area on whether what the nurse or nursing aide is doing is either considered neglect and abuse or just lack of knowledge. There are also several different types of abuse, including physical, mental, sexual and verbal. In Merav Ben Natan and Ariela Lowenstein’s research, “Study of Factors That Affect Abuse of Older People in Nursing Homes,” the two found there were more reported incidents of mental abuse and neglect than there were of physical abuse and neglect. Out of 513 reported incidents, 57% were reported mental abuse or neglect. These data exhibit that more than half of the abuse occurring in nursing homes is mental abuse. With the elderly often being very sensitive and needing intensive care, mental abuse and neglect can easily occur from the nurse or nursing aide. As Ziminski asserts in his article, “The Nursing Role in Reporting Elder Abuse” a resident can often sense if a caregiver is doing the job in a caring manner or not, and when the resident feels their aide does not care about them, the resident will start to put blame on themselves and wonder if something is wrong with them. A resident will think they are the one mistaken and start to feel bad about themselves. This psychological misunderstanding plays a substantial role in the mental happiness of the resident. The nurse may just be having a bad day and accidentally displace their anger onto their patient, resulting in the patient feeling emotionally neglected. Tanni Chaudhuri, Dale Yeatts, and Cynthia Cready, authors of “Nurse Aide Decision Making in Nursing Homes: Factors Affecting Empowerment,” all believe this is one of the main causes of nursing home abuse. Emotional exhaustion and a lack of a positive attitude often lead to some type of maltreatment of a patient. Besides verbal and mental, physical abuse is still a major issue within nursing homes. Physical abuse is not just hitting a patient. Unintentional physical abuse is more common than intentional physical abuse, according to Ziminski. Leaving a patient in one position for too long, resulting in sores, is a very common type of unintentional physical abuse. Many times, unintended physical abuse comes from new employees due to either their inexperience in the field or their lack of knowledge of their new residents. Obviously, the employee is

still learning how everything works and what the likes and dislikes of their residents are. However, these new employees learn from their mistakes, such as accidentally putting on a blood pressure cuff too tightly, resulting in bruises on a resident's arm. Now, this employee knows not to put the cuff on too tightly, but a resident had to be physically abused in order for learning to take place. This type of "learn as you go" work is resulting in falls, bruises, bed sores, infections, and many more accidental incidents that could have been easily prevented with more knowledgeable employees.

If new employees are more properly trained, they would not have to deal with the "learn as you go" work stress. A high school student can earn their nursing aide certificate in just two semesters, with little hands-on experience. This is the root of the problem. To receive the certificate, more clinical hours should be required. Although it does differ from state to state, federal regulation only requires sixteen hours of clinical training. Sixteen hours is not nearly enough clinical time for a student brand new to the job field to grasp a firm understanding. In clinicals, a student is under the supervision of other CNAs and their teacher, who is most likely a nurse of some kind. The student is never left alone with a resident and can be immediately stopped if something wrong is about to happen. This intense supervision is something they will not have when they are working as a CNA, so it is a valuable time to learn what decisions to make in certain situations without any type of harm being done. The minimal hour requirement for clinical training should be at least sixty. Although this may have to result in either less classroom teaching hours or an increase of the course length, clinical training is the most important component of the CNA course. This will give students multiple different days to really learn and practice their future job. After a student receives their CNA and gets hired at a nursing facility, they may only be trained for a week (often less) and then sent on their own. New employees are left on their own way too soon. Also, new CNAs are often trained in groups of three or four, with only one trainer. This needs to be changed so there is one-on-one training time and the new employee can ask all the questions they need and receive the proper guidance. The amount of training time likewise needs to

be increased. It takes more than a week to learn all of the residents' names, medical, physical, and emotional needs. Seeing how residents react with the other CNA's will provide insight and help prepare the new worker on how to approach and act with the resident. A connection has to be built between a nursing aide and resident. Nursing aides are the primary assistance in bathing, dressing, grooming, feeding and other personal needs of their patients, so it is vital that the resident feels comfortable with their aide, or the resident will feel embarrassed and ashamed to perform these tasks in front of them. Training for a new employee should be a minimum of ten days, only if both the trainee and the trainer feel the trainee has enough adequate knowledge to be left on their own. It is not only new employees who need training, but also employees who have been there for years. After being in the same career for so long, it is easy to forget the official standards and to create a new set of rules and ways of doing tasks that may seem to be faster than the proper way to perform them. Just as Arja Isola and Backman state in their article, "The maintenance of staff's knowledge should be attended to. This is a particularly important challenge in view of the fact that the mean age of the staff is nearly 44 years. This means, quite concretely, that the staff acquired their basic professional skills about 20 years ago, after which gerontologic, geriatric and nursing research has yielded a huge amount of new, useful knowledge" (9). This can be dangerous when prior employees teach new employees the "shortcuts" or faster but less safe way of completing tasks. That is why it is vital that all employees have sufficient training by state regulators and are tested on their abilities annually so new employees and older employees are performing tasks the same and correct way. The goal is to not be able to tell who has been in the field longer, if all care should be equal and exceptional in quality. Along with hands-on training, psychological understanding of the residents needs to be enforced. When taking the CNA course, there needs to be more teaching on consideration of feelings of the elderly and their psychological needs. There is more to being a CNA than taking them to the bathroom and taking their blood pressure. In Isola's and Backman's research, they state, "Helping older people to express their sexuality, to face death or to discuss difficult

or anxiety-provoking matters were the domains of nursing where the respondents' knowledge and skills were least adequate" (6). As seen in Isola and Backman's study, nurses and nursing aides are particularly lacking in areas of their jobs. It is essential for a CNA to try to put him- or herself in a resident's position and intuitively understand how the resident must feel. In a nursing home, a person is not able to live the life he or she once did, and it is crucial for nursing aides to understand that and be ready to provide each resident with all that they possibly can. For example, if a CNA encounters a resident who is usually happy and easy to talk to, but suddenly becomes angry or saddened, the CNA should not take it personally or make the resident feel bad for being upset. The resident has the right to feel emotions, and it is important for the nursing aide to be there for the resident and listen to his or her needs. Mental needs are just as important as physical needs.

These changes would essentially be beneficial for everyone. The patients obviously would benefit the most from these adjustments, receiving improved quality care and resulting in little to no unintentional abuse and neglect from their caregivers. Patients should feel more understood and not afraid to talk about how they feel. The nurses and nursing aides would gain benefits from these modifications by being more confident in their ability to take care of their patients. They would have a greater sense on how to deal with their patient's mental needs and connect with them on an emotional level. Better care for patients should result in happier patients, making work less stressful. Nursing homes would have an improved reputation and fewer incidents of abuse occurring in their facilities. Families would feel better putting their loved one in a nursing home knowing exceptional care was being received by their family, resulting in more business for nursing homes and additional comfort for the families. Overall, anyone involved would benefit from these modifications. The only people who may not profit from these variations are lawyers who specialize in nursing home maltreatment.

Although extra training would help decrease the chances of abuse, more training means more money. Increased hours of training would indicate an increase in expenses to pay the trainers. Sometimes, nursing homes

are on low budgets and cannot afford additional days or hours of instruction, but the people who are paying to live in nursing homes are spending a great deal of money, and deserve to receive excellent and satisfactory care. Proper training is worth the higher expenses especially when it is for the best interest of the patients. In Chaudhuri and Cready's study, they believed that despite training efforts, a nursing aide's decision-making came down to demographic background, including gender and race. In their research, they stated, "Interestingly, compared to white NAs, we found that black NAs were less likely to make decisions about their work on their own, whereas NAs of 'other' races were more likely to do so" (8). They also state, "Episodes of workplace discrimination were not uncommon and included verbal abuse by residents including usage of racial slurs" (8). While some ethnicities and races traditionally have different ways of reacting and handling situations, race or ethnicity is not a factor of the quality of one's skill to perform tasks as a nursing aide. If a resident has a problem with their nursing aide due to their demographic background, then that is a personal opinion issue with the resident, not associated with the nursing aide's ability to accomplish their duties. If one is in the nursing field, the rules and regulations are strict, and someone's race is not going to interfere or break those rules.

To conclude, unintentional abuse and neglect in nursing homes is a severe concern, and the obligation to correct it needs to be addressed. Allowing more time for training nursing aides and emphasizing more awareness of psychological factors with an emphasis on understanding the emotions of the elderly would result in a decrease in the amount of unintentional abuse and neglect. In some cases, a 16-year-old high school student has the responsibility to be accountable for people's loved ones. It is scary to think that someone who can barely drive has the responsibility to make sure nursing home residents have all their needs met. Knowing that this 16-year-old has had hours of training and preparation with an adequate emphasis on patients' psychological needs may ease the mind. Neither cost nor race should discourage the idea of an expansion of training among nursing aids and nurses. Growth of properly trained employees will benefit everyone, most importantly, the residents. Safety

and quality care of the residents should be the number one priority of any nursing home.

Annotated Bibliography

Chaudhuri, Tanni, et al. "Nurse Aide Decision Making In Nursing Homes: Factors Affecting Empowerment." *Journal of Clinical Nursing* vol. 22, nos. 17/18, 2013, pp. 2572-2585.

In this article, Chaudhuri, Yeatts and Cready conduct research in eleven different nursing homes in the Southern United States. This article focuses on the decision-making factors of nursing aides resulting in abuse and neglect of the elderly. The researchers believe the two main factors for abuse in nursing homes are due to race and emotional exhaustion. While I do disagree with the race factor, the emotional exhaustion does play a huge factor in unintentional abuse and neglect. The built-up anger and stress can sometimes easily be displaced onto the nursing aides' patients. These researchers have a strong belief that the ethnic background and environment one grew up in results in different decision-making for their patients. This thought is very arguable and is questionable on how reliable it is, considering the nursing aids are all taught the same material and instructions on how to complete the tasks regardless of race or ethnicity. I still included this article for my essay due to its research and logic on emotional exhaustion for being a factor.

Isola, Arj and Kasia Backman. "Quality of Institutional Care of Older People As Evaluated By Nursing Staff." *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, vol. 17, no. 18, pp. 2480-2489.

Isola's and Backman's research article looks into the nursing staff to find out why nursing home abuse is so common. They supply surveys to only the nurses and use their answers to come up with statistics and results. Their conclusion was that skills and knowledge of nursing staff should be studied more frequently to raise the quality of nursing care of older people. This thesis relates with my proposal in a similar manner, making it an excellent article to include in my research proposal. This article is unbiased, and the authors come up with their beliefs strictly based on data rather than opinion.

Natan, Merav Ben and Ariela Lowenstein. "Feature. Study of Factors That Affect Abuse of Older People In Nursing Homes... Includes Discussion." *Nursing Management - UK*, vol. 17, no. 8, Dec. 2010, pp. 20-24. EBSCOhost, prox2.harpercollege.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=hch&AN=55984253&site=ehost-live

Natan and Lowenstein's article provides research data on the unintentional and intentional neglect and abuse in nursing homes. Based on their concluding data, they believe abuse and neglect can be prevented with a decrease of nurse to patient ratio and with more sufficient training of employees. The researchers received their data through surveys through both the patients and staff. They present their data through tables. They believe abuse and neglect of the elderly is completely wrong and have a strong passion on the subject. This article supports my argument, and I have similar beliefs to both Natan and Lowenstein.

Ziminski C. and L. Phillips. "The Nursing Role in Reporting Elder Abuse: Specific Examples and Interventions." *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 19-23. *Healio*, <https://doi.org/10.3928/00989134-20111010-01>

In this article, Ziminski and Phillips focus on the importance of reporting abuse to a superior. Ziminski and Phillips believe if more people reported any signs of abuse, the amount of abuse and neglect would substantially decrease. The authors provide the different kinds of abuse and signs and symptoms. They also provide different scenarios and examples on how to report and assess the situation. This article provides great ideas and definitely supports my proposal on the idea of better training of staff. Just as I do, the authors believe nursing staff need to be held to a higher standard to help prevent abuse.

Evaluation: *Ashley's essay is a stellar example of how to complete this assignment successfully. Ashley was a student in the nursing program, so this topic was of high interest to her. She completed the assignment with a level of sophistication and attention to detail that is noteworthy.*

Jeff Koons: I'm Calling Bullkitsch

Patrick Lingen

Learning Community:

Art and Literature in Contemporary Culture
Courses: Art 105 (Introduction to Visual Art)
and English 102 (Composition)

Instructors: Perry Pollock and Christopher Padgett

Assignment: *Write a research paper that examines a specific idea, theme, or issue in multiple works by a single artist or author.*

Of all the artists of the postmodern period, Jeff Koons is perhaps the most divisive. Some herald him as the greatest artist of our era, while others harshly criticize him for a seeming lack of awareness of, and involvement in, his work. As Michael Dashkin wrote in the *Library Journal*:

Many critics and museum visitors. . . [see] Koons (b. 1955) as a significant contemporary artist, but just as many might decline, perceiving him as lacking in stature. Curator Rothkopf weighs the opinions both of Koons's champions and his detractors. . . and all of the work's contributors (distinguished curators, critics, art historians, editors, and even a novelist, Rachel Kushner) skillfully negotiate the range of complex reactions to Koons's art. (74)

If commercial success were any sort of reliable indicator of an artist's worth, it would be undeniable that Koons would be the greatest artist alive; he currently holds the world record for highest price paid for a piece by a living artist at an auction; his sculpture *Balloon Dog (Orange)* sold for \$58,400,000 in 2010. However, despite his popularity and admittedly *obscene* financial success,

Koons is by no means a great artist. In fact, it is debatable whether or not he is an artist at all. Jeff Koons *is*, however, a businessman, a salesman, and a con man, and he is very, very good. So good, in fact, that he has convinced the world that he is one of the greatest artists alive. Upon inspection, however, this façade disintegrates, exposing the completely soulless high-capitalist machinery beneath the surface. Art is a creative process or product that intentionally conveys some thought, feeling, or experience to the beholder; this conflicts entirely with Koons' works and artistic process. These inconsistencies are most apparent upon examining his pieces *Balloon Dog*, *Basketball*, and *Girl with Dolphin and Monkey*, as well as excerpts from reviews of his work.

Koons' *Balloon Dog* is certainly a spectacle. Standing just over ten feet tall, the vividly orange mirror-polished steel sculpture of a balloon dog demands to be noticed. But once the beholder has taken notice, the piece has nothing more to say. It is certainly an impressive display of craftsmanship and a flawless replication of the authentic article. However, it exists simply to "look cool." There is no significant meaning behind his choice of subject matter, nor in his execution of the creation of the piece. It feels as though Koons sat down and brainstormed a list of things people would pay handsomely for large metal versions of, and then set to work methodically and exactly reconstructing the original, modifying only the scale. This alone could be enough to be considered a creative process by the less discerning among art critics; however, even the reproduction is not performed by Koons. He has a large team of craftsmen who do almost all of the work for him. And the greater fact remains that Koons has done nothing more than select a pre-existing object on the basis of potential marketability. He has created nothing: no new ideas, emotions, or concepts are present in his reproduction.

Even here, however, one could argue that this is similar to the works of Andy Warhol or Marcel Duchamp. The difference is that both Duchamp and Warhol were trying to express the nature of a new era that brought with it an entirely new set of experiences through their ready-mades and reproductions. *Balloon Dog*, on the other hand, does not seem to communicate anything of significance. In a review of Koons' retrospective installation (in which



Figure 1. *Balloon Dog (Orange)*, Jeff Koons. Mirror-polished stainless steel with transparent color coating, 1994. Private collection.

an edition of *Balloon Dog* was displayed), Eric Gibson makes a similar observation about Koons' entire body of work:

Indeed, there's a sense in which Koons isn't really at home in the role of artist. He possesses no real imaginative gifts and doesn't seem to understand what artists do. Real artists take raw material and transform it. Even a Duchamp readymade is transformed, through its altered context rather than changes to its physical form. By contrast, Koons's "transformations" are mostly sideways moves -- increases of scale, replication in another material, the addition of little embellishments like flowers or colored spheres that he calls "gaze balls." The original object remains largely as it was. (45-46)

This is especially clear in the case of *Balloon Dog* (Figure 1); it is purely a visual spectacle. Nothing about the presentation, execution, or conception of this piece communicates anything other than, "Balloon animals look cool!"

In another review of the same retrospective installation, Richard Lacayo addressed the fundamental difference between Koons and artists like Warhol, Duchamp, and Oldenburg:

Pop artists like Claes Oldenburg had made scaled-up specimens of mass culture before, but usually with tongue in cheek, holding the mass-produced world at a remove. Not Koons. He was unapologetically in love with it, and he still insists that his lowbrow



Figure 2. *Basketball*, Jeff Koons. Bronze, 1985. The Royal Academy of Arts, London.

imagery helps viewers shed embarrassment at finding pleasure in trashy stuff. “By removing anxiety, you can really have everything in play,” he says. “If you have acceptance for everything, you’re in a position of maximum freedom.” (93)

The quote at the end, from Koons himself, is a prime example of mystification: it obfuscates the true nature of his work while creating the illusion of insight, profundity, and depth. But what does he *mean*? What exactly *is* a “position of maximum freedom?” He alleges to have eliminated anxiety in his works; it would seem that in doing so, he also removed all other emotions, as well. Fredric Jameson commented on this cultural lobotomization, which he refers to as “waning of affect,” in his book *Postmodernism*:

As for expression and feelings or emotions, the liberation, in contemporary society, from the older *anomie* of the centred subject may also mean, not merely a liberation from anxiety, but a liberation

from every other kind of feeling as well, since there is no longer a self present to do the feeling. This is not to say that the cultural products of the postmodern era are utterly devoid of feeling, but rather that such feelings—which it may be better to call ‘intensities’—are now free-floating and impersonal, and tend to be dominated by a peculiar kind of euphoria. (72)

This shallowness that dominates Koons’ work is the product of the postmodern mindset and values that our culture has adopted. By rejecting depth, passion, and meaning, society has reduced art, once the domain of philosophers and those of great passion, to a sea of kitschy junk with breathtaking price tags. And leading the charge against thought, depth, and significance is Jeff Koons. His assertion that “his lowbrow imagery helps viewers shed embarrassment at finding pleasure in trashy stuff” is equally sickening and hilarious; Koons is blatantly acknowledging that his work is no more than

a flashy attraction. Jeff Koons' works are the artistic equivalent of air dancers, flailing desperately at passersby on the curb of a used car dealership. Furthermore, he is openly claiming that people should be unashamed of their ignorance, cultural apathy, and generally toxic postmodern attitudes. Koons is suggesting that one need not consider new ideas or leave one's comfort zone: in fact, he seems to be positing that one should simply give up on expanding their tastes or viewpoint at all. This notion is personally, socially, and *globally* pathological, and yet it embodies the quintessential postmodern zeitgeist perfectly. After all, why try to be sophisticated, conscientious, and informed in a society where arrogant ignorance is applauded? Why try to decipher Shakespeare when you can just read *US People*? Koons' *Balloon Dog* is a celebration of shallowness, a festival of ignorance that scorns profundity and meaning with every square inch of its flawless, mirrored hide.

The second of Koons' pieces that best illustrate his lack of involvement in and awareness of the artistic process is *Basketball*, a life-size bronze reproduction of a basketball (Figure 2). This piece is baffling to the extreme. Why does it exist? It is a bronze basketball. There is no more to be said about it. It is given no significant context, no implication of meaning. It is simply a basketball flawlessly reproduced in metal. It was made simply to *be art* as a commodity: to be bought and sold. In no sense is it original, communicative, or even expressive. Therefore, one would be hard-pressed to call this a genuine example of artistic expression. The cold, impersonal, calculated nature of Koons' art is well described in the observations of Eric Gibson:

In the end, "Jeff Koons: A Retrospective" is profoundly depressing, the first time I have experienced such a feeling in a lifetime of visiting museums. The show is suffused with the atmosphere of cold calculation, of a career advancing as the result of a series of carefully thought-out moves and strategizing rather than proceeding naturally, without premeditation, as artists normally do. The work feels the same way. For all the warmth of the bright colors and ingratiating subject matter—puppy dogs, hearts, balloons—the manner of their execution, the works' razor-sharp contours and

impersonal, textureless, polished surfaces, makes them feel icily remote and distant. (45)

Naturally, in this era of frantic commodification, gluttonous consumption, and planned obsolescence, we have seen many opportunists do their best to reduce art to a commodity; Koons is by far the most successful of these cultural scavengers and parasites. He creates the illusion of art, weaving a tapestry of mystification and pomp and circumstance. And like any expensive bauble presented by a flashy con man, the wealthy masses fight each other tooth and nail for the privilege of paying millions of dollars to call it their own. Koons' inclination to create art for purely commercial purposes was noted and expounded upon by Eric Gibson:

Koons has succeeded by emptying his images of everything except the cheesy, the easy, the sweetly appealing, and the familiar. His works are big, they're cute, they're shiny, and they make no demands. What do they mean? What do you want them to mean? Something for everyone. They aren't there to be pondered or engaged with in any significant way. They exist solely as emblems of value.

This, in the end, is why Koons's work looks so out of place at the Whitney; it doesn't belong in an art museum. Its proper venue is the sale room, the commercial gallery, or even the Museum of American Finance on Wall Street in Lower Manhattan, places where, with all aesthetic pretense cast aside, it can stand forth fully and unequivocally in its true nature as a high-priced, tradable commodity. (45)

Jeff Koons has reduced art to a corporate model, and he has been successful beyond belief. However, in doing so he has made a prostitute of art, whoring her out to the highest bidder: "I can be whatever you want me to be, baby, as long as you've got the cash." Jeff Koons' pieces are good at two things: making rich people feel like they are highly cultured individuals (ironic, given the nature of his work) and earning interest. Even for its category, *Basketball* is exceptionally useless. A Rolex can tell time. A Fabergé egg is beautiful. A signed first edition copy of *A Farewell to Arms* can be read. Hell, even a Prada handbag serves a function. But all *Basketball* can



Figure 3. *Girl with Dolphin and Monkey*, Jeff Koons. Oil on canvas, 2009.

do is *be*. It is not intended to be engaged with in any way, physically or mentally. This piece demonstrates that Koons' concept of what art is aligns more closely with what most people would consider to be a trophy.

The third, and perhaps most blatantly and unapologetically meaningless, piece of Koons' work that will help to illuminate his fraudulent nature is a painting called *Girl with Dolphin and Monkey* (Figure 3). This painting has everything a great work of kitsch needs: a woman in 1960s lingerie, vintage automobiles, inflatable animals, and not one, but *two* Incredible Hulks. It seems to pride itself on its inherent lack of meaningful content, defying all attempts at analysis and interpretation. However, rather than knowingly and skillfully employing nonsense and absurdity, as was the case with Dada, this piece is suffering from an identity crisis. It has no idea what it is, or what it wants to be. The potential for uncomfortable eroticism produced by the primary figure, scantily clad and astride the balloon bottlenose, is completely undermined by the Hulks' furious visages and

their rippling green musculatures. There is no sense of unity; in fact, the different elements of the painting fight each other for attention, doing their best to drown each other out. The result is a visual cacophony, overstimulating to the eyes and baffling to the mind. The piece contradicts itself at every turn, unable to assert any kind of clear intention. This is painfully common throughout all of Koons' art; many of his pieces seem rather at a loss as to their meaning or purpose, certain only of the fact that they are art.

Shockingly, the most ridiculous aspect of *Girl with Dolphin and Monkey* is not its disparate and aggressively unimportant subject matter; rather, it is that it is a painting of *one of Koons' own works*. That's right: the girl, the dolphin, and the monkey are copied directly from his photograph *Girl with Dolphin and Monkey*, 2006. The banal practice of reproducing sculptures and photos as paintings is a trademark of Koons' business model approach towards art. This tendency belies his artistic pretense: his aim is clearly to produce and sell more

Student Reflections on Writing: Patrick Lingen

One thing that never fails to amaze me about writing (and learning, and living; indeed, about any endeavor, really) is just how high the ceiling for personal growth and accomplishment is. When I wrote this piece, it was a strong contender for the title of "Best Thing I've Ever Written"; I remember wondering if this was the apex of my progression as a writer. After all, how could I ever top a masterpiece like this? What progress was left to make? It was perfect. And beyond that, I was so proud of the critique I had made against Koons, so sure that I was right. Reading it now, however, it seems quaint, innocent even, in its naive passion and self-certainty. While the writing is exceptional, it pales in comparison to some of my more recent compositions. Now, with the great wisdom of the years that comes with being 25, I wonder not how I will surpass my current standards, but rather I wonder at what my writing will be like in a decade or two; I have come to see that there is no upper limit, or if there is, it has yet to be reached. Similarly, looking back, I see that while valid, my critique of Koons' work overlooked a possibility that (while remote) has the potential to unravel my entire argument: perhaps Koons' art is the ultimate expression of postmodernism. Perhaps he is not only aware of the soulless inanity of his work, but he engineered it to be that way intentionally, as the final word on the death of potential and reduction of art, expression, and culture to disposable kitsch. This would, after all, be in keeping with the postmodernists' infatuation with meta-narratives and layered meanings. It seems unlikely, but who's to say? Maybe rather than questioning his motivation, the better question, to quote Yann Martel, would be, "since it makes no factual difference to you and you can't prove the question either way, which story do you prefer?" That is for you to decide, dear reader. Whatever your final thoughts may be, I hope you enjoy the piece, and continue to strive to further your own skills in any field you love.

works, rather than to enlighten, illuminate, or express anything at all. Why else would he have his team of craftsmen exactingly recreate a photograph in paint? There is nothing profoundly different about the painting compared to the photo; the additions of the Hulks and a colored background seem more to serve to fill the space than to actually add any content. This is especially evident when you consider that Koons produced yet *another* painting of the photograph's subject matter, entitled *Girl with Dolphin and Monkey Triple Popeye (Seascape)*. This one features a backdrop of three Popeyes and some grey squiggles. However, neither the Incredible Hulk nor Popeye the Sailor Man add anything in terms of content or context to the painting. Yet Koons can, without lying, label them each as one-of-a-kind, and everybody knows "one-of-a-kind" things are valuable. It is truly sickening that society has accepted Koons' notion of art, and now acknowledges him as the quintessential artist of our time. At best, he belongs on Wall Street; he certainly has no business displaying his works at the Metropolitan.

Koons' prowess as a businessman is formidable indeed, but as an artist, he is a babe in the woods. He has displayed no capacity to create new ideas, feelings, or experiences, nor to effectively express a predetermined concept through visual media. He is a purveyor of luxury goods: no more and no less. He does not fulfill the role of the artist; he has repeatedly demonstrated his unwillingness or incapability to engage in the creative or communicative acts that constitute the artistic process. Furthermore, his message of shallow-mindedness, apathy, ignorance, and narcissism is a cesspit of cultural toxicity. Koons is the prophet of consumer culture: the very Walmart Messiah against whom Tyler Durden and his army waged war. He has come to "rescue" us from the ravages of strenuous thought, deep emotion, profound understanding, and any other remnants of real human experience we've managed to retain in our constructed consumer society. *Hallelujah!* Jeff Koons is everything that is diseased and perverted and *wrong* in our world,

wrapped up in a little bow. And what did we do about him? We praised him. We raised him up and placed him on a shining pedestal and cheered for him. We idolized him, paid him millions and millions of dollars, and proudly and eagerly proclaimed, "Now, *that's* a real artist!" Maybe we deserve him.

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Evaluation: *Incisive and critical, often adopting the tone of a Thomas Frank, Patrick's careful and skillful analysis of Jeff Koons should also be read as a critique of contemporary cultural institutions.*

Should 16-Year Olds Drive?

Shaheena Lofthus

Course: HSE 035

(HSE Reasoning through Language Arts)

Instructor: Jennifer E. Bell

Assignment: *High School Equivalency Language Arts students have 45 minutes to read and analyze two articles about a current events topic and then write a multi-paragraph response that uses argumentation. Students must quickly identify the claims, support, and reasons that the authors present, and then plan and write a response that explains which author made the better argument. Students must defend their assertions with multiple pieces of evidence, build their points logically, and organize their response with transitional phrases. Shaheena's topic was whether the driving age should be changed to 18 or remain at 18.*

Should 16-year olds drive? According to a report written by a *Chicago Tribune* reporter, Ted Gregory, for the most part, they shouldn't. After analyzing his article for myself, I partly agree, but my stance still differs. Sixteen-year-olds should learn how to drive, but it should be official by age eighteen.

First and foremost, the Researchers for the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety make a good point with bringing to light how teenaged brains work; teen brains are vulnerable. Through research, it is known that teen brains undergo extensive development and are susceptible to peer pressure and being distracted. The front area of the brain only matures in the twenties, so as a teen, your social and emotional stance remains immature, and you're more likely to indulge in greater risks (sensually pleasing actions, searching to be special, etc). Taking this into account, and being a seventeen-year-old, I agree completely with the research that has been done. Allowing teens to freely drive at such a tender time in their lives can pose a danger, as they're more likely to make the wrong decisions. However, I do think because the brain is developing rapidly in this stage, it is a good idea to *teach* driving around this time and to have the new drivers consistently monitored by parents or guardians to help their growth. After all, you don't master something

overnight in a short period of time. Years should be placed into this—years of having a permit so you can learn how to properly drive.

On the other hand, Brent Johnston, a driving teacher at Hinsdale Central, remains dubious about raising the minimum driving age and even uses an analogy of banning children from swimming (so drownings would cease) as a way to express his opinion on the matter. The teacher points out that teen driving has nothing to do with age and maturity, but with good choices and behavior. The most interesting thing about this is sixteen-year-old Ryan Moore of Schaumburg, who agreed on raising the age and had the same take on it. He, too, believes it has nothing to do with age. Again, being seventeen, I agree and am not taking a biased stand on this. One of the most important things people forget is that *teens grow at different rates*. I get along better with 38-year-olds than most people my age, not because of my maturity level but because I make more sound choices than most. Firsthand, I've witnessed eighteen-year-olds committing acts I did when I was fifteen, yet their mentality is similar to mine. This is a troubling but crucial fact, that some people are just ready to drive, and some aren't. I'm seventeen, and I still don't want to drive because I want to know that I will do well on the road, so for now, I take the public bus and get picked up. That's my own standing. So how to solve the driving issue for those ready and those aren't? I still stick to my guns: permit at sixteen, an actual license at eighteen. Sixteen-year-olds will either learn at this time or enjoy a bit of freedom of driving around. Everyone should be at a similar standing point by the time they're eighteen, due to their experience on the road.

In conclusion, most adults lean toward sixteen-year-olds not driving, while a minor amount oppose it. I tried to remain unbiased and combined the two beliefs together. I think sixteen years is not the reasonable age to become a driver, but I also believe eighteen years is too much. The most logical solution to me is to extend the time of permits to two years, so teens can really experience the road while still being monitored so they'd make safer decisions. Taking into account the opinions of the two parties, this is my take on the matter.

Evaluation: *Shaheena argued her point effectively, with evidence from the texts. Her essay is well-supported, well-organized, and logical.*

The Courage of Responsibility

Debra Miller

Course: Humanities 120 (Classical Mythology)

Instructor: Lauren Hahn

Assignment: *The assignment was for students to respond to a statement made by the editors of our Mythology 120 textbook, who say, "In an act of supreme moral courage, Oedipus chooses to live with the curse of awareness, with the knowledge that is pain." Students were asked to agree or disagree with this statement, and give reasons for their choice.*

Courage is a quality of mind or spirit that enables a person to face difficulty, danger, pain, and other hardships without fear. A person of courage is one who is aware of their flaws and takes steps to overcome and live with them. Morality is the awareness of right and wrong and the desire to do what is right. The words moral and courageous both perfectly describe Oedipus at the end of *Oedipus Rex*, especially after vehemently resisting responsibility for King Laius's murder. It would have been easiest for Oedipus to ignore embarrassment and responsibility and die. Nevertheless Oedipus's moral courage gave him the strength to suffer in a way he saw as appropriate for his crimes. "Recognizing that Apollo is in some indecipherable way behind the events in his life, Sophocles' Oedipus nevertheless freely asserts his own integrity and insists on taking responsibility for his acts" (Harris and Platzner 669). It was Oedipus's morality that allowed him to accept punishment for his mistakes, and it was Oedipus's courage that allowed him to live with the knowledge of his actions. At the end of the play, Oedipus feels so much hatred and disgust for himself that it would have been much easier to die and no longer be faced with his ever-present self-loathing. Oedipus's decision to live with the knowledge of his crimes shows extreme moral courage. Harris and Platzner's claim that it took extreme moral courage for Oedipus to live with the responsibility

for his mistakes is proven true by comparing Oedipus to Jocasta and analyzing Oedipus's self-inflicted punishment.

The contrast between Oedipus's and Jocasta's reactions to the news of their mistakes is a perfect example of Oedipus's moral courage. Jocasta becomes aware of the mistakes before Oedipus does, and her mental weakness is clearly shown when she says, "Don't by the gods, investigate this more / If you care for your own life. I am sick enough" (Sophocles 713). This shows that Jocasta, rather than explaining the truth of the situation to Oedipus and accepting the consequences, would prefer to cease the already heavy investigation altogether and live with the secret of her and Oedipus's wrong-doings. After Oedipus continues to dig deeper into the investigation, Jocasta's weakness is ultimately embodied by her suicide: "...Jocasta, your divine queen, is dead" (Sophocles 719).

It could be argued that suicide defies human nature which makes it an incredibly courageous and difficult act to pursue. Jocasta's case is different, though. Since her mistakes are major and incredibly surprising, accepting responsibility for them would have extreme moral courage. However, responsibility was avoided by Jocasta's suicide. Because she is so highly revered and looked up to in Theban society, it would have been extremely morally courageous for Jocasta to live as an example of responsibility.

In contrast, Oedipus's reaction to the news of his crime perfectly embodies his moral courage. Morality is embodied by acceptance of punishments for wrong-doings, and Oedipus's morality is proven to be extreme when he chooses to gouge out his own eyes and live in exile:

What more is there for me to see / My friends, what to love, / What joy to hear a greeting? / Lead me at once away from here, / Lead me away, friends, wretched as I am, / Accursed and hated most / Of mortal to the gods. (Sophocles 722)

Oedipus's morality is displayed by his self-inflicted punishment. "Not only does he impose pain on himself in his self-blinding, an act far more intense than anything Apollo required, but he also reaches a kind of moral transcendence" (Harris and Platzner). It not only shows moral courage for Oedipus to live with his actions, but it

shows extreme moral courage to transcend the punishment that was expected by furthering his suffering by living in blind exile.

It was incredibly courageous of Oedipus to accept his crime as his own after initially publically denying the possibility of his faults: “I did not know that you would speak so much folly / Or I would not have brought you to my house” (Sophocles 692). Oedipus went through most of the investigation with the blind belief that it was impossible for him to be guilty, but it is after gouging out his eyes that Oedipus becomes truly able to see.

A person of moral courage is one who boldly accepts responsibility for his or her actions. Oedipus did just this at the end of *Oedipus Rex*. “To Oedipus’s infinite credit, when all the pieces began falling into place as a result of his investigation, he confronts the truth squarely” (Harris and Platner 669). In a time when death would have been an easy escape from shame and self-loathing, Oedipus’s moral courage allowed him to face the consequences by suffering daily and living, blind, in exile with full knowledge and responsibility for his wrong-doings.

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Evaluation: *Debra shrewdly agrees with the editor and defends her position persuasively by comparing Jocasta’s suicide with Oedipus’s meek acceptance of exile. Debra understands the complex issues surrounding Oedipus’s choice and explains his decision with thoughtfully chosen examples from the text.*

Outer and Inner Beauty

Christina Nagorneac

Course: ESL 067 (Writing IV)

Instructor: Mary Cerutti

Assignment: Write a comparison-contrast essay following the five-paragraph essay format for Writing IV students in the Intensive English Program.

“...and you thought beauty was the outward show—but now you know the truth, my Love—it has always been the inner fire...,” says John Geddes in his book *A Familiar Rain*. From all over the world, beauty is one of people’s favorite topics to talk about. People think beauty is a combination of many qualities, including words, physical appearance. However, people think that even a person’s charming appearance is not really attractive; or her/his is repugnant. So, what is more important—outer or inner beauty? This question is probably the most common question in the modern world. Both types of beauty are very different, even though they both have the same impact on people’s lives.

To begin with, it is important to understand what beauty actually means. Outer beauty means having an attractive physical appearance, including beautiful facial features and a perfect body shape. Outer beauty is the first thing that people see in other people. They do not need to make any effort to see it; outer beauty is something that is not hidden. People with outer beauty possess qualities that give them pleasure to see, such as beautiful eyes, nose, and clothes. Outer beauty is outside beauty that attracts people. Also, outer beauty today is a system full of standards. This system has its own images of beauty, and this system requires all its models to look the same. Hair, eyes, lips, cheeks, and the body shape should be perfect to fit the ideal beauty standards. It is also called “the beauty world.” However, not only in the beauty world does physical appearance mean a lot. Nowadays, many people spend a great deal of money to fit the world’s beauty standards. Of course, natural outer beauty is greatly appreciated in

this system, but in most cases, natural beauty does not fit in those standards of beauty. In addition, it is a sad truth that outer beauty nowadays has a priority for many people. Girls, boys, women, and men from all over the world try to change their natural physical appearances in order to become more beautiful than they are. They try to enhance the way they look by exercising, by putting on make-up, by dressing well, and even by doing some expensive plastic surgeries. Because outer beauty is something that draws a person to another and because a first impression about the person depends on his or her physical appearance, people try to do everything possible to make their looks better, even if their outer beauty will be fake. Many people also think that having outer beauty is very important because it gives them a chance to live a better life. It is not surprising that for many people, a first reaction and a judgment about other people depends only on other people’s outer beauty.

In contrast to outer beauty, inner beauty means having a good personality. Basically, it means being kind, honest, friendly, and forgiving. It has nothing to do with the physical appearance; in addition, even the person with the perfect facial features and the perfect body can be “ugly inside.” Inner beauty is beauty that people cannot see from first sight. Only when people try to go deep within, can they be aware of other people’s inner beauty. In other words, having inner beauty means having a beautiful soul. Moreover, unlike outer beauty, inner beauty does not have any standards. This kind of beauty does not depend on a perfect size of eyes, a bright smile, and curly hair. It is something that has no rules, no ideals, and no system.

In contrast to outer beauty, the inner beauty of one person can be different from the inner beauty of another person, and this makes the person special. Many beautiful models who fit the ideal beauty standards and who earn a lot of money only by being beautiful do not feel truly beautiful. It happens because their souls are empty. A true beauty is a light in people’s eyes, and this light does not require money, designer clothing, diet, exercise, and anything else that the outer beauty system requires. This light is a soul expression. When the soul is charming, calm, courageous, faithful, and harmonious, then the light in people’s eyes is shining. Finally, inner

beauty is a really important asset. However, in contrast to outer beauty, people think the opposite. They think that having a good personality does not ensure their success in their lives. Because of that, many people do not try to improve their souls. While people are doing everything they can to enhance their looks, they are not even thinking about improving their characters' qualities. Most people nowadays could be much happier, positive, and friendlier if they were trying to improve their inner qualities. Instead, they are rude, negative, and unhappy. This happens because people forget one important thing, which is that beauty is not in the face and body; beauty is in the heart and soul. Everyone can be beautiful by looking only on the bright side, by helping others, by reading good books, and by showing enthusiasm for everything. Inner beauty definitely differs from outer beauty.

All in all, both kinds of beauty, outer and inner, are very different. While outer beauty only seems the most important thing to have, inner beauty is really more essential. Of course, it is perfect to be equally beautiful inside and out; however, the beautiful soul can make every person attractive, regardless of his or her physical appearance. It is crucial to remember that "outer beauty attracts, but inner beauty captivates," as Kate Angell, a nationally best-selling author, has stated.

Evaluation: Christina's work shows excellent command of the English language, after participating in several semesters of the Intensive English Program at Harper College. Christina is a student from Moldova, whose native language is not English. Her essay demonstrates in-depth understanding of a topic relevant in today's society, it follows the comparison-contrast format, and her points are supported with specific details. She also uses quotations from outside sources.

Finding Religion in Science

Kenji Omura

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Pearl Ratunil

Assignment: *Write an eight- to ten-page research paper that demonstrates that you can formulate a thesis statement and support it using evidence from primary and secondary sources. The paper should examine ideas and texts from this course.*

Galileo Galilei is the Italian philosopher, astronomer, and mathematician of the sixteenth century and early seventeenth centuries, who is responsible for revolutionizing astronomy with the telescope and is also responsible for paving the way for an acceptance of the Copernican heliocentric system (Helden). Bertolt Brecht's work *Galileo* depicts a story of Galileo's struggles to publicize his ideas of a non-geocentric universe, the Copernican system. *Galileo* is the revised American version of *Das Leben des Galilei*, with the changes being that in the original, Galileo is an "independent scientist," whereas the American version featured Galileo's research "as an instrument that serves only to the government" (Pierce). The character Galileo comes face-to-face with a religious figure, the Inquisitor, who threatens Galileo to stop his research. Carl Sagan's *Contact* on the other hand, is a story set sometime after the twentieth century, a hypothetical future, and it is a story about humanity's first contact with alien life. Carl Sagan himself is a planetary astronomer, and likewise, scientist, who is responsible for his contributions in the scientific field and for his efforts in promoting space research and SETI, the Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence (Bohlin). Ellie, the protagonist, is part of the team that first makes contact with the aliens. One of the main issues of Sagan's story is the morality concerning contact from outer space. The idea of religion is introduced with the possibility that the signal is from God; religious figures, such as Joss and Rankin, make

Ellie question her own faith and belief in an omnipotent being, or likewise, a creator of the universe.

The presence of these clashing ideologies, religion in a science fiction work, in *Galileo* and *Contact* reflect an important question: what impact does introducing religion in a science-oriented work have? In both *Galileo* and *Contact*, religious conflict against science, through the Inquisitor or the Pope and Palmer Joss, exists as reflections to actual conflict in their real lives, but also serves as a warning to humanity: the favoring of one side over another, either religion or science, can impede the progress of humanity as a whole.

To begin with, in Brecht's play *Galileo*, the religious figure that exists to stop Galileo is the Cardinal Inquisitor. When Galileo is called to trial by the Holy Inquisition for interrogation in Rome because of his ideas of a non-geocentric universe, the Inquisitor tries to convince the Pope against Galileo. While the Pope believes Galileo to be "the greatest physician of our time," the Inquisitor sees otherwise, where he sees supporting Galileo to be telling the public "that the Bible can no longer be regarded as the alphabet of truth" and that people are placing "their faith in [science...] and not in Almighty God" (Brecht 108-109). The Inquisitor also believes that "God has blessed [...] modern astronomers with imaginations" (81). The first notable thing about the Inquisitor is that he is a major character that is not referred to by name. The Inquisition was "a judicial procedure and later an institution that was established by the papacy and, sometimes, by secular governments to combat heresy" ("Inquisition," 2015). Referring to the Inquisitor solely by title emphasizes not his actual self, but his persona; his sole purpose in his relation to Galileo is that he finds Galileo a heretic and therefore is determined to stop him. Another important aspect of the Inquisitor is that by manipulating religion, his opinion is above the Pope's. The Inquisitor's inclusion of the terms "Bible" and "Almighty God" as the source for "faith" and "truth" allows him to argue against Galileo; the juxtaposition of the terms creates a certainty, despite the dogmatic nature of his argument. Likewise, he ironically calls the source of modern astronomy to be "imagination." Science has factual evidence that is universally repeatable. In contrast, religion is dogmatic; the Inquisitor could make up any idea of faith or truth,

Student Reflections on Writing:

Kenji Omura

As someone who was taught both Japanese and English at roughly the same time, I had a lot of trouble growing up trying to find the right words to say or write. I'd be so caught up in what was the 'right thing' that I'd end up saying nothing at all. Regardless of whether you speak fifteen languages or just one, I'd like to share with you a piece of advice: Just write. If you ever find yourself stuck on writing but you have all these brilliant ideas but you're stuck and you can't find the connections between these ideas and yet these ideas keep flowing out like this run-on sentence and nothing makes sense, I suggest you write everything down and then figure everything out afterwards. While it's true that once you say something you can never take it back, it has never been said that you can't make the effort to make things right and fix your mistakes. While mulling over what to say isn't the same as saying nothing at all, the result is the same. At some point, you'll have to become vulnerable and share your thoughts. But once you let go of your fears, you might end up surprising yourself with what you are capable of, because you've been holding yourself back all this time.

Having said all that, I'm still not perfect with getting out all my ideas. The anxiety tried to grab a hold of me many times as I was writing this paper. But the more I write, the less power it has over me. So, I'd like to thank Dr. Ratunil for taking time from the beginning of every class to let us just write, and more importantly, write for ourselves.

so long as he sources it from "God." The Pope, as a representative of religion, must agree to these statements about faith and truth without dogmatism, despite his own opinion about Galileo and the fact and reason provided by physics. In this case, where religion has a greater emphasis than science, the Copernican system, which is believed in the twenty-first century to be more fundamentally correct than the geocentric system, with modern physics as reasoning, science has been denounced for a single person's imaginary notions. This example, where the church had the power of charge with science, serves as a reminder to humanity that religion to be greater than science.

to elaborate on the problem with religion, within the same scene where the Inquisitor is talking to the Pope, the Pope agrees to a peculiar punishment for Galileo. Brecht writes: "It is clearly understood: he is not to be tortured. (Pause.) At the very most, he may be shown the instruments" (Brecht 110). This does not end there, for the Inquisitor will be adequate, Your Holiness. Mr. Galilei, the machinery" (110). The diction reveals an obvious fiction. For Galileo, who "understands being "shown the instruments" of torture

is equally the same as torturing him. Through the last passage as well, one can reasonably infer that the Pope has some regard for Galileo. Being shown the instruments of torture, but actually torturing may be two different plans, but even without considering the fact that the Pope is talking to Galileo, the difference does not matter, because the result is the same: if he does not recant his teaching, he will die, whether or not he was tortured. Even though the Pope likes Galileo, as explained before, he cannot go against the church. Another point is the inclusion of a pause in the line. This is a direct indication of hesitation or reluctance. The Pope has to accept Galileo's fate. In this case, since religion is at a greater influence than science, in this case reason, the Pope must submit his own deductions obtained from reasonable thinking under the pressure of his position and role in the church. This is a reflection of Brecht's message for humanity: human progress would be impeded because personal opinion or reasonable opinion must be set aside when one of the sides is focused on too heavily.

In order to further comprehend the decision of the Pope and the Inquisitor, Brecht's history has to be analyzed. In general, Brecht's works contain an "extreme left-wing ideology" (Magill 39-440). In addition, his work *Galileo*

was one of few that Brecht wrote during his time of exile, having been exiled because when “the Nazis came to power in 1933, Brecht and his family fled from Germany to Denmark” (Pierce). Glahn describes this time as well. He writes, “[the] first version of *Galileo* [was finished] in 1938 at a time when Germany was descending further into darkness and civilization’s progress and rationality were to be employed in unprecedented mass destruction” (182-183). He continues by explaining the comparisons of *Galileo* as a work “entirely of Brecht’s imagination,” where the “Inquisition bears obvious resemblance to the Nazis” and Galileo’s struggle against science and religion, or the “barbarism of world rationality,” is a reflection of the “Stalinist regime” as well as the “forces of a capitalist culture industry” (183). Therefore, *Galileo* is not simply an account of Galileo Galilei’s struggles, but also a reflection of struggles in Brecht’s own life. With that in mind, the Pope and the Inquisitor’s actions can be analyzed differently. The Pope’s inability to go against the church is a parallel to the “barbarism of world rationality.” Brecht creates an imaginary past world when religion had greater influence than reason, where civilization is dehumanized by a “world rationality,” in which if a person’s opinion did not resonate with the world’s opinion, they would either be punished by the Inquisition or ignored. This is the barbaric nature that Glahn refers to: this type of thinking does not promote the creation of new ideas or opinions and is the backward nature that Brecht was trying to warn humanity against. This is also emphasized in the character of the Inquisitor. When the Inquisitor argues to the Pope, he removes himself from the argument and makes it about the church as a whole and God. The church and God are the same as the “world rationality,” as mentioned, in the parallel of the Pope. In the way that civilization’s rationality faced mass destruction in Brecht’s time, people like the Inquisitor, and the entity of the church, were destroying the rationality of the people in Galileo’s time. The most important parallel is the message Brecht employs. In Galileo’s story, Brecht was warning us against giving the church such power over reason. Keeping in mind his situation at the time and taking into account his other works, Brecht’s work as a whole reflects a message against letting the government have greater power than the individual. With the parallel

and the messages of the works as a whole, Brecht is warning humanity against the unequal distribution of power, because this will ultimately impede humanity’s progress.

Carl Sagan’s work introduces and tackles the problem in a manner similar to Brecht’s work. In both works, the conflicts between characters represent a clashing of ideologies and bodies of thought, and they likewise have connections to their own lives, as a parallel to consequences of unequal power distribution in real life. In Carl Sagan’s work *Contact*, the religious figure that appears before Ellie is Palmer Joss. The most notable scene for their interaction involves a Foucault pendulum. Ellie, in arguing against religion, uses the symbol of the pendulum as a test of faith. Ellie states her “faith says that the amplitude of a free pendulum [...] can never increase” asking Joss if he “would be willing [...] to stand a foot closer [...] and pray to God to shorten the swing” (Sagan 98). The juxtaposition of science and religion reveals an argument against religion. However, in choosing this example, Ellie presupposes that God does not exist, so that the law of gravity is a scientific concept void of any religious influence. This example shows the counter, where science has a greater influence than religion. The argument is sound, in that there is evidence, but there is a flaw with the presupposition. Sagan is using this as a warrant against a soulless science, one without taking in to consideration a God.

Through another character, Hadden, Sagan uses another example to develop this idea of science without a soul. Hadden explains to Ellie that some religious people “think this planet is an experiment” because God “is always fixing and poking, messing around,” and ultimately this “speaks of [God’s] incompetence,” that God is a “sloppy manufacturer” (160). Hadden does not believe in God because he sees the world as imperfect. By removing God’s supposed contribution from the laws of nature and science in general, he places science over religion. In this sense, Hadden can make claims about the imperfection in design of the world. By removing God, he no longer focuses on the big picture, but details, without taking into consideration whether or not the underlying principles that govern the world, which he sees and takes as “incompetence,” are designed perfectly.

Within this example and the example before, by using a presupposition to remove God or religion from science, Hadden can claim all he wants about what he thinks about his God. However, this would cause Hadden to be caught in a circle, for he never gets any truth about God without taking into account every aspect of the argument. In this case, Hadden impedes his own striving for truth about the universe by removing religion from science. This is not, however, making a claim that God is responsible for the world, but rather, that making a presupposition for such an idea is specifically what Sagan warns against, for it limits one's ability to grow.

In order to further examine the idea that Sagan is using *Contact* also as a message against placing science over religion, Ellie's relation to Sagan has to be defined. Specifically, in Ellie's childhood, Ellie sought out not just how something works, but why it does. Ellie, in taking apart a radio, asks a number of questions: "Are all of those tubes really necessary? What would happen if you removed them one at a time" (3)? Ellie also asks Mr. Weisbrod "how could anybody know that the decimals go on and on forever" and "why? How do you know? How can you count the decimals forever" (6)? The relentless questioning reveals innocence, but on the other hand, an attention to detail. The childlike innocence reflected by Ellie in trying to learn about the world in not just why it worked, but how it worked, was also exhibited by Sagan in his early childhood. At the age of eight, Sagan had researched stars, and he eventually studied at the University of Chicago in 1951, at sixteen years old (Gorman 3590). Connections between Ellie's personality and Sagan continue, where Sagan had a "mixture of hubris and enthusiasm" as a graduate student (Impey). There is a connection between Sagan's early years and Ellie's early years, most notably, before she had experienced alien contact. The connection between Ellie and Sagan is important because Ellie in the previous example had thrust away someone's opinion because she placed all of her importance on science and none on religion.

To further elaborate on this idea, Ann Druyan, Carl Sagan's wife, talks about an account of Sagan testifying about teaching creationism in public schools. She writes,

He had given up his daytime job and realized the

error of what he was doing. It was only because Carl was so patient and so willing to hear the other person out. He did it with such kindness and then, very gently but without compromising, laid out all of the things that were wrong with what this guy thought was true. That is a lesson that I wish that all of us in our efforts to promote skepticism could learn. Because I know that very often the anger that I feel when confronting this kind of thinking makes me want to start cutting off the other person. But to do so is to abandon all hope of changing minds. (Druyan 34-35)

Druyan's specific diction of "compromising" and "abandon" reflect the very thing Sagan warns against with the example of Joss. To further this idea, she says she would have cut the other person off before, but having met Sagan, she knows the importance of not doing so. Again, for Sagan to have made a connection to Ellie, and this change in mentality after the alien contact, Sagan is stressing the importance of this principle through the development of Ellie as a person. The favoring of one side would impede people from developing internally and ultimately would impede humanity as a whole from developing.

As previously mentioned, Sagan was not making a claim about God. However, Sagan's own standpoint on science and religion can be explained through Ellie. When Ellie first receives the alien transmission, Ellie proceeds carefully, as she has her doubts: "It dovetailed perfectly with human fears and pretensions [...] We wanted to believe it too badly" (Sagan 34). Ellie's enthusiasm to wanting real alien contact mirrors Sagan holding "a hope that there are civilizations out there waiting to discover us, or us them" (Bohlin). Sagan was not an atheist; he simply didn't want to commit to a God without evidence (Achenbach). In the same way Ellie argues Joss that "there isn't compelling evidence for God [...] or that he doesn't" (Sagan 97). Ellie "wanted" it "badly," but she realizes it is "pretensions," Sagan is promoting a skepticism that allows a balance of science and religion, reason and doubt. In this way, *Contact* not only gives examples of an unbalanced scale of science and religion, but also Sagan's life example, in which he changes to be more accepting of other ideas, and it

provides a way to correct the imbalance, so as to remove limitation for humanity's development.

The connection between *Galileo* and *Contact* is important. *Galileo* is a story written based on a past story about Galileo Galilei. On the other hand, *Contact* is a story about the modern to future world. Yet, both explore this idea that one should not place religion or science above one another. The importance about this is due to the fact that even from the past to the present, and even to the hypothetical future, this problem exists, and this problem has yet to be fully solved. This stresses the importance of the message that these two works have about the balance between science and religion. Brecht's use of the interaction between the Inquisitor and the Pope in *Galileo* and Carl Sagan's use of Palmer Joss and Hadden in relation to Ellie in *Contact* help stress the importance of not putting either science or religion over one another. The examples the works provide show how putting one over another had a negative impact on the development of humanity, and they show the flaws in the rationalities they respectively carry. These works not only tell how, but explain why, through examples that relate to real life. Through reading these works, one can learn how to balance these two bodies of thought and use that balance to help not only humanity develop, but themselves, as well.

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Evaluation: *Kenji's paper is an excellent example of a research paper that is used to examine a complex idea: what is the relationship between science and religion? This question was once posed by Albert Einstein, and Kenji considers a resolution to this question in this paper when he argues that favoring either side limits progress. Kenji then does excellent close readings from two works we read in class: Contact and Galileo. His analysis reveals ideas that I had not considered when I was teaching them. In addition, his secondary source quotations are well integrated into his prose. Overall, this paper is a wonderful example of how secondary research helps deepen our understanding and supports our ideas.*

A Review of the Harper Mobile App

Heenal Patel; Uzma Fatima; Emma Block; Buki Abioye

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 Harper Mobile App and suggest opportunities for improvement.

Evaluation: The website this team developed is outstanding based on the level of organization and consistency across the project, the level of teamwork demonstrated, and the quality of recommendations. Harper's IT department was very pleased with the recommendations, and they intended to apply as many of them as they could to subsequent versions of the Harper Mobile App.

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Introduction

In response to the overwhelming ubiquity of smart phones among students, colleges and universities have shifted communication to mobile platforms. College mobile apps provide a valuable resource to the college community, offering features like campus maps, dining options, transportation, course catalogs, and more. Maintaining the same quality of information and navigation that is found on a full website can be difficult for a mobile platform. Just as any new technology does, it will have some growing pains. The purpose of this website is to review the Harper Mobile App and identify the growing pains, determine ways in which the app could improve, and provide recommendations that will maximize value to the user.

Methods

This review was conducted by four students at Harper College. Each student reviewed several of the main features provided on the app. Factors that were taken into consideration are how well each feature met its intended purpose, ease-of-use, appearance, and the perceived value to the user. A competitor analysis was also conducted to gain a more well-rounded perspective of college and university mobile apps, and discover which features could be integrated into the Harper Mobile App.



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- **Offices & Directory**: a review of the Offices and Directory features.
- **Maps & Construction**: a review of the Maps and Construction feature
- **MyHarper**: a review of the MyHarper feature.
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- **Bookstore & Email**: a recommendation to add Bookstore and Email features.
- **Course Registration & Scholarships**: a recommendation to add Course Registration and Scholarships features.
- **Competitor Analysis**: a comparative analysis of the Harvard, Ohio State, University of Virginia, and Harper Mobile Apps.
- **Review Summary**: a summary of all recommendations.

Conclusion

The Harper Mobile App is very effective in meeting the basic needs of the user. However, there are several ways that each feature can be changed to improve the convenience, appearance, and overall benefit to the Harper College Community. These recommendations are included in each feature's page and outlined in the Review Summary.

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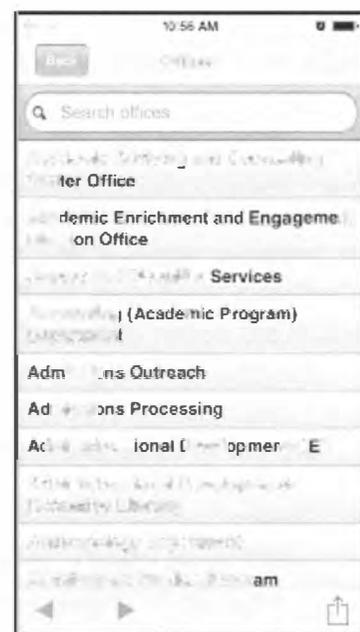
Introduction

The Harper Mobile App has a Directory and Offices features that lets users search for people and office locations on campus.

Description

The Directory and Offices features in the Harper Mobile App allow users to directly enter information into the search bar provided within the app. Users can use the Directory feature to search for faculty and staff and the Offices feature to search for different locations on campus. While using the Directory feature, the search result brings forth all the information about the selected faculty member including their title, department, email, and phone number. Users also have the option to add the faculty/staff member to the Favorites list within the feature or add them to their personal address book. There is also a history button at the bottom which has a list of recent searches.

In the Offices feature, all office locations are alphabetically displayed on the page. The user can choose to scroll up or down to find the location they want or type the location into the search box for quick access. The search result displays a photo, the hours of operation and the contact information for that selected location.



Pros

The Directory's ease of emailing faculty directly within the app without having to log into Blackboard or MyHarper is great. Also, you do not need to enter all the characters in a name in the search box. All that's needed is just three characters and the system will pull all the names that begin with those three letters. Having phone numbers and hours of operations available in the Offices icon is very useful as well.

Cons

The search bar does not allow for auto fill of text when using the search

Recommendation

The Directory feature can be made more user friendly by allowing for an auto-fill feature in its search bar. This suggestion is of low priority, however, if the exact spelling of the name is not known, the auto-fill feature will save the user time and make the Directory feature more efficient.

Conclusion

The Directory and Offices features are great tools in the Harper Mobile App and they are both easy to use. Searching for faculty and staff as well as different office locations on campus has never been easier. All the information the user needs is at their finger tips including phone numbers and email addresses for staff, hours of operation and location numbers for offices.

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Maps & Construction

Introduction

The Harper College Mobile App allows users access to Maps and Construction updates as part of the application process.

Description

The Construction icon directs users to the Harper College website about ongoing campust construction. This includes access to a mobile-friendly version of the most recent construction updates. This is provided

through the college and streamlined into the mobile app via the Construction icon.

The Maps icon in the Harper Mobile App gives users access to an interactive map of the campus. There is a search bar at the top where users can input their destination and the map generates a search result by directing the user to the desired location, which is marked with a red pin. The user has the option of selecting the pin and receiving more information about that location or adding the location as a bookmark.

Pros

Both the Construction and the Maps icon are easy to view and read. The search feature in Maps is very helpful because it can direct the user to their desired location. Also, the Maps icon saves time by allowing ease of access



to phone numbers, and other information about the building.

Cons

The Construction page redirects the user to the Harper College website rather than being native to the application itself. The Maps icon may be more helpful if it could provide walking directions from different places across campus.

Recommendation

Streamline the content for the construction updates as a native part of the application instead of redirecting the user. The Construction icon should give users the option to receive notifications from the Harper Mobile App about construction updates. Consider providing walking directions from one place on campus to another through the Maps icon.

Conclusion

The Construction icon allow users access to up-to-date information regarding campus construction. The text is mobile friendly and easy to read. The Maps icon allows the users access not only to the location of the building, but also provides additional information about that particular building.

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MyHarper

Introduction

The MyHarper feature is the mobile version of the MyHarper student portal available on Harper College's website.

MyHarper is a convenient way for students to view important information including their account balance, grades, and schedule.

Description

The MyHarper icon directs the user to a mobile webpage with four buttons:

MyAccount, MyGrades, MySchedule and Money.



- **MyAccount:** A concise table of charges, payments, and balances for the student's current semester divided by line item (fees and tuition).
- **MyGrades:** A simple list of all the student's completed classes along with the credit hours and grades earned is ordered chronologically by semester.
- **MySchedule:** A list of the current and future classes the student is registered for. The list features the class name, class description, instructor, refund date, withdrawal date, and class times and locations.
- **Money:** Directs the student to an informational page about "loanlook" on the Harper College website. Loanlook is a separate application students may use to manage their loans across multiple devices.

Pros

The MyHarper feature is extremely user-friendly. It is easy to navigate through the different options and the information is concise and easy to understand. For the most part, MyHarper provides the most pertinent information from the student portal and is easy to access via a mobile phone or tablet.

Cons

The MyHarper icon directs the user to a mobile webpage instead of keeping all options native to the application itself. This makes it less visually appealing and cohesive. The Money button is excessive for a mobile app, directing the user to an informational page about a separate app that can manage loans.

Recommendation

All information should be available directly on the application interface instead of connecting to a mobile webpage. This recommendation is of low priority; however, displaying information in a visually appealing manner can give more credibility to the app and could increase the number of users to a degree. Delete the Money button or develop the ability to manage student loans on this app. The Money button is extraneous and misleading, it could be mistaken for account information. Give users the ability to make payments through MyAccount. This could potentially be very useful to busy students, especially given the strict tuition payment deadlines. Display the cumulative GPA on MyGrades. This is an easy fix and would provide the student with valuable information that can be difficult to calculate on their own. Provide a calendar view on MySchedule. This is a convenience for visual students, it can be easier to conceptualize when they have class and when their availability is.

Conclusion

Overall, MyHarper is a great feature for users to quickly and conveniently view important student portal information such as their schedule, grades, and account balance. A few improvements could be made by adding additional features and options and deleting extraneous information.

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Library & Menu

Introduction

The Harper College Mobile App allows users to access Library and Menu information as part of application process.

Description

The Library icon directs users to a mobile-friendly version of the Harper College Library website.

This icon gives users the ability to search for books that are available in the library catalog. Users can search for books by

writing the keywords, title, author subject, and/or ISBN/ISSN. Once the user enters the keyword, the relevant search pertaining to it comes up. It also provides the ability to sort the search in the desired order, for instance, newest first, oldest first and so on. Once the search is complete, the users, can click on the field to check to see if the book is available. The featured icon also allows users to login into their account to access some of the articles when they are off-site. The Menu icon directs users to a mobile-friendly version of Harper College Dining Services website. This includes access to the weekly menu, hours of operation, and other restaurant specialties.

Pros

Both the Library and the Menu icon are easy to view and read. The Library search feature is very helpful when looking for books, because it saves, users the time of



going to the library and looking for it. The Menu feature gives, the users a wide variety of options for meals. The user can access menu information directly on their mobile app instead of, going to the cafeteria to look at it. Also, it lists if the food is suitable for vegan or vegetarian diets. It also provides, the users with a printable summary of nutritional facts, for the food item that they select.

Cons

The Library icon does not have the feature to check out books through the app, instead the user must to go to the library, find the book, and, check it out. The Menu icon does not provide, the users with the cost of the lunch.

Recommendation

The Library icon should provide the facility to hold and checkout books. It should also provide access to the first chapter. The Menu icon should display the cost of each item on the menu.

Conclusion

The Library icon allows access to all the books that are available in the Library, its location, in the app (with a QR number), thus making the work of finding books easier. The Menu icon allows users to access the college menu for each day of the week.

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Courses

Introduction

The Harper mobile app allows users access to the college course catalog through the Courses feature.

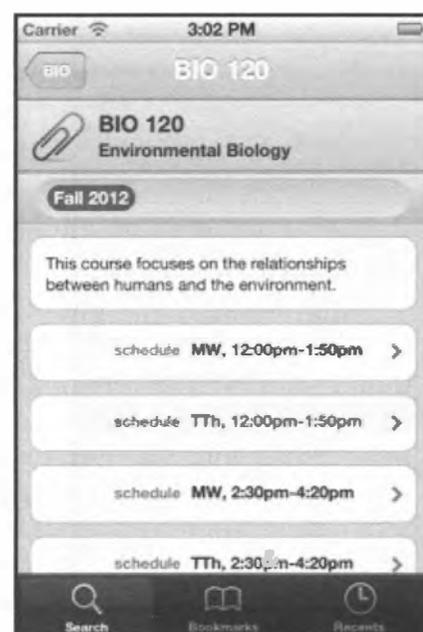
Description

The Courses feature allows users to search for courses by department using the search box or view courses listed alphabetically by department using the

credit or continuing education links provider. Tapping on any department displays all courses including the course's name, number, and title. Furthermore, when a course is selected, there is more information available such as the term the course is offered, the course description, how many credit hours the course is worth, the course ID, days and times, enrollment capacity, instructor, building information, and the option to bookmark the course.

Pros

It's great that Harper Mobile app has the Courses feature available for students and non-students to view courses the college offers. Users can quickly see if a course will be offered for a particular term and having the time and day available is beneficial when deciding on what classes to take.



Cons

The courses feature is not user friendly because it doesn't allow the use of acronyms or abbreviations for some courses in its search box. For example, there were no search results generated when "Health Information Technology" or "HIT" was entered into the search box. The only way to find HIT courses was to guess what text to type in and fortunately, when "health" was entered, all courses related to health were displayed. Also, not all courses offered at Harper are shown and some departments listed do not have any information available on them.

Recommendation

It would be helpful to students for the search box to allow acronyms or abbreviations for all departments/courses. This will be useful to quickly search for courses since most students identify their classes by acronym. Also, allow students to register and withdraw from courses on the app. This would be convenient for busy students who wish to register or withdraw from classes on the go, especially if they know a class will fill up quickly but won't be able to access a computer at the time registration opens.

Conclusion

Overall, the Courses feature is not easy to use and it does not serve all of its intended purpose. However, it is still a convenient tool to have as part of the mobile app.

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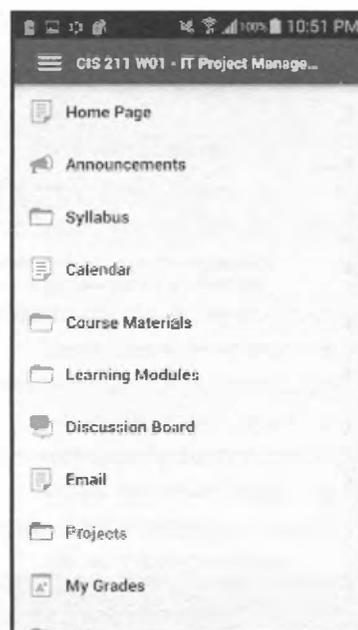
The Harper College Mobile App allows users access to the Blackboard Mobile App link as part of the application process.

Description

The Blackboard icon directs users to the Blackboard Mobile App link where they can download the Blackboard Mobile App separately. The Blackboard Mobile App includes access to a mobile-friendly version of the Blackboard website. Classes are listed with different color schemes, a medium to large text size is used and the order of the classes can be rearranged according to user preference. The user has the option of selecting their desired class and then have individual options available to them. Through this users can check their grades, upload a discussion board post, view other posts and access coursework files.

Pros

Users can receive notifications from the Blackboard Mobile App about grades, announcements and more. The App settings can be customized so the user does not have to repeatedly sign in. The option to download content from the site is available as well, such as powerpoints, study guides and other coursework that the instructor has made available. One other option the Blackboard Mobile App



provides is the ability to access and send emails within the application itself.

Cons

The Blackboard icon in the Harper Mobile App only provides users with a link to download the Blackboard Mobile App. It does not natively run the application within the program.

Recommendation

Streamline the content for the Blackboard icon as a native part of the application instead of redirecting the user to download the Blackboard Mobile App. This recommendation is of medium priority because having this feature available would allow students to have a "one-stop" access point for all college activities.

Conclusion

The Blackboard icon allows users to quickly access the Blackboard Mobile App via a link. The Blackboard Mobile App itself is user friendly, allows for notifications and provides for easy access to grades and coursework.

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Athletics & News

Introduction

The Athletics feature allows users to view news items, schedules, and scores for each sport at Harper College. The News feature allows users to keep up to date on all Harper College related news.

Description

The Athletics feature is divided by sport. Each sport is divided into three tabs: news, schedule, and scores. The schedule displays the opposing team, date, time, and location of each event. Scores displays the score and whether the team won or lost. The News feature displays a list of Harper College related news sorted reverse chronologically. It displays the headline, the first few sentences of the article, and a general idea of when it was posted (1 week ago, 1 month ago, etc.). It also contains a search feature so the user may search for keywords to find articles.

Pros

The Athletics and News features are both very user-friendly. They both have a simple and appealing interface. It is easy to navigate through the different options and the information is concise and easy to understand.



Cons

Though the Hawks mobile website has additional information (which can be accessed by clicking on a news article under the Athletics feature), team rosters and recreation program information are not integrated into the application interface. There is no calendar view of all sporting events. The News feature doesn't display exact dates on all articles. At the top of the screen there is a drop down menu with 3 options: all news, latest news, and Harper news. All three of these options show the exact same articles.

Recommendation

Consider including a team roster as one of the tabs under each sport. The team roster can provide users with information about the players, their position, and stats. This would provide valuable information to family, friends, and fans before going to see a game. Also, consider including information about the recreation programs, hours of operation, and facilities at Harper College. Finally, a calendar with every sporting event would be helpful for users that are just looking for something to go see on a particular night and want to see all the events in one place. For the News feature, display exact dates on all articles, the additional information could be useful to users. Delete the drop down menu from the top of the screen, it is extraneous and will only confuse the user.

Conclusion

Overall, Athletics is a great feature for users to quickly and conveniently view Harper Hawks information such as news, schedule, and score. A few improvements could be made by adding additional features for the user's convenience.

The News feature is simple, user-friendly, and performs its intended purpose well; however, a few small adjustments would make it more useful.

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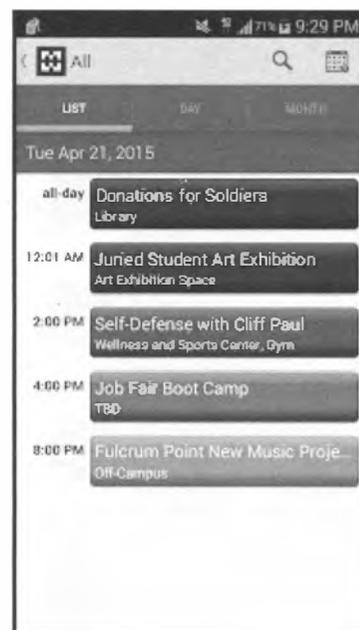
Introduction

The Harper College Mobile App allows users to access Events information as well as the Academic Calendar as part of application process.

Description

The events listed in the Events feature are divided into different categories like alumni, career programs, theater, etc. Also, the feature gives users the ability to view all the upcoming and

currents events within the selected category. The events are displayed in three different formats: list, day, and month. The day view lists all of the events in an hourly day view format, whereas the month view displays all the events in a monthly calendar form. The Academic Calendar provides users with access to the Harper College 2014–2017 academic calendar. This academic calendar is available via the Harper College webpage and is streamlined in through the Harper College Mobile App via the Academic Calendar icon. The Academic Calendar is divided into sections first by year and then by Fall, Spring, and Summer semesters. The feature provides users with information about major events like semester start and end dates, college holidays, and final exam and graduation dates.



Pros

The Events feature is very useful to users because it allows them to see the current and upcoming events. Users can click on a specific event to see additional information like starting and ending times, a description, location, and even the contact information of the event coordinator. At the bottom of all event pages users have the option of adding that event to their Calendar. The Academic Calendar feature is helpful to users because it provides quick and easy access to important dates throughout the semester. Users also have the option of asking questions by selecting the Chat Live feature. Also available to users is additional information via links, towards the bottom of the page, such as academic areas of study, degrees the school offers, a fast track program, transfer information, and more.

Cons

The Events feature does not have the ability to send notifications to users if the event is pertaining to their career. The Events feature may be more useful in hindsight, if the events can be linked with the news feature as a follow up of what occurred at the event. The Academic Calendar feature would be even more productive if users can save the dates listed in the Academic Calendar and add that information to their personal calendar on their device.

Recommendation

The Events feature should allow users to sign-up for the events and users should be notified of similar upcoming events with a reminder. Also, the Academic Calendar feature should allow users to add pertinent dates to their personal calendar. This recommendation is of medium priority because it would engage users to interact more with the App and allow them to stay up-to-date regarding college events.

Conclusion

The Events icon provides users with information about events relating to Harper College. The Academic Calendar feature is a convenient tool for students to easily find important academic dates.

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Transit & Emergency

Introduction

The Harper College Mobile App allows users to access Transit and Emergency information as part of application process.

Description

The Transit icon directs users to the Harper College Transit mobile-friendly version. The feature is divided into three different categories: Dial-A-Ride, PACE Bus Departure Times and PACE Bus Schedule.

The first category Dial-A-Ride, (also known as DART) directs users to the Village of Schaumburg home page. It provides information on door-to-door access to any location within the border of Schaumburg with the exception of Harper College in Palatine. It also provides users with a phone number to schedule their ride, reduced fare eligibility, and the cost of using the service.

The second category PACE Bus Departure Times, directs users to the PACE bus home page with five tabs: Home, Stop Times, Maps, Schedule, and Notifications. Some of the tabs has drop down menus with additional information on the buses departure times from Harper College, along with its stop location on the campus. The third category PACE Bus Schedule, displays weekday bus schedule of route 696 that runs from Randhurst to Harper College. The Emergency icon feature directs users to the Harper



College Emergency dials; which allows users to call, Harper police through their phone, and also provide users with an option to sign-up for Harper College Emergency alerts.

Pros

The Transit and Emergency features are very user friendly. The information about bus services such as the departure times is always updated according to the bus schedule. The Emergency feature provides speed dials for 911 and Harper Police.

Cons

The Transit icon directs users to two different pages to obtain information. When signing up for emergency alerts the feature directs user to the Harper College page instead of automatic sign-in within the application process.

Recommendation

The Transit icon should provide information on bus services native to the application. In the Emergency icon the sign-up for emergency alerts should also be native to the application process.

Conclusion

The Transit feature provides users with information about bus services to and from Harper College. The Emergency feature allow users to dial 911 through their phones and also provides the option to sign-up for Harper College Emergency alerts.

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Bookstore & Email

Introduction

The addition of a Bookstore and Email feature within the Harper Mobile App would be beneficial to users.



Go Forward*

Description

There is currently no feature on the Harper Mobile App that gives users access to the Harper College Bookstore. The Bookstore is an important part of the student experience; it is where they can buy textbooks, Harper College merchandise, and graduation materials.

The Harper College email address function is currently not integrated with the MyHarper feature on the Harper Mobile App. The integrated email function would provide users with the ability to send, receive, attach and compose emails within the application itself. Currently, users need to log into Blackboard or onto the Harper College website in order to access these functions.

Pros

The recommended feature would be beneficial because it would allow users to collect information regarding textbook availability, and pricing. Additionally, users would have quick and easy access to bookstore contact information, location and the hours of operation. Another beneficial feature would be the option that allows students to purchase books and other merchandise through the Application itself. Also, reminders about rental due dates and access to course textbook lists and upcoming promotional offers would increase user demand for this feature. The feature can also help users by allowing for quick access to FAQ/Help information.

An email feature on the Harper Mobile App is of high priority because users access their Harper College email address almost on a daily basis to communicate with students, faculty and staff. Allowing users with quick access to their Harper email address would be beneficial because it would allow convenient and effective communication.

Cons
These



changes do not have any expected negative outcomes.

Recommendation

Consider adding a Bookstore and Email feature to the Harper Mobile App. The Bookstore feature would offer users with mobile friendly access to the Harper College Bookstore website. Information would be provided through the application about featured products, graduation, textbook and course material information. The App would allow users to search for textbooks for the current/upcoming semester by entering in additional information like the term, department, course, and section number. The app needs email integration so that students can get all of their emails in one central place, school or personal, without having to log into different places.

Conclusion

The addition of Bookstore and Email features within the Harper College Mobile App would be very beneficial to users.

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Course Registration & Scholarships

Introduction

The addition of a Course Registration and Scholarships feature within the Harper Mobile App would be beneficial to users.



Description

Although there is a Courses feature on the Harper Mobile App, it does not give users the ability to register and withdraw from courses. There is currently no feature on the Harper Mobile App that gives users access to seek out and apply for scholarships. Scholarships are an important part of student life. Besides federal grants, scholarships are a great way for students to earn money for tuition and textbooks.

Pros

The benefits of being able to register and withdraw from classes on the go are significant. If a student knows that they will not have access to a computer at the time of registration and the class fills up quickly, the capability to register from their smartphone would be very valuable. Withdrawal dates have shorter deadlines, so having the additional option of withdrawing from a smartphone or tablet would be beneficial to busy students. The Scholarships feature would be beneficial because it would allow users to look for scholarships. Additionally, users would have quick and easy access to all the scholarships deadlines, eligibility, additional requirements and awards. Another beneficial feature would be the option that allows students to sign-up for scholarships.

The students will be able to update their profile information and fill out the general application without needing to sign in on a computer.

Cons

One negative of a course registration feature on the mobile app is the potential for students to mistakenly or rashly register or withdraw from a class.

Recommendation

Include the ability to register and withdraw from courses through the Courses feature. Many students would find this capability advantageous in the educational planning process. To help mitigate the risk of mistakenly withdrawing or registering, make sure there is a verification process before being able to register or withdraw. Consider adding a Scholarship feature to the Harper Mobile App. The Scholarship feature would offer users with mobile friendly access to the Harper College Scholarship website. Information would be provided through the application about current scholarships, deadlines, eligibility, additional requirements and awards.

Conclusion

The addition of Course Registration and Scholarships within the Harper Mobile App would be provide many advantages to users. The ability to register for courses and view scholarship information is very important to students attending Harper.

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Competitor Analysis

Introduction

The purpose of this competitor analysis is to investigate highly ranked college and university mobile apps to identify advantageous features that are not currently available on the Harper Mobile App and determine whether they can be integrated into the app. The competitors were chosen based on several articles regarding the best college mobile apps available in the market. For the purpose of this analysis, three specific apps that were among the top ranked will be compared, including the Harvard Mobile App, Ohio State Mobile App, and the University of Virginia Mobile App.

Harvard Mobile App

Of the three apps, Harvard Mobile App's user interface is the most similar to the Harper Mobile App. The home screen is populated with simple, eye-



catching icons. A few things make the Harvard Mobile App's interface slightly better. First is the search box available at the top and second is that the features are limited to only one page, unlike Harper's two. Features that make Harvard's mobile app stand out are Admissions, and Alerts which provides users with an accessible list of all current alerts.

Ohio State Mobile App

The home page of the Ohio State Mobile App boasts a

user-friendly, social feel. Icons representing different features are available at the top. The app has a News/Event feed, an "image of the Day" that displays user submitted images, and a list of parking, food, and shopping options near the user's current location. Also available is a self-guided Tour feature and an Academics feature, which allows users to search for courses by program, building, course title, instructor, etc.

University of Virginia Mobile App

Possibly the best of the three is the University of Virginia's Mobile App. The App provides users with an easy-to-use, yet sophisticated interface. Upon first use, users can select their status (student, alumnus, parent, etc.) and the App's information is tailored to that selection. The home page provides users with a news feed containing pictures, events, news, and athletic score updates. Features are available through the menu icon as a collapsible list. Stand-out features include: augmented reality Maps, Health System, and Clubs.



Recommendation

Several interface options and features from these competitors can be implemented onto the Harper Mobile App. At a minimum, the app would benefit from eliminating the second page of the home screen and combining features into broader categories. Additionally, consider including a news feed like the University of Virginia for the best user experience. To provide greater convenience and usability, include additional features like Admissions, Alerts, and a Courses feature with greater search capability. Also, consider including an augmented reality Maps feature allowing for user navigation, a Health System feature which offers information about health services offered at Harper, and a Clubs feature.

Conclusion

Considering the prestige of the three universities detailed above, the Harper Mobile App stood up surprisingly well in comparison. The Harper Mobile App is a great app for most basic student needs; however, the other apps have few useful features that Harper could benefit from.

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Review Summary

Introduction

The Harper Mobile App is very user friendly and provides a good array of features. Included below are a few recommendations that the App could benefit from. For the full review of each feature with justifications for each recommendation, navigate to the feature's page by clicking on the title links.

Directory

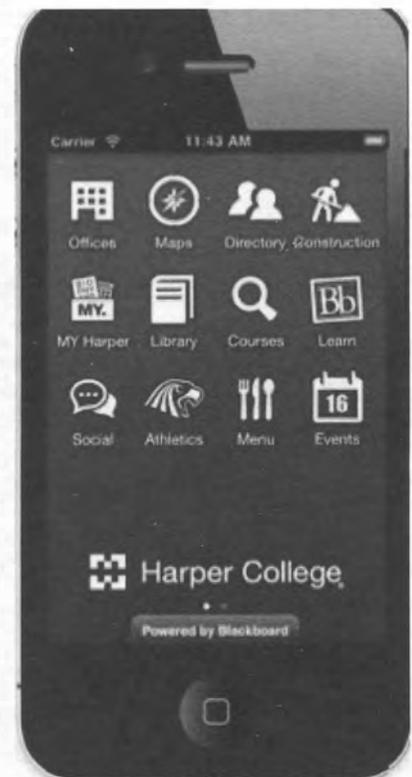
The Directory feature can be made more user friendly by allowing for an auto-fill feature in its search bar.

Maps & Construction

The Construction icon should give users the option to receive notifications from the Harper Mobile App about construction updates. Consider providing walking directions from one place on campus to another through the Maps icon.

MyHarper

Delete the Money button or develop the ability to manage student loans on this app. Give users the ability to make payments through MyAccount. Display the cumulative GPA on MyGrades. Provide a calendar view on MySchedule.



Library & Menu

Allow users to check out books through the Library feature. The Menu icon should display the cost of each item on the menu.

Courses

It would be helpful to users for the search box to allow acronyms or abbreviations for all departments/courses. Also, allow users to register and withdraw from courses on the App.

Athletics & News

Consider including a team roster as one of the tabs under each sport. Furthermore, consider adding a calendar that displayed every sporting event. Also, display exact dates on all news articles.

Events & Calendar

The Events feature should allow users to sign-up for the events and they should be notified of similar upcoming events with a reminder. Allow users to easily add dates from the Calendar feature to their personal calendar.

Bookstore & Email

Consider adding a Bookstore and Email feature to the Harper Mobile App. Information would be provided through the application about featured products, graduation, textbook and course material information. The App needs email integration so that users can get all their emails, school and personal, in one central place.

Scholarships

Add a Scholarships feature which would offer users with mobile friendly access to the Harper College Scholarship website.

Additional

recommendation across , of the features is to integrate all information onto the app's interface instead the er to webpage. he App would benefit eliminating the security page of the home screen and atures into broader categories. Also, to provide greater convenience and usability, include additional features like Admissions, Alerts, and a Courses feature with greater search capability.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Harper Mobile App is well designed and allows for the completion of many tasks. If the recommendations listed above are taken into consideration, the Harper College Community would greatly benefit.

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- Image: <https://www.cfsarasota.org/breivebgrantsscholarships/scholarships.aspx>

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- App ranking: <http://patrickpowers.net/2010/09/more-of-the-best-college-and-university-iphone-apps/>
- App ranking: <http://www.thebestcolleges.org/the-10-most-innovative-official-school-smartphone-apps/>
- App review & image: Harvard Mobile App (Android)&
- App review & image: Ohio State Mobile App (Android)
- App review & image: University of Virginia Mobile App (Android)a

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- Image: <http://www.harpercollege.edu/harpermobile/mobileplatforms.jpg>

Social Justice Education: African-American Vernacular English in Schools

Megan Peterson

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 1996, African American Vernacular English (AAVE or Ebonics) became the center of a media and political firestorm as a result of one school district's efforts to better meet the needs of its students. The Oakland school district, acknowledging the contemporary linguistic view of AAVE, decided that building on students' use of AAVE could build a bridge to Standard American English (SAE), which carries the most prestige and is useful for purposes of code-switching. The notion of using more than one variety of English is a popular and ordinary occurrence and allows an individual to maintain language important to their identity and also make use of other forms of language that may be useful in other scenarios. Contrary to much of the debate that followed Oakland's new policy, the district was right in their acknowledgement of AAVE as a variety of English. The resolution acknowledged an extremely important aspect of their African American students' identity, made an effort to increase their achievement in school while also practicing code-switching, and created an opportunity for teachers to carry out socially just pedagogy.

In 1996, the Oakland, California School Board passed a resolution that declared Ebonics to be the first language (L1) of their African-American students, specified Ebonics as a language rather than a dialect, and maintained that they would use Ebonics as a bridge to teaching their students Standard Academic English

(SAE) (Baron 5). The announcement of the resolution was the result of data collected by the district that showed great discrepancies in achievement for African American students:

...African-American students who comprised 53% of students in the district, were over-represented in special education classes and under-represented in gifted and talented classes. Sixty-four percent of students retained, or made to repeat a grade, were African-American; 67% of students classified as truants were African-American; 80% of suspended students were African-American; 19% of African-American high-school seniors failed to graduate; and African-American students had an overall grade point average of 1.80 on a 4.0 scale, the lowest grade point average for any ethnic or racial group in the district. (Baron 7)

The resolution was made public in December, which is typically a time when the news cycle is slow; as a result, the news media quickly had a role in creating a media firestorm concerning Ebonics. Eventually, the resolution would be modified twice, with the school withdrawing the claim of Ebonics as a language and specifically stating that the school would not be teaching Ebonics, but rather use the knowledge students had of their first language to draw connections to mainstream English (Baron). The purpose of the Ebonics Resolution was twofold: it drew attention to language politics and language pedagogy. The media firestorm that resulted drew attention to Ebonics, turned the resolution into a political issue, and unfortunately distracted from the original purpose of the resolution.

The declaration of Ebonics "as a language, not a dialect" made the resolution easy fodder for the news media (Baron 7). Many respected media sources weighed in on their perceptions of the resolution, almost all with extremely poor views of the resolution and of Ebonics. "The *New York Times* called it a 'blunder' to give 'black slang' a place of honor in the classroom....By labeling them as linguistic foreigners in their own country, the new policy will actually stigmatize African-American children..." (Baron 7). A journalist for the *Detroit News* "said African Americans should not be encouraged to cling to a dialect that is bound to increase their alienation

from their brothers and sisters in Africa, their fellow Americans and the rest of the English speaking world” (Baron 7). The discussion in the media eventually gave way to a discussion of Ebonics and the resolution in higher political office.

Many politicians stated their opinions on the resolution and made official efforts to counteract the measure. One representative proposed a bill to prohibit teaching “any nonstandard English” in public schools, another sought to prevent federal monies for any programs that recognized “Ebonics is a legitimate language,” and California’s state senator proposed a bill to ban teaching Ebonics in all state schools (Baron 7). All of these political measures were in efforts to reduce the impact of the resolution and any power given to Ebonics that would legitimize its use. The political fervor was successful in defeating the true aims of the resolution and also reduced a legitimate dialect to the stigmatized slang that has been its typical status level in the mainstream culture.

The linguistic view of Ebonics is quite the opposite of the discussion in the mainstream media and political circles after Oakland’s resolution. “Among linguists, there is no such thing as a good language or a bad one...” (Fields 9). Some of the media hostility toward the resolution specifically related to the declaration of Ebonics as a language rather than a dialect. There is not a clear consensus on this among linguists, and “it is unlikely that a consensus will ever be reached about whether Ebonics is a language or a dialect” (Fields 6). Perhaps more importantly, many linguists felt that this argument was irrelevant and distracted from the larger purpose of the resolution:

The point...is to be able to speak the language of wider communication and yet to be able to talk to your mom, and not be embarrassed by your mom or to embarrass your mom. There is evidence to support the suggestion that Ebonics can be used, as Oakland intends, to help provide a transition for students who speak it into speaking and writing standard American English. (Fields 6)

Any discussion about the resolution that did not have to do with the efforts to increase student achievement

simply became an effort to derail the conversation from best practices in education to one of language and power. Other linguists remained in firm agreement with Oakland’s declaration of Ebonics as a language: “At this late stage in history, how is it that people are still missing the beat on Black Language? Yeah, uhm, saying “language” cause I think it is a language. Anyway, as the linguist Weinreich said over half a century ago, the only difference between a language and a dialect is who’s got the army and the navy!” (Smitherman 28). Regardless of the language versus dialect debate, professional linguists could agree on the validity of the resolution. The Linguistic Society of America noted that “...the board’s decision to recognize the vernacular of African American students in teaching them Standard English is linguistically and pedagogically sound” (Jackson 23). The linguistic community was supportive of the resolution in light of how important language is to identity.

The media campaign against the resolution distracted from the true purpose of recognizing the importance of Ebonics as the L1 of Oakland’s African American students: “See, when you lambast the home language that kids bring to school, you ain’t just dissin dem, you talking about they mommas!” (Smitherman 28). Rather than devaluing Ebonics, the resolution made an effort to recognize this important aspect of identity. Language used between parents and their children or between intimate family members is “language of love.” Devaluing home language “can undermine a child’s self-esteem, hinder the learning process,” and fail to recognize and then legitimate an important aspect of identity (Fields 7). This can set the stage for low academic achievement. “... Some teachers reject black students who speak Ebonics and commonly characterize them as dumb or inferior, thereby causing some of them to rebel against any efforts to be taught Standard English; one unfortunate outcome of this is any black student’s characterization of academic achievement as a white – not a black – ‘thing’” (Jackson 23). The resolution’s efforts to recognize Ebonics as a language created an atmosphere where Ebonics would be regarded with prestige.

The media and political firestorm highlighted the poor regard typically associated with Ebonics. This is

not the view that the Oakland school district wanted their students to internalize. The resolution sought to highlight that, “Ebonics simply expresses the common variety of sights and sounds of the African American language. It is the extension of the oral tradition of African people, it is used among African people to communicate, and it serves a very useful purpose” (Fields 7). If language is the most fundamental aspect of culture, it seems the only reasonable stance resolution could promote with regard to Ebonics is acknowledgement. If the Oakland school district could recognize the importance of language and Ebonics as a bridge to teaching mainstream English, not only would students feel that their culture was something of value, but they would be able to use what they already know as a tool for academic achievement.

The original intent of Oakland’s resolution was to put into practice methods of teaching that would use the L1 of students as a way to learn mainstream English. This would include making use of a very common linguistic tool: code switching. “This view made sense to the public, since most speakers of Ebonics tend to move seamlessly among several varieties of English, a phenomenon known as code-switching, and since non-Ebonics speakers can usually understand Ebonics without too much difficulty, if they make an attempt to” (Baron 12). Teachers would have a general understanding of Ebonics and also have an opportunity for additional training that would allow them to help students recognize the common features of Ebonics and mainstream English. Teachers also had access to a Standard English Proficiency program where they could learn more about Ebonics and learn methods to help students with code-switching (Fields 1).

Not only would Ebonics serve as a bridge to mainstream English for purposes of academic achievement, but students would have the opportunity to practice the art of code-switching and recognize its value in other aspects of their lives. “In many situations, including college admissions and job interviews, students will need to understand ‘the language of power’ in the dominant mainstream culture in American society and the culture of power” (Whitney 68). The practice of code-switching

would not discount the value of Ebonics but instead highlight its cultural value and provide students with access to other “codes of power” by developing “...the ability to choose the language variety appropriate to the time, place, audience, and communicative purpose” (Whitney 67). The Oakland school district never had intentions to teach Ebonics but rather put it in a place of esteem and use its structure, already familiar to its speakers, for the purposes of learning to code-switch to the variety of English dominant in the mainstream culture.

All of the efforts that Oakland’s resolution sought out to accomplish—recognize Ebonics as L1, reaffirm cultural identity, and teach students mainstream English by code-switching—represent best practices in educational pedagogy. “Teachers really are cultural brokers who have the opportunity to connect the familiar to the unknown” (Ayers, et al 125). Affirming Ebonics as the home language of their students affirms an important aspect of culture and allows teachers to teach the value of mainstream English in particular settings.

To achieve success in mainstream American society, bicultural students need to acquire mainstream English. But in exposing bicultural students to Standard English, we also need to expose the relationships of power inherent in these forms of discourse. When Standard English is discussed as “proper,” society fails to acknowledge the cultural hegemony implicit in this definition. An effective teacher cultivates a classroom in which all student voices are valued. (Oakes and Lipton 99)

A classroom that is socially just reflects and genuinely values the diversity of its students and has teachers that are interested in pursuing equitable pedagogical practices. “In addition, the total school context must come to accept whatever students have learned and experienced as legitimate knowledge....make the classroom a welcoming and psychologically safe environment for speakers of [other] languages...[then] the teacher tacitly promotes bilingualism and biliteracy (Ladson-Billings 24). From the position of promoting equity in the classroom, the Ebonics resolution was the right thing to do. While many individuals in the media and politics regard Ebonics with

disdain, it is the role of the teacher to best meet the needs of their students. Kimberly Min, a third-grade teacher, states,

Mainstream Academic English (MAE) is not only considered the standard language, it is also a code of power. African American Language (AAL) is also a legitimate form of language, with a sociocultural history that is culturally significant for African Americans. The majority of my students use AAL, which most teachers deem as slang or as an unacceptable form of English. There is a great deal of neglect in terms of language acquisition because many teachers do not acknowledge that African Americans are standard language learners. I counter this by allowing my students to express themselves in both AAL and MAE, while I teach the contexts in which to use both languages appropriately. Once students have an understanding of when it is appropriate to use either AAL or MAE, they are successful “code-switchers.” (qtd. in Oakes and Lipton 202)

Although the controversy over the Ebonics resolution created by the media and perpetuated by politicians brought stereotypical views on Ebonics and its speakers to the forefront, it was a call to arms for teachers. Teachers have the responsibility of acknowledging the cultural identity of their students and giving it a place of honor in the classroom. In doing this, teachers can only help

students achieve their goals and ensure academic success. The discussion of the resolution in the media also brought attention to the social construction of definitions of language and how this directly relates to power. Practicing code-switching in the classroom results in an educational setting that recognizes the cultural background of students and teaches them the language of power.

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Evaluation: This paper is a thorough account of the Ebonics movement in California, which supported the use of African-American vernacular English in the Oakland school district in order to provide African-American students with better chances to succeed academically. The strength of Megan’s paper lies in her discussion of the multiple facets of this debate: the broader sociopolitical context, the revival of the question “what is language?,” and the overall challenges of attempting to provide a socially just educational context.

Rocky Wirtz: A Modern-Day Great Thinker

Adam Petrenko

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.

There have been many great thinkers to grace the Earth with their presence over the course of history; consider leaders such as Mohandas Gandhi (*Non-Violent Resistance*) and Martin Luther King Jr. (“Letter from Birmingham Jail”), looking to create change in their society, or individuals like Adam Smith (*The Wealth of Nations*) and Charles Darwin (*The Origin of Species*), wanting to give the average person new concepts to believe in that actually make sense. But, if you were to ask anyone today who they think is a modern-day great thinker, they would most likely just give you a blank stare or stutter until they blurt out a well-known man or woman with power, such as Barack Obama or Hillary Clinton. This is the most likely occurrence because, according to Gandhi, “History is a record of an interruption of the course of nature” (Winchell and Winchell 793). As a result, since not many programs and events that can be thought as “unnatural” have happened in recent memory, excluding popular topics such as Barack’s Obamacare and Hillary’s run to become the first woman to become President of the United States, it can be hard to name a single individual that can automatically be deemed a great thinker. So, that begs the question: Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton may be considered great thinkers, but who else might qualify as a modern-day great thinker? Well, the modern-day great thinker operates differently when compared to their predecessors, has many loving supporters, turns one of the most pitiful companies in an industry into consistently one of the most enviable in that

particular industry, and works on multiple well-running projects at the same time. Based on these conditions, the man who is the poster child for the title of the modern-day great thinker is William Rockwell “Rocky” Wirtz.

To start, who exactly is Rocky Wirtz, and how did he get into a position of earning the title of a great thinker? Rocky was born into the wealthy Wirtz family in 1952, and two years later, “his grandfather, Arthur Wirtz, purchased the Chicago Blackhawks in 1954” (“W. Rockwell ‘Rocky’ a Wirtz”). In addition to now owning the Blackhawks, the Wirtz family had business interests in realty, insurance, banking, and premium beverage distribution, all under the umbrella known as Wirtz Corporation (“W. Rockwell Wirtz”). The next couple decades were successful for the Wirtz family, as they continued to grow their multiple businesses while the Blackhawks also won the Stanley Cup in 1961. Not long after Rocky graduated from Northwestern in 1975, with a Bachelor’s degree in Communications (“W. Rockwell Wirtz”), many things began to change, and not for the good. With Rocky’s father Bill now in charge, the Blackhawks as a franchise started to slowly decline. As said by Steve Silverman in an article called “Breaking Down Rocky Wirtz’s Game-Changing Impact on the Chicago Blackhawks,” “While the elder Wirtz (Bill) had been a dominant businessman who had built a thriving liquor business, his theories in the hockey business had not been as successful.” As the National Hockey League became more popular in addition to the value of the dollar increasing due to inflation, more money was needed to keep a competitive team on the ice. Bill Wirtz did not accept this, though. Along with earning the reputation of being very frugal, Wirtz alienated the fan base, which in turn gave him the nickname “Dollar Bill” (Zeisberger). To borrow from Charles Darwin regarding his hockey team, Bill Wirtz did not go through “the process whereby a species will develop, preserve, and pass on those characteristics that are most useful for adapting itself to the challenges of its environment” (Winchell and Winchell 95). Since Bill had a sad excuse for a hockey team that had not won a championship since 1961, “many fans stopped showing up, and some that did would boo upon seeing him at games” (Zeisberger).

On September 26, 2007, a day that was sadly needed for change to arrive, Bill Wirtz lost his battle with cancer

(Calabrese). Shortly after, “W. Rockwell (Rocky) Wirtz was named President of Wirtz Corporation and Chairman of the Chicago Blackhawks in October 2007” (“W. Rockwell ‘Rocky’ Wirtz”). When the day finally came for Rocky to be in charge, he was ready to bring immediate changes to the organization, as he had been making plans for years. He just needed to wait until it was his turn to be at the head of the table. On the Chicago radio show *Kap & Haugh*, Rocky said “If I would go to him (Bill Wirtz), I would probably try not to do it right before Thanksgiving, because that dinner would not be a good dinner. But he knew where I stood and I knew where he stood. He was my father (but) he was also my boss. So I respected his position and he had good reasons for that. But at the time, after his passing, I did what I thought was right for the organization” (“Rocky Wirtz Segment”). What he ended up doing for the organization ultimately earned him the title of a modern-day great thinker.

The first step Rocky had to take in order to be considered a great thinker was to prove everyone in the hockey world he had the gumption to not end up being like his father; and in turn, he would also earn many loving supporters. In order to escape his father’s shadow, Rocky had to make some immediate changes. One unpopular decision Bill Wirtz made when he was in charge of the Chicago Blackhawks was to remove Blackhawks home games from television because televising the games “would be an insult to season-ticket holders (“Breaking Down Rocky”). Rocky knew this had to change. As said by Steve Silverman in his article “Breaking Down Rocky Wirtz’s Game-Changing Impact on the Chicago Blackhawks,” “One of the first and most recognizable moves (Rocky made) was putting Blackhawks’ home games on television.” Adding on to that, Silverman goes on to say “Rocky didn’t just want to get the good will from putting his team’s home games on television, he wanted to win new fans for his team and his sport.” And just like that, Rocky Wirtz got the attention of everyone in Chicago and the hockey world. But he had not earned their trust yet, as the product on the ice was still abysmal due to his father’s old, frugal methods of running business. So, over the next couple of years, the team would develop young and promising players such as Jonathan Toews and Patrick Kane while also signing free agents like Marian Hossa to

big contracts (Calabrese). While Bill Wirtz was probably turning in his grave in disgust for everything his son was doing to his hockey team, Rocky was putting his own stamp on this franchise, reclaiming the trust of Blackhawk fans that had given up on their team. Rocky, however, was not done catering to the fans. “Alumni such as Hall of Famers Bobby Hull and Stan Mikita were brought back on a regular basis” as ambassadors to connect with older fans (Zeisberger). In addition, the upbeat and popular song “Chelsea Dagger” by The Fratellis was made the official goal song in order to appeal to new fans (Allen). “At the time of Bill’s death in 2007, the 20,000 plus seat United Center was only averaging 12,500 for Blackhawks games” (Calabrese). Now, thanks to Rocky’s efforts to get back many old fans and make new hockey fans, Blackhawks games have had “329 straight sellouts dating back to 2008” (Ecker). It could not have been easy for Rocky to make all these decisions, knowing his father would not have done the same and as a result could have been disappointed in his son. However, Rocky put his emotions to the side and decided to do what he thought was right (“Rocky Wirtz Segment”). As Rocky said on the radio show *Kap & Haugh*, “We treat people the way they want to be treated ourselves. We make sure everyone in the organization is treated that same way. Our fans are our customers, and don’t ever forget. You show an executive who forgets who his customers are and I’ll show you a poorly run business” (“Rocky Wirtz Segment”). With this philosophy, Rocky was able to make the Blackhawk fan base turn from a distasteful ghost town into a trustful and exciting cult following. Now, it was time to give these many fans something to celebrate.

The next step Rocky took that would lead him to being considered a great thinker was to make the Chicago Blackhawks consistently one of the best teams in the National Hockey League. In order to reach this goal, Rocky would need the help of multiple smart and trustworthy individuals. He first needed to find his right-hand man, a president that sets high expectations and expects them to be met. In order to find this man, Rocky would not need to travel far. Not long after taking over the franchise, Rocky Wirtz hired John McDonough away from the Cubs in order to help change the culture of the Blackhawks (Silverman). This included helping change

the team's public perception, locally and nationally, in order to attract new fans and sponsors (Silverman). Next, Rocky had to find a head coach that would be able to control a young and inexperienced team. He would do this by firing former Blackhawks star player Denis Savard as head coach, replacing him with Joel "Coach Q" Quenneville, a man with a proven track record as an NHL head coach (Silverman). Joel Quenneville has turned out to be a great head coach because he has been able to identify and take advantage of player mismatches, recognize when a player needs a rest, whether it means taking him off the ice for a couple minutes or giving him a day off, and not running the players hard in practice in order to save their energy for games.

At last, Rocky had to find a general manager that would be able to find talented hockey players. Rocky would find his man in Stan Bowman, a general manager that would bring to the organization "sharp, rational leadership" (Silverman). Stan, however, has done more than just find talented hockey players. He has been able to identify core players whose talents would be hard to replace and signed them to long-term contracts. These players included Jonathan Toews, Patrick Kane, and Duncan Keith, all former playoff MVPs. In addition, in order to fit the team under the player salary cap, multiple times he has had to make the hard choices in letting go of talented but expendable role players who would make too much money in new contracts. These players included Brandon Saad, Patrick Sharp, and Andrew Ladd. However, he has been able to bring in new, younger players that would take on the roles that were vacated. Thanks to these three individuals — McDonough, Quenneville, and Bowman — and many others who work in this organization, the Chicago Blackhawks have won the Stanley Cup three times in the past six seasons and reached the Western Conference Final in five of the past seven seasons. So, although Rocky Wirtz does not get directly involved in the team's day to day activities, he has been instrumental in being able to identify the right people to successfully run this franchise. That is why he is considered by many as "The chairman of the franchise that some are now crowning an NHL dynasty" (Ecker). While Rocky has been successful in helping turn around the Chicago Blackhawks, he has not forgotten about the other companies he runs under Wirtz Corporation.

Finally, Rocky is considered a modern-day thinker because he is successful in running multiple businesses. As previously stated, in addition to being Chairman of the Chicago Blackhawks, "Rocky also serves as Chairman of Wirtz Corporation, one of the largest privately-held and family-owned companies in the United States" ("W. Rockwell Wirtz"). This statement understates the truth, considering "Wirtz Realty Corporation's presence in the Chicago metropolitan area is over 80 years old and worth over \$2 billion" (Calabrese). However, out of the many successful businesses he runs, other than the Blackhawks, Wirtz Beverage Group has to be considered Rocky's crown jewel. According to Rocky Wirtz's Bio on the Chicago Blackhawks' home page, "Wirtz Beverage Group is a leading international distributor of the world's top luxury and premium wine, spirits and beer brands." In recognition of Rocky's contributions to the beverage industry, the Wine and Spirits Wholesalers of America recently awarded him with the Lifetime Leadership Award last year ("W. Rockwell 'Rocky' Wirtz"). In addition, Rocky has experienced success in non-profit business ventures. Since its inception, "Chicago Blackhawks Charities has donated millions of dollars to dozens of organizations focusing on youth programs, health and wellness, education and housing" ("W. Rockwell 'Rocky' Wirtz"). So, not only is Rocky a determined and shrewd businessman when trying to earn a profit for his multiple companies, he is also a compassionate and understanding donor when trying to help people that are not as fortunate. It should be noted that one of Rocky's smartest and most creative moves was made at the beginning of his tenure as Chairman of the Chicago Blackhawks. In order to bring more money into the organization, Rocky aligned the Blackhawks with his other businesses in order to bring in a new revenue stream (Silverman). Now, after many successful seasons on the ice, which has resulted in tens of thousands of fans and many wealthy sponsors wanting to be associated with the franchise, Rocky Wirtz now "claims the team doesn't make money without the help of his other Wirtz Corporation businesses" (Ecker). So, not only did Rocky's decision to align the Blackhawks with his other businesses bring more money to the Blackhawks organization, it can also be said that Rocky got free advertising for his other businesses whenever the Chicago

Blackhawks are mentioned or shown in conjunction with Wirtz Corporation. Now, that is how you do business.

In conclusion, Rocky Wirtz should be considered a modern-day great thinker because he had the courage to make decisions his father would not have agreed with; moreover, he has the full and loving support of Blackhawks fans nationwide; he has turned the Blackhawks into a hockey juggernaut after recently being considered a laughingstock; and he has continued to grow his other businesses by making intelligent, profitable decisions. Now, some critics would argue that Rocky did not solve any political or social issues, and as a result should not be mentioned in the same sentence as Adam Smith, Martin Luther King Jr., Charles Darwin, and Mohandas Gandhi. However, considering that in today's society there might not be as many unresolved political and social issues, a modern-day great thinker perhaps could indeed include a confident, popular, flexible, and successful businessman. It all started with Rocky deciding to not be like his father, where instead of holding on to the money he already had, Rocky realized that he needed to spend money to make money for his hockey team, like any rational businessman. This is similar to something Adam Smith thought anyone should do in a capitalist society, where he "argued that national wealth was best measured by economic productivity, not by accumulation of precious metals or other cash reserves" (Winchell and Winchell 879). And now, just as "Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. spearheaded a social revolution that profoundly transformed American Culture" (Winchell and Winchell 714), Rocky Wirtz has led the way in turning around a franchise that was living in the past, transforming them into a team that is thriving in the present and keeping an eye on the future. Similar to how the Chicago Blackhawks have now achieved their "One Goal" three times in six years, Rocky Wirtz has achieved his "One Goal" of making the city of Chicago forever a "hawkeytown."

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Evaluation: *Adam kept resisting my advice to steer clear of a sports or entertainment figure for this assignment, and I found myself glad in the end that he did. He makes an excellent, well-researched case here for Rocky Wirtz's status as a great thinker.*

Shining Like the Sun

Ellie Pierce

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Elizabeth Turner

Assignment: *Students were instructed to compose and revise a focused narrative that effectively develops a unified theme.*

The concrete road was behind me as I was entering dirt and sand on my CRF230F dirt bike. I could feel my palms sweat even under my gloves as I tried to swallow the lump in my throat. I was shaking, but it wasn't because it was early in the morning and the sun was struggling. I had prepared myself for this day all year, practicing on grass, concrete, and dirt trails. I revved my 230F a little harder as I felt my tires sink in the sand. I looked ahead to see Alex, my boyfriend, chasing his best friend's tail. Colin, Alex, and I began heading our way toward the sand dunes, becoming more intimidated the closer we approached. We started to come across large deep puddles, Alex and Colin cutting around and avoiding the water. I lifted the gear shifter into second, with my left foot slicing through the cold muddy water that was caking me and the 230F. I lost traction for a second, coming out of the puddle, and I felt the bike swerve. I pulled in the clutch with my left hand and jerked the handlebars straight while the bike straightened itself out as I kicked the gear shifter down to first, calmly approaching Colin and Alex, who were sitting side by side, looking back at me. "Nice save!" Colin cheered. I made a complete stop. "Thanks, but I can't hear the loud mufflers." "Alex, let's go! Let's go! Let's go!" I heard him yell as Colin zipped off on his KTM; Alex started his Yamaha, following Colin, then me following Alex.

I saw Colin shoot up the 80-foot sand dune like a shooting star, effortlessly. Alex looked back over his shoulder, but soon he was flying up, too. I took a deep breath, clenched the handlebar, and kicked it into first, then second, revving the engine hard, and then I was zooming up the dune. I reached the top and flew in the air, landing hard on the sand, making an "oof!" noise as my butt hit the

seat. My heart started racing as I felt my face begin to turn red. I grinned, following with laughter. I looked into the distance as I sat on my 230F at the top of the dunes. I put my hand over my helmet to block the sun that was now shining bright in the deep blue sky that had minimal clouds. Dead trees were grasping into the bright orange sand, with tall yellow grass slightly rocking back and forth. I listened to the intimidating roars of other dirt bikes echoing throughout the dunes. I was merely a gazelle.

Colin and Alex dashed off as I attempted to get up. I was flying up and down the dunes, shifting, tasting the dust in my mouth. Alex and Colin became smaller in my vision. I stood on the 230F, gripped the bike with my legs to go even faster, maintaining steady balance. I was soaring, as my heart was racing, even feeling a little light-headed. I revved it hard, going up a large dune and reaching the top, and I slammed on my brakes as sand went everywhere. I looked straight down a 90-degree angle, and there was no sign of Colin or Alex.

I looked to my right and noticed a dirt trail below. I hesitantly approached the edge and sat back on my bike tapping both brakes with my right foot and my right hand as I started creeping down the slippery sand into the forest. The extremely muddy trail was evident, with the sun fighting to beam its way through the trees. I kicked it in second gear and kept a safe pace as I was treading through thick mud and large puddles. The insides of my boots began to fill with water. My vision started to become impaired with mud caking on my goggles.

I started losing hope as I realized Colin and Alex did not go this way, and I quickly began to feel alone as I heard no bikers. I came to a stop, attempting to wipe off the mud but only smearing it everywhere. I clenched my jaw and could feel the dirt grit between my teeth, tasting the earth, and my throat was as dry as the dunes. I looked around and saw an arrow pointing up, stapled to a tree. I turned around to look at the dunes being glorified by the sun and back ahead of me to see a challenge. I didn't know my way back from the dunes, so I decided it was best to follow the signs, as I knew it would take me some time to begin.

I started again in first, then second, cruising through

the mud and water, underestimating how deep the puddles really were. I stopped and saw the only two ways I could go, and both had water. I deliberately began toward the right side of the trail, as I was certain the left was more dangerous, until I'm suddenly up to my knees in the water, and the 230F dies. I slammed my foot down on the slippery bottom, falling with the bike. My left leg became buried under the bike as my right landed on the hot exhaust, burning through my dirt bike pants. I screamed in agony as I attempted to jump backwards, freeing myself from the bike and landing in the water that was up to my neck. I stood up and wringed my hair and looked down at the 230F lying in the water. Suddenly, the smell of gasoline filled the air. My heart started racing as I frantically searched for the off switch on the bike under the murky water. The water began to bubble and smoke from the hot engine. I stood up and grabbed the handle bars and began to pull the 250-pound bike, grunting and breathing heavy. I just couldn't do it.

I sat down in the mud and stared at the 230F. It was quiet, and I could hear myself breathe under my helmet. I looked around, wishing there was more sunlight, and I began to feel angry at Colin and Alex. How could they have left me? I took a deep breath to let my heart settle. I stood up once more, releasing my anger out on the bike, yanking it hard, pulling it up against my body.

I stood there for a moment, smiled and sighed. How was I going to get this bike out of the water? I launched myself onto the bike and kicked it in neutral attempting to push it out, to no avail. I pushed, kicked, pulled, and cursed. I took off my helmet, throwing it in the mud, my hair coated in perspiration. I sat on the 230F to think. Then it dawned on me, I had no other choice. I had to try to ride it out.

I got off, holding the handlebar and stretching to reach for my helmet. I slipped on the very damp helmet and sat back down, slapping both handlebars with my hands. I held the start switch, and the 230F chugged and then died. I held the start switch again as it chugged and began to rev. I smiled and felt a wave of relief, and then the bike died again. Finally, I try it once more, and success, it's revving hard like it wants to get out of the water just as bad as I did. I did once more of pulling in the clutch with my left hand, kicking it into first with my

left foot, grabbing the handlebar with my right hand, and I ripped it with force. The engine started screaming, water was splashing everywhere, and the back tire was spinning. Then I was free. I kicked it into second and started dashing away. I began to shriek with sheer excitement as a giant grin covered my face. I was breathing heavy, my heart felt like it was going to burst out of my chest, my goggles were fogging up, and sweat began to pour. Chunks of mud were flying everywhere, the faster I rode. I looked up at the sunlight cracking through the trees. I cracked a smile back and followed the signs that I knew would take me back to Alex and Colin.

At the end of the day, I was sitting in the back seat, staring at the soft sunset and noticing my reflection in the window. I saw heavy eyes and a dirt-covered face. I sat back and took a deep breath as I continued watching the sun disappear behind the large cornfields, and I began to drift away to sleep for the three-hour drive back home from Attica, Indiana.

Evaluation: *Ellie's essay is a highly focused narrative that conveys its theme through the use of sensory details, vivid verbs, symbols, and more. It's about one experience riding a dirt bike, but it is really about much more.*

The Place I Never Thought I Would End Up

Andrew Rand

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Greg Herriges

Assignment: *Write a personal narrative essay about an event that has helped make you who you are.*

I ducked left, then right. My adrenaline began pumping instantaneously. Everything was happening so fast that it felt as though I was moving in slow motion. I wondered, “Did he really just hit me? Am I bleeding?!” I told myself, “Just protect yourself, face forward, and ATTACK!” I was in quite a predicament as I was sucker-punched by a man just short of Muhammed Ali’s physique in the place I never thought I would end up.

Looking back to my childhood, I couldn’t complain about much. I was blessed with caring parents that worked hard so that I could grow up in nice neighborhoods. Upon graduation, I received a \$70k scholarship and embarked on the rite of college freedom in the big city. I didn’t even have a blemish on my driving record until that day. Weeks leading up to that night, I faced an unspeakable act, and that may have been the only reason why I got behind the wheel after that many drinks. It would have been one thing if I had been the only victim of my car crash, but regrettably so, I had one passenger—my best friend since junior high. He was a great friend who was always the life of the party. He was a strong, confident athlete who was training to become starting wide receiver on his college football team. He was one of the most loyal people I have ever met and always wore his heart on his sleeve. When I came to in the hospital, my father told me the paramedics found my car in a ditch on the side of the expressway. The doctors were able to stabilize my condition after suffering internal bleeding, but my friend passed away on the way to the hospital. As I cringed while trying to take short breaths to mitigate the pain of my bleeding organs, I realized I had hit complete rock bottom.

Being raised in a Christian home, sure, I knew it was possible for me to end up in Hell, but prison? There was no possible way, or so I thought. When they put me in handcuffs after being discharged from my five-day stay in the ICU, so many thoughts crossed my head: “My lawyer didn’t tell me about any of this....Are they seriously going to put me in a cell when I can barely breathe?” They did. It was the coldest four hours of my life, as the bitter chill from the steel bench seeped directly into my bones. When I initially accepted my plea bargain, I was under the impression that I would be completing a four-month boot camp program that could only take six months at the most. What had really happened was that I had been duped by my own lawyer into accepting a three years and five months sentence, which I would later find out about.

To say I was apprehensive about entering the system would be an understatement. I had a vague sense of what prison entailed from watching one of my favorite shows, *Prison Break*, but I hoped all the dramatized action sequences were only the result of edgy Hollywood producers. This may sound implausible, but the first four months felt longer than the latter part of my sentence. In order to be processed into boot camp, all inmates had to go through the receiving process at a maximum security level prison. I was confined to an eight- by nine-foot cell with all of the amenities: a sink that was connected to a toilet, a desk that was connected to a stool, a bunk bed that was connected to a cellmate, and a solid steel door that moved as often as earthquakes were common to this area. There was nothing to do all day except to lament every little bad decision I had made in the past that had led to my downfall. Between wondering what the rest of the world was up to and forgetting the taste of real food, I prayed to be released from this mental torture as quickly as possible. I could not imagine how I could continue living normally, knowing that my actions had led to the early departure of my best friend. To make matters worse, I heard through the grapevine that inmates with my type of case were denied admission to boot camp. The uncertainty of my fate led to a roller coaster of emotions that almost broke me mentally.

“DENIED,” the counselor wrote back 120 days later, with ill intent. That meant I would be shipped on the next bus out to face my demons. I felt a large pit in my stomach as I thought of the insurmountable obstacle of

The Place I Never Thought I Would End Up

the next three years, 75 months, the 1000+ days in prison I would have to spend away from my family and friends. The thought that years of my life would be wasted as I was swept further and further away from my life dreams made me sadder than the loss of a long-time lover.

At first, it shocked me that the living conditions were this wretched. The room we “lived” in housed 200 inmates with rows and rows of bunk beds. We lived among mice that had leaping abilities of kangaroos. The mattresses and pillows we were issued were not even fit for the homeless. What appalled me even more was the extent that some of these inmates had let themselves go to. The only times they would leave their beds was to go and eat, use the bathroom, or take their monthly shower. Everything in this environment demanded bleakness. Months passed the clouds above my head remained, I accepted my fate of being an inmate.

I finally realized I had to do something in order to not just walk out of this place with a wasted soul. What changed everything for me was acceptance. I accepted that I had made a horrible decision that night and I also accepted that these were the consequences I would have to suffer. I realized that no matter how much I dwelled on the past, nothing could change it, but, rather, it could only negatively affect my future. From that point on, I decided to better myself in any which way I could. That involved attending vocational classes in culinary arts and auto mechanics, and other college-level courses that were offered through a local college. I fervently attended multiple church services a week. In order to help others, I volunteered as the teacher’s assistant to tutor students trying to earn their GEDs. I was even able to improve my physique by lifting strangely bent and welded weights out on the yard.

One day, after getting a little too comfortable in that place, I decided to become vocal to a certain inmate in front of his friends. I was fed up with him cutting the line to use the only phone in our unit. I presume he felt disrespected, because ten minutes later, I was interrupted while reading a magazine in the common area with a punch to the side of my head. I surprised myself at how quickly I was able to get on my feet and throw counter punches back. Later, when there was a quick moment of separation, he put his hands down and said, “Come on,

let’s stop.” I considered continuing, briefly, and forcefully peeled my fingers out from a fist. It was fortunate that we did not get caught for fighting, since more time could have been added on to our sentences as punishment. After knowing that our incident was not reported, I let myself feel proud of the fact that even though I was in the unfavorable position of starting the fight, I did the best I could to end up in control. He also stopped cutting the phone line.

On the day of my release, as I stepped through the last set of steel doors, the feeling I received when I saw my entire family waiting for me was surreal. While we drove off and tears rolled down my face, I took one last look back; it was a cathartic experience that was long overdue after holding all of my emotions in check for a very long time. I know I will never be able to completely forget this whole ordeal, but that is not necessarily a bad thing. I learned that there are consequences to all of my actions. Previously, I had taken every small and large opportunity for granted. Being reduced to living as an inmate taught me humility and appreciation. I also learned that when certain circumstances are out of my hands, being patient is the best route. I would never have become as strong of a person as I am today had it not been for the adversity I faced and overcame. The most important thing I learned is to cherish life while I can. I acknowledge that I made a horrible mistake that cost the life of my best friend, but I choose to learn from that mistake and not let my past hold me back, knowing that is what my friend would have wanted.

Evaluation: *I was struck by Andrew’s courageous candor and the thoughtful, reflective nature of his persona on the page.*

Refusing Martyrdom: Sandra Cisneros’ “Woman Hollering Creek” and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s “The Disappearance”

Mary Romano

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

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

“This is the man I have waited my whole life for” (Cisneros 49). This ponderous statement made by Cleofilas in the short story “Woman Hollering Creek,” by Sandra Cisneros, embodies the immense disappointment not only in her husband and marriage, but also the marriage shared by the first wife in the short story “The Disappearance,” by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. In these stories, these two women were united in a common misery as disenchanting, battered brides. The misery was belligerently derived from their spouses. These spouses were immigrant men who exhibited slanted perspectives regarding their own male identities and their ethical and moral behaviors, but more significantly, the rights, roles, and liberties afforded to their wives. Self-centered best described these men, whose wives were expected to dutifully fulfill their requests and requirements while concurrently withstanding pervasive ignorance and indignity. Men, who uprooted these women from their families and homelands, were the women’s only source of companionship, with the exception of the children these tyrannical men fathered. Cultural and gender-based beliefs of both husbands were detrimental to their freshly immigrated wives’ physical, emotional, and mental good health. The various damaging effects of the diverse abuses these two women endured crossed over economic and geographic boundaries. Cleofilas and the first wife in “The Disappearance” coveted a better life, removed from the cruel reality of domestic abuse and cultural bias that hindered their well-being, so each individual victim mustered the strength to overcome her trepidation and escape the struggle and isolation of her oppressive married life.

Cleofilas anticipated her married life imitating the romantic emotional drama she saw acted out on her cherished *telenovelas*. Her exposure to the *telenovelas* caused her to develop a distorted notion of how love should be expressed within a romantic relationship. Cleofilas remarked, “Somehow one ought to live one’s life like that, don’t you think? You or no one. Because to suffer for love is good. The pain all sweet somehow. In the end” (Cisneros 45), which depicted her initial belief that she should endure life with her one and only despite personal sacrifice, because satisfaction would result from the relationship prevailing. Cleofilas muddled through

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agony stemming from her husband’s mistreatment of her. Her own distress, for the sake of love, delivered to her a warped sense of gratification amidst a dire situation.

The wife in “The Disappearance” did not display similar idealizations but did bring her own expectations of a marriage to the story, and she subtly indicated her desire for a decent spouse. The Indian husband commented on her demeanor at their first meeting: “Nervous he thought, yearning to be chosen. But when she’d glanced up there had been a cool considering look in her eyes. Almost disinterested, almost as though she were wondering if he would make a suitable spouse” (Divakaruni 9). The Indian custom of arranged marriage frequently urged women into eagerness to be selected as a bride. According to Sarwari Noor, “...marriage is the destiny tradition offered to women by society. This task of finding a suitable match is so inherent in the Indian culture that it is believed that a girl’s life begins and ends with marriage...” (3). From the start, this soon-to-be wife acted differently than most other women. She did not give off an aura of desperation. Alternatively, she silently deliberated on this man’s potential as a suitable husband. The husband did not take her consideration seriously. Too arrogant to distinguish that a woman might judge him unbecoming for her and eventually become dissatisfied with him, he moved forward with the marriage. Her allusive facial expression could’ve been indicative that she was similar to the Calcutta girls he was purposefully avoiding. Sociology professor Steve Derne reported, “My interviews with Hindu men suggest that men realize the advantages they gain by controlling women, and that they consciously act and talk to maintain those advantages... men’s dominance is maintained by systematically repressing women’s pride” (204). If the husband had not been self-absorbed and egotistical, he may have averted the faulty union.

Both Cleofilas’s father and the Indian mother foreshadowed the destruction of each marriage. Cleofilas’s father reminded her that “I am your father, I will never abandon you” (Cisneros 1) at the end of her wedding. The mother in “The Disappearance” protested that “something about the girl just didn’t feel right” (Divakaruni 9) after the bride viewing and first meeting.

Cleofilas was surprised by her own response, after

being subjected to physical abuse perpetrated by her supposed loving husband. She recalled:

The first time she had been so surprised she didn’t cry out or try to defend herself. She had always said she would strike back if a man, any man, were to strike her. But when the moment came, and he slapped her once, and then again, and again; until the lip split and bled an orchid of blood, she didn’t fight back, she didn’t break into tears, she didn’t run away as she imagined she might when she saw such things in the telenovelas.... Instead, when it happened the first time, when they were barely man and wife, she had been so stunned, it left her speechless, motionless, numb. (Cisneros 47)

Although life was plenty dramatic, physical abuse offered none of the glamor that the telenovelas had portrayed. Existent was the stark realization that life would not emulate television art, that she did not have the boldness she envisioned she would. This is also evident as Cleofilas recollected, “She could think of nothing to say, said nothing. Just stroked the dark curls of the man who wept and would weep like a child, his tears of repentance and shame, this time and each” (Cisneros 48). Through her husband’s manipulative display of guilt after beating her, Cleofilas was unexpectedly thrust into the role of the comforter, when she had already been cast as the victim. Romanticizing would not erase the residual damage of living life with an abusive partner, yet she avoided any further backlash by passively accepting his remorseful performance as the villain-victim. Cleofilas was confounded, her psychological complexity increasing.

In “The Disappearance,” the wife took direct action to brandish her disinterest in engaging in sexual intercourse with her husband. He foolishly compared his encounters with his wife to those of men who physically struck their wives to subdue them into sexual acts. He described repeatedly raping his wife, but justified it by shifting blame to her for only struggling, not actually crying:

Surely he couldn’t be blamed for raising his voice at those times (though never so much as to wake his son), or for grabbing her by the elbow and pulling

her to the bed, like he did that last night. always careful not to hurt her, he himself on that. Not even a little slap, not like some of the men he'd known, growing-up, or even some of his friends now. And he always told himself he'd stop if she really begged him, if she cried. After some time, though, she would quit struggling and let him do what he wanted. But that was nothing new. (Divakaruni 9)

It is bewildering that this man was proud of himself for not physically marring during forced sex. Despite him yelling at his and her off to the bedroom, unmistakably unwillingly, revealed in his personal, superior ethical standards in contrast to those of his friends. He also showed ignorance regarding his wife's disappearance when he explained to the police, "She'd been out for her evening walk, she took one every day after he got back from the office. Yes, yes, always alone, she said that was her time for herself. (He in'ta quite understand that, but he was happy to wait little boy, play ball with him, perhaps, until she returned to serve them dinner)" (Divakaruni 1). Upon reporting his missing wife to local authorities, this husband displayed his unawareness of his wife's basic needs. Time to decompress after spending the day with a toddler was essential to his wife. He allowed her to go out for nightly walks, but he could not comprehend why she would possibly need a break. He did not hold off on serving himself and his son dinner because he was waiting to share a meal with his wife; he waited so that she would be home to serve him.

Male influences kept both men buried in denial of their poor treatment of their wives. Observing a conversation between her husband and his friends, Cleofilas witnessed a demonstration of the habitual and blatant, sexual objectification of women that these men were amused by and comfortable propagating:

What she needs is...and made a gesture as if to yank a woman's buttocks to his groin. Maximiliano, the foul-smelling fool from across the road, said this and set the men laughing, but Cleofilas just muttered. *Grosera*, and went on washing dishes. She knew he said it not because it was true, but more because

it was he who needed to sleep with a woman, instead of drinking each night at the ice house and stumbling home alone. Maximiliano who was said to have killed his wife in an ice-house brawl when she came at him with a mop. I had to shoot, he had said-she was armed. (Cisneros 51)

The lewdness of the men denoted their disparaging assessment of women's worthiness. Had Maximiliano killed his wife under such circumstances, it would solidify the fear that Cleofilas had for her safety. If these border-town men presented high disregard for women's lives, and law enforcement concurred that a gun was a suitable response to the threat of a mop, then this justified Cleofilas's surmounting fear of the physical abuse escalating. Conversely, the story could have been fabricated, concocted by Maximiliano himself, to shelter him from the embarrassment of a woman deserting him. Flippantly dismissing his wife as dead by his own hand displayed the callousness these working class, alcohol-gorging men had for their wives. As far back as 1983, the community depicted in the story realized there was an overwhelming need for domestic violence to be addressed in the borderland area that Cleofilas and Juan resided in. The Guadalupe Valley Family Violence Shelter, a nonprofit violence and sexual assault shelter, was founded then in Seguin, Texas. According to the shelter's website, "In 1984, shelter and services were provided to 629 women and children" ("About Us" par. 3). The shelter still continues to grow and be utilized today.

In "The Disappearance," commentary from the husband's friends substantiates that the male view of women in this culture was a poor one:

Look how well the household was running now, the furniture dusted daily, laundry folded and put into drawers (his mother, a smart woman, had figured out the washing machine in no time at all). She cooked all his favorite dishes, which his wife had never managed to learn quite right, and she took such good care of the little boy, walking him to the park each afternoon, bringing him into her bed when he woke up crying at night. (He'd told her once or twice that his wife had never done that, she had this idea about the boy needing to be independent. What

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nonsense, said his mother.) Lucky man, a couple of his friends added and he silently agreed, although later he thought it was ironic that they would say that about a man whose wife had disappeared. (Divakaruni 10)

From the Indian male vantage point, intelligence from a woman consisted of her learning how to operate a washing machine. Steve Derne noted, “In India, an integral part of the gender division of labor is an ideology of appropriate female behavior that emphasizes modesty, obedience, self-sacrifice, and attachment to the home” (205). There was no concern for the missing wife, just enviousness for his household being clean and his meals being well-prepared. Women in this culture could easily be replaced by a multitude of paid positions such as maid, chef, nanny, and prostitute. Considered highly inappropriate for a typical American to suggest that a man was “lucky” for his wife having gone missing, mysteriously, this Indian man took no offense and even agreed with their assessment.

Neither wife appeared to have consistent contact with her family. This potentially contributed to feelings of desolation. In a degrading scenario, Cleofilas begged her husband for money to seek prenatal medical care for herself and their unborn child, while he drove a vehicle that he could not reasonably afford the payments on. The narrator explains:

No, she won’t mention it. She promises. If the doctor asks, she can say she fell down the front steps or slipped when she was out in the backyard, slipped out back, she could tell him that. She has to go back next Tuesday, Juan Pedro, please, for the new baby. For their child. She could write to her father and ask maybe for money, just a loan, for the new baby’s medical expenses. Well then if he’d rather she didn’t. All right, she won’t. Please don’t anymore. Please don’t. She knows it’s difficult saving money with all the bills they have, but how else are they going to get out of debt with the truck payments? (Cisneros 53)

This confirmed that Cleofilas had been prohibited in contacting her own family and that Juan Pedro actively denied her the right to contact her father for assistance. Cleofilas may be wrestling with an inner conflict here.

She could have planned to cover up for Juan if questioned about her bruises, or she could have been engineering an escape plan, coercing him into driving her to the doctor because this was her solitary idea of how to exit the toxic marriage. Using the privacy of a doctor’s office to convey abuse was a brilliant, innovative notion on the part of Cleofilas. Per an Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) policy brief, “the implementations of the Women’s Preventive Services Guidelines – and the release of the 2013 U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommendationa- create new opportunities for identifying women experiencing intimate partner violence through the increased use of screening by healthcare providers” (7). Although physician screening, reporting, and support for intimate partner violence has been advised for over a decade, at the time of Cleofilas’s turmoil, it was not common.

In “The Disappearance,” during a phone call between the husband and his mother in India, it is revealed that the wife had been missing for two weeks, and he had not bothered to contact her family. Both the husband and his mother flaunted utter disregard for the wife and her relatives through the mother’s words:

My poor boy, she cried, left all alone (the word flickered unpleasantly across his brain, left, left), how can you possibly cope with the household and a child as well. And when he admitted that yes, it was very difficult, could she perhaps come and help out for a while if it wasn’t too much trouble, she had replied that of course she would come right away and stay as long as he needed her, and what was all this American nonsense about too much trouble, he was her only son, wasn’t he. She would contact the wife’s family too; she ended, so he wouldn’t have to deal with that awkwardness. (Divakaruni 10)

That there was no communication with the wife’s family for two weeks suggested that the contact between herself and her family was inconsistent. The husband pawned off the task of calling her family onto his mother, further substantiating that there may not have been any contact with her family. The husband’s mother assumed a subservient disposition with her son, disseminating the untruth that as a man, he could not care for his child, nor

run his household. The mother is widowed, and perhaps lost her identity upon the death of her husband, and was looking to fulfill the wife and mother role in order to gain the only purpose she ever knew, once again.

A recurring theme of double standards was evident in both stories. Each of the men had relationships outside of the marriage. Arriving home from the hospital after giving birth to their first child, Cleofilas had an instinctual feeling that Juan Pedro had another woman in their home: "A doubt. Slender as a hair. A washed cup set back on the shelf wrong-side-up. Her lipstick, and body talc, and hairbrush all arranged in the bathroom a different way. No. Her imagination. The house the same as always. Nothing. Coming home from the hospital with her new son, her husband" (Cisneros 50). There was tangible evidence to support Juan Pedro's indiscretion. Cleofilas was more comfortable rejecting her instinct, rightfully assuming that confrontation would erupt into violence. Juan Pedro granted himself the ability to seek solace outside of the failing marriage, while Cleofilas was forced to endure the unhappiness and injustices alone. She had nobody to turn to for alternative options, nobody to mentor her. Cleofilas lamented the lack of strong women in her life, as the narrator states, "The neighbor ladies, Soledad, Dolores, they might've known once the name of the arroyo before it turned English but they did not know now. They were too busy remembering the men who had left through either choice or circumstance and would never come back" (Cisneros 47). Cleofilas' neighbors, dazed by the life events relating to men, both lost true purpose. They each struggled with their own personal versions of grief arising from abandonment by the men who were formerly in their lives. They did not seem to be happy without a man, yet it was notable that they were not actively looking for a replacement spouse. These two women did not demonstrate aspiration for a better, more fulfilling way of life. Soledad numbed herself with *telenovelas* and utilized avoidance tactics when her absent husband became a topic of discussion. Dolores morphed into a walking, breathing, gardening memorial to her dead husband and sons. Even from the grave, these men controlled her daily habits and sense of worth. Neither of Cleofilas's neighbors, who could have potentially provided womanly advice by drawing from their own life

experiences, behaved in an engaged or productive manner. They employed unhealthy escapism and immersion to survive, leaving Cleofilas destitute for guidance. It was noted in *Beacham's Encyclopedia* that, "Cisneros employs much symbolism in the names she chooses for her characters....Dolores and Soledad, which mean 'sorrow' and 'alone' respectively...Graciela which is a Hispanic version of Grace, and Felice, which means 'happiness.' Cleofilas's name is clarified... 'A martyr or something.' This point is underscored by some critics who note that Mexican culture often reveres women who suffer" (449). Cisneros uses a subliminal approach, through the names of the select few Cleofilas associates with, to mark the evolution of Cleofilas's life.

Divakaruni also employs a similarly refined approach, as expressed in *Short Stories for Students*, "Everything the reader learns about her [the wife] is revealed through the husband's thoughts. Through this technique, Divakaruni suggests, the woman in an arranged marriage has no voice of her own. She is observed only through the lens of her husband, and while her silence speaks volumes to the reader, the husband is oblivious to it" (6). Describing his relationship with his wife, the husband in "The Disappearance" stated, "She was, after all, a well-bred Indian girl. He didn't expect her to behave like those American women he sometimes watched on X-rated videos, screaming and biting and doing other things he grew hot just thinking about. But her reluctance went beyond womanly modesty. After dinner for instance she would start on the most elaborate household projects, soaping down the floors, changing the liners in cabinets" (Divakaruni 9). The husband mentioned that he watched pornography; however, his overall demeanor suggested that he would not tolerate similar behavior from his wife. He retained an outlet for his desires, but the wife was not allowed to express hers. The wife attempted to circumvent his sexual advances by intentionally making herself unavailable due to housework demands. Even though the husband admitted her projects were elaborate, she is chastised later in the story for not maintaining the household as well as her mother-in-law.

Each husband asserted a degree of conceit and delusion, insinuating their role in the marriage was more beneficial than it realistically was. As he rehashed the

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events leading up to his wife’s disappearance, the Indian husband boasted:

He was a good husband. No one could deny it. He let her have her way, indulged her even. When the kitchen was remodeled, for example, and she wanted pink and gray tiles even though he preferred white. Or when she wanted to go to Yosemite Park instead of Reno, although he knew he would be dreadfully bored among all those bear shit-filled trails and dried-up waterfalls. Once in a while, of course, he had to put his foot down, like when she wanted to get a job or go back to school or buy American clothes. (Divakaruni 9)

The husband gloated over his fictional mastery of the role of perfect husband. His idea of indulging his wife was letting her pick out tile for their common home or compromising on a single family vacation destination. This would hardly be considered indulgent by most people in the country he chose to reside in. It is reminiscent of what the author says of her grandfather in an interview with Archana Khare Ghose: “He certainly ruled his household with an iron fist, even though it was often gloved in velvet” (2). The husband in the story remained firmly rooted in his misconception of being generous with his wife’s preferences. Although he acclimated to American life, he continually discouraged her acclimation. He prevented her from exploring ideas that piqued her curiosity such as furthering her education, seeking employment, and wearing clothing appropriate for the country she had to call home. This deterred her from interacting with people, which would have potentially given her the ability to slowly explore herself and eventually salvage their marriage. She may have personified the following statement made by Divakaruni during an interview with Preeti Zachariah, “Strong women, when respected, make the whole society stronger. One must be careful with such rapid changes, though, and make an effort to preserve, at the same time, the positive traditions of Indian culture” (2).

Dissatisfaction with her laborious daily life accumulating, Cleofilas attempted to assemble redeeming feelings toward her husband by saying:

Not that he isn’t a good man. She has to remind herself why she loves him when she changes the baby’s Pampers, or when she mops the bathroom floor, or tries to make the curtains for the doorway without doors, or whiten the linen. Or wonder a little when he kicks the refrigerator and says he hates this shitty house and is going out to where he won’t be bothered with the baby’s howling and her suspicious questions, and her requests to fix this and this and this because if she had any brains in her head, she’d realize he’s been up before the rooster earning his living to pay for the food in her belly and the roof over her head and would have to wake up again early the next day so why can’t you just leave me in peace, woman. (Cisneros 49)

Juan Pedro expected her to execute her wifely duties but expressed an aversion to working around the house himself. He belittled Cleofilas’s intelligence and over-exaggerated his contribution to the household as if he were a stellar provider. He then established a sense of entitlement to shirk fatherhood responsibility. Cleofilas’s recollection did not convince anyone of her husband’s goodness, herself included. It served as a reiteration of his constant berating, his disrespectfulness, and his eruptions of rage. She held little value, from Juan’s perspective. He was a malcontent, oblivious to how productive and resourceful she was. This introduced the loss of Cleofilas’s domestic fantasy. “Because the towns here are built so that you have to depend on husbands.... There is no place to go unless one counts the neighbor ladies, Soledad on one side, Dolores on the other. Or the creek” (Cisneros 51).

Cleofilas reached her breaking point, realizing that life was not sustainable under the current conditions with Juan. She began to question her sanity, identifying with a character from a Spanish legend:

The stream sometimes only a muddy puddle in the summer, though now in springtime, because of the rains, a good sized alive thing, a thing with a voice all its own, all day and all night calling in its high, silver voice....La Llorona, who drowned her own children. Perhaps La Llorona is the one they named the creek after, she thinks, remembering all the stories she learned as a child. La Llorona calling

to her. She is sure of it...Wonders if something as quiet as this drives a woman to the darkness under the trees. (Cisneros 51)

La Llorona, translated into English as “the weeping woman,” is a well-known folklore tale. A woman of lower class becomes involved in a relationship with a man from a wealthy class. She mothered two of his sons. After time had passed during their relationship, this man neglected her and planned to leave her for a woman he had an affair with. Humiliated and heartbroken, La Llorona drowned her two sons in a river, and then herself. Cleofilas sensed that she faced the same mental torment, anguish, and shame that the character in the legend felt. She suspected that it had driven her to an unstable place within her own isolated, broken psyche. It was an intelligent thought, realizing her own volatility, as reported in an article in *BJOG: An International Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology*: “Domestic violence is...associated with significant psychological and social impairment including...suicide attempts” (par 1). Cleofilas seriously contemplated the direction her life was headed when she asked herself:

Was Cleofilas just exaggerating as her husband always said? It seemed the newspapers were full of such stories. This woman found on the side of the interstate. This one pushed from a moving car. This one’s cadaver, this one unconscious, this one beaten blue. Her ex-husband, her husband, her lover, her father, her brother, her uncle, her friend, her co-worker. Always. The same grisly news in the pages of the dailies. (Cisneros 52)

Cleofilas was taking notice of the recurring violence against women in her community committed by men they trusted. Even though her husband dismissed her thoughts, coming to terms with the probability of her becoming the next victim due to the severity of the problems in her marriage may have been a turning point. This also suggested that law enforcement may not have actively investigated physical or domestic violence before it intensified into lethal situations.

Desperate, Cleofilas reached out to the sonographer, Graciela, at her obstetrician’s office. Cleofilas’ condition elicited Graciela’s calling a friend to rally aid:

I was going to do this sonogram on her-she’s pregnant?-and she just crying on me. Hijole, Felice! This poor lady’s black and blue marks all over. I’m not kidding. From her husband. Who else? Another one of those brides from across the border. And her family’s all in Mexico. Shit. You think they’re going to help her? Give me a break. This lady doesn’t even speak English. She hasn’t been allowed to call home or write or nothing. That’s why I’m calling you. (Cisneros 54)

Graciela verified that whatever agency a victim of abuse would be referred to in this type of predicament may not actually be able to provide any substantial assistance. Her testimony of the abuse obviously being from Cleofilas’s husband supports the theory that domestic abuse may be prevalent for women of her cultural and economic background during this era and this region of the United States. Cleofilas’s departure was glaringly eminent.

In the other story, suspecting that his wife was not missing, but had instead abandoned their marriage, the husband in “The Disappearance” visited their safe deposit box at the bank. Upon opening the safe deposit box, he discovered his wife had left with her meager portion of jewelry. Stunned by the premeditation required for her to accomplish such a feat, “He ground his fists into his eyes and tried to imagine her on that last morning, putting the boy in his stroller and walking the twenty minutes to the bank (they only had one car, which he took to work; they could have afforded another, but why, he said to his friends, when she didn’t even know how to

(Divakaruni) Ironically, this provided another example of how a woman’s independence and her ability to navigate relationships and utilize herself with U.S. customs. He, however, was not driving although he possessed the means to provide that convenience and freedom to her. This demonstrated that this wife had also reached her breaking point and had planned to exit the marriage without her husband’s knowledge. She gathered a few important personal effects and abandoned her son, her main source of delight in life, to preserve her own sanity. It is bafflingly unclear why she chose to leave her son behind to be raised by a man she despised. A typical American divorce would have allowed for joint custody, and per The Guardians and Wards Act of 1890,

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the children of tender years should be committed to the custody of the mother; (ii) older boys should be in the custody of the father; and (iii) older girls in the custody of their mother. As to the children of tender years, it is a firmly established practice that mother should have their custody since father cannot provide that maternal affection which is essential for their proper growth. (Agrawal 1)

Amid the discovery of the nature of his wife’s disappearance, the husband’s narcissism overcame him, and he soothed himself through morbid thoughts of his wife’s demise. The husband reassured himself:

Anyway it was possible she was already dead, killed by a stranger from whom she’d hitched a ride, or by a violent, jealous lover. He felt a small, bitter pleasure at the thought, and then a pang of shame. Nevertheless, he made his way to the dark bedroom (a trifle unsteadily; the drink had made him light-headed) and groped in the bottom drawer beneath his underwear until he felt the coarse manila envelope with her photos. He drew it out and without looking at them, tore the pictures into tiny pieces. (Divakaruni 11)

Compounding his mistakes, he destroyed the only evidence that his son’s mother existed. He would no longer be able to share those memories with his son when he grew older and had questions about his mother. His ego was bruised, and he experienced pain and humiliation by his wife’s abandonment, so he endeavored to ease his turmoil at the detriment of his son. His culture-based neglect of women clouded his judgment, and the ramifications of his actions would negatively affect his child eternally. Book reviewer Francine Prose illustrated, “And yet this often obvious story ends with a burst of emotion so deep that even the reader who’s been invited to patronize the insensitive narrator is shocked by a rush of feeling for him, and for the sorrow that lasts his whole life” (34). After the revelation that his wife would not return, the husband explained to his mother his updated requirements and desires in a second wife: “This time he didn’t want a college-educated woman. Even good looks weren’t that important. A simple girl, maybe from their ancestral village. Someone whose family wasn’t well off,

who would be suitably appreciative of the comforts he could provide. Someone who would be a real mother to his boy” (Divakaruni 11). Instead of empathizing with his first wife for his contemptuous behavior toward her, he attacked her mothering skills and personality. Avoiding the glaring mistake of not adapting himself to the rights of women in America, he condemned the qualities found in his first wife. He opted for a second wife who would not crave the independence that the first wife did, someone who would blindly accept her exploitation at his hand. Steve Derne reported, “More than 90% of men I interviewed mention that the ideal wife is one who obeys her husband” (217).

The women in these two short stories remained in their marriages long after the abuse ensued. Each woman discovered a unique exodus from her marriage for her own safety, welfare, and a chance to move beyond the devastation. Both women displayed boldness and determination that neither husband expected. Cleofilas voluntarily entered her marriage, yet eventually and successfully enlisted the assistance of other women to emancipate her from a miserable and dangerous home life. Cleofilas returned to her family in Mexico and because of the compassionate and fierce examples set by Graciela and Felice, she is able to experience happiness again. Even though Cleofilas had demonstrated her own resourcefulness, she was surprised that Felice had no husband, drove her own truck, and used vulgar words like a man. Felice let out a happy yelp as they crossed over the creek with the namesake that had perplexed Cleofilas. Cleofilas retold the event to her father and brothers and found herself laughing, genuinely, in her new-found freedom, similar to the laugh that Felice had let out during her escape. Writer William Rouster said, “It is in leaving Juan Pedro that she learns a new meaning for Woman Hollering Creek other than the rage and anger she has experienced” (par 11). Cleofilas rescued her son from the torment, never indicating that she would have left him behind, instinctually knowing children repeat the cycle of abuse that is demonstrated in their formative years.

The whereabouts and tactics utilized by the arranged first wife in “The Disappearance” remain largely unresolved; however, she thought it best to leave her child behind with his father, despite the laws she must

have had some knowledge of. In an interview with Archana Khare Ghose, Divakaruni explained, “Actually though I think of my female protagonists as having both strengths and weaknesses. They are complex characters; they often make the wrong decisions” (2). The wife may have felt destitute, unable to provide for her son without her husband’s income. A foundation that was founded by Divakaruni, noted on its web page, “We believe that a large number of difficulties experienced by Maitri’s clients arise out of a real or perceived situation of dependency. This philosophy is encapsulated in Maitri’s motto of ‘Helping Women to Help Themselves’” (“About Us Agency Mission” par. 3).

Divergent in action, one woman departed for the familiarity of family and former home, and the other ventured into unknown circumstances in a foreign country. Yet, each comparably courageous woman was anxious to break free from the abuse that coincided with living under men that perpetuated the degradation of women as naturally acceptable. In *Kirkus Reviews*, it is stated, “Cisneros’s tactile prose brings to vibrant being the sights, smells, joys, and heartaches of growing up female in a culture where women are both strong and victimized, men are unfaithful, and poverty is mitigated only by family, community, and religious ties. Despite the hardship, the spirit remains vital...” (par. 1). Cisneros draws from her life experiences to introduce the reader to a realm in which women must be strong if not submissive. Cleofilas returned home to her family, not having any of the available options mentioned to mitigate her sorrow. Writer Rajesh Bojan asserts, “Chitra Divakaruni in her works largely discusses about the cultural divisions, the diasporic experiences and mainly focuses on the effect of migration especially on her women characters, thereby depicting the transformation it brings into their lives..nHer characters beautifully represent the status, the feeling, the expectation, the need of every immigrant” (22). The husband and wife from “The Disappearance” individually contend with conflicting worlds that cause cultural heritage to collide with their reality.

Both authors convey a sense of responsibility, a personal, moral conviction to bring attention to the issues facing repressed, abused women. These issues are relevant not just to immigrant women, or married women, but to

all abused women, irrespective of geographic location. According to author Adria Bernardi, “Cisneros says of her writing being representative of the issues pertinent in Latino culture: ‘I feel very happy and proud that I can address these issues because it is something that I can give back, it’s something that I can do’” (3). Divakaruni took her call to action a step further, as Noor states:

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is also a lively social worker. She became engrossed in women’s problems when she went to America. In 1991, she established Maitri, a hotline for South Asian women who are sufferers of domestic cruelty and abuse. It was her involvement with Maitri that ultimately led her to write *Arranged Marriage*- a work that includes stories about the abuses and bravery of immigrant women. (2)

Eradicating the imported moral turpitude that often accompanies freshly immigrated people into their diasporas would render the ultimate mission of both stories irrelevant, in the most positive sense. Native-born American women encountering human rights violations could also experience the renewed hope implied in the stories. Personally or privately interpreted, within the context of the referenced cultures or any other environments tolerant of discrimination and exploitation, women can extract a tailored vitality from these stories and move to eliminate gender oppression, physical, and mental cruelty universally. In the spirit of the intent of these progressive female authors, may these stories serve as a catalyst to transform minds and inspire generations of women who reject flagrant inequities between the sexes.

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Evaluation: *This paper is exemplary for its use of sources beyond the usual literary critical material, and for the writer’s distinctive, exact use of language. This is an excellent research paper.*

Consuming Kids and In Defense of Food

Catherine Sanchez

Course: Sociology 101 (Introduction to Sociology)

Instructor: Monica Edwards

Assignment: *Construct a sociological thesis (an argument!) that explores a patterned connection among three texts that we have discussed. Essentially, using the three texts, write a synthesis paper, with proper in-text citations, a debatable thesis statement, and references to all three texts. Explain the concepts you deploy in your own words, and be sure you are moving beyond description and into sociological explanation (not just what, but why, how and with what consequences for whom). Also, use sociological language throughout the paper, and keep it focused (e.g., with one primary theme, but two or three sub-themes that emerge in the body paragraphs). Finally, in referring to the quotations you select, explain why and/or how that particular statement of the author supports your ideas.*

From a sociological perspective, the specific commercialization of childhood, explored in the documentary *Consuming Kids*, and the commercialization of eating in general, discussed in Michael Pollan's *In Defense of Food*, are both socially constructed phenomena resulting from the competing and often contradictory goals of the democratic versus capitalistic social structures that coexist in the United States. While neither of these particular structures (democracy or capitalism) are inherently or specifically necessary to society in and of themselves, the socially necessary labor that they organize is something without which society could not exist—if no one produces food, for example, no one could eat. However, because each system comes with a set of values, and these two particular systems have rather contradictory values, there is often friction when society attempts to apply them in tandem. Democracy is, as President Lincoln famously said, a government structured to be “of the people, by the people, for the people” (“The Gettysburg Address,” emphasis added), while capitalism is an economic system in which the means of production are privately owned and the organization of labor is based around the needs of the producers. As such, democracy generally values public good, while capitalism values private good, and these are not always, or often, the same good, though it is frequently marketed to the public as such.

Even where there are shared values between these two, often the value has different meanings attached to it for each. Freedom, for example, is a cognitive aspect of the social structure shared by both democracy and capitalism; that is, the idea of freedom exists in, and is valued by, both of these systems, but it has a radically different meaning in each. *Consuming Kids* and *In Defense of Food* both explore the ethos of freedom mainly from the consumer/citizen's perspective; however, this is not the only point of view available. The democratic view of freedom, the kind espoused in both sources, is the idea of freedom for the individual citizen—freedom to vote, freedom of speech and religion—whereas freedom for capitalism (or market freedom) is freedom for the producers (ideologically this would be the people who own the means of production, but in a modern iteration this appears more as the corporation as an entity rather than a single individual or group of individuals as capitalism

has moved through industrialization)—freedom to earn, freedom from regulation, freedom to own—with the idea that this freedom then “trickles down” to those without means (the consumers/workers) and becomes the freedom to choose. This so-called consumer sovereignty is the idea that consumers are free to choose what is best for themselves from among all the available products (Guptill et al). Clearly, this is not the same as democratic freedom, because the consumer is only able to make choices from options that have already been vetted for them; it is akin to saying a toddler has freedom because they have been given a choice between sleeping with or without their nightlight – either way, the choice for the child to go to sleep has already been made for them by their parent. Of course, there is a more complex relationship between consumer and producer than parent and child; and though producers, as a group, have the real sovereignty over which choices consumers have, it is still somewhat of a two way relationship, but only, *Consuming Kids* would argue, if both parties are adults.

This vital disagreement between the two uses of the term freedom occurs because freedom itself is a socially constructed concept that is assigned its meaning by the system. In the same way that any given word is simply a set of sounds and has no meaning outside of that given to it by the culture in which it is used, and the same set of sounds can mean different things in different cultures (for example, “football” is not the same sport in America as it is in the rest of the world), freedom has no inherent meaning, and its meaning in any particular setting is created by the culture and context in which it is used. The idea of freedom, as is true with all socially constructed concepts, is constantly being created, affirmed, and altered by its use and its users in the same way that slang changes over time. In *Consuming Kids*, this plays out via the clash of marketers and corporations desiring the freedom to market their products in the way they feel is most effective and advantageous for them while parents and concerned citizens (members of the democracy) are interested in freeing childhood from such marketing. Both parties strongly believe they are the ones on the right side of a freedom/subjection dichotomy. The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis asserts that the way a person sees the world is shaped by the language they use. This explains

why both the marketers/corporations and the children’s rights advocates may feel righteous about their behavior. But no matter who is “right,” they are participating in a dialogue about (and, equally, the continued creation of) what the meaning of freedom is for America as a whole.

The United States is a first-world, post-industrialized, Western, capitalist federal republic. All of these descriptors have deeper, historical meanings that contributed to the country’s current social structure. History is like the DNA of society. In *In Defense of Food*, Pollan discusses how the “Age of Nutritionism” developed out of the scientific discoveries about macronutrients starting in the late 1800s, which shaped our view of where the value of food lies (that is, in the nutrients themselves, not in the “whole” food). But slightly glossed over here is the cultural atmosphere of this time period that led the country to believe that science could, and should strive to, overcome nature and that an individual’s moral strength came from their diet (Guptill et al). This led also to the push in the U.S. to change milk production over from a combination of rural family, seasonal dairy farms and urban swill dairies to government-regulated and socially sanctioned industrialized dairy farms, looking to mass produce standardized milk (Guptill et al). Knowing this background of a century of positive moral and social development being associated with big business and mass production helps anyone watching *Consuming Kids* to understand why corporations would have enough respect and leeway from the general public for an American president to suggest “there’s no reason to substitute the judgment of Washington bureaucrats for that of professional broadcasters” (Ronald Reagan qtd. in *Consuming Kids*). Business, especially business-cum-science, commands as much (or more) respect in America as the government, despite the conflict of interest business clearly has with public interest. In part, this singular relationship between business and government is due to the necessity of creating social structures, similar to the American Dream, that encourage people passively into the exploitative labor required by industrialized capitalism. If the public did not trust in corporations and see them as benevolent stewards of the public good, they might well begin to question—and even revolt against—the hegemonic power business holds over them.

Student Reflections On Writing: Catherine Sanchez

Looking back at this piece now as a student at Stanford (a thing which was, at the time I wrote it, not even a possibility in my mind) is both strange and comforting. They say a picture is worth a thousand words, but a few thousand words can give you a deep sense of who you were in a given moment in a way a picture could never quite capture. This particular assignment was the final for Sociology 101, and the sociological lens Dr. Edwards explores in that class completely upended the way I saw the world. Rereading this work now feels very centering because what were once new ideas and concepts have been incorporated into the basis of all of my current writing.

In this paper, I see myself grappling with concepts I continue to confront in my classes today. The subjectivity of values, the placating narrative of “consumer” sovereignty, the hegemonic power of corporations, etc. are echoed in the discourse of topics as diverse as housing discrimination in the 1950s, sexual assault and relationship violence on college campuses, or the prison-industrial complex.

For me, the experience I gained at Harper has always felt like a firm foundation for my current studies, but rereading this paper was a fresh reminder that both my writing style and the ideological frameworks I use now have their roots at Harper. What was once hard-won and occasionally unwieldy has smoothed and become easier with practice. I look forward to reading this piece again in the future and tracing back to this pivotal moment in my formation as an academic writer.

It’s also important to understand the relationship between corporations and the U.S. government that led to the deregulation of child marketing in the 1970s and 1980s. In both *Food & Society* and *In Defense of Food*, the authors discuss the creation of the USDA dietary guidelines and the interplay between corporate lobbies and government institutions. In short, the USDA’s dual mission to “promote and protect agriculture, *and* to offer dietary advice to the American public” (Guptill et al, 62, emphasis added)—which neatly mimics the vying social structures of capitalism (good of the producers) and democracy (good of the public), and with similar results—led first to the creation of the Dietary Goals of 1977, which told citizens to eat less “meat, eggs, and other foods high in fat, sugar and salt” (Guptill et al, 63), and then, after the backlash from affected food producer lobbyists unhappy that the guidelines no longer encouraged consumers to eat more of their products, the adjustment of the Goals to one in which the recommendations did not threaten the supremacy of meat, sugar, and processed foods in the American diet. Despite both new evidence to support the original Goals being reported each year (Pollan) and the

continued efforts of scientists and concerned third parties to change the recommendations, the guidelines continue to move further from descriptive, prescriptive, evidence-based recommendations, to the point that in 2011, the visual guideline of the new MyPlate does not even address real number or size of servings (Guptill et al). Clearly, the commercialization of childhood is not the only issue in America in which the good of the public has come second to the good of the producers.

Much of the power that the economy has in its hold over other social structures in the U.S. originates in the history of industrialization. While many are familiar with the Industrial Revolution as only a historical event, the change from a more egalitarian, agricultural society to that of an industrial (and later post-industrial) society affected the entire social fabric. Working for wages rather than mostly for sustenance created an economy in which workers created goods and then consumed them. It also meant that when, where, what, and how people ate changed; food became a commodity. No longer were family meals eaten together, nor made from ingredients farmed nearby. And public perception of “homemade”

began to fluctuate. Now that food made by hand from home wasn't the only option, the new factory-made, mass-produced food had to be marketed to the public as "better than homemade" because, as Pollan explains, "... the food manufacturers... stood to make very little money from my grandmother's cooking, because she was doing so much of it from scratch..n" (5). Here was the birth of the advertising industry, and its intimate relationship to science, seen in *Consuming Kids*. With the cultural atmosphere of credulously accepting scientific "advancement" as the highest form of knowledge and the final authority on all subjects, every advancement in nutritional science, though only in its infancy, was touted as must-follow advice with new, compliant products conveniently provided by the food industry, who happily made a profit this way (Pollan).

Sociologically, there are a few additional ties here that may not be overtly apparent. In a culture where scientific advice is faddish, following (or not following) it becomes part of identity work and social status. Are you part of the in-crowd who "know" that animal fat or gluten is bad? Are you a "good" father who buys "healthy" food for his children? Are you a "good" mother who knows where to get the "right" advice? The decisions about health and eating have been taken out of the hands of the individual and placed in the hands of scientists, backed and monitored, theoretically, by the government. Industrialization turned the family unit toward the breadwinner/homemaker dynamic, and patriarchy and latent sexism told the homemaker she ought to defer her decision-making about her family to the better-knowing men of science. This semi-worship of the opinion of the "professional" and the transfer of the work and responsibility of safeguarding the public from the individual to the government to the industries themselves continues to pervade current culture, leading to situations like the one in which the media industry creates their own ratings system for movies and then violates it, and the public is surprised (*Consuming Kids*). Surely, there are other factors involved in this cultural switch—such as the change in parenting styles, from more authoritarian to more permissive, and the two-income family dynamic, which leaves more children more often in non-parental care outside of the home where they are more likely to

be exposed to influences such as advertising in schools and daycare (*Consuming Kids*)—but again, these are outcomes that can be traced back to the changes to the family-economy-government dynamic brought about by industrialization.

The culturally inculcated response to complaints about this situation is an interesting sort of victim-blaming. The epidemic of obesity is blamed on the eaters, not the providers of high-calorie food and false information, and the government's responses (hard won though they may have been) are generally in the category of the food label—information is given on the back of the product, in terms and measurements that have to be taught to the average consumer (making it less than useful), but there is little sanction of food producers who divide the information on a candy bar clearly delivered as one serving, into two, or who misuse health claims (for instance, marketing vitamin water as "healthy" while it contains almost as much sugar as a can of Coke, according to the information clearly printed on their labels, but certainly not in their advertising). When anything is "exposed" as unhealthy for children, the first response of the media, the company at fault, and the public is: "Isn't it the parents' responsibility that their kids are eating and watching? Isn't that to buy and feed kids up to the parents ultimately?" (*Consuming Kids* 30). Meanwhile, with the other hand, marketers are purposefully studying and applying the "nag factor" in their marketing to get children to nag their parents about the product until the parents give in and purchase it (*Consuming Kids*), clearly working to both undermine the authority of the parents they claim are responsible for making decisions and to move that decision making power squarely into the hands of children, who are, by definition, much easier to persuade. This is, in essence, the commercialization of childhood—childhood has become commerce.

Marketing for child-related products has existed more or less since the dawn of marketing itself (certainly since the creation of child-related products), but marketing to children is a newer phenomenon (*Consuming Kids*). With the advent of television, toys could be marketed more directly to children, but in an era of lesser disposable income, greater adult supervision, and lesser cultural

focus on the importance of childhood, toy companies advertised their products via their value as useful objects; toys were inexpensive, and children were seen only as an “influence in the purchasing of everyday commodities” (*Consuming Kids* 5), not the actual decision-makers. As society moved away from doing the actual manual labor of farming, spinning, sewing, cooking, etc, into doing menial labor in factories and offices to earn money to buy the labor of others, actual skill earned from practice became moot—a beautiful dress is no longer a product of a person’s time and skill, it is a representation of the time and skill of others that they can afford to purchase—and as, economically, the average U.S. household was able to accumulate more wealth and consume more products, commodities became part of their identities. The spectacle of having something (a dress) became more important than the actual actions associated with being something (a tailor or seamstress), and a person’s relative wealth, not their skill or knowledge or labor, became the basis of their identity. This also changed the way interpersonal relationships are expressed. Purchasing began to supplant actions in displays of affection. If a parent loved their child in 1900, simply telling them so was sufficient because the actions of caring were the love. If a parent loves their child in 2015, they will buy them an iPhone... or so Apple would sincerely like them to believe. While there is nothing inherently wrong or maybe even particularly meaningful about giving a child an iPhone, the way advertising plays on these emotions and the extent to which advertisers literally plan out how to shape this interaction between parent and child and between child and product shows how commercialized childhood has really become; the basic parts of their existence—food, play, friendship, love—have been manipulated to become commerce. Toys and food for children are no longer sold on their value and features, they are sold by implying to children that these items will make them socially acceptable in the eyes of their peers and will fit in (*Consuming Kids*); that by having these things, they will be cool or loved or special. *In Defense of Food* is a number one *New York Times* best-seller because this is not a phenomenon unique to childhood—millions of adults make their food choices based on perceived associations of the food with image, identity, and emotion imbued to

them by similar advertising. In a manner of thought, *In Defense of Food* itself is pushing similar identity-based reasoning for choosing certain foodways by providing advice around which people who wish to subscribe to the identity of “healthy” and “wholesome” eaters can use to eat “correctly.” Being told what to eat by a trusted author is not dissimilar to SpongeBob, a trusted character, telling a child which macaroni to eat.

Sociology is, in simple terms, the study of social behavior, not a system of value judgment. The sociologist’s job is to look impartially at evidence and point out connections. While both sources, as non-sociological works, are free to make such value judgments, these judgments do not necessarily discredit the evidence the sources provide. *Consuming Kids* points out, for example, that the “fundamental message [of the marketing] that [children] need something outside of [themselves] in order to play...starts to take play out of children’s hands so that the kids need more and more and more in order to be able to play and in order to be happy” (*Consuming Kids* 27). If virtually unfettered freedom of the market results in unhappy citizens, is that really “good” for the society? The purpose of social structure is, at its heart, the organization of labor. As C. Wright Mills so famously said: “personal troubles are public issues.” Unhappy people are unproductive laborers. Unimaginative people are uncreative, unproductive laborers. Unhealthy people are both less productive and a greater drain on the system. Perhaps more importantly, is this a sustainable system? Surely, no rebellion was started by happy citizens satisfied with their lot in life. Dividing society into the haves and have-nots has not worked well in the past—feudalism came to an end at the hands of similarly intolerable circumstances. Binary dichotomies lead to inequality, which then leads to structural instability and eventual change. In focusing an entire generation’s attention on what they have (or more importantly, what they cannot afford), inequality and envy seem naturally fomented.

Looking back at the history that built industrialization, it is hard to imagine a century of progress fostered by a people who cared more about obtaining things than obtaining knowledge or skill. Certainly, though, it’s hard to say from a modern, uninformed vantage point how much of that sentiment is accurate. It’s almost cliché

to say every generation sees the generation following it as lazy and stupid, so it would seem unwise to think that generational bias plays no part in these ideas about children. Nevertheless, clearly, there are some ominous warning signs about where the future may be headed, and it seems fair to say that perhaps Americans are (or, if they understood what was going on, would be) uncomfortable with the changes unregulated freedom of the market has wrought on themselves and their children. And perhaps since commercialization is a socially constructed problem, it would also have a socially constructed solution.

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Evaluation: *Cat's work is a great and elaborate synthesis of the material assigned. Her opening discussion of freedom and the need to operationally define given the socially constructed reality is impressive, coming from a student in Introduction to Sociology. Her ability to draw out the connections between sources and expand upon them to illuminate the broader, sociological perspective is what makes her work stand out. Using history to articulate the process whereby our current food system was institutionalized, and the social systems and structures involved, Cat produced a really solid piece of sociological writing.*

Women Disappearing: The Dissonance between Immigrant and Gender Identities

Sequoia Selah

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

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

“Where was she now? And with whom? Because surely she couldn’t manage on her own” (Divakaruni 11).n These words are spoken by the main narrator in “The Disappearance,” by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, in regard to his missing wife. These words define the ruling lens through which people who subscribe to traditional gender roles view the lives and capabilities of women, especially in regard to the contrasting identities they must negotiate when adjusting to Western Civilization. This exact theme is examined in “Mrs. Sen’s” by Jhumpa Lahiri, which is a story of an Indian woman who has come to America with her husband in order to further his career as a professor. In order to fill up her time and give her a greater sense of purpose, she begins to babysit a young boy by the name of Eliot. Throughout their time together, Eliot observes many cultural and gender-specific differences between both his family dynamic and the relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Sen. During this time, Mrs. Sen is attempting to learn how to drive, at the insistence of Mr. Sen. This eventually culminates in Mrs. Sen causing an accident with Eliot in the car and her losing her job as his caretaker. This story highlights the disparities in the valuation of the different needs required by Mr. and Mrs. Sen and the lack of identity that Mrs. Sen is afforded by her role as nothing more than Mr. Sen’s wife. In a much more extreme way, these same roles are also explored by

the aforementioned story, “The Disappearance,” by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, which also highlights the lack of identity afforded to women when they are confined to traditional gender roles. The wife in this story disappears suddenly, forcing the husband to start thinking about the aspects of their relationship that may have driven her away, or where he possibly made mistakes. He eventually is confronted with the startling revelation that jewelry has been taken and must face the reality that she most likely left of her own accord. This story traverses the mental road that these thoughts take the husband, from initial denial through the eventual recognition that he was, in fact, to blame for his wife’s disappearance.

Both of these stories, in both subtle and extreme ways, illuminate the dangers of subscribing blindly to traditional gender roles and the toll that these gender norms take on the women in each of the stories, from the palpable loneliness displayed by Mrs. Sen to the startling revelations that the husband discovers as he thinks back on his marriage to his missing wife. The husbands in both of these stories do not view their wives as entire,

Student Reflections on Writing: Sequoia Selah

It has been several years and a seismic shift in political climate since I wrote my paper on immigrant identities in the USA, and it has been a wonderful reminder for me of where a lot of my current political passions began. I have had many papers since then that I have written on similar subjects, but being able to see the beginning again was quite gratifying. As I’ve continued on in my academic career, I have found that writing, again and again, has served as a respite for me, not only from the stark facts and formulas of many of my other classes, but also from the chaotic nature of being a college student. I have been inexhaustibly grateful for the writing skills I obtained at Harper and beyond, because this has allowed writing to continue to be a relaxing and therapeutic venture for me, academically as well as for personal reasons.

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whole people but instead view them through a narrow filter in which every interaction is evaluated by how it affects only them, leaving no room to view them as shared experiences.

From the beginning, “Mrs. Sen’s” highlights the subtle differences in the established identities between Mr. and Mrs. Sen. When Eliot and his mother first meet Mrs. Sen, she is introduced in very particular words: “Mrs. Sen came to them in tidy ballpoint script, posted on an index card outside the supermarket: ‘Professor’s wife, responsible and kind, I will care for your child in my home’” (Lahiri 111). This is both the characters’ and the reader’s introduction to Mrs. Sen, and in the very first words she uses to establish her identity, she defines herself by her relationship to her husband. Instead of speaking of herself independently, about her personality or her own life, she presents herself as being someone whose identity is summed up in two words: “Professor’s wife.” This is not entirely surprising when one recognizes that Mrs. Sen is on the precipice of having to define a new identity for herself. Bahareh Bahmanpour touched on this very idea when she wrote, “A detailed study of her character proves her to be struggling in the process of adaptation to the new American cultural space. Posited in a liminal space, she has to confront the culture of the Other, and is therefore, on the verge of negotiating a new identity” (292). However, instead of using the opportunity of America to craft a new identity, Mrs. Sen has instead held on to the only part of her identity that has remained stable: that of Mr. Sen’s wife.

Mrs. Sen begins to babysit Eliot and after becoming further acquainted with him, she begins to open up with regard to her feelings about America. She tells Eliot, “Here, in this place where Mr. Sen has brought me, I cannot sometimes sleep in so much silence” (Lahiri 115). It becomes clear through this statement that Mrs. Sen was not a part of the decision to move to America. She clearly states that “this place,” this country, is one that Mr. Sen has chosen for them to live in. Additionally, Noelle Brada-Williams states, “Mrs. Sen is homesick for the kind of community she had in India, a community defined by a responsibility to participate in the lives of others rather than a responsibility not to interfere or be in any way intrusive in the lives of others” (par. 18). In

comparing it to her life in India, which was full of noise and commotion, Mrs. Sen is disturbed by the silence of America to the point of it interfering with her ability to sleep. Between her assertion about the silence and the phrasing of the statement placing the onus for their residence in America on Mr. Sen, it becomes possible to see a resentment growing between Mr. and Mrs. Sen.

After Mrs. Sen has been babysitting for Eliot for some time, she gets news, by way of a letter, of a joyous occasion that has occurred in her family. Mrs. Sen reacts in a very emotional way, and she tells Eliot, “My sister has had a baby girl. By the time I see her, depending if Mr. Sen gets his tenure, she will be three years old. Her own aunt will be a stranger. If we sit side by side on a train she will not know my face” (Lahiri 122). It is evident at this point that familial ties are incredibly important to Mrs. Sen, but because of her husband’s choice to live in America, those ties have loosened, and Mrs. Sen is deeply saddened by this. Mrs. Sen is someone who is comforted and gains a sense of self from her connections to other people. This is not atypical of Lahiri’s characters, as Jennifer Bess notes:

Moving between values of collectivist and individualist cultures, they are perfectly suited to navigate the relationship between the universal and the unique, but they find that the homogenizing forces of globalization, the chaos of mechanized living, and the silence of loneliness threaten cultural identity instead of fostering a sense of community and that they threaten individual identity instead of nurturing self-knowledge. (par. 1)

Mrs. Sen comes from a collectivist culture, which puts a grand emphasis on community and family. In coming to America, Mrs. Sen is attempting, and failing, to navigate her way through an individualist society with a collectivist behavior pattern. In finding out this news about her family, Mrs. Sen is forced to face the fact that life is continuing on in India without her there. Additionally, not only does she not get to live near her family, but it’s clear that the reason for her inability to go visit her sister in the joyous time of a new addition to the family is because she cannot travel without her husband, and because it seems that her husband cannot take vacation before he gets tenure, she is

bound to America. This shows that within the confines of their relationship, Mrs. Sen's priorities are not nearly as valued as her husband's.

Throughout the story, Mrs. Sen maintains certain traditions in the household, including the daily preparation of food, which requires fresh fish. In the beginning, Mr. Sen readily helps Mrs. Sen by going to fetch the fish for her on his breaks, but this behavior ceases as he begins to feel it is taking a toll on his work life. After her husband refuses to buy fish for her due to a business meeting, Eliot finds Mrs. Sen in her bedroom: "Her face was in her hands and tears dripped through her fingers. Through them she murmured something about a meeting she was required to attend She stared at him. Her lower eyelids were swollen into thin pink crests. 'Tell me, Eliot, is it too much to ask?'" (Lahiri 125)? It is at this point that we are confronted with just how much Mrs. Sen has given up to support Mr. Sen in his endeavors. She has left her family, her home, and her lifestyle, all to come to America as his wife. In return, when asking him to assist her in getting fish from the market, Mr. Sen instead starts to push back, insisting that it is an inconvenience to his work day and that it's detrimental to his way of life as it pertains to his career. Mrs. Sen has only her babysitting and her cooking, with no other means of defining herself or of obtaining life satisfaction now that they live in America. According to Laura Williams, the act of preparing food is especially important to Mrs. Sen's identity. She states:

Her solitary chopping and the stories she tells Eliot of her past life are a means of crafting her identity. She prepares food despite the absence of her friends and family. Most of all, she performs specific acts—caring for Eliot and chopping vegetables—that are well within her knowledge and expertise. Receiving news of fresh fish from the local merchants is the only thing that makes her as happy as receiving mail from India. Food preparation is linked not only to Mrs. Sen's subjectivity, but also her ethnic identity and her ability to forge a connection with others. (par. 12)

Clearly, food preparation and the acquisition of the fish are necessities for Mrs. Sen because they are acts that are inextricably linked to her sense of self. It is made

apparent, however, that Mr. Sen does not prioritize Mrs. Sen's needs as being on equal par with his own.

After the argument with Mr. Sen over the phone, in which Mrs. Sen reacts so emotionally, she then begins to lash out physically and begins to go through her closet, revealing an extensive collection of opulent saris. It is stated, "She sifted through the drawers, letting saris spill over the edges. 'When have I ever worn this one? And this? And this?' She tossed the saris one by one from the drawers, then pried several from their hangers" (Lahiri 125). Mrs. Sen is upset about the way her life has changed since moving to America and is pointing out that her approval of America and all its personal obstacles cannot be sated with the clothing or material possessions that it seems Mr. Sen might be buying for her in an attempt to appease her. Lahiri carefully shows that Mr. Sen is not without heart toward Mrs. Sen, but that he has fumbled in his attempts to care for his wife. Noelle Brada-Williams asserts that this is a common theme for Lahiri, who intentionally shows "the dichotomy of care and neglect" (par. 1). It is important to note that Mrs. Sen does hold on tightly to the possessions that have sentimental value, such as her blade, but in the act of tossing the saris out from the dressers, she's making a definitive statement that she does not define herself by the saris that she wears and that clothing, adornment, and money mean little to her in the wake of the sacrifices she's had to make in her adjustment to America. Unfortunately, it seems that even after all this time, Mr. Sen does not seem to comprehend these facts about his wife.

Finally, Mr. Sen comes home, and after further bickering about Mrs. Sen's reluctance to drive, Mr. Sen finally drives both her and Eliot to the fish market. When they park, it is stated, "Mr. Sen handed her some bills from his wallet. 'I have a meeting in twenty minutes,' he said, staring at the dashboard as he spoke. 'Please don't waste time'" (Lahiri 126). After acquiescing to Mrs. Sen's request, Mr. Sen does drive her down to purchase the fish, but he is clearly not pleased about this. This shows the disparity that exists between the value that is put on each of their individual roles within the relationship. Everything that Mrs. Sen does, needs or desires is secondary to the same actions, needs, and desires that are required by Mr. Sen. He makes his displeasure apparent, as well, by

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“staring at the dashboard” as he speaks to her, so there may be no question that while he may be doing this for her, he is not happy about it. This type of dismissal would most likely feel diabolical to Mrs. Sen when it comes to the fragile mental state that she is in. Paul Brians examines the intimacy and care that Mrs. Sen is accustomed to when he writes, “In countries like India, the successful family tends to be regarded as one that stays together, in which everyone knows what everyone is up to, and in which the rewards of individualism are sacrificed for the rewards of belonging. Mrs. Sen yearns for a culture in which she would be cared for simply because of who she is” (par 27). The distance that is growing between Mr. and Mrs. Sen has become palpable, even to a young boy like Eliot, and it is due, in large part, to the contrasting ways in which each of them are establishing themselves as immigrants. Brians goes on to describe Mr. Sen as, “just the sort of immigrant that has built America: eager to move on, impatient with tradition, bent on change” (par. 28). Mrs. Sen is not adapting well to the changes that America has brought, and it seems that Mr. Sen is running out of patience with her lack of personal evolution. This impatience with Mrs. Sen’s personal journey as an American immigrant, however, speaks to the atmosphere of their relationship. Mrs. Sen is unable to speak openly to Mr. Sen about her difficulties, and Mr. Sen refuses to show his wife the kind of understanding she needs in order to negotiate her way to a full-fledged identity in her new role.

Overall, this story paints a picture of a marriage that puts an unfair emphasis on the needs and desires of the husband. Their relationship is strained and does not seem to be based much on respect or at all on love and affection, and unfortunately, as we see in the daily life that Mrs. Sen leads, her general life fulfillment is not of a great priority. In a much more extreme way, these same themes and examples are portrayed in the story “The Disappearance.”

To begin, shortly after being introduced to the fact that the wife in this story has gone missing, the husband begins to excuse himself from any guilt. This leads him to describe exactly how he viewed his wife. The narrator lets the reader in on the husband’s inner monologue:

She wasn’t, thank God, the quarrelsome type, like

some of his friends’ wives. Quiet. That’s how she was, at least around him, although sometimes when he came home unexpectedly he would hear her singing to her son...or laughing as she chased him around the family room...both of them shrieking with delight until they saw him. Hush now, she would tell the boy, settle down, and they would walk over sedately to give him his welcome-home kiss. (Divakaruni 9)

The husband viewed his wife as being submissive and even-tempered, even using the phrase, “Thank God,” within this description to show how much he enjoyed this quality in her, adding it in almost as if to indicate that one would naturally assume that would be his preference. However, readers are then shown both his wife and his son “shrieking with delight.” This illustrates the unbridled joy and the unadulterated emotion that the wife seemed almost to reserve solely for their son. At the end of the quote, he describes her as walking over “sedately.” This description acts as a jarring counter to the joyful mother that she is seen to be when he is not around, and it becomes clear that this is not a woman who is behaving naturally in the presence of her husband. The husband does not seem at all surprised by this fact, as he may be viewing it as the vestige of their cultural traditions, such as when families live with several generations under one roof, a dynamic that restricts the closeness of husband to wife for fear of it disturbing the dynamic of the joint family (Derne 213). If the husband has caught himself *in the trap of assuming that his wife’s behavior is due to an adherence to antiquated ideals*, it is not a surprise that he does not have a reactionary response to the bifurcated behavior of his wife.

As the story progresses, the husband begins to reveal more intimate details about the state of the relationship before the wife disappeared, including how he felt about his wife attempting to lead a more independent life. The narrator says, “Once in a while, of course, he had to put his foot down, like when she wanted to get a job or go back to school or buy American clothes. But he always softened his no’s with a remark like, What for, I’m here to take care of you, or, you look so much prettier in your Indian clothes, so much more feminine” (Divakaruni 9). The language used in this passage displays the control

that the husband has over the wife's life and the lack of understanding that he has toward her as a whole person. The use of the phrase, "had to put his foot down," shows that these restrictions that he places upon his wife are not something that he recognizes as optional, but as absolutely necessary to maintaining their dynamic. He also describes his "softened" rejections of her wishes, which are anything but. Her choice to wear American clothing would make her appear less "feminine" to him, and her wish to attend classes or work outside the home would lessen his role as provider. This attitude toward controlling even how she dresses was not an unusual sentiment within the culture. Steve Derne wrote of an interview in which it was stated,

Some men expect a wife to obey her husband's every whim. Twenty-seven-year-old Rajesh Tadav says, for instance: "The biggest thing for the ideal wife is that she accept whatever her husband wants...She should always wear red clothes if that is what pleases him. If the husband wants her to wear jeans and tee-shirt, then she should dress that way." Such subservience pleases Rajesh. "It is the greatest thing," he says, "if a wife lives according to her husband's desires." (17)

To compound this attitude of not letting her dress as she chooses or to craft her own, independent life, he also chooses to force her to view these choices she's attempting to make as inconveniences to him. This has the effect of framing her life as being contingent upon his desires. Similarly, Rajesh Bojan writes:

Hardly have they left any space for them to act independently. In the name of love, in the name of power, in the name of a family head, in every way possible, it is not surprising to know how men are governing women. Women appear to be liberated in the society, but every household has a tale of domination. Divakaruni brings to light the type of oppression that most women face in the contemporary society. She writes about the bridal expectation of the husband, "If you can find me a quiet, pretty girl, someone who would be relieved to have her husband make the major decisions." (24)

These restrictions speak to the fear the husband has about losing control of his wife and exposes his tendency to view his wife not as an entire human being, but as an entity responsible for fitting into the mold he has crafted.

As the story continues to unfold, the narrator begins to paint a picture not only of an abused woman but also begins to reveal intimate details about the husband and the troubling ways he views feminine sexuality. When thinking of his wife's sexual reluctance, the husband compares her to the "American" women he's become accustomed to seeing, and the narrator states:

That was another area where he'd had to be firm. Sex. She was always saying, Please, not tonight, I don't feel up to it. He didn't mind that. She was, after all, a well-bred Indian girl. He didn't expect her to behave like those American women he sometimes watched on X-rated videos, screaming and biting and doing other things he grew hot just thinking about. (Divakaruni 9)

This passage puts on display the systematic objectification that the husband places on women, both with regard to their purity or their lack of it. This dissonant dichotomy is a common theme throughout the story, as Francine Prose writes of Divakaruni's writing:

Indeed, many of Divakaruni's characters are performing the strenuous balancing act of having one foot in one country, the other foot in another. Though perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the chasms her protagonists straddle have less to do with the ground beneath their feet than with the gap between past and future, between the heart and the head. (par. 3)

Both the husband and the wife in this situation are dealing with concepts in identity that cannot be reconciled, but while the wife is simply struggling to find herself amidst the upheaval, the husband is dealing with a much more troublesome issue. His is a dual-sided problem. On the one hand, he places his wife on a pedestal for her reluctance, saying that he "didn't mind," her resistance to his advances, even going so far as to label her as "well-bred," a description usually reserved for that of animals.

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Conversely, he then goes on to compare her behavior to that of the women he sees in pornography, admitting that their more risqué and sexually open behavior causes him to become sexually excited. His wife's identity is inextricably linked to her sexual reluctance, painting her to be virtuous and "well-bred," based on this fact. He would never "expect her to behave" as the women in the pornography do because, in spite of the fact they sexually excite him, it is implied that their participation makes them less desirable as actual mates because of their perceived lack of virtue. In neither instance is the husband recognizing any of these women as sexually autonomous people and instead views their identity as being part and parcel of their sexuality, either because of their reluctance or their willingness.

In addition to this, the narrator then begins to outline exactly how the husband deals with his wife's sexual trepidation, and in a troubling passage, he begins to show just how deeply this controlling and violent nature of his runs. He attempts to justify his own behavior in the wake of his wife's disappearance by reassuring himself and saying,

Surely he couldn't be blamed for raising his voice at those times (though never so much as to wake his son), or for grabbing her by the elbow and pulling her to the bed, like he did that last night. He was always careful not to hurt her, he prided himself on that. Not even a little slap, not like some of the men he'd known growing up....And he always told himself he'd stop if she really begged him, if she cried. After some time, though, she would quit struggling and let him do what he wanted. (Divakaruni 9)

This passage is describing a man who is sexually abusing his wife and who evidently does not view his wife as an autonomous, equal partner in their marriage. He tries to justify his actions to himself by saying that he "couldn't be blamed" and that "he'd stop if she really begged him." By setting those vague parameters on his sexually aggressive behavior, he's backed both himself and his wife into a corner in which the ever-escalating behavior will constantly be justified, and for which he is already making excuses for incredibly inexcusable behavior. He views his wife as a sexual object that is there for his use,

whenever he so chooses, as opposed to someone who is deserving of making her own sexual decisions. The wife has been placed in a dangerously precarious situation due to both his emotional indifference and his sexual violence. Serena Nanda, an American anthropologist, explains the lack of footing the wife possesses in this situation: "If [a wife] is psychologically, or even physically abused, her options are limited, as returning to her parents' home, or divorce, are still very stigmatized" (qtd. in Peacock 20). It is apparent at this point in the story that her role within the marriage is to submit to his whims and accept the sexual objectification and outright violence he is inflicting upon her. Peacock goes on to explain that her disappearance after such treatment is almost expected, especially when the lack of cultural and geographic support is taken into consideration. She writes, "She submits to an arranged marriage and plays the quiet and dutiful wife to the best of her abilities in accordance with Indian tradition. When this role becomes untenable, she simply disappears rather than submit to a nontraditional divorce" (20). The wife is not just a victim of regular sexual violence. She is also a woman without financial resources who was brought up in a culture that discouraged divorce and who has been brought to a new country where she is isolated and without family. Her disappearance is not only an understandable decision, but also a brave one.

After making several justifications and personal excuses in order to assuage his own guilt regarding his wife's disappearance, the husband makes a startling discovery indicating that his wife has disappeared not as a victim of circumstance but of her own volition and has in fact, left him. As he begins to process this fact, the husband begins to make assumptions regarding the circumstances surrounding his wife's departure, and he thinks to himself, "Where was she now? And with whom? Because surely she couldn't manage on her own" (Divakaruni 11). Once the husband had made the realization that the wife has possibly left of her own accord, it becomes clear that despite her swift and seamless disappearance, he still is unable to view his wife as an independent person. He emphasizes in his own thoughts that she must be with someone, most likely a man, in order to survive. There are several reasons this could have occurred. Peacock suggests the following: "...The husband is mistaking his

wife's quiet and solitary ways as proof of her delicate nature. He is romanticizing her because he does not know her" (20). He cannot fathom that his wife was capable of doing this on her own, despite the fact that she has displayed hardiness and endurance. His own mind blocks him from seeing the truth because this would mean that he would have to take the blame for her leaving and begin to face the aspects of his own personality that are troublesome and outwardly destructive. He would be forced into taking responsibility.

These two stories lay in stark light the damage that hyper-traditional gender roles have on both women and men by showing how these two couples struggle with unbalanced dynamics. While one woman struggles with her identity and is left on her own to try to figure out who she is within the confines of a prescribed role, another bucks against these parameters and eventually takes matters into her own hands, a process which, unfortunately, backs her into a corner where she makes the difficult decision to abandon her only child. Both of these stories lay out examples, both explicitly and more subtly, and have much to say on the ramifications of living lives led by stereotypical gender roles.

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Evaluation: *Sequoia's* discussion of these two works addressing gender roles in the Indian-American diaspora is marked by precise and distinctive presentation and interpretation of story details, and by her advanced academic writing abilities. This paper is an excellent comparison, incorporating pertinent remarks from critical sources and also advancing new ideas.

The Road to Quipu: An Art Journey

Nana Shibata

Course: Art 133 (non-Western Art History)

Instructor: Karen Patterson

Assignment: This assignment was a semester-long inquiry into a single non-Western artwork that the student viewed firsthand at a Chicago museum. The project was broken into four small papers that were assembled into a larger paper at the end of the semester. For the first step, students collected their assumptions and questions about the art object, without doing research. In the second portion, students visually analyzed the artwork. Part three introduced research. Last, students summarized their discoveries about the learning process as a result of the project.

Getting handed an assignment as a student typically means you've just received a bothersome task that needs to be addressed as soon as possible, to get it out of your hands. However, researching the quipu was surprisingly not just another burden. Rather, it became a journey of discovering a whole different world of art and getting a glimpse of the ancient past.

The first part of this assignment was to choose a work of art from a list provided by the instructor. To be quite honest, at this point, all the artwork I had gone through all appeared the same: characterless and dull, with little that aroused interest; that is, until I nearly hit the bottom of the list, and the quipu came into view.

The moment I laid eyes on the rope-like object from the list of acceptable artworks at the Field Museum, there was just no other artwork that could compete with the amount of questions this piece stirred up in my mind. My mind screamed, "What in the world IS that thing?" If I had not known that the quipu was featured as a work of art in a museum, without a doubt, I would have just passed it off as some yellowing piece of rope hanging off of a

wall. Sure, it was arranged in a rather interesting fashion for just a piece of rope, but without its arrangement, the artwork wouldn't have had nearly as much impact as it did when showcased on a wall.

What its purpose was for, I couldn't even begin to imagine. The possibilities of what the rope would have been used for were overwhelming and exciting. Perhaps this particular piece may have been used to represent the sun, through using a simple medium. Aside from the main rope holding the entire piece together, all the other ropes in the artwork were thinner, varied in length, and radiated outward, almost as if manifesting itself as the rays of the sun. Another hypothesis was that this rope may not have been an item for display, but instead, something meant to be worn by a living thing for ceremonial or decorative purposes. The quipu might have even been draped across some other object as a part of another work. Something else to consider was that this simple yet complex work may even change, depending on the time period in which it is viewed. The rope was clearly hundreds of years old; the original colors of the rope may have faded over time. How this rope-like object (if constructed out of ancient rope) survived the harsh passing of time was beyond my comprehension.

There were endless questions I had for the artwork, but few answers. Its entire being and purpose was shrouded in the mysteries of time and an unfamiliar culture. Though it deceived people by appearing simple and useless, it ensnared curiosity with its mysterious arrangement and purpose. What its purpose and meaning was, I had absolutely no idea. However, there was one thing I could have said about that work confidently, back then. For a simple piece of rope, the quipu was pretty complicated.

The second part of becoming more familiar with the quipu was observing the quipu itself, in person. Like any artwork, the *Quipu of Inca Empire, Peru*, was truly something to be witnessed and experienced in the raw. There are certain details in an artwork that a photograph can never truly capture. First off, the entire piece itself appeared to be made of fibrous material, such as rope or twine. Though it appeared to have a rough texture, the material was twisted tightly together in a way that caused it to give off both a coarse and smooth surface. Many

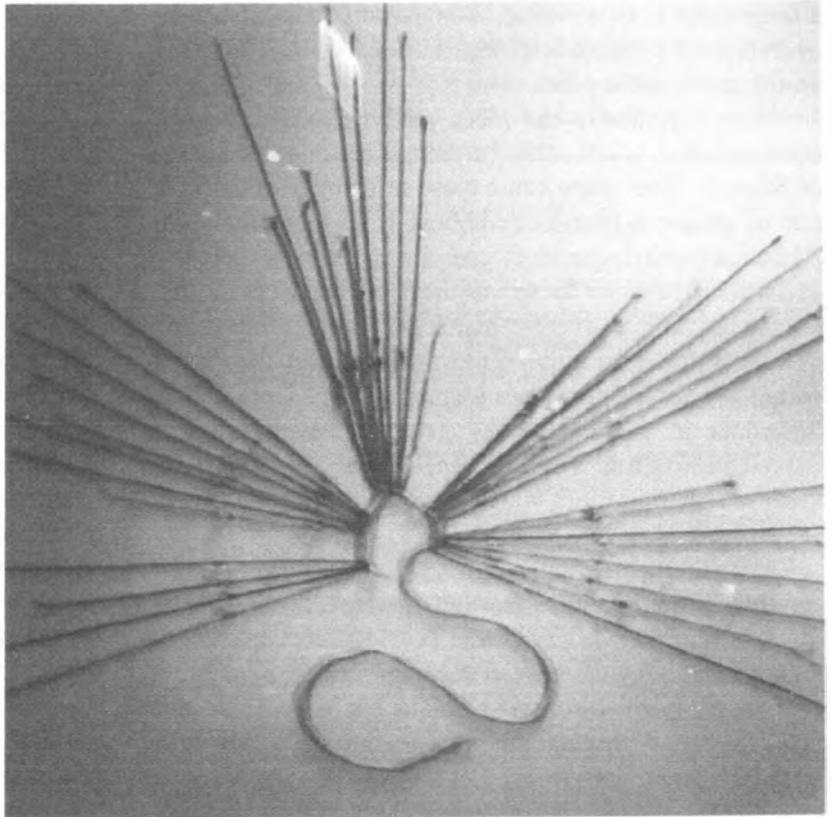


Figure 1. Quipu, Inca (AD 1400-1532), Peru.
On display at the Art Institute of Chicago.

of the edges on the “radiating” ropes were frayed, which helped convey its scratchy texture. The series of ropes came together to create a rather large arrangement of ropes that was not monumental, but not miniature, either. Its dimensions were large enough so that its importance could possibly be visible from a distance.

What made the quipu incredibly intriguing, however, was not just the materials used, but its shape and composition. Its organic shape consisted of a large, winding, circular rope placed in the middle, with “rays” of thin ropes radiating out of the center, in five similar triangular patterns. There were no precise, geometric shapes to the quipu, but its use of curving and straightly arranged ropes filled an otherwise negative space, to give off an illusion that the quipu was made up of positive spaces (Figure 1). Midway between each of the thinner ropes were knots tied to break its single straight path, but even then, the straight, radiating ropes visually helped guide the eye from the center of the rope out to the entire

piece. The center rope held the entire piece together but drew the attention of the viewer as the initial focal point. Just as quickly, the center pulled the eyes away from the circle to the straight path of the radiating ropes attached to it. The artist may have intentionally done this so that the viewer is forced to acknowledge the whole piece at once, and not view the quipu in sections and pieces. If the quipu was meant to represent a symbol or object like the sun, the arrangement has done it justice by incorporating every part of the rope to represent the subject matter.

As for the colors of the quipu, they varied extremely in value. Because the entire piece was made of similar material, the colors mainly stayed within the same hues of an earthy brown palette. Few of the thin ropes were such a deep brown tone; they almost appeared to have a bluish green, gray, or even black color. The center rope alienated itself as the focal point, as it also had the lightest value: a straw-like yellow hue. Every rope attached to the center was darker than the center rope itself. Such

a large scale in color value, though, only helped pull the overall piece harmoniously together, as it also aided in the arrangement of the piece.

The varieties in the piece really helped the quipu come together, whether the varieties were of color, shape, or balance. The quipu came close to being symmetrical, but its minor differences allowed it to retain balance. Although the arrangement forces the eye to view the piece as a whole, the major focus was the upper half of the quipu, not the bottom part of the center rope. Another interesting point was that if the quipu is closely inspected, the viewer would see that all the ropes were similar in length. The difference in whether it was arranged straight or in an curved pattern was what gave the viewer the impression that the radiating ropes were longer than the center rope.

The third part of the journey was finally learning the true nature of the quipu through research, and boy, was my mind blown! Many of the previous concepts I had about the quipu were proven severely wrong. The quipu is an incredible piece of art to look at, but in truth was also one of the most unimaginably fascinating technologies to be used by man.

My assumption before researching this Incan work was that the quipu was created to artistically represent a symbol, such as the sun. However, it was only after I started looking into the purpose of the quipu that I remembered a crucial element that needs to be kept in mind while examining a work of art: not all art was created for “artistic” purposes. What we view as art now may have been a tool for practical use in the time of its creation.

The quipu was one such object. Its existence held a crucial purpose within the Incan empire during the pre-Columbian South American era. The Incan Empire was the largest empire dominating pre-Columbian South America, with its capitol located in Cuzco (present-day Peru). The empire came to power within the thirteenth century. Unfortunately, it dissolved in the late fifteenth century due to the Spanish conquest, but perhaps there was a bit of silver lining to this, as well.

One of the biggest debates among scholars, as mentioned earlier, is the idea that quipus were also a form of writing. If so, the quipu would be the world’s only

three-dimensional written language created by civilization known so far! According to Urton (the creator of the Khipu Database Project), his argument is that if quipus were solely created to record numbers, “then you would have a system that was much more economical, such as one of just white cotton strings tied in a decimal hierarchy (qtd in Hardman). However, the varieties in color, spinning, and plying, and in the directions in which the knots are tied, all seem rather excessive for simply recording numerical information. There are also arguments against the idea that quipus were more than just mnemonic devices, as well. Patricia J. Lyon argues that, “Due to cultural evolutionary theory, people have decided that cultures are not really any good unless they have writing” (qtd. in Mann). So, what appeared to look like the symbol of the sun on first impression surprisingly turned out to be an incredible instrument of information storage during the Great Incan Empire. It is without a doubt that the Incans were tremendously creative for creating such a tool. Although many quipus and the information about them have been submerged in the depths of time, time has without a doubt not stripped them of their greatness as artworks and methods of communication.

In conclusion, I was completely wrong about the quipu being artistic representations of the sun. Based on observation alone, before having any insight into what a quipu was, I had formed a hypothesis that was way off the mark. Interestingly enough, though, the visual observations I made, using formal analysis, involved the same characteristics that scholars debate on, such as their colors and their knots.

Much of the little known information we have on quipus was recorded by the Spanish, as the Incans had no form of writing (or at least one that historians and archaeologists deciphered). Unlike the Spanish, with their alphabets, much of Incan literature and communication was oral. However, the quipu did relay messages, statistics, and other information through Quipu code. No one is certain how the quipu code works or how to even decipher it, but there are a few surviving sources from history that explain some mysteries surrounding the quipus. For one, the code was incredibly sophisticated; it was not a tool used or read by the common folks. Quipus

were also made of cotton and occasionally camelid fiber, and they varied in color, from white, brown, and green. Many were also destroyed by the Spaniards, who didn't quite understand these tools and declared them "ungodly." Quipucamayocs (or quipu makers/keepers) were the trained officials and accountants who recorded every type of information within the empire, such as "census data, landholdings, and legal proceedings" (Hardman).

Whether the quipu code actually recorded history or literature is still debated, but there is no doubt that the quipu code utilized numbers, which are represented by knots to record information. The code is created when the quipu maker takes a main cord to attach the pendant cords to, which contains the knots and information the code is tied on. As one text explains,

These knots and their clusters conveyed numerical information in base-10 representation. For example, if the number 363 was to be recorded on the string, then five touching knots were placed near the free end of the string, followed by a space, then six touching knots for the 100s, then three touching knots for the 60s. Specific information was conveyed via the number and type of knots, cluster spacing, color of cord, and pendant array....Quipus were mathematically efficient and practical. (Slavit and Slavit)

Beyond learning about the quipu and its function, this experience has certainly taught me a lot about learning and observation. For one, assumption may hinder your ability to clearly analyze an artwork. Before learning the true purpose of the quipu, I had, without even realizing it, assumed that all artwork was created for only artistic or ceremonial purposes. However, the quipu has reminded me once again that art can also be practical.

Learning how to formally observe art also taught me how to critically view a piece of work and understand what makes up the artwork and the "story." As a person who creates artwork, I've been taught to critically look at what makes a particular piece look beautiful, or how that effect comes about. This exercise, though, went far beyond what "looks good." Through this process, you really learn how to demonstrate and practice observing all aspects of an artwork, what makes the piece,

and why it was created in that manner. It truly amazed me how much can be learned about a culture, their people, religion, and even history from just a single work of art. Art isn't just what looks pleasing to the eye. It is also a testament of where it comes from.

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Evaluation: *Nana's paper stood out because of the way she tied the four papers together into a seamless whole, and because of the sophistication of her reflections at the end of her paper. Her analysis of the visual structure of the quipu is remarkably sophisticated, especially since this object is more commonly regarded for practical, rather than its aesthetic, qualities.*

Means of Social Control in George Orwell's *1984* and in the Present Society

Alena Sidelnikova

Course: ESL 073 (Reading V)

Instructor: Alina Pajtek

Assignment: *Write a paper in which you discuss the ways in which you see the tools of social control present in George Orwell's 1984 in action in today's society.*

Some people today would give no chance to the possibility of the real existence of the society of Oceania described in George Orwell's dystopia *1984*, let alone being part of this society. On the other hand, there is still a majority of people who might draw parallels to their own country's present reality or at least its history while reading *1984*. George Orwell wrote his dystopia in the year of 1948, depicting the mood of despair of contemporary society and sending a message that its development had taken a dramatically wrong direction. His biggest concern is about the future of men in a world ruled by an outright dictatorship and, as Erich Fromm interprets *1984's* biggest question, whether "... human nature [can] be changed in such a way that man will forget his longing for freedom, for dignity, for integrity, for love—that is to say, can man forget that he is human" (Orwell 318)? The society in the book is divided into four levels: Big Brother, the Inner Party, the Outer Party, and proletariat. Big Brother is a governor of Oceania and represents its ideology; the Inner Party is the ruling mechanism of Oceania; the Outer Party is the middle class of Oceania; and, finally, proletariat or proles, the working class, who are not held as human beings, but as the pure labor of industrial society. Oceania is continuously at war, and people live in poverty, with never-ending shortages of goods in spite of overdone production plans. There are no written laws limiting people's rights, but there are unwritten rules inhibiting them from liberty, justice, happiness, and peace. Except among proles, there is neither love nor

trust between people; however, all this love and trust must be given to the Party and Big Brother—the power elite. People of *1984* are daily and nightly watched, devoid of any kind of privacy, and those who do not accept this reality are vaporized and considered to never have existed. The biggest aim of the Party is not just to control people's lives, but their thought, in order to preserve absolute power. The Party maintains its aim by means of altering history, simplifying language to the grade of its most possible primitiveness, poverty, war and unlimited terror. As a result, George Orwell demonstrates that dehumanization of man is possible. Even though George Orwell's *1984* is a dystopia, the pattern of that society, with lower or higher projection on Oceania, is to be found nowadays in many countries, especially among big world powers such as China, Russia, the United States, North Korea, and dictatorial Middle Eastern and South African countries. Surprisingly, the means by which the Party controls people in *1984* coincide with those used by governments today; among them are history altering, the media, labor exploitation, poverty, authoritarian regimes, and war. Mass media and history altering are tools of social control that are common to both Oceania in *1984* and modern Russian societies.

Mass media is a simple but effective instrument to force the direction of people's thought and to make them follow social order. Mass media can confuse even people with critical thinking skills, let alone ordinary folk. This idea finds support in George Orwell's Oceania society as well as in present-day Russia. The media in *1984* is represented by the telescreen translations, newspapers, movies, and posters. For example, even though Winston Smith is aware of the present reality, sometimes, under the influence of continuously changing facts and propaganda of certain ideas in the media, he gets confused about what is the real truth (Orwell 34). Loud news about "the reports of production" regularly transmitted over telescreens did not make anyone in Oceania question why there were still shortages of food, cigarettes, and shoes for everyone, and not enough clothes, so that people wear socks with holes and sleep without underwear to make them last longer (Orwell 31, 41, 58, 60). Nevertheless, people accepted reported information as an unquestionable truth because what the Party said was considered to be the truth. For

example, when Winston sits in the canteen during his lunch break, and the telescreen runs the report about produced goods and the raised chocolate ration, which only a day before had been reported to be reduced, he watches people's reactions: "Parsons swallowed it easily, with the stupidity of an animal. The eyeless creature at the other table swallowed it fanatically, passionately, with a furious desire to track down, denounce, and vaporize anyone who should suggest that the last week the ration had been thirty grams" (Orwell 58).

Movies held in cinemas both for party members and proles also functioned as means of social control in *1984*. For example, Winston Smith describes in his diary the night in a movie house. The movie shows people in the Mediterranean trying to escape from helicopters bombing them, where boats of escapees filled with children and women are finally crashed into pieces. The audience of the movie house welcomes the dramatic development with applause and shouting, with the laughter of party members but with protest from one woman among the proles, arguing that it should not have been shown in front of kids (Orwell 8-9). Evidently, in this scene, escapees are Oceania's enemies, and the helicopters are Oceania's military force. This example shows that this kind of movie promotes war and hatred toward the rival and the part of the world about which people of Oceania do not have much knowledge, except that they are considered to be their enemies; moreover, such movies psychologically manipulate society, gradually killing the sense of humanity in people. In addition, posters of Eurasian soldiers placed all over the city, which exceeded the number of posters of Big Brother, serve the same purpose, of social control. Gigantic posters depicted "... expressionless Mongolian face and enormous boots, a submachine gun pointed from his hip. From whatever angle you looked at the poster, the muzzle of the gun... seemed to be pointed straight to you" (Orwell 149). Those posters were supposed to constantly remind Oceania citizens of their enemy and produce anger, but also patriotism, making them forget about long working hours, and support those who are on the front line, fighting for victory. By means of mass media, the Party conducts its control over Oceanian citizens' perception of life in general and of living conditions in particular.

Similar to George Orwell's *1984*, the mass media

are also tools of social control in present-day Russian society. Without freedom of information, it is hard to talk about democracy; and where there is no democracy, there is a place for a dictatorial regime and complete control of society. In Russia, there are media forms funded by the government and a private media, but the first one is predominant. Both of them, however, are highly controlled and suppressed by the government. In spite of having come a long way toward developing an independent press with the end of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia seems to be coming back to the same path. Mariana Torotcheshnikova, in her "SKR, 'Rospetchat' and 'Antigovernment' Press" article reports that in the last ten to fifteen years, there was a monopolization of press by the government, making press dependent on government's budgeting and, therefore, thoroughly controlled by it. In 2015, there appeared a list of press forms, a kind of a "black list," referred to as antigovernment press, which was going through inspections by governmental institutions. This press was accused of extremism and of publishing information forbidden for readers. The media on that list allowed criticism that the public could not hear transmitted on the central federal channels, and which differed from the information given by the Kremlin press, the government, and officials (Torotcheshnikova). Such development influences mass media decisions about whether to denounce their criticism towards someone or something, or not. In fact, today, free press in Russia tends to be nonexistent. According to Reporters Without Borders, For Freedom of Information, the Russian Federation holds 152 positions out of 180 in the 2015 ranking. Unfortunately, that means that people are likely to receive information lacking in objectivity and to see only one side of any argument. In the period of December 2011 through March 2012, Russians once again were discontented because of falsified parliamentary information, and following presidential election results, they came out on the streets to protest. The government adopted the tactic of splitting society and trying to gain the support of the majority. Natalia Avdonina, in "Political Journalistic Under Siege," explains that at that moment, the mass media started saying loudly that the minority, which were not leaving demonstrations held in different cities of Russia, did not know how to fill up

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their spare time while others were working from dawn to sunset. This example, like the media worked toward setting up and emphasizing social differences in people's minds, dividing intellectuals and ordinary folk, and confusing the perception of the present circumstances. Both in *1984* and in Russia, we can see in these examples how the media has the ability to convince, or at least to confuse people, or influence the direction of thoughts in society.

History altering, as presented in both *1984* and the Russian reality of today, is another significant method of influencing people's minds to think and to form the "right" values and ideology. It is important for a human being to know the past in order to understand whether he or she is moving forward in development or going backward. People need to learn how to live a better life from the successes or the mistakes of the past. In *1984*, the past underwent big changes. Old records containing evidence of true facts were regularly destroyed in order to make people think that the Party's deeds and ideology are undeniable. "Day by day and almost minute by minute then past was brought up to date" (40). There was the whole section in the Records Department, which "consisted of persons whose duty it was to track down and collect all copies of books, newspapers, and other documents which had been superseded and were due for destruction" (40). Winston Smith found the altering of the past worse than death and torture. He was frightened that "if all others accepted the lie which the Party imposed—if all records told the same tale—then the lie passed into history and became truth" (34). Therefore, Winston was afraid that the future generation would never know the true past. Winston's concerns are true and evident, as the past would become a mystery, leading to the stagnation or degradation of human development.

Winston did not stop thinking and questioning about how life was before the Revolution and assumed it was possibly better than in his present days. However, it was the intention of the Party to create the understanding in people's minds that the life that they live is the best that they could ever have. The Party's slogan was "Who controls the past, controls the future: who controls the present controls the past" (Orwell 34). When Winston meets an old man in the proles' bar, he asks the question

that never leaves him: "Do you feel that you have more freedom now than you had in those days? Are you treated more like a human being?" (Orwell 91). That was what worried Winston so much: "when memory failed and written records were falsified ..., the claim of the Party to have improved the conditions of human life had got to be accepted, because there did not exist and never again could exist, any standard against which it could be tested" (Orwell 93). There was no chance to track what was really true, other than to keep memories. For example, Winston could not remember in what year Big Brother was first mentioned or when his country had not been at war, but he could definitely remember that during some part of his childhood, there was no war (Orwell 32-36). However, other people whose memories and consciousness were less resistant to the environment of new technology, or those who had been born after the Revolution and had grown up in the atmosphere of the loudly pronounced, dominated truth of the Party, seemed not to notice when the information was controversial, unreasonable, or they did not agree with reality. For example, Winston never noticed that the rival of Oceania was regularly changed from one power to another, from Eurasia to Eastasia and vice versa, as though the enemy had always been the same one (Orwell 154). Moreover, untrue history was taught to children in schools. Children's history textbooks told about the life before "the glorious Revolution" as about a miserable time when children had to work twelve hours a day and had nothing to eat, and about fat and rich capitalists with "wicked faces" who "owned everything in the world and everyone else was their slave" (Orwell 72, 89). For instance, Julia learned at school that airplanes had been invented by the Party while Winston remembered airplanes since his early childhood, long before the Party came to power (Orwell 36, 153). It appears that to change the past is very easy, especially when generations replacing each other do not ask the older ones about what life was like when they were young.

The struggle for history is happening also in present Russia. Today, an average Russian citizen understands, without looking for possible factual evidence, that what is written in school history books may be not objective but dictated by government order. Doctor of Historical Sciences, Ivan Kurilla, in his article "History and

Memory in 2004, 2008 and 2014 Years” expresses his concerns about the future of history and says that Russian historical societies experience growing pressure from the federal government that attempts to create a “uniformed schoolbook” and to pass “memorial laws,” limiting free scientific research on World War II and the present Russian-Ukrainian relations. With regard to this, open conflict developed and escalated between bureaucrats and historians. The government actively promotes policies that narrow possible interpretations of history, limiting school education to a “uniformed schoolbook,” and persecution for different interpretations and approaches to developments and actions of the Soviet Union in World War II. In April 2014, the Russian State Duma added to the Criminal Code the article “About Nazism Rehabilitation,” which limits free research on WWII history. Following that article, a new crime appeared in the Russian Criminal Code, defined as the “distribution of facts, expressing disrespect to the society, related to the days of military glory and Russia’s memorable dates.” To work on the creation of the “uniformed schoolbook,” historical and Russian military-historical establishments were organized and managed by officials (Kurilla). Similar to George Orwell’s *1984*, where the old man whom Winston met in the proles’ bar was the last hope to learn the truth about prerevolutionary days, also in Russia, Dr. Kurilla worries, the veterans of WWII were the last connection point to the historical truth, and with the disappearing of the last veterans, the political history activists are able to create the history they like. Correspondent to Radio Svoboda in St. Petersburg, Tatiana Voltskaya, describes how astonished she was by the wall newspaper “The Steps of History” in one of St. Petersburg’s schools, which she considers to be one of the first results of this trend of “memory monopolization by the government.” The wall newspaper was glorifying the Soviet time and claiming Stalin was a hero. It seemed to deny the crimes of the Gulag (Soviet forced labor camps during the Stalin era), Stalin’s repressions, and annihilation of the peasantry. There, one can read about such achievements as “Five Year Plan in Four Years!” This is an example of what we can also see in George Orwell’s *1984*. The principal of the school argued that the school follows the president’s orders and that the newspaper publishes objective history

facts. Voltskaya sees the danger in that people will forget who they are and thinks that people should be reminded that they are human beings, not slaves not knowing their heritage. She fears that today’s society is being manipulated by old methods of brain-washing, where people are told that cannons and planes are important, but not low pensions or children suffering from cancer who cannot get sufficient medical treatment because war is more important. The correspondent fears that from that kind of “wall newspaper” starts the propaganda of fascism and national socialism (Voltskaya). As a result, people dismiss the truly important things, devoting their lives to serve the government’s ideology, as we saw in *1984*. The aim of the Russian government is clear, especially in light of the latest developments of internal and international matters—to inspire patriotism in Russian citizens and to ensure their absolute support of the government, as well as an unquestionable belief in the honesty and generosity of their country’s leaders. Altering history and approving schoolbooks by government officials rather than by historians can lead to erroneous judgments not only about the internal past and present of the country but also about its international relations, escalating conflicts and posing danger for world safety and freedom.

People were talking at all times about how to ensure both political and intellectual freedom, and democracy, and one could hardly disagree that this question is still open. In *1984*, the Party tries and succeeds in trampling a man’s nature, transforming him into an instrument not capable of feelings, hope, and critical thinking in order to control society and to sustain its power. The Russian government is trying today to achieve a similar goal. By simultaneous effort of mass media and the more dangerous and immoral tool such as history altering, both the Party and the Russian government are trying to take away people’s memories, the right to know their past, to change their consciousness, to make people ignore or not notice the real picture of reality and believe in “a happy life,” while, as Winston bitterly complains, “always in your stomach and in your skin there was a sort of protest, a feeling that you had been cheated of something that you had a right to. It was true that he had no memories of something greatly different... Was it not a sign that this was not the natural order of things, if one’s heart sickened

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at the discomfort and dirt and scarcity...the lifts that never worked, the cold water, the gritty soap, the cigarettes that came to pieces, the food with its strange evil taste" (Orwell 59-60)? Once, Winston thought, "Out of those mighty loins a race of conscious beings must one day come. You were dead; theirs was the future. But you could share in that future if you kept alive the mind as they kept alive the body, and passed on the secret doctrine that two plus two make four" (Orwell 221). There is no doubt that everyone should always keep alive hope for a better life and future, but the question is: "What prevents—and has always prevented—the majority of the society from standing up against and overthrowing the few ruling figures before the methods that the power elite use to take control over society come into effect?"

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Evaluation: Alena's paper presents a compelling argument for the existence of similarities between the society of 1984 and that of present Russia in her discussion of the lack of freedom of information, and of changing historical facts. Equally powerful is Alena's thought-provoking question, which is as relevant today as ever: What prevents individuals from speaking up and fighting for what they believe in?

E.B. Dongala and Ndeley Mokoso's Criticisms of Twentieth-Century African Governments

Ben Snively

Course: Literature 208 (non-Western Literature)

Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

Assignment: *One of the options for the first analytical paper of the semester was to compare two short stories by different African authors.*

Over the past few hundred years, Africa has existed in a tumultuous environment characterized by foreign invaders, oppressive regimes, seemingly endless violence, and periodic power shifts from one abusive government to the next. Throughout this lengthy period of unrest, people from all around the continent have expressed their frustration with the cruel policies of the uncaring and self-serving forces governing them. One of the most powerful ways that the discontent masses of Africa have voiced their disapproval is through the art of the written word. Within this category, two highly poignant works are E.B. Dongala's "The Man" and Ndeley Mokoso's, "No Escape." Although both of these pieces fall within the short story genre and criticize real-life African governments, they deliver their messages in two distinctly different ways: dramatization and satire, respectively. Through the use of fictional characters with strong parallels to actual figures and events, E.B. Dongala and Ndeley Mokoso criticize the corruption and incompetence commonplace throughout postcolonial African governments.

The first of these stories, "The Man," begins with an unnamed country gripped in a state of panic: the adored "president-for-life" has been assassinated, and the "bastard who dared to murder" the "dear beloved founder-president" has escaped, untouched, from the ruler's grand palace (Dongala 6, 7). In order to catch and justly punish this "one-eyed son-of-a-whore without balls" who dared to harm the cherished leader, the army goes from village to village, beating, burning, and slaying all those whom they feel are not fully cooperating with their hunt to find the disdained enemy of the state. Eventually, the search party unknowingly kills the infamous assassin, for he is unrecognizable due to his removal of the disguise he wore during the murder. Following this, the military proceeds to fruitlessly continue their hunt, fated to never apprehend the treasonous villain, though they already had.

Reading through this quick summary of the story, it should be fairly obvious that the titles assigned to the "father founder of the nation" and the "bastard murderer" who took his life are far from accurate. These exaggerated labels are actually used sarcastically by Dongala to mock the reigning powers controlling the state. Throughout the story, the narrator makes strikingly clear that all of these designations given to the two characters are nothing

but propaganda spread by the oppressive regime. This excerpt from the story details the inescapable presence of the tyrannical leader:

It was a statutory requirement that his portrait should hang in all homes. The news bulletins on the radio always began and ended with one of his stirring thoughts. The television news began, continued and finished in front of his picture, and the solitary local newspaper published in every issue at least four pages of letters in which citizens proclaimed their undying affection (Dongala 7).

Despite all being located “in a country where people rarely have enough to eat,” every media outlet within the state constantly reports messages glorifying the dictator and the government he allegedly runs so well. This tactic of creating a cult of personality has been a very common ploy used by totalitarian governments for centuries; infamous figures such as Adolf Hitler and Mao Zedong are well documented in their use of this strategy. Taking this is no different. Despots such as Idi Amin in Uganda and Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu Wa Banga of The Democratic Republic of the Congo (reigning during most of his reign) are very similar to what is described in the story. In this way, the dictator in “The Man” becomes a clear fictional counterpart to these real-life monsters and is subsequently used by the author to criticize their actions. By creating a character so closely related to actual dictators, the audience sees Dongala’s imaginary world in the same light as their own. When the starving citizens of the “father-founder’s” country are described, the audience’s minds immediately link that image to a country like Uganda, where the citizens really do struggle to feed themselves. Similarly, the military in the story nonchalantly brutalizing the common folk holds inevitable analogies to a war-torn Nigeria or a ravaged Congo. By showing his readers such an evil figure that they will undoubtedly despise, E.B. Dongala actually enlightens them to a few of the specific issues facing the nations within it. To strengthen these parallels, Dongala includes more detail in patterning the character in the story to the rulers he is patterned after.

Aside from all utilizing similar propaganda strategies and leading their countries to widespread poverty and despair, the three totalitarian figures share another link: residing in incredibly lavish compounds. The “father-founder of the nation” is first described in the story, Dongala makes special note of the expansive fortress that the tyrant has built for himself. This “vast palace” is described as being surrounded by a moat filled with crocodiles, a “ditch full of black mambas and green mambas”, and a perimeter wall “an enormous sixty-foot high” that is as “imposing as the wall of the Zimbabwe ruins” (Dongala 7). Within the palace’s actual walls are one hundred and fifty rooms, all containing enormous mirrors that reflect the image of the man that lives there. The dictator uses this place to serve his hedonistic desires, constantly using prostitutes and young girls for “his sophisticated pleasures” (Dongala 7). Both the level of extravagance involved in the construction of the mansion and the debauchery within its walls create obvious connections with Amin and Mobutu, two men with well-documented interests in living extravagant lifestyles. The author is well aware of these facts, and he uses them to ensure that his audience associates the character in his story with these actual people. When readers see the contrast between the “father-founder’s” life of luxury and the way his citizens are starved and abused, Dongala ensures that the images of Amin and Mobutu come to their minds. After this line of association is secure, the message that these men are tormenting their own people for material gain comes loud and clear to the audience, leaving a lasting impression about the sorry state of the population in all too many African countries.

Much like how E.B. Dongala uses his captivating writing to create a powerfully realistic dramatization of totalitarian Africa, Ndeley Mokoso uses his wit in the absurd “No Escape” to satirize the militaries staging the coup d’états common throughout the continent. At the start of Mokoso’s farce, the scene of a meeting of rebels is presented. It is there that the main character, Captain Dewa, is introduced. Dewa is a military mind paid by the party to lead the troops in “Operation Hyena,” an attempt to stage a coup d’état and overthrow the current regime ruling the state. From the very beginning, it is clear that the Captain is “not fighting for a cause” and is

instead invested solely for selfish reasons (Mokoso 23). As more of “Operation Hyena” is revealed to the audience, it becomes increasingly evident that this group of fighters has no idea what they are doing. The group fully expects to receive no civilian resistance, assuming that the people will be “shocked into complete acceptance,” and believes that if they take over the capital, the surrounding “chorus groups” will quickly “show support and solidarity” for the new regime (Mokoso 24). Other telling signs of the rebels’ ineptitude include the “uninspiring” party proclamation declaring very little in the way of new policies and the belief that they will somehow find “the right people” to “come up with answers” to any problems and that will pop up when they obtain power (Mokoso 24). Expectedly, this so-called “people’s revolution” ends up being a disaster (Mokoso 25). After a brief period of fighting, the ruling government’s forces quickly crush the rebels with air attacks and overall superior firepower. In fact, the attempted coup is so insignificant that “most inhabitants did not learn what had happened until late afternoon the next day” and once the information became common knowledge, many even call for the “maximum punishment” to be exacted on the various “plotters and enemies of peace” (Mokoso 25, 26). The story concludes with Captain Dewa being captured by government forces. He eventually discovers his true identity by uncovering a hundred thousand francs stashed on his person, the same money he was paid with to participate in the operation.

Due to the political unrest plaguing many African states in the second half of the twentieth century, coup d’états became a relatively common occurrence throughout the continent. Many countries, such as Nigeria and Rwanda, experienced multiple coups during these years. Ndeley Mokoso, a native African, uses the fictional coup in “No Escape” in order to parody and criticize the actual ones taking place across his homeland. The most obvious points Mokoso makes in his piece are the lack of competence, purpose, and morals possessed by these groups.

Throughout “No Escape,” there are countless examples of cluelessness within the revolutionary party. The leaders are consistently misinformed and confused, their plans have gaping holes in them, and they greatly

underestimate their enemies. While it’s clear that this group of would-be rebels are in way over their heads, the most startling detail of the party is their total lack of reason for staging their coup. They claim to be on “a sacred mission” to teach the “bastards” in charge a lesson, but they never detail what they specifically want to change or how they plan on doing it (Mokoso 23). They insist that they are leading a “people’s revolution,” but when the other citizens finally find out about the coup, they are outraged at the plotters. In fact, “Operation Hyena” is responsible for breaking a longstanding peace that has existed in the country since “the early turbulent years” following its initial declaration of independence (Mokoso 23). Not only are the members of the rebel party unable to accomplish their supposedly “sacred mission,” it appears as if no one else in the country wants them to. Mokoso purposely makes the party out this way in order to show that the actual groups leading these coups are not really solving problems; they are just making things worse. They perpetuate the violence that’s been raging inside of Africa for centuries and do nothing to stabilize the political turmoil facing their nations. However, aside from solely looking at the perpetrators of “Operation Hyena” as a whole, one can look at Captain Dewa, specifically, for more criticism from Mokoso.

When studying Captain Dewa’s motivation for participating in the coup, it is obvious what inspires his involvement: greed. Dewa is no freedom fighter, he is simply a man taking advantage of a situation in an attempt to acquire wealth and further his own status. He leads his troops in the operation solely because he is paid to do so and to set himself into a more powerful position following the plan’s completion. The most telling part of Dewa’s philosophy is revealed when his thoughts on the “Schloss” are explained (the “Schloss” is a “celebrated German Governor’s residence,” a relic from a previous and foreign regime) (Mokoso 23). The civilian government currently in power has the idea of turning this old building into a public monument; however, Captain Dewa finds this concept “stupid and wasteful” (Mokoso 23). Instead of going through with the popular plan, Dewa plans on taking residence inside the “Schloss” himself, once “Operation Hyena” succeeds. This brief examination of the Captain’s desires shows how he

E.B. Dongala and Ndeley Mokoso's Criticisms of Twentieth-Century African Governments

would much prefer to serve himself instead of the public. Here lies another point of criticism from the author. By giving Captain Dewa such a self-centered personality, Mokoso hopes to give his readers the impression that these coups are just new regimes created to benefit their leaders. Captain Dewa could not care less about the state of the public; he simply wants to gain wealth and raise his own social status. His selfish desires help point out the sheer ridiculousness of the group calling their coup the "people's revolution" and reminds the reader, yet again, of the incredibly prevalent corruption running rampant throughout African governments. The lasting impression of Ndeley's story is a bleak one, showing the state of a conflict-ridden area and the selfish people taking power within it. Though the story details dark aspects of a foreign place, it parlays important information to an audience perhaps unaware of the events unfolding in these types of countries. Writings such as these spread news and help raise public knowledge about issues not detailed nearly enough in the media.

Despite using two distinct literary techniques targeting two different, though related, issues, both "The Man" and "No Escape" are wonderful examples of not only African short stories, but socially conscious literature as well. In these stories, E.B. Dongala and Ndeley Mokoso use their expert writing skills to simultaneously create compelling narratives as well as spread messages about the issues plaguing their countries. Today, these tales stand as classic examples of what literature can do: compel an audience, report important information, encourage an oppressed people to persevere, and inspire a positive change within the world. Truly, they are both modern masterpieces.

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Evaluation: *Ben's analysis of these stories is detailed and perceptive, and he provides meaningful context for the two works. This is a well-written, enlightening paper.*

Understanding the Mind Behind the Madness: A Response to Margaret Laurence's *A Bird in the House*

Jonathan Stoesser

Course: Literature 224 (Women in Literature)

Instructor: Elizabeth Turner

Assignment: *Develop a creative response to one of the course readings. That response may take many forms, including an original poem. A narrative submitted with the project should explain how the piece was created, what it means, and how it reflects the literary work as well as the other works we have read by women writers.*

"A Bird Set Free" is a poem set in the fleeting mind of Ewen MacLeod, the father of the main character (Vanessa MacLeod) of Margaret Laurence's short story sequence *A Bird in the House*, just moments after his death. The poem is an account of his final thoughts to his family and a reflection upon himself. The prosaic poem is written in such a way that it encapsulates the final thoughts of someone as they frantically scramble to hold on to their identity in the end. It's raw, real, and unplanned.

Why did I decide to write "A Bird Set Free?" Each of the stories discussed in class highlights women's issues as they pertain to the time period the stories were written in. However, there is an entirely untapped theme that recurs in each of the stories: the state of men. This statement comes off as inherently sexist, but it's very far from the case. Each of the stories includes a man, but they follow a very strict archetype. Each one is either overly masculine and terrifying, abusive, and problematic, or dead.

How did I come up with such a preposterous, yet intriguing exhibition? I am not a woman, and thus cannot directly relate to the problems the protagonists of

the stories are suffering. Instead, I am a man and can easily identify with the men in a story; however, each of the stories we have read lacks a truly positive male influence. That's not to imply that a man is essential to order, but contrastingly, that the men in each story are a personification of chaos and disorder. When that is not the case regarding the men in the stories, they are usually dead or not present at all.

With this poem, I sought to generate a piece of literature that gives a voice to the voiceless, in this case, a dead man who voices his fears and regrets for his inability to provide for his family. Ewen MacLeod provided the perfect example of a good man who was taken out of a story before he could be of decent support to his family and thus made an excellent vessel for such a message: a message of fear, regret, love, hope, and in some ways, a prayer for eternity within the minds of others.

How did I make this poem? It took a bit of creativity and embellishment to provide a decent voice to a man who had very little presence within a story. It started with poetry, then transformed into prose. However, to me, the voice of the dead does not come off as merely talking, and rather something more punctual, so even the prose became poetic in its own right. I took the original draft that I had written in prose and broke it back up into a poem. I just couldn't make up my mind, but I finally decided to use poetry and let my delivery dictate the meaning on a deeper level.

Ewen MacLeod is a perfect example of the archetype of absent men, more specifically, absent fathers. The usual case is that the father is dead, and therefore cannot protect his children, usually a daughter, from the other archetypal man: the abusive man. The abusive man doesn't necessarily have to exhibit outward abuse, but instead could represent a demonization of the exaggeration of the worst qualities of men, such as overt masculinity, sexual dominance, tyrannical control, drunkenness, or dishonesty. This was the case in multiple stories. In "A White Heron," there is a hint of sexual dominance exerted by the hunter, and no presence of a father. The story "Old Woman Magoun" lacks the presence of a helpful father but instead replaces it with an abusive one working cooperatively with another villainous man.

**Understanding the Mind Behind the Madness:
A Response to Margaret Laurence's
*A Bird in the House***

“A Bird Set Free”

My name is Ewen MacCleod
I pray of you, remember it
For I fear that soon
I may not remember myself

So this is how I am to diee
Cold, empty, and lost
A shell of a man before his family
Not old and full of fulfillment
But afraid and full of regret

Fear for the wife I have left behind
Fear for the future of my children
Fear for the home I can no longer protect
Fear that I am not the man I sought to be

Regret weighs upon me
An anvil on my chest
I have already breathed my last
And this crushing knows no end
The question burns as I fade away
What man am I?
I'll soon forget the answer

Roderick, the duality
Brother I could not save
son I could not raise
I could not keep one alive
And could not live for the other
The regret of losing twice
I'll carry it forever

What man was I to fail my kin?
I'll soon forget the answer

Forgive me, my dear son
I will be with you no longer
Who am I to bring you here
But not stay to guide you
And though you're just a baby
I know you will do well
The man I hope that you become
Is the king I could not be

What man was I for you to follow?
I'll soon forget the answer
My dear Vanessa, I see it now
The pain you keep inside
The fear plaguing your minde
But not all men will fail you
I wish you could see it soe
Grandfather Connor is no man
Just a demon who got free
But I have done no better
And now can do no more
Like the loons, I will not last
But I know you won't forget

What man was I for you to trust in?
I'll soon forget the answer

The Grandfather I could not stope
The tyrant with no heart
I can see the fear that controls hime
But a monster he chose to bee
And yet I could not stop him
And his family I could not free
He dons that bear like a trophy
It may as well be part of him
An animal he truly is
That no one dares to hunt

What man was I to let him rule?
I'll soon forget the answer

Do not recall how I have failed
That burden falls on me
Keep the memory of my lifee
And what good I may have donee
Do not cry for me, my lovese
I am already gone
And as I fade forever away
I ask you one last time

What man was I to leave you behind?
I have forgotten the answer

What man was I?
Remember me...

Evaluation: *Jonathan's poem reworks themes in
Laurence's work while remaining true to the literature.
His narrative is descriptive and interpretive, too.*

Will My Relationship Survive the Test of Matrimony?

Patrycja Tomasik

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Kathleen Dyrda

Assignment: Based on the readings about marriage in this unit, and on your own experience, observations, and common sense, write a persuasive paper offering advice to those contemplating marriage. Your audience need not be engaged couples but can include those who desire to be married at some point in their adulthood. Look to articles that offer statistics and trends in American marriage, including The National Marriage Project's State of Our Unions report. Establish the purpose of this essay in your introduction.

Growing up as a little girl, surrounded by other little girls who derived hours of entertainment from dressing up as brides with tablecloth veils and bouquets of flowers pillaged from their unsuspecting neighbors' flowerboxes, I didn't have a clear idea what marriage was. The consensus among my playmates was that it involved a cute boy, a white dress, and a grand ceremony culminating in a happily ever after. Since our main sources of information at the time were Disney movies, I found the whole thing highly implausible.

My doubts were justified. According to the article, "Your Chances of Divorce Might Be Lower than You Think" in the National Marriage Project's *State of Our Unions Report 2011*, "The national divorce rate is almost 50 percent of all marriages" (73). The fact that so many marriages fail leads me to believe that marriage is not so much a fairy-tale ending, as it is an ambitious engineering project that often falls apart due to sloppy execution. Since I happen to be a very meticulous and pedantic person, I have a very low tolerance for sloppiness. In light of this, I decided to see if my current relationship could stand the

test of matrimony. Thankfully, I was lucky enough to have acquired a boyfriend such as yourself: gullible and willing to become my guinea pig. I made you answer a questionnaire on marriage and intend to use your answers to determine if a hypothetical marriage between us could be successful.

The first trait you find important in a spouse is patience. Considering everything I know about you, I feel it is necessary to congratulate you on putting this particular quality at the top of your list; it truly is self-preservation at its finest. I am happy to say that I do my best to be patient with you, although it requires a tremendous amount of effort. All those times I space out and stare blankly into the distance whenever you say something ridiculous in the middle of a conversation we are having are when I remind myself of your beautiful eyes and cute smile, and what a shame it would be to ruin them by throwing the nearest heavy object at your head. This clearly indicates that as long as you stay attractive, I will remain patient. The importance of consistently viewing your partner in a positive light and its effect on the stability of marriage is discussed in Aviva Patz's article "Will Your Marriage Last?" She analyzed the findings of Dr. Ted Huston, one of which is that "...the major distinguishing factor between those who divorced and those who remained married was the amount of change in the relationship over the first two years" (60). Based on this fact, I conclude that, if you wish for our relationship to survive, you must remain consistently physically appealing. For the sake of our future together, I hope you will work on that – before I lose my patience.

When asked if you want children, you responded with maybe, and only if your spouse agrees. As your theoretical spouse, I feel obliged to inform you that I do not agree, but I reserve the right to change my mind, mostly because the mad scientist in me feels curious about the kind of creature our combined genomes could produce. Will it be beautiful and smart, like its mother? Will it think that Scandinavia is a country, like its father? The possibilities are endless! Still, I feel it's best if we leave this kind of experimenting for an undetermined, and very distant, future. Another reason I have for liking your answer is that according to the article "Family Size, Faith, and the Meaning of Parenthood," in the National

Will My Relationship Survive the Test of Matrimony?

Marriage Project's *State of Our Unions Report 2011*, "... the happiest husbands and wives among today's young couples are those with no children and those with four or more children," which indicates that not having children could make our theoretical marriage a happy one (50). It also means that if we do decide to have children, and wish to remain happy, we will need to have at least four. Luckily for me, in your answer to the question on whether you would want yourself or your spouse to stay home to raise the children, you volunteered yourself for the task.

I found it very interesting that your responses to questions on what you considered the best and worst things about marriage focused on love. You stated that having a bond with someone you love and care about is the best thing about marriage, while the possibility of falling out of love is the worst. After I managed to cease cackling at your adorable naiveté and hopeless romanticism, and seriously thought about your words, I concluded that you might be right. In "Save Your Relationship," Susan Johnson and Aviva Patz present the results of research conducted by a relationship guru, Dr. John Gottman. Said research "confirms that it's often emotional distance – not conflict – that determines whether a relationship will flourish or begin to disintegrate" and that "...as long as partners can connect emotionally, their relationship should remain healthy" (52). I cannot deny that I feel a surge of affection for you whenever you send me a random romantic text message, even though they usually drip with so much cheese that I have to clean the grease off my phone after reading them. All the little things you do to remind me that you care make me feel terrible about all the little things I do to viciously mock you for doing them. Your actions seem to be a necessary sappy foundation for a happy relationship, which leads me to believe that, if our theoretical marriage is to survive, I must learn your mushy ways.

I realize that after all of the logical and compelling arguments I provided, you probably cannot wait to get down on one knee and propose, but I implore you to refrain from doing so. In reference to my engineering analogy, there seem to be a few sloppy lines in the blueprint of our hypothetical marriage. Luckily, since we haven't started building yet, we still have time to work on them until they are perfected. Or just throw

them out in case we happen to find a more appealing set of blueprints somewhere along the way. Nevertheless, I am glad that I had this opportunity to take a peek at your expectations and priorities with regard to marriage. I am glad that most of them are very similar to my own. Most importantly, I am glad that because of your compassionate and forgiving nature you will not kill me for writing this. After all, according to you, the key to keeping love alive in a marriage is "always making the other person smile or laugh," and I am pretty sure I have that one covered (S. Selby, personal communication, October 15, 2015).

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Evaluation: *Patrycja brings a unique and playful tone to a serious question and produces a well-written essay from an uncommon point of view.*

Women in Computing

Dylan Turnbull

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Stephanie Horton

Assignment: This essay was written as a final research essay for English 101. Students were asked to write a proposal essay on a topic of their choice. They needed to include a statement and description of the proposal, an assessment of current efforts on the topic, address at least two counterarguments, and provide a conclusion that calls the audience to action. Their essays also needed to include research from at least four different sources.

Since the early days of computers, women have played an important role in the development and operation of computer systems. From the operation of early ballistics trajectory systems to programming language development, women were leading the field of computing into uncharted waters. By the end of the 1980s, women earned almost 40% of the computing bachelor's degrees and made up almost 38% of the IT workforce (Edwards). However, despite this early surge in female participation, today, women only make up 26% of the workforce (Department of Labor), and the representation tends to be in nontechnical roles that ultimately do little to stoke interest in STEM fields among younger generations. In order to build the groundswell needed to propel women through school and into STEM fields, there needs to be a shift in focus from nontechnical leadership to attracting women to technical roles that will directly interact with younger generations of women.

Between the 1940s and the 1980s, women led what would become the field of information technology and computer sciences. Grace Hopper was one of these women. Her work in the development of COBOL, a computer language written in English rather than mathematical notation, set the standard for future programming languages (Edwards). Grace isn't the only woman to make important and meaningful contributions to computer science. In the 1970s, a woman by the name of Sophie

Williams designed a microcomputer known as Acorn, the first of many computers sold by Acorn Computers. Even more impressively, Sophie contrived the instruction set used in the very first RISC processors, known as the Acorn RISC Machine, otherwise referred to as ARM. If you're still unsure of who ARM is or why you should care, look down at your phone. Regardless if it's an Apple or Android smartphone, chances are that it's driven by a microprocessor using the RISC architecture developed by Sophie Williams. As impressive as the accomplishments of Grace and Sophie are, they were just two members of an army of women that marched this technology forward during the early years of modern computing.

Despite the major advancements made by women in the field of computing, by the end of the 1980s, their employment within the technology sector began to wane. In order to understand why, we need to look back twenty years to the 1960s. During the 1960s, we had begun manufacturing better computer hardware more efficiently and on a larger scale. This availability is what led to the realization that the challenges software brings had been underestimated. Nathan Ensmenger, associate professor in the school of informatics and computing at Indiana University, said

The sixties is this period where people realize that software is a much bigger problem than they had ever anticipated. It's where the computer starts to meet real-world problems and those problems are somewhat vaguely defined. In the 1940s, when computers were used to calculate shell trajectories, that's a complicated problem, but the analysis is rather straightforward. By the sixties, people are asking how they can computerize the accounts departments. (qtd. in Edwards)

Now that computers need to run software that could perform business functions that developers may have had no experience with, the workflows involved in building those applications becomes exponentially more complex and difficult to manage. Businesses saw a need to hire people who would be able to build these complex software systems. The problem that faced them was that they had no idea what these candidates would look like.

In 1968, W.J. Erickson and E.E. Grant from System

Development Corporation completed a research project that aimed to create an aptitude test for identifying individuals that would be best suited to software development. Edsger Dijkstra, a leading computer scientist of that time, said, "It's terrible research: there were just nine subjects in it. However, people seized on it because it seems to correspond with their actual experience" (qtd. in Edwards). Despite the argument against aptitude tests like this, the push for more candidates led to the adoption of these tests. As Chris Edwards says about the puzzle-solving nature of these tests, "the tests tended to favor young men who like doing those types of puzzle. The tests fail to identify those who perform better on more open-ended problems and less algorithm focused aspects of development." And as one young woman programmer said to Joan Greenbaum, the project advisor at the City University of New York: "We were hired at 20 percent less than men and only allowed to set up the test cases" (qtd. in Edwards). It is painfully clear that by this point, women in IT were being regularly marginalized, and it's no surprise that their participation rate fell to just 26% in 2014 (Gilpin).

While things may look grim, there are groups trying to encourage young women to indulge in the computer curiosities they may have and put them into contact with strong female role models that can help encourage them to find their place within this male dominated field. The National Center for Women & IT (NCWIT) is one of the many organizations trying to build enthusiasm in computer sciences. Their focus has been on correcting the gender imbalance within the technology fields through programs that help immerse young women in the world of computer science and connect them with role models that can provide positive support and guidance. One of these programs is called *AspireIT*, which started in 2013 and is now operating in 15 states and reaching 800 middle-school girls, providing 25,000 hours of instruction ("Aspirations in Computing").

Another program offered by the NCWIT are the Awards for Aspirations. These awards are given to women whom demonstrate an active interest in computing and technology and are accompanied by gifts ranging from cash prizes to college scholarships. Another perk offered to these Aspiration awardees is access to a restricted

Facebook group[!!] that acts as a private forum in which "the high school and college 'members' can see and comment on scholarships and internship opportunities, as well as programming contests and other activities NCWIT posts. The Facebook group has become a place where the young women also discuss their own computing projects, college visits, job search and interview strategies, and how it feels to be female in a male dominated field" ("Aspirations in Computing"). Safe spaces like these are important to helping women give each other support when trying to break into the male-dominated field they may have called home seventy years ago. Perhaps, though, trying to drive a revolution so quietly isn't the most effective route.

The Facebook groups and Aspiration awards are positive things that have driven many girls to explore an interest in computers. Without programs like these, we may find ourselves facing an even greater gender gap in computing. That being said, I think they need to take it further. Having some women talking about computer science and working in that male-dominated field will do little to build awareness in other areas. We need a national push to make sure that schools make mandatory technology-based classes with an equal representation of men and women. Groups that have been made private need to be public and allow the world to see what women who have interest in computer sciences have done and will continue to do. Closing off the groups to prevent criticism will also prevent other people from gaining insight and correcting any preconceived notions they may have.

One preconceived notion about the current IT work environment is that, as Thornton May, the author of "Women and the Future of IT," put it, "Women in technology can be marginalized by hostile macho cultures." This mis-categorization is ironic in that today's IT culture isn't hostile toward women, but the prevalence of this belief has caused women to feel that perhaps IT, and as an extension, computer sciences weren't for them. Additionally, May presents the case that around the age of thirty, women tend to leave their technology-based roles, saying that "female attrition rates tend to spike 10 years into a career. Women experience a perfect storm in their mid to late 30's ... Companies that step in with targeted support before this 'fight or flight moment' may

be able to lower the female attrition rate significantly.” This kind of statement is problematic because it presents yet another accusation of how women are not welcomed in technology and computer sciences fields.

If we want to be able to properly address the problems we’re having with a serious lack of women in technology, we need to not only continue, but expand and make public, the work being done by the NCWIT. If we want young girls to feel like computer sciences could be for them, we need to show them that it’s not a club, be it a club for boys or NCWIT awardees. We also need to shed the preconceived notions we have of the people and policies that make up IT. Technology departments aren’t boys clubs by design anymore; by and large, they’ve taken the rumored “no girls allowed” sign off for good. The real reason there aren’t many women in IT is because women avoid IT, and why wouldn’t they? Everyone who tries to support them and guide them through the path of computer science rants about how much of a “hostile boys club” technology departments are, and not everyone wants to be a pioneer.

At the end of the day, the fact of the matter is that while 26% is low, 26% is not nothing. To quote author Samara Lynn, “there are plenty of women in tech.” I know because I’ve met some of them, and yes, they were superstars, just like everyone else I’ve worked with over

the years. Women are equally as capable as men of being successful in technology jobs, and it is time we tell them that in fact IT departments aren’t the men’s locker rooms everyone’s been led to believe they are. As companies grow and the technologies we have to support become more complex, we need more people to help manage and maintain our systems. The truth is, there aren’t enough of us who can maintain these systems. Yes, we can be critical, but we are, most importantly, equally, and (sometimes unnecessarily) critical of everyone, regardless of gender. We need whomever we can get. Please, I have so much work I haven’t seen my wife in weeks.

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Evaluation: *Dylan’s essay is a stellar example of how to complete this assignment successfully. He completed the assignment with a level of sophistication and attention to detail that is noteworthy.*

Allegories for Moral Compromise in the Works of Ursula K. Le Guin

Carolyn Vukson

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

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

“The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” and “The New Atlantis” are two stories by Ursula K. Le Guin. In “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas,” she details the city of Omelas, which exists ostensibly as a utopia. The city is peaceful, and all the people are happy, even though they lack any sort of government or hierarchy. It seems unbelievable until the narrator expounds on the dark side of Omelas. In a dark, small cellar, they keep a small child, existing in total misery, on the belief that they must keep this child suffering so that their city can continue its peaceful prosperity. Everyone in Omelas knows about this child and knows that the child must suffer; eventually, some citizens can no longer accept this and decide to leave Omelas. The story “The New Atlantis” is told from the point of view of a woman named Belle, who lives in Portland, Oregon; however, her Portland is not like the one we know. This story envisioned a future where environmental problems have reached a tipping point, the polar ice caps have begun to melt, and throughout the story, there are recurring mentions of an island rising from the sea, causing the water to rise over the other land masses even faster. Belle’s world is dominated by governmental control, where everyone lives in fear of what will happen if they draw too much attention to themselves. When Belle’s husband returns after spending years in a rehabilitation camp, the government’s eyes are drawn back to she and her husband. Simon, her husband, is a scientist who has made discoveries that have led his

fellow academics to creating a small solar battery, but they must keep this discovery secret, knowing that they would be arrested if it were discovered. After only a few days, the FBI come and arrest Simon, and Belle closes her story as she prepares to travel to where he’s been sent, and all the while, the island in the ocean continues to rise. Belle’s narrative is broken by passages written from the denizens of Atlantis as it rises from the ocean; they begin to awaken as they surface, and they wonder at the lights they can see above and at what or who is up there waiting for them. “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” is an introspective, cautionary, fantastical allegory that warns the reader about the compromises and necessary evils we allow in our society and the beliefs that lead us to them, while “The New Atlantis” is a foreboding, futuristic, environmental story that warns us of the downturn to the environment, and what happens when the government has too much control. Omelas is a peaceful, seemingly perfect society that is controlled by a dark belief. In “The New Atlantis” the society is a regimented, fearful, dystopian one that has seen the world fall to government control from the failing environment. Overall, with respect to the compromises we make and their negative ramifications, it seems that “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” shows us how we should be more mindful of who might be suffering for our happiness, and “The New Atlantis” shows us how we should be more vigilant in how our choices affect the world we live in.

“With a clamor of bells that set the swallows soaring, the Festival of Summer came to the city Omelas, bright-towered by the sea. The rigging of the boats in harbor sparkled with flags. In the streets between houses with red roofs and painted walls, between old moss-grown gardens and under avenues of trees, past great parks and public buildings, processions moved” (Le Guin 531). Omelas is a beautiful city, but it seems to be the only thing in existence. It sits on the sea, surrounded by mountains and green fields, and the streets are filled with beautiful houses, public buildings, and parks. There is no mention of other cities or countries, or of any place outside Omelas. If they have any contact with people outside the city, it is not mentioned. The city described in this narration is nothing like cities as we know them; to us, cities are filled with traffic and large buildings and are divided into areas

that are wealthier and poorer, but in Omelas, there is no mention of poverty, and the people are parading through the streets. Omelas is seemingly a utopia.

Their society seems to be one of both frivolity and purpose, and although they seem to be very much like us, they have somehow attained peace without any kind of law and order. They live their lives through a sort of philosophy, where “Happiness is based on a just discrimination of what is necessary, what is neither necessary nor destructive, and what is destructive” (Le Guin 532). The narrator states,

In the middle category, however—that of the unnecessary but undestructive, that of comfort, luxury, exuberance, etc.—they could perfectly well have central heating, subway trains, washing machines, and all kinds of marvelous devices not yet invented here, floating light-sources, fuelless power, a cure for the common cold. Or they could have none of that: it doesn’t matter. As you like it. (Le Guin 532)

This philosophy seems to be one of the few unwritten rules of their society. They have no rulers and no discernable government, no army nor police force, yet everyone coexists peacefully. You would assume that to live without conflict would mean that they aren’t intelligent, but the narrator tells us, “They were not less complex than us....They were mature, intelligent, passionate adults whose lives were not wretched” (Le Guin 532). The people of Omelas work, play, and celebrate, and they even have religion although they eschew any organized ministry. The narrator explains for us, “But really it would be better not to have any temples in Omelas – at least, not manned temples. Religion yes, clergy no” (Le Guin 532). They have this peaceful society without any kind of social hierarchy or authority enforcing it. But the fact that they are so complex, as the author repeatedly tells us, suggests that Omelas has more to it than meets the eye. Judy Sobeloff wrote, “It is not intelligible to us that a place could simply be happy, so we need a sense of something darker underneath” (185).

Omelas is not the utopia it seems to be. After imparting us with this vision of perfection that we find ourselves doubting, the narrator writes,

In a basement ... one of the beautiful public buildings of Omelas or perhaps in the cellar of one of its spacious private homes, there is a room. It has one locked door, and no window....The room is about three paces long and two wide: a mere broom closet or disused tool room. In the room a child is sitting. It could be a boy or a girl. It looks about six, but actually is nearly ten. It is feeble-minded. Perhaps it was born defective or perhaps it has become imbecile through fear, malnutrition, and neglect. (Le Guin 533)

Underneath all the beauty of Omelas, this child is abused and neglected; they make no effort to disguise its gender or name. This seeming utopia covers nothing so very far from perfection. The narrator tells us,

They all know it is there, all the people of Omelas... They all know that it has to be there. Some of them understand why, and some do not, but they all understand that their happiness, the beauty of their city, the tenderness of their friendships, the health of their children, the wisdom of their scholars, the skill of their makers, even the abundance of their harvest and the kindly weathers of their skies, depend wholly on this child’s abominable misery. (Le Guin 534)

This tells us that the existence of this child is common knowledge for the people of Omelas. They can come and go to see the child, ostensibly, at will. And yet none of them do anything to help the child’s circumstances. Apparently, they all know that they have to treat this child this way; everything from their happiness and wisdom to the growth of their food is dependent upon it. Jerre Collins wrote, “The connection between the child’s suffering and the people’s happiness is stressed, yet while the narrator *says* that the connection can be understood, she advances no details, however hypothetically, as indices of the rationality or intelligibility of the connection” (190). This is almost a religion for the people of Omelas. They have this belief, a belief that is supported by no discernable proof, that without this child’s suffering, they will lose all the prosperity of their city. “They feel disgust, which they had thought themselves superior to,” and the narrator says, “They feel anger, outrage, impotence, despite all

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the explanations” (Le Guin 534). They are disgusted and angry, both at themselves for the way they treat the child, and at the child itself, for making them feel that way about themselves. They resent the child because it is the source of their happiness, by being so miserable. They resent it for making them have to treat it that way. The child is their scapegoat, something Le Guin drew inspiration from others to create: “Since both Dostoevsky and James have written pieces which include some kind of scapegoat which could be a model for the locked-up child of Omelas, looking at these pieces in light of Le Guin’s story can be instructive” (Sobeloff 183). In the end, they know the child doesn’t make them do anything, that they make the choice to act this way, believing the child is a necessary evil to keep their city going, and so they become disgusted with themselves. Eventually, some come to the understanding that the system is wrong, and then they leave Omelas; they walk out into a world that the narrator says is indescribable, and although no one in the city seems to know what is out there, the ones who walk away do. Sobeloff writes:

Le Guin’s ending, in which some individuals leave Omelas for a place “even less imaginable to most of us,” points out finally that the dilemma of the scapegoat for the American people has in no way been resolved. The ones who walk away are not thanked for their decency or concern or commitment to social justice, nor does their absence even seem to be noticed. “Omelas” achieves its power through drawing in the reader and then implicating him or her in the highly questionable morality of the Utopia(s) he has participated in describing and thus in creating. (185-186)

One of the key aspects of this story is the narrator’s repeated questioning of whether the reader believes in the city’s existence. We are told that the details of its existence are at our will, and so we are slowly lulled into becoming creators of Omelas ourselves. In *Short Stories for Students*, Logan Hill wrote,

When the narrator asks the reader to envision the world as he or she wishes to, it forces the reader to consciously create the story with the narrator. Since the idea of such awesome responsibility is rarely

admitted (though it is always the way stories are created), Le Guin softens her request by writing, in relation to technology, “Or they could have none of that: it doesn’t matter. As you like it.” She eases the reader’s sense of responsibility while exploiting it and implicating the reader more thoroughly into the act of writing. (187)

By asking us to picture Omelas as we like it, we become complicit in its creation; “If the reader accepts this premise, that the details of Omelas are at his or her discretion, then the reader is implicated in the creation of Omelas and thus implicated in the horrible situation on which the society rests” (Sobeloff 185). We aren’t simply observers, we are participants. The story draws us in, forcing us to contemplate our own utopia, and our ability to walk away from it when it is built on something that goes against our own morality. Le Guin seems to challenge both writers and readers, as shef “...examines the moral responsibility of writers and readers by composing a story in which the narrator tries to entice the reader into taking part in the creation of Omelas....Therefore, the reader, like the citizens of Omelas, can either accept the society or reject it out of moral indignation” (“Omelas,” *Short Stories for Students*, 179). Le Guin’s work is asking both writers and readers if they have a moral obligation to effect social change. By drawing us in and making us accomplices in the creation of Omelas, we are forced to ask ourselves whether we will accept the injustice to maintain our utopia or whether we will be like the ones who walk away. Our utopia isn’t necessarily perfect either; it could just be the status quo. The author uses the story to exaggerate our own dependence on sweatshops and underpaid workers, and our treatment of the underclasses. The situation in the story has even been compared to racial segregation, since most of our underprivileged are minorities: “She might have written that, while many white people were living extremely well, rates of African-American poverty, imprisonment and illiteracy were egregiously higher than that of white Americans....While America has been a Utopian land of plenty for many rich whites, it has been a world of pain for many African Americans who have been murdered, lynched and discriminated against or excluded from middle-class America” (Hill 186). Everyone in this country possesses something that was made at the hands

of a worker in poor conditions. Sweatshops employ men, women, and children in buildings without ventilation or heating and without safety measures in place, every day, to make everything from clothes to electronics, and we in America depend on them. We hear about the conditions and are appalled, but all too quickly forget that the brands we buy are made in those same shops when the time comes to buy something new. In the end, it's nearly impossible not to be a part of this system, as the use of sweatshops is so far spread we don't know which brands use them and which don't, like the people of Omelas, who don't know what is outside their city. We compromise ourselves on this constantly, and the author is trying to warn us of the ramifications of those compromises and how we need to constantly remember that what makes our lives easier could hurt someone else.

Unlike the fictional city of Omelas, "The New Atlantis" takes place in Portland, Oregon, but not as we would recognize it. This Portland as well as the rest of the country and the world have been ravaged by the declining environment. The author seems to be trying to show us what might happen if our environmental problems continue. In a conversation at the beginning of the story, on the bus, Belle tells us:

...Manhattan Island is now under eleven feet of water at low tide, and there are oyster beds in Ghirardelli Square.

"I thought that was because the oceans are rising from polar melt."

He shook his head again. "That is a factor. Due to the greenhouse effect of pollution, indeed Antarctica may become habitable..." (Le Guin 12).

We are already suffering some of the effects of global warming; in this story, the ice caps have melted so much that both New York and San Francisco are under water. Presumably, the world is also experiencing increased temperature and radiation. Studies show this adversely affects plants and animals, our food sources, as well as causing skin cancer and eye problems. So this dystopia would probably have food shortages and increases in health problems. The city has definitely suffered from the adverse conditions; when Belle returns home, she muses, "There had been a power outage in West Portland for

three weeks" (Le Guin 13). Other statements through the story suggest that when there is power, it isn't very much, and the power outages last for weeks at a time. People have had to learn to make do without.

Belle's story is broken up by sections detailing a rising continent in the middle of the ocean. The inhabitants of the continent slowly become aware over time; meanwhile, visions of this rising continent are seen by Belle, and through her, they are passed to others:

The reader is given no explanation of these passages, only the sensations of pressure and darkness giving way gradually to light and life. Other clues suggest that Belle may be in tune with the unknown Atlanteans....Later, when she improvises on her viola, listeners in the next room have a vision of white towers rising from the sea. (Gordon par. 94)

The inhabitants of the rising continent at first muse on the strange lights they see through the water. Thomas L. Wymer wrote, "This light inspires an additional awareness, of time, which the speakers connect with their memory of the stars, until they recognize the lights to be 'little lives'" (298). Slowly, the continent rises, and they become aware of the structures around them and, eventually, the people above, hearing a call that they try to answer. When they finally reach the surface, they call out, "Where are you? We are here. Where have you gone" (Le Guin 35)? This world is described as being of great beauty, a contrast to the deteriorating surface where Belle lives, and it is symbolic of what good humans can do:

Undoubtedly an image of nature uncontaminated, they are also arguably an image of the early stages of human life itself, together with everything that is potentially beautiful in humans waiting to be born again after the massive eruptions taking place in the Atlantic and the Pacific have finally buried everything on the North American continent. (Maxwell 17)

Belle sees the visions of this continent, and through her music, she is able to share them with others.

The decline of the world has led to government oppression. A biography about the author states, "The frequently anthologized "The New Atlantis" and critically

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acclaimed “Diary of the Rose” (which won a 1976 Jupiter Award) both speak against oppressive, authoritarian government” (Gordon par. 92). The government controls people’s resources and monitors them for any sign of sedition. When Belle returns home, her husband Simon is waiting for her:

Simon, a theoretical physicist, has just been released from a detention camp where for several years he has been held prisoner because his work in the mathematics of direct energy conversion has the potential to undermine the government’s monopoly on power production. It is testimony to the kind of society that now exists that in addition to being starved by the authorities he has been brutally tortured. (Maxwell 16)

The government is so afraid of a loss of control over the populace that Simon had been imprisoned and tortured for publishing his work, and the detention camp isn’t even the worst; their true fear is being sent to a hospital. Simon is in terrible shape from his time in the camp, but instead of going to a hospital, all of which are now essentially prisons, Belle must go to a black market doctor. It seems later on that their fear of the government is well founded, as Belle tells us,

When I got home, the FBI had already been there. The computer at the police precinct where I registered Simon’s address must have flashed it right over to the computer at the FBI building. They had questioned Simon for about an hour, mostly about what he had been doing during the twelve days it took him to get from the Camp to Portland. (Le Guin 22)

People have to register where they live and work, and they live constantly terrified of drawing attention to themselves. Even marriage is illegal, but ““The New Atlantis’ shows the love between the musician, Belle, and the scientist, Simon, in a society where marriage is illegal and even fidelity is suspect” (Gordon par. 93). Probably this is to keep the birthrate down, so that a population increase won’t further tax the limited resources. They are so afraid that when Belle’s husband Simon and his friends invent a device that could solve the energy problems, they have

to keep it hidden. Belle tells us about Simon’s invention:

He explained that it means we can tap solar energy for power, using a device that’s easier to build than a jar battery. The efficiency and storage capacity are such that about ten minutes of sunlight will power an apartment complex like ours, heat and lights and elevators and all, for twenty-four hours; and no pollution, particulate, thermal, or radioactive. (Le Guin 27)

This is the type of energy source we are still striving to implement. Currently, solar power is possible, but usually it involves large equipment and is difficult and expensive to pull off. That’s why most of us aren’t using it. This sort of device could end the energy crisis, if it existed. Wymer writes, “They are victims of a tyrannical bureaucratic government, not the cause of it, and hope for a better world is linked to Simon and Max’s breakthrough discovery of a cheap system for conversion of solar energy into useable power, a discovery that is seen as potentially democratically empowering” (297). The government maintains its control over the populace through control over required resources. They control food, water, power. If people could build their own sustainable solar generators, they would be able to have control over their own lives again, which is the way it should be. America is supposed to be the country of democracy, ruled by the will of the people, but in this world, people don’t seem to have any power over their own lives at all. Using Simon’s poor health as an excuse, they arrest him. The ironic thing is that they arrest him, saying that everyone has a right to health, but threaten to shoot him if he doesn’t come with them, a prime example of the perversion of the constitution in this apocalyptic world. Simon is clearly terrified of going to the Federal Hospital, as he refuses to go with them until they threaten to kill him and arrest Belle.

“The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” and “The New Atlantis” show us two worlds that are completely different. One world is perfection undermined by a dark secret that controls its citizens’ lives, and the other is a world that is drowning, sinking under the water as the people sink under the thumb of Big Brother. In “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas,” Le Guin is trying

to show us how others can be harmed by things we take for granted, and that we must always weigh the cost of our happiness when its source is someone else's suffering. "The New Atlantis" shows us that we must be more careful about how our choices affect the world we live in.

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Evaluation: *This research paper presents clearly written analysis and uses sources and textual interpretations effectively, while taking care to provide a clear sense of the events and messages of both works of short fiction, for readers who might be unfamiliar with them. It is a pleasure to encounter such careful work.*

Decriminalizing What Is Not Criminal: Psychoactive Substances

Cole Wagner

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Andrew Wilson

Assignment: *Write an essay that persuades.*

Throughout history, and in numerous ways, use of a variety of plants containing psychoactive substances. Of course there is recreation which may be the first thing that comes to mind when the topic of drug use is brought up, but drugs have served users in many other ways—medical and/or purposes that have changed over time. For example, where opium was used as an opiate for uses of recreation or analgesic purposes, we now see things like heroin, or socially accepted and legal drugs such as oxycodone and codeine. In the search for additional energy, stimulants have been used in a variety of forms throughout history: the coca leaves of South America and the khat plant have been used for thousands of years a long time. Today, we see this need fulfilled through the use of caffeine (the most commonly used stimulative drug on Earth), cocaine, and drugs like Adderall or Ritalin, which are prescribed to kids all over the country. But as what is acceptable for varied uses changes in society, there is another category of need (perhaps the most important of all) that has been stigmatized and ignored: the need to explore the subconscious mind in the search for self-awareness. This task has often been pursued (and still is today, albeit illegally and against the views of society) through the use of psychedelic drugs. In his book *PIHKAL* (an acronym for “Phenethylamines I Have Known and Loved”), co-author, chemist, and pharmacologist Alexander Shulgin describes what I have just mentioned and goes on to discuss the demonization of psychedelics by society and government, saying,

Then, there is the need to explore the world that lies just beyond the immediate limits of our senses and our understanding; that, too, has been with mankind from the first. But in this case, our non-native North American society has not given its acceptance to the plants, the chemicals, that open up our seeing and feeling skills. Other civilizations, for many hundreds of years, have used the peyote cactus [containing mescaline] and psilocybin-containing mushroom, the ayahuasca [DMT], cohoba and yajé of the New World, and the iboga of Africa, for this inquiry into the human unconscious. But our modern medical profession, as a whole, has never acknowledged these tools for insight or for therapy, and they have remained generally unacceptable. In the establishment of a balance of power between those who heal us and those who govern us, it has been agreed that the possession of these remarkable plants shall be a crime. (Shulgin and Shulgin xviii)

For too long, our society has clung to an unsubstantiated stigma based on scare tactics and lies that have demonized the use of psychedelic drugs. Even worse, the legal status of these drugs has led to the imprisonment of too many people, many of whom are entirely non-violent.

It is imperative that we as a society look past the false information being put out about these plants and chemicals and begin to think logically about this issue. It is time that we decriminalize the possession and use of psychedelic drugs (drugs such as LSD, psilocybin, mescaline, DMT, MDMA, etc.) and begin to take a good look at what benefits these substances have to offer.

Those in opposition to a plan like this are quick to jump to the conclusion that decriminalizing psychedelic drugs will lead to much higher rates of drug use among the general population. The fact of the matter is that this assumption couldn't be farther from the truth. In 2001, Portugal decriminalized the use of all drugs, choosing to treat drug use as a health issue rather than the crime it is labeled as here in the United States. Since making these changes to drug policy, Portugal has seen a significant decrease in rates of drug use and a substantial decrease in overdose rates: “Among Portuguese adults, there are 3 drug overdose deaths for every 1,000,000 citizens.

Comparable numbers in other countries range from 10.2 per million in the Netherlands to 44.6 per million in the U.K., all the way up to 126.8 per million in Estonia. The E.U. average is 17.3 per million” (Ingraham). Additionally, Portugal has seen a decrease in HIV infection rates since the implementation of their current drug policy. Since HIV is often spread through the use of dirty needles among intravenous drug users, having lower rates of drug use and a policy geared towards informed use has led to improvements in public health in that area.

Another way in which our nation’s drug policy has done more harm than help is its overall approach to drug use: it is a (supposed) crime for which we can have no tolerance. In reality, drug use has always been prevalent among humans; it still is, and it is not going anywhere anytime soon. Instead of acknowledging this fact, our government has set out to put a taboo on drug use. As a result, much of what people are taught about drugs are actually blatant fallacies based around fear-mongering. As opposed to educating people on how to safely and responsibly use drugs, and what the potential dangers realistically are (similar to the way sex education is taught), the government has chosen instead to act like it’s something that’s going to easily be removed from our society; but it’s not, and it won’t.

To illustrate my point, I’d like to point to the RAVE Act (Reducing America’s Vulnerability to Ecstasy). This legislation serves to punish business owners for the actions of their customers and seeks to combat drug use with tactics that have proven time and time again to be useless and counterproductive. This law most often applies at music festivals, where drug use is fairly common. At such events, there are frequently drugs being sold as MDMA (ecstasy) and LSD (and by the way, both have been shown to be reasonably safe when used responsibly, in correct dosages); yet, attendees at those events are in fact *not* purchasing MDMA or LSD. Rather, they are buying fake drugs, and what is especially noteworthy is that these fakes are not merely inert substances designed as money-grabbing scams; they are drugs commonly referred to as “research chemicals” (RCs). Research chemicals are newly developed drugs that, because they are relatively unknown, fall outside the legal parameters of drug legislation and are therefore (and ironically) legal.

This is another result of our failed war on drugs; things that are actually safe are illegal, so people resort to cheap alternatives that are very dangerous. The fakes aim to mimic the effects of sought-after drugs like MDMA and LSD but have nearly no history of human use — and again, they often prove to be risky. You may have heard stories in the news about synthetic cannabis or bath salts; these are just slang terms for some of the many RCs out there. In a world with all these drugs going around, it’s hard to know what you’re actually being sold, especially since many of these drugs have very similar physical appearances. However, there are reagent tests that can be used to determine what you actually have. They are cheap, easy to use, and can often mean the difference between life and death in identifying and differentiating between a drug that has shown to be relatively safe (such as MDMA or LSD) and a potentially deadly RC. Due to the large amount of RCs circulating America’s music festivals, there are groups that set up stands where concert-goers can purchase test kits in the pursuit of safe and informed drug use. Unfortunately, though, the RAVE Act foolishly punishes venues and event planners for allowing things like test kits into their events; they claim that it promotes drug use, and venues face stiff penalties for non-compliance. What legislators fail to realize time and again is that people are going to use drugs with or without safety precautions, so essentially their efforts are useless and prevent people from knowing what potentially harmful drugs they are ingesting. This demonization of knowledge and informed use of drugs is the gist of our nation’s drug policy, and it needs to change.

When the topic of decriminalizing psychedelic drugs comes up, those in opposition like to say that psychedelic drugs are a significant danger to users and are harmful. However, when you take a good look at statistics regarding deaths from drugs, you’ll find that a disproportionately large amount of drug-related deaths are due to alcohol and prescription pills, which are legal and socially sanctioned; moreover, you’ll learn that psychedelic drugs are actually among the safest drugs and that they account for little or no deaths. There is a website, *Erowid.org*, whose goal is to provide accurate information about drugs of all types and to promote safe use. This site has detailed information around various drugs, including effects,

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chemistry, and safety; it also includes fatalities associated with certain types of drugs. In the section on LSD, there are only about three pharmacological fatalities reported as a result of LSD consumption, and this is throughout the entire span of over seventy years that LSD has been used. Let us be fair: there are deaths that are attributed to behaviors while on LSD (suicide, walking into traffic, etc.), but fatalities of this nature are characteristic of any psychoactive substance, not solely LSD. Though it is hard to pinpoint an exact fatal dose for LSD, estimates are that it is very high. “Estimates of lethal doses of LSD are higher than 10 mg (10,000 ug) administered orally, more than 100 times a normal moderate dose of LSD (100 ug)”ⁿ (“LSD (Acid)”). Additionally, many other psychedelic drugs have shown a similar safety profile. Psychedelics such as peyote (a mescaline-containing cactus), mushrooms (containing the psychedelic drug psilocybin), and ayahuasca (a South-American tea containing DMT and a MAO Inhibitor) have been used by humans for centuries and have shown to be safe. Conversely, if you look at drugs such as alcohol and prescription pills, you will see that they account for significantly more deaths than any psychedelics (with prescription pills being the leading cause of death from drug overdoses), despite the fact that these are legal and are produced with significant regulatory oversight. In a study to determine what the most harmful drugs are, numerous factors were taken into consideration regarding not just harm to the user but also harm to others and society at large. In this study, alcohol was found to be the most harmful of all, while psychedelics such as MDMA, LSD, and mushrooms were at the lowest end of the spectrum in terms of harm. “The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates 3.3 million deaths every year are caused by the harmful use of alcohol—that’s 5.9 percent of all annual deaths. Shockingly, this is roughly one person every ten seconds” (Andrews). Despite the fact that legal and well-regulated drugs cause much more harm than illegal psychedelic drugs, for some odd reason, *our* hypocritical policies still aim to stigmatize the use of psychedelic drugs.

One of the benefits of decriminalizing psychedelic drugs is this: by changing our laws so that it is no longer a crime to do something that humans have been peacefully and safely doing for centuries, there will be fewer non-

violent criminals in an already over-clogged justice and penal system. According to the Drug Policy Alliance, an advocacy group for an end to the war on drugs, “Each year, there are more than 1.5 million drug arrests in the United States,” and the overwhelming majority of these arrests are for non-violent drug charges (“Drug Decriminalization”). Additionally, the U.S. currently has the highest incarceration rate in the world. If we were to stop imprisoning peaceful drug users, then we’d free up space in prisons for criminals who are actually doing harm to our society and to other people.

Imagine for a moment that you’re a veteran of the U.S. military. You bravely served your country in Iraq, but while you were there, you witnessed and experienced things no human being should be exposed to; you’ve seen the horrors of war and you’ve been through the unimaginable psychological trauma of seeing some of the close friends you served with (and came to know and love) die right before you. The tour of duty is over, and now you’re home. Away from all of the carnage and misery of war, you’re physically safe; yet, there is a deep psychological scar left by the tragedies you witnessed overseas. Every day, flashbacks of the atrocities of war are the first thing you see when you wake up; they’re the things that keep you up every night, never allowing you to have so much as a moment of peace. This is post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and sadly, it is a psychological ailment that affects many of our courageous veterans who risked everything to fight for us. The horrors of PTSD have driven many veterans to commit suicide, as they are unable to cope with the horrors of war that daily haunt them. There are prescription medications for PTSD, but many prove ineffective. The debilitating effects of PTSD are not only limited to veterans, in fact, but to anyone who has survived a traumatic experience and can’t get past the feelings and emotions that continue to antagonize and terrorize them. But for those afflicted by PTSD, there is hope. The Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS) is a non-profit research and educational organization developing medical, legal, and cultural contexts for people to benefit from the careful uses of psychedelics and marijuana. One of their most notable areas of study currently is their research into the use of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for the treatment of

PTSD. “Preliminary studies have shown that MDMA in conjunction with psychotherapy can help people overcome PTSD, and possibly other disorders as well. MDMA is known for increasing feelings of trust and compassion towards others, which could make an ideal adjunct to psychotherapy for PTSD” (“MDMA-Assisted”). Unlike most treatments for PTSD and other mental health issues, MDMA is administered only a few times and in a safe environment with a trained psychotherapist. MAPS has been working diligently since 1985 to study then applications of drugs like MDMA, LSD, psilocybin, and ayahuasca in treating mental illnesses, and the results so far are very promising:

In a recently completed study, 83% of subjects receiving MDMA-assisted psychotherapy no longer qualified for PTSD, and everyone who received a placebo and then went on to receive MDMA-assisted psychotherapy experienced significant and lasting improvements. These results were published in the *Journal of Psychopharmacology*. These subjects had suffered from PTSD for an average of 19 years.

A long-term follow-up of subjects receiving MDMA-assisted psychotherapy revealed that overall benefits were maintained on average for 3.5 years or more. (“Healing Trauma”)

As can be seen from the data, these treatments are capable of profound healing and have significantly improved the quality of life of those who have taken part in the studies conducted thus far. But because of the current legislation regarding psychedelic drugs, and since many people hold an ill-founded bias against these drugs, it has been a long road to get to this point and has taken a lot of work from some very dedicated people. The potential benefits of these drugs are starting to be seen more and more, and with more hard work and commitment, this may soon be an FDA-approved method of treatment.

While psychedelic drugs are showing serious potential in the areas of healing, their benefits are not solely restricted to use in a medical setting. There are anecdotal accounts from innumerable people claiming that psychedelic drugs have had a profoundly positive impact on their lives and their understanding of themselves and

the world around them. Shulgin was a strong believer in this idea, saying “The potential of the psychedelic drugs to provide access to the interior universe, is, I believe, their most valuable property” (Shulgin and Shulgin xvii). Shulgin was but one of many people who held this view. Steve Jobs, co-founder and former CEO of Apple, has stated that his use of LSD when he was younger was an extremely influential part of his life and his going on to be an innovator. He is quoted as saying, “Taking LSD was a profound experience, one of the most important things in my life. LSD shows you that there’s another side to the coin, and you can’t remember it when it wears off, but you know it. It reinforced my sense of what was important—creating great things instead of making money, putting things back into the stream of history and of human consciousness as much as I could” (“How Steve”). Another advocate for the benefits of the use of psychedelic drugs was Timothy Leary, a one-time psychologist at Harvard University. Leary’s first encounter with psychedelic drugs took place on a trip with a colleague to Mexico, where they took psilocybin mushrooms. It was here that the course of his life was changed, and Leary realized the potential of these drugs in the areas of self-discovery and understanding. Leary has said about the experience, “I learned more about my brain and its possibilities and more about psychology in the five hours after taking these mushrooms than I had in the preceding fifteen years of studying and doing research in psychology” (“The Magic”).

There seems to be a lot of evidence showing that psychedelics can be beneficial in various aspects of one’s life. In preparing to write this essay, I remembered that one of my dad’s friends had partaken in an ayahuasca retreat in Peru about seven or eight years ago. Remembering this, I decided that he would be able to offer some great insight into the benefits of using the most powerful psychedelic drug known to man. Ayahuasca is a tea, a preparation of plants that has been used by the indigenous peoples of the Amazon Basin for quite some time. Earliest records of the documentation of its effects in literature date back to the mid 1800s, but its history stretches back much farther than that. It is used in ceremonies under the supervision of an experienced shaman, a guide through the journey. Recipes for ayahuasca vary based upon the shaman preparing it,

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but all have two things in common: they contain a plant, usually the vine *Banisteriopsis caapi*, which contains harmala, a natural monoamine oxidase inhibitor (MAOI), and another plant containing the psychedelic drug DMT, often considered to be the most powerful psychedelic drug known to man. DMT can be consumed in various ways (smoked as a freebase powder, insufflated, intravenously injected), but in ayahuasca, it is taken orally. If one were to consume DMT by itself orally, the monoamine oxidase system would break it down too quickly, and no effects would be felt. Thus, in ayahuasca, it is mixed with an MAOI to shut down this system so that the effects of the DMT can be felt. However, taking DMT orally with an MAOI, such as in ayahuasca, produces notably different effects than with other routes of administration; the duration is longer and the effects themselves are varied, but they are often reported to be more intense. Ayahuasca creates a profound alteration of consciousness and a feeling of interconnectedness to the infinite, as well as providing a physical and spiritual sort of detoxification. It has a highly revered place as medicine for the mind, body, and spirit among the indigenous peoples who have used it for generations.

As I was saying before, I was able to interview my dad's friend over the phone, regarding his experiences with ayahuasca. His name is Bill Lawrence, and he has been good friends with my dad since they were in high school. The aforementioned retreat took place in a remote part of the Amazon Basin in Peru. The participants were mostly Caucasians from the United States and Europe, varying in age from as young as 19 all the way up to 78 years old. Everyone has a different reason for seeking out the healing properties of this ancient medicine, and for Bill, his interest was sparked by an article about ayahuasca in *National Geographic*: "I was intrigued by the self-discovery process and at the same time, I was scared shitless by the self-discovery process, and that combination of being excited and scared shitless sort of created a personal challenge in my mind. I really felt like I had to rise to the challenge, so I signed up for the trip and went all by myself." The retreat, which consisted of five ayahuasca ceremonies, was spread out over ten days, giving participants some time to recuperate between ceremonies. The ceremonies are led by shamans. Regarding the shamans, Bill said,

They're very indigenous; they live very close to the land, very close to the plants and the practice that they live by. They're masters of their craft. According to the shamans, no shaman, no man ever fully understood or knew fully what the benefits of each plant are or could be; that's why the plants communicate their value to the shaman. And naturally, the shaman's entire job is to listen to the plants and find out what they can do. So that's what the shamans do when they're not running ayahuasca ceremonies: they're healing local tribesmen. That could be anything from depression to potential infections and such—all using local plant medicine.

The ceremonies would take place at dusk in an open-topped hut where the participants would get comfortable before embarking upon their journeys. When asked about his experience drinking ayahuasca at one of the ceremonies, Bill told me,

As soon as I put my faith and trust in the shaman, I was lifted out of my body and brought to the infinite where I had a spirit guide and basically every question I had brought down there to have answered was answered for me that night by my spirit guide. It was visual, it was beautiful, it was . . . I mean there were parts of the ceremony where I was in the infinite bathing in this, just, love and beauty of life. And the icaros (native songs and chants accompanying the ceremony)...at that particular moment down on earth was an icaro that was just the most beautiful thing I'd ever heard. It was a feeling of joy. And beauty and wellness just swelled up inside of me and it was just, just incredible. I was shown a few things, I was taught a few things. The spirits offered to show me some of my children's future, which I asked them not to do. I wanted to live life surprised. What they'd accomplish, what they'd do. But they offered, told me a lot about my kids, told me a lot about my life. They told me a lot about my lineage, my connection to my mother, my youngest son, Sam. I could tell you more, but that's the gist of what the experience came down to for me.

Though Bill started off having very positive experiences during the ceremonies, most people tend

to go through some difficulties. The experience can be challenging and, at times, frightening as the participant battles their demons and works through what is ailing them physically, emotionally, and spiritually in a process that is ultimately one of great healing and insight. In our interview, there was one part that stood out very broadly to me as an example of what ayahuasca is capable of. It concerned one of Bill and my dad's friends from high school, Pete, who died about 30 years or so before Bill partook in these ayahuasca ceremonies:

So I was not able to make it up to Pete's funeral because when he died I was off at college, and I had always held a lot of guilt about that [missing the funeral]. During my third ayahuasca ceremony, Pete came to visit me and I totally expected that he was going to be a little bit pissed, and it was quite the opposite; he went to some great lengths to connect to me [during the ceremony], so he said. His message to me was, you know, over here [in the spirit world] that kind of shit about funerals, condolence cards, and that sort of tertiary, superficial bullshit means absolutely nothing to them. He said what's important to us here [in the spirit world] is how you treated us while we were there [alive, on earth], and he said to me that you always made me laugh and always made me feel good, he said, so we're good, in all the ways that matter, we're good. And I took that with me too. And specifically, I remember his words, it's how you treated us while we were there [alive, on earth] that's important, and try and keep people I know and love well and make them laugh and be there for them.

To Bill, this experience provided closure. He continued,

And the thing that really shocked the hell out of me and the reason that I believed that it came from outside of me, was that if you had asked me to write down 100 possible reactions Pete would've had to our meeting, I wouldn't have even considered that as a possibility. That wouldn't have been on there. That did not come from my head, that did not come from me. That's why I am 100% convinced that that came from Pete. So to people that would say that ayahuasca is just tapping into your subconscious, your psyche, your own mind, I say bullshit. That

shit he told me was nowhere in my head. I can say that with 100% certainty. Because that's the last thing I would've expected Pete to say.

Bill said that even now, years after the retreat, there are still some positive effects that have stayed with him:

The experience provides a strong sense of well-being that lasted strongly for 2 to 3 years for me after my ceremony. I wouldn't say that I still feel that; I'm sure that part has worn off by now as it was 7 or 8 years ago that I did it. I would say the most lasting effects are the spiritual ones, and that's the understanding of life, the infinite, the cosmos, and morality that I took home with me from my experience that are still very much alive with me.

For Bill, and for many others who have taken part in retreats and ceremonies like these, there is no question that ayahuasca and psychedelic drugs can be beneficial, so long as they are used responsibly and in the right context.

The potential for psychedelic drugs to heal and to teach is very great, but for this potential to be reached, we must first tear down the legal barriers and stigmas around psychedelic drugs, as these prevent them from being more fully understood. And if psychedelics are indeed to increasingly understood, we will see that through them, we ourselves, our conscious minds, and our world will be better understood. But above all, human beings have an inalienable right to do what they will with their bodies and minds, and the demonization of psychedelic drugs is an unjust mockery of this important right. In *PIHKAL*, Shulgin stated that "Our generation is the first, ever, to have made the search for self-awareness a crime, if it is done with the use of plants or chemical compounds as the means of opening the psychic doors. But the urge to become aware is always present, and it increases in intensity as one grows older" (Shulgin and Shulgin xvi).

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Evaluation: *This is a unique, exceptional response to the assignment. It is an old-fashioned, hard-working essay that employs both research and good common sense. Cole’s inclusion of a colorful interview—conducted with a family friend just days before the paper’s due date—takes this essay to a new level of excellence.*

Walls

Lizzy Young

Course: Speech 101

(Introduction to Speech Communication)

Instructor: Cheryl Golemo

Assignment: *Through a narrative speech, using a manuscript, share a personal story of an event that changed your perception in some way. Be as descriptive as possible to take us through this journey. How were you changed, and what can we learn?*

“Wall.” It seems like a simple word. We all know what it is. There have even existed famous walls. For instance, the Great Wall of China. Millions of visitors walk along it every day, but they often forget what its purpose was in the first place: to protect. It was built to defend the nation from invaders. On the other hand, we have the Berlin Wall. The Communists built it to prevent unwilling citizens from fleeing to the democratic West. This wall was an example of imprisonment.

Now you may be wondering. Why would someone start off a speech with something as vague as discussing walls? Well, the other day I determined that my house—that I have lived in my whole life—contains 32 walls. For most, the walls in their house could be compared to the Great Wall of China, maybe not in terms of exquisiteness, but in terms of purpose. Unfortunately, for some, myself included, they were like that of Berlin, for within them, I suffered more than I had out in the world beyond. Even so, those were just a portion of those that exist, for within me, I possess my very own walls that I have yet to climb.

For instance, when friends come over and I hang their coats in the closet, I never share with them the secrets it holds. That closet was the closest my sisters and I could get to security, growing up; however, even from that shelter, we could hear those awful sounds. Even in that darkness, we could imagine what was happening. It’s sad to think those screams...those bangs...those sirens...are some of the first sounds I ever remember hearing. Still, no one would have ever guessed by the smiles on our faces...no one would have ever known in the beautiful home that we had lived in...no one could have predicted no matter how well they had known us....that behind those smiles,

Student Reflections on Writing: Lizzy Young

Writing, for me, is not only an essential form of expression, but an art in which your whole soul can be poured into and delivered in the hopes that somehow and someday, others will gain some sort of new perspective. The writing process all begins with one simple idea. Sometimes, it easy to know what you want to write about. Other times, you find yourself brainstorming things that matter to you—things that you will actually care to write about. In my opinion, if you do not care about what you are writing, it will not be sincere nor have much impact. Even if you do not feel as though you are a strong writer, it does not matter as long as you have passion for the work that you are creating. Expressing your thoughts, feelings, and creativity is never a weakness, but is rather always a strength. My writing process for “Walls” came about when I decided to take all of these memories and emotions I have bottled up for so long and share them with whoever cared enough to read about them. It not only served as a sense of closure to me, but also as a sense of hope that somehow, it will touch, resonate with, and inspire others. Once I begin to write, there is no stopping me. I try my best to include as many details as possible; after all, the best kind of stories are often the ones in which you can imagine yourself in the shoes of another. Those are the ones that leave a lasting impression. Bringing forth new insight and a perspective far from one that most are used to seeing the world from is what drives me in my creative work. If you have a story to tell, by all means, you should. There are always people out there somewhere willing to read your story, and sharing even the most difficult of stories can ultimately be what helps you to overcome them. Walls are everywhere: many times, we even build them up ourselves. The most rewarding action you will ever take is to find the strength to climb them.

behind those walls, and beyond those impressions, lived a monster in disguise.

To make matters worse, not only was I questioned by the authorities, teachers, and social workers, but I was interrogated by my father himself as well. “What have you told them?” he would ask. “I’m not allowed to say,” I replied. He would get so frustrated when I would not give him an answer. Those were just a few of the times when his lack of patience or compassion would overpower every moral. And just like that of a magician, his next move was always unpredictable.

And while my mother would always take precautions to protect us, I’d often wished I could have done more to protect her. One day, I came home to find her lying unconscious. None of us had to say a word. We knew what had happened. Within 15 minutes, I was being questioned. Me, a five-year-old who still couldn’t comprehend what in the world would cause a man to want to push his wife of ten years into the French doors that lined our living room, knocking her out cold.

I remember being taken into a little room with a dollhouse and some blocks—a distraction, I assumed. They asked me to describe what life was like at home. I told them it didn’t matter. But it did. And even then, I knew it did. When the social workers discovered that I loved to write, they would then ask me to write about a typical night at home. When I was seven, I wrote a poem entitled “Lullaby.” It reads as follows:

I remember thinking:
“Mamma and daddy, please don’t fight.
Daddy, calm down. This isn’t right.
I’m tired of reruns every night.
Don’t want those dreadful sounds to be my lullaby.
I could hear the commotion,
Even through my pillow.
This isn’t a part of the world,
I ever wanted to know.
A few months later, daddy packed his bags to leave.
It wasn’t until then I’d realized how much better off we’d be.
Now no more sirens, no more shouting,
The nightmare’s over. I can at last sleep soundly.”

Little did I know, it was still far from the end. When my parents finally divorced, the judge ruled that my sisters and I would still have to see our father. My mother told me not to tell my dad I slept with a hammer beneath my pillow. I never used it. I just never had enough courage

to swing it at him. I could only watch in horror, frozen, at the sights that haunt me to this day. It’s ironic to me...the first number almost every child learns how to dial is 911. But I didn’t just learn how to; I had to actually make that call long before anyone should have to.

To this day, I am conflicted within myself. I often wonder, “How should I feel toward my father?” A part of me thinks maybe I should love him; after all, you only get one. Another portion of me just plain hates him. But perhaps the most complex sector is the one that feels indifferent whenever someone mentions his name. Growing up, I always felt like a piece was missing. I found myself constantly craving a fatherly figure whom I could look up to, tell my stories to, and toss a football around with just like they do in the movies. I knew I would never have that, but what I did have was an unbreakable bond with my mom and my sisters.

Still, to this day, even someone raising their voice sends a chill down my spine that I don’t think I will ever be able to shake off. I’ve lived my life by shutting everyone out, even those who only meant well, all because of my father’s cruel and unpredictable actions. And often times, I felt alone, but in reality, according to the Safe Horizon Organization for victims of domestic violence, approximately 3 million children per year are victimized. This means that in these 18 years I have lived, 54 million children have been victimized. I am one in 54 million.

Those 32 walls that make up my house may still stand, but they’re on the market now. It is not long until I will be moving into a new place with less secrets than it has witnessed. On the other hand, the walls I have built between myself and the rest of the world have weakened little by little as I’ve grown older, once I found strength, once I began to see things in a whole new light, and once I finally gathered the courage to leave the past where it belongs. On November 9, 1989, the Berlin wall that divided West Berlin from the rest of the world was at last destroyed. And today, on September 15, 2015, the walls that have divided me from the world will follow its example.

Evaluation: Through a bold, compelling, personal narrative, Lizzy takes us on a journey that is at times difficult, but ultimately hopeful, courageous, and redemptive. Her eloquent, poetic skills, which helped her to heal, are shared in her descriptions, and in the unique rhythm of her writing and delivery.

Afterword: Reading and Writing Words and Worlds

Alina Pajtek

My grandmother dropped out of school in second grade because she was bullied and beaten by other kids, and after all, she had to work the land to help her family. She could not read at all and her signature—the only writing she could do—looked like a first-grader’s handwriting even at ninety years old. Yet she was witty, wise, a very loving grandmother, and a great storyteller. My sister and I spent many evenings sitting on a bench with her in front of her house in the countryside and listening to her delightful stories. I have always wondered what her life would have been like had she been able to continue her education and learned to read and write. Illiteracy and the opportunities that can be lost because of it can offer a clearer perspective on the role of writing and a renewed appreciation for the opportunity to learn how to write.

My Writing Process

“What’s THIS???” Frowning and a questioning look will always be associated in my mind with academic writing.

I went to college in Romania right after the fall of communism, when people’s mindsets were still very structured, controlled, and contrived, including those of my college professors. For example, in my English and French literature classes, there was no room for creativity and critical thinking. Students read a lot of books, but instead of being able to discuss in class their own literary analyses based on the books they read, they had to “regurgitate” their professors’ literary analyses of the same novels, which students had to study from a

textbook published by their professors. This brought a lot of frustration, especially because we could not choose our classes—all the classes we took were required. The only class that I remember enjoying was an advanced class in English as a Foreign Language taught by a professor who used songs and other materials which allowed for some level of self-expression in speaking and writing. I still remember some of the poems and songs we used in that class to learn and analyze English and the vocabulary that I learned through the discussions based on those materials.

Though my major in college was English language and literature, and my minor French language and literature, and Romanian grammar was also a requirement, I never had to take a writing class. The assumption must have been that writing just happened because if you spoke the language, you also learned how to write. In other words, if you went to college, you were expected to be able to write. In Romania, taking a writing class or a speech class would have been perceived the same as taking a class on how to breathe. While I never questioned this lack of a composition course requirement when I was in college, as an ESL and linguistics instructor, I now understand the importance of college composition classes. Writing requires effort and certain parts of writing do not come naturally to anyone. Also, we learn writing conventions much faster by taking a class than by figuring them out by ourselves.

During graduate school in the United States, none of my professors suggested that I had to take a writing class; in fact, my grades on end-of-semester papers were all straight As, yet they never included any constructive comments (beyond the overused “Good job!”) that would help me improve my writing. So, I thought my writing was good enough until I had to write my doctoral dissertation. As I presented my advisor with the first drafts of chapters of my dissertation, I learned to expect the daunting question “What’s THIS???” over and over again. The question referred both to how I analyzed my dissertation data and how I reported my findings. Some of my challenges at that time were to identify patterns in the data and an overarching issue (which is similar to the thesis that students have to come up with when they write papers), to organize my ideas in terms of this overarching issue, and to not let details “take over” my writing. As intimidating and subjective as her evaluation seemed at the time, there was no doubt in my mind that I would

not give up, but instead I would learn to write better. At the same time, I also knew that I would never ask this question of my own students as an English as a Second Language (ESL) and linguistics instructor.

My graduate school experience learning to write academic papers also taught me the importance of having access not only to finished papers that served as examples, but also to papers that were “works in progress.” Seeing the unfinished product and hearing accounts of the struggles that some of my professors experienced as they wrote papers for publication made academic writing seem less intimidating. The non-linear nature of the writing process and the flexibility required when we write also became clearer to me: I understood that it was fine to go back to add ideas if needed in the introductory paragraph after I completed the final draft, and it was also fine to delete a paragraph that might have taken me an hour or more to write. I have been told to imagine that my reader knows nothing about my topic in order for me to know to what depth I should develop my arguments and to include sufficient details in my writing. Lastly, I learned the importance of developing independence as a writer by reading my papers aloud, over and over again, and by making changes; next, I let it sit for a day or two, then read and re-read it again and make further changes. As I hear myself reading my own papers aloud and cringe sometimes, I try to make sure that my ideas make sense and that there is a common thread of meaning throughout the paper. My overall writing experience might have been more positive and easier had I learned about all of these aspects of writing in a composition class, and not while writing my dissertation.

Some students think that writing is difficult only for them because they are still learning how to write, whether they are in college, in graduate school, or whether they are learning another language. However, I think writing is always challenging if one cares about and attempts to apply rigor to what ideas one puts forth, how s/he presents them, who the audience is, and how the audience may interpret what has been written. Other things to consider are what ideas have been left out, whether justice has been done to the topic, and possibly what social impact the writing may have, or what good can come out of a piece of writing.

Writing as a Thinking Tool

My writing experiences that discouraged critical thinking and those that lacked meaningful encouragement and feedback help me to appreciate the joy and value of writing as a tool for thinking in a supportive environment. Whether it is a sentence or an entire essay, writers constantly have to sift through words, verb tenses, sentence structures and their functions, and punctuation, in order to decide what ideas they want to communicate, and which ones they want to foreground. Many students at Harper recognize the tight connection between writing and thinking, or that of developing thinking and ideas through writing. When asked in what ways writing is empowering to her, this is what a current ESL student at Harper had to say: “Learning to write in English taught me to think deeply on a specific topic and to find many ideas that I could not find [them] in my mind before.” For ESL students, writing in English becomes more complex in that students have to learn to think in English so that their sentences follow an acceptable English word order, contain correct grammar, and the vocabulary they choose is appropriate for the given context (in linguistic terms, using the right word in the right context is called pragmatics). While native English speakers may also have difficulties with some of these aspects of writing, ESL students may experience “negative transfer,” that is, they may use language structures and vocabulary that seem to have the same function or meaning in both their native language and English, but they do not. Such words are called “false friends” because they can trick us into believing that they have the same meaning or function in both languages. For example, in English the word “ordinary” means “usual, normal,” but in Spanish, *ordinario* means both “usual” and “of poor quality,” depending on the context.

Another aspect of thinking through writing that can be challenging for ESL students is caused by cross-cultural differences in writing styles. For example, in US English, we typically begin an essay by declaring what we are going to write about (the thesis), then we develop that particular topic, and lastly, we restate or summarize what we wrote about. However, in Romance languages, such as Romanian, “detours” are expected in order to maintain interest and sometimes politeness. In some languages, it is considered rude if the writer makes a point too obvious or too direct. Thus, an ESL student whose first language

is Romanian might have a lot of sentences which would be considered irrelevant from a US English writing style perspective, but acceptable, or even encouraged, in a Romanian writing style framework. While one writing style is not better than another, ESL students in the United States must learn the US writing style if they want to succeed here academically.

However, I have read many papers written by ESL students in our program that make writing seem easy for them but that I know are the result of a lot of hard work. For example, Manabi Iwabuchi wrote a paper in her Reading IV class that perfectly and beautifully illustrates the value of writing as a thinking tool. In her paper, Manabi compares Denny, the main character of *The Art of Racing in the Rain*, and his car racing experience, with her daughter, Koharu, and her life experience through a series of car racing metaphors that appear in Stein's novel:

When she was a 10-year-old girl, the rain poured on us suddenly. Her hair began to fall out. We couldn't detect any disease. I bought her a wig, but she could not keep going to school. The doctor said that her stress had reached its limit and suggested to her to be absent from school for a while. She did not know the cause of the stress. To use a car racing analogy, our car slipped in the rain and began to spin. My feelings toward her were ambivalent--love, compassion, bad luck, confusion, resentment all at the same time. I thought, "What is the cause? Who is at fault? The school, her friends, my husband, or me? Was I too strict for her, or did I spoil her too much? Was it wrong that I am working? Was I more affectionate with her younger sisters than her? Many say a lack of love from a parent is a cause of the stress of the child. What is a lack of love? How can I love her more than now?" We could not find the reason for the rain. I was confused for a while, but calmed down before long; I thought in this way.

There is no help for it even if I think only of the past. And it becomes only uneasy even if I think only of the future. (Iwabuchi 1,2)

Throughout her paper, Manabi analyzes the manifestations of her daughter's school-related stress and her family's attempts to find what is best for Koharu in terms of education and parental support. In her paper, Manabi seems to find the right tools for beginning to understand,

accept, change, and express what goes on in her life through an in-depth comparative analysis between the ideas in *The Art of Racing in the Rain* and her family's situation: Manabi learned to develop a less fearful attitude while dealing with hardships and to see them as part of life; the novel helped Manabi recognize that individuals cannot have complete control over what goes on in their lives; and, she learned to pay very close attention to what her daughter needed to decrease her stress levels and, equally importantly, to have the courage to follow her intuition when making parenting decisions even if this went against acceptable social rules.

Some scholars and teachers believe, and rightfully so, that good writing and thorough thinking come from reading a lot, and from reading thought-provoking material. Some of the best papers that ESL students have written are reaction papers based on novels that they read in ESL reading classes; Manabi's paper is such an example.

In the case of content classes, including linguistics classes--credit-bearing classes that focus on the study of language--substantial, coherent, and compelling papers are based not on reading bits of information on Wikipedia or other unreliable sources of information, but on reading academic sources, such as books or journal articles. It is essential for students to develop the habit of reading a lot, of using reliable sources, and of pushing themselves to write good quality papers with correct grammar. Such practices can have a positive cumulative effect on students' literacy levels and their future academic and professional success. One may assume that all college graduates are literate; this is not always the case, though:

Not only does it [the study] find that the average literacy of college educated Americans declined significantly from 1992 to 2003, but it also reveals that just 25 percent of college graduates -- and only 31 percent of those with at least some graduate studies -- scored high enough on the tests to be deemed "proficient" from a literacy standpoint, which the government defines as "using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential."("Graduated but Not Literate")."

Given these statistics, achieving a level of literacy high enough to be able to "function in society" ("Graduated

but Not Literate”) should become one of the main goals of all college students alongside their goals of gaining general education or more specialized knowledge in their career or academic classes. Students’ awareness of the importance of reading and writing in literacy development is central to strengthening one’s intrinsic motivation for academic perseverance.

College students may say that reading academic sources is too difficult for a 200-level class because some materials, such as journal articles, present actual research studies and the knowledge gained by conducting such studies; however, I believe our responsibility as faculty is to both challenge students and provide the necessary support to help them succeed using these authentic sources. How else can we help increase the literacy level of college graduates and help build self-confidence in emerging scholars if not by setting high standards and showing them how they can reach these newly set goals: by reading and understanding journal articles and other equally valuable and reliable, albeit challenging academic sources.

Some of the most creative papers that I have read from my linguistics students are based on journal articles because they explore topics that are so innovative that they have not been widely researched yet, or there are no books written on these topics. For example, Jacob Custer’s paper, “I Speak Therefore I Am: The Literary Effect of Constructed Languages” (published in the 2015 volume of *The Harper Anthology*), explores the fascinating potential of constructed languages to create versions of reality different from our own, and to invite us to envision new ways of thinking and perceiving the world.

Introducing writing as a thinking process to both ESL and linguistics students can be empowering because even if they may lack some of the linguistic tools (vocabulary, grammar, or even linguistic jargon), they are given the opportunity to think about issues of interest to them and share their worldviews with the reader while also learning more vocabulary, grammar, and linguistic jargon in the process. The thinking-through-writing process can be relevant to all academic fields and can foster learning in all content classes that students may take at Harper, not just in linguistics; I have no doubt that many faculty assign writing with this purpose in mind.

Writing as Social Action

Writing is not only an academic exercise but also a functional one. Many ESL students are so determined to study English to be able to get better jobs, understand the letters that their children’s teachers send home, be able to fill out forms when they go to see the doctor, and learn about and apply for affordable healthcare for their children.

I have taught quite a few evening ESL classes in which some of my students were so exhausted they looked like they might faint during class, and some of them might have...not because they meant to be disrespectful, but because the class was at the end of a ten or twelve hour day. And yet they persisted because they wanted a better life. They also wanted to stop feeling the frustration of not being able to communicate in the language of their adoptive country; because they wanted to be able to express all the complex ideas that they were able to express in their native languages; because they wanted to gain membership in their new culture and be treated with respect by other people around them; or, because they wanted to eventually be able to hold the jobs that they were trained to do in their home countries—doctors, lawyers, architects, nurses, or teachers, among others.

For me, too, learning English and especially learning to write in English always held the promise of a better future. I must have written a good enough graduate school application to get accepted into graduate programs in the United States, some of which also offered teaching assistantships which paid for my tuition and paid a small monthly stipend. This is how my husband and I came to the United States from Romania. The cover letters that I submitted as part of job applications must have been good enough to land me my first job teaching English as a Second Language in the US even though I am a nonnative speaker of English. More letters were written over the years that opened new doors and opportunities, including my current position as Associate Professor at Harper College. The impact of this type of writing is more immediate and forces writers to clarify their ideas even more than other forms of writing because their livelihood and professional career depend on it.

During their studies at Harper, students have the opportunity to engage with writing not only to improve their own lives in the immediate future, but also to fight for their—and other people’s—rights and to raise awareness

of social, economic, and political issues that may affect everyone, both here and internationally. One way in which students in the Adult Education Development (AED) Department at Harper have engaged with writing in this way is by participating in letter campaigns, as Adult Education funding has been in jeopardy at several points in time. For example, in 2016, AED students learned how to find and contact their legislators via letters to request that they support funding in adult education in Illinois. With the support of their instructors, in 2015 AED students wrote letters asking their state legislators to release funding for AED so that they could continue to study and earn their GED diplomas. Lastly, in 2009, some AED students wrote to Senator Dick Durbin asking him to reauthorize the Workforce Investment Act (WIA); their ESL classes might have been in danger of not being funded anymore if the WIA had not been reauthorized. There are also countless powerful stories of Harper students' writing that seek to make an impact internationally. One of our ESL students was a television reporter in Turkey, but she had to immigrate because of the political unrest and the danger of getting imprisoned in her home country because of the nature of her job—a journalist reporting political news. One of the strongest motivations that she has in learning ESL is to be able to continue to work as a journalist from the US in order to tell the truth to the rest of the world about the political situation in Turkey. In particular, she would like to give Turkish people a voice—which may be missing from the current news reporting—by writing about their perspective and experiences during the political events in their own country.

Alena Sidelnikova, one of the writers in this volume, brings awareness to the similarities between the dystopian society portrayed in Orwell's *1984* and present day Russia through "Means of Social Control in George Orwell's 1984 and in the Present Society." Alena convincingly argues that Oceania and modern day Russia are comparable in terms of lack of freedom of the press and in altering history. According to Alena, similarly to Oceania, in modern-day Russia, it is hard to envision a democracy because both the government and private media are funded by the government, and because there is considerable subjectivity in government media reporting. In addition, the altering of historical information is not uncommon in present day Russia, especially regarding WWII research and the current political tensions between Russia and Ukraine.

These examples of student engagement in social action through writing are compelling in that they not only have a strong potential to bring about awareness and social change in a very concrete way in the immediate and wider community, but also to give us as readers the courage to attempt to "write and rewrite the world" through words and "conscious practical action," as Freire points out below, and as the title of this Afterword suggests:

There is a permanent movement back and forth between "reading" reality and reading words - the spoken word too is our reading of the world. We can go further, however, and say that **reading the word is not only preceded by reading the world, but also by a certain form of writing it or rewriting it.** In other words, of transforming it by means of conscious practical action. For me, this dynamic movement is central to literacy. (Freire 17, emphasis added)

"Rewriting the world" can become reality if students are given the chance to discover their passion for social and political activism, or generally speaking, for something that they care deeply about. This can be a very empowering form of writing—one that goes beyond oneself, and that combines thinking with contributing to improving the world around us in a relatively concrete manner. There are so many excellent papers that linguistics students have written over the years in LNG 105, LNG 205, and LNG 220 in this vein. For example, in Linguistics 205 in spring 2013, Carolyn White researched homophobic language: what it looks like, why it is used, what the effects of homophobic language are on those who are at the receiving end, and how homophobic language can be mitigated. Carolyn presented her research in class and wrote a paper discussing all these topics. Even today, in 2018, I remember how relevant her topic was—and it is equally relevant now—and how compelling was the discussion that followed her presentation.

Koren Salajka and Ruthann Shambaugh wrote and published papers in the 2013 volume of *The Harper Anthology* on the topic of language death. As part of her research study, Koren conducted a short questionnaire on language death to bring awareness to this topic and to have the opportunity to educate those who wanted to learn more about this topic. Her questions focused on the meaning of language death, on whether we should try to save endangered languages, whether it would be

better if everyone spoke the same language, and whether her respondents had studied another language. Similarly to Koren, Ruthann's purpose in writing about Lakota Sioux was to share with her classmates all the factors that contributed to the process of language loss and revitalization. Ruthann wrote about the historical and political background surrounding the wars and treaties between the Sioux and the US government and their cultural beliefs and practices. The last and most important factor that led to Lakota Sioux language loss was the fact that their children were forced to go to boarding schools off reservations and become part of the US educational system, where the Sioux children were punished if they tried to use their native language. In addition to writing this very informative and eye-opening paper, Ruthann visited the Sioux Reservation before she took Linguistics 205. One of Ruthann's future projects is to write a book on Lakota Sioux to provide an accurate historical account of the Sioux and Lakota Sioux.

These are just some of the ways in which former and current Harper students have used their voice to bring awareness to and take concrete action regarding certain political, linguistic, social, and cultural issues of interest to them. Critical thinking and constantly challenging the status quo and even their own assumptions about language and about how things *should* be are at the core of all of these excellent papers. Whether you are a novice or a seasoned writer, there are so many more words and worlds to be read, written, and rewritten in your immediate community and beyond through writing.

With my students, I frequently mention my grandmother's illiteracy, my struggles with writing, as well as the many examples of excellent student writing to emphasize the role of education, and especially that of writing in their lives and the lives of their children. It is not so hard to imagine how my grandmother's life would have been better had she learned to read and write...she would have been able to get a job outside of the home, which would have come in handy when she became a war widow at twenty-seven years old. Perhaps she would have been better able to support her own daughters to continue their education and make different choices in life. Maybe my mother would have gone on to college, and my aunt would not have stopped going to school in seventh grade to go work as a live-in housemaid at thirteen years old

in order to support her family financially. Given how intelligent and forward thinking my grandmother was for her times, I can also envision her as a leader in her community, fighting for her rights and the rights of others.

What I haven't thoroughly and sufficiently considered though is how my grandmother must have felt when she had to ask her young granddaughters "what does it say here?" every time she needed to understand a bill, a doctor's prescription, or food labels when she went to the store. Had she—and others—had the opportunity to learn to read and write, how many more stories she could have told, and how much more empowered she would have been to change her life and the lives of others for the better.

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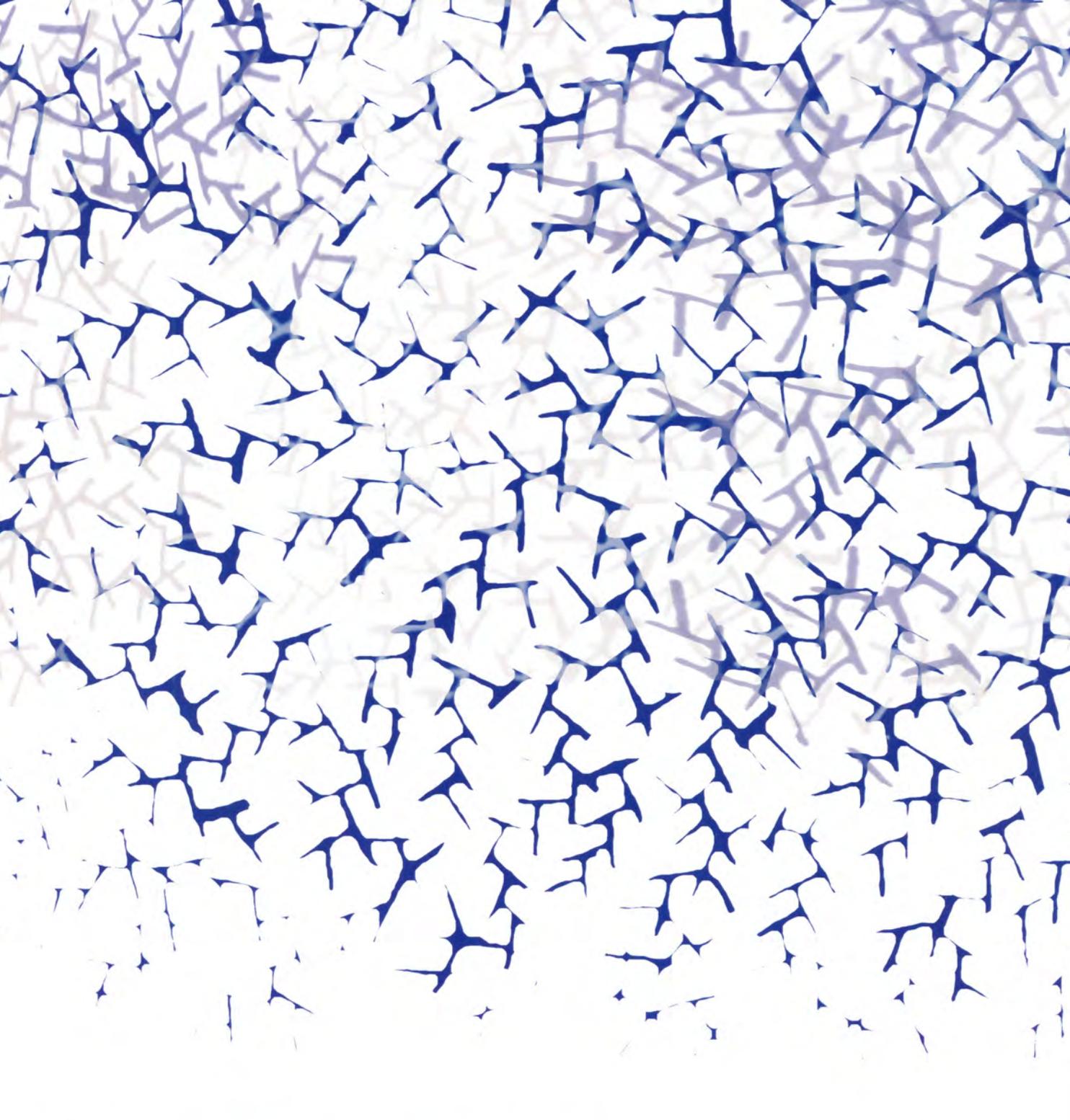
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