

The background features a series of overlapping, wavy, organic shapes in various shades of green, ranging from a deep forest green to a light, pale green. These shapes flow from the top left towards the bottom right, creating a sense of movement and depth. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern.

# THE HARPER ANTHOLOGY

2018-2022

VOLUME XXIX

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

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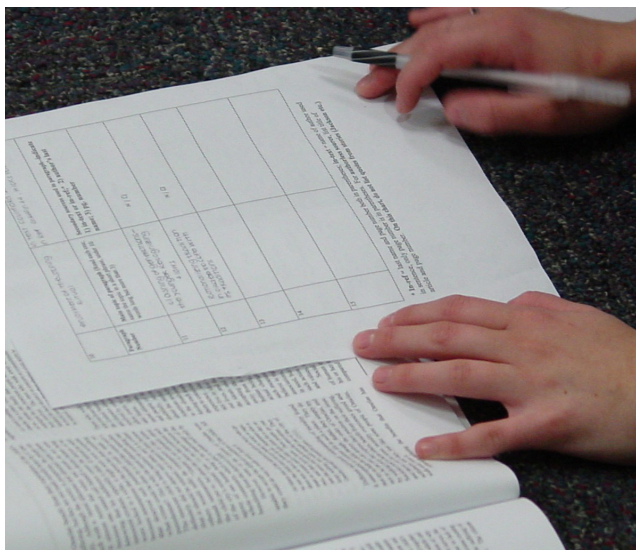


# The Harper Anthology Volume XXIX

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

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*The Harper Anthology*  
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## Submission Information

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Faculty can submit student papers at  
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of student papers

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# From before a Pandemic: *The Harper Anthology* Comeback Issue

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Kris Piepenburg, Chair  
*The Harper Anthology* Committee

This edition of *The Harper Anthology* is quite unique, as it is a “comeback issue” because of the long time that has passed since the last edition was produced, in 2018. This *Anthology* had already been delayed by a year because of my own personal issues, and then, in March of 2020, as we were at the point of forming an *Anthology* committee to evaluate submissions, we were sent home to teach and learn remotely, and the papers that had been submitted sat stacked on my desk for another year. The added Covid-related delay and the year needed for production of this issue has caused some of the papers in this issue to be four or five years old.

As a result of this lag in time, tracking down students to inform them of their upcoming publications and to request a few words of reflection from some of them about the paper being published became quite an interesting experience. Some of the “Student Reflections on Writing” that are sprinkled throughout this issue are very thoughtful, in describing the experience of re-encountering a paper written four or five years previously. In those reflections, some of our former Harper students are writing from quite different perspectives—Dina Flores, for example, is working on a doctorate at Northwestern University, and Ryan Wexler is studying to be a doctor and will be writing papers subject to peer review, out in the Pacific Northwest. So many Harper College students go on to advanced studies and take their places in professional work, after having transferred from Harper. It is always encouraging and exciting to learn of these students’ stories. A paper published in *The Harper Anthology* is only one small thing that will be included in the resumes of such students. The long span of years between this issue and the one preceding it offered these students (and their readers) rare opportunities to reflect

on papers and times from another version of themselves, perhaps, which results in some interesting perceptions.

The long hiatus for *The Harper Anthology* during these difficult years for humanity also has offered a unique opportunity to reflect on the watershed period that these years have been. The health crisis that came along with the polarizing years of the Trump presidency has resulted in over 635 million cases of Covid-19 infection worldwide since the year 2020, leading to six and a half million lives lost to virus-related disease. Six and a half million lives lost to this disease, in less than three years—I had to repeat this to myself this morning, October 30, 2022—the loss of life is staggering. Cases in the United States

## Student Reflections on Writing: A Few Excerpts

### Julia Brown

Even if the assignment seems pointless to you, the process of mulling over an idea, formulating your own ideas, and communicating them to an audience is a skill applicable in any area of life.

### Dina Flores

...I didn’t think I’d use the skills taught during English 102. I was wrong. In my graduate studies, the topics had changed...but I still needed those writing skills to move forward in my education. This semester I’m writing a paper on low back pain....

### Jacquelyne Mak

A pen and paper or typing at a keyboard tells all. My suggestion is for all writers to not be afraid to open up to oneself. Once that is done, one can then open up to others.

### Hadley Richardson-O’Brien

Looking over this piece has reminded me that writing meant for others can also be meant for ourselves, and that we might just need to reread it in a few years to realize it.

### Ryan Wexler

To the developing minds of readers: find ways to immortalize your propensity to construct anew, to manifest your mind; do not think small.

have accounted for over 99 million of the worldwide total and for over 1 million of the Covid-related fatalities. In Illinois, there have been over 3.8 million cases and nearly 40,000 deaths.

Despite these overwhelming data, here in October 2022, I feel quite a distance from the ravaging effects of Covid-19 that seized the world beginning in March of 2020. This fall of 2022, Harper College has completely reopened for on-campus classes, and distancing restrictions were lifted some time ago, bringing back normal class sizes. Some students and Harper employees continue to wear masks, but most do not. It feels like life has gone back to normal, but perhaps it is more the case that a natural complacency has returned, to replace the hypervigilance that accompanied Covid-19 in March 2020, when the campus closed, sending employees and students home to teach, work, and learn online, in an unusual collective effort never experienced before in the Harper College community. We probably all are relieved this fall to have completely returned to campus, but it is important to remember and reflect on the years we were away, and why, and to maintain vigilance, as well. On Friday of this week, just two days ago, the state of Illinois reported nearly 3,500 new cases of Covid-19 infection and nine new Covid-related deaths. This virus still exists, and it infects people and kills them. Complacency and forgetfulness seem like somewhat risky luxuries.

That being said, it is very easy to become distanced and insulated from the crisis of the past couple of years, when “normal life” feels like it can be lived again. I need to call into memory that my friend’s 16-year-old nephew died of Covid-related respiratory disease in the spring of 2020, and that another friend lost her aunt to the disease around the same time. I need to recall the panic of late March 2020, as store shelves emptied of disinfectants, masks, toilet paper, paper towels, and various other necessities for living through a medically induced lockdown. I remember my search, among other frenzied individuals doing the same thing, at a Menard’s store late one night in March 2020, for something, anything, that would work as protective gear for myself and would help me ensure a virus-free home environment. I came up empty that night. I was late to the party.

I need to remember, also, that in late December of

2020, I became extremely ill with Covid-19 and spent a week on my living room couch, feeling like I was dying, and then five days in Good Shepherd Hospital, eventually feeling like I was living. I was admitted to the hospital on January 6, 2020, and I was awake until 4 am that night, in the lethargic haze of illness, watching CNN coverage of the insurrection at the United States capitol, and the roll call of electoral votes overseen by Vice President Mike Pence, who might have lost his life that night, had the mob gotten access to him. The care and treatment at Good Shepherd Hospital undoubtedly saved my life, and it was quite a surprise that one of my attending nurses had gone through the Harper nursing program and remembered having taken courses with John Garcia and Andrew Wilson, among others. I wish I could remember her name...she is an ICU nurse with a bachelor’s degree at least, for sure. After my release, I spent the next few months recovering from lung inflammation. I need to remember the work I had to do to improve my health that year, and that I have continued to do, and how friends and family helped me get through that very rough time.

It is easy to forget this brush with death when it is now nearly two years ago that it happened, when it is something I would like to forget, and when life is now back to feeling unthreatened for myself and for most of us. I am curious, though, about what the further effects of the pandemic will be on teaching and learning, beyond the obvious ones related to increased and more specialized distance education. I am wondering if two years of pandemic-affected teaching have had any effect on the teaching of writing, in particular, and on the place of serious, sustained writing (as represented in this journal) in the courses that we teach. I am also curious about the experience of our newly arrived younger student population, during the span of 2020-2022—what they lived through on a daily basis, how they felt, how their educational experience changed, and what kind of unique learning they might have drawn from it, or what effects they might have felt as a result. It would be an interesting assignment, for an English 101 course, to require students to write about their lives and experiences during the pandemic. This experience, it seems to me, should not go without thoughtful reflection from this population of students.



The questions I have about post-pandemic writing and teaching of writing cannot be answered, at this point, but in the pages of this issue, glimmers of the pandemic's political climate are visible in some of the student writing, especially in Erika Barfield's essay for her English 101 course, "On the Election of Donald Trump" and in Diana Kim's excellent "Memo to President Trump on Matters of Globalization," written for a Global Business course. Had Erika or Diana been writing these essays during the pandemic, I am guessing the focus might have been directed at President Trump's dismissive and incompetent response to the crisis: his statement that the virus might just "blow away," or that it could be treated with injected disinfectants, or with hydroxychloroquine or chloroquine (similar to fish-tank cleaner) or azithromycin (an antibiotic), or perhaps even ivermectin (a de-wormer used in veterinary medicine). Those two papers are the only ones in this issue that are indicative of the political climate in America in 2017 and 2018. The other papers in this issue are reflective of college writing seemingly untouched by that political climate, and nothing included in this issue was predictive of the developments that were to come in the spring of 2020, which again piques my curiosity, about what sorts of things students have been writing about during the pandemic. Perhaps the effects of the murder of George Floyd, also in the spring of 2020? Or the Russian invasion and destruction of Ukraine, which began in 2014 but went full-scale in February 2022? I hope to find out, in the next year, as papers are submitted for the next issue. The world needs writing that responds to these global issues.

One of the purposes of *The Harper Anthology* is for instruction in the classroom, especially in the composition courses English 101 and 102. With regard to English 101, autobiographical writing in this issue deals meaningfully with subjects such as drug addiction ("It Runs in the Family," by an anonymous writer); enduring and surviving cancer treatments ("Monster," by Jacquelyne Mak); cross-cultural communication ("The Advantage, Not the Superiority" by Aleksey Chernov); and the mortgage crisis of 2008 ("Cash Is King," by Marco Enea). Essays of cultural analysis for English 101 include a paper on movie-going (by Olga Saburova) and a paper on youth dance competitions (by Lauren Maltby).

Of the literary research papers from English 102 courses in this issue, some step away from literary analysis and shed light on the issues dealt with in the literature, such as PTSD ("Pieces Left at War," by Jay Patel), conditions in Iraq ("The Nightmares of Hassan Blasim," by Will Hanley), and the effect of childhood abuse on intimacy ("The Stories of Lara Vapnyar," by Abigail Flanagan).

This issue of the *Anthology* includes many papers from disciplines outside of the English department. There are several essays from Linguistics courses, dealing with compelling topics such as "Bilingual Education for Deaf Children in Japan" (by Chie Kotani) and "Individualism and Collectivism in Communication" (by Haruka Smith), and there is an outstandingly detailed outline of a thematic unit from a Methods in Teaching English as a Second Language course (by Kate Stonecipher). That paper in particular stands as testimony to the high quality of work completed by Harper College students, as they prepare for professional work after completing their studies at the College. As I re-read and formatted that paper, I was impressed by the student's preparedness for teaching, as revealed in the paper, and I came away with an appreciation for what the College offers, in terms of opportunities and courses that help students develop professionally. The paper by Kevin Danikowski, from Chemistry's undergraduate research program, also left me with that impression, as did the paper by Ronald Tragasz, written for his Forensics II course, from the Law Enforcement and Justice Administration career program.

The work of students writing for Art classes is represented in this issue by seven outstanding papers from various courses in Art History, which inspired me to invite Professor Karen Patterson of the Art Department to write the Afterword for this issue, which begins on page 200, at the back of the volume. In that Afterword, titled "Why We Write about Art," Professor Patterson explores ideas about visual literacy but also captures the value of writing for ourselves and for our students: it is, she says at one point, the practice of putting ideas into words, of "thinking in sustained, critical fashion." That is, indeed, a primary reason why we write in academia, and why writing assignments are part of so many of our courses. In this issue, the paper about an artwork called *The Raft of the Medusa*, for example, by Adam Kowalski, outlines

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**From before a Pandemic:**  
*The Harper Anthology* Comeback Issue

his “thinking in sustained, critical fashion” about the composition of the artwork, what inspired and went into its creation, what its purpose was, and the impact it had and continues to have.

At the very end of her Afterword, Professor Patterson succinctly captures the purpose of why we are here, students and faculty, at Harper College, and why we continue to require sustained writing assignments from our students. In a brief metacognitive analysis of her writing process, Karen states how her process involved discarding some ideas because she had questioned them and seen flaws in them. After this revelation, she concludes her Afterword with the pithy assessment, “This is learning. This is why we write.” Indeed. Testing idea, questioning ideas, and evaluating them--yes--this is learning. And *The Harper Anthology* has returned, documenting and celebrating that purpose, that writing process, and those learning processes, as a good collegiate journal of students’ academic writing should.

I know you will enjoy this issue of *The Harper Anthology*, and I look forward eagerly to the next one, which should only take one year or so to produce, not four or five.

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# It Runs in the Family

*Anonymous*

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

*Assignment: Write an autobiographical essay about a time in which you were engaged in a struggle with forces much greater than yourself. Try to write in a way that leaves a meaningful record of your life that would benefit future readers.*

He bolts out of his house with his hand in his sweater pocket. As he sits down in my car, I see him pull it out: a nine-millimeter pistol in the hands of an idiot. He yells out to me, “Drive, drive, drive bro, I’m gonna blast their ass!” All I remember thinking is “what the hell is going on” and “I really hope he doesn’t accidentally fire that thing.” It wasn’t the first time I had seen an unregistered gun in the hands of an impulsive, uneducated, irrational, and unfamiliar individual, but this was a bit much. From AP Physics and Math Club to Saturday detentions and pill popping, what happened? He had gone from being an individual with courage who overcame a great challenge and won the respect and friendship of his peers, to an unpredictable, egotistical, rage-fueled, entitled junkie scum. Let me explain.

Slowly, I open my eyes. I lift my head up from the desk and sit up in my chair. My whole skull is pulsing. My vision is blurry. I can hear movement outside my door. It’s my mother getting ready for work. Shit. I look down at the desk to see my arm. As I become aware of my situation, my heart quenches, and I am flooded with disgust, shame. I want to cry. I want to run away. I just want to escape. I carefully rotate my arm and slowly and gently pull the needle out. Inside the syringe remained this liquid promise, tainted green by pharmaceutical dye. The promise to make everything alright. I don’t remember how much I did. But it was enough to put me to sleep and forget to remove the 28-gauge piece of metal in my arm.

Growing up, I was told I was smart. My teachers, family, friends, and my parents would tell me “You’re so

talented, so smart, so funny.” I don’t remember when I stopped believing them. I was definitely smart enough to steal without getting caught, smart enough to get myself out of trouble (most of the time, anyway), and I was smart enough to make them believe I was a “*wonderful young man.*”

From as early as I can remember, I felt different from the other kids. I didn’t know at the time how different my home life was from most of my peers. For starters, my dad was a severe alcoholic, and as a result, I never really had a father to raise me. I was raised by a single mother, and for what it’s worth, I would say *we took care of my father plenty more than he took care of us.* Our family went through a lot due to my father’s alcoholism. Broken doors, urinated-on laundry baskets, yelling, threats, and manipulation. On some nights, my father would become so violent that my mother would take me over to her friend’s house to get away from him. I always believed he would change—he told me he would—and I kept believing it. Sometimes he took me to the park, and other times he told me he wanted to fight me. He would promise to finish medical school and give our family a great life, and I would have an allowance. He promised to be a great father and spend more time with me and take me out to the park more. It took me many years to fully understand alcoholism and realize that he was sick, and that as long as he didn’t do something to treat it, he would keep acting the same way, and things would only get worse. I didn’t have a father to show me how to be a man, so I had to do my best to figure that out. In the process, I made quite a few mistakes and often looked for guidance in the wrong places.

In my early years, I never felt like I truly belonged with the other kids. I always felt a little out of place around others. With all the chaos and instability in my household, I had little tolerance and patience for some of the other nefarious young creatures at school. The worst of them would glare at me like a lion glares at his prey. As they planned their attack, they awaited the sweet feeling of victory and dominance. Can you really blame them? This behavior is in our DNA. I must confess that I was both the bully and the bullied. I didn’t know how to deal with my emotions at the time. I would cry often, and I experienced depression at a very early age.

## It Runs in the Family

I also developed anger issues and would fight a lot with other kids, so trips to the principal's office and calls from the school were commonplace. I tried talking to the counselors at school. Sometimes this would help, and sometimes it would just make things worse.

My mother is a very strong woman. Eventually, she gathered up the strength and made my father move out for the first time. This was strange for me as a young child, and the feeling was bittersweet. I was relieved that we would now be safe, but I was angry at my dad for doing this to us. My mother came to America alone with three kids to give them a better life than she had. She found my father in Chicago at a Polish welfare program, and slowly, they fell in love. Ask anyone who's met her, and they'd tell you about her positive attitude, amazing cooking, and most important, her kind, gentle heart filled with love and acceptance. This was both her strength and her weakness. She stuck by my dad's side for over a decade, taking care of him and helping him get back on his feet, not realizing her codependent behavior. She believed his promises to sober up and be a good husband and father. She never gave up on him until he started to put her kids in danger. Then finally one day, the divorce was filed, and eventually she kicked him out for good.

Up until eighth grade, I was a chubby, shy kid with almost no friends. Luckily for me, something good happened that year. I ended up joining the wrestling team and losing around 45 pounds while growing a few inches. This physical change revolutionized my whole life. I finally earned the respect I was looking for, and I felt like the king of the world. Girls would talk about me, and I would walk into a room, and people would smile and say hello. I had people calling and texting me, inviting me to hang out. People would stand up for me now. I had finally made it. I was finally one of the cool kids, one of the normal kids. Little did I know, this pink cloud would not last forever, and in fact it was much, much shorter. By the start of freshman year, my friends had abandoned me. Not many people wanted to talk to me, but there sure were those who loved to talk about me!

According to them, I was now a weird kid, too much of a coward to even finish the football season, and eventually my defenses came down, and I started to believe some of things other kids would say about me. I

started to once again slip into depression, and I felt like a "worthless fat loser with acne, who nobody likes." It even got so bad that I started having suicidal thoughts.

I had nowhere to look for guidance anymore. I started to search for answers. When the opportunity to smoke some weed came up, I was quick to seize the moment. The first day I got high started my long, treacherous journey through drug and alcohol addiction and all the problems that are conveniently included as a package deal. I was in love from the start. I started to try any and every drug. It started with innocent explorations, having psychedelic experiences on LSD and MDMA or eating amphetamines before multi-night studying sessions (and essays like this one), but it ended up getting much worse.

The exact details of my drug ballad are not as important as the effect my choices had on my psyche, my life, and the people in it. Although I managed to get through high school with a decent GPA and eventually graduate, my drug use only got worse. By the time I had started college, I had developed a habit that was getting very hard to control. It was getting extremely dangerous, costly, and hostile. My drug use took me to places I never thought I could end up in, from nights in the hospital and overdoses to getting in trouble with gang members, getting caught stealing, sleeping in my car, getting arrested, losing jobs, and driving so inebriated that I couldn't even keep myself awake. My choices and actions put a strain on my family. This behavior seemed familiar, but I couldn't quite pin it down. I didn't realize that I was becoming the very man I hated the most. I was slowly turning into the man who caused so much havoc in my home and inflicted devastating damage upon me and my family, the man who put me and mother in danger and debt. As my addiction progressed, I would reach new bottoms, and I started to do and say the same things that my father used to do and say. I always promised myself and others that I would change. I was very sincere in my desire to get my addiction under control, but on the inside, I wasn't ready to let my dearest friend go. I could no longer imagine a life without my drugs and my booze. They were there for me when I needed them most. I could always count on them to pick me up when I was feeling down. I needed them to function. That's what I would tell myself, anyway. The truth was that at this point in

my life, I had come to rely on these substances to help get me through tough times, and they did, temporarily. Time would have to take its toll, and the consequences of my addiction would have to become so severe that continuing to live that way would no longer be an option.

I tried very hard to do things to manage and control my drug addiction, but I never succeeded on my own. It wasn't until I started listening to my family and others who tried to help me that I made the decision to get help. This started my healing process, and as I humbled myself, I started getting the answers I was looking for. I started to realize why I use drugs and ways to be happy without them. After attending rehab multiple times, spending several nights in the hospital/detox center, staying in various recovery homes, and going to countless support groups, I started to genuinely change.

I learned responsibility, commitment, honesty, and accountability during my stays in rehabs and recovery homes. I learned what my mother couldn't teach me and what my father was supposed to teach me. I had to learn about respect, both for others and myself. There were some tough lessons and more than a few wake up calls. I learned to stand up for myself, yet at the same time be more compassionate. I learned how to wake up in the morning, make my bed every day, maintain cleanliness and hygiene, set and reach goals, deal with emotions, and arguably most importantly, I learned how to repair a broken cigarette. I learned how to face problems head on, be genuine and fair with others, manage money, and plan for the future. I learned a lot from living on my own, in a new environment with rules that I had to follow.

I have come a long way, but I still have a long way to go. I try to be better every day. I'm not perfect, but I keep trying, no matter what happens. I learned to forgive my father, and I do my best to accept him for who he is. The craziest part about this whole thing is my dad's story. I am convinced that if he had to write something similar as this, his story would sing a similar tune. He was also a troubled, introverted, and complicated individual with an alcoholic father. He also had problems at school and with his peers. He also struggled to find identity and feel a part of his fellow peers. I didn't find out until I was older that my father's dad was a much worse drunk than my father himself. My father never told me, but I later

learned that his father once chased him and his siblings out of the house with a knife on Christmas day, leaving them barefoot outside on the cold, snow-covered ground. I am so grateful that I never had to go through something like that. When I first learned this about my father, I was hurt, and I couldn't imagine what he had gone through. I wondered if my pain and anger were justified. Maybe he was just doing the best he could with what he knew at the time. I hope that one day my father will be sober. I wish that we can finally find some common ground, maybe find a way to support one another, as a father and as a son should.

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Evaluation: *Very economically and convincingly, this author tells us the story of a difficult struggle and shows considerable empathy and self-awareness throughout. The author's writing style provides clear details in some cases but only hints at some in others, which really makes the telling of the story quite powerful.*

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# On the Election of Donald Trump

*Erika Barfield*

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Andrew Wilson

*Assignment: Erika and her classmates were asked to write a “cultural critique,” an essay that explains a current cultural phenomenon and that examines this phenomenon’s harms and benefits (if there are any).*

*Even though Erika’s essay was written a handful of years ago, at the outset of the “Trump era,” it feels very timely this year, given the good chance that Mr. Trump will once again be on the ballot for the U.S. Presidency in 2024.*

One thing that has been weighing heavily on my mind this past week is the idea of what is going to happen, and what has already started happening now that Donald Trump has been elected as our next president. First, I just want to say that I don’t harbor resentment towards people I know who did vote for him; I have many relatives who voted for him, and although I am very disappointed and slightly offended by their decision, I still love them and don’t think any less of them. I know that there are many people who voted for him simply because he “speaks his mind” and doesn’t care what people think of him, or about being “politically correct,” and that’s fine. What is not fine at all is the fact that many people also voted for him simply because they agree with the racist, sexist, and homophobic remarks he tends to make during televised speeches and at his rallies.

The reason I am so disappointed in some of my family members who voted for him is because, sadly, some of them have very skewed views on women’s rights, race relations, and LGBT issues, possibly ingrained in them due to the area they grew up in. They couldn’t choose where they grew up, of course, but they *can* choose to be more open-minded; however, they are set in their ways and refuse to consider any other perspectives. In fact, many of them have been littering my Facebook feed with

posts about how anti-Trump protesters are “crybabies” who want to have everything in life handed to them, and stating that they need to “get over it” because Republicans didn’t protest when Barack Obama was elected. That is completely untrue; in fact, I distinctly remember seeing a Facebook post from the same relative who posted the above rant, which was just a collage of pictures of protesters holding signs with horrible statements about Obama. This included statements about how he needs to “go back to Africa,” demanding to see his birth certificate for proof that he is a United States citizen, calling him “Osama,” even a sign that said “hang in there, Obama” with a crude drawing of a hangman’s noose. These people were protesting Obama simply because he is African American; people today are protesting Donald Trump because they are genuinely afraid for their well-being, based on things he or his running mate have said. I think it makes someone more of a “crybaby” to protest a president-elect on grounds of his or her race, than it does to protest one with a good reason to fear.

Throughout Donald Trump’s campaign, I have been wondering how anyone could possibly vote for him under the impression that he is fit to run a country, considering he has no past experience in politics and seems to make up “plans” on the spot during debates. Now that he and Mike Pence have been elected, I can see that many of his supporters just don’t care about what he will do for the economy or foreign relations; they are more concerned with the fact that he is a voice for the politically incorrect views they share. Perhaps not all of his supporters fit into this category of intolerant people, but at the very least, by voting for him, they have let all of his offensive remarks slide and supported views based solely on closed-mindedness. Some people voted for him simply because they are tired of corrupt politicians, and he is a businessman, so he must be able to relate to the American people more than any lying politician who panders to certain demographics to secure their vote. Maybe it’s just me, but I cannot relate to someone who constantly speaks negatively about women and minorities, and who considers \$1 million to be “a small loan.” What is baffling to me is how many people I know who voted for him over a “lying politician,” who are now saying, “Don’t worry, nothing bad will happen from this; he only said some of

### Student Reflections on Writing: Erika Barfield

Looking back at this essay over five years later, it's interesting to see how much of it is still relevant today. Donald Trump has been the center of many scandals since his presidency, and we are still dealing with the aftereffects of certain issues such as his response to the COVID-19 pandemic. He has been involved in a long list of lawsuits, some even still ongoing, regarding interference with the 2016 and 2020 elections, the events of January 6<sup>th</sup>, etc. Not to mention all the sexual misconduct allegations that came out after he took office, and accusations of encouraging a violent atmosphere at his campaign rallies. This isn't the type of person anyone should want to lead their country, and yet, at least where I live, "Trumpism" is alive and well. I know a lot of these people with Trump bumper stickers and "Don't Blame Me, I Voted For Trump!" signs in their yard will be voting for him in 2024 if they are given the option. Since his presidency, I've personally noticed a lot more customers at my job making racist or homophobic comments towards employees, and of course refusing to follow COVID restrictions and yelling at employees over mask requirements. I can't help but feel that maybe Trump made them feel more secure in expressing these beliefs since "speaking his mind" is why they liked him to begin with. I sincerely hope he is not on a presidential ballot again, because we don't need this type of hatred to be reinforced.

those things to hype people up." So it's fine for him to lie to get voters, even though his "honesty" is the reason you voted for him in the first place? That just doesn't make any sense to me, and it seems like their way of trying not to sound like they supported him based on their personal feelings of intolerance toward others.

There are several different groups of people that are at risk for violence and oppression under Trump's presidency, and the first of those is women. We have all heard some of the horrible things Donald Trump has said about women, both during his campaign and throughout his life in general—insulting their physical appearance, making fun of them for menstruating, and of course, his statement that it's fine for him to "grab" women by the genitals, because they probably wanted him to do it anyway, since he is a "star." There are also multiple allegations of rape committed by him, including that of a 13-year-old girl; his supporters are quick to dismiss these claims and insist that these women are all lying, yet they scorn Hillary Clinton for the rape allegations against her husband. Somehow, it isn't okay to elect someone who is married to an alleged rapist, but it's okay to elect someone who has been accused of multiple accounts of rape themselves, and openly admits to "grabbing" women without their consent, because their consent isn't

necessary. Personally, I feel that having a president who has sexually assaulted women and thinks it was perfectly fine is going to lead to sexual assault becoming more socially acceptable, and cause women to be even more afraid to speak out if they happen to be assaulted. At the time I am writing this, the election was exactly one week ago, and I have already read several accounts of women being grabbed in public, on the grounds that, "we're in Trump's America now." Even if he himself were to come out and say that it isn't okay to sexually assault women, we would still have people like this who think it's justified now. Mike Pence is causing a lot of fear for women as well. As governor of Indiana, he already defunded many Planned Parenthood centers, and he wants to change the law so that insurance does not have to cover birth control. He also wants to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, making all abortion illegal. I can't begin to describe how wrong all of this is without writing 10 pages, so I will try to keep it brief. First, sometimes abortion is medically necessary: the pregnancy may threaten the life of the mother, or that of the fetus. Sometimes it isn't medically necessary, the woman just isn't ready for children, or perhaps the woman was raped and therefore doesn't want to go through with a pregnancy that was forced upon her. In my opinion, in any and all circumstances, it should be the woman's

choice. Second, Planned Parenthood centers are not just abortion factories; most of their locations actually do not provide abortions at all. Essentially, they are just doctors' offices that can provide birth control, prenatal care, and check-ups for expectant mothers. If all of these centers are defunded and birth control is too expensive for women to afford, not only will there be more women with unwanted and possibly dangerous pregnancies who are unable to get abortions, but there will be less locations for women who are already pregnant to go and get the care they need. Also, birth control is not always used solely as a method of contraception; many, many women and teen girls start birth control simply because without the added hormones in contraceptive pills, the pain and duration of their menstruation is too much to bear. If birth control becomes less affordable, even women who have never been sexually active may have to suffer.

Minority groups are being threatened by a Trump presidency, as well. He has stated multiple times that we are going to build a wall along the Mexican border, because Mexican people are, as Trump put it, "bringing drugs; they're rapists." It is true that we need better security at our borders, due to people smuggling drugs back and forth. However, not all drug traffickers are Mexican, and certainly not all of the Mexican people crossing the border are rapists. If Mexicans in general are rapists, and millions of them have emigrated here, we would have a nationwide rape epidemic on our hands, and yet, we don't. Even with over 10 million Mexican immigrants in the United States, there are still far more rapes and sexual assaults committed by white males, so it seems to me like "Mexicans are rapists" is not at all an accurate or fair generalization. He has also voiced support for the mass deportation of illegal immigrants, which would result in families being torn apart and even children being left without parents. Another group being affected is the Muslim community; according to Donald Trump and, sadly, many Americans, "Muslim" is synonymous with "terrorist." They couldn't be more wrong about this; a person's religion does not reveal anything about what kind of person he or she is, nor does the color of a person's skin or country of origin automatically reveal what religion he or she practices. There are also two sects of Islam, Sunni and Shia, of which Shia is the more extreme, and also the

minority. People who are afraid of Muslims in general honestly just need to do a quick Google search to find out that the vast majority of Muslims are not "terrorists," and those who may have committed terrorist acts are simply extremists, which are found in every religion. Just as there are Muslim extremists, there are Christian extremists, as well, who have taken lives in the name of God, but they do not get called terrorists; we are normally made to feel sorry for them because they were "troubled," or didn't have any friends. We are discouraged from generalizing and being afraid of Christians based on the few who commit violent acts, yet we are supposed to be wary of anyone who looks vaguely of Middle Eastern descent because they might be Muslim and therefore, dangerous. What disgusts me the most about this issue is that America was founded on the idea of religious freedom but apparently, in 2016, this only applies to Christians who want to impose their values on everyone else. Donald Trump also seems to be discriminant towards African Americans; he was a huge supporter of the "birther" movement that suggested President Obama was born in Africa and not a legal citizen of the United States. Trump repeatedly made remarks about how Obama needed to release his birth certificate as proof of his citizenship, which he did in 2008, but it has only been about a month since Trump *finally* admitted that Obama was born in the United States; apparently a valid Hawaiian birth certificate was not enough proof. Trump has also, in his campaign, repeatedly referred to African Americans in general as "inner-city," as if all African Americans live miserable, poverty-stricken lives and have no hope of bettering themselves on their own, without the help of Trump, a white man who has never had to deal with poverty or discrimination in his life. To me, the most terrifying and shocking part of all of this, is that the Ku Klux Klan has come out in support of Trump, and for some reason, many people don't see anything wrong with supporting a president who has been endorsed by a hate group, even though it may mean enabling the KKK to rise to prominence again.

Another marginalized group that is going to be negatively affected by Donald Trump is the LGBT community. Surprisingly, Trump has recently stated that the same-sex marriage issue has already been settled, and he is fine with it. However, that is not what he was saying



in the first place; originally, he said that he would consider appointing judges who would support overturning same-sex marriage legalization, allowing discrimination towards members of the LGBT community on grounds of religious beliefs. Mike Pence, on the other hand, is possibly one of the most anti-LGBT people I have ever heard of; he is a strong supporter of conversion therapy. He genuinely believes that someone who is homosexual can be “turned” heterosexual through electric shock and conditioning. I personally have several gay and transgender friends, and they are some of the kindest and most accepting people I have ever met; I do not believe that there is anything “wrong” with them or anything that needs fixing, and I certainly do not think that an electric shock to their brains is going to make them any less of who they are. I have heard stories of conversion therapy “camps,” where all of the residents are teenagers, who are physically and mentally abused to the point where they learn to hate themselves, and either end up committing suicide at the camp, or pretend that they have “turned straight” to escape the torture and live unhappily in fear of their true feelings for the rest of their lives. Do we really think that it’s morally acceptable to subject our children to torture and force them to hate themselves, just so they fit perfectly with our religious ideals? I am not religious at all, personally, but I feel that people who are religious should consider their beliefs as guidelines for their *own* lives, and not worry too much about what strangers are doing. It’s one thing to privately disagree with someone’s choices based on your religious beliefs, but it is not right to send someone off to be tortured into conformity, just because they don’t fit with *your* personal view of what is acceptable. Some people today fail to realize that the concept of “religious freedom” means that Americans are supposed to be free to practice any religion they choose, not that everyone is free to impose their own religious will on others who may not share the same beliefs.

I do not think that Donald Trump is the real problem here. I think the problem is that there are enough intolerant people in the United States that someone who has such bigoted views can gain any kind of traction in the polls, let alone be chosen to lead our country. Prior to Trump’s campaign, I liked to think that the majority of people in the United States were rather open-minded and

believed in equality, but now, I cannot even try to pretend that we do not live in an extremely closed-minded society marred by systemic racism and sexism. Somehow, in the year 2016, many Americans still believe that only white men should have any type of power; some still believe that women and minorities should not have equal rights, and that homosexuality is the ultimate sin. None of this is okay, and ironically, many of these beliefs are grounded in Christianity, a religion which also encourages us to love everyone, even our enemies. It is deeply disturbing to me that Christians are supposed to believe in treating everyone with love and compassion, but some of them refuse to extend these pleasantries to people who they disagree with morally. As I said previously, everyone is entitled to their own opinion, and although we should not hate someone based on their skin color, gender, or sexuality at all, it is better to keep these opinions inside than to try and use them to control other people’s lives. I completely disagree with those who have supported Donald Trump, but that does not mean I automatically hate them or think they deserve to have any of their rights taken away. I, along with many other Americans, believe that everybody has a right to be themselves and do whatever makes them happy. If we ever want to progress as a society and make this a reality, we need everyone to start voting based on what is best for *everyone* in America; we should be voting to protect the rights of others, rather than to selfishly reinforce our own ideals.

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Evaluation: *With references to personal experience, with plenty of passion, and with extremely clear prose, Erika expertly examines the “culture of Trump.”*

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# Defiance: Outside the Scenes

Julia Brown

Instructor: Kurt Hemmer

Course: Literature 112 (Literature and Film)

Assignment: *Students were to write about which scenes from Nechama Tec's book Defiance they thought should have been included in Edward Zwick's film adaptation of the book.*

## Student Reflections on Writing:

### Julia Brown

As my eyes glance over the lines of this essay written three years ago, I pick out every little word I would like to change. When I make it to the end, I think, "Hmm...not bad..." I hope this pessimistic attitude means I've improved in writing over the past three years and would be able to churn out a better essay if tasked with it again. But my criticisms now don't really matter, because I know I tried my best when I first wrote this essay. I think that's what really matters in any academic endeavor. If you do your best with the time that you have, there's no reason to feel regret. Writing takes practice. And if you keep doing your best, keep on practicing, you will improve. Even if the assignment seems pointless to you (I mean, who cares what a college kid thinks about the scenes that should be added or removed from an existing masterpiece?), the process of mulling over an idea, formulating your own ideas, and communicating them to an audience is a skill applicable in any area of life.

The takeover was so brutal and swift by the Nazis in the 1930s and 1940s that it is hard to imagine how any act of defiance could endure for the duration of the war. It is true that many did not, but there were a few that did. Not many have heard of the unimaginable feats of the Bielski brothers, leaders of a group of partisans in the Belorussian forests who evaded the Nazis for nearly two years beginning in March 1942, with 14 members, until July 1944, with 1,200 members. Certainly, if it weren't for Nechama Tec's book *Defiance*, this story might have remained forever unrecorded. Based on interviews with partisans from the Bielski otriad, this work weaves an inspiring record of individual survivors' stories centered around the otriad leader, Tuvia Bielski. A film adaptation was later produced under the same name by Edward Zwick in 2008, furthering the story's circulation. As an intermediate adaptation, this film retains most of the story elements from Tec's work, but, as all films must, it leaves many details left out. Enthusiasts of the book may argue for the inclusion of certain scenes in the movie, and for different reasons. A few examples are Tuvia's life in Subotniki, an independent escape from a ghetto, and the liberation of the camp by the Red Army in 1944. If added to the film, these scenes would have contrasted Tuvia's pre-war town life with his forest life, heightened the feeling of awe in the film's viewers at the unlikelihood of individual Jews' survival, and put the otriad into the larger context of the Holocaust in Europe, respectively.

Discussed briefly in the book, Tuvia's life with his wife Rifka in the small town of Subotniki, if included in the film *Defiance*, would have presented viewers with a pre-war Tuvia starkly contrasted with a better, more glorified Tuvia as he became the leader of the Bielski otriad during the war. Although the book devotes two chapters to life in Belorussia before the Nazi invasion, in the movie, Tuvia's life before the war is rarely discussed; in fact, the opening scene of the movie is the Nazi destruction of his hometown. In an early scene between Tuvia and Zus, his brother, near their home in Stankiewiczze, viewers discover that Tuvia has just come from the town of Nowogrodek, where his wife Rifka chose to remain behind. Other than that, little is revealed to the viewer. In the book, however, Tuvia is portrayed as not quite fitting into small-town life in Subotniki, which can be juxtaposed with his natural fit

into the position of leader in the woods during the war. Having met Tuvia Bielski in Subotniki in the 1930s, Herzl Nachumowski, a teenager at the time, describes him: “when I talked to him I realized that he knew Talmud, literature, and so much more. I had the feeling that the place was too small for him. All of it, the store, the petty life of a small town, was not enough....On the way home I asked my father what is a man like this doing in such a primitive place” (qtd. in Tec 11)? With the coming of the war, as Tuvia took his place as leader of a partisan unit, viewers of the film would better understand how unique Tuvia was. Tuvia was no ordinary man because ordinary life did not suit him; he was extraordinary, and extraordinary circumstances were where he fit in best. If such scenes were included in the film, they would create a greater tension between Tuvia and his surroundings, remedied only by the discovery of his rightful place as leader of a partisan unit.

Another important scene that might be added to the movie is an independent group’s escape from a ghetto, since it would emphasize the unbelievable realities of individual partisans’ survival before they found their way to the Bielski otriad. The survival of 1,200 Jewish people in the Bielski camp during the extreme dangers of the Holocaust is awe-inspiring in itself, but learning of unimaginable ghetto escapes that led to the growth of the otriad would contribute to a heightened sense of awe in audiences. The most daring, unlikely, and well-planned escape was one from Nowogrodek ghetto on September 26, 1943, which led to the survival of 100 to 150 escapees. At the time of the escape, the ghetto population had been reduced to around 300 inmates by an *Aktion* (mass execution) in May; people were crammed into a courthouse surrounded by an inner and outer wall each about six feet tall. Failed escape plans led to the decision to dig a tunnel out to the woods around Nowogrodek. With fifty men spending around five months digging the tunnel that extended for about 600 feet when completed, this escape route included wells for water drainage, oxygen pipes, and electric lights. Tec gives the reason for this daring plan: “Toward the middle and end of 1943 most Jews in the surrounding ghettos and camps knew about the Bielski otriad. Inmates from Nowogrodek ghetto regarded it as their last hope and an expectation of a safe haven gave them the strength to organize a

ghetto breakout” (263). Not only was the Bielski otriad significant because it directly saved lives by taking in any and all Jewish refugees, but it also provided hope for others still stuck in ghettos. Even when the Bielski otriad was struggling to survive without a permanent base, and therefore not being able to send fighters to help the Novogrodek ghetto inmates, its existence alone helped pave the way for the ghetto break-out. In Zwick’s film, the ghetto escape is portrayed as easy; the escapees are led out of the ghetto by Tuvia, the leader of the Bielski otriad himself, through a hole in the wall under the cover of darkness. The hardest part of this escape is convincing the Jewish people to leave in the first place. In the haze of the searchlights outside the ghetto wall, the *Defiance* viewer can see only five German soldiers; in the escape story mentioned above, there were at least twelve guards during the daytime, and this number increased at night. In the movie, the search light rotates toward the hole in the wall but stops and turns around before it gets close to where the escapees are. Tec’s description says, “at night a huge projector kept the area lit” (263). The word “kept” implies *constant* light surrounding the ghetto. Viewers do not see any planning going into the ghetto escape in the movie, but the Jewish people simply walk out, and they keep walking through the night undisturbed until they arrive at the camp at dawn. Tuvia leads the people out in the movie, but a significant aspect of the book’s ghetto escape story is that Tuvia was not there and could not send anyone to help the ghetto inmates. The Jews did it by themselves. The fact that the knowledge of the otriad and the hope of arriving there spurred the ingenuity of the Jewish people gives a greater credit to the Bielski otriad than simply taking the easy way out of the ghetto.

A third scene, the liberation of the Bielski otriad by the Soviet Red Army, if added to the film, would have given the viewer a larger context surrounding the events in the forest. Since the action of the movie strictly focuses on combat in the woods between partisans and Germans, the viewer forgets about the larger war happening around the otriad. The arrival of the Red Army, however, would remind viewers of the mass slaughter of Jews in other countries, and of the larger war being waged against its perpetrators. Of the Soviet Army, little is portrayed in the film. Russian partisans are depicted, but not liberating the Bielski otriad. The liberation scene of July 1944 included

in the book is especially poignant because of the words of a Jewish major in the Soviet army, which attests to the extraordinary survival of the Jewish partisans. He says, “I passed from Stanlingrad to Belorussia, I freed many towns and villages. I did not meet any Jews at all. I am happy to see real Jews, alive....I left my wife and children in Kiev, now they are all in Babi Yar” (qtd. in Tec 279). Readers are reminded of the atrocities going on throughout Europe, as the allusion to Babi Yar refers to a ravine in Ukraine where up to 150,000 Ukrainians and Jews were murdered during the Holocaust (Rapson 85). Reminders of the greater destruction of Jews throughout Europe would make the Bielski otriad seem tiny by comparison, but all the more precious.

Other fans of *Defiance* may disagree with these scene choices, and if given the opportunity, some might wish to rewrite the entire film. For the sake of making the story more realistic, some of Tuvia’s flaws might be included, such as his alcoholism and questionable executions. Similarly, promiscuity and a class system within the Bielski otriad, although not pleasant, were reality. Or, instead of adding scenes from the book, some may wish to exclude scenes from the original film. For example, women were discouraged from carrying arms, according to Tec, and any guns owned by women who came to the otriad were confiscated and given to the men. But in the film, women are seen learning how to shoot, and they fight and die alongside men. No matter what scenes might be added or subtracted from the original movie, even if possible, that would not detract from the incredible, yet underrepresented, story of over one thousand Jews who survived the Nazi killing machine by acting in defiance.

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Evaluation: *Julia does a remarkable job defending her choices for scenes from the book Defiance that should have been included in the film.*

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## The Fundamental Incompatibility of Science and Creationism

Sergi Castells

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Geoffrey Fogleman

Assignment: *Write a six- to eight-page research essay to inform your reader of a topic that your audience might not know much about, and include effective use of four to seven secondary sources.*

Science enables an understanding of all aspects of life from countless perspectives. It can be split into the natural sciences, social sciences, and formal sciences. The natural sciences rely on empirical evidence and the consistent repeatability of results rather than faith in any aspect of the process, which is why the natural sciences are broadly inconsistent and irreconcilable with most faith-based religious doctrines at a fundamental level. Fields of science that deal with historical origins such as cosmology, historical geology, and biology rely on the anthropic principle, which states that the observations of the universe must be compatible with the sentient life that observes it. As a tool to explain the fine-tuning of our universe and Earth, these fields utilize the weak anthropic principle, the idea that in the current universe, “there is the right amount of complexity and time for intelligence to evolve,” and that “the current universe is of the form that allows intelligent observers” (Schombert). Theists will often cite this fine-tuning as evidence for a higher power and, by extension, a creator. The simultaneous belief in creationism and scientific theory results in cognitive dissonance, which, by its very nature, creates an inherent bias in the understanding, application, and study of natural sciences, engenders major misinterpretations of fundamental scientific theories within the general populous, and bastardizes the scientific method overall, resulting in pseudoscience.

Creationism allows the mind to deteriorate and never truly ponder the fundamental questions: Why are we here? What sparked abiogenesis? How is Earth able to sustain

life? How do we explain the universe and its known elements? These questions and more are addressed in both science and creationism but produce vastly different answers. While both will generally provide a single response for all hypothetical questions, only science recognizes that no matter how accurate and compelling a theory, it is merely an approximate model of reality. In the sciences, an inconclusive or seemingly unfulfilling answer on a scientific as well as philosophical level is accepted as truth until new evidence proves otherwise, with corrections or complete rewrites of theories often praised. Science as a system recognizes the inherent limit on knowledge and accepts answers that may well be only partially complete or unable to be determined due to the intrinsic limitations of our current knowledge of the universe. Creationism, however, typically answers these questions by attributing absolute responsibility for all aspects of life and its development and change to an omnipotent Creator, or God, and considers these its creed. The suppression of critical thinking manipulates humans into mere automatons, thus bridging the chasm between man and machine. Academia is the realm of learning and is contingent on man’s ability to think critically. Removing critical thinking from man is as if one were to lobotomize humanity. Without the trait that makes *Homo sapiens* the dominant life form on Earth, how can one contribute to academia and advance knowledge? Attempts by creationists to be pertinent within academia create cognitive dissonance that promulgates bias and error throughout the academic community and science itself.

The insidious spread of creationism within academia is present not only in the United States, as stereotypes would suggest, but also in the United Kingdom. Students in STEM programs regularly fail exams because they cite the Bible or Qur’an as fact while dismissing the actual subject matter they were taught. Dr. David Rosevear, a former professor of organic chemistry at the University of Portsmouth, and Director of the Creation Science Movement in England, promulgates the problem of creationism in academia. He entirely disregards the theory of evolution, which is the foundation of the entire field of biology. In a 1999 paper by Dr. Rosevear titled “The Myth of Chemical Evolution,” he discusses how the lack

## The Fundamental Incompatibility of Science and Creationism

of evidence for a mechanism for abiogenesis apparently leads to the logical conclusion that life was created rather than evolving from organic molecules (Rosevear). The entire premise of the paper relies on the logical fallacy of Dr. Rosevear's assumption that the lack of information or a developed theory that he himself recognizes implies that chemical evolution is impossible. In addition to the fallacies present in his paper, a blatant bias plagues the entire validity of his research. Facts are misconstrued through his inability to meld creationist beliefs with science, which brings into question their compatibility.

Science is a philosophy based on empirical evidence, permissive to change and revision, while creationism, and religion in general, is a philosophy of faith, irrespective of empirical evidence. Stemming from the scientific philosophy, the scientific method is a system of forming hypotheses based on observation and previous knowledge, gathering data objectively, and analyzing it to arrive at conclusions about that hypothesis. Ideally, there would be no bias and the entire process would be objective with all repetitions of any given experiment yielding equivalent results. While it is unrealistic to expect a perfect system, the current iteration of the scientific method has worked for the hundreds of years since the formalization of the sciences during the Renaissance period (Anderson and Hepburn). The entire philosophy upon which creationism is based, however, runs resolutely counter to one of the greatest and most successful systems of shared knowledge in human history. Forming a conclusion and cherry-picking data to create a reverse-engineered hypothesis is irrefutably incompatible with its converse, scientific theory. Combining the meta-analysis of science and creationism, and the blatant bias in Rosevear's academic work, the existence of creationism within academia is shown to promulgate the misinterpretation of scientific theory.

The willful disregard and blatant distortion of scientific theories by creationists is not exclusive to academia, as one may suspect, but is widespread across societies in many Western countries. One of the most common misinterpretations of science within the general populous is the misuse of the second law of thermodynamics. One of the many questions directed to Bill Nye after the 2014 debate "Is Creation a Viable Model

of Origins" exemplifies this misinterpretation: "Does not the second law of thermodynamics disprove evolution" (Rutherford)? This shows this questioner's entire lack of understanding of the scientific theory and an asinine misinterpretation of thermodynamics. A major assumption that the questioner makes is that evolution happened in a closed system. By the definition of a closed system—a system that does not exchange energy or matter with its surroundings—the entire premise of a closed system of evolution is nonsensical (Freske). (Note that the definition of a closed system in thermodynamics is akin to an isolated system in chemistry due to the use of the modern definition of a closed system in thermodynamics. It is defined in terms of entropy, while the less math-intensive definition restricts the movement of energy or matter to/from a system.) In addition to the previous incorrect assumptions, there are additional misinterpretations of scientific theory in the list of questions to Bill Nye, such as using the colloquial connotation of theory to "disprove" evolution and assuming that science tries to give a meaning to life.

The word "theory" is used within science to mean a set of explanations for certain observations that have and are being constantly tested and revised. There is also a key difference between evolution and the theory of evolution; evolution is a fact that changes occur over subsequent generations, and evolutionary theory is the set of rules that describe the process by which evolution occurs. Not only does this misinterpretation of science harm the immense amount of work that has gone into confirming evolutionary theory, it reduces the credibility of scientific theory within the eyes of those less scientifically and mathematically literate. Along with the misuse of the word "theory," creationists tend to misinterpret scientific theory through the assumption that science attempts to assign a meaning to life. Given that religion serves as a sociological mean of controlling human behavior and to quell existential angst, it is not entirely unexpected that creationists would insinuate that science should also provide an "objective meaning [of] life" (Rutherford). Just as with the word "theory," science is not meant to give a meaning to life, but rather to explain and analyze how experiences happen. Questioning existence or attempting to assign a purpose to our existence is the job of philosophers and

poets. There is a place for metaphysics and existential philosophy, and a clear distinction between scientific theory and philosophical speculation. These three examples demonstrate how creationism distorts science, based on misinterpretations and inadequate cherry-picked bits of information.

The generalization and misrepresentation of science leads to pseudoscience, a quasi-intellectual plague that disperses throughout society. Pseudoscience is arguably the most important of all the negative effects that creationism has on both the scientific community and society. Notably, creationists are not the sole perpetrator of pseudoscience but rather a subset of the whole group, making the eradication of pseudoscience much more difficult. The culmination of massive generalizations, misinterpretations of scientific theory, and general lack of knowledge results in cases of pseudoscience such as astrology and creationist research. Astrology may have its roots in a time before the advent of scientific theory, but that does not stop a large group of people from believing in it as a legitimate science today; religion as well as creationism hold this in common with astrology.

The idea that another celestial body will influence life on Earth, excluding any gravitational effects due to its scientific nature, is preposterous. With the advent of modernized scientific theory during the Renaissance, the divide between astrology and astronomy became apparent. Astrology uses the scientific theories of astronomy to predict the motion of the planets and celestial bodies; however, the analysis of their motion is why it is considered pseudoscience. This community of people who believe their lives are controlled by the stars, as well as those who believe in healing crystals, can promulgate these “facts” due in part to creationism’s effect in normalizing utter nonsense. The case here is that while creationism may seem harmless while it is contained in the Ark Encounter in Kentucky, for example, it spreads unwanted and unwarranted mindsets to the general populace. The mindset that people can manipulate, misinterpret, and ignore science on a whim to make it fit their beliefs allows the pseudoscientific community to continue to grow. Astrology may be only indirectly affected by creationism, but it highlights a much larger issue regarding creationism and pseudoscience. Creation and biblical research is a type of pseudoscience that is a direct result of creationism’s acceptance of quasi-intelligence and pseudoscience.

This type of research, as shown in multiple instances previously, bastardizes the scientific method through its misinterpretations of scientific theories and use of a quasi-scientific method. The obviously unscholarly tone of creationist research is blatantly ignored in many cases, specifically by creationists who do not recognize the rift between creationism and science.

A large portion of the scientific community perceives a rift between themselves and creationism; however, many creationists view science and religion as an entirely compatible group of studies. An example of this is the large group of research scientists that publish in the *Answer Research Journal*. Just the existence of a creationist research journal presents the argument that creationism and scientific theory are compatible. This journal is sponsored by the Answers in Genesis foundation and is held to “the highest scientific and theological standard.” While openly praising the bias of contributed works may seem counterintuitive, creationists view it as a positive and a backing of the journal’s merit. One of the leading articles within the ninth volume of the Answers Research Journal is titled “Thoughts on the rāqīa’ and a Possible Explanation for the Cosmic Microwave Background” and explores the Creation Week while attempting to form a biblical model of astronomy. The article is relatively recent in scientific terms and was written in 2016 by Dr. Danny R. Faulkner. To remove bias while analyzing this paper, any research and data collection is assumed to be accurate and conducted properly.

The early portions of the paper discuss the Creation Week (or six days of creation) in the context of theology and thus can be considered legitimate within this scope. The telling portion of the paper is in the final few paragraphs, where Faulkner discusses the derived implications of his theory based upon his preceding theological research. His theory states that the universe is surrounded by water and follows that the cosmic microwave background radiation, which is commonly referred to as the CMB, is a result of said water (Faulkner). It is immediately apparent that there is conflict of interest with his beliefs and scientific theory due to the fact that his beliefs trump the prevailing cosmological model of the universe within the scientific community. Regardless of the blatant bias, Faulkner’s asinine claim that the water’s radiant light would emulate the CMB disregards three key elements.

The water present within the void of space, at his

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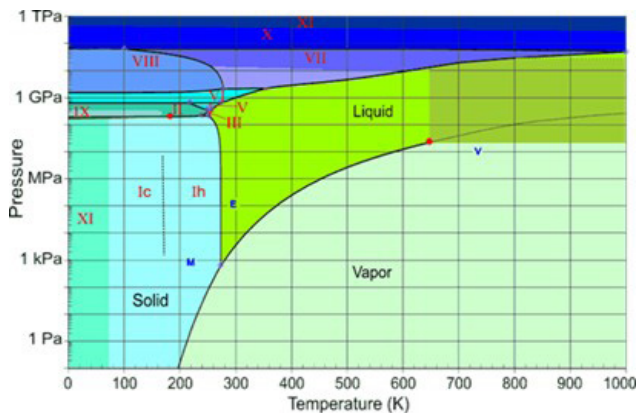


Fig. 1. Water phase diagram. From *Physics at Duke*, Duke University.

specified temperature of 300K, is in its gaseous phase (fig. 1) which, as seen in the emission spectrum of water vapor (fig. 2) and the emission spectrum of hydrogen plasma (fig. 3), does not match the emission spectrum of hydrogen plasma. The distinction is made between the two emission spectra where the water vapor is a continuous curve while hydrogen plasma emits discrete wavelengths. Note that comparison of the two differently labeled diagrams can be made due to the proportionality of wavelength and frequency, which exposes a fundamental problem in his proposition. Thus, even before accounting for the redshift of the emitted light, the initial proposition is entirely unsubstantiated. The second key element that Faulkner is missing in his analysis is a simple understanding of the cause of the CMB. NASA describes the nature of matter in the early stages of the universe as “hydrogen [that] was completely ionized into free protons and electrons,” (Griswold). The proposition that water in any phase existed before the time of primordial nucleosynthesis, which occurred between ten seconds and twenty-five minutes after the Big Bang, is nonsensical and easily refuted by the fact that the element hydrogen had yet be formed, one of two components of a water molecule. Along with the inexistence of hydrogen, elements heavier than lithium are created through stellar nucleosynthesis, which did not even occur until as early as 100 million to 250 million years after the big bang (Larson and Bromm). The final element that Faulkner disregards is expansion of the universe itself. His theory that water surrounds the universe is debunked by a basic understanding of the

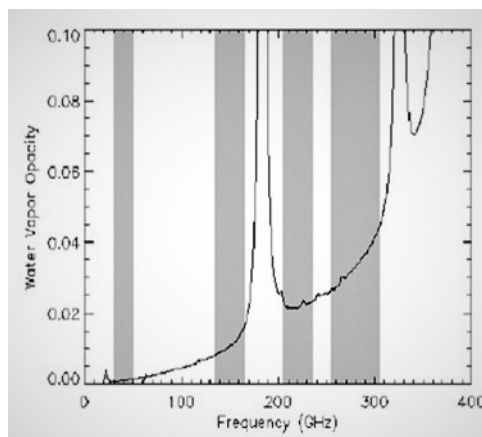


Fig. 2. Water vapor spectrum. From Bussmann, R.S. *The Astrophysical Journal*, Dec. 2004.

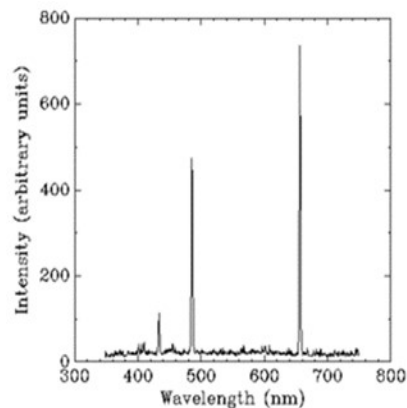


Fig. 3. Hydrogen plasma emission spectrum. From *General Astronomy/Molecular Emission and Absorption*, WikiBooks.

expansion of the universe. Simply stated, space itself expands faster than the speed of light *in vacuo* and the distance between objects acts as a catalyst to accelerate said expansion. The primary concept to note is that space expands faster than light while matter cannot. As shown in Einstein’s theory of special relativity, an object with invariant mass can only infinitely approach the speed of light but never attain it (Einstein and Lawson 49). Thus, by the general and special theory of relativity, the existence of water on the edge of the universe is extremely unlikely, if not impossible.



Based on this analysis of the quality of Faulkner’s paper, there is a strong and legitimate basis to say that he incorrectly utilizes scientific theory to further his own pseudoscientific claims and beliefs over widely accepted theories and that the paper itself has not undergone a legitimate peer-review process. The quality and integrity of the paper sheds a bad light on the *Answers Research Journal* as a whole, and considering their attempt at being of “the highest scientific and theological standard,” it seems that they only reach the highest theological standard and blatantly ignore actual science in its entirety. The purpose of this analysis of the *Answers Research Journal* was not to refute their academic integrity, although they seem to need no help with that, but to show the incompatibility of creationism and science. Due to Faulkner’s inability to accept and correctly utilize facts that contradict his beliefs and predetermined conclusions, and the journal’s absurd peer-review standards, it is apparent that, at least in this case, scientific theory does indeed cause cognitive dissonance within the creationist community, thus backing the claim that creationism and science are incompatible.

Science creates a framework from which the world can be modeled and viewed through the lens of an observer. Crafting theories around facts and constantly molding theories to be consistent with observations irrespective of politics, race, or gender, science is a pristine example of humanity at its finest. Creationism is quite literally the exact opposite; facts are cherry-picked to fit a hypothesis that is based on a moralistic belief system originating two millennia ago, and one which was never meant to address the questions of the physical world as science now does. It is simply not fit for this purpose and was never designed to be. Science welcomes and rewards new discoveries, while creationism perceives the literal word of the Bible to be the only universal truth. The two systems clash and, through a multitude of angles and lenses, it is blatantly obvious that science and creationism are fundamentally incompatible if one holds true to the core philosophy of both systems.

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Evaluation: *What I liked most about Sergi’s essay is that he tackled what could be considered a controversial subject and handled it with aplomb. His tone is both academic and respectful, and he draws from interesting and credible sources.*

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# Juvenile Delinquency and Rational Choice Theory

*Leticia Ceron*

Course: Law Enforcement and Justice  
Administration 205 (Juvenile Justice)  
Instructor: Louis Martinez

Assignment: *Students were to write about what they believe causes juveniles to commit horrible and serious crimes such as murder and rape.*

## Abstract

Theories about crime can be divided into two separate approaches. The rational choice theory states the belief that people are rational human beings that weigh the possibilities of their decisions and carry out those decisions freely. Another theory is that individuals are predisposed to crime and have a higher chance of committing crimes based on external factors of control. In this essay, I will be centering on the case of the teenager Ethan Couch, favoring rational choice theory to explain his actions. I will also discuss why the positivistic approach, which Ethan used at his sentencing hearing, as his defense is wrong in its view of finding people's criminal actions excusable. I will state the dangers that positivism has on the criminal justice system and state whether rational choice theory can contribute to a deterring plan of action.

## Introduction

Crime as a part of life is a necessary evil. Petty crime has always existed to different extents fluctuated in this country, with different factors being held responsible, such as the economy, drugs, and war, and more serious offenses are individually determined ("Causes of Crime," n.d). Questions arise such as what caused a person to murder? Why does a rapist force a person to engage in sexual acts versus asking them on a date? Adult crime is already difficult to understand, much less justify. Even more difficult to comprehend is what causes children to commit serious offenses.

Usually, children are viewed as being innocent and

harmless. Though given the initial benefit of the doubt, they have been found guilty of horrible crimes similar to those that an adult would commit (Menihan, 2014). Masterful planning and coordination to execute a horrible crime such as murder or burglary have developed from children's minds, some as elaborate and meticulous as from a grown adult. The physical differences between an adult and a child are clear to see; however, how different are they internally? Is the child actually capable of determining right from wrong? Does a delinquent fully comprehend consequences much like an adult does? These are two very important questions to answer, when it comes time to decide whether to charge juvenile offenders with crimes. In addition to deciding whether to charge them, how the prosecutor should charge them must be determined, that is, whether the process should include trial as an adult, or if the juvenile justice system should be used in the care of young offenders.

In the case of juvenile Ethan Couch, the juvenile courts sentenced him to 10 years' probation and treatment at an inpatient rehabilitation facility when he was 16 years old. Couch pleaded guilty to four counts of intoxication manslaughter and two counts of intoxication assault for a fatal car crash in which his drunk driving resulted in the deaths of four people and the physical paralysis of one friend. His defense team saved him from serving a harsher sentence by using a positivistic approach to justify his actions. Claims that Couch suffered from "affluenza," a "condition" in which a person is so wealthy and overly privileged that consequences are not real to them, were seen as legitimate and held their weight in court ("What Is affluenza," 2015). Affluenza is one of many defenses that the positivistic approach to crime might include. Positivism is rooted in the belief that external factors are responsible for an individual's course of action. Therefore, Ethan could not be held responsible for his actions when he was incapable of grasping their severity. In contrast, the rational choice theory states that every action a person makes, whether criminal or noncriminal, stems from a cognitively rational process based on free will.

## The Rational Choice Approach

"To act rationally means to act in a way that one's choices are harmonious with their preferences" (McCarthy,

2002). In the rational choice theory of crime, it is believed that people act in a way that benefits them, after they carefully analyze their options. A balance between what people want and how they go about achieving their goal is part of what makes up the theoretical constructs of criminology. According to this view, crime occurs when a person knowingly commits an action that defies the laws put in place, for their own personal gain. Important principles for the rational choice theory include the belief that people are rational creatures; that they have their own individual sets of interest; that they have their own set of choices they can choose from; and that finally, people decide on their own choices based on their rational way of thinking (“Basic Principles of Rational Choice Theory,” n.d.).

To determine that people are rational is different from determining whether they have values and morals. Paternoster and Pogarsky (2009) state that “there is likely to be variation across person’s in how carefully, thoroughly, and thoughtfully choices and decisions are made.” This does not exclude the basic assumptions of right and wrong in anybody, including juveniles. Ethan was at the point in adolescence that he had a basic idea of how misconduct was formed. Not only was he two years from legally becoming an adult when he willingly threw an alcohol-filled party with all his underage friends, but witnesses at the party even reported trying to stop the intoxicated Couch from driving. Couch made a regrettable decision as a result from already being intoxicated, and he attempted to drive while at triple the Texas legal alcohol limit for adults. Couch comprehended the consequences of his actions when it came to drinking and driving. In February 2013, the police stopped Couch for DUI. He was reported to be arrogantly arguing with police as they tried to reason with him about his actions (Klauss & Valiente, 2016).

Ethan Couch is a rational person. He displayed rationality at the crime scene even in his intoxicated state after the crash, when he was supposedly more confused from the accident. Witnesses state that Ethan woke up to people trying to help him, and he began telling them, “Hey man, I am, I am Ethan, I can get you out of all of this” (Klauss & Valiente, 2016). Ethan showed his mental ability to realize this was a very bad situation, and he immediately began to try and escape responsibility. His wealthy and unfettered lifestyle did not prevent Ethan

from understanding consequences, as his defense team claimed. Instead, his entitled lifestyle allowed him to perfectly comprehend the depths of any unlawful actions to the point where, anytime he would be caught breaking the law, he immediately began formulating plans to prevent punishment. He knew from experience that punishment was nothing to fear, as he had the resources to escape it. The night of the party, Ethan was aware he was going to drink and should not have attempted driving. After the crash, he knew that he had done something wrong and rationalized in his head that he would need to find a way—an excuse—to keep from doing prison time. Many young people have parties with their friends. However, they do not always end up behaving exceptionally recklessly, to the point where four lives are lost, and where one person loses the ability to move his body forever.

### The Positivistic Approach

Positivism operates on the basis of determinism. This states that from the moment of birth, individuals have a predisposition to crime based on external factors of control. External factors including their environment, their genetics, and even their cognitive development are seen as preventing them from assuming responsibility for their negative actions. “The character and personal backgrounds of individuals explain delinquent behavior” (Bartollas & Schmalleger, 2016). A delinquent is regarded as different from his or her peers, and to correct deviating behavior, identifying factors that are seen as responsible for the delinquent’s criminal behavior must first be rectified. As a result of emphasizing the effects of background factors in an individual, no room for personal responsibility is left. If this approach is taken for every criminal case, like it was accepted for Ethan Couch, then there would be no more use for criminal trials. Defendants will never be found *guilty* of their actions; they will be found *excused* instead. Crimes will always be found justifiable, as long as a person has experienced some form of hardship in their lives.

In Ethan’s affluenza defense, the psychiatrist claimed his parents were the ones who led their child into the path of criminal action by allowing him to grow up rich and by never providing a firm hand when punishing him (Klauss & Valiente, 2016). Couch never had any idea that he was responsible for his actions. At the age of 16, Ethan Couch was not aware of right and wrong, to the extent that he

never classified any of his own behavior as going against the law. This defense held no sufficient grounds from the time of its acceptance, right up until the present. Two years into Ethan Couch's sentence of 10 years' probation, on December 15, 2015, Couch was wanted by U.S. marshals for going on the run after video evidence surfaced that Couch had violated his probation. Rules of his probation stated that he was not allowed around alcohol, and he was even ordered to attend rehabilitation away from his parents as part of his original sentence ("Ethan Couch sentenced," 2014). Yet, in a video released by news channels, Couch was seen playing beer pong, without a care in the world about the orders the judge had given him. No remorse for his actions is seen on his face. If Ethan in fact had no way of comprehending that his actions went against the law, then he would have seen no reason to flee the country after violating parole.

Positivistic defenses are dangerous in the court of law. They allow criminals more room to escape culpability by simply stated that they were treated unfairly growing up. For juveniles, this can result in growing into experienced criminals. There would be no reason to change as they age, when their defenders can mold the justice system into seeing them as anything they want to be perceived as.

### Rational Choice Theory and Deterrence

Deterrence is not possible when applying it to the rational choice theory of crime. This view states that people commit crimes because they have already viewed and weighed their options. They have already rationally decided that being a criminal and the risk of jail time is worth whatever sort of criminal act they plan to carry out. For these people, rehabilitation is not always the answer. They have nothing to sort through. The possibility of deterring them is not optional, because how can a crime be stopped before it has been committed? The best solution to prevent crime from getting out of control is for criminals, especially juvenile offenders, to see that excuses will not be tolerated in the court of law. If a person commits a crime, whether juvenile or adult, they will be held accountable for their actions.

### Conclusion

The fact of the matter is, when a crime is committed, it cannot be undone. The damage to a murder victim, a rape victim, a victim of burglary, etc. is already set. Positivism does not provide sufficient ground for these

actions to take place. If the factors considered in a positivist approach are true at all, they only tell the partial story of the criminal. This approach does not take away the pain that others have experienced at the hands of the offender, and it does not make them feel any better knowing that their lives had to change because someone was not disciplined as a child. The responsibility of our legal system is to find people guilty of their actions, not lend a shoulder for criminals to cry on. Justice for the victim is the goal, and by accepting positivistic defenses, we deviate from that goal and head into a direction where the legal system can be cheated, and where criminals can be let off for their actions.

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Evaluation: *Leticia clearly articulates and explains the rational choice theory by contrasting it with other theoretic views. Her style of writing is exceptional as she maintains a structured and flowing pace while advancing the main idea. Her meticulous attention to detail is evident throughout the paper.*

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# The Advantage, Not the Superiority

Aleksey Chernov

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Elizabeth Turner

Assignment: *Compose, revise, and edit a persuasive narrative.*

The resonant call of the old man broke the silence and reigned in the room for a few brief moments. His voice was so firm and confident that it made me raise my head to ensure that he still was the same person. The sound he made in no way correlated with his appearance; voices like this belong to priests or commanders and force us to listen and to perform. But that call in an unknown language was directed into the deep of the house, through the living room somewhere to the kitchen. I had no idea who he called for, but I saw how the old man was waiting for a “genie” to show up, so I hoped that whoever it was would be really helpful. Expressing apparent impatience, he took a few steps toward the kitchen, but he didn’t breathe a word to rush the “magic,” confirming my theory that the order said with his voice must be executed without him having to repeat it. This allowed me to see him better.

He was a short old man of about eighty years old. His shoulders, sloping and leaned slightly forward and down, along with a humped back, made him seem even shorter. Unable to straighten, he had to look at me from under his completely gray but dense eyebrows, which remained practically the only hair on his head except for a neatly trimmed, gray, and rounded beard. He was giving the impression of a man who had carried a heavy bag on his back for a long time. The burden had disappeared over the years, but without knowing it, he remained bent. Despite this, he moved quickly and confidently, proving his status as the owner of the extraordinary voice. Those few steps he made seemed to me to be a short sprint; he literally vanished in one spot, to appear in a moment in the middle of the living room.

The characteristic features of the old man’s face, the combination of sounds in his words, and the inscription made in Arabic or Farsi on the hallway wall allowed me to guess that the family who lived there were newcomers from the Middle East. They were my customers, and I had come to their house to install the Internet and TV services. This was my last stop for the day, and I was hoping to complete the job shortly. My ardour was extinguished when in response to my learned by heart greeting, the old man didn’t say a word, but only nodded his already bowed head. Stepping in, I almost regretted not agreeing to be at home earlier, but the paterfamilias’s actions awakened a spark of hope. And now, I eagerly, of course not expressing my eagerness as much as he had, waited for the savior’s appearance. I was surprised when into the living room entered a puzzled old lady with a phone clumped in her hands. With no doubt, she was his wife, and the word “son” was the only thing that she could say. The phone in her hands, the puzzled look of the spouses, and the following discussion in colorful but still incomprehensible language eloquently explained to me that their son was the one who had made an appointment, and now he was running late and was unavailable.

Not wishing to interrupt their lively conversation, I stared at my phone for the umpteenth time, flipping through the work order. I was listening to them and thought that they, people who had lived their lives, could tell me amazing stories about their country, culture, and places I have never been, but now we were standing in the living room, three victims of the Babylonian tragedy, unable to communicate. At some moment, I noted that I didn’t hear their voices. I looked up from the phone and saw two elderly people looking at me with eyes full of regret and hope.

I suddenly realized that I knew exactly how they felt. The crazy carousel of memories took me back in time twenty years and made me again find myself in Tashkent, numbly standing in front of a convenience store, with a haughty saleswoman who had denied serving me. She ignored me just because I wasn’t talking to her in the Uzbek language, despite the fact that she knew Russian perfectly and used to talk in it. From the very first moment, I couldn’t understand why this was happening. I left, full of frustration. Apparently not the brightest

human being, she thus wished to show her excellence, but she chose for this purpose the wrong tool: language. My comprehension of what had happened came later, of course, and then I felt humiliated.

The comparison of these two situations was hardly exact, but an annoying thought would not leave me. I wouldn't be much better than that brainless saleswoman if I rescheduled the family's appointment and just left, because we could not communicate. Interrupting my memories on that positive note, I smiled, letting them know that I was not going to give up so easily. They smiled back at me, so we started to communicate. Encouraged by the power of body language, I tried to show with fingers that I needed to know spots for three TVs, but stopped short, realizing that I wouldn't be able to explain in the same way about the modem and the computer. But the ideas kept coming, and in a minute, I knew who could help me: the kids. The word itself didn't impress them, but I showed with my hand appropriate height, and the granny understood me first. She obviously shared her discovery with the husband and went out, leaving us alone. It was very interesting to observe the changes of the old man's mood. It seemed that he got very excited and began busily pacing around the house. The old lady was back shortly. She came in followed by a six- to seven-year-old boy, reluctantly trudging behind her, apparently not realizing yet what had caused the adults to interrupt his so much more important activities. I couldn't even guess from where she had borrowed him, but he was the one I needed. We exchanged a few common phrases, and I began to explain and to ask questions. Obviously, it was fun watching us from the side. The little captive translator surrounded by three adults standing over him resembled a traffic controller at an intersection, alternately turning to face one of the sides. The little man was quite the smartest and not the least patient. Gradually, realizing the importance of his role, he dutifully followed us around the house, providing our means of communication. Even when all my questions and needs were clarified, he stayed just in case and was rewarded by granny with sweetness.

I was finishing the installation when their son came back home. He apologized and thanked me. Our translator was released home. He looked so proud of himself when we each in turn shook his tiny hand. From the ensuing

conversation, I found out that my customers were originally from Iran and that the parents had come just a few months before to the United States. I told him about myself, and I saw his father's eyes when he translated that me and my wife were born and lived in Tashkent and Samarkand, respectively—very famous places in Muslim world. It looked like he noted something for himself, something that had been matched with the opinion formed before. In these cases, people say, "I knew that."

I didn't need to know Farsi to read it in his eyes. I thought about that case in Tashkent again. Abandoned for many years, the recollection gave me no peace. How much did the 20-year-old situation differ from what had happened today? I found the answer within the historically developed attitude to immigration in this country, which plays a special role. I couldn't say of course that everyone in Uzbekistan or in Russia, where I lived, too, hated strangers, as well as I cannot say that here in the United States, everyone welcomed immigrants. But here, I met a lot of strangers who proudly shared their own or their ancestors' stories of immigration, which I've never seen, neither in Uzbekistan nor in Russia. Moreover, for more than four years in the United States, I never experienced language being used as a factor of the transcendence, and I am happy that it is so, because language remains the communication tool, and not the other way around.

While we were saying goodbye, the granny handed me a bag, which turned out to contain Eastern sweets. I was about to give up, but seeing how she was doing it, I couldn't. The gesture, familiar from childhood, when one hand is attached to the chest in the heart area, always meant that what was being done, was being done wholeheartedly. The body language kept working.

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*Evaluation: Alex's essay reveals his understanding of the challenges that immigrants face in a new country. This is a poignant essay, well-written and convincing.*

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## Potential Reaction Concepts to Study the Reversibility of Sulfonyl Chloride Inhibitors

Kevin Danikowski

Course: Chemistry Research (Chemistry 296)

Instructor: Roger House

Assignment: *Kevin's paper was written as a summary of his time doing background literature investigation for a project he would later undertake. His goal was to understand the previous relevant work that had been done, as well as the potential problems. This paper set the stage for a future investigation he would carry out in our laboratory as part of his undergraduate research project.*

Sulfonyl chlorides ( $R-SO_2Cl$ ) are useful substrates for modern enzymatic reactions; they possess similar properties to their sulfonyl fluoride counterparts, which are recognized as “privileged warheads” in modern biochemical studies.<sup>1</sup> Both allow for nucleophilic attack on the sulfur group similar to that of a carbonyl ( $C=O$ ). As a result, they may also function as potent inhibitors of biochemical pathways involving enzymes that use hydroxyl groups (a potential nucleophile) in their mechanism of action such as serine or threonine proteases.<sup>1</sup>

Reactions of sulfonyl fluorides with proteins are, for the most part, irreversible. Irreversibly inhibiting proteins in the body results in a new protein-inhibitor complex as “foreign,” causing the liver to attempt to clear the waste and possibly leading to hepatotoxicity.<sup>2,3</sup> As a result, there may be a use for more reversibly active inhibitors with modes of action similar to sulfonyl fluorides. *Silvastat*, a sulfonyl-based irreversible inhibitor, is currently the only FDA approved drug on the market for emphysema, although many reversible small molecule inhibitors are being researched.<sup>4</sup> Another interesting avenue for study is the placement of steric hindrance (crowding) on the inhibitor molecule adjacent to the active site. This is a variable which can affect the binding reversibility and effectiveness of the drug.

The installation of a sulfonyl chloride moiety onto benzene allows for diverse subsequent substitution of other groups, i.e. the enzyme, in place of chlorine. Placing large groups adjacent to the  $-SO_2Cl$  group may be difficult due to the steric interference of the large sulfonyl chloride.<sup>5</sup> Analogously, substitution of the sulfonyl chloride moiety onto a substituted aromatic ring may also be difficult; large groups, such as *tert*-butyl ( $-C(CH_3)_3$ ) may hinder the ability of the sulfonyl group to substitute on the ring.<sup>5</sup> In my project, installation of a sulfonyl chloride adjacent to two *tert*-butyl groups was desired to study the effect of the additional steric hindrance on the reversibility of the enzyme inhibition reaction.

Possible methods for the installation of a sulfonyl chloride between two *tert*-butyl groups (fig. 1) include diazotization followed by a Sandmeyer-type reaction, or the reaction with concentrated chlorosulfonic acid. Starting with 1,3,5-tri-*tert*-butylbenzene will ensure a single site of reaction.

## Potential Reaction Concepts to Study the Reversibility of Sulfonyl Chloride Inhibitors

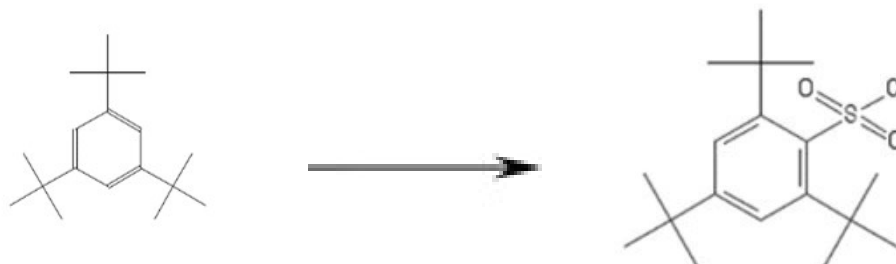


Fig. 1. Intended reaction using either method.

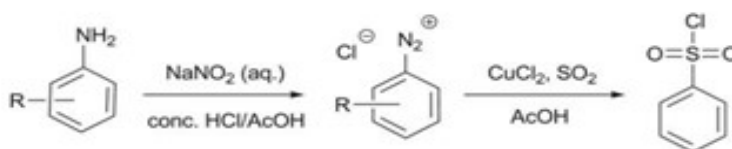


Fig 2. Chlorosulfo-de-diazotisation reaction (R could potentially be 1,3,5 *tert*-butyl substituents), from Malet-Sanz, *et al.* 2010.

For diazotization, the reaction begins with 2,4,6-*tert*-butylaniline, to which would be added aqueous concentrated NaNO<sub>2</sub>, concentrated HCl, and acetic acid (AcOH). This mixture should produce 2,4,6-tri-*tert*-butyldiazoniumbenzene. That product would next be added to saturated SO<sub>2</sub> in AcOH containing 0.2-0.4 mol% CuCl<sub>2</sub>. Previous studies generate yields on the order of 70-90%, but without the presence of *tert*-butyl groups (fig. 2).<sup>6</sup> The reaction concept is illustrated below.

The second route involved the creation of the [SO<sub>2</sub>Cl]<sup>+</sup> electrophile from chlorosulfonic acid (HSO<sub>3</sub>Cl) by self-protonation and the elimination of water.<sup>5</sup> Addition of three equivalents of chlorosulfonic acid to 1,3,5-tri-*tert*-butylbenzene at very low temperature was expected to produce the desired product. However, chromatographic analysis of the product mixture using this method on a 1,3,5-triisopropyl starting material showed minimal success.<sup>5</sup> To our knowledge there is no published literature for the reaction of chlorosulfonic acid with 1,3,5-tri-*t*-butylbenzene.

Unexpected problems in this reaction seem to involve de-alkylation and subsequent rearrangement

due to instability from steric effects; the rearrangement tends to favor the di-alkylated product over the tri-alkylated product.<sup>5</sup> The rearrangement has been shown to de-alkylate 100% of the tri-isopropyl product in 60-80 minutes.<sup>5</sup> Tri-*tert*-butyl alkylation in our lab rendered a half-life of only 10-30 minutes. Additionally, yields were never more than 50%. The crowding effects may be too great to isolate this compound to store for any large amount of time, yet immediate purification may be possible. Our attempts at purification of the tri-*tert*-butyl product proved unsuccessful; however, novel future attempts may prove promising if they can be done rapidly and the product can be further reacted immediately.

There are possible avenues to consider when attempting to halt the reaction at the tri-alkylated product: de-acidifying the mix, lowering the equivalents of chlorosulfonic acid, and adding a drying agent. All attempts in our lab were unsuccessful after a total of 8 reaction variations using methods described above. The greatest success at increasing the half-life and subsequent yield was with the addition of Na<sub>2</sub>CO<sub>3</sub> and ZnCl<sub>2</sub> to the solid 1,3,5-*tert*-butylbenzene before the addition of one



equivalent of liquid chlorosulfonic acid. Novel attempts at these variations may still be made.

In conclusion, there are methods to assess the ability of steric effects as potential novel solutions to irreversible mechanism of action induced hepatotoxicity; however, using *tert*-butyl moieties adjacent to a sulfonyl chloride may prove unsuccessful if the product cannot be isolated and used in a reasonable time frame.

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Evaluation: *The strength of Kevin's piece is how succinctly he conveys his understanding of the previous research and the difficulties to be expected in carrying out his eventual work. Many students who write in our chemistry classes boost word count in their writing by including irrelevant information, too much information, or just fluffing it up with unnecessary words, frequently because of the (poor) advice given in previous courses. My advice to students is to remember that every word costs money, and they need to save as much money as possible. Kevin's work does that beautifully without sacrificing rigor or necessary information.*

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# The Ethics of Deafness

*Ryan Eberhardt*

Course: Philosophy 115 (Ethics)

Instructor: John Garcia

Assignment: *The assignment was to write a two- to three-page paper on a selected case study in ethics.*

In 2001, Sharon Duchesneau and Candace McCullough sought a sperm donation from a deaf donor with a family history of deafness. Both women were deaf since birth, and they sought to increase their chances of having a deaf child. Furthermore, when their child was born with complete loss of hearing in one ear and severe loss in the other, the couple denied him treatments that might allow him to hear, saying they would allow him to choose for himself whether he would like to hear when he is older.

This raises a difficult question: Should parents be able to genetically select for deafness, and if children are born deaf, should parents be allowed to deny their children treatment? In order to properly answer this question, we must consider the harms and benefits of deafness, particularly as it relates to deaf parents having deaf children, and we must consider the issue of autonomy, both for the parents and for the children. In this paper, I will argue that deaf parents should be able to genetically select for deafness and should be able to deny hearing aids and implants while their children are young. The harms of deafness are not sufficient to view deafness as strictly harmful, preventing parents from having deaf children infringes on the autonomy of parents more than it does on the autonomy of the children.

In considering this issue, we must first consider the harms and benefits of deafness. Deafness is widely seen as a disability and is listed as such in the Individuals with Disabilities Act. It creates potential safety issues; for example, deaf people may not hear fire alarms or other safety alarms, deaf pedestrians may not hear oncoming vehicles, and deaf drivers may not hear horns or emergency vehicles. Additionally, deafness may impair development in children; deafness makes it difficult for children to communicate and may cause other developmental issues. In *Seeing Voices*, Oliver Sacks offered evidence that if a young child's ability to communicate is compromised, other areas of development are also compromised: "If communication goes awry, it will affect intellectual growth, social intercourse, language development, and emotional attitudes, all at once, simultaneously and inseparably" (Schilling and DeJesus). In 2007, only 8% of California deaf students scored proficient or advanced on the California Standards Test for English Language Arts, and only 10% of deaf students scored proficient or

advanced for Mathematics (Qi and Mitchell). Besides developmental challenges, hearing-impaired children report more symptoms of depression than their hearing peers, (Theunissen et al) and hearing-impaired adults face more limited job prospects (Walter and Dirmeyer).

The benefits of deafness at birth may be less concrete but are no less significant. Those who are born deaf often experience increased sensitivity in sight, touch, or smell; a deaf child's brain rewires itself to use auditory parts of the brain to process other senses (Bates). This enables the deaf to perceive sensations that the hearing miss, and it gives deaf people a more intense focus, free of auditory distractions. Anecdotal evidence points to a sharpened perception of other people; one deaf individual wrote, "I feel my hearing disability has enabled me to become a good listener" (Berke). Many deaf individuals believe signing to be a more expressive and efficient mode of communication than spoken language. A deaf football team from Little Rock used signing to quickly communicate with each other across the field without needing to worry about noise or being within shouting range (Lawrence). Finally, although the deaf have a more difficult time communicating with the hearing, deaf individuals often report feeling much more intimate with other people in the small deaf community.

Because it is difficult for deaf individuals to function in the same way as hearing individuals, many are quick to classify deafness as a crippling disability, and therefore argue that parents should not be allowed to genetically select for a deaf child. However, we should consider whether the deaf are any more disabled than the hearing, or if the two simply function differently. The aforementioned harms present significant challenges for a deaf individual, but a deaf person also has abilities and strengths that those with hearing lack. Additionally, while the benefits of deafness are unique to the "disabled," the challenges that the deaf face are increasingly mitigated with advancing technology. The issue of fire safety, for example, is reduced by using fire alarms that flash in addition to beeping; a study for the United States Fire Administration found that with appropriate technology and training, "[d]eaf and hard-of-hearing people are just as capable as the hearing community when it comes to fire safety" ("Fire Risks"). The proliferation of the Internet and online education has made it possible to accommodate students on a more individual level and to better meet the

needs of students that cannot communicate aurally. In the future, augmented reality technology may be used to recognize speech and display sign language on a screen, or to recognize audio cues (such as sirens) and convert them to visual or tactile cues.

The autonomy of the parents and children should also be considered in reviewing this case. Opponents of genetic selection for deafness may argue that it violates the autonomy of the child, who has no say in whether he or she should be deaf. However, this is not different from many other factors determined at birth that children have no say in; for example, a child born African American may face many challenges because of his skin color, but he has no say in that, either. Opponents of denying hearing assistive technologies such as hearing aids or implants may argue that in keeping a child deaf, a parent robs him of the ability to hear in the future, since his brain will develop such that the auditory cortex is repurposed for other senses. While this is true, the weight of this argument depends on how severe of a disadvantage deafness is, and I have argued that deafness is not a severe disadvantage. Denying assistive technologies, then, could be loosely compared to raising children in a particular culture; a child will grow up adopting certain beliefs, customs, and practices that he or she has no say in. The child without hearing aids simply develops a different style of living.

On the other hand, preventing deaf parents from using genetic selection to produce deaf children would significantly violate the autonomy of the parents. Parents have the right to procreate and to influence the traits of their offspring in choosing a mate. If a woman should be prohibited from selecting a deaf man as a sperm donor, why should she not be prohibited from selecting a deaf man as a husband? Prohibiting her from selecting a deaf man as a husband would significantly infringe on her autonomy in choosing a spouse of her desire; likewise, prohibiting her from selecting a deaf man as a sperm donor infringes on her autonomy in influencing her offspring. Likewise, parents should have the autonomy to raise their children in the way they deem best. Insisting that a parent use assistive technologies to help a deaf child would violate the deaf parent's autonomy to raise the child to be like him or her.

The case of Duchesneau and McCullough presents a difficult question: Should parents be able to, in a sense, cripple their own children? In examining this case, we

## The Ethics of Deafness

must be careful to consider whether the deaf are truly more disabled than the hearing. Deafness has many harms for a child, but it also has unique benefits, and the harms are being continually mitigated by advancements in technology. As such, I argue that genetically selecting for deafness and denying assistive technologies is not crippling children. Additionally, although selecting for deafness and denying hearing aids might infringe on the autonomy of the child, the violation is trivial compared to the violation of the parents' autonomy from disallowing genetic selection or mandating usage of assistive technologies. As such, deaf parents should be allowed to use genetic selection for deafness and should not be required to provide deaf children with assistive technologies.

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*Evaluation: Students are evaluated on this assignment based on the clarity of their writing, the depth of their analysis, and their ability to see counterarguments to their position. Ryan's essay excels in all of these regards. It should be noted that this essay is also exceptionally well-researched even though research was not a requirement of the assignment.*

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# Cash Is King

Marco Enea

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

*Assignment: Write an autobiographical essay about a time in which you were engaged in a struggle with forces much greater than yourself. Try to write in a way that leaves a meaningful record of your life, from which readers might benefit.*

As I emerged from the subway on that June 2005 day, I was overpowered by a rush of varying emotions. I could feel the heat of the sweltering sun on my skin. The towering skyscrapers of downtown Chicago provided shade, but little relief, as they towered over me like mammoth titans hovering from above. The hustling and bustling of pedestrians and cars whizzing by sent me into an anxious daze. It was my first day as a mortgage broker; as I stood at the front doors of my new office building, I took a deep breath and gathered my composure. The cramped elevator ride seemed to last an eternity, as people hopped on and off at varying floors. I finally arrived at the office, eager to put aside the roller coaster of emotions I endured to get there. I opened the glass double doors with child-like enthusiasm, ready to tackle this new and exciting endeavor.

There are moments in time, that when looked back on, can be pictured as if they happened mere seconds ago. That is exactly how I remember walking into that office for the first time. I felt the energy radiating from the doors as if an atom bomb had just exploded in front of me. The boisterous sound of people talking to each other and to clients on the phone was at a decibel level that I had never been exposed to before. As I turned my head, I could see television monitors all tuned into Bloomberg and CNBC as brokers closely monitored interest rates. Secretaries were handing off documents as if they were in a relay race. Every desk was full of brokers on the phone, seemingly oblivious to any outside noise.

After navigating that treacherous terrain, I finally

made it to my desk. There, I was greeted by my senior mortgage broker, Rob, who also happens to be my cousin. Every new mortgage broker is assigned a senior mortgage broker to look after them and show them the ropes. Still reeling from the sensory overload inflicted on me by my journey to my desk, Rob's voice finally began to come in clearer. His opening words of guidance were straightforward, but they would set the tone for the coming years: "It's really simple, all you have to remember is that cash is king!" Noticing the perplexed look on my face, he started to explain the basic principles of cash out home refinancing. "Any piece of real estate with a mortgage can have money drawn from its equity under the following caveats: the property is worth more than the balance of the mortgage and/or the owners are employed and do not carry a lot of debt. So long as those basic criteria are met, the owner can pull money from the equity built up in the property," he rambled off from memory with ease, like someone remembering his or her own birthday. "You'll get the hang of it in no time, just keep selling them on the cash out, it's easy, like dangling a carrot in front of a rabbit!" chuckling at his own remark. So, on his advice, it was full steam ahead!

After months of training and learning the industry, I was able to get into a groove. It was a couple of years later now and life was good, I was making good money and having fun. I could pay all my bills with plenty of money to spare to splurge on life's finer things. There was no limit to how much money I could drop on a new pair of shoes or an evening out at the club. It was an empowering experience. All-in-all, it was not too bad for a 26-year-old who did not have the burden of mounting bills or being responsible for a family. I was coasting along smoothly like a private jet in clear skies. My youthful naivety made me feel like it would last forever, but fate would prove otherwise. There was no way I could conceive just how violent and severe the turbulence ahead of me would be.

The warnings that signaled the beginning of the end became apparent in late 2007. On a mundane Tuesday afternoon, Mr. Steven Chase was the name scribbled on the lead sheet that was dropped on my desk. As I glanced at the lead, I could see Mr. Chase, a union carpenter, was married with a son. Mr. Chase made a decent living; he

was just looking to lower his monthly mortgage payment and save some money.

The hours between 12 and 5 pm at my office would always be the calm before the storm, as if someone pressed the pause button on the orchestrated chaos. It was the ideal time to scheme a plan of attack and structure a proposal to present to Mr. Chase. “Alive at five! Alive at five!” the frantic voice could be heard all over the office, through intercoms like a siren. Brokers awoke from their daze and scrambled to reach their phones. Five o’clock is prime time in sales, the optimal chance to reach potential new clients at home. Like any other day at five o’clock, I too would hit the phones, this time looking to reach out to Mr. Chase to pitch him the proposal I had meticulously crafted earlier.

During an introductory phone conversation with Mr. Chase, I got to learn more about him, his family, and their financial needs. I was able to persuade him into an in-person meeting with him and his wife. I arrived at their home shortly after 6 pm; it was your typical Chicago-style bungalow nestled in the quaint suburb of Oak Park, just outside of the city. I walked into the home, dodging the minefield of children’s toys as we made our way to the dining room table. There, I had the opportunity to meet with him and his wife, and I got to understand their financial needs better. He explained that they wanted to cash out the equity on their home to pay off credit cards and make some minor home improvements. I described to them their options and they felt it was best to take out about \$50,000 with a five-year adjustable-rate mortgage. Adjustable-rate mortgages are loans that have fixed interest rates for only a few years, as opposed to the conventional 30-year fixed-rate mortgage.

Towards the end of Mr. Chase’s loan process, he reached out to me by phone. I could hear the urgency in his voice: “Marco! You gotta get me more than the 50K!!” I could almost feel his heart beating through the phone. Taken back by this once calm, mild-mannered man, I told him we were already pretty far along and that this would only delay things. “I don’t care! I need 85K now! I need it! Whatever it takes, you hear me? Whatever it takes!” he shouted into my ear. The next thing I heard is the dial tone as he ended the call abruptly. Shaken from the call, I headed over to see Rob to explain the situation. “The

man wants more money, give him more money. Plus, you can charge more now so take advantage of it. Like I said, cash is king,” he expressed nonchalantly. After pondering over the details with the loan processor and the bank, I was able to get the extra cash approved. Feeling weary of the situation, I got in touch with Mrs. Chase, in the hopes that her calmer voice could lift the strain I was feeling. The conversation that ensued startled me, as she would go on to detail her husband’s addiction to gambling. I sensed the quiver in her voice, tears about to run down her face, as she pleaded with me to help them. “Our family needs your help” she told me repeatedly. About a few weeks later, I closed their deal, and at the closing, Mrs. Chase gave me a hug and thanked me while Mr. Chase shook my hand, unable to look me in the eye. I do not know if he was embarrassed or hated the fact that his wife had let me in on his dirty secret.

As the leaves on trees changed colors and the air had a shivery bite to it, the winds of change were blowing through in the fall of 2008. Throughout the year, there were rumblings in the mortgage industry that the so-called real estate “bubble” was about to burst. The decadent lifestyle that many in the industry had grown accustomed to was about to come crumbling down, and there was no stopping it. The multi-million-dollar homes were being foreclosed on, exotic sports cars repossessed, and fancy European holidays were about to be a thing of the past. It didn’t matter how many commas or zeros were in a person’s bank account, this storm was coming. October, the month of Halloween, would become more terrifying than any haunted house I could ever visit.

Walking into the office had become a surreal experience. What were once slam dunk deals would get denied almost instantly. It had become a daily occurrence to find out which bank was filing for bankruptcy or was being absorbed by another. Brokers who were always on the phone dealing with clients were now anchored to TV monitors. Everyone would watch as the news forecast a grim new reality. The once highly visible and charismatic owners of my company were nowhere in sight. The “open door” policy to their offices was seemingly over, as now they kept their doors shut to the outside world. Anxiety covered the air like a thick black cloud; productivity had come to a screeching halt. All deals in the pipeline were

terminated, and we were not accepting any new business. Rumors quickly spread throughout the company that it was going to be shutting down.

Banks made it nearly impossible to get approved for a home loan by drastically cutting financing. That led to mortgage companies across America permanently closing their doors, and my company was no exception to this rule. Every day I would be at my desk, waiting to be summoned to my manager's office. I and my fellow brokers would huddle up in groups venting our frustrations and sharing our concerns collectively. "I have kids, man! What the hell am I going to do?" a colleague spouted; "I have rent due, I'm screwed!" another broker chimed in. The worried looks on their faces gave me a small glimpse into their dread. I was not immune to the frustration; I had my worries as well. I may not have had a family to answer to, but I did have bills and was about to be unemployed.

Seated at my desk, I watched the revolving door of coworkers being escorted out one by one. I was starting to become fully aware that I was next on the Grim Reaper's list. My heart started to beat faster and faster as I could hear my manager's footsteps approaching my desk; the day of reckoning had finally come. He asked me to see him in his office, where he sat me down and explained the current environment and that he had no choice but to let me go. I will never forget how he put it: "It's business, it's not personal." It was hard to not take it personally when my life had just changed in an instant. As I walked out of the office one final time, I looked around at what was once a vibrant, bustling workplace, but which now looked more like an eerie ghost town. Empty desks, silent phones, the TVs normally tuned to the news were black; the few sole remaining stragglers had worried looks on their faces. Standing outside of the building, I gazed upwards, no longer in awe, but in disappointment of what could have been.

Months went by, and unable to find employment, I found myself seeking help at the unemployment office. Standing in line with the other poor souls in the same predicament as me, I looked to my left and who did I see sitting in a chair: Mrs. Chase. I walked over to say hello, and after exchanging pleasantries, she began to tell me how she had left her job and Mr. Chase. She told me he had taken the money from the refinancing of their home

and gambled it all away on horses. "It was never enough for him, he wanted more, and now he has nothing," she said through tears. It was hardly surprising, given the urgency with which I recalled Mr. Chase calling me to ask for more money. Speaking with Rob later that night, I told him what I learned. "It's no joke out here," he said, "Everywhere you go there's despair, I don't know how I'm going to pay my mortgage this month." He told me he had heard our former bosses all had their fancy sports cars repossessed, and one of our co-workers had to get a job at McDonald's because he couldn't find one anywhere else.

It took a long time for the shock to wear off. I was able to get back on my feet doing odd jobs here and there. After years of miscellaneous work without a real career in sight, it hit me; I needed a higher education. That time in my life helped mold me into who I am today. There's no such thing as easy money; you have to work for it. An important lesson I learned was money has a strong effect on people. The more you have, the more you want. Rob was right, cash is king.

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Evaluation: *Marco takes us on a firsthand tour of the collapse of the America mortgage industry in the first decade of the twenty-first century. In this essay, he leaves behind a descriptive and evocative memoir capturing his own and others' plight as they deal with the inherent failures of systems promising "easy money."*

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# We Speak Englishes

*Kaitlyn Etienne*

Course: Linguistics 205 (Language and Culture)

Instructor: Alina Pajtek

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

What does it mean when someone speaks English well? It is normal for one to enjoy listening to an accent, to find certain words charming or antiquated, or to find certain pronunciations “proper” or “improper.” In linguistics, the term variation refers to changes within a language. Language varieties are a natural occurrence and are often influenced by geographical and social factors (Holmes and Wilson 215). Examples of English varieties would be African-American Vernacular English in the US, Australian English, British English, Indian English, and Singlish in Singapore (Holmes and Wilson 84). From a linguistic standpoint, no variety of English is “better” than another (Kirkpatrick qtd. in Wetzl 206). Varieties simply happen as a language is shaped by its speakers over time (Holmes and Wilson 214). It would seem to follow that no one variety of English is inherently better than any other. However, research shows that societal and individual preferences toward varieties of English abound.

English resides alongside Mandarin and Spanish as one of the languages with the highest number of speakers in the world (Eberhard et al.). However, the demographics of these languages’ speakers differ. For example, there are more native speakers of Mandarin than there are native speakers of English, but if one includes non-native speakers, then English is the world’s most spoken language (Eberhard et al.). At a time when the English language is rapidly gaining speakers who know it as their second, third, or even fourth or more language, perceptions are varied concerning what makes a variety of English “good” (Canagarajah 588), and this in turn influences what kind of English students want to know and learn and who they choose to teach them English. Attitudes towards varieties of English shape English as a Second Language (ESL) learners’ preferences towards the variety of English they would like to be known for using, as well as their English proficiency goals.

Research has shown these preferences explicitly expressed by student and teacher comments (He and Zhang 778), as well as stated and implied in the recruitment of English teachers (Ruecker and Ives 742). Meanwhile, students coming from the linguistic majority in a region may hold unconscious biases against speakers of minority varieties of English (Wetzl 213). Biases held by English



learners affect the way a learner views their progress or goal (Espinosa 30; He and Zhang 782). Meanwhile, teachers strive to best equip their students for the future of the language (Canagarajah 591; Wetzl 204). This paper will explore the question of which varieties of English are perceived as desirable among different populations—with a focus on Mandarin-speaking populations—and why; it will examine if promoting these varieties helps or hinders language learning. Finally, it will examine modern strategies for teaching English in an ever-changing world.

One perspective regarding ESL education concerns biases in who is expected or desired to teach the language. In some situations, native-English-speaking teachers (NESTs) are given preference over non-native-English-speaking teachers (NNESTs). This was the case in one study (Ruecker and Ives 740) that examined prejudice against NNESTs in online websites recruiting ESL teachers for work in China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand. Of the 59 websites analyzed by Ruecker and Ives, 81% either implied or stated a native English speaker requirement (Ruecker and Ives 742). Furthermore, the researchers noted the reasons websites gave for having these requirements. Often, the websites would proclaim that they were looking for native speakers of English because that is what students and their parents preferred (Ruecker and Ives 752). While the marketing observed by Ruecker and Ives' study suggests native English speakers are being requested by students, one must ask if this is truly the case and if so, why this preference exists. The results of Ruecker and Ives' study seems to suggest that biases in hiring ESL teachers reflect biases from students and schools.

Demands for certain English teachers could be intertwined with demands for certain varieties of English, namely "standard" varieties. "Standard" varieties of languages are typically those that have been codified, stabilised, and are considered prestigious (Holmes and Wilson 83). Standard English (SE), with its origin in England, is often used as a benchmark for English learners under what have been termed "native speaker models" (He & Zhang 772; Holmes & Wilson 83). Data collected regarding the attitudes of Chinese students and teachers seem to support the notion that SE is preferred over the local variety, Chinese English (CE), with some

limitations. In a study conducted by the researchers He and Zhang, 1,030 participants consisting of students (non-English majors) and English teachers at four Chinese Universities were assessed on their attitudes towards CE and SE (He and Zhang 774). The study found that the majority of students desired to be able to use grammar like a native speaker, and not like the grammar of CE (He and Zhang 779). In an assessment of attitudes when listening to audio recordings of CE and SE, participants rated the SE speaker higher than the CE speaker on positive traits like "friendly," "competent," and "trustworthy" (He and Zhang 780). Both findings seem to suggest a preference for SE. However, interestingly, the study found that the student respondents were far less concerned than the teachers with aiming for native-like pronunciation when speaking English; rather, they indicated that they did not mind having a Chinese accent, as long as they could be understood (He and Zhang 779). Ultimately, this study documented some degree of difference in opinion among the learners and the teachers when it comes to a preferred variety of English. Perhaps the students were more comfortable with the more vernacular form of English (CE) because they were interested in using it in "real-life" situations, while the teachers were focused on its use in "academic" situations, where SE is more often the benchmark. This notion is supported by various other case studies of students whose comfort with the use of SE in the classroom differs from their comfort with the use of vernacular English varieties outside of it (Canagarajah 591-592). Potential differences in opinion over what type of English should be taught in schools may be due to different expectations about the domains in which it is expected to be used.

The attitudes of the students in He and Zhang's study differed slightly from those of their teachers, but they show similarity to the perspectives of some linguists who also argue that English is being used for new purposes in the context of international communication. Typically, these linguists are considering contexts where English serves as a lingua franca, or "a regular means of communication between different linguistic groups in a multilingual speech community" (Holmes and Wilson 86). As a lingua franca, English can be used as a sort of trade language within a group of non-native English

speakers. As these scenarios become more common, some linguists suggest it is entirely possible for students learning to use English for the purpose of international communication to innovate and make the language their own, rather than trying to emulate native-English speakers (Espinosa 13). This approach seems like it would resonate with the students' responses in He and Zhang's study because it considers the domain in which the English will be used. However, there is still the issue of needing to be understood by the other ESL speakers. What are the major aspects of the English language that need to be in place for it to still be widely understood? In response to this question, the researcher Jenkins proposed the Lingua Franca Core (LFC) (Jenkins qtd. in Espinosa 14). The LFC is a set of language features that are necessary for communication between non-native speakers in English (Espinosa 14). This includes vowel and consonant pronunciation (Espinosa 14-15). It is clear linguists have examined this issue in quite some detail, and the findings further support the students' attitudes in He and Zhang's study. As the number of "non-native" English speakers grows to eventually outnumber the number of "native" speakers, some English users are embracing their local English varieties more, realizing there are many more speakers than there were before (Canagarajah 589). With English's increasing use as a lingua franca, the contexts and needs of its users are also changing, in turn affecting perceptions of whether varieties like CE are acceptable or preferable to learn in school.

While He and Zhang's study suggested that perhaps more diverse viewpoints exist among the student body and that may allow for the inclusion of some CE features in the curriculum (He and Zhang 785), there is still the fact that some recruitment for ESL teachers appears to target certain varieties of English speakers. The data in Ruecker and Ives' study seem to suggest that native-English speaking teachers are still in high demand in the Asian countries studied. The websites they analyzed typically stated teachers must hold a passport from one of the following countries: United States, Canada, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and occasionally South Africa (Ruecker and Ives 743). Most of these countries are considered to be "traditional bases of English" (Bhatt 529); however, Ruecker and Ives' list

pales in comparison to the much larger lists of countries where English has an official status, one of which includes forty-four entries (Bhatt 531). Assuming that the websites are trying to fill positions based on consumer demand, it seems clear that bias toward varieties of English exists, and it is creating a demand for native speakers using what are perhaps considered more traditional or "standard" varieties from a relatively small list of countries.

Additional data from Ruecker and Ives' study suggests further reasons why the varieties of English from these "traditional base" countries hold prestige over others. In their analysis of websites, they found that most videos on the site featured teachers who appeared to be of white ethnicity (Ruecker and Ives 749), thus portraying a stereotype of a white ESL teacher in an Asian country. Other Asian countries, such as the Philippines and India, where English holds an official status and is used in school, were excluded from the advertisements for ESL teachers (Ruecker and Ives 743). The "traditional base" countries targeted by the websites are not only known for using certain varieties of English, but for certain ethnicities, specifically those who have held power and dominance. Not only do these countries enjoy economic and political power, but their dominance also extends to linguistic power and the status their varieties of English enjoy on the world stage compared to those newer varieties of English in non-white-majority countries. When considering worldwide perceptions of what it means to be a "good" English speaker, one must consider not only language features, but also the social and political power implied using a particular variety of English.

Although the majority-white countries sought after for ESL teachers may be looked at as somewhat homogenous by outsiders, there exists a lot of linguistic variation within these countries, and biases as well. It is estimated that 21.9% of people living in the US speak a language other than English at home ("Language Spoken at Home") and established vernacular varieties of English such as African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) are also used. Linguists have long noted that preferences exist in the US, Great Britain, and other "traditional base" countries. For example, there is an ongoing debate in the US about whether AAVE, which contains structural patterns not found in Standard American English (SAE),

is acceptable for use in an academic setting (Holmes and Wilson 440). This variety, while a language in its own right, does not have the same social status of SAE. This is similar to the way preferences and prejudices exist for varieties of English spoken around the world. Some linguists refer to newer varieties as “World Englishes,” meaning to emphasize that “they are languages in their own right and do not have to be measured by the yardstick of more established varieties” (Wetzl 205). However, the way users of World English (WE) are viewed by their peers in settings where most people are speaking an SE variety does not always reflect this notion. Cultural and social factors again play a role in how these varieties are sometimes perceived when their speakers are in the minority.

Not only are biases present among those who grew up speaking English as their first language, but research suggests that some of the bias held by users of “standard” English against WE may be unconscious (Wetzl 214). One study conducted by Wetzl explored attitudes among US university students assessed toward WE and American English (AE) writing samples (Wetzl 214). The students assessed were attending English composition courses at a school in northeast Ohio and were mostly users of AE (Wetzl 2013). On average, when the students in Wetzl’s study were presented with WE samples, they rated them as lower quality and less comprehensible than AE samples (Wetzl 214). What is fascinating about this study is that the students had been told that all the samples had been written by WE users; they could not have knowingly singled out the AE writing, but rather may have been affected by unconscious biases (Wetzl 214). If negative biases truly do exist among AE users and towards WE users, this further complicates the issue of what “speaking English well” (or in the students’ case, writing English well) means. If the users of the English varieties that already hold power and prestige feel that that prestige is warranted, one can assume that it would be more difficult for those varieties held in less high esteem to gain acceptance.

Different cultures hold English to different standards, and linguists argue these preferences may have an impact on students acquiring the language, affecting their confidence and willingness to learn (Canagarajah

591). In considering the impact that a bias toward native speaker pronunciation could have on ESL learners, Espinosa asserts that “The pursuit of [native-speaker] perfection may...actually discourage learners from using English at all” (30). Returning to He and Zhang’s study, a similar sentiment was addressed by one of the English teachers interviewed. When asked about how to improve teaching English to their Chinese students, the teacher said the following:

“Personally, I think it might be a better choice if... we can also accept students’ Chinese way of English speaking...One of the merits of this model lies in the fact that ‘China English’ might be easier for China’s English learners to acquire. Besides, students will be more self-confident and relaxed when speaking English if they know they do not necessarily need to speak it as rigidly as in Standard Englishes just like American or British people, and it is ok for them to speak in a Chinese manner.” (qtd. in He and Zhang 783)

The teacher is promoting incorporating CE into the classroom because it may make students more comfortable than expecting them to use native-speaker pronunciation. These statements are further supported by research that suggests that students learn English best when they are able to use it in their own way, in a sense, that “taking ownership of English...helps develop fluency in English” (Canagarajah 592). If this is the case, it seems that biases held against WE could put learners at a disadvantage, opening them up to criticism as they struggle to reach the difficult goal of speaking English the way a person from a country other than their own does.

From the studies reviewed, it is clear that learners and teachers hold biases both negative and positive toward different varieties of English. While these biases arise for various reasons, they may have some negative outcomes—not only for English learners, but also for “native” English speakers. As the number of English users around the world rises, the demographics of its speakers are changing, causing the language to change as well. The researcher Canagarajah argues that due to the increasing globalization of the world as well as the rise of the Internet, English speakers who grew up speaking only

English as their first language may be at a disadvantage moving forward, as they are faced with tasks that involve interacting with English speakers from all over the world in their daily lives and online (Canagarajah 589-591). These English speakers presumably speak multiple languages, with English not necessarily being their first language, and because of their bilingualism, they may be more skilled in conversational tasks such as negotiating for meaning (Canagarajah 591). For these reasons, proper education about language variation and WE could potentially serve as an asset to students from “traditional base” countries, allowing them to expand their knowledge of the English language as it applies to an international setting.

Some English teachers recognize that an education inclusive of WE may serve students from “traditional base” countries well. Part of this education goes back to perhaps addressing the unconscious biases that exist towards WE. Returning to Wetzl’s study of US college students’ attitudes towards WE writing, part of her research included providing an experimental group of students with a two-week intervention, exposing them to concepts of linguistic diversity, WE, and language variation (Wetzl 211). Wetzl found that this experimental group showed an increased awareness of linguistic bias, and their perception of the WE writing samples improved after the intervention (Wetzl 217). This study is promising and shows that intentional education has the potential to gradually change perceptions of English users from “traditional base” countries. Improving education about WE may be one way to challenge perceptions of certain varieties of English as “good” or “bad,” allowing for more acceptance of linguistic diversity and creativity.

The education students receive helps to shape their worldview. Likewise, the English education one receives has the potential to shape a student’s perception of what “correct” and “incorrect” English looks and sounds like. After all, school is where we are taught about the kind of language required for scholarly work. Some linguists have asserted that teachers requiring their students to use only a certain variety of a language are, in a sense, further contributing to the notion that certain varieties are “better” than others (Canagarajah 587). However, we have to question how teachers can encourage their students in good conscience to use a less prestigious

variety of English, knowing it is stigmatized and they may be left at a disadvantage later on in life if they do not at least know how to use the more prestigious variety (Canagarajah 596-597). This is one of the positions that Canagarajah responds to in his analysis of the place of WE in composition (Canagarajah 597). Considering there are certain varieties that still hold linguistic power in some domains such as academia, one could imagine that changing perceptions of these prestige varieties’ users could have the positive outcome of allowing newer varieties of English to gain prestige (Canagarajah 611-612). Canagarajah asserts that a scholarly text that “code-meshes” (Canagarajah 598) or uses different varieties of English at the same time can help to shift scholars’ perspectives of what kind of English is acceptable in the academic realm (Canagarajah 599). While making a bold proclamation, Canagarajah admits that this is difficult even for himself to do, saying, “Throughout my life, I have been so disciplined about censoring even the slightest traces of Sri Lankan English in my own academic writing that it is difficult to bring them into the text now” (Canagarajah 613). Even researchers planning for a future more inclusive of English diversity must admit that social and cultural factors are strong influencers of language. Biases and widely held opinions about “academic” and “vernacular” English still control what varieties are used in what domains.

This overview of recent research suggests that changing demographics of English’s users and speakers are in turn changing the language. As English is used more and more as a lingua franca, assumptions about what English is “supposed” to sound or look like are being re-examined. A select few varieties—namely those of politically and economically powerful cultures—continue in a sense to hold more prestige in certain domains, while in others, local varieties gain recognition and prestige (Canagarajah 589). Researchers suggest that knowledge of English’s linguistic diversity is beneficial. This is true both for both English learners, who may embrace and take ownership of a vernacular variety, aiding their acquisition, as well as for “native speakers” who can better prepare themselves to engage with an international audience (Canagarajah 590-59; Wetzl 204). This paper has focused on a few scenarios, and while one cannot assume that all

individuals or cultures hold the same beliefs, one can take these studies as indications of potential trends to consider in select domains, geographic areas, and contexts. Taking Canagarajah's suggestions into consideration, perhaps someday in the future, a term paper like this, written for a college course in the US, could take advantage of nuances in Ghanaian, West Indian, and Philippine English, thus beginning to take on a look that is more and more reflective of the true diversity of this global language.

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Evaluation: *This paper explores Mandarin-speaking students and teachers' bias toward varieties of English and implications for the teaching of English as a foreign language. The author focuses primarily on negative bias toward non-native English speakers and positive bias toward varieties of English spoken in countries that hold prestige, power, and economic wealth. Through this well-researched paper, Kaitlyn makes a strong argument in support of world Englishes and non-mainstream varieties of English by discussing the use of English as a lingua franca these days and the constant change in demographics of English speakers around the world.*

## Vulnerability and Connection in Women's Relationships with Men: The Short Stories of Lara Vapnyar

Abigail Flanagan

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

Assignment: *Write a research paper on a work or works of literature that we read for class, and make effective use of at least seven secondary sources in the paper.*

“A Bunch of Broccoli on the Third Shelf” is a short story by Lara Vapnyar that examines the oppressive solitude the main character experiences when she begins to feel inadequate in her relationship with her husband. The story takes place in New York, two years after the main character, Nina, and her husband have emigrated from Russia. Nina spends her weekends buying vegetables, but instead of ever cooking them, she attends parties at her husband’s friend’s apartment. For most of the story, Nina struggles with feeling that she is not good enough for her husband since she doesn’t share his love of music and poetry, as the women at the party do. After Nina’s husband leaves her in the later part of the story, Nina attends another party and meets Andrei, a man who also loves vegetables. At the end of the story, Andrei teaches Nina how to cook vegetables for the very first time. “Puffed Rice and Meatballs” was also written by Lara Vapnyar, and it tells the story of a Russian woman whose traumatic childhood experiences have shaped her into a closed-off and suspicious person. At the beginning of the story, the main character, Katya, decides to share a story about growing up in Communist Russia, at the request of her new lover. Instead of telling him about the hardships she experienced, as he requested, Katya decides to come up with a modified story of her first sexual experience. The story amuses her lover, but it leaves Katya feeling ashamed and horrified that she edited a sobering experience into a light-hearted tale. Later, Katya begins to reminisce about another disturbing experience she had while living in Russia, this time with a man who forcibly grabbed her

and used her as a battering ram inside a grocery store riot. The story concludes with Katya peering into tea leaves in search of a man who will someday understand her, but finding nothing. “A Bunch of Broccoli on the Third Shelf” and “Puffed Rice and Meatballs” both demonstrate the struggles women can experience in relationships with men. While Nina is an insecure and lonely woman who feels disconnected from her husband and alone in her desires, Katya is a shame-filled, distrusting woman who struggles to connect with men emotionally because of the trauma she experienced in the past. Both stories showcase the loneliness the main characters experience and the negative impact their lack of vulnerability causes. Misty K. Hook and colleagues inspect intimacy in their article, “How Close Are We? Measuring Intimacy and Examining Gender Differences”:

A fourth ingredient of intimacy is self-disclosure. An intimate relationship cannot exist if the participants refuse to reveal parts of themselves. Self-disclosure encourages love, liking, caring, trust, and understanding (Hatfield & Rapson, 1993). The level of intimacy reached with a given relationship seems to depend on the kind of information disclosed. (463)

As both stories show, each main character seems to want a deep connection to the men in her life, but neither character is willing to disclose her inner thoughts or desires.

In “A Bunch of Broccoli on the Third Shelf,” Nina buys and fantasizes about vegetables that she never actually cooks. Her interest began when Nina and her husband emigrated from Russia to New York two years earlier. On their second day in New York, Nina and her husband go into a small Korean grocery store, where Nina finds herself entranced by the variety of vegetables. She notices the SUNRIPE brand tomatoes and thinks about how they, “reminded her of her family’s tiny vegetable garden when she was little. Nina wanted to touch the tomatoes in the box, hoping that their surface would still be a little warm from the sun that shined on them while they ripened. She was reaching for one when her husband dragged her away to another store” (Vapnyar 5). In this scene, Nina is dreaming about home. She feels homesick and is comforted by the happy memories the tomatoes

invoke. But instead of telling her husband her thoughts about it, she allows him to pull her away. Nina doesn't try to see if her husband would support her interest, but she decides to keep it to herself. The story goes on to say that from that day forth, Nina chooses to shop alone for vegetables on Saturdays. This demonstrates two issues that Nina faces in her relationship to her husband: she feels unworthy of her husband's affection, and she doesn't feel connected enough to him to share her inner world with him. The article, "Self-Disclosure in Personal Relationships" discusses the reasons why someone may not open up to a partner:

The self-focused reasons for nondisclosure deal with the psychological and physical costs based on divulging personal information and include fear of rejection and possible loss of privacy. Other-focused reasons for nondisclosure include the perception that the other person cannot or will not be helpful and protecting the relationship partner from being hurt or upset. Relationship-focused reasons include losing the relationship, dissimilarity, a superficial relationship, or the information is not significant or relevant for the relationship. (Greene et al.)

Although the story never mentions why Nina is reluctant to share her hobbies with her husband, it could be that she fears rejection, particularly because she feels unworthy of her husband and feels disconnected from him. This creates a hostile environment for vulnerability.

Instead of cooking vegetables on the weekend, as Nina desires, she concedes to her husband's wishes and accompanies him to a party at his friend Pavlik's apartment. Once inside, Nina begins to compare herself to the other guests and feels shame that she does not fit in with them or their interests. She notices that the women there, "... were attractive but in a wrong, unpleasant way. They were thin and sophisticated, with straight hair and strong hands with long powerful fingers, toughened by playing either the piano or the guitar. They had soulful eyes, sad from all the poetry they read, and wore expressions of eternal fatigue. They had everything that Nina lacked" (Vapnyar 10). Nina envies the women at the party because they understand poetry and music, which are her husband's two main hobbies. Furthermore, she feels that

they have the right body type and hair styles, while her appearance is lacking. Nina first mulls over these feelings of dissatisfaction when she and her husband are driving to the party: "Her own reflection seemed unsatisfying. Her hair was still too frizzy, her soft-featured round face required a different type of makeup, and her blue angora pullover cut into her armpits" (Vapnyar 8). In comparison to the women at the party, Nina feels uninteresting, unattractive, and unworthy of her husband's attention. Jennifer C.D. MacGregor, et al. examine low self-esteem (or LSE) in relationships: "relationships involving LSE people do tend to be less satisfying, at least in part due to their negative behavior and expectations of rejection in the relationship (Bellavia & Murray, 2003; Murray, Bellavia, Rose, & Griffin, 2003). People seem to intuit these disadvantages – they expect to be less satisfied in a romantic relationship with an LSE person (MacGregor & Holmes, 2007)" (692). Nina's internal self-criticism shows her low self-esteem. She feels that she is not as attractive as the women at the party and finds something to criticize with every part of her outfit. This may be part of the disconnect between herself and her husband. Nina's low self-esteem and feelings of worthlessness cause her to pull back from her husband.

The story gives a few indications of how Nina's husband feels about her and her hobby. The beginning scene shows her husband finding a bunch of wilted broccoli in the refrigerator. He says to Nina regarding the broccoli, "Another one, seduced and abandoned" (Vapnyar 3). His phrasing here is an unusual way to describe expired produce. It suggests that Nina's husband may feel that she seduces and abandons in other ways or areas. He may feel that she has seduced and abandoned him by not sharing her hobby or thoughts with him. He may notice that she has started to pull away from him. The story states that,

When they first started going to Pavlik's parties, Nina sat by the fireplace with the others. She loved to sit across from her husband and watch his face while he played. His neck was bent down, the bangs of his dark hair fallen over his half-closed eyes. From time to time he glanced at her, and then his eyes flickered through the forest of his hair like two tiny lightning bugs. At those moments Nina felt like

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he was playing for her, and then the music touched her, making her skin prickle and her throat hurt. (Vapnyar 11)

This shows that Nina used to feel a connection to her husband. She used to love watching him play guitar and connecting with him over his music. But over time, Nina notices the other women at the party are watching her husband play as well. Since she already feels inadequate in comparison to these women, Nina begins to think that they deserve her husband's attention more than she does. MacGregor et al. write:

LSE people generally tend to feel inferior in their close relationships (Murray et al., 2005). Thus, people who pick up on these insecurities may be especially unwilling to disclose if what they have to say seems likely to threaten their LSE close other's fragile sense of self-worth, as an accomplishment, but not a random positive experience, very well might. (692)

Nina used to be able to enjoy sharing in her husband's hobbies and interests, but as she begins to compare herself to the other women at the party, Nina stops watching her husband play and instead sits alone at the party and away from him. This demonstrates the beginning of the end for Nina's relationship with her husband. Greene et al. state:

Important early theories of relationship development in the 1970s...emphasized how self-disclosure progresses in depth (sensitivity of material disclosed) and breadth (variety of topics disclosed) as relationships develop over time. According to this perspective, people would reveal more about their inner thoughts and feelings as their relationships and affection for one another developed over time. Disclosure gradually (or rapidly) accelerated with relationship development, in frequency, depth, and range of topics. Conversely, self-disclosure was assumed to decrease or decline in the same manner as a relationship deteriorated.

As Nina and her husband share less and less with each other, their relationship begins to deteriorate.

This must be a frustrating experience for Nina's

husband, especially because he does love her, and Nina is aware of this. In one part of the story, Nina's sister questions the validity of her marriage, and states that Nina's husband married her for a visa to America. However, the story states,

...it wasn't true that he had married Nina just for that, and it wasn't true that he didn't love her. Nina's sister didn't know what Nina knew. She didn't know that when Nina was in the hospital after appendix surgery, her husband wouldn't leave her room even for a minute. She begged him to go and have some coffee or take a breath of fresh air, but he refused. He held Nina's hand and squeezed it every time she moaned. Nina's sister didn't know how sometimes he would hug Nina from behind, bury his face in her hair, and whisper, "There is nothing like it. Nothing in the world." She could feel his sharp nose and his hot breath on the nape of her neck, and her eyes would grow moist. And Nina's sister didn't know that he often said the same words when they were making love. (Vapnyar 12)

This scene is almost heartbreaking. It is apparent that Nina's husband does care for her in a real way. He wants to be there for her in her time of need, but she is the one pushing him away. It could be that Nina's resistance illustrates to her husband how little she cares about their marriage. Judith A. Feeney writes, "That is, most relational transgressions may be seen as implying that the offender devalues the relationship, and conversely, conveying to one's partner that their relational value is low would appear to violate the usual "rules" or norms of intimate relationships. Hence, it is possible that most hurtful events involve both relational devaluation and an element of transgression" (255). It seems that Nina is the one pushing him away in the story and not the other way around. She's the one who tells him to leave after her surgery, she's the one who stops watching him play guitar, and she's the one who does not share her secret hobby with him. Feeney goes on to say, "In the case of active disassociation, offenders explicitly deny or retract feelings of love and commitment, and relationship breakdown becomes probable. Given evidence that relationship breakdown can erode attachment security



(e.g., Kirkpatrick & Hazan, 1994), it is not surprising that active disassociation is particularly likely to elicit anxiety and challenge targets' 'felt security'" (263-264).

In the end, Nina's husband leaves her for reasons the story does not explain. It could be that he tires of her seclusion and lack of connection. Regardless, Nina handles this loss in an interesting way. Her sister warns her to brace herself for the fifth week, presumably when she will come out of shock and start feeling the loss. However, the story states that, "the fifth week didn't bring Nina any extreme pain but only added to her fatigue. Nina felt as if she were recovering from a long, exhausting illness. She tried to do as few household chores as possible. She didn't shop for vegetables anymore" (Vapnyar 15). This suggests that Nina may have found her relationship with her husband to be exhausting in some way. Perhaps her constant self-judgments in regard to her husband wore her down over time. A few weeks after her husband leaves, Nina returns to Pavlik's apartment for another party. This time, Nina feels more at home at the party. She no longer feels that she is inferior to the women there, and she no longer feels judged for not sharing their hobbies. Nina suddenly feels that there is more space at Pavlik's apartment than there used to be when her husband was there. By taking her husband out of the equation, Nina stops judging herself in relation to her husband and therefore starts to recover in a way. However, the fact that she stops shopping for vegetables and tries to do as few things as possible may be a sign that she is feeling some distress over the loss. The article, "A Comparative Study of the Structure of Love in the U.S. And Russia: Finding a Common Core of Characteristics and National and Gender Differences" looks at Russian cultural views of love: "Our ethnographic findings indicate that Russian (and Eastern Europeans in general) view romantic love as a kind of 'sickness', temporary, and unreal (de Munck 2008, 2006)" (de Munck, Victor et al. 339). This indicates that Nina may have felt the loss of her husband, and considered it as a long illness, due to Russian cultural views on love.

It is at this party that Nina meets Andrei, a married man who also loves cooking vegetables. Andrei confides in Nina that his wife dislikes when he cooks and suggests that they meet for a cooking date. Greene et al. write:

A key feature in Reis and Shaver's intimacy process model is the disclosure recipient's conversational responsiveness (Miller & Berg, 1984), referring to "behaviors made by the recipient of another's communication through which the recipient indicates interest in and understanding of the communication" (Miller & Berg, 1984, p. 193). Responsiveness may be indicated by the content of the response (e.g., elaborating on what was said or making a matching disclosure), the style of the response (e.g., showing concern for what was said), and timing (e.g., whether there is an immediate response or a long delay before the recipient responds). Thus the response is critical in understanding the disclosure process.

When Andrei confides in Nina, she feels less unusual and less alone, and she is more willing to open up and share her love of vegetables as well. Because of this, she excitedly sets a date with Andrei to cook vegetables. After a small hiccup, Andrei shows Nina how to cook broccoli. The story ends with Nina standing on a chair over the pot of cooking broccoli; "she closed her eyes, lifted her nose, and breathed in deep. The warm aroma of broccoli rose up, caressing Nina's face, enveloping the whole of her" (Vapnyar 24). After her chance encounter with Andrei, Nina finally gets to live out her dream of cooking vegetables. This is presumably a new beginning for Nina, with the possibility of her being more open, more accepting of herself, and more vulnerable in future relationships.

"Puffed Rice and Meatballs" begins with Katya having a discussion with her new lover. Her lover has just come back from taking a shower after sex, and says to Katya, "Tell me about your childhood. Tell me about the horrors of communism" (Vapnyar 51). The story explains that Katya grew up in the Stagnation Period in Russia, which occurred right after the fall of the Soviet Union. Birgit Beumers writes:

The period that followed under Leonid Brezhnev's leadership is commonly called the period of "stagnation," as it consolidated Communist rule through pragmatic policies rather than opening an ideological debate about the adaptation of communism to contemporary society....This

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increased suppression of opposition led to the emergence of a dissident movement that began formally with a letter protesting against Soviet foreign policy in 1967, signed by a number of members of the Soviet Writers' Union.

Some of the issues that Katya encountered as a child were strict schedules, rigid rules, and shortages of coveted imports. This may be what Katya's lover is referring to when he says "the horrors of communism." Beumers goes on to say that, "A 'second economy' (black market and underground culture) flourished to satisfy the demand for 'deficit' products. Lavish state rituals, monumental parades, and holiday celebrations went hand in hand with the cult of the leader, Brezhnev. They covered up the increasing dissatisfaction with the system that reduced the individual to the marionette."

Nevertheless, it is unclear why her lover asks to hear about the "horrors of communism." He may have been trying to be funny, but also may have been interested in getting to know Katya better. Or he could have been looking to be entertained with a flirtatious story. He does say this to Katya after his shower, which suggests that he may have been interested in getting to know her more. If he was just looking to have sex again, he may have asked her this before he showered. Either way, Katya is suspicious of his motives. Katya studies her lover's face and decides that he is looking for, "an easy, amusing, and preferably sexy story about the exotic world to which his lover had once belonged" (Vapnyar 52). This thought causes Katya to instantly relax. This is the first sign in the story that Katya is uncomfortable with opening up to this man, or to any man. The idea that he may want more from her or want to get to know her better makes Katya feel suspicious and untrusting. She is relieved at the idea that he is only interested in a flirtatious tale. Later in the story, it is explained that Katya has experienced sexual childhood trauma at the hands of a shopkeeper, which may be one of the reasons she is uncomfortable with vulnerability. The article, "The Influence of Physical and Sexual Abuse on Marriage and Cohabitation" talks about the effects childhood sexual trauma can have on adult relationships:

In addition, childhood sexual abuse has been linked to relationship difficulties, such as distrust of others and discomfort with sexual intimacy. Intrusive

thoughts and defensiveness resulting from abuse can prevent the formation of close relationships (Loeb et al. 2002). One review concluded that childhood sexual abuse is associated with greater difficulties in interpersonal relationships, lower relationship satisfaction, and a greater probability of revictimization in adulthood (Polusny and Follette 1995). (Cherlin et al. 769)

Katya searches her memories and chooses a story about being in preschool as a child in Russia, where they were required to take a nap every day at one pm. The children slept in beds alternating by gender, so Katya finds herself next to a little boy who suggests they compare their private parts. Katya is fascinated by this experience and eagerly tells her mother about it as soon as she gets home. Instead of the positive reaction Katya is expecting, her mother responds with hysterics; "Several hours of yelling, sobbing, and hysterical phone confessions to her friends followed. Then there was a lecture. My mother led me into the room we shared... sat me on a little chair in the corner, and walked to the middle of the room, her arms folded on her chest and her brows furrowed. I think I might have giggled, because I remember my mother suddenly yelling 'It's not funny! It's a very serious matter!'" (Vapnyar 56). Although Katya intends for this story to be light and sexy for her lover, her mother's reaction is proof that this experience was actually damaging for her. She is too young at the time to understand her mother's horror and fear for Katya. Her mother knows that if the teacher had discovered what was happening between Katya and the little boy, Katya would have been blamed. Dianne Ollech and James McCarthy write:

If culturally and personally, mothers are viewed as devalued, nurturant, desexualized figures, then a girl's sexuality evolves through an identification with a mother who is selfless and unentitled to sexual desire. Fear and loathing of female sexual desire is doubly reinforced when one acknowledges, usually at an unconscious level, that although the woman depends on the man for satisfaction and recognition, it is the woman who must proffer reparation for childhood psychic injuries (Dinnerstein, 1976). (75)

Katya's mother understands the pressure that's placed on

women from a young age to not only be in charge of their own sexuality, but also the sexualities of the males around them. Because of this, her mother continues to overreact, even going so far as to lock herself in the bathroom.

When Katya's lover learns this, he says, "'Oh, my God. It could've left you scarred for life.' Katya stopped. Her lover looked mildly horrified. He'd even freed his fingers from under the straps of her bra" (Vapnyar 56). He is concerned for her, but this makes Katya immediately stop and change direction in the story. She does not wait to see if he is someone she can share her real stories with. She is afraid of even attempting to trust this man. She knows almost nothing about him, but she's already decided he is not trustworthy, simply because he is a man. She thinks to herself, "It would be a bad idea to mention that she then had banged on the bathroom door, yelling 'Mommy, please, please forgive me!' It would be an even worse idea to add that she had dropped to her knees and tried to calm her mother by whispering through the slit under the door. The last thing Katya needed was to show her scars" (Vapnyar 56). Dana Lassri et al. state the following:

Recent models involving both self-criticism and attachment measure have argued that this personality dimension encompasses broad cognitive-affective schemas related to achievement and failure, whereas attachment avoidance refers to the actual expression of these tendencies in close relationships (Luyten & Blatt, 2011; Sibley, 2007). Specifically, Sibley (2007) and others (Luyten & Blatt, 2016; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007) have argued that both self-criticism and attachment avoidance basically involve a tendency to experience discomfort with closeness and dependence on others. (122)

Katya's thoughts reflect her life philosophy; she needs to be tough, and not show her scars. She needs to keep her interactions with men light-hearted and pleasing. She shouldn't show weakness or vulnerability. This may be because of her trauma history and the relationship between trauma and attachment avoidance.

Katya hurriedly takes the story onto a lighter note and ends with a joke. Her lover is amused, and they have sex again. Katya considers this a success, showing that she is afraid of experiencing anything other than flirtation

and sex with men. However, as time passes, Katya begins to feel ashamed of the way she modified her story to entertain her lover. She feels that she lied to herself and to her lover. Katya understands that she dressed up a disturbing memory as if it were something to be laughed off lightly. Cherlin et al. write, "Childhood abuse may erode psychological resources by engendering feelings of self-blame, guilt, low self-esteem, and depressive symptoms (Wolfe, Wolfe, and Best 1988)" (771). Her experience with her mother is actually a sad memory for Katya, and a defining moment in her life. Because of her mother's reaction, Katya begins to understand the negative stereotypes and expectations that surround human sexuality with regard to women. She learned that sexuality is not something to curiously explore, but something that is serious, dangerous, and not to be taken lightly, especially for women. Ollech and McCarthy state:

When girls become prepared for their roles as nurturers and achievers in a society that devalues and sexualizes women, then their preferences, opinions, and needs remain secondary to the desires, views, and requirements of others. Consequently, female adolescents' emotional needs for nurturance, affirmation, validation, and security are minimized and their sense of healthy entitlement and intrinsic worthiness are curtailed. (66)

In her sadness and shame, Katya makes herself a cup of tea and examines the tea leaves for answers. The story states, "she peered into the pile now and tried to read if she would ever meet a man who would understand her pity and her shame, to whom she'd tell her real stories, the ones that mattered, the ones that haunted her, without dressing them up with descriptions of labor-camp preschool, her red tie, or her family's lack of bread and toilet paper" (Vapnyar 59). This shows that Katya dreams of meeting a man whom she can be honest and vulnerable with. However, Katya does not trust men or herself enough to risk opening up to men. Even if she met a man whom she could be vulnerable with, Katya would probably regard him with suspicion, as she did with her lover at the beginning of the story. It's her own inner judgment of herself that requires her to never be honest, coupled with her traumatic memories. Cherlin et al. write, "Women who had experienced abuse were much less

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likely to have sustained unions. Women who experienced abuse beginning in childhood or who reported sexual abuse (alone or in combination with physical abuse) were more likely to develop a transitory union pattern in adulthood" (779). Katya seems to have only superficial, physical relationships with men that don't last. Although she would like to have true intimacy with a man, Katya's inability to work through her past trauma keeps her in a self-perpetuating cycle.

Katya begins to recall an even more disturbing experience she had as a teenager in Russia. In the first part of the memory, her aunt brings her a bag of expensive clothes from West Germany. Inside the bag, Katya discovers a sweater that gives her the appearance of having breasts. Katya remembers how badly she wanted breasts at that age. Even at 13, she already felt the societal pressure to achieve the beauty standards placed on women. Having breasts is considered a part of being beautiful, so Katya does everything in her power to make this happen, even forcing herself to drink milk until she felt nauseated. So when Katya discovers this sweater that magically gives her the appearance of breasts, she is elated. She remembers looking at herself and thinking, "the girl who blinked at me from the bookcase's surface was beautiful. She was not just pretty or cute, as people mistakenly called her. She was strikingly, undeniably beautiful. Apparently, the beauty had always been there, but buried under the wrong clothes" (Vapnyar 61). In this memory, Katya feels valuable because of her newfound beauty. She feels confidence in herself and rushes to show her best friend. However, on the way to meet her friend, Katya wonders if her beauty will be a burden. She asks herself what she will do when people stare at her, and decides that she will look down at the ground. This shows that Katya can't just enjoy feeling beautiful for herself. Ollech and McCarthy explain,

As the family is construed along the lines of male preference, girls are taught to orient themselves toward the wants and needs of males and to view their own needs as secondary. In contrast, boys learn a sense of entitlement to gratification from females and to societal rewards. Girls learn to limit themselves and boys develop phase-specific grandiosity that confirms their right to overextensive, intrusive boundaries (Kaschak, 1992). (68)

Because of the social pressures put on women from a young age, Katya immediately starts to worry about how men around her will react to her beauty, and she feels responsible for that reaction.

Her worries are confirmed later in the memory, when Katya and her friend go to a grocery store that is selling a rare and coveted American food item, puffed rice. People have lined up outside the doors, waiting for their chance to go in and buy this rarity. However, just as Katya and her friend are about to go into the store, the shop woman announces the store is closing. The customers are enraged and begin to riot after someone hits the shop woman. The crowd pushes past the fallen woman, and Katya is dragged into the store by the crowd's momentum. The shop woman screams to her male coworker to call the police. Instead of doing so, the man decides to assault Katya and use her to clear the store. Katya remembers this moment:

And then he lifted me off the ground. It was the first thing that I noticed – the sensation of being in the air, of losing control. His hands were on my chest, right there where I'd felt the precious little knobs just a couple of hours earlier. His index fingers crushed my nipples flat, while his thumbs pressed into my back, which was exactly what he needed. He used me as a battering ram, crashing me into the crowd to push people out of the store. (Vapnyar 67)

In a sobering turn of events, the very thing that Katya was so excited and proud of, having breasts, has now turned into this horrifying and disturbing experience. She states that she remembers "the sensation of losing control." This may be why Katya insists on being guarded and in control of the interactions she has with men in her current life. She remembers the humiliation, the pain, and the fear she felt back then. She remembers how powerless she felt at the hands of this cruel man and she never wants to feel that way again, even if it means giving up the possibility of having an open, honest relationship with a man whom she can be herself with. Lassri et al. write, "Further, self-criticism has also been associated with a tendency to avoid intimacy and closeness more generally in relationships" (122).

After the man releases her, Katya runs home and throws away the sweater. She thinks to herself that, "I wasn't beautiful and never would be" (Vapnyar

68). Katya blames herself and the new sweater for her traumatic experience at the grocery store. She doesn't even consider that this man is responsible for his own actions and that the blame lies with him. This showcases an aspect of rape culture, the idea that the way a woman looks and dresses can be the cause of violence against her, and therefore her fault. It's likely that Katya concludes if she hadn't been wearing the sweater, this traumatic event would not have happened to her. Ollech and McCarthy explain the dynamics of rape culture:

Kaschak (1992) articulated this dynamic by stating that, from childhood on, females learn that they bear responsibility for what they cannot control, such as other people's behavior. A female often feels personally responsible when a relationship fails, scrutinizing herself to discern "what more she could have done, how she could have looked better or met someone else's needs better" (p. 181). Furthermore, she is responsible for her own abuse if she dresses provocatively, consumes too much alcohol, or is in the wrong place at the wrong time. This is not the case for males, who have the power to project the responsibility for their violence, their addictions (females are enablers), and their personal failings onto females (Kaschak, 1992). Through the [male] projection of blame and the [female] acceptance of responsibility, the female ego ideal is strengthened rather than questioned. (74)

As Katya comes out of her reverie and returns to the present, Katya looks into the tea leaves again: "The tea leaves looked like a bunch of dead flies. They didn't show the face of a man, nor did they give any hint of his name. If they knew something, they certainly kept it secret. Katya put the mug away and went to brush her teeth" (Vapnyar 69). The tea leaves do not show Katya what she is looking for, and may never show her what she wants to see. Lassri et al. explain the difficulties adults with childhood sexual trauma face, "This may lead them to experience difficulties in establishing and maintaining close relationships and may also negatively impact their romantic relationships" (126). As long as Katya holds onto her past trauma and remains guarded against men, she will mostly likely never meet the man of her dreams. She will continue to stay light and flirtatious with men,

keep hiding her scars, and keep pretending that she is ok.

Nina from "A Bunch of Broccoli on the Third Shelf" and Katya in "Puffed Rice and Meatballs" are both women who struggle to share themselves with the men in their lives. For Nina, the reason for her reluctance is her low self-esteem and fear that she is undeserving of her husband. She progressively pushes her husband away until he leaves her, which causes her to feel free enough to actually start exploring her dreams. Greene et al. state, "Self-disclosure is important for achieving important goals (such as developing relationship closeness, gaining emotional support), but it is often just one component in an ongoing interaction involving disclosure input, reactions of the disclosure recipient, initial discloser's and recipient's perceptions of what happened, and so on." This suggests that Nina lost her relationship with her husband due to her gradually pulling away and not sharing her inner life with him. For Katya, it is trauma from the past that keeps her from finding a man that she can be honest and vulnerable with. Through these traumatic experiences, Katya learns a very common lesson for women; women are responsible for their own sexualities, as well as the sexualities of the men around them. Hooke et al. write:

In Erikson's (1959) psychosocial stages of development, intimacy versus isolation is the primary developmental task of young adults. An individual must meet her or his intimacy needs or she or he will be isolated. Erikson believed that it is only after a sense of identity has been established that real intimacy is possible. Without intimacy, people are unable to commit themselves to solid unions or to develop the moral energy to keep such commitments. (463)

Because of her misconception about female sexuality and her inability to trust the men in her life, Katya continues to build relationships with men that are temporary, superficial, and unfulfilling. Both stories showcase how connection with men can be a frightening, sobering, timorous experience for women.

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Evaluation: *Abby's paper is an extremely nuanced psychological reading of the women in these two short stories by Russian-American writer Lara Vapnyar. Her paper makes intelligent use of peer-reviewed journal articles from the social sciences, in the absence of literary critical sources on Vapnyar's work. This is a highly advanced, well-researched, and well-written paper.*

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## Socialization in Elementary School: Charles Baxter’s “Gryphon” and Richard Yates’ “Doctor Jack O’Lantern”

Dina Flores

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

Assignment: *Write a research paper about a work or works that we read for class this semester, incorporating effective use of at least seven secondary sources.*

The two authors selected for this research paper help to point out particular attributes of socialization of children during elementary school. The story “Gryphon,” by Charles Baxter, is about an unorthodox substitute teacher, Miss Ferenczi, who toys between fact and fiction in one fourth-grade class. The narrator, Tommy, is a nine-year-old student who finds the substitute teacher absolutely fascinating. His excitement for learning the information Miss Ferenczi doles out quickly spills over into his home life. The other students in the class share Tommy’s enthusiasm for the eccentric teacher. Regardless of the initial reaction to Miss Ferenczi, she becomes a little too comfortable in her sharing, which ends up in her losing her temporary position. However, her leaving doesn’t change the impression she made on the class. An article in *Contemporary Authors Online* points out the significance of these early childhood interactions by stating, “In the story, Baxter explores the importance of imagination in the way one learns and perceives the world, and at the same time he reflects on the relative openness of the mind during childhood” (“Charles Baxter,” *Contemporary*... 1). Richard Yates, the second author selected for this research paper, is successful at connecting with his readers by writing his characters with real emotion and depth. In the article review, “A Harrowing Mirror of Loneliness,” author Stephen Amindon describes Yates’ work by stating, “... Yates proved himself to be without equal as a chronicler of American solitude” (154). Yates’ story “Doctor Jack-

O-Lantern” is about Miss Price, a fourth-grade teacher, who has her carefree teaching job turned upside down when Vincent Sabella joins her class. Vincent is an orphan and foster child who is purposely excluded by his peers. Vincent has limited social skills, and so the only friendship he finds is with Miss Price. Miss Price refuses to give up on Vincent and his ability to acclimate to his

### Student Reflections on Writing: Dina Flores

I wouldn’t say I’m a writer. So, when Mr. Piepenburg contacted me about publishing a previous assignment from five years ago, I was pleasantly surprised. Although I don’t remember much about my thought process behind it, I do remember how it was accomplished. I have to give credit to Mr. Piepenburg. His teaching style and direction helped me write a literary review worthy of an A in his class. During the semester, he assigned small parts of the paper. By the end of the semester, I had a paper that was worthy of publication in the *Anthology*.

At the time, I was working toward an associates degree in science, so I didn’t think I’d use the skills taught during English 102. I was wrong. In my graduate studies, the topics had changed from “Doctor Jack O’Lantern” to the *Longus colli* muscle of the neck, but I still needed those writing skills to move forward in my education. This semester I’m writing a paper on low back pain. I’ll need to be able to not only communicate my thoughts in an organized manner, but also cite my references appropriately in order to ensure academic honesty.

Since I left Harper in 2018, I have been working toward building a better career for myself. I earned a bachelors degree in biomedical science with an emphasis on nutrition from National University of Health Sciences. Currently, I am working toward a doctorate in physical therapy at Northwestern University. All of my accomplishments could not have been possible without the strong foundation gained in English 102.

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new surroundings. Although her intentions are good, they end up backfiring, and Miss Price will have to deal with the damage. Although very different in storyline, these two narratives call attention to varying factors of socialization in elementary school. Overall, with respect to social experiences between students and their teachers, it is apparent that these interactions have an impact on the development of elementary school children. "Doctor Jack-O-Lantern" portrays how the aftermath of switching schools and making futile attempts to fit into a new social network can affect a child, and "Gryphon" shows how important our teachers are in passing on cultural and social ideas, which is important for personal growth, with possible effects that they will carry for the rest of their lives.

Throughout both stories, it's evident that the teachers play a huge role in the lives of their students. Whether it's a permanent teacher or a substitute, they are responsible for not only teaching children how to prepare for their future, but also how to interact and socialize with each other. In the *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, the authors of the article "Social Risk and Peer Victimization in Elementary School Children: The Protective Role of Teacher-Student Relationships," quote many reputable sources, stating, "Schools are a primary context for children's socialization experiences, serving as fertile ground for both positive and negative peer relationship experiences, including peer victimization" (qtd in Elledge et al. 692). They go on to explain, "Peer victimization refers to children's repeated exposure to peer interactions that convey harmful intent, produce harmful effects, and are sanctioned (often implicitly) by peer groups" (qtd in Elledge et al. 691). That being said, teachers play a big role in the socialization of elementary school children. Teachers are responsible for class interaction, and can intervene if necessary. Most of the time, it's a task that seems trivial to the job teachers do on a daily basis, but occasionally it can be problematic. The teacher in Yates' "Doctor Jack O'Lantern," struggles with how to address a troubled student in a way that doesn't single him out for further negativity from his classmates. Late in the story, Vincent writes obscenities on the wall. Miss Price has to find a way to deal with the situation. She knows this is not an easy task and wrestles with the burden at hand, as the narrator describes:

While the room was clearing out she sat at her desk, closed her eyes and massaged the frail bridge of her nose with thumb and forefinger, sorting out half-remembered fragments of a book she had once read on the subject of seriously disturbed children. Perhaps, after all, she should never have undertaken the responsibility of Vincent Sabella's loneliness. Perhaps the whole thing called for the attention of a specialist. (Yates 490)

Punishing a child who is unhappy on the inside may only make matters worse. She knows this is a complex situation, one that she may not be qualified to handle. The one thing she tried to do for Vincent was befriend him. She knows he cannot be happy without love and friendships. As a teacher, she knows socialization is important for long-term growth and success. She is racking her brain because she doesn't truly know how to deal with the situation. She is not a psychologist or a specialist in troubled children. She is a teacher who works in a middle- to upper-class suburban area, with students from stable homes. She knows, ultimately, her years of teaching have not prepared her for Vincent Sabella.

Personalities of teachers can vary widely. The two teachers in these stories couldn't be more different. In the beginning of "Doctor Jack-O-Lantern," Miss Price is told about Vincent Sabella. The sensitivity of her reaction is described by the narrator: "A less dedicated or less imaginative teacher might have pushed for more details, but Miss Price was content with the rough outline. It was enough, in fact, to fill her with a sense of mission that shown from her eyes, as plain as love, from the first morning he joined the fourth grade" (Yates 479). Vincent is an orphan who now lives with foster parents. In a study titled "Emotional Maturity of Adolescents from Orphanages, Single Parent Families and Intact Families: A Comparative Study," by Rashmi Upreti and Seema Sharma, the authors describe the main difference between orphans and children with families by stating, "They become deprived of sympathetic affectionate parental care and love. They start and continue life with great challenges and are known as orphans" (143). This is an informative statement because it indicates the disadvantages orphans have from the very beginning of life. This also explains why Vincent's situation is so dire. Knowing that children



are not separated from their parents without good reason, Miss Price takes on the responsibility of getting Vincent acclimated to his new environment. In this single decision, Miss Price shows her dedication as not only a teacher, but as a compassionate human being. She knows she must treat Vincent with warmth and respect. In doing this, she might be able to help him adjust to his new school, make new friends, and excel academically. From the beginning to the end of the story, Miss Price has nothing but tenderness and concern for Vincent. At the end of the story, Vincent has just come out of the school after being reprimanded by Miss Price for writing profanities on the wall. The narrator describes what she sees:

Miss Price, buttoning her polo coat as the front door whispered shut behind her, could scarcely believe her eyes. This couldn't be Vincent Sabella—this perfectly normal, perfectly happy boy on the sidewalk ahead of her, flanked by attentive friends. But it was, and the scene made her want to laugh aloud with pleasure and relief. He was going to be all right, after all. For all her well-intentioned groping in the shadows she could never have predicted a scene like this, and certainly could never have caused it to happen. But it was happening, and just proved, once again, that she would never understand the ways of children. (Yates 493)

The two curious children, Warren Berg and Bill Stringer, wait for Vincent to find out his punishment. After Vincent lies to them, by saying Miss Price hit him with a ruler, she sees the boys interacting, but she misconstrues the situation. Because she is a hopeful person, she immediately thinks Vincent has found two new friends. She has hoped for Vincent to be accepted since the first day he came to her classroom. She has wanted nothing but the best for Vincent. Her positivity may be blinding her from the reality of the situation. Although her intentions are admirable, the situation with Vincent is beyond her control.

Miss Ferenczi, from the story “Gryphon,” on the other hand, is a little more self-involved. When their regular teacher, Mr. Hibler, falls ill, Miss Ferenczi fills in as the substitute teacher. On her first day, after the bell rings, she begins the class with her story, as the narrator

recounts, “While we settled back, she launched into her tale. She said her grandfather had been a Hungarian prince; her mother had been born in someplace called Flanders, had been a pianist, and had played concerts for people Miss Ferenczi referred to as ‘crowned heads’” (Baxter 225). There is no more transparent window into Miss Ferenczi then when she told the class of her upbringing. In just a couple sentences, it's clear that Miss Ferenczi has been around high-class society and has had extensive opportunity to engage with the elite. It explains why she appears to be and acts worldly, because she is. I'm sure Miss Ferenczi is well-educated, well-traveled, and well-bred. Even before class starts, Miss Ferenczi brusquely reprimands the children as the narrator states, “She clapped her hands at us. ‘Little boys,’ she said, ‘why are you bent over together like that?’ She didn't wait for us to answer. ‘Are you tormenting an animal? Put it back. Please sit down at your desks. I want no cabals this time of day.’ We just stared at her. ‘Boys,’ she repeated, ‘I asked you to sit down’” (Baxter 224). During this first interaction Miss Ferenczi has with the children, the boys are playing with the class chameleon. Not knowing that fourth-grade boys can be gentle with animals, she snaps at them. Unfortunately, Miss Ferenczi assumes the worst. She thinks they are in some way hurting the animal. She thinks that they are in some way hatching a scheme to do something evil. She lacks trust in the students that are just acting like curious kids. Her abrupt nature is not reserved for only the students. In the middle of the day, the children ask Miss Ferenczi why she was not eating lunch with the other teachers. The narrator relays her attitude by stating, “‘I talked with the other teachers before class this morning.’ Miss Ferenczi said, biting into her brown food. ‘There was a great rattling of words for the fewness of ideas. I didn't care for their brand of hilarity. I don't like ditto machine jokes’” (Baxter 229). In spite of the fact that the children don't really understand the intent of her words, she is insulting the faculty at the school. She has a condescending attitude toward them. The reasoning behind her contempt for them is unjust, considering it's her first day working there.

Personalities aside, the main purpose of a teacher is to teach, and the style of teaching they choose to utilize can help or hinder their results. The authors Lisa E. Kim

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et al. point out, "The support that students receive in school and their self-efficacy may be founding stones on which they build their approach to education, academic goals, and even identity. Teacher personality is associated with these key variables, and may thus be a key driver of student social and emotional outcomes" (321). Depending on the teacher, the results of academic success may vary from student to student. Therefore, it is important for teachers to make a connection with their students. Miss Ferenczi, from the story "Gryphon," for example, may act superior to those around her, but her teaching style has a way with the children. On the second day of Mr. Hibler's absence, Miss Ferenczi begins the day by speaking on various topics with which she is familiar: huge jewels, cursed diamonds, monkeys for breakfast, Beethoven, and angels. There is no topic off limits. She goes on for forty minutes, until her last engrossing statement, which the narrator recounts:

"I will tell you one more story," she said, "and then we will have to do arithmetic." She leaned over, and her voice grew soft. "There is no death," she said. "You must never be afraid. Never. That which is, cannot die. It will change into different earthly and unearthly elements, but I know this as sure as I stand here in front of you, and I swear it: you must not be afraid. I have seen this truth with these eyes. I know it because in a dream God kissed me. Here." And she pointed with her right index finger to the side of her head, below the mouth, where the vertical lines were carved into her skin. (Baxter 235)

Miss Ferenczi talks to the class as if she is telling them some great secret that no one else knows. She leans in and whispers, all attention on her. The kids were intensely quiet. To the fourth-graders, all of her topics are interesting and foreign. They actively listen, so they don't miss a thing. Miss Ferenczi is successful at motivating the kids to not only listen, but to retain the information she gives them, even if it's only one time. Many teachers compete with distractions to obtain the attention of their students, but Miss Ferenczi secures their attention with her unique flair and honesty. In an article in the *Journal of Educational Psychology*, the authors state, "In educational research specifically, studies have found

that the characteristics of effective teachers are largely personality-based" (Kim et al. 310). Miss Ferenczi's personality, although quirky, is effective at engrossing the classroom. Furthermore, effective teachers are successful in producing an environment that is essential for learning.

Miss Price, from the story "Doctor Jack-O-Lantern," seems like she gets her regular students to respond well. At the beginning of class on Monday mornings, Miss Price asks for students to stand in front of the class and speak of their activities over the previous weekend, as the narrator describes: "The idea of the reports...was Miss Price's own, and she took a pardonable pride in it. The principal had commended her on it at a recent staff meeting, pointing out that it made a splendid bridge between the world of school and home, and that it was a fine way for children to learn poise and assurance" (Yates 481). However, Miss Price is unequipped to manage her new student, Vincent Sabella. Vincent is a troubled young boy, and Miss Price struggles with how to help him handle his new social situation. However, social adaptation is not his only problem. The author of "Taking Care of One Another," Robin R. Collins reveals, "People can't learn if they don't feel safe. And a sense of safety goes beyond physical security to include a sense of purpose and belonging—of being able to be yourself and claim ownership of the place where you learn" (81). Vincent is never free of fear or anxiety, so basic learning is challenging for him. Vincent is clearly behind his other classmates academically, which is apparent by his repeated mistakes. It's obvious that Vincent comes from an area where schooling is not important, or the school itself did not adequately address the academic needs of the students. During his first week at the new school, the rest of the class notices the special treatment Vincent is getting from Miss Price, as the narrator details, "All Vincent's errors in schoolwork were publicly excused, and all his accomplishments were singled out for special mention. Her campaign to build him up was painfully obvious, and never more so than when she tried to make it subtle..." (Yates 484). Miss Price's efforts to excuse his mistakes can only make things worse, both academically and socially. There are valid reasons for Miss Price wanting to show kindness to Vincent. Elledge referred to a 2010 study by Reavis, who "speculated that positive

teacher relationships help children develop coping and conflict resolution skills critical for managing instances of peer victimization” (qtd in Elledge et al. 693). Perhaps a positive teacher-student relationship could have an impact on a child with a secure base, but there are too many other factors influencing the situation. Miss Price is trying to be a buffer between Vincent’s failures and the contempt of his peers. In the classroom, every student should be treated the same, regardless of the teacher’s personal feelings towards them. Her actions do not go unnoticed by the other students, who now refer to him as the teacher’s pet. Since Vincent is a new student having problems developing friendships with his peers, Miss Price, good intentions aside, only makes matters worse by this behavior.

Socialization of elementary school children is an important task for teachers to accomplish to ensure children grow into functioning adults. However, biases learned in the home at an early age may filter into the classroom. Authors Robert J. Havighurst and Allison Davis wrote an informative article called “Child Socialization and the School,” in which they state, “Since social behavior is learned, these principles indicate that what the child learns in his school culture is influenced by what he learns in his social life outside of school and what he has learned before he entered school” (29). Children start learning social cues at home before entering the education system. If home life is sheltered, openness to different cultures and people can be challenging. When there is a student like Vincent Sabella in the class, making friends can be difficult. From the very first day that Vincent came to class, his classmates had already decided that this outsider was not one of them. Miss Price introduces Vincent to the rest of the class, and the following was the response, as the narrator explains:

The girls decided that he wasn’t very nice and turned away, but the boys lingered in their scrutiny, looking him up and down with faint smiles. This was the kind of kid they were accustomed to thinking of as “tough,” the kind whose stares had made all of them uncomfortable at one time or another in unfamiliar neighborhoods; here was a unique chance for retaliation. (Yates 480)

The story is set in a school in a suburb of New York, near White Plains. Miss Price tells them that he’s from New York City, but they can tell he’s from those questionable areas, areas people don’t want to be in after dark. With just one look at his appearance, they all made judgments about Vincent. A fifth grade teacher herself, Robin Collins, author of “Taking Care of One Another,” noticed how social discord between students was leading to division within her classroom, and she noted, “It wasn’t just bickering and playground disagreements: Girls bullied other girls through insults and exclusion, cliques formed, students with low social skills were ostracized, and most students ignored classmates who had learning and physical differences that were outside their comfort zones” (81). Beliefs about people that are different from us are implanted in children at very early ages. Sometimes it’s up to the teacher to identify and address problems of social interaction before it turns into a problem. Since he was the new kid, Vincent was already at a disadvantage. Add on top of that the fact that he came from a troubled family, and it was Vincent who was in danger of never being able to fit in.

There are major differences in emotional maturity between orphans and children that come from stable families. Upreti and Sharma refer to Sinha to define emotional maturity as, “...how well one can respond to situations, control emotions and behave in an adult manner when dealing with others” (qtd in Upreti and Sharma 143). Both stories provide examples of children with emotional maturity on both sides of the spectrum. On Vincent’s first day of class, a student named Nancy stands up to speak. Nancy has great social skills. It is evident because of how she is admired by the other children, as the narrator recounts:

The others fell silent as Nancy moved gracefully to the head of the room; even the two or three girls who secretly despised her had to feign enthralment when she spoke (she was that popular), and every boy in the class, who at recess liked nothing better than to push her shrieking into the mud, was unable to watch her without an idiotically tremulous smile. (Yates 481)

The confidence she exudes is drawing attention from the

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others. Even Miss Price selects her for the first morning report, because she speaks well in front of the class. Authors Upreti and Sharma state, "In order to develop this attribute of personality, an adolescent requires a secure emotional base to explore and experience the world. No doubt, a happy home or healthy family is the first secure base in a person's life for this exploration" (143). Nancy is Vincent's opposite. Her family is financially secure. They have a home in the suburbs. It appears her family is tightly knit. Her brother, who is home from college to buy a brand new car, drives the family into White Plains for a shared evening. The stability of her home life plays a big role in her popularity as well. She has a secure foundation, one that Vincent will never have. Vincent cannot connect with the children by telling them about his home life. He lives with foster parents, which most of the children wouldn't understand. In the absence of information and understanding, peers can be very unforgiving. Vincent is lonely and wants desperately to be liked by the others. After some persuading by Miss Price, Vincent gives a morning report that is far from the truth. Vincent just wants to fit in, but his elaborate story and creative pronunciation make him the outcast once again. Later, Miss Price gingerly tells him she knows he lied about the story. After being confronted, he becomes physically ill. Because Vincent is emotionally stunted, he then acts out by writing profanities on the school wall, just outside the classroom. Although she doesn't want to reprimand him, she explains the possible consequences of his action by stating:

"Vincent, perhaps I understand some things better than you think. Perhaps I understand that sometimes, when a person does a thing like that, it isn't really because he wants to hurt anyone, but only because he's unhappy. He knows it isn't a good thing to do, and he even knows it isn't going to make him any happier afterwards, but he goes ahead and does it anyway. That's when he finds he's lost a friend, he's terribly sorry, but it's too late. The thing is done." (Yates 491)

Miss Price again tries to connect with Vincent in the way she knows how. She knows he's lonely. She knows he's unhappy. She tries to teach him about the ramifications of his behavior. But she doesn't know how to communicate

this effectively to a child who is already troubled. He knows that his bad behavior has garnered attention from Miss Price. Because Vincent is an orphan, any attention he may have received while at the orphanage may have been because he was misbehaving. Vincent has probably learned this behavior from an early age, and behaviors are difficult to change. Miss Price's attempt to point out that he may lose a friend is not a good idea. Vincent already knows what it's like to be alone. He knows it all too well.

Authors Upreti and Sharma stress the importance of family stability on children by declaring, "Nobody can replace the important role that parents plays in developing balanced and harmonious personality of their children. The kind of attention and care adolescents received during their early years of life in family, affect their ability to handle important issues and their emotional maturity" (143). In other words, in order for a child to obtain the social skills needed to navigate adolescence, a strong family foundation is important. Nancy shares the same family stability, as the narrator Tommy, from the story "Gryphon." After an interesting day with a new substitute teacher, he rushes home to tell his mother about his day. Tommy says, "My mother was washing other vegetables in the kitchen sink, and my baby brother was hollering in his yellow playpen on the kitchen floor. 'Hi mom,' I said, hopping around the playpen to kiss her" (Baxter 233). The various forms of affection given out by Tommy show that he is used to the loving tenderness and warmth of a family life. After school, he eagerly comes home to tell his mother about his interesting substitute teacher. This shows communication in his family is open and encouraged. As soon as he arrives home, he hugs his dog and kisses his mom. This indicates he feels close to his family, the first social bond. Upreti and Sharma solidify the idea of family affecting emotional maturity by stating, "The intact family is considered to be one of the main socializing institutions of the society, where children acquire their first experiences of being treated as persons in their own right" (143). Both Nancy and Tommy have intact families, which explains why they are comfortable in social situations.

When children start elementary school, their teacher becomes an intricate part of their socialization. The two teachers in this story have much different emotional effects on their students. In particular, Miss Price, in "Doctor

Jack-O-Lantern,” makes a bond with Vincent. Miss Price decides he needs special attention, and she freely gives it to him. At the end of a long week of watching Vincent struggle with fitting in with his peers, she talks with him while he’s eating his lunch. Vincent, who is used to eating by himself, is overwhelmed by her attention, and when she stands up to leave, he feels like hugging her. The narrator discloses, “It was probably a lucky thing that she stood up when she did, for if she had stayed on the desk a minute longer Vincent would have thrown his arms around her and buried his face in the warm gray flannel of her lap, and that might have been enough to confuse the most dedicated and imaginative teachers” (Yates 486). The feelings that Vincent has for his teacher are understandable. Since he comes from an orphanage and has foster parents, it’s reasonable to assume he hasn’t had the emotional support Miss Price is showing him. It must be a foreign feeling to have someone treat him that way, when he has been used to deprivation of these emotions. Children normally learn to manage their emotions in early years of education, like kindergarten or preschool. Clearly, Vincent is behind emotionally as well as academically. Vincent is not the only child to have an emotional reaction to his teacher. In the story “Gryphon,” Tommy gets into a fight with a classmate he feels is responsible for Miss Ferenczi being fired. After Wayne returns from the principal’s office, Tommy confronts him and gives an account of the incident:

“You told,” I shouted at him. “She was just kidding.”  
“She shouldn’t have,” he shouted back. “We were supposed to be doing arithmetic.” “She just scared you,” I said. “You’re a chicken. You’re a chicken, Wayne. You are. Scared of a little card,” I singsonged. Wayne fell at me, his two fists hammering down on my nose. I gave him a good one in the stomach and then I tried for his head. Aiming my fist, I saw that he was crying. I slugged him. “She was right,” I yelled. “She was always right! She told the truth!” Other kids were whooping. “You were just scared, that’s all!” (Baxter 239)

It’s as if Miss Ferenczi made her mark on the children in a very short time. Clearly, Tommy is passionate about the way he feels about her. He defends her ferociously. Even though Wayne is his classmate, Tommy sides with

Miss Ferenczi because he believes she told them truthful information during class. He may even feel like this because he feels like she trusted them enough to have the information, something no other teacher has done in the past.

In conclusion, these two stories depict how social experiences between students and teachers have an impact on the development of elementary school children that may last well into adulthood. The story “Gryphon,” by Charles Baxter, shows how influential teachers can be on children, but Yates’ story accurately illustrates a picture of a troubled child, one who will suffer the consequences of bad socialization. “Doctor Jack-O-Lantern” ends on a poignant note. After his peers reject Vincent yet again, he acts out by writing on the wall, once more. This time he uses Miss Price as the object of his anger. After drawing her face the narrator states, “He paused to admire it with a lover’s solemnity; then from the lips he drew a line that connected with a big speech balloon, and in the balloon he wrote, so angrily that the chalk kept breaking in his fingers, every one of the words he had written that noon” (Yates 494). Vincent doesn’t know how to express himself, his frustration, or his anger. His actions will no doubt hurt the one person who has been nice to him: Miss Price. His last action in this story can only lead to him being more isolated, and even to him being labeled in school with a behavioral problem. In this ending is a troubling beginning for an elementary school child. The author of “Taking Care of One Another,” Robin R. Collins states:

When I reflect on what I want to accomplish with the young minds in my care, the answers have nothing to do with achievement gains or test scores. I want to create responsible members of society, people who understand that their climb to success should not be on the backs of others, and who understand that by working together we accomplish more. I truly hope that students will remember how they learned to appreciate strengths and shore up weak spots in classmates. (82)

This statement demonstrates the importance of effective socialization for our elementary school children, and that students should support one another. Successful socialization leads to understanding, tolerance, and

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compassion for humanity. Our goal for our children should not only be to educate them for the future, but also to ensure they grow into well-rounded, fully functioning members of society.

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Evaluation: *This paper reflects clear and empathetic understanding of the characters and situations in these two short stories. The essay is carefully shaped around a central idea related to teachers' personalities and children's socialization in elementary school. Use of research material from outside of the stories was particularly effective in this paper.*

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# A White Man's "Burden": Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*

————— Ahtziri Garcia-Sandoval —————

Courses: English 102 (Composition) and  
Philosophy 105 (Introduction to Philosophy)  
Instructors: Kurt Hemmer and John Garcia

*Assignment: Students were asked to write a research essay on the novel On the Road (for English 102) that also makes connections to the concepts and authors from Philosophy 105.*

Jack Kerouac's novel *On the Road* is one work of literature that has passed the test of time. His semi-autobiographical novel is invigorating and sucks readers into a life of adventure, love, drugs, and sex. The novel follows narrator Sal Paradise along with his rowdy group of friends through numerous exhilarating cross-country road trips to New York, Chicago, New Orleans, Denver, San Francisco, and Mexico City, just to name a few stops. Throughout his time on the road, Sal embarks on a journey of knowledge and self-discovery. He encounters many different cultures and comes to realize just how diverse the United States of America really is. With this newfound knowledge, Sal comes to the conclusion that he is unsatisfied with his life as a white man. He makes it obvious that his "white ambitions" (180) are holding him back from enjoying a truly meaningful life. This, of course, is a ridiculous thought on his part, but one of the major reasons why some readers can still connect with the novel today.

To understand why Sal's thoughts on being a disillusioned white man are absurd, one must keep in mind when the story takes place. Sal's journey begins in post-World War II America: a time of surprising economic prosperity for many whites. This was a time in which many Americans were out pursuing their American Dream. For middle-class white men in the United States,

this was a prospect within their reach. Unfortunately, if someone was neither white nor a male in America at the time, it was not as simple. The opportunities afforded to this specific group did not expand to the many poor Americans, African-Americans, Hispano-Americans, and American women in the country. Ann Charters, former professor of American Literature at the University of Connecticut, writes about Sal, "Being poor himself, Sal sympathizes with the underclass characters he meets on the road. . .even as he romanticizes their lives" (xxii). It is acknowledged that Sal has no true concept of what being a minority in the United States is, but he believes being anything other than white is better. America before the Civil Rights Movement was not the happiest of places to live in for disenfranchised minorities and even after the Civil Rights Movement the country still faces inequality. Kerouac's novel *On the Road* is still relevant to contemporary readers because it showcases problems within society that are still an issue today. To be more specific, there are clear elements of unjust treatment toward minorities and women, as well as racial romanticism, which can be seen in the society of the present.

Quite possibly one of the most abhorrent components of Kerouac's novel is the treatment of women by Sal and his infamous companion, Dean Moriarty. The women receive little to no respect and are constantly being abused, cheated on, lied to, and left behind like yesterday's news. There are many instances in which readers will find a woman being treated poorly in the novel, but Sal's first starts with the timid Rita. While in Denver Sal takes her back to the apartment he is staying in and claims, "She was a nice little girl, simple and true, and tremendously frightened of sex. I told her it was beautiful. I wanted to prove this to her. She let me prove it, but I was too impatient and proved nothing" (57). By this time, Sal is already "itching to get out on to San Francisco" (56) and knows he will be leaving soon, yet that does not stop him from sleeping with an innocent girl he will leave behind and who has no real interest in. Tim Hunt, a top Kerouac scholar, says about this passage, "Sal's behavior here is exploitive. His claim that he wants 'to prove' that sex is beautiful is a con, and he knows it. . .Sal is, it seems, attempting to lessen her sense that she has been

used and thus ease his guilt" (173). It is obvious that Sal is simply using Rita in this situation to get what he wants without any qualms about how she will feel. Even though he tries to reassure her things will be okay, he is really only doing it to make himself feel better about the situation, not because he truly cares about what Rita may be feeling. This is a recurring theme for Sal that happens once again with a Mexican-American woman, Terry, with whom he has a brief affair in California. Hunt emphasizes the "competing desires for physical freedom, meaningful domestic stability, and romance" (175) in the relationships of not only Sal but also Dean in relation to his multiple wives.

Like Sal, there are many moments in which Dean is made out to be the jerk of the century for the way he treats his wives. Throughout the novel, he marries a total of three women, all of whom he cheats on with the others. His first wife, Marylou, is the one he repeatedly goes back to, and it could be argued that he truly loves her but then he says things about her like, "she'd apparently whored a few dollars together and gone back to Denver" (3), which is incredibly hypocritical on his part, considering the amount of times he has affairs with other women while he is with her. It becomes a double standard; Dean is allowed to go out and have sex with anything that walks, but God forbid the women he is currently dating do the same. When Sal finally catches up with the gang in Denver, he asks his friend Carlo about Dean's schedule, to which Carlo responds, "I came off work a half-hour ago. In that time Dean is balling Marylou at the hotel. . . . At one sharp he rushes from Marylou to Camille—of course neither one of them knows what's going on—and bangs her once, giving me time to arrive at one-thirty" (42). Dean actually has a fixed schedule on who he is seeing, and when, and for how long. The fact that he can do this and still claim to love both women is almost comical. Kerouac scholar John Tytell says Dean is "utterly indifferent to women as women, his Priapic and primal urge making him inconsiderate to any feeling other than the desire in his loins" (423), which is in agreement with Sal's statement that "for [Dean] sex was the one and only holy and important thing in life" (2). Dean's only concern is getting his kicks and satisfying his own personal needs. According to Tytell, "[Dean] treats his mistresses like his

cars, with an all-consuming speed" (425) and a complete disregard for how they feel. But it comes as no surprise that Sal and Dean do not have much respect for women when one keeps in mind that the novel, while a work of fiction, is heavily based on Kerouac's life.

In a similar way to how Sal and Dean viewed women, Kerouac oftentimes saw women as a means to an end. In 1944, Kerouac was arrested in a murder case as a material witness; his father refused to post bail. How did he get out of jail with no money? Kerouac married his girlfriend, Edie Parker, in return for her bailing him out of jail. The agreement worked, "but they separated soon afterward" (Charters xi). Did Kerouac have a genuine love for Edie Parker, or did he simply use her to obtain his own freedom—the freedom from being incarcerated and the freedom to join Neal Cassady (the model for Dean Moriarty) out on the road? Kerouac used other women when he needed something more out of life than he felt he could do for himself. Charters writes in her introduction, "In November 1950, dissatisfied with the way his life was drifting, Kerouac impulsively married a second time" (xvi). Kerouac had no legitimate reason to get married again. He was not in love; he was bored. He looked for a woman to take away that boredom. This is exactly what Sal and Dean would do in the novel. When they yearned for something more out of life—whether it was sex, love, or a short affair—they went after a woman to find it and then left her shortly after. It was a common pattern in both the lives of Sal and Dean as well as Kerouac and Cassady.

In addition to the protagonists' unfair treatment of women, the lives of many minorities are also incredibly romanticized in the novel, but African Americans are the most targeted by Sal. Slavery is an ugly part of American history, and it is obvious Sal does not understand the extent of damage it did and just how grotesque it was. While in California, Sal has a brief affair with a Mexican-American woman by the name of Terry. In an attempt to support Terry, her son, and himself, Sal decides he is going to pick cotton. He is under the assumption the job will be simple, and even after realizing it is not, he still proceeds to glorify the experience. Many of the cotton pickers are African American, and looking around the field, Sal says about them, "They picked cotton with



the same God-blessed patience their grandfathers had practiced in ante-bellum Alabama” (96). His comment shows his ignorance of what slavery was truly like in the United States. African Americans had no opportunity to pick cotton with leisure, nor were they paid for their work. After a long day of picking cotton, he then says, “Sighing like an old Negro cotton-picker, I reclined on the bed and smoked a cigarette” (97), implying that slaves had the luxury of relaxing after being out in the fields all day. Sal has no concept of what African Americans endured during slavery and fails to understand their lives were nothing to envy.

In the same way that Sal romanticized slavery, he romanticized the lives African Americans and other minorities led in post-World War II America, as well. He had the terribly misguided conception that the life of a minority in the late 1940s and early 1950s was better than his own life. While in a minority dominated neighborhood in Denver, Sal thinks to himself, “I wished I were a Denver Mexican, or even a poor overworked Jap, anything but what I was so drearily, a white man disillusioned. All my life I’d had white ambitions,” and he wishes he could “exchange worlds with the happy, true-hearted, ecstatic Negroes of America” (180). Since Sal sees them enjoying life and laughing, he wrongly assumes they live an easy life and “know nothing of disappointment and ‘white sorrows’” (181). The minor inconveniences he faces seem much grander to him than anything an African American could encounter. This is something African-American novelist James Baldwin would heavily disagree with Sal on. In his book *Nobody Knows My Name: More Notes of a Native Son*, Baldwin states that he would “hate to be in Kerouac’s shoes if he should ever be mad enough to read [*On the Road*] aloud from the stage of Harlem’s Apollo Theater” (182). Baldwin sees the absurdity of Sal’s comments, and as an African American himself, knows the fury this could ignite in other African Americans reading Kerouac’s novel. He continues to tell his readers, “The world has prepared no place for you, and if the world had its way, no place would ever exist. Now, this is true for everyone, but, in the case of a Negro, this truth is absolutely naked: if he deludes himself about it, he will die” (183). The world shows no favoritism to one race, but the society in

which humans live does. African Americans realize this even when white men still cannot fully grasp that truth.

In a similar fashion to Baldwin, novelist Norman Mailer concurs that African Americans live a much harsher life. In his essay *The White Negro*, Mailer states,

Any Negro who wishes to live must live with danger from his first day, and no experience can ever be casual to him, no Negro can saunter down a street with any real certainty that violence will not visit him on his walk. The cameos of security for the average white: mother and the home, job and the family, are not even a mockery to millions of Negroes; they are impossible.

In everyday life, African Americans face the fear of hate crimes being committed against them. Regardless of how lousy Sal’s life may be, that is not something he has to go through life fretting over. Sal is white and therefore lives an easier life. For African Americans, it is not so simple. They have ties to both the enslaved (African) and the enslaver (American). How do they reconcile those two identities? W.E.B. Du Bois, an African-American activist, writes in his essay “Souls of Black Folk,” “It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul through the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity” (442). African Americans are aware of their own colored skin, but there is a difference when looking at their skin through the eyes of others. The knowledge that even though they are American they will be judged simply because the color of their skin is darker than a white man’s is something they have to keep in mind. That is something Sal would never have to worry about and makes his comments about African Americans having an easier life ignorant.

Sal’s adventures bring forth problems still relevant to modern day society. It is 2017 in the United States, and racial issues and unequal treatment toward women and minorities are still major problems in the country. There are numerous news stories of African Americans and other minorities being targeted by police regularly. The country cannot seem to get away from the violence. Minorities are being verbally and physically attacked. White people still think this is not an issue and see themselves as the

superior race. It does not concern them that an innocent African-American man has been shot down, but if it were a white man, all hell would break loose. White men can get away with a heinous crime, but a black man will be locked up for having an ounce of marijuana in his pocket. Women are still paid less than a man for working the same job. They are still seen as sexual objects in society. They are used for what is between their legs and not what they can offer intellectually. Where does the injustice stop? As a country, the United States has progressed, but it is not where it should be. With this new administration it is unlikely it will move forward in the near future, either. The country has a person in power that degrades women and other minorities, someone who wishes to "make America great again," but that only applies to the top one percent, mainly white Americans in the country. As a country, we are moving back instead of forward. With a society like this, it comes as no surprise that Kerouac's novel still resonates within the hearts of many. Racial prejudice still exists. Misogyny still exists. Contempt for the counterculture still exists. It is all over *On the Road*, and it is all over the country. It is something readers can connect to because it can be seen in everyday life. One can walk into any building and is likely to see examples of this type of treatment. This is a serious matter and has

always been a part of America's history. The question now is how does one fix it? What as a society can we do to change things? To make the country a better place for everyone to live? Kerouac's writing style can put a flowery twist on these issues, but that is only on paper. He makes the novel enjoyable even when one knows the situation is completely wrong. The gritty reality of it is that these issues are neither pretty nor romantic. They are legitimate problems contemporary readers can still see today, and they are problems readers are likely to see for years to come.

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Evaluation: *Ahtziri does an exemplary job not only capturing many important elements of the novel but engaging in a through critique of it. She takes the narrator and the novel itself to task for the fact that the main character, Sal, sees his whiteness as a barrier to a meaningful life rather than as the position of privilege it is. She weaves together a thorough discussion of American culture and history, use of philosophical ideas like W.E.B. DuBois' concept of "double consciousness," and a detailed analysis of the novel supported by numerous quotes from the text.*

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# The Impact of Ingenious Leonardo

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Course: Humanities 102  
(Renaissance through the Modern West)  
Instructor: Keith Jensen

Assignment: *The final project required the student to select a topic of interest in Western culture, from the Renaissance through the 20th (or the 21st) century. The chief goal was to explain why the topic is important to understanding Western history and culture. The topic choice was entirely up to the student, and it could include any topics covered in class as well as topics not covered but within the specific time periods. Students had the option of a traditional research paper (eight to 10 pages), a visual arts portfolio (15 to 20 pages), a website, or a creative project. They were required to use 10 sources (at least three books, five journal articles, and two websites [maximum]).*

“Leonardo da Vinci was like a man who awoke too early in the darkness, while the others were all still asleep.” This quotation of Sigmund Freud is for the Florentine artist, and one of the great masters of the High Renaissance: Leonardo da Vinci. He is also celebrated as a painter, sculptor, architect, engineer, and scientist. He wrote many books containing his findings, and he created many famous works of art. What we understand today as being “modern culture” is in fact not that modern but was born nearly half a millennium ago at the time of the Renaissance in Europe. But even if we think of great Renaissance thinkers, such as Leonardo da Vinci, we should not forget that all civilizations throughout history have produced and accumulated knowledge to understand and explain the world. People may argue that another of the greatest Renaissance artists, such as Michelangelo or Machiavelli, had a greater influence on Western culture than did Leonardo da Vinci, but they did not have the same influence on history as da Vinci did. It is an undeniable

fact that Leonardo da Vinci’s inventions and discoveries have influenced today’s Western culture in many ways; his visions and ideas have encouraged our modern scientists to experiment and discover new artifacts, and his creative mind has been influential to various fields of knowledge; he showed his greatest skill and made his most lasting mark on history as a painter and anatomist.

Leonardo was born in the small town of Vinci, in Tuscany, near Florence. His father was a wealthy Florentine notary, and his mother was a peasant woman. In the mid-1460s, the family settled in Florence, where Leonardo was given the best education. He rapidly advanced socially and intellectually. When Leonardo turned 14, he was apprenticed to a talented artist named Andrea Verrocchio. Although Verrocchio was very influential in Leonardo’s life, da Vinci had his own style of painting, which made his art much more popular. Because of his amazing talent in so many areas, Leonardo da Vinci is the epitome of a Renaissance man. Capra argues that “Leonardo da Vinci was a systemic thinker and a complexity theorist, aware of the interrelatedness of things, and interested in discovering fundamental patterns (archetypes) across diverse phenomena” (34). Yet another area he excelled in was the field of science, particularly with his incredibly detailed visions and ideas that have encouraged our modern scientists to experiment and discover new artifacts.

About 1482, Leonardo joined the service of the Duke of Milan. When he applied for chief engineer, “he wrote the duke an astonishing letter in which he stated that he could build portable bridges; that he knew the techniques of constructing bombardments and of making cannons; that he could build ships as well as armored vehicles, catapults, and other war machines; and that he could execute sculpture in marble, bronze, and clay” (Gill). A chief engineer requires great intelligence and thinking skills to both create plans and to carry them out. Leonardo got the job and kept it for sixteen years. He explained several traditional forms of a “perpetual-motion machine” in the three tiny notebooks by him, known as the Codex Forster; his legacy remains as the engineer for the Duke of Milan, which included investigation of various ways to move water in the “Codex” (Mills). It explores the contributions of Da Vinci in engineering.

Capra uncovered the artistic approach of Leonardo toward scientific knowledge and his worldview; da Vinci was responsible for inventing and applying designs ranging from early tanks and submarines to the revolutionary flying machine. He states that Leonardo studied the flight patterns of birds to build some of the first human flying machines; designed military weapons and defenses; studied optics, hydraulics, and the workings of the human circulatory system; and produced designs for rebuilding Milan, utilizing principles still used by city planners today (186). According to Capra, “Leonardo pioneered an empirical, systematic approach to the observation of nature, today’s scientific method. Also, Leonardo made many inventions and was able to foretell the design of many machines which are still in use today” (5). That is why Capra goes as far as claiming that Leonardo is “the true founder of modern science” (6).

Leonardo’s giant crossbow design is not an impractical object, but is often established as an example of his technical draftsmanship (Landrus). Landrus offers evidence of Leonardo’s intention of the drawing as a reliable plan with which military engineering could consider a strategy, or an imaginative solution for building the full-scale giant crossbow. The illustrated dimensions, the written specifications, and the use of geometry help to depict the primary dimensions. This clarifies how this intelligence of a brilliant mind is related to Archimedean geometry and has influence on Western culture (Landrus).

As a scientist, da Vinci perceived everything possible in nature. Leonardo’s investigations led him to predict many great scientific discoveries including breakthroughs by Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, and Darwin. “40 years before Copernicus, Da Vinci noted, ‘The sun does not move.’ Sixty years before, Leonardo suggested that ‘a large magnifying lens’ should be employed to study the surface of the moon and other heavenly bodies. Two hundred years before Newton, anticipating the theory of gravitation, Leonardo wrote ‘Every weight tends to fall towards the center by the shortest possible way.’ Four hundred years before Darwin, Leonardo placed man in the same broad category as monkeys and apes and wrote, ‘Man does not vary from the animals except in what is accidental’” (Gelb 45). Leonardo’s approach to knowledge set the stage for modern scientific thinking,

which is more valuable than any of his specific scientific achievements. Moreover, his scientific inquiry affected Western history and still influences American culture.

Leonardo da Vinci’s inventions and discoveries have influenced today’s Western culture, and his creative mind has been influential to various fields of knowledge. According to the article “Leonardo’s Bridge: Part 2. A Bridge for the Sultan,” Leonardo produced a drawing of a single span 240-m bridge as part of a civil engineering project in 1502. It was for Ottoman Sultan Beyazid II of Istanbul. The bridge was designed to span an inlet at the mouth of the Bosphorus. It was supposed to be a masonry bridge as high as a building, and even tall ships would be able to sail under it. Beyazid did not deploy the project, because he did not believe that such a construction was possible. “However, Leonardo’s vision was resurrected in 2006, when the Turkish government decided to construct Leonardo’s bridge to span the Golden Horn” (Atalay).

With precise and sophisticated computer modeling techniques, Dr. Lillian Schwartz juxtaposed the *Mona Lisa* with da Vinci’s only existent self-portrait, drawn in red chalk in 1518. She observes, “Juxtaposing the images was all that was needed to fuse them: the relative locations of the nose, mouth, chin, eyes and forehead in one precisely matched the other. Merely flipping up the corner of the mouth would produce the mysterious smile” (21). This provides a charming glimpse of how images were thought about and constructed at the beginning of the computer age (Schwartz 22), quite a valuable for contemporary art historians.

“Da Vinci proved that the pursuit of art (beauty) and science (truth) were not just compatible but the best way to get a richer, fuller grasp of our complicated existence. To make his point into practice, he was ambidextrous and would often switch between his right and left hand while painting, drawing or writing. His embrace and practice of whole brain thinking led to another gift he left for the modern intellect, the concept of ‘brainstorming’” (Shlain 127). Based on his point of view, it is a technique that unlocks our surge of consciousness; a few minutes of thinking time is the best possible starting point to think clearly or act sensibly to become a creative person.

Leonardo used images, diagrams, symbols, and illustrations as the easiest way to capture, on paper,

the thoughts that were emerging in his brain. Inspired by da Vinci's note-taking style, Buzan invented mind mapping, a powerful graphic technique, a universal key that unlocks the potential of the brain. Leonardo used the major elements of the mind map guidelines to make his thoughts visible. According to the article "Tony Buzan Inventor of Mind Mapping," mind mapping is a whole-brain practice that originated in the 1960s and is now used by millions of young and old people around the world, who wish to use their minds more effectively; mind maps are a phenomenal storage, data-retrieval, and access system for the gigantic library that actually exists in our amazing brains; it is a method for transcribing the spontaneous, simultaneous ideas, thoughts, impressions, and feelings that float harmoniously in the mind, and on paper. It helps to plan, communicate, be creative, save time, solve problems, concentrate, organize, and clarify thoughts. "Using Mind Maps on a daily basis, life becomes more productive, fulfilled, and successful on every level" ("Tony Buzan Inventor of Mind Mapping"). Without da Vinci's ingenuity and uniqueness in the fields of knowledge, the inventions and discoveries that have influenced today's Western culture and created a legacy for centuries cannot be imagined.

Leonardo da Vinci's inventions and discoveries have influenced today's Western culture because he showed his greatest skill and made his most lasting mark on history as a painter and anatomist. He was a gifted and innovative painter, whose works and techniques are the most distinguished of his time. *The Last Supper*, *Mona Lisa*, and *Vitruvian Man* are some of his finest works of art. These art pieces were way ahead of Da Vinci's time. The *Mona Lisa*, Leonardo's most famous work, is well known for its mastery of technical innovations as for the mysteriousness of its legendary smiling subject. *Mona Lisa*, or *La Gioconda*, is a 16th century oil painting on poplar wood, and it is the most famous painting in the world. According to Stauble, this painting is a half-length portrait that depicts a woman whose gaze meets the viewer with an ambiguous expression. She also mentions that the title *Mona Lisa* comes from an artist, biographer, and writer Giorgio Vasari; the portrait is of Lisa Gherardini, wife of a banker, Francesco del Giocondo. Leonardo began the portrait in 1503 or 1504, when he was living in

Florence. Until his death in 1519, it was never delivered by Leonardo. It became more famous after being stolen by an Italian patriot in 1911. It has been part of the collection of the Louvre Museum in Paris, France since 1913 (Stauble 22). The painting presents a backdrop of a distant, vast landscape of valleys and rivers receding behind her. Leonardo applied three-dimensional effects to a landscape background to produce a strong reaction in viewers ("On the Nature of the Background behind Mona Lisa"). Because of the pyramid-shaped figure and the contrast of light and dark, the portrait is still the center of attraction. "The sense of overall harmony achieved in the painting reflects Leonardo's skill in phenomenal creation connecting humanity and nature, making this painting an enduring record of Leonardo's vision" (Carbon). "With Leonardo's model providing the unifying thread, however, it becomes possible, first, to glimpse the man's restless intellect, that extraordinary psyche; second, to see whence the ideas for his works of art came; and ultimately, to appreciate his art at a different level" (Atalay xix).

The *Mona Lisa*, Leonardo's most famous work, is well known for its mastery of technical innovations as well as for the mysteriousness of its legendary smiling subject. The woman in the painting exhibits some striking facial features. Is she smiling? According to Gelb, this work is a dexterous example of two techniques—*sfumato* and *chiaroscuro*—of which Leonardo was one of the first great masters (143). "Sfumato is characterized by subtle, almost infinitesimal transitions between color areas, creating a delicately atmospheric haze or smoky effect; it is especially evident in the delicate gauzy robes worn by the sitter and in her enigmatic smile" (Gelb 143). Stauble mentions about *chiaroscuro*, "the technique of modeling and defining forms through contrasts of light and shadow; the sensitive hands of the sitter are portrayed with a luminous modulation of light and shade, while color contrast is used only sparingly" (25). "Leonardo's remarkable ability to welcome sfumato and embrace his paradoxes and ambiguity prepared the terrain for the extraordinary to be manifested through his life and work, and led the way to inventions and discoveries that were centuries ahead of his time" (Gelb 145).

Leonardo's stylistic innovations are more obvious in *The Last Supper*, in which he depicted a traditional theme

in an entirely new way. “*The Last Supper* was described by the legendary Oxford art historian, Kenneth Clark, as the ‘keystone of Western art,’ and recently inspired the compelling best seller, *The Da Vinci Code*” (Atalay 169). It is one of the great masterpieces of Western art, a mural that still intrigues and enchants. Jesus, who is seated in the center, surrounded by his disciples, is the main point of interest in Leonardo’s mural. Atalay describes that the drama is generated from him to the disciples; the rectangular table is covered with simple household objects such as glasses, plates, utensils, and foodstuffs that now assemble into ceremonial significance. “Instead of showing the 12 apostles as individual figures, he grouped them in dynamic compositional units of three, framing the figure of Christ, who is isolated in the center of the picture” (Atalay 169). “Seated before a pale distant landscape seen through a rectangular opening in the wall, Christ—who is about to announce that one of those present will betray him—represents a calm nucleus while the others respond with animated gestures” (Stauble 28). According to Stauble, “In the monumentality of the scene and the weightiness of the figures, Leonardo reintroduced a style pioneered more than a generation earlier of his time” (30).

Leonardo is best known for the many drawings that are closely connected to his paintings. According to his written statement, his explorations into various scientific fields made him a more skilled painter (Capra 165). “Given that he believed painting to be the best way humanity could reach total understanding of the world, his dedication to science while still considering himself an artist is understandable” (Capra 166). One well-known drawing in Western art is the *Vitruvian Man*, which shows “Leonardo taking the writings of the ancient Roman architect and engineer Vitruvius and creating a visual representation of the ideal ratios in the human body with the accurate dimensions of the average man inside a circle and a square” (Atalay 105). Based on Atalay’s description, we can see evidence of Leonardo’s exploration of the same kind of mathematical concept that the Ancient Greeks and Romans applied to make the works that become the “very foundation of the Italian Renaissance [and] that also inform his uncanny skill in representing [the] ideal human form” (105). His

innovations in the field of painting influenced the course of Western art for more than a century after his death. According to Capra, “For Leonardo, painting is both an art and a science, a science of natural forms, of qualities, quite different from the mechanistic science that would emerge two hundred years later” (3).

“So, was Leonardo a scientist who studied art, or an artist who studied science? Clearly, he was both. His scientific studies of rocks, plants, flight, flowing water, and human anatomy, for example, are expressed in beautiful, evocative, expressive works of art, not dry technical drawings. At the same time, the plans for his paintings and sculptures are exquisitely detailed, painstakingly analytical, and mathematically precise” (Gelb 98). Da Vinci’s innovative techniques in paintings have an immense effect on our society’s modern sensibilities, and the impact of those techniques cannot be underestimated. In terms of influences to contemporary Western culture, Leonardo da Vinci was a revolutionary artist and scholar. He adapted several advances that we take for granted today. As an artist, Leonardo attempted to represent realism in several forms, especially that of the human figure. He was successful in depicting true human emotions. A painting such as *Mona Lisa* is still a recognizable work of art in popular culture, but there is a deeper significance to its existence in contemporary society. According to Gelb, Leonardo was one of the first painters to showcase a modernized painting; scientific observation was an added advantage in his paintings; his work has influenced Western culture and thought because it shows the power of science and creativity; he showed that art, science, and technologies can be combined to achieve magical discoveries (166). The history of science is filled with the lives and legends of men and women who have made contributions for centuries, and their names have become synonymous with the science and the ideas that they created. “Leonardo’s model that worked magnificently for him can assist in bridging the cultural divide prevailing in our age of specialization, and it can help make us all more creative” (Atalay 280). Based on Atalay’s view, Leonardo’s paintings act as the key to unlock the progress of our society.

Even after his death, his innovations in the field of painting influenced Western art for more than a

century. His scientific studies—particularly in the fields of anatomy—envisioned many of the developments of modern science, particularly with his incredibly detailed and accurate anatomical illustrations. He dissected a total of 30 bodies (male and female and all different ages) over a 30-year period and created over 200 drawings of these bodies; he dissected a skull and brain with great detail to investigate the human skeleton overall (Panduru). According to the article “Leonardo Da Vinci and Human Anatomy. Original Communication,” Leonardo drew cross-sections of the human skull so accurately that medical students are still using the drawings today; he also dissected animals and compared their structures to human anatomical structures; he dissected cows, birds, monkeys, and frogs. He had a particular interest in the topographical anatomy of horses and bears. The article also says that “The greatest contribution of Leonardo on anatomy development is the introduction of anatomical drawing with educational value” (“Leonardo Da Vinci and Human Anatomy. Original Communication”). It is an assumption that Leonardo dissected corpses in order to better represent the human form in his painting. Leonardo’s anatomical drawings are the best. “Cardiac surgeon Francis Wells in Cambridge (UK) introduced a new technique in mitral valve repair inspired by Leonardo’s drawings of the human heart and his general methodology and has successfully applied the technique on over 250 patients” (“Leonardo’s Bridge: Part 2. ‘A Bridge for the Sultan’”). It is not an exaggeration that some of Leonardo’s most significant contributions to modern culture were his studies of human anatomy.

Some people may have a different opinion, that one of the great Renaissance artists, such as Michelangelo or Raphael, had a greater influence on Western culture than Leonardo da Vinci. Yet, a piece of art is nothing but an artist’s creation, no matter how great the artist is. People can admire the art; it can be inspiring, and it can become a valuable economic and cultural possession. However, artists cannot have the same influence on history as an individual such as Leonardo. The Renaissance is famous for its remarkable great men at the time, although they rarely worked together. Leonardo was twenty-three when Michelangelo was born, and he was thirty-one when Raphael was born. At the age of 37, Raphael died in 1520,

the year after Leonardo, but Michelangelo continued to work for another 45 years. The Renaissance encouraged a crossover between the ideas and skills of arts and sciences, which challenged many inventions in their intersection. “Because of his aura of mystery and extraordinary talents, Leonardo da Vinci became a legendary figure even during his lifetime, and his legend has been amplified in different variations in the centuries after his death” (Capra xix).

Capra occasionally referred to Leonardo as the first modern scientist. Capra also builds a case for this claim that Galileo Galilei, who was born 112 years after Leonardo, is usually credited with being the first to develop the innovative approach and is often known as the “father of modern science.” “There can be no doubt that this honor would have been bestowed on Leonardo da Vinci had he published his scientific writings during his lifetime, or had his *Notebooks* been studied soon after his death” (Atalay xvii).

It is undeniable that the significant role of Leonardo da Vinci during the period of High Renaissance Art has influenced Western civilization. He could suggest new possibilities by seeing the future; his imagination was influential for today. Leonardo’s impact on the world around him, his imaginations and insights, paintings and drawings have an immense effect. He created a future with so much imagination, innovation, and inspiration. He evolved the rules of science and technology, many of which are still applicable today. Leonardo da Vinci was a man who was far beyond his time. Many of our ideas in modern science, art, and math come from his works. Great pieces of art would not exist if he had never been born. If it were not for Leonardo da Vinci, some of the things we see in everyday life might not be possible.

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Evaluation: *Sarmila made effective use of 13 sources, none of which were websites. She also wrote in a well-organized, professional manner, and she had an interesting thesis. This paper was a sheer pleasure to read.*



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## The Rococo and Romance

Cosette Gutierrez

Course: Art 105 (Introduction to Visual Art)

Instructor: Karen Patterson

Assignment: *Students were asked to select an artwork from the textbook and link it to one of the “universal themes” of art addressed in class (in this case, the theme was “physical or spiritual love”). Students were required to demonstrate support for their argument using two methodologies: formal analysis and research.*

*Le Chinois Galant* (fig. 1) is an oil and canvas painting created by French artist François Boucher in 1742. This painting measures 41 by 47 inches and is currently a part of The David Collection of Copenhagen, Denmark. Boucher uses the medium of oil and canvas to imitate the style of Chinese designs on porcelain ware. Oil, unlike earlier painting material such as tempera, is easily blended, allowing artists to work with a varied range of tones and hues. This feature helps Boucher paint a realistic scene while working with the blue and white color scheme characteristic of Chinese porcelain. Another distinguishing feature of oil paintings is their glossy sheen, often that is produced by adding a thin glaze of transparent color to the surface of the painting. By adding this glaze to his painting, Boucher can imitate the shine of glassware. The early 18th century is often associated with the Rococo movement. This style was heavily influenced by the theatricality and extravagance of the previous Baroque period, but as high-society women increasingly became involved in the arts as patrons, artists of the Rococo period took into account more feminine tastes. *Le Chinois Galant* features a Chinese couple, with the woman extending her hand out to her kneeling lover, who kneels to kiss her hand. By placing them in the foreground, François Boucher makes the lovers the focal point of *Le Chinois Galant*, reflecting the tension between spiritual and physical love featured in the tradition of “courtly love.”

As mentioned, Boucher takes advantage of the variety of tones and hues created by blending oil paints to create a detailed scene with the restricted palette of blue and white. This restricted palette of cool colors contributes to a sense of unity in the scene; the different hues of blue, gray, and white do not clash with one another but instead help convey a sense of peacefulness and serenity in the scene. The scene itself is surrounded by a painted frame composed of curved, organic shapes mimicking leaves and flowers that seems to mirror itself on either side of the scene. The sides of the frame have rather subtle differences as they both are lush with the twisting foliage; however, some of the details are painted with a heavier line on the right, giving a little more visual weight to this side of the frame. Boucher uses a darker and more vibrant blue on this frame, almost giving the illusion that it is closer to the viewer. The scene itself uses a similar technique to create a sense of space in the painting. The sloped foreground on which the couple sits is darker and more detailed than the scenery behind them. This image on the foreground takes up just about a third of the painting; however, the viewer’s attention is drawn to it because of the darker coloring and the comparatively empty space that hangs overhead. The light seems to be coming from the left of the scene, as the front of the man seems to be illuminated, while his back seems to be marked by shadows. This is especially notable in the highlight on the smooth surface of the top of his head, which is lowered towards the woman’s hand. This is also reflected in the background. For example, the roof of the gazebo is illuminated on the side facing the viewer, but on the side closest to the right of the frame, it is darkened by shadow.

There is a sense of asymmetrical balance to the scene as the foreground slopes up towards the woman, with her parasol as the foreground’s highest point. Meanwhile, there is mainly empty space behind the figure of the man, who lowers himself before the woman. Arguably, the gazebo placed behind the man is meant to balance out the potted plant that sits behind the woman, but by placing it in the background and denoting such with its pale coloring, Boucher gives the gazebo a lack of visual weight that keeps the scene asymmetrical, which perhaps reflects an imbalance within the couple themselves.

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The movement in the scene is subtle, through the slight swaying of the trees in the background, the thin leaves portrayed with a delicate brushstroke, and more notably, the movement of the man towards the woman. The curve of his body toward hers and the space in between his lips and her hands implies that the painting captures the moment just before the kiss. The rectilinear forms of the gazebo and the platform on which the Buddha statue sits counter the curvilinear forms of the couple and the more organic forms of foliage that dominate much of the image.

Focusing back on the figures of the man and the

woman, Boucher takes care to give them both texture as he paints the many folds of their clothes. These folds also help discern their movement in regard to each other. As mentioned, the man is curved toward the woman. He is closed off to the audience as he turns his body toward the woman's hand. As opposed to the curved form of the man, the woman is more angular. She sits almost upright, the arm closest to the viewer is bent at a 90-degree angle, and the angularity in her pose is exacerbated by the fan that she holds in her hand, which extends in a straight line, creating an implied line that leads the gaze toward



Fig. 1. François Boucher, *Le Chinois Galant*, 1742. Oil on Canvas, 41 by 57 inches (104 x 145 cm). The David Collection, Copenhagen, Denmark.

the hand that is held by the man. Though she follows this line by tilting her head to look down at the man, her body is turned slightly out to the audience, making her seem more open compared to the hunched figure of the man. This contrast between the two figures could potentially raise questions about their relationship with each other. The man portrays a sense of devotion in the way that he is turned inwards toward the woman and lowers himself before her, but the woman merely stretches her hand out to him and looks down at him.

The type of scene portrayed here appears to be modeled in the styles of *fêtes galantes*, which in turn were inspired by pastoral scenes of 17th-century Dutch and Flemish painters. *Fêtes galantes* often featured well-dressed men and women frolicking and flirting in lush garden-like settings. These were popular during the age of the Rococo as they captured a light-hearted and jovial view on sensuality that was popular at the time (“Glossary”). Boucher had taken to this style of painting and notably portrayed the sentimentality of pastoral scenes on a multitude of mediums including tapestries and porcelain (Laing). However, *Le Chinois Galant* is notable in comparison to other *fêtes galantes* of Boucher and his contemporaries because of its subject material. *Le Chinois Galant* reflects the European fascination with the far East as European nations established trade with Asia. Artists of the Rococo often imitated Eastern-inspired embellishments such as pagodas and dragons to meet high society’s demands for chinoiserie. The novelty of chinoiserie helped establish the homes of society women as cultured (Mayor). Boucher had experimented with the genre of chinoiserie prior to *Le Chinois Galant* and is credited with a number of engravings depicting Chinese subjects fishing, dancing, and hunting, all images inspired by travel books maintained by travelers to Asia (Stein). *Le Chinois Galant* combines two fashionable trends of Rococo art by using Eastern elements to create a *fête galante*.

As noted previously, the art of the Rococo moved away from the dark theatricality of the previous Baroque period to better cater to the increasingly female patrons of the arts. Many of Boucher’s works were created under the patronage of the Marquise de Pompadour, one of the mistresses of King Louis XV. Boucher had in fact

been commissioned multiple times to create portraits of Mme. de Pompadour (Posner). Mme. de Pompadour had also encouraged Boucher to devote works of art to mythological and religious subjects, sometimes despite his own lack of enthusiasm for such work; nevertheless, he accepted commissions from his enthusiastic patron (Laing). This relationship of artist and patron can also be seen in the courts of 12<sup>th</sup>-century France. Poets known as troubadours sought out noblewomen as patrons and catered to them. Medieval traditions of courtly love emphasized a sense of longing for a love that is unattainable (usually due to differences in status). Popular notions of romance such as always thinking of one’s beloved can be traced back to the troubadours of this time. These poets painted love to be almost religious as they pledged devotion to their beloved (Denomy). This kind of relationship is very clearly depicted in Boucher’s *Le Chinois Galant*. The huddled figure of the man is turned entirely towards his lady as he pulls her hand towards him. He lowers himself before her, to kiss her hand, but also arguably to show submission to her. In contrast, the woman holds herself upright in a very dignified recline against the bench behind her. Boucher seems to denote her authority over the man through her posture.

The physical aspect of this romance is subtle compared to more amorous displays that may be featured in other pieces of Rococo art. The woman holds the man an arm’s length away, but there is the tension in the implied motion of the man bending down to kiss her hand. The fact that Boucher chooses not to portray the actual kiss itself perhaps is done with respect to the longing that is so often the subject of troubadour poetry, which in turn reflects the unattainability of a noblewoman due to differences in status and wealth (Denomy). The spiritual aspect to love can perhaps be symbolized by the Buddha statue that smiles down at the couple. As noted in the textbook *A World of Art*, this statue takes the place of Venus or Eros, gods associated with love in Western mythology (Sayre). While the Buddha does not necessarily have the same connotations of love and sensuality as these gods, the idea of a higher deity smiling down, blessing a romance, perhaps speaks to the purity of the love between the couple. However, in the same way the Buddha smiles down on the couple, so does the woman smile down at the man, once

again perhaps speaking to the power imbalance between the two. The lighting can also be considered a reference to the almost goddess-like status that the patrons of artists and troubadours can be elevated to in their works. As previously noted, the lighting seems to be coming from the left to illuminate the man's front and darken his back with shadow. The woman, despite holding a parasol and being placed against this light, is light in color, lacking in shadows, and she, in comparison, appears to be radiant. The parasol is also placed just behind her head, giving the illusion that she is haloed like portraits of the Virgin Mary or other saints of the Catholic canon. This perhaps reflects his own patroness's inclination for religious and mythological subjects while at the same time referencing the religious views troubadours had imposed on romance.

Ideas of courtly love were notably prominent during the Rococo period as women like Mme. de Pompadour increasingly became involved as patrons of the arts and artists of this period sought to cater to their tastes. Such tastes may have also played a role in Boucher's artistic choices, in his color scheme, and as subjects like chinoiserie became fashionable among society women. The lovers are drawn in the foreground with much darker lines than the background, thus drawing the viewer's attention to the intimacy between the two, which reflects the tension between physical and spiritual affections characteristic of courtly love.

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Evaluation: *Cosette presents what seems to me to be a sophisticated and original argument: she weaves together the painting's fête galante tradition of the French 18<sup>th</sup> century with contemporaneous Orientalist fascination, while finding commonalities in subject matter with the medieval theme of courtly love and the troubadour tradition. She develops her arguments well, drawing her conclusions from astute analysis of form as well as high-quality research.*

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# The Nightmares of Hassan Blasim

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William Hanley

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

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Assignment: Write a research paper about a work or works of literature that we read for class, incorporating effective use of at least seven secondary sources.

“If you put a camera in the street in Baghdad, everyone wants to tell their story,” says Hassan Blasim in Lynx Qualey’s article, “Book Review: *The Corpse Exhibition* by Hassan Blasim,” which is essentially what he has done with his book *The Corpse Exhibition: And Other Stories of Iraq* by giving readers an intimate look into a war-torn and crumbling culture of Iraq. In addition, the article, “A Nightmare of Violence and Terror” by Jessica Holland, says this book is, “perhaps the most important work of literary fiction printed in the U.S. to depict post-invasion Iraq from an Iraqi point of view.” Furthermore, *Truthdig* contributor Chris Hedges’ article, “The Crucible of Iraq” takes Holland’s claim one step further by saying it, “is the most important book to come out of the Iraq War.” Many have echoed a similar importance of not only the work, but of Hassan Blasim himself, a man riddled with a past exposed to all types of violence and societal ills. In, “Q & A #1: An Interview with Hassan Blasim,” Joe Fassler of *The Lit Show* writes, “Blasim inserts his own nightmarish brand of magical realism into a grisly, war-torn landscape” and undoubtedly, through the stories in *The Corpse Exhibition*, Westerners can now enter into a version of Iraq that they may have not realized. Referring to the last story of the book, “The Nightmares of Carlos Fuentes,” David Kipen of *The New York Times* wrote in his article, “An Iraqi Blasted Open, Sketched from the Inside,” a contemplating question and concession: “Is Mr. Blasim suggesting the complicity of writers like himself, who transmute the deaths of their countrymen into literary fiction for self-congratulatory Western readers tough enough to take it? If a short story could break the heart of a rock, this might just be the one.”

Hassan Blasim, an Iraqi-born filmmaker and writer, “has himself become one of the most important Arabic-language storytellers” according to Qualey. To put it bluntly, “The Iraq of Mr. Blasim, who was born in Baghdad in 1973, was burning long before other forces showed up, jerrycans of kerosene sloshing, to douse the flames” (Kipen), and Blasim has given readers a first-person perspective into these longstanding dilemmas and atrocities. After making several short films in the 1990s, “[Blasim] left due to concerns his films did not play well with those in power there” (Ashfeldt), and as a result, “In 1998 [he] himself fled artistic persecution in Baghdad to settle in Kurdish-controlled Iraq” (Qualey). At the beginning of the Iraq War in 2003, Blasim became a refugee and has, for this reason, been living in Finland since 2004. Blasim describes the life in Iraq in an interview by Joe Fassler: “Before there was the dictator’s police and security agencies. Now there are the security agencies and the militias, and terrorism and mafias and intervention by neighboring and distant countries in all parts of the country.” Blasim recognized this was systemic: “There was a culture of violence that predated the occupation” (qtd. in Hedges) when referring to the Iraq War of the U.S. and its allies. Regardless of this, journalist and critic of the Iraq War Chris Hedges, maintains that “The American occupation...has made this internal and external violence worse.”

As a caveat, Blasim’s perspective may never have reached many Americans’ eyes and ears without Jonathan Wright, the man who translated Blasim’s works and interview questions into English. In an article by Lane Ashfeldt, “Translating Hassan Blasim: A Conversation with Jonathan Wright,” she describes Wright’s past: “As a young journalist, he was kidnapped in Lebanon but broke out and escaped unharmed within weeks.” That is, Wright is not some naive onlooker to what Blasim’s writings suggest. Nothing came easy for Blasim or Wright. While they both have escaped much of the circumstances of their pasts, they are now met with a new challenge: “Every translator’s nightmare is that he will miss a reference or possible second reading and end up looking like an idiot,” Wright says in his interview with Lane Ashfeldt. Mr. Wright has, on the contrary, done a fine job giving Blasim’s words and prose powerful and resonating visualizations that can bring readers’ minds into the streets of Iraq.

Of the stories in *The Corpse Exhibition*, “The Killers and the Compass” reads as an amoral black comedy that brings the reader into the violent, autotheistic, and debaucherous world of Abu Hadid, while “The Nightmares of Carlos Fuentes” is a cautionary and surreal introspection that lets the reader understand the extreme lengths to which a person will go, to redefine one’s life. Both main characters are flawed, with extreme ideologies. Abu Hadid in “The Killers and the Compass” is a savagely immoral person, bringing us into the mind of a truly self-absorbed, nihilistic youth. On the other hand, in “The Nightmares of Carlos Fuentes,” the main character, Salim Abdul Husain, a.k.a. Carlos Fuentes, only becomes fanatical after fleeing Iraq, by embracing Western thought through the entirety of Dutch culture as a newly determined nationalistic man. Overall, it seems Hassan Blasim’s “The Killers and the Compass” shows us the dark side of having too much individualism with no sense of community, and “The Nightmares of Carlos Fuentes” shows us the extreme of conforming to a culture to fit in. “Blasim is as haunted by violence as his characters” (Hedges), and yet, the saving grace of that is how this characteristic makes these stories even more worth reading.

“The Killers and the Compass” is told in reflection by Mahdi, the sixteen-year-old younger brother of Abu Hadid. Mahdi goes out for an evening with his older brother and experiences the world as his brother knows it. Abu Hadid believes himself to be a god and goes about the neighborhood gathering favors, pleasures, and whatever he deems for the taking. Mahdi is introduced to several of his brother’s acquaintances: from a single mother he casually meets up with for sex (along with her daughters), a mechanic that gives the local kids pills in exchange for bringing customers to his shop via illegal methods, a bald man obsessed with a fish tank, and another young man named Murad who takes the two brothers on a car ride to the outer city limits as he tells the tale of a young Pakistani boy and his compass. The story concludes with Mahdi, Abu Hadid, and Murad dragging a bound and gagged man from the trunk of Murad’s car and burying him alive. In this last action, Abu Hadid proudly inaugurates his younger brother into his world and tells Mahdi: “Now you’re God” (Blasim 23).

Abu Hadid tells Mahdi at the very beginning of “The Killers and the Compass” that, “If someone tells you ‘God forbids it’ or ‘That’s wrong’, for example, give him a kick in the ass, because that god’s full of shit. That’s their god, not your god. You are your own god, and this is your day” (Blasim 13). This quote captures Abu Hadid’s autotheism (you are your own god) as the central thought process of his actions. Abu Hadid’s belief structure and lack of morals is somewhat common for young men. David Kipen recognizes this as reaching “Straight back to the jagged, unsatisfying nihilism of youth.” However, coupled with the life in war-torn Iraq, it follows that Abu Hadid wants to be bigger than his circumstances allow him by being his own god. Nevertheless, at his core, I do not think Abu Hadid entirely disbelieves in God or gods as if he were an atheist, he just wants nothing to do with that kind of wishful thinking after what he has been through. Ironically, this attitude has given rise to his own horrific actions by continuing the despair in his neighborhood. Mahdi himself says: “Abu Hadid didn’t distinguish between good and evil” (Blasim 17). Abu Hadid arguably has no morals, at least not any good ones. There are few, if any, silver linings revealed about his character; he lives in a gray area of life, which may be pretty honest of him intellectually, but it does not give him a better way of going about the world.

Mahdi describes how “People were scared senseless of [his] brother’s brutality. His reputation for ruthless delinquency spread throughout the city. He would baffle police and other security agencies for many years--until, that is, the day he was executed in public” (Blasim 17). I believe this line is important because it lets the reader know that Abu Hadid didn’t live a long life of delinquency and debauchery. Mahdi tells of the fatal end to his brother’s life in the middle of the story: “Abu Hadid would go on the rampage like that for eight years, until Johnny the barber gave him away. The night it happened Abu Hadid was fucking Johnny’s pretty brown daughter on the roof of the house. The police surrounded him and shot him in the leg. They executed him a week later” (Blasim 17). Up until the last moment of his life, Abu Hadid was living for pleasure. Abu Hadid had a somewhat successful run of doing whatever he wanted, but that slavery of obeying every impulse ended with his demise. It seems that

Mahdi has a neutral position toward his brother, believing he really was neither good nor evil. I viewed his death to be very telling of the laws in Iraq. Abu Hadid didn't have a trial, nor anything of the sort, and was executed a week after his arrest. In many Western cultures, that type of punishment would never happen so swiftly and purposefully. Unlike Abu Hadid, Salim Abdul Husain, a.k.a. Carlos Fuentes, did have a positive side to his story, up until the end.

According to Brian Van Reet's article, "Iraq, Terror, and the Surreal," "The last story in the book and one of its most heartbreaking is 'The Nightmares of Carlos Fuentes.'" He goes on to say, "The story is satisfying in a tragic sense, and admiring its artfulness, one can only predict Blasim's own future will be much brighter than his character's" (Van Reet). David Kipen, who was much more critical of the overall work, says, "The collection's last story is so complicatedly good that it's hard to believe that it came from the same man as the first one." "The Nightmares of Carlos Fuentes" tells of an Iraqi man named Salim Abdul Husain, who has grown weary of all the death, decay, and destruction in his homeland of Iraq. Salim, a street sweeper, routinely found body parts from explosions. One day, after an oil tanker explodes near the market, he came across a ring on the dismembered finger of a victim from the blast. The ring became his prized possession. Salim eventually made it to France for a spell and eventually to Holland, where he changes his name to Carlos Fuentes. Under his new identity, Carlos Fuentes embraces the Dutch culture to the full. He learns the language, marvels at their culture, and even scoffs at the foreigners as if he was from there his whole life. One night, Carlos begins to have nightmarish dreams that remind him of his past. To counter this, he falls into a pattern of fanatical behavior, from strange sleeping habits and dietary observations to mysterious and secretive rituals. Fuentes even frantically tries to learn everything there is to know about dreams and learns about lucid dreaming, where individuals can control their dreams if they realize they are dreaming. On one night, he recognizes that he is dreaming. In his dream, and to finally end his unconscious thoughts, he begins murdering every person in his wake. And "right up to an ending worthy of Rod Serling" (Kipen), he climbs to the top of floor of

the building and sees himself, his old self, Salim Abdul Husain. Carlos Fuentes grows frustrated at the mockery his former self chants. Carlos begins to shoot at Salim, but Salim jumps out of the window, missed by the barrage of bullets. In the morning, Carlos Fuentes lays dead on the sidewalk outside of his home, after accidentally jumping out of his apartment window in his sleep. A photographer on the scene captures an image of Salim Abdul Husain, otherwise known as Carlos Fuentes, at a low angle, with a sheet over his body, and all that stuck out was his hand and that ring glowing in the sunlight thus, presumptively bringing all of the short stories full circle by the end of the book as one complete, thought-provoking experience.

Carlos Fuentes would say, once he made it to Holland: "Yes, give me a country that treats me with respect, so that I can worship it all my life and pray for it" (Blasim 191). By this point in the story, he has fallen into a dangerous ideology of Statism, which is giving oneself to government or a state. This is in stark contrast to Hassan Blasim's own thinking: "I'm not interested in nationalism or religion or any other narrow allegiance" (qtd. in Ashfeldt). The reader never saw this kind of zealotry from Salim when he was living in Iraq, whereas the new Carlos Fuentes goes as far as denigrating his Arabic kind: "They work in restaurants illegally, they don't pay taxes, and they don't respect any law. They are Stone Age savages" (Blasim 190). I think this is comparable with how many Americans sneeringly view Mexicans who come to the US; in short, both racism and nationalism are inherent in almost every culture.

The narrator describes Carlos Fuentes' feverish immersion by saying, "He joined classes to learn Dutch and promised himself he would not speak Arabic from then on, or mix with Arabs or Iraqis, whatever happened in life" (Blasim 189). This was the first hint of extremist behavior we see in Carlos Fuentes, and yet, it is not uncommon: "In ordered European societies, immigrants desperately trying to survive as exiles, straining to fit into an alien culture and speak an alien language, soon discover they are forever bound to this wheel of fire" (Hedges). The character has become a racist against his own peoples and has disavowed his past life in Iraq. Consequently, during the climatic nightmare, "Fuentes' nerves snapped and he panicked. He let a resounding scream and started

to spray Salim Abdul Husain with bullets, but Salim jumped out the window and not a single bullet hit him” (Blasim 195), and as a result, he accidentally committed suicide by leaping out his window. I think the author is trying to make a statement that we should not forget where we come from, as he deals with demons from his own past and present through this story. Likewise, Hassan Blasim had a similar event in his life, saying, “I moved to Kurdistan and changed my name” (qtd. in Holland), just like his character Carlos Fuentes. Granted, these stories are works of fiction; nevertheless, one can speculate how much of these stories’ truths are grounded in fact.

In the beginning of “The Nightmare of Carlos Fuentes,” the narrator describes a scene after an oil tanker had exploded in the nearby market, killing multiple people: “They were sweeping the market slowly and cautiously for fear they might sweep up with the debris any human body parts left over” (Blasim 187); in fact, for Blasim, it may have been even worse than this. In an interview with Jessica Holland of *Guernica Magazine*, Hassan Blasim says: “We used to watch executions,” and not out of pleasure or entertainment, for this is an all too sad and regular occurrence for these people. In an interview with *World Literature Today* writer Lane Ashfeldt, Hassan Blasim describes it as, “Iraq has been a maelstrom of violence and destruction for more than five decades.” The realities of this hellish life are echoed in “The Killers and the Compass,” when Murad explains to Mahdi what it was like trying to leave Iraq: “I was thinking of going from [Iran] into Turkey and putting this fucked-up country behind me. I lived in a filthy house in the north of Iran, with people from Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iraq...we waited for them to hand us over to the Iranian trafficker who was going to take us across the mountainous border” (Blasim 19). This highlights how contentious, troubled, and perilous not only Iraq is, but also the surrounding region. These people are essentially trapped in a limbo of violence, despair, and a seemingly never-ending humanitarian issue. In the interview with Jessica Holland, Hassan Blasim tells of a very similar situation that he experienced:

“I’ll tell you a short personal story. We were walking across the Turkish-Bulgarian border. We

were a group of Iraqis and Nigerians. There was a fat young Nigerian woman with us and she found it hard to walk. Our smuggler, an Iraqi, suggested we take turns carrying her. Between us we carried the woman through a cold rainy night in the mud of the woods and fields. The Bulgarian army caught us at the barbed wire and beat us up. Then they took us to their military unit on the border. The soldiers raped the Nigerian woman in the room next door. We could hear her voice and we cried in silence. We had carried the woman through a cold, wild night so that the army of the modern world could rape her.”

Regrettably, the vast majority of people in the West probably do not realize what many of the people of Iraq and the surrounding region are dealing with on a daily basis. Furthermore, these people can’t even leave the war-torn areas they are from, and so it follows that these young men, like the character of Abu Hadid, fall into the nihilistic angst of repetitious hopelessness. If they do escape, like the character Salim Abdul Husain did, I assume the reaction can be something of what he had when he arrived on Holland: “Look how clean the streets are! Look at the toilet seat; it’s sparkling clean...Why are these trees so green and beautiful, as though they’re washed with water every day? Why can’t we be peaceful like them?” (Blasim 189).

Hassan Blasim has presumably dealt with the demons of his own past by using these characters as vehicles to describe what it was like coming from a war-torn country. Abu Hadid and Carlos Fuentes both died in tragic fashion. Conversely, author Hassan Blasim’s future is only just beginning. In the end, I believe Hassan Blasim’s stories like, “The Killers and the Compass” and “The Nightmares of Carlos Fuentes” are criticisms of not only Iraq, but also of the West. Hassan Blasim says it this way: “The media presents what is happening in Iraq in the form of fast food for the audience” (qtd. in Fassler). He goes on to say: “The violence that has taken place in Iraq has reached the most extreme peaks of insanity. It is not magical realism, it is nightmarish realism” (qtd. in Fassler). Blasim makes other assertions in his various interviews, like: “There’s no violence worse than the violence of Iraq. For the last fifty years Iraq has been living a nightmare of violence and terror” (qtd. in Holland), and only now are many



being exposed to this reality. “We paid a heavy price in those years for the crimes of the dictator, who had been supported by the West and America for many years,” says Blasim to Holland. Accordingly, Blasim pronounces: “What is happening in Iraq now did not come about by chance. It’s an extension of the destruction and the wars that the dictator (i.e., Saddam Hussein) fought earlier, wars in which international capitalism was, and still is, a significant factor” (qtd. in Ashfeldt). In contrast, it is not all fire and brimstone for Blasim, because he maintains hope for the future, summing it up as: “Perhaps I’m an idealist but wars are a disgrace to us as humans” (qtd. in Fassler). If only more people thought like this, maybe the world would be a better place. Blasim’s translator, Jonathan Wright, says in his interview with Lane Ashfeldt, “I know Hassan much better through his writing than in person,” and so it follows, we all can have a better understanding of life in Iraq thanks to writers like Hassan Blasim.

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Evaluation: *This paper is a rich and deft synthesis of discussion of Hassan Blasim’s fiction, critical commentary about it, and Blasim’s own comments on his life and writing. In this paper, Will shows a highly developed and professional research and writing ability. I found this paper quite breath-taking.*

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# Parting Is Such Sweet Silence

*Mia Indovina*

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Kurt Hemmer

Assignment: *Choose a character from Ernest Hemingway's A Moveable Feast and write an essay exploring his or her impact on Hemingway.*

People often say that the moment before you die, your life will flash before your eyes. What they really mean by “your life” is only those moments deemed most important to you, the highlights so to speak. All the trivial details fade away, and what stands out in those moments is all that truly matters to us. One can assume suicide might be similar, only you have more time to linger in the details of it all, more time to revisit the moments in your life when things were going right, more importantly, when it all went wrong. For most people, I would assume this reflection would be quiet, private, and concealed from those around them. For a literary legend such as Ernest Hemingway, it was quite the opposite. *A Moveable Feast* gives us a glimpse into the last thoughts and memories of Hemingway right before he ended his life. It feels as though you are reading his suicide letter to the world, gaining access to the moments in his life he deemed most relevant. Hemingway is honored in the literary field today for his unique stylization, and most notably for his iceberg theory. He leaves so much unanswered, leaving his audience to finish it. The way he portrays himself in this memoir leads me to believe he portrayed himself to the world in this same fashion. It appears that he concealed large aspects of his true self in order to project a certain image; the rest was left for us to fill in the blanks. Hemingway discusses many important relationships he had during his years in Paris, but it is the relationship he had with himself which is most interesting. This memoir allows us to investigate specific topics, such as hunger and masculinity, which mirror the internal struggles he faced. After all, this was the time in his life that he chose to reflect on before his suicide, and its significance is worth exploring.

A general theme Hemingway mentions in this book is his hunger, and how this hunger seemed to be the very fuel his younger self thrived on. It seems most prominent in youth when everything life has to offer seems out of reach yet still highly obtainable. This young version of Hemingway seemed to encompass a multifaceted desire for all he witnessed around him: love, sex, wealth, respect, recognition, and, in typical Hemingway style, other things we feel but cannot quite identify. Hunger weaves through his words all throughout this memoir. When first mentioned, he speaks of the hunger that remains, and not the simple kind. Hemingway states:

It was a wonderful meal at Michaud's after we got in; but when we had finished and there was no question of hunger anymore the feeling that had been like hunger when we were on the bridge was still there when we caught the bus home. It was there when we came in the room and after we had gone to bed and made love in the dark, it was there. When I woke with the windows open and the moonlight on the roofs of the tall houses, it was there. (57)

Hemingway tosses between the literal and figurative meaning of hunger throughout this book. In this section, he had just finished indulging in a grand meal, and the hunger accompanying it had little to do with actual food. It seems he was remembering the chase of his youth, the profound happiness felt when the world was his for the taking, the desires that breed in the belly of a young man, and how dreaming of what we want is often far more gratifying than actually achieving it. He had love with his wife Hadley, he had opportunity ahead of him, he had just dined with people he admired, yet still the hunger burned bright. Hunger in its most basic form is a pit or void that urges to be filled. Hemingway never seemed to be fully satisfied with the way things were; he always seemed have a void in his life that was keeping him from feeling gratified. This appetite is in part what made him great, yet also foreshadows his demise. It makes sense that at the end of his life he chose to speak so intentionally of these desires and of the time in his life when they were most prominent. Perhaps he finally realized at the end of the road, joy is not always found in crossing the finish line, but in the race itself.

As a young man with an insatiable appetite, he had an intense desire to prove himself. Hemingway presented himself with a proud masculine manner, and he found it distasteful when other "men" behaved in contrast to it. He points this out in the book when he ends his friendship with Gertrude Stein for showing a weak and feminine side in her romantic relationship. Even though Stein was indeed a woman, she was still the acknowledged "male" of her relationship with Alice B. Toklas. When Hemingway walked into her apartment and heard her begging and pleading with Toklas, he lost all respect for her and never quite saw her in the same way. He displays distaste again later in the book with F. Scott Fitzgerald,

when he describes his "delicate long lipped Irish mouth that, on a girl, would have been the mouth of a beauty" (149). When Hemingway was a child, his mother used to dress him and his sister as twins. She kept his hair long and forced him to wear dresses like his sister. This behavior deeply upset him and bruised his self-confidence as he worried that even Santa Claus might not know he was a boy. It is safe to say that perhaps the macho attitude he displayed as an adult was deeply rooted in childhood wounds. Hemingway hints at his family problems in the memoir when he states, "It is easier with bad painters because they do not do terrible things and make intimate harm as families can do. With bad painters all you have to do is not look at them. But even when you have learned not to look at families nor listen to them and have learned not to answer letters, families have many ways of being dangerous" (108). Although Hemingway does not outright say what he means in this passage, he does give insight into his perception of his family. Despite the fact that he escaped his home when he set off for Paris, his relationship with his mother may have followed him throughout his life. In this memoir, we may be glimpsing Hemingway's remembrance of the creation of the "Papa" image we have all grown accustomed to. This image became integral to Hemingway's sense of identity. He attempted to preserve this image by diverting our attention to others who did not meet his standards of masculinity. Despite his best efforts, he only drew more attention to the very thing he set out to conceal.

Hemingway exposes many things about himself in this book, but ultimately it is what he discovered outside of himself that made the biggest impact. Toward the end of his life as he writes this memoir, he reflects fondly but with great regret about his first wife, Hadley. He left her for the illusion that novelty often creates; and he went off with her best friend. At the end of the story Hemingway looks back at his affair and remembers returning to his wife afterwards: "When I saw my wife again standing by the tracks as the train came in by the piled logs at the station, I wished I had died before I ever loved anyone but her. . . I loved her and I loved no one else and we had a lovely magic time while we were alone. . . it wasn't until late spring, and back in Paris that the other thing started again" (210-11). His hunger may have led him to marry

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multiple women throughout his life, but in his last days, it was Hadley for whom he grieved. Oftentimes, when we look back at our lives, a couple things stand out: who we love, who we lost, and who we regret letting go.

Hemingway had another great love that altered his life, besides his wife Hadley: one whom he may have taken for granted, and one whom he did not realize would be missed until she was gone. It was Paris, with all her possibilities; she lured him as she had with so many before. Full of intrigue and magic, he found many things while in her company. He found the space to distinguish himself from his upbringing, mentors and literary rivals to motivate his career, and true love with his first wife Hadley. Paris was also the place he lost her, and with her maybe part of himself. Paris was not just a physical place he once called home; it was a place that remained with him always. Paris encapsulated the highlights of his life that he reflected on before his death. Love, loss, regret, hunger, passion, and desire—they were all there living inside him in that city. In the end though, he spoke of her the way one always speaks of a true love, with sincerity: “If you are lucky enough to have lived in Paris as a young man, then wherever you go for the rest of your life, it stays with you, for Paris is a moveable feast” (v). One love lost in a lifetime is enough for any man, but to have lost two is perhaps unbearable. Hemingway declares that Paris will always remain with him, but if you are unlucky enough to know for yourself, the ghost of a lover comes only to haunt. Maybe he realized there was only one way to irrevocably escape her echoes. Less than a year after working on this book, Hemingway took his own life, once and for all surrendering to the sweet silence found in death, never again to be haunted by what was and what would never be again.

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Evaluation: *Mia does an exceptional job analyzing the details of Hemingway's memoir to show what it reveals about the man himself.*

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# We All Are Racers, and What We Manifest Is Before Us

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Manabi Iwabuchi

Course: ESL 057 (Reading IV)

Instructor: Kathleen Reynolds

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*Assignment: This essay assignment involved responding to the novel *The Art of Racing in the Rain* by Garth Stein. For most students in ESL Reading 4, this assignment is their first time writing a full-length essay in English about a novel written in English.*

We are all racing somewhere, sometimes. And sometimes, we have to race on slippery, rainy ground, as Garth Stein shows in *The Art of Racing in the Rain*. Denny, who is the leading character of Stein's story, is an excellent racer in auto racing, and he runs his life brilliantly through a lot of hardships. However, all the characters of this story are racers running through a course called life. They must sometimes drive in the rain, such as a death in the family, a fear of losing a child, jealousy or a false accusation. Enzo the dog, who watches over and helps Denny, narrates the lesson of the race. When I read the phrase, "A racer should not be afraid of rain" (Stein 44), I remembered my daughter Koharu. I pondered the meaning of the phrase that appears repeatedly, "That which you manifest is before you" (Stein 41). It is there before anyone: Koharu, me, probably all other people.

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 stress for 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. In the novel, Denny says, "It is being a part of a moment and being aware of nothing else but that moment" (Stein 13). In other words, one must sometimes disengage from the present. Denny and I arrived at the same answer. I stopped thinking about responsibility and uneasiness. I thought that this moment is important and determined that we should manifest living with a smile.

Koharu's hair grew while she was absent from school. She had begun to go to school again when she became a junior high school student. I thought that our car advanced smoothly. However, heavy rain fell again. The name of the rain is "the malice." When she was in seventh grade, a bullying issue occurred in her classroom. Koharu was not a victim, but one of the assailants was her friend. She was confused and decided to fight against bullying. The bullying was stopped, but she lost her hair again. She said, "I will not go to school any longer." She cried, "I am afraid of the malice of the person. There is malice in every classmate. I am too feeble!!" Our car greatly spun. It is difficult to live in an unpopular way in Japan. It is generally believed that the children who don't go to school are failures. But I did not let her go back to the popular way. Enzo says of the racer, "He will do his best to maintain his line and gradually get himself back on the track when it is safe to do so" (Stein 291). Denny did not stroll around in temporary unrest in the hard situation. I think that I was able to act like Denny then. We do not need to come back to the course in a hurry. Denny repeatedly says, "Your car goes where your eyes go" (Stein 83). I thought that I must not have improper aim. "What do we manifest? Yes, to live with a smile tomorrow." I believed only this. Koharu dropped out of school and continued studying little by little at home. The

spin was settled, and we advanced the car slowly in the rain.

When we decided to move to the United States because of my husband's work, Koharu was 17 years old. She wanted to enter the American high school. She hadn't studied English enough, so she couldn't speak English well. She continued going to school while sometimes crying. I was anxious about her smile disappearing if our car spun again. I often said to her, "You can quit going school anytime if you want." However, Koharu said, "No, I won't. I should be an adult who can do something for somebody." I noticed what a stupid mother I am. That is not our car. It is her car. She had already grasped the steering wheel by herself and set her foot on the accelerator. What was manifest before her was unknown to me. Enzo says, "The true hero is flawed" (Stein 135). The flaw of Koharu is much small baldness behind her long hair. If she feels too much stress from hard work, her hair will probably fall out. However, Koharu was already able to control her weakness. She took a little rest and played truant before her health failed. She spun her car before the car spun, like Denny (Stein 42). She embraced the rain, as Denny says (Stein 44). I applied to enter Harper College for myself at that time because I had to drive my car forward for myself.

It was the end of October when I began to read this book, and an acceptance letter for Koharu arrived from a Japanese university. She accomplished her goal! What she manifested is now before her! She is going to go to university starting next spring and live alone. I worry again. "Don't worry, mom, because I can buy a new wig if my hair disappears again," she said with a great smile. We all are racers. We must go forward, even if we spin, even if it rains. And I hope that we all have potential to be heroes. Because there is some flaw with everyone like Denny, Koharu, and me.

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*Evaluation: Manabi's thoughtful essay not only shows her understanding of the novel, but also her ability to make deep personal connections to its themes. Manabi's voice as a writer and her experiences as a parent are the highlights of this work, transcending linguistic and cultural borders.*

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## Fear and the “Enigma of Women”: Kafka’s Struggles with Gender in Life and Work

Jacob Iwaniuk

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Jeremy Morris

Assignment: *This essay was submitted in my English 102 course as the capstone assignment for the semester: a literary research essay written on Franz Kafka’s “The Metamorphosis.”*

The opening of Simon C. Ryan’s “Franz Kafka’s die Verwandlung: Transformation, Metaphor, and the Perils of Assimilation” begins by describing “The Metamorphosis” as “...the story of a son whose transformation into a repulsive, inhuman, and steadily weakening body [that] marks his banishment from society and from the family he loves” (1). Nearly every criticism of “The Metamorphosis” begins the same way, discussing Gregor’s slow death, the dehumanizing nature of his work, and, inevitably, his family. In “Transforming Franz Kafka’s ‘Metamorphosis,’” Nina Pelikan Straus points out that “In 1977 there were already ten thousand works on Franz Kafka in print. . . . Yet until 1980, gender-based theories and feminist criticisms were rarely articulated in discussions of Kafka’s stories” (Straus 651). She argues that this is because, “Traditionally, critics of ‘Metamorphosis’ have underplayed the fact that the story is about not only Gregor’s but also his family’s and, especially, Grete’s metamorphosis” (Straus 652). Straus is pointing out that most of the discussion about change in “The Metamorphosis” focuses on Gregor, but that leaves out three major characters, each having their own unique perspectives, motivations, and arcs. “The Family” is usually discussed as if it were one character, despite their different attitudes toward the creature that they suddenly find themselves living with. This reduction of three individuals into one unit is misleading, and it doesn’t allow for deeper analysis into their original inspirations. The idea that Kafka’s writing was inspired by his life isn’t exactly a fresh idea, and it’s been written about for a while. However, most of these analyses focus on the inspiration for Gregor’s father. There are interesting parallels there, but Greta and the mother go mostly ignored in lieu of the surface comparisons. Writers draw inspiration from the people and places around them, and it’s inevitable that their lives will bleed into their stories, but, what if these aren’t positive inspirations? What if the author had toxic relationships with the people in his life? Franz Kafka’s fear of women, fostered by a deep hatred of his father, and fueled by his inability to commit himself to a relationship, manifested itself in his work.

First, it’s important to examine how each character behaved in the story. Gregor may be the main character, but he isn’t the only one that changed in the story. Gregor’s

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father begrudgingly rejoined the workforce, and Gregor’s mother went from fainting at Gregor’s sight to visiting him and moving furniture. Greta is introduced, minutes later she is crying. Later, however, she starts taking care of him and working to support the family. At first glance, this seems like a story that proves women can be ambitious, take their lives into their own hands, and become stronger individuals. However, this empowering nature of the story is completely undercut by what the parents do on the last page of the story. Now that Gregor’s gone, and Greta is of age, the parents agree that this is the right time to marry her off to some wealthy gentleman. In the end, Kafka’s portrayal of women in “The Metamorphosis” is mixed. Straus notes “... the ambiguities of Kafka’s language effect a tension between culturally sanctioned attitudes toward women and his own exploration of those attitudes” (Straus 652). Kafka certainly had a peculiar way of interacting with the women in his life. He wasn’t exactly a “ladies man,” exemplified by his having broken off an engagement with the same woman, twice (Beck 567), and his “. . .fear of physical intercourse” (Neimneh 37). Kafka’s familial estrangement and fear of intimacy influenced his work, and it impacts the way each character behaves in the story. How did Kafka get to this point? Who turned Kafka into Kafka? Well, his family, of course.

It’s important to examine Kafka’s relationship to his family during his formative years. Kafka’s father seems to have affected his trajectory in life the most. In “His Father’s Excrement: Franz Kafka and the Power of the Insect,” Hanif Kureishi writes that, “Far from being an absent, unimpressive father, Hermann Kafka was an overwhelming man: too noisy, too vital, too big, too present for his son. . .” (Kureishi 6). Franz and Hermann were locked in an eternal arm wrestle of sorts, unable to rationalize each other’s behavior. Kureishi points out that “Kafka, who loved theatre and cabaret, and hated his own “puny” body, particularly in comparison to his father’s hardy, “huge” frame, was more interested in the tortured male frame than the female form. . .” (10). Kafka really differed from his father on a fundamental level. Hermann Kafka was “. . .a man of appetite, who seems, from the outside, to have been hard-working, devoted to his family, loved by his wife to whom he remained faithful, and a Czech-speaking Jew in a tough, anti-semitic city”

(Kureishi 7). Hermann was the polar opposite of Franz. This was more than just a rebellious streak. Kafka never relented; he kept up this behavior for the entirety of his life, and this struggle between father and son is likely the inspiration for the conflict between Gregor and his father in “The Metamorphosis.”

Hermann was strong and bulky, while Franz was weak and puny; one was faithful to his wife, while the other was “. . .very good at maddening, provoking and denying women, [going] to enormous trouble to ensure that none of the women engaged with him was ever happy or satisfied” (Kureishi 10). It’s almost comical how differently both acted. This begs the question; did Kafka do this to himself? Could it have been out of spite? Kureishi answers this question by quoting Kafka himself: “Kafka wrote in his diary in 1921: ‘It’s astounding how I have systematically destroyed myself’” (15), which implies that Kafka did these things because he despised what his father represented, and this was his way of rebelling. Kureishi continues his analysis by writing that Kafka’s “. . .perverse insistence on innocence, ensured that his destructiveness was never a secret... .He misled himself, as people do, for good reasons. He was always ‘devilish,’ as he put it in the diary, ‘in his innocence’” (Kureishi 15). Kafka, in his attempts to differentiate himself from his father, ended up worse off, much like a rebellious teenager. Kureishi says as much: “Kafka grumbled, protested and rebelled, but he never revolted. He never overthrew the system or sought to do away with it, to escape the impasse and start afresh in another place with another family, making new mistakes. Kafka refers to his father as ‘the measure of all things for me’ but also calls him weak” (11). Franz was constantly acting like he was on the defensive, but simultaneously doing everything in his power to oppose what Hermann represented. Hermann certainly had an impact on Franz’s life and his work, and it’s not a very far leap of logic to assume that the way Franz felt about women also affected the way he portrayed them in his work.

As was mentioned previously, Kafka wasn’t exactly a Casanova or a Don Juan, but that didn’t stop him from seeking women’s attention and affection. Kureishi writes, “Although Franz Kafka wrote in his diary, ‘A man without a woman is no person,’ and came close to marrying Felice



Bauer and, later, Julie Wohryzek, he could not become a husband or father himself” (6). There was just something about Kafka that drove him to command women’s attention; half-heartedly stringing them along for months or years, and then suddenly turning cold. In “Kafka and Girls: The Case of Leni,” Bennet prefaces her discussion about the character of Leni in “The Trial” by writing “Franz Kafka was always in a muddle with girls, wishing to yet failing to marry three of them, both mistrustful of and drawn to sexuality, author of some of the century’s greatest love letters yet unable to renounce his solitude” (Bennet 390). Apparently, Kafka was more eager to sit behind his desk and write love letters than he was to meet in person. Neimneh writes, “Over the course of [their] correspondence, Kafka and Milena met only twice. The first meeting [was] in Vienna. . . .They met again in August of the same year in Gmünd. These meetings were viewed by Kafka as gaps in an otherwise epistolary affair” (Neimneh 37). In three years, they only met twice (Neimneh 37), but it’s not like they lived thousands of miles apart. Kafka just chose to avoid meeting the women he wrote to. His excuse? That he was sick.

To be fair, Kafka was sick. He died young of tuberculosis, and, according to Neimneh, the letters were way to cope with his sickness; “The fluctuation of Kafka’s health documented in his early letters to Milena and its deterioration by the time he wrote the final letters led him to experiment with the traditional bodily contours by means of written letters,” and here, it’s being suggested that the letters Kafka received “. . .[served] as a substitute for Milena’s corporeal presence. . . .” (Neimneh 41). Since Kafka was either too weak or non-committal to show himself in person, these letters took the place of physically being next to Milena. This letter-writing benefitted Kafka well; “The early letters show that writing does Kafka good; he grows calmer through the cathartic function of writing. . . . His dedication to letter writing is motivated by the letters’ ability to give him the energy necessary to pursue life. . . .they provide him with the longed for nourishment for the sickly body” (Neimneh 41). Milena, understandably, would have rather committed to a real relationship. Kafka wanted to keep it on an epistolary level (Neimneh 41), and he never considered that the other party might want him to commit on a more serious level.

Kafka seemed perfectly content writing to Milena and keeping it from getting too serious; after all, who knows the facts and realities of marriage better than Kafka?

“Getting serious” seems to be what Kafka wants to avoid. In “Kafka and Sex,” Stanley Corngold asks, what does Kafka have to lose by settling down? Thankfully, Kafka answered that question himself via the medium of poetry, citing “In the Dead of the Night,” by Yilan Tzu-tsai:

Bent over my book in the cold night  
 I forgot to go to bed in time.  
 The perfumes of my gold-embroidered  
 quilt  
 have already evaporated, the fireplace is  
 extinct.  
 My beautiful mistress, who hitherto has  
 struggled  
 to control her wrath, snatches away the  
 lamp,  
 And asks: Do you know how late it is? (qtd. in  
 Corngold 82)

Kafka, by including this poem in one of his letters to Felice, is trying to show why he is afraid of committing to a woman and settling down. He’s afraid that he will have no time to write and create. Corngold says as much: “For Kafka, writing excluded regulated heterosexual sex. He feared marriage because he could not spend his nights in bed; he needed at least his nights for another sort of ‘nightwork,’ as he put it” (82). Kafka’s fear of intimacy and commitment starts to make sense. The logic behind it is still flawed, but Kafka appears to have a reason to distrust marriage. Kafka’s detachment from his father, mistrust of sexuality, sickness, fear of marriage, and urge to write completely skewed his perception of the other gender. They weren’t necessarily warranted fears, but they plagued him nonetheless. Elvira Bennet, author of “Kafka and Girls: The Case of Leni” sums it up rather nicely: “It is evidently easier for women to do without Kafka than for him to manage without women, though of the two I think it is Kafka who makes the greater exertions to extricate himself” (Bennet 390). Kafka did everything in his power to keep himself detached from women; after all, there was a minute possibility his time to write would

## Fear and the “Enigma of Women”: Kafka’s Struggles with Gender in Life and Work

be occasionally interrupted. Kafka couldn’t commit to any of the women in his life, and he also couldn’t stay consistent when it came to writing female characters in his work.

In “Kafka and Girls: The Case of Leni,” Elvira Bennet points out that “The Trial,” “The Judgement,” and “The Metamorphosis” were all written after Kafka began courting Felice Bauer (Bennet 394), the same woman he would end up proposing to twice (Beck 567). Bennet says, of “The Metamorphosis,” “There are four women in ‘The Metamorphosis.’ The three living ones establish the range of womanhood itself: Grete the maiden, Mrs. Samsa the matron, and the charwoman” (394). These were some of the only roles women played in society: wife, daughter, maid. Kafka seemed to be very familiar writing these characters according to their social norms, despite his apparent distaste for the classical father/breadwinner archetype. The women in “The Metamorphosis” all have their own motivations and characters arcs, but “. . .there is also another, a ‘girl’ with a sexual charge. This is the woman in the photograph Gregor has hung with explicit pride and implicit shame on the wall of his monkish bedchamber” (Bennet 395). This is the picture that Gregor scurries up the wall to “rescue” (Bennet 396) when Greta and his mother enter the room to remove furniture. Bennet continues, saying “The shameful of this image, the moral equivalent of the adolescent discovered with his Playboy or Penthouse, is reinforced by the horrified response of Gregor’s mother, a source of comfort now withheld from Gregor by the successful alliance of father and sibling rival” (Bennet 396). Women can be wives, daughters, maids, or sexual objects, and that’s it. That’s all that Kafka can come up with. According to Kafka, that’s all women represent, all they amount to. This reductive portrayal of female characters becomes clear upon further examination of “The Metamorphosis.” Kafka portrays Greta as indecisive and emotional. She defends Gregor at first, then she starts to berate him. She starts working, begins to teach herself French, then, suddenly, she is subject to the whims of her parents when they decide they should marry her off. Kafka can’t decide whether women are too controlling or incapable of controlling anything. Bennet concludes her analysis of “The Metamorphosis” by writing “Kaf-

ka projects females as at once powerless...and powerful...Men may compete for her favors, yet she remains a medium between them, a trophy and the seal of their bond” (400). Greta goes from a promising musician to a good to be sold in the marriage market. Greta had some form of control over her life, for a few months at least, but all of that self-determination evaporates instantly. The rest of the women in the story have similarly underwhelming resolutions to their character arcs.

The mother is similarly powerless and powerful. As mentioned earlier, she grows as a character when she starts helping Gregor, but she loses that ambition, and doesn’t say a word when her husband decides it’s time to marry off their daughter. It had been just a few short hours since Gregor passed away, but it was more important to think about how the other child can bring wealth to the family. The maids don’t have fates that are as depressing as Greta and the mother, but they are still treated coldly. The father fired the first maid because of their poor financial situation, and the charwoman is fired just as unceremoniously, without any advance notice. It could be argued that the father wants to forget this chapter of his life and get rid of the bad memories these people bring, but that doesn’t excuse him for discarding them like one would dispose of an old couch.

In conclusion, Kafka’s mixed portrayal of women in his work stemmed from an ongoing conflict with his father and a deep-set fear of committing himself to a long-term relationship.

Kafka’s father was everything that Kafka resented. Hermann was a hearty, strong, committed man, while Franz was often described as weak and puny, not exactly representative of the traditional male role. Kureishi points out that this rebellion never resulted in anything, that it just drove Franz further from his father and probably cemented Franz’s distrust of traditional marriage roles. Further into his life, Kafka’s fear of intimacy and women affected the way he interacted with them, and that skewed perception of women started to affect how he wrote the female characters in his work. Before his death, he would end up courting three women, but he would rarely meet them in person, preferring to keep them at a distance. It’s much easier to dodge questions and be elusive via post. The women in Kafka’s life were more like emotional

punching bags and shoulders to cry on rather than potential life partners. These letter exchanges carried on for years before the relationships fizzled out. In Kafka's work, Leni and Grete are two examples of characters who are both powerful and powerless, portrayed as capable characters, but eventually reduced to sexual objects to be bartered away or ignored. "The Metamorphosis" is more than ". . .the story of a son whose transformation into a repulsive, inhuman, and steadily weakening body marks his banishment from society and from the family he loves" (Ryan 1). It's the story of Franz Kafka, the man who never married, but was the ". . .author of some of the century's greatest love letters. . . ." He may have been ". . .unable to renounce his solitude" (Bennet 390), but his writing has been analyzed and will continue to be analyzed by generations of literary critics and scholars. Kafka may have met an early end, but his work lives on, a sort of time capsule of early twentieth century attitudes toward women and the male role in society. Kafka may have been afraid to commit himself to a woman, but the words he committed to paper will continue to inspire discussion and analysis for generations to come.

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Evaluation: *From the beginning of this essay, this student lights the way with a proposed question. The student's claim, about Kafka's fear of women being manifested in his work, is fervently sharp in the best way. The development of the claim can be followed until the end of the paper, where like Greta, an enigma is born yet elucidated. The utter craft here by Iwaniuk is resolute by the end of the essay wherein the reader, just like the characters in the story, feels changed, complete, or as Kafka writes, "like a confirmation of their new dreams."*

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# One Man's Wimp Is Another Man's Gangster

Christopher Jaime

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Elizabeth Turner

Assignment: *Compose, revise, and edit a persuasive narrative essay.*

I strutted down the hallway of Fenton High School, muttering to myself in a Boston accent and holding a pencil to my mouth in the likeness of a cigar. "You feeling all right?" my gym teacher, Mr. Madl, queried. I was so focused on my impression that I jumped at the sound of his voice. I clutched my chest and explained that I was rehearsing for my role in *Kiss Me Kate*, the high school's fall musical. Mr. Madl's brow furrowed, and he asked if I was being smart. When I told him I was serious, he said, "Look, I don't know why you're bothering with that, but why don't you come try out for the football team instead? I'm about to oversee tryouts, and I can use a big dude like you to man the line. It'll be a lot more intense than dressing up in costumes and pretending it's Halloween."

"No thanks, Coach," I replied. "I appreciate the offer, but acting is just as intense as bashing heads with the big boys, and this way I won't get a concussion and a handful of broken limbs."

"Well, when you decide you don't want to be a wimp anymore, you know where to find me," rebutted Mr. Madl. As he dismissed me with a wave of his hand and turned to walk away, I parried with, "And when you decide you want to be open minded, you can come watch us rehearse. Acting is more like football than you realize." I turned and huffed toward the auditorium.

I heard a ruckus as I approached the green room. I shouldered through a door labeled "M" and stepped in to find the boys preparing for the show. Our lead actor, Scott, who was playing the role of Fred Graham, was rapidly issuing orders to the team. He directed me to suit up and join the group. I quickly fetched my gear, which consisted of a zoot suit, pair of spats, tie, and fedora. While I dressed, our Director, Mr. Mitchell, popped his head in to wish us luck with our dress rehearsal. After delivering his encouraging words, he departed for an empty house seat to sit and critique our performance. When I finished dressing, I joined the rest of the team, and we began warming up, singing "do, re, mi, fa, so, la, ti, do!"

When Scott believed our vocal cords were properly stretched, he barked, "Form up!" We huddled and recognized a minute of silence, which was our pre-performance ritual. "Hands in," Scott ordered; we obeyed. "The director says this is a dress rehearsal, but don't lose focus. Get your heads in the game!" We chanted our agreement and broke our huddle.

We hustled into position on and behind the stage, and Mr. Mitchell yelled, "Begin!" The opening number, "Another Op'nin', Another Show," commenced. I was not a part of this number, but I watched from the sidelines as the two actors on stage began the scene by singing, "Another op'nin', another show. In Philly, Boston, or Baltimo'. A chance for stage folks to say hello. Another op'nin' of another show!" Immediately following, the rest of the actors blitzed the stage from the wings. Scott seized the lead, and the song continued while the team ran its intricate patterns downstage; upstage, stage right, and stage left. Coincidentally, *Kiss Me Kate* was about actors preparing for and performing in a musical of their own, so my teammates portrayed themselves on stage. The number concluded, and every participating actor but Scott and Kate, the lead actress playing Lilli Vanessi, talked to each other like old friends as they departed the stage to rejuvenate.

Fred and Lilli, formerly married, argued bitterly while I prepared for my debut. As part of the plot, a member of the cast gambled and lost ten thousand dollars. When he couldn't afford to pay back the sum, he forged Fred's signature on an IOU. Phil and I, who were cast as the two gangsters, had to score the money back for our boss, Mr. Hogan. As soon as Fred returned to his on-stage dressing room, Phil and I snuck in and confronted him about the money. Fred was startled by our sudden appearance. "Who are you, and what are you doing here? If you're here for an autograph, I see my fans after the show," Scott stated with uncertainty. With a Boston accent, Phil and I explained his debt to Mr. Hogan, and Fred's eyes widened. While we conversed, he made two attempts to escape us, and both times we shoved him back into his seat. Lilli popped her head in to wish Fred good luck, and, to avoid drawing unnecessary attention, we followed her offstage. I tracked the show after I walked off and made several short appearances before the house lights gradually lit to indicate halftime.

The team congregated in the green room, and we chirped about the first half. Silence washed over us when the director arrived with the half-time report, and he coached us. "You're all doing a great job out there, but there's a few things you need to work on." Mr. Mitchell referenced his clipboard and continued, "Katie, you're

a little flat on your high notes. Tackle those suckers confidently, and you'll nail them. Chris, I was having trouble hearing your lines while you were up there with Phil and Scott. You gotta stiff-arm that shyness, or we'll miss key dialogue. Scott, don't think I didn't see you sack your cue for Katie; you improvised nicely, though. That's all I've got. Keep up the good work, everyone." Mr. Mitchell wished us good luck for the remainder of the rehearsal and turned to exit.

When the director disappeared, Scott ordered another huddle, and we chanted, "Go team!" With our shortcomings known, the second half promised to run smoothly. As the plot line went, the gangsters were supposed to become enamored with acting in the process of trying to collect Fred's debt. While I waited for my opportunity to run with my scene, I studied the stadium of empty seats. Until now, Mr. Mitchell sat alone and critiqued our abilities. However, he was now accompanied by Mr. Madl! I stood tall, straightened my suit, and peered closer. The gym teacher seemed guarded; I decided I was going to break his defense.

At that point in the play, Lilli was about to depart because she planned to marry another man, but Fred and Lilli were still secretly in love. Despite Fred's best efforts to persuade her to stay, Lilli bade him farewell and admitted she could not finish the show. She escaped stage right, and Fred, injured from the foul blow, withdrew to stage left. With the stage empty, Phil and I sauntered on. As part of the plot, we were lost on stage, and we wandered left and right searching for an exit. When we realized we were in front of an audience, our musical number began. Phil and I swayed nervously, and I could see that Mr. Madl recognized me. Winning his favor would be a Hail-Mary pass.

"Brush up your Shakespeare. Start quoting him now. Brush up your Shakespeare, and the women you will wow. . . ." At the end of the first phrase, I caught a glimpse of the coach's eyebrows as they rose. Our drive might just work! Phil and I sang and followed each other around the stage. We posed Hamlet and clapped each other on the shoulder from phrase to phrase. ". . . Just declaim a few lines from Othella, and they'll think you're a hell of a fella. . . ." The corner of Mr. Madl's lips slowly curled towards the ceiling. We had to stay on the offensive. ". .

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.if you can't be a ham and do Hamlet, they will not give a damn or a damnlet . . . ." A flash of pearl caught my eye. ". . . If she says your behavior is heinous, kick her right in the Coriolanus. . . ." The football coach's guttural guffaw rivaled a stadium announcer's booming voice. ". . . Just recite an occasional sonnet, and your lap'll have honey upon it. . . ." Mr. Madl launched from his seat and pumped his fist in the air while screaming his approval; I knew we scored. With puffed chests, Phil and I finished the song. "Brush up your Shakespeare, and they'll all kowtow!" We each lifted our fedoras in gratitude and swaggered from the stage.

The show continued, and Mr. Madl was now focused on the production. We were exhausted from the hot spotlights, uniforms, and constant action, but one scene remained. Despite being covered in sweat and the droop in his step, Scott donned his game face. Our final scene was also the final scene in the musical, and a devastated Fred took the stage. The actors stiffly looked left and right and prayed for Lilli to show up; without her, they would have to forfeit the show! "She won't be coming," Fred lamented. Silence filled the air, and the threat of defeat loomed ominously.

"I'm here!" Lilli bellowed, and she charged in from stage right. Fred froze and stared wide-eyed at Lilli. With a sudden burst of energy, he ran to embrace her, and the finale began. Phil and I, now dressed in matching chorus costumes, marched in from off stage and posed for the end of the scene as Fred and Lilli kissed. Mr. Madl cheered madly after the curtain closed, and the cast left for the dressing rooms for our post-performance cooldown.

My feet dragged on the way, and I let out a contagious yawn. I peeled off my suit, returned to my street clothes, and made my way to the hallway so I could begin my journey home. Mr. Madl was waiting for me, and when he saw me, he rushed over and shook my hand. "I was wrong about you, dude," he confessed. "Your coordination is stellar! I wish I could get some of my guys to follow a route like that. You really gave your all and tackled that show head on. You got heart, kid." Mr. Madl held out his fist, and we bumped knuckles.

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Evaluation: *Chris' essay reflects the characteristics of an effective essay. In addition, Chris effectively includes elements of fiction, including an extended metaphor.*

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# A Memo to President Trump on Matters of Globalization

*Diana Kim*

Course: Management 165 (Global Business)

Instructor: Karl L. Buschmann

Assignment: *As newly appointed Special Assistant to the President for Global Business Affairs, write a memo to the President, on globalization, global trade, and global investment.*

## **Memo**

**To: Donald Trump, President, Executive Office of the President, United States of America**

**Cc: Professor Karl L. Buschmann, Instructor, MGT 165, Harper College**

**From: Diana Kim, Special Assistant to the President for Global Business Affairs**

**Re: Globalization vs Automation: What Is Taking American Jobs?**

**Date: 15 November 2017**

## **Executive Summary**

Globalization is not as big of a threat to the jobs of low-income Americans when compared to the progressing nature of automation, which may be hitting those communities the hardest. There is reason to believe it would be beneficial to renegotiate NAFTA without withdrawing and find better means of keeping our Americans employed and employable.

## **Introduction**

It has been my understanding that the Trump rhetoric on globalization from the campaign and first year in office has been fraught with inaccuracies. Coming from the face of this country, these misconceptions are detrimental to the education of the American people and also create problems when making policy decisions and negotiating policies with countries. Furthermore, there has been an overemphasis on globalization as the cause of unemployment and not enough acknowledgment of job automation and regional inequalities in the discussion of American job loss. This memo will illuminate key concepts about globalization and NAFTA to think about before the start of renegotiations on Nov. 17, address the issue of automation, and recommend a tactic to consider that will keep Americans employed and put the unemployed back to work.

## **Discussion**

One of the most pressing issues is the upcoming renegotiations of NAFTA on Nov. 17 and the impact withdrawing from NAFTA could have on pocketbooks of Americans. NAFTA is a mechanism that allows for less restrictions on

trade within North America. It is one component in making the involved countries more competitive in a globalized society. Your campaign rhetoric made globalization out to be some form of evil that needed to be tamed for the good of the American people, when in reality the concept of globalization is simply the “shift toward a more integrated and interdependent world economy” (Hill 6). It is through globalization that we have been able to enjoy a larger variety of products, run efficient businesses because of around the clock work that takes advantage of different time zones, and keep products affordable thanks to specialization. For example, one of the products that many Americans enjoy is avocados, and Mexico is one of the largest exporters of avocados. While we could certainly grow avocados here in the U.S., prices would have to be exorbitant to pay wages to our farmers, and because avocados only grow in very specific conditions, there would not be enough supply for the demand. Mexico has a comparative advantage in the production of avocados. If we were to enforce trade barriers against Mexico, this would raise the prices because of the taxes on Mexican avocados, or people would be buying expensive American-grown avocados. This idea is even more relevant when we talk about the trade of automobiles where a 25% tariff on something as expensive as automobiles and their parts is even more substantial. According to an article by William Mauldin, the US-based car manufacturer GM heavily relies on parts from Mexico, but if NAFTA crumbled, they would be stuck paying the high tariff, or they would build the parts in the U.S., where they would be paying higher wages with a loss in efficiency from starting over (2). They would then pass that price hike onto the consumers. This hardly makes American vehicles competitive in the global market, which would lead to a drop in demand for American-made cars and further loss of jobs. To believe that restricting globalization will bring efficient and thriving factory work back to the United States is certainly foolish. As Alan Blinder notes in his article “Five Big Truths About Trade,” trade “is not mainly about creating and destroying jobs. It’s about using labor more efficiently” (2). To restrict trade is to restrict efficiency, and even a slight drop in efficiency could have devastating consequences on businesses in a competitive market.

Another troubling aspect about relying on bringing back factory jobs for employment is the progression of automation. According to Alexia Elejalde-Ruiz, half of Americans are at risk of losing their job in the coming years due to the automation of their jobs. “Automation poses a far greater risk to American jobs than offshoring and has a disproportionately harsh impact on poorer, rural communities” (Elejalde-Ruiz 1). While it may be tempting to find ways to regulate automation, this development is important for efficiency and accuracy and helping firms and corporations remain competitive in the global economy. Instead, as Blinder states, when there is job loss due to international trade or automation, it would be of great value to these workers for the federal government to help them (2). And no, it is not enough to just offer federal welfare. Let us look at the German model that was explored in an episode of Freakonomics radio. In Germany, there is a federally subsidized system of vocational training, where the individual spends half of the week taking classes and the other half working for an employer. This method is how Germany was able to rebuild its nation after the Great Wars and how they are having fewer problems of employment in the country. According to Jens Suedekum, professor of economics at Dusseldorf University, even when there is job loss due to automation, if the worker has acquired “industry-specific human capital” they are immediately more hireable than someone who has only received firm-specific training (Dubner 00:42:00-00:43:00). While in Germany this is mostly targeted at young adults, I recommend that this type of program should be available for adults of all ages in the United States. Education and staying relevant in your industry is the best way to ensure employability, and that is what vocational training provides. Also noted in *The Economist* article “The Right Way to Help Declining Places,” location has so much to do with a person’s ability to find employment. Many of the country’s unemployed live in left-behind towns, and while welfare may help the individual survive, they are still stuck in that town where they continue to perpetuate the problem. The proposed program above in combination with offering assistance in moving to a better location may put millions of Americans back to work where they can begin to contribute to the economy.



### Conclusion

As concerns rise in the American populace over increasing job loss in the manufacturing sector, many people feel that the culprit to their unemployment is globalization. While it is certainly true that offshoring of jobs has put many people out of work, this is only a small aspect of this larger concept of globalization. Overall, globalization has a net positive outcome, from giving access to products we use and love at an affordable price, to the employment of American people by foreign corporations. To believe that putting a halt to NAFTA would bring back jobs, particularly in the regions of the country that have been left behind, is to be misinformed. Businesses are not interested in setting up jobs where the average population is less educated. Should the companies that employed people in these areas go out of business, the people are back to living off of welfare. A government-subsidized program to educate and train Americans living in low-income areas and offering assistance in moving to areas with abundant job opportunities is a more sustainable policy with longer-term benefits to the people. Furthermore, it would encourage those people who are able to work to not take advantage of welfare and be productive members of the community. It is time to consider policies that give Americans the tools they need to thrive in a globalized society.

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Evaluation: *Diana's memo was the best submission from the course. Per the writing assignment rubric, she earned 100%. Her memo and oral presentation were most professional and fully met all requirements.*

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## Figure with Meat

Christian A. Klehm

Course: Art 132 (Modern and Contemporary Art)

Instructor: Stephany Rimland

Assignment: *The formal analysis paper is based on a primary investigation and visual analysis of a work of art. The student is tasked with analyzing the visual structure and media of a given work of art and to develop an interpretation of the artwork grounded in the physical/visual evidence.*

*Figure with Meat*, from 1954, is a 51 $\frac{1}{8}$ - by 48-inch oil and canvas painting of a man sitting between two halves of a butchered cow. The painting was inspired by Diego Velazquez's *Portrait of Pope Innocent X* and was part of a larger series by Francis Bacon, recreating the pope in various, twisted forms. While his popes are meant all frightening and disturbing in some way, none of them are quite as grotesque as *Figure with Meat*, which sets it apart in the series, being the only one to include any form of gore. The piece currently resides at the Art Institute of Chicago.

The canvas is about 4.25 by 4 feet, giving it an almost square aspect ratio of 1:1.0625, compared to many of his other paintings, which have a far narrower aspect ratio, from 1:1.44 to 1:1.28, for example. Square aspect ratios tend to be more claustrophobic and tight, either forcing the artist to fill canvas with more of the subject, or making the subject smaller. Composition for square aspect ratios tend to be centered, as moving the subject to one side or the other, even slightly, would lead to a heavily imbalanced painting or picture. This is one reason that social media platforms like Instagram favor the aspect ratios for selfies, as the subject, one's face, can easily fill the frame without a distracting background. Bacon, however, chose to use this aspect ratio for a far darker purpose.

He, unsurprisingly, centered the figure, both horizontally and vertically in painting, but he only had his pope fill half of the canvas vertically, result in him being relatively small and distant. The top half of the canvas is filled with a bisected carcass, which because of the square

aspect ratio, also extends to roughly the outer fourth of the canvas. The resulting composition has the center half of the canvas filled with a subject that is in turn divided in half, and the outer fourth is nearly blank canvas. This is a far less pleasing composition than something like the rule of thirds, which would break the canvas into three equal parts vertically and horizontally, as opposed to working in fourths. Fourthths are far more exacting and precise, and likewise feel staged and artificial. Popes would historically be painted posed, but found sitting gracefully and naturally. Composing in fourthths leaves Bacon's pope forced into position, coldly, and lifelessly, stripped of the same regal treatment given to his predecessors. The two flanks of meat also have a sloped space in between them, drawing the viewer's eye down and away from the meat and to the figure sitting between it, as opposed to the figure first. Because of the composition, this figure has been stripped of his power.

The canvas is black, and outside of the figure and meat, it is largely bare. This gives the already saturated colors even more contrast, which is rather sickening. Sprouting from the corners of the painting, and converging further on to form a cube, there are several faint white lines, some tainted with a light red and brown, suggesting a cage, or perhaps a small room. There are also some light, gray smudgins, hinting at some kind of grudge or water stains on a wall, or some surface in between the viewer and the figure, like a veil. These soft markings are meant to be ambiguous, placing the pope in whatever dungeon or other nightmarish holding cell the viewer may conjure up. This abstract environment reinforces the darkly surrealistic impression Bacon is trying to give the viewer, and it is one of the most common elements of his works.

This is compounded by extremely loose and splotchy brushstrokes, which have been further smeared in places, while left blocky in others. The black canvas often pokes through in the shadows, with only the highlight being painted in. The painting is left with an extremely crude and child-like rendering, which stands in stark juxtaposition to the nightmarish subject material. This in itself could be seen as disturbing, as what could drive a child to paint such horrible scenes of suffering? The loose quality of the brush strokes also gives the painting a hazy quality, which contributes to the surrealistic, dream-like nature of Bacon's work.

Bacon dressed his pope in a dark blue robe, fading into a purple in the shadows, like almost all of his other popes. This differs from historical paintings of popes, who were clad in vibrant reds. This suggests a different reality than our own, but the consistency alludes to a form of canon within Bacon's paintings. Red is generally considered to be a passionate, and even sometimes a violent color, while blue is usually mellow and peaceful. This starkly contrasts the often serene, although sometimes stern, depictions of historical popes. Bacon's popes, despite being dressed in blue, are shown in fits of rage, pain, terror, or other deep emotion. There is an intentional degree of irony to the color change, but most likely, it is to show sorrow and depression. By painting his popes blue, Bacon shows their entrapment and disturbing outbursts to be causing, or a result of, some kind of sadness. This could be a depression from futility, inevitability, or an awareness of morality, all three being applicable to *Figure with Meat*.

The skin of meat is a sickly, rancid beige, with the inside showing white bones, and a deep, bloody red for the meat itself. The colors are as disgusting and repugnant as the rotting meat itself. This contrasts slightly with the figure's skin tone, which is far more gray, but it is similar enough to suggest that the figure is not far off from the carcass behind him. The yellows and reds complete the

primary colors with the pope's blue clothing: however, with the distinct separation they have, it feels fractured and jarring, as opposed to natural and completed. The bottom half, with the pope, is blue, the next fourth up is red, and the top fourth is yellow. This follows Bacon's constant attempt to make the scene appear to be as unnatural as possible.

While many consider *Study After Velazquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X* to be the finest of Bacon's pope series, *Figure with Meat* offers something far more literal and tangible than Bacon's masterpiece. Is the figure much different than the meat behind him, which is rendered so similarly to his own flesh? He is flanked by these rotting pieces of meat, which are a constant reminder of his morality, that because of the cage, is inescapable. This causes him extreme anguish. Despite the nightmarish nature of this piece, it is not at all dissimilar from that nagging thought of death that constantly plagues us. The cage then becomes our own mind. *Figure with Meat* is simply meant to be a reflection of our own thoughts, but with something so entirely universal, one could argue it is something as absolute as our own mortality. Despite the gross and shocking nature of the painting, it is meant to be, in a sense, us. We are the nameless figure, grappling with mortality, and it is disgusting.

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Evaluation: *The student presents a sophisticated formal analysis of Bacon's painting to conjure a psychological portrait of this iconic image.*

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# Bilingual Education for Deaf Children in Japan

Chie Kotani

Course: Linguistics 205 (Language and Culture)

Instructor: Alina Pajtek

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

## Introduction

How should deaf children be raised? This could be a major issue for hearing parents. They might ask for doctors and specialists in hearing and linguistics, or they might search for information on the web. Some specialists give a lot of advice from their position and view for parents. Parents have to consider what is best for their deaf children. Now, many researchers pay attention to bilingual education for deaf children to include a spoken language and a sign language. According to Kusanagi, bilingual education is valuable for deaf children in three ways. First, sign language is the mother tongue for deaf children; second, bilingual education can help deaf children attain cognitive ability and learning ability through concept- and content-based teaching by using sign language; and third, bilingual education allows the dignity and culture of deaf people to be respected and valued. This view has been spreading since the 1980s around the world, and many deaf schools adopt it for their curriculum. In contrast, in my country Japan, the situation is different. There are only two deaf schools that adopt bilingual education, so Japan is behind in this area. In this paper, I argue for the importance of bilingual education for deaf children, and I discuss the reason for supporting this in Japan. Finally, I want to consider how to improve bilingual education for deaf children in Japan.

## Two Views of Deaf Education

Historically, we have two views about Deaf education. One view is that deaf schools should correct hearing problems with technology and improve children's communication abilities with speech therapy. The second

view is that deaf children should learn sign language, and children have to learn Deaf culture and identity through sign language. In the first view, training and curricula in deaf schools are based on oral language, such as speech therapy, articulation, lip-reading, and teaching the national language in oral and written form (Hayashi and Tobin 2). We call this approach "total communication." This approach was born in the United States in the 1960s. Some researchers argued that any communication tools like oral communication, hearing, and hand communication are necessary for deaf children, so total communication is the best way for them (Kusanagi 9). The goal of this method is to communicate exactly, using both oral and hand communication. Within this approach, hand communication doesn't mean sign language. That is "signed language," which is totally different from sign language. It is created by hearing people, so signed language follows oral language grammar and syntax. This approach is popular in many countries now, and most of the Japanese deaf schools adopt it.

On the other hand, in the second approach to education, the method focuses on sign language and Deaf culture. This view defines sign language as a native language for deaf children. Bilingual education is central to this approach. In bilingual education, sign language is defined as the first language (L1) for deaf children, and spoken native language is defined as the second language (L2) (Sasaki 2). For example, for a deaf child who is born in Japan, Japanese Sign Language (JSL) is L1, and Japanese is L2. In the bilingual education curriculum, deaf children learn JSL at first, and they learn Japanese reading and writing skills later. Professors of sign languages and linguistics comment about the benefit of bilingual education:

There are 3 strong reasons to learn both sign language and written/spoken language. First, a speech-only approach risks linguistic deprivation at a crucial period of development. The risk arises because of the variability in the spoken language development of deaf children who have cochlear implants (CI). In contrast, both sign language and early reading are visually accessible to the deaf child. This bilingual approach virtually guarantees that the child will develop linguistic competence.

Second, bilingualism is beneficial. Bilingual children display better mental flexibility and cognitive control as well as more creative thinking, especially in problem-solving. These benefits extend to social and academic settings. Third, sign language development correlates positively with written and spoken language development. No evidence has been found that the use of a visual language affects the outcome of cochlear implantation. (Mellon et al. 3)

The most valuable aspect of this education is to respect Deaf culture. Language reflects culture, so sign language is culture and identity for deaf people. At the same time, teachers must improve children's writing and reading skills. Those skills are also essential for deaf children. Because of those reasons, bilingual education is beneficial for deaf children.

### **The Benefits and Importance of Learning Sign Language**

In total communication, teachers use signed language in lectures. Sign language and signed language look similar, but they are totally different. Sign language was born from deaf people's life naturally, and it has unique grammar and syntax, so Deaf culture and identity are included. In contrast, signed language was created by hearing people. They used sign language vocabulary with oral language grammar and syntax to communicate with deaf people (Takahashi 21). Because of each background, sign language and signed language are different languages. Signed language is a useful tool for people who already learn spoken language grammar like hearing people and post-lingual deafness (Takahashi 23). Some researchers argue that if deaf children acquired signed language, they could communicate with hearing people easily, so signed language is more useful for deaf children than sign language (Sasaki 6). However, it is so difficult to master signed language and oral language grammar for deaf children. In particular, Japanese deaf children might need more time to understand them because Japanese grammar has some complicated rules. For example, Japanese has three characters (Hiragana, Katakana, and Kanji), so deaf children are confused about how to use each character with correct meanings. In addition, we use postpositional

particles a lot in Japanese (Sasaki 7). A postpositional particle is a part of speech that functions as an auxiliary to the main word in Japanese grammar. This grammar rule is the most difficult point of struggle for all Japanese learners. We should not impose on deaf children to learn signed language as their L1. If we do this, deaf children might fail to acquire L1. Some parents think that learning sign language would prevent development of their children's ability to learn to read and write. According to Sasaki (9), this would not be beneficial for children. She researched what education methods 27 deaf college students used before entering college. Thirteen students had education with total communication methods, and the other fourteen students learned using a bilingual education approach. There isn't a gap between the two Deaf education methods, so bilingual education isn't inferior to the total communication method.

### **Bilingual Education from Infancy**

In bilingual education, the majority of specialists in linguistics and any other areas recommend that deaf children learn sign language from infancy because language acquisition and brain development have a strong relationship (Humphries 5). That is the same situation in how hearing children learn L1. Hearing children begin to produce sounds gradually. They babble around six months old, they speak some words by one year old, and they use grammar in sentences by two years old. Deaf children follow the same steps in sign language by watching adults using sign language (Sasaki 2). L1 gains occur most naturally and successfully in the first few years of life. If a child is not exposed to the accessible or learnable language regularly and frequently before the age of around five years old, that child is not likely to use any language and grammar fluently like a native speaker does (Humphries 5). In another work, Humphries also says,

Failure to acquire language in the early years results in delay or disruption in the development of cognitive skills that interweave with linguistic ability. Such children have trouble with verbal memory organization, mastery of numeracy and literacy, and higher-order cognitive processing such as executive function and theory of mind. (Mellon et al. 3)

Learning sign language from infancy is essential for deaf children. In addition, writing and reading are also essential skills for deaf children's lives. Bilingual education from infancy is the best method for deaf children.

### Relationship between Bilingual Education and Cochlear Implants

Recently, cochlear implants have become popular for deaf children, especially in wealthy countries. Many hearing parents hope to recover their children's hearing problems by using cochlear implants, so their deaf children get the implants when they are babies. Some parents think that their children don't need to learn sign language because of the effectiveness of cochlear implants, and they hope for a good result of the surgery. However, unfortunately, the outcome is unpredictable, and the rate of success in the surgery is not guaranteed; even if the surgery succeeds, children's hearing abilities are not recovered completely (Humphries 6). They may catch some noise after they have the implants done, and they can't hear clearly like hearing children. After the surgery, they might start learning sign language or oral communication, but it is late to obtain L1 completely. They lose an important period to learn L1. If deaf children don't have their perfect L1, they might feel isolated from social situations. They can't communicate well with family, teachers, and peers, and they might lose any chances to obtain higher education degrees and pursue careers (Humphries 3). Of course, it is not good for deaf children who have CI surgery to learn only sign language. Parents need to activate deaf children's hearing devices after CI surgery to learn oral language (Mellon et al. 2). It is important for deaf children to improve their educational abilities.

### Summary of Deaf Education

Sign language is a full-fledged language, and it is central to Deaf culture and Deaf people's identity. For deaf children, learning sign language means respecting and understanding Deaf culture. Studies confirm that sign language is the most helpful language for deaf children. In addition, it is essential to obtain writing and reading skills for deaf children to get higher education and a career. Parents and deaf school teachers should try to improve deaf children's skills in both sign language and writing

and reading. Bilingual education is the best way for that goal.

### Deaf Education in Japan

In Japan, only one private school and one public school use the bilingual education approach; on the other hand, most schools adopt total communication in their curriculum (Hayashi and Tobin 1). Many deaf schoolteachers lecture by signed language. From the view of respecting Deaf identity and Deaf culture, is this situation right for Japan? We have some reasons for that situation. Since the 1970s, signed language has been spreading in Japan. Hearing people who use signed language worked as translators between deaf people and hearing people. Many people didn't realize the difference between JSL and Japanese, so they used JSL vocabulary in Japanese grammar. This is one reason why signed language has become popular in Japan (Takashima 21).

In addition, almost all deaf schools have attempted to improve students' oral communication skills since MEXT (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology) requested the use of oral communication in deaf schools in the 1930s. Deaf schools have adopted total communication since the 1970s. Almost all of the teachers in deaf schools were hearing people, and they lectured with speech therapy, signed language, lip-reading, and total communication tools (Sasaki 4). My mother worked as a deaf school teacher for 25 years. She told me about her lectures sometimes. She put her finger in students' mouths and pushed students' tongues to help them practice how to move their tongues when speaking. To teach how to do lip-reading, she had some lists that describe mouth shape in each letter. When I heard the curriculum, I thought that it was tough for students. However, she had pride in her job to improve deaf students' oral ability, since she trusted that students could get jobs and continue their education after deaf school, with those skills. That condition continues in deaf schools now. Teachers use signed language and total communication methods in classrooms, and almost all of the teachers are hearing people. Their curriculum is based on education guidelines of hearing children by MEXT. They have a class in Japanese, but they don't have a class in JSL. In Japanese deaf school, students don't have opportunities to learn JSL (Sasaki 6). Their curriculum doesn't include Deaf culture and identity. Unfortunately,

current Deaf education in Japan has been created by hearing people and hearing culture, and hearing people organize it.

### **Japanese Sign Language**

Because deaf children have lost opportunities to learn JSL and Deaf culture, JSL has become an endangered language. About 90% of deaf children are born from hearing parents, so they can't learn sign language at home, and deaf schoolteachers don't lecture in JSL in school. Because of those situations, deaf children can learn JSL only in the limited Deaf community. However, this important opportunity for deaf children is decreasing now for two reasons. According to Takahashi (14-16), the first reason for this situation is a decrease in the number of deaf students who go to deaf schools. Due to the development of hearing aids and CI technologies, many deaf children go to special classes for handicapped children in local hearing schools. They study, with their limited hearing abilities, with hearing students. The second reason why deaf children have limited opportunities to learn JSL is a decrease in the number of deaf schools. This is especially relevant because dormitories in deaf schools were the most valuable places where deaf children were exposed to JSL and Deaf culture, through socializing with other deaf children. These days, deaf children are losing those beneficial places. A major factor for a language to stay healthy and alive is to transmit it to children. Unfortunately, for Japanese deaf children, those opportunities are dwindling, and this situation leads to a decrease in the use of JSL.

### **Bilingual Education in Japan**

In the 2000s, bilingual education began in Japan in earnest. In 2007, the Sapporo public deaf school created a new course, in which teachers lectured with JSL. In 2008, a private deaf school, Meisei Gakuen, was established. All curricula there are taught with bilingual education methods and JSL. Those schools are pioneers in bilingual education in Japanese Deaf education, so many researchers and teachers have an interest in their form of education (Sasaki 2). One of the Sapporo public deaf school teachers commented why they decided to stop using an oral approach and to teach in JSL:

“One day we came to the point where we just couldn't keep on doing what we had been doing and what we were expected to do. We couldn't deny the reality in front of us: the oral approach just wasn't working. Around this time from our visits to Tatsunoko (a nonprofit JSL/Deaf advocacy organization), we became aware of the possibility of teaching in JSL. From this moment on we couldn't go back to the oral approach because we knew JSL was the best option for deaf children. It's their natural language. So we started teaching preschool classes in JSL.”  
(qtd. in Hayashi and Tobin 6)

Meisei Gakuen has beneficial environments that deaf children can learn by using bilingual education. The website for the school explains how they have an infancy class, kindergarten, elementary school, and junior high school, and many deaf teachers work with hearing teachers who can use JSL fluently. In all age classes, teachers talk with deaf children in JSL. In elementary school and junior high school curriculum, they have JSL classes and Japanese classes, and they teach other subjects in both JSL and Japanese. Some researchers say that the knowledge level of normal deaf school children is lower than hearing children. However, thanks to bilingual education in Meisei Gakuen, many children can obtain the same level of knowledge as hearing children. It is natural that deaf children would think that JSL is inferior to signed language and oral communication if hearing teachers and hearing parents often use signed language more than JSL in schools. Additionally, they might also think that they are inferior to hearing children who use oral communication (Kusanagi 3). Children who receive bilingual education can use JSL exactly as their L1, and they have writing and reading skills in Japanese as L2 speakers. Those children have pride in their identity, and they can attempt higher education because they have literacy skills. To raise such children, Japanese Deaf education should adopt bilingual education.

### **Conclusion**

Sign language is a full-fledged language, and Deaf culture is one of our world cultures, too. Nobody opposes that thought. School and education are significant and necessary opportunities to pass language and culture along

to deaf children. Bilingual education is the most beneficial for deaf children in Japan. Deaf schools should change their environment to improve that education. If hearing teachers would learn sign language, the number of deaf teachers should increase. Deaf teachers should teach Deaf culture not only to students but also to hearing teachers and hearing parents. Also, hearing teachers should take on the role of a bridge between deaf teachers and hearing parents, and they should teach writing and reading skills for deaf children. In addition, deaf schools should have JSL classes in their curricula. That is a valuable time to learn Deaf culture and to obtain a high proficient L1. In this situation, Deaf culture and hearing culture would be combined well. Parents and deaf children should experience opportunities to pass along Deaf culture out of school, too. Joining an active sign language community immediately is the most beneficial for both hearing parents and deaf children. This first step is essential in achieving the linguistic, cognitive, and social development that deaf children will need for school (Mellon et al. 4). Through education in school and home and in some communities, children can establish their identity. Every child has this right, and we should provide these opportunities for all Deaf children.

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Evaluation: *In this paper, the author reviews the literature on Deaf education in the US and then discusses Deaf education in Japan, where hearing teachers still teach Deaf students, and the curriculum does not include Deaf language and culture. The strength of Chie's paper lies in her thorough discussion of Deaf education in the US and Japan and in her passion to raise awareness of the importance of teaching Japanese Sign Language and culture to Deaf children in Japan.*



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# Théodore Géricault's *The Raft of the Medusa*

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Adam Kowalski

Course: Art 105 (Introduction to Visual Art)

Instructor: Karen Patterson

Assignment: *Students were asked to select an artwork from the textbook and link it to one of the "universal themes" of art addressed in class (in this case, the theme was "propaganda and persuasion"). Students were required to demonstrate support for their argument using both formal analysis and research.*

The greatest and most devastating of historical tragedies come not at the ever capable hands of nature's awe-inspiring destructive force. The true face of horror is what human beings are capable of doing to each other in hours of greatest desperation. Such is the nature of Théodore Géricault's painting *The Raft of the Medusa*, as the horrors depicted on canvas are as disturbing as they are a painful reflection of what humans are capable of when conditions are dire. Théodore Géricault had gone through many preliminary studies of the human form, the decay of the human form, and the physical structure of the infamous raft itself during early 1818, and he composed the final painting between 1818 and 1819, when it was premiered at the Paris Salon. The artwork is an oil on canvas painting, and it stands at a colossal 13.75 feet high by 23.5 feet wide (4.91 by 7.16 meters). The nature of the oil painting allowed for meticulous detail and blending of colors despite the rather muted color palette, and for vivid use of chiaroscuro to contrast areas of light and shadow to bring horrific realism to the suffering figures portrayed on the canvas. According to the official timeline of artistic movements, *The Raft of the Medusa* falls under the jurisdiction of Neoclassicism, especially considering that Théodore Géricault was directly influenced by Michaelangelo's *Last Judgement* after having visited the Sistine Chapel immediately prior to his composition of *The Raft*, carrying over the depiction of idealized human forms. However, due to the haunting subject matter and

grisly depiction of the scene unfolding with a genuine feeling of action and movement, *The Raft* has been interpreted as one of the earliest artworks indicating a transition to Romanticism.

*The Raft of the Medusa* portrays a moment of the tragic tale of the shipwrecked *Medusa*, a French frigate that ran aground during a voyage to Senegal in 1816 as it struck an unseen sandbar off the West African coast. Following the fall of Napoleon in 1815, and the reconstruction of the government under the Bourbon restoration, Hugues Deroys de Chaumareys rose to prominence through his own glorification, and was appointed the ship's captain after being away from naval navigation for over two decades. When his ineptitude led to the cataclysmic end of the *Medusa*, chaos erupted amongst the ranks. No officer on board respected de Chaumareys and his lackluster leadership, yet none volunteered to rise to command and replace him (Brandt 132). When de Chaumareys and his officers gathered into the lifeboats, some 150 of the crew were left to fashion a makeshift raft from the ruins of the *Medusa*. While originally promised that the lifeboats would tow the raft to safety, the tow ropes were untied, and in the following thirteen days, 90% of those on board the raft had perished. Mutiny, madness, murder, and cannibalism ravaged the survivors. Only fifteen souls remained on board when they were finally rescued by the *Argus*, and only ten survived thereafter. The moment that Théodore Géricault chose to capture in his piece was one that took place just before the actual rescue of the survivors. There was a moment when the *Argus* completely passed by the raft, two hours before returning to rescue the survivors, and Théodore Géricault chose to capture the dismay of the survivors in that instant as their hope for rescue faded off into the horizon. The painting *The Raft of the Medusa* utilized the horrific events of the shipwreck and ensuing madness as a catalyst to critique the horrible judgement of the Bourbon government in their appointment of the ship's captain, which Bonapartists (those who had supported Napoleon) embraced to slander the shortcomings of the Bourbons as a form of political protest and propaganda against their opponents.

The scene portrayed in Théodore Géricault's *The Raft of the Medusa* is truly as awe-inspiring as it is horrifying.



Fig. 1. Théodore Géricault, *The Raft of the Medusa*, 1818-1819, Oil on Canvas, 13.75 x 23.5 ft. (4.91 x 7.16 m).

Beginning with the color palette of the artwork, Géricault chose to use very abysmal colors of pale white, browns, grays, muted oranges and reds, and dark muted greens to great effect to create a very depressing atmosphere. In the absence of vibrant, lively colors, the viewer is left with a feeling of sickness mirroring the decaying bodies and desolation on board the raft itself. There are stark contrasts of dark and light colors used between the sailors themselves and the raft, illustrating the madness amidst the pile of half living and half dead bodies on board. This causes great difficulty in discerning survivors from corpses and recognizing where one figure ends and the next begins, at a first glance. There is also a sharp contrast between the two tallest points of the raft and the sky in the background. The makeshift mast and the black man hailing the distant rescue ship stand out against the

fiery sunset in the distance, causing our eyes to be drawn to the figures at the top of the pile of bodies. By similar contrast, the pale and decaying bodies on board the raft near the bottom of the composition are effectively juxtaposed against the cold, dark colors of the tumultuous ocean waves and stormy dark clouds overhead (fig. 1).

This leads into the composition of the painting and the positioning of the various figures throughout. The primary focal point of the artwork is arguably the man hailing the rescue vessel, since there is a sharp color contrast between the man and the sky behind him, and additionally, there are multiple implied lines leading the viewer to the figure. He stands atop a barrel, and while the figure himself does not occupy the most space, of all the human figures, he is the tallest on the canvas. A triangle can be drawn along the slanted bodies reaching toward

him and reaching toward the rescue ship on the horizon, and there is a figure pointing up at his direction as they point at the distant ship. There is also a similar triangular shape that could be drawn along the mast and sails with the cluster of figures next to the hailing man. From the primary focal point, attention can next be caught by the pale, decaying bodies at the very bottom of the canvas. Arguably, the secondary focal point is the nude corpse at the bottom left of the canvas, tied with the second corpse in the bottom right that is upside-down and half submerged in the sea. This first figure in the bottom left, along with the figure in the bottom right, command the second most visual weight not only due to how eye-catching their pale forms are, but the bottom left corpse is actually the largest figure on the raft. The limbs are completely sprawled in all directions, whereas many of the survivors are either kneeling, sitting, or clustered and overlapped with other figures to diminish the space they individually occupy on the canvas. While the bottom left corpse is visually larger, and while the pale front-facing nude form has visual complexity to command visual weight, the disturbing nature of the second corpse at the bottom right has just as much impact, since the corpse lies at an unsettling angle as it seems to be falling into the sea.

After analyzing the primary and secondary focal points, the viewer gets lost in the chaotic carnage on board the raft. With the exception of the corpse falling into the sea and the man hailing the rescue ship, every other figure on board the raft is either overlapping, grabbing, embracing, or collapsing upon another figure. There is hardly any detectable negative space amidst the desolation. The only reprieve from the tangled mass of bodies is the sea, the sky, and the sail. This negative space does little to distract from the frenzy on board the raft, since the ocean and sky are both depicted as being dark and stormy, and the haphazard appearance of the makeshift mast and sail seems as though it may collapse at any moment.

There is a great attention to detail with Théodore Géricault's meticulous brushwork. Combing through every facet of the painting, there are no visible painterly brushstrokes, leading to a very realistic representation of the event. There are vivid details in the faces of each individual on board, ranging from an old man with a

contemplative expression, to multiple younger men with pleading expressions of desperation, and a small cluster of hopeful faces just beneath the mast. Chiaroscuro is used to impressive effect in order to bring depth to the artwork and to endow each individual with a detectable weight. There are clean, crisp contour lines to each figure, despite the clustered mess of bodies. On the subject of line, there are also hardly any straight lines in the composition. The only straight lines present are those found in the mast, the support ropes for the mast, and in the planks of wood that construct the raft itself. Elsewise, everything from the sailors to the sky and sea is drawn with curved lines. This combines with the poses of the figures to create a dramatic sense of movement throughout the piece. The sailors in the middle of the raft all lean to one side or lean forward as they reach up toward the man hailing the rescue ship, while the hailing man waves a tattered cloth in his hand. There is also seafoam accumulated under the edge of the raft closest to the viewer, as well as the fully billowed sail catching the wind of the storm, reminding the viewer that this vessel is in motion, riding the waves of the sea.

All of these elements combine together to bring a sensation reflective of the leadership shortcomings that caused the shipwreck and abandonment in the first place. The bleak color palette is reminiscent of the bleak hopelessness of the sailors on board the raft. The tangled madness and cluster of bodies is indicative of the clamoring disorder that befell the crew from the moment of shipwreck through their abandonment, mutiny, and cannibalism. The contrasting darkness and light can be interpreted as an inner evaluation upon the duality of man, and how such appalling circumstances led the men on board to descend into savagery. All of this horror came as a direct result of de Chaumareys' appointment at the hands of the incompetent Bourbon party members, leading the viewer to believe such chaos as shown on the canvas could have been avoided if it were not for the selfishness and ineffectual leadership of de Chaumareys and the blundering French government.

Théodore Géricault had exhibited several works at the Paris Salon prior to his entry of *The Raft of the Medusa* in 1819, and he had mixed results in doing so. His first work, *Charging Chasseur*, had debuted in 1812 to critical acclaim, but his following entry in 1814, *Wounded*

*Cuirassier*, was panned by critics, leading him to go on an artistic pilgrimage to Italy for inspiration (Trapp 134). There, he took strong influence from Michaelangelo, particularly from the warped and tortured figures of the *Last Judgement* on the walls of the Sistine Chapel, the imitation of which he would employ to great effect in the composition of *The Raft*. As Frank Anderson Trapp describes, "Géricault's subject has deep expressive affinities with representations of the *Last Judgement* by Michaelangelo" (Trapp 136). When Théodore Géricault returned to France to begin work on his colossal project, he first searched for a "contemporary and contentious" subject upon which to base his forthcoming artwork (Riding 39). He stumbled upon the written account submitted by Henri Savigny and Alexandre Corréard, the surgeon and geographer/engineer, respectively, on board the *Medusa*, originally published in the anti-Bourbon broadsheet *Journal des débats* in September of 1816 (Riding 38-39). The account of these two survivors placed the responsibility of the catastrophe mostly upon the shoulders of Hugues Deroys de Chaumareys, but also on the Minister of the Marine, vicomte Debouchage, who had mistakenly appointed de Chaumareys simply based on his "aristocratic pedigree and pro-Bourbon sympathies, and not on his merits as a sea captain" (Riding 38). This account, when initially published, led to great political embarrassment for the Bourbon party, and "an official cover-up was attempted, including a lenient prison sentence for de Chaumareys... a scramble ensued on all sides to save face, apportion blame, and win the public relations battle" (Riding 39). When Théodore Géricault read this account, "by early 1818 he had made the acquaintance of Savigny and Corréard. And it was their emotive account of the shipwreck that inspired his painting" (Riding 39). Théodore Géricault sought the firsthand account of the events, knowing full well that this was a heated and politically charged subject, with full intention of slandering the political blunderings of the Bourbon party.

Théodore Géricault first began with preliminary studies of the human form, as well as the structure of the raft itself. Géricault took a rather twisted approach to cementing the artwork in realism, as recounted by Anthony Brandt:

To paint the *Raft*, he immersed himself in its horrors, visiting the Paris morgue to view and sketch dead bodies, taking amputated limbs and an amputated head from a nearby hospital to his studio in order to study the effect of decay on the body. He lived with these human fragments for months at a time. The stench, his friends said, was unendurable. (132)

Truly this horrific commitment to the craft was perhaps a bit unnecessary, but the resulting work speaks for itself in terms of how realistic the depictions of the human body have been transferred to canvas. Additionally, "a faithful model of the raft was specially built for him by the ship's carpenter," that he might accurately portray the physical vessel itself in his painting (Trapp 135). Trapp goes on to repeat Brandt's sentiment of Théodore Géricault's fascination with the grotesque, as "accounts have it that the young painter's studio was further encumbered by bits and pieces of human remains" (Trapp 135). Whether historical accuracy was truly Théodore Géricault's motivation, or if it was a "morbid fascination that far exceeded the strict demands of reportorial accuracy," the truth may never be discerned (Trapp 135). What is evident, however, is that this fascination resulted in a shocking and jaw-dropping portrait of the human condition when faced with tremendous environmental pressures.

Théodore Géricault contemplated multiple choices of which moment in the *Medusa* narrative he would ultimately commit to canvas, ranging from "interpreting scenes of mutiny or cannibalism," before finally settling on "showing the moment of a bitter turn of fate that occurred shortly before the actual salvation, when the *Argus* was first sighted by the castaways but, still too far off to observe their plight, innocently passed them by" (Trapp 135). While this choice of a less gruesome subject was perhaps for the best, it does still encapsulate the bleak hopelessness at the time for the shipwrecked sailors, as their hope for rescue fades off into the distance while the sailors remain on the raft, surrounded by the deceased and dying.

The initial reception of the artwork at the Paris Salon in 1819 was as conflicted as the subject matter itself. It was not immediately identified as the shipwreck of the *Medusa* in the original title, but it was such a widespread and well-known controversy, it was unmistakably the true

subject of the artwork. Even the King took pleasure in the merciless panning of his Bourbon contemporaries, as recounted by Frank Anderson Trapp:

Louis XVIII and some of his aides may well have been privately pleased at the political gravamen of Géricault's theme, for, despite the fact that prudence had dictated that the painting be exhibited merely as "Scene of Shipwreck," its reference to the sinking of the warship *Medusa*, in 1816, and the sickening outcome of that disaster was obvious to all... the King would not have been averse to seeing an embarrassment to the ultra-royalist faction then entrenched at the Naval Ministry, who were widely held responsible for the debacle." (134)

There is also a subtext of abolitionist expression within the artwork. As Christine Riding expresses,

[Théodore Géricault] shared Corréard's abolitionist sympathies, a fact that is often quoted when interpreting the prominence of the black figure hailing the distant ship in the painting.... The selection of a black man, whom many in France at the time would dismiss as representative of a subclass, for the apex of the composition was a loaded and highly controversial decision." (41)

Théodore Géricault made a bold decision to attack a highly controversial topic such as the shipwreck of the *Medusa*, but he continued to double down on his controversy by placing the pinnacle of the painting, the individual responsible for the salvation of the crew, as a black man. It is believed that the black man in the painting is "intended to represent Jean Charles, the only black soldier to survive the *Medusa* tragedy. He died soon after in hospital" (Riding 43). During a time when France still participated in the slave trade, this depiction of a black man as the principal savior of the crew was a bold step in enforcing the principles of abolitionism.

Interestingly, the success and controversy of *The Raft of the Medusa* was not confined within French borders. *The Raft of the Medusa* was showcased in 1820 "to great acclaim in London, at the Egyptian Hall" (Riding 40). A similar event unfolded for the English at the same time as

the tragedy of the *Medusa*. Christine Riding goes on to describe this in her article:

The opportunity to compare and contrast national character via the *Medusa* shipwreck was given an even greater boost....A British navy ship, the *Alceste*...ran aground on an uncharted reef... despite the ensuing dangers, including attacks from the Malays, order was maintained and everyone survived." (43)

Theatrical depictions of the tragedy were composed at the time, and the general consensus was that "what saved the British was 'courage, discipline and order.' What destroyed the French was the lack of all three. Indeed, the British on the *Alceste* and the French on the *Medusa* were bound to act in the way they did because of their national character" (Riding 43). It truly does not get more politically charged and propagandistic than that. Due to the abhorrent lack of judgement in the appointing of de Chaumareys as the captain of the doomed frigate *Medusa*, as opposed to an officer who would have inspired courage, discipline, and order, it was undoubtedly the natural progression of events that horrors would unfold aboard the *Medusa* when the captain in charge was so ill-equipped to address naval catastrophe.

Théodore Géricault sought to commit an event to canvas that would be remembered for generations, and *The Raft of the Medusa* achieved exactly that. His aspirations of critical acclaim were deeply entrenched in controversy at the initial exhibition at the Paris Salon of 1819, but the artwork would live on as a heralding benchmark for the power that controversial artwork can have within the court of public opinion. By reproducing the writhing figures of Michaelangelo's *Last Judgement* against the horrifying account of the shipwrecked *Medusa* that he acquired from surviving crew members Henri Savigny and Alexandre Corréard, Théodore Géricault's masterpiece would ultimately bridge the gap between Neoclassicism and Romanticism. Géricault's composition would go on to influence both French and British nationalism, giving French anti-Bourbon sympathies a vehicle for their grievances against the government, as well as fueling British pride within their own mastery of naval expedition and management of naval tragedy.

*The Raft of the Medusa* will forever be immortalized as a testament to the failure of the Bourbon government, and to the atrocities that resulted from their momentary lapse of reason appropriating political favor over expertise.

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Evaluation: *Adam provides an engaging and well-researched account of the Medusa tragedy, the painting's creation, and its reception in France and Britain. Additionally, his formal analysis of the painting adeptly demonstrates how the painting's form heightened its effectiveness as a form of political or governmental critique. The paper proves to be an engrossing read.*

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# Monster

Jacquelyne Mak

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

*Assignment: Write an autobiographical essay about a time in which you were engaged in a struggle with forces much greater than yourself. Try to write in a way that leaves a meaningful record of your life, the reading of which other readers might benefit.*

I awoke with a startling fear that spread, bit by bit, taking over every part of my being like the tendrils of the ivy climbing its way, brick by brick, over our neighbor's house, until no space was left untouched. This same, creeping feeling left me gasping, sucking in with all my strength. When I looked over, I was swimming in an endless sea of sweat and drenched sheets. I knew this was not just the result of some never-ending nightmare.

It was the fall of October 2014. I remember it like it was yesterday. There was a nice, crisp, fresh cool breeze in the air. It was about 2:30 p.m. on a Sunday afternoon, and I was at my nephew's football game as we were in the middle of football season. Loud and excited cheers, hoots, and hollering were heard around the stadium. Suddenly, I felt a pain like I had never felt before. I doubled over in excruciating pain that felt like knives cutting away my insides. At this point, between the nightmares I had been having, the night sweats, and now this pain, I knew this story was not going to end in a fairytale.

I was rushed immediately to the emergency room at Lutheran General Hospital in Park Ridge, where probing and tests were done. They did EKGs, MRIs, x-rays, and a CT scan. Hours later, the test results came back inconclusive. It was at this point, with a look of uncertainty and unease, that a very concerned physician suggested that I make an immediate appointment with an oncologist. "An oncologist?" I thought, "Why would I need to see an oncologist?" I suddenly had a feeling of apprehension, dread, and most of all fear.

I was thirty years old. I was ready to take on life's new challenges and ready to take on the world. I was

ready to live my thirties and see where life's journey would take me. I was ready to start a brand new chapter, a brand new decade, and to take the ride of a lifetime! Well, I definitely did take the ride of a lifetime, except this roller coaster was spiraling down...way down! There were loopy loops all over the place, and there was a huge drop. It did a complete 360°—not in the direction I wanted to head at all. I was falling.

I followed the physician's orders. I made an appointment for the next day to see an oncologist. When I met with him for the first time, I explained to him that the emergency room physician suggested that I get in immediately to meet with an oncologist for an evaluation to see if he could find something that the testing at the hospital could not determine. He reassured me that things were okay, but that we had to act fast and follow the next steps right away. He requested that my left inguinal node be removed so that a pathologist could take a look at it to locate any signs of cancer. After the surgery, the waiting time was the worst. Of course I was in pain after the surgery, but more so, I was terrified. Not knowing what to expect or what the outcome would be is the scariest and most frightening thing to endure.

After a few more days of tests, biopsies, and probing, he had an answer for me. He asked me to come to the office so that he could speak with me. I came in to the office and sat down quietly. I remember my mom and husband being there on each side of me, holding my hand with their soft touch to reassure me that everything would be okay. I am guessing they could sense my terror and wanted to remain by my side with their tender words and touch. My daughter couldn't be there because children under the age of eighteen were not allowed, due to liability issues and health concerns. In that instant, I felt a tightening in my throat as I sat there and listened. I learned the worst news imaginable—the worst thing I could ever hear in my life. These were three words that still resonate in my head to this day and were forever life-altering, three unsettling words that would leave me forever fearful, and the time to embrace the fact that I was encountering the worst nightmare of all...

"You have cancer," said the oncologist. I was at a standstill, frozen in time, frozen in my own space, and feeling all alone. For that very moment, the earth stood

### Student Reflections on Writing: Jacquelyne Mak

A few years ago, I was enrolled in English 101 at Harper. I was an adult student in my thirties, and I realized that working full-time during the day, taking a full load of classes in the evenings, and raising my daughter would be a challenge. I opened myself up to this experience wholeheartedly because, face it, I wasn't getting any younger. A few years prior to going back to school, I was faced with a personal, life-threatening medical situation that affected me and those close to me. I wrote this essay, "Monster," while enrolled in Mr. Kris Piepenburg's class about this experience, and rereading my essay recently opened up my vulnerability once again. All the emotions that I had experienced years before opened up a floodgate of tears. This is not necessarily a sad thing to undergo these raw feelings. I was able to relive this part of my life once again.

I have found that a person should never give up in life, and for me, writing is the best medium to soothe my soul. It takes one back to a place they once were in their life. Maybe it was a good time or a bad one, but the bottom line is that it is an experience a person went through in their life that made them vulnerable enough to want to write about it. Something about putting words down on paper releases the pressure within, as the story is told to others. The other day, I read this essay aloud so that my husband could once again hear it. He was one of the key people who helped me get through this crushing time of my life. By the end of the story, he and I were both sobbing, and that in itself was an unforgettable experience. It gave us a moment to share and lifted our spirits to understand that we are still here and can fight through anything. Opening up and telling my story made me very thankful in that my whole being was immersed in this writing, and my story lives on. The memories may fade as we get older, and it may be harder to recall every detail. However, the feeling we once had never goes away. Another special thing about writing is that a personal moment is created with just you and the paper, yet you are really sharing it with the world. The moments we endured—pain, love, agony, worry, sadness, happiness, despair, hope—can be relived so that we can always remember.

The importance is that we should never give up, especially in our writing. A pen and paper or typing at a keyboard tells all. My suggestion is for all writers to not be afraid to open up to oneself. Once that is done, one can then open up to others. It might give a chance to someone else to take that step to dig in to that memorable moment that made the most impact on them.

As a side note, I am still in remission and am living a wonderful life with my husband and dog as well as my daughter, who is now a pre-med student. Doctors, prayers, loving family members and friends, and self-motivation to fight and give myself hope aided me in my recovery. I had just gone into remission when I wrote this essay, and I feel privileged to have been a student in Mr. Piepenburg's class. The discovery of the written word and how to bring it forth was an integral part of his teachings, so I am forever in his debt for guiding me.

still just for me, and there was just the sound of silence. I felt numb. How did this start out with words that I was not experienced with, words like oncologist, malignant, stages of cancer, just the word "cancer?" This word had been forced into my face before with other family members. I was extremely familiar with that word, a word hated by so many. I was envious of this word, for it received so much attention and created the suspense and fear. How could a word have that much power? I wish I

had that much power! At this moment, I was powerless.

The doctor went on to explain that I had stage four, B-cell follicular non-Hodgkins lymphoma, a type of cancer that attacks the body's immune system. I burst out into tears when thinking that stage four meant I was going to die, as I once remembered a close family member passing away three months after finding out he was at stage four cancer. He explained to me that this was different. This type of cancer didn't work that way because this was a



type of blood cancer and had not affected any organs. He also explained that I was considerably young to have this form of cancer, and my life expectancy could be five to ten years after going into remission. Again, I burst into tears. I had so much to live for. How was this possible? I was just barely thirty and diagnosed with cancer. I laid it out before me...age thirty, stage four cancer, life expectancy five to ten years afterward. My insides felt as though they were being split apart. I tried my best to put on a brave front and even convinced myself at some point that everything was alright. It was not alright. I had fallen into a deep place where I did not feel I could be revived. It felt as if the world was coming to an end. It all happened so fast! After this, the rest of the events became a blur.

The next point of business per the doctor's directives was to do a bone marrow biopsy to see if the cancer had reached the bone marrow. If so, this would have been really bad because then they were talking about a bone marrow transplant needing to be done. Thinking ahead, I would have had to find a donor, and the best way to find bone marrow that will work with a patient is to have a family member's donation. Hmm...best bet would be my younger brother. Can you imagine how that conversation would have been? "Hi, brother. I love you and all. Would you mind if you can donate some bone marrow so that I can feel better and get rid of IT (that's how I was coming to envision this cancer, as IT). It is not too big of a deal. You will only have to undergo surgery and bleed out a little bit. You might be in excruciating pain yourself, but you will heal. Oh, and lastly, I need it by tomorrow! So what do you think?" Well luckily results came back that showed that IT had not reached my bone marrow. Phew!!! Close call.

During this process, I noticed that each phrase or expression of what the next steps were going to be seemed to sound worse than the last conversation. I didn't know what I was in store for or what I was up against. I had no idea whatsoever. I just knew that each time something else came up, my family was always there by my side to comfort and to support me. Their love and support helped to keep me together like glue.

The next step and worst of all (so I thought) was the port that had to be inserted in my chest. During surgery, I was put to sleep. However, when I awoke, I was in a lot of pain. The port was really close to my heart, which made

me extremely nervous. When you hear the adage about someone pulling on your heart strings, I now understand that there is another meaning to this. Literally, I felt like this port was pulling on my heart strings, my arteries, my veins, every blood connection within my body. When the fluids pumped, it only got worse as I could feel the strong pressure. I felt sick "to my heart."

As I was going through all these tests, biopsies, surgeries, etc., my daughter found out in detail what was going on with me. Now I will tell you, sharing this type of news with a ten-year-old was not easy and was absolutely heart-breaking. She was crushed, devastated, outraged, but most of all confused and concerned. She wasn't sure what the next steps were, as none of us really did, either. We were all in this together. I imagine when my mom broke this news to my daughter, she most likely said it in a soothing voice that lulled her into a sense of calmness, false that it might have been, but swathed her with her soft words. I am sure that she settled back down, comforted, as my mom reassured her that everything was going to be okay.

Now it was the time for the final step, the biggest whopper of all...chemotherapy. What is chemotherapy? As defined by *Dictionary.com*, it is the treatment of disease by the use of chemical substances. Imagine that. A cocktail mixture of chemical substances being put into your body! Yikes! It sounded intense. It definitely was! This was the real hand holder of them all. Chemotherapy was rough. The doctors had me going two days during the first week of each month for six months. Because the chemicals were so strong, they knocked me down for that first week of every month. It seemed as though it went on forever.

I remember being surrounded by white walls. Everything seemed to be sterile and white. I can still remember the sound of the other patients moaning and their eyes glazed over from pain and despair. We would just look at one another and nonverbally empathize with one another. We all wondered how we got here. Yet we all had one common goal—to seek the treatment needed to fix us.

I remember the smells of the chemicals and fluids. It was almost like we were one big science project. It brought me back to the days of chemistry class where we had to figure out the concentration levels of the solution on a Ph scale. Basically, more or less, we were these

water-based items—the acids and bases mixed, used to form a chemical reaction. We were the chemical reaction by using a concoction of medicines to see what level we were at in our treatment. We were the result, the outcome of this project!

I remember those cancer-ridden days very well. Images of my daughter holding up my head as I vomited all over the bed and floor will never disappear from the memories of this time period. I was weary, tormented, growing sicker with each chemo treatment; and yet, I still had a resolve of steel. I was a tough cookie, a fighter that kept pushing myself for me and for my daughter. I tried to find a moment's rest while fighting off the urge to spew over the freshly laundered blanket. I didn't know what to expect.

I remember the frustration I felt going through all of this, especially since I still felt so alone. My emotions were all over the place. Of course there were times that I felt comforted by my mom, husband, and daughter as they held my hand. I knew that as long as the family was in good spirits, this would keep me motivated and fighting until the end. They would help me fight my fight. Then there were other times that I knew my friends and family could not possibly truly understand what I was going through. Sometimes, emotional and mental anguish can be even worse than the physical pain. I just wanted them to understand and to know what I needed without me actually having to say the words. I recall thoughts, conversations, and questions such as, "please drive me to and/or from the chemo appointment," "you can sit with me," "you don't have to talk because the chemo cocktail gets me tired anyway," "just mumble something and I will fall asleep," and then the other "how else can you help, you say?" or "please hold the hair out of my face when I am throwing up everywhere." Also, "you can help to change my bedsheets and clothes when I get sick all over myself," and "please make sure there is an empty bucket next to my bed" were also comments that were brought up during my half groggy state. I remember during these treatments that I could only eat things that were light on my stomach like broth, liquids, and jello. I also remember anyone wearing any overpowering perfume had to stay away! Heavy smells such as this meant there would be plenty of vomiting to follow.

What initially started out in fear and not knowing suddenly became a daily routine for me. I felt like a zombie on auto pilot with this day in and day out routine. Go in, stick the IV in the port, flush out the port, put the chemicals in the port, sit and get drowsy, go home, throw up, and then do it all over again the next day. It became very exhausting. One thing that remained constant is that every time after the chemo session was completed, fear and confusion came right back and washed away the normal life I once had.

A floodgate of tears would pour out, and my body would shake uncontrollably from time to time while I was thinking awful, dreadful thoughts. What seemed to be a never-ending battle was wearing me down. One moment I felt better. The next I was hunched over in pain. I kept fighting and forced myself to go to work, even on some days when I just wanted to crawl in bed and hide beneath the covers. Between all the ups and downs of the chemotherapy, trips to the doctor, and biopsies and scans, the only word I was waiting to hear was "remission." Suddenly with a blink of an eye, it was over. My six-month journey had come to an end. I was in remission.

To my dismay, sadly it wasn't over yet. I was told by my oncologist that I now had to maintain this state by starting a maintenance treatment for two years. I was not happy. There was just so much more in the process. And here I thought remission meant that I was done with it all! However, the result of this two-year process was a good one. It wasn't that bad after all, especially since tests indicated that I was completely cancer free. I still have to go in twice a year for follow-up testing, but these few hours are a delight, as compared to what I had been through.

I have learned a few things over the course of these years. I have learned that with chemotherapy, you will never be back to 100 percent because of your weakened immune system. Cancer is a very invasive and destructive enemy of our bodies. Recovery from the damage caused by the treatment of the disease is a very lengthy process. After the end of the treatment, the body remains devastated. Once you have had cancer, you always think it is still there. Any time I feel pain or I have normal night sweats from a bad nightmare, I feel there is something wrong. Then, I automatically jump to conclusions that

the cancer has returned. A common question that is asked a lot is if a person loses their hair and/or loses or gains weight. Well, fortunately, neither of these happened to me. I looked like the same Jacqui on the outside, but only I knew how the Jacqui on the inside felt. One of the most valuable lessons I have learned is that second opinions always matter. If you feel unsure about something, speak up. There are always beacons of hope in everyone's life. Thanks to my Jacqui team of my oncologist (my light), the home team of my daughter, my mom, and my husband (my comfort), and the emergency room physician (my savior) who intuitively knew that something was not right even though all tests and scans had said otherwise, I was able to push ahead and endure the most horrible of days.

The significance that the season was fall and that I had fallen will never be forgotten. I now associate this feeling I once felt with the feelings, smells, and breeze of fall. I look back on this experience, and I am so grateful that the medical professionals found what they did and when they did during this fall season, as it saved me. This season's fresh, crisp, cool air opened my lungs and lifted my spirits. It reminded me of how terrifying something once had can still send shivers down my spine, but also that it was exhilarating to feel and smell again.

Happily, I can say that I am still in remission and living my life to the fullest. Yes, I still have to go for

checkups; and in the back of my head, there is always the fear of being reunited with the monster that once took me down and took away my freedoms and so much of my life. It brought me down to such a scary place in my life, a place I never want to revisit. For now, I am not going to worry about that. I just want to live...truly live! I now treat every single day as it really and truly is my last. I have since embraced newfound freedoms such as playing on volleyball and softball teams or engaging in the simple back-to-normal, daily routines of studying with my daughter. It is something so simple, yet so enlightening, uplifting, and rejuvenating. This got me thinking about a new journey I would embark on in my life. I started to attend college! This new way of really living and breathing and just taking it all in with just life itself has brought me to many discoveries about myself. I am truly happy. My life is now back to normal.

Someone dear to me who passed away from cancer years ago once said, "I am going to kick the monster out of me!" Sadly, IT got the better of him but not his spirit or the way his life will forever be remembered. I remembered the way he fought; and during my fight, I kept saying the same thing to myself that I would not let IT get to me. As I was driving around looking at the fall and Halloween decorations that are on display, I thought, "Well, I kicked the monster out of me!"

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*Evaluation: This detailed account of strength is an inspiration, and it is a valuable record of life that could certainly educate others and help them through treatment and recovery, in coping with life-threatening illness.*

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# Damn Crazy Dance Moms

Lauren Maltby  
Course: English 101 (Composition)  
Instructor: Andrew Wilson

Assignment: *Students were asked to write essays critiquing some aspect of our contemporary culture or climate—a media phenomenon, maybe, or an often-visited place, or a trend, or a subculture.*

Many avid television viewers are familiar with the phenomenon of Lifetime’s show *Dance Moms*, but just how realistic is this reality show? The show follows the young dancers of the Abby Lee Dance Company, their teacher, Abby Lee, and her controversial teaching techniques and mannerisms, and their obnoxious, obsessive mothers. Between the girls dancing, Abby yelling at the girls, and the moms yelling at each other, the show has more than enough chaos to elevate a viewer’s blood pressure, but nevertheless keep them entertained for forty-five minutes each week.

*Dance Moms* has raised many controversial question since its debut in 2011. Many people criticized the teaching methods of Abby Lee Miller. She was frequently seen reprimanding the dancers (as young as five years old), screaming at them, making degrading comments, and even throwing a stool at one of them. Every time she was confronted on one of these behaviors, she justified it by saying, “I make stars.” Another concern associated with the show was how age-inappropriate the choreography and costumes were. There were numerous episodes where the girls were wearing rather revealing costumes and doing choreography to suggestive music that would probably be more suitable for a woman in her twenties in a music video. This is absolutely a huge controversy in the dance competition world, but I’ll expand upon that later. The third major controversy of the show was the behavior of the mothers. The mothers would frequently barge into the dance studio, swearing, arguing, and picking on each other’s children. Obnoxious does not even begin to describe the behavior of these holier-than-thou, nit-picking moms. Overall, these less favorable characteristics of the show have given competitive dancing a certain reputation.

So just how accurate of a depiction does *Dance Moms* give us of the real dance competition world? I decided to revisit my glory days and step back into the competitive dance world for a weekend to see how much my perception of it has changed in the past five years. I began dancing competitively much later than most dancers, at the age of twelve. I fondly remember competition season as being the highlight of my year. We would begin learning our dances after company auditions in August, and we would prepare for the competitions until February. We would

attend competitions and conventions roughly every other weekend until May. Then we would prepare for two months for Nationals in July, just in time for the process to begin again.

Competitive dancing was so much more than an after-school activity; it was a lifestyle. It was practicing your tap dances under your desk at school, then going straight to the studio after school and staying there as late as ten o'clock. It was spending your Saturdays, and occasionally Sundays, in rehearsal and coming home from those long, exhausting rehearsals only to lay in your bed, turn on your music, and run through your dances in your head until you drifted off to sleep. Most importantly, it was spending those competition weekends on the stage with your best friends, doing what you love most. Not only did you get to bond with your dance family, you got to meet dancers from other studios, and watch some really incredible performances.

While there were definitely certain teams that were more competitive, I don't recall the entire experience being as cut-throat and hostile as it is portrayed in *Dance Moms*. Our teachers were always very nurturing and were considered role models to us. Our moms were never overly involved. They dropped us off at rehearsals and cheered us on at performances, but they never really lingered around the studio and certainly didn't cause a ruckus and make demands with the instructors. Our costumes and music choices were always very tasteful and appropriate. There were certain studios who leaned toward the flashier, skimpier costumes and certain dance moves, but I don't recall them being so provocative that people vocalized their discomfort with it. If anything, I actually was slightly jealous of those girls and their Swarovski-encrusted bra tops. The way the stage lights reflected off of the rhinestones and the bright colors of their costumes popped against their spray tans made them that much more entertaining and fun to watch. While we knew our teachers were making a point to be professional and protect our innocence, there was always a small part of us that wished we could be like those studios.

I decided to attend a dance convention as a spectator a few weekends ago. Since the competition season doesn't really get rolling until January or February, a dance convention was as close to a competition as I could

get. This particular convention actually has a competition on the second night, but the main focus of the event is for the dancers to take master classes with big-name dancers and instructors from across the country. The studio I used to dance and teach for was attending this competition, so I was able to tag along and observe the situation while cheering on my former students.

The first thing I noticed when entering the ballroom was that familiar energy that used to consume me for so many weekends as a teenager. Especially with it being the beginning of the season, you could feel the excitement in the air. The dancers were all motivated to get on stage, instructors were thrilled to finally be able to see their work pieced together and performed, and parents were eager to watch their little dancers do what they love. I caught myself feeling the adrenaline rush through my veins, even though I wasn't the one performing. I was surrounded by dancers rehearsing before heading on stage, teachers giving their students pep talks, and parents touching up their dancer's lipstick and fake eyelashes...and then I remembered that I'm on the other side of this competition world now and, suddenly, these dancers looked like babies to me.

Once I got past that initial surge of excitement, I was able to take a step back and really begin observing the entire scene, and there were a few changes that appeared pretty obvious to me. The first thing I noticed was that nearly every one of these dancers was wearing a two-piece costume. These costumes that I used to think were beautiful and glamorous suddenly looked a bit extra. I saw a group of girls who couldn't have been older than four, and I couldn't help but think to myself that these *babies* haven't even been potty-trained for more than a couple of years. Did they look cute? Sure, but was it really necessary? I've spent quite a bit of time with pre-school aged kids and can assure you that they can be wearing a dinosaur costume and plastic princess high heels and still be pretty darn cute. I just had a hard time finding a reason for these tiny dancers to be wearing such revealing costumes and a full face of makeup. It made the whole event feel almost more like a beauty pageant, rather than a competition based on dance technique and choreography.

Upon examining one of our team's scorecards after

the event, I was even more shocked to see that they were actually being judged on their costumes. A whole twenty points of their score was dedicated to the judging of their costumes. While I can surely testify that a costume can enhance the overall performance quality of a dance, or distract an audience from the performance, I was a bit confused as to why such a large percentage of the score was based on the dancer's physical appearance, especially at such a young age and level. The dance community as a whole is such a big promoter of equal rights and body positivity, so it seems relatively counter-productive to teach these young girls that they're being judged for their looks, especially when they don't even get to choose their own costumes.

My concerns with the costumes didn't end with the youngest age group of the competition. It seemed as the ages went up, the amount of clothing on the dancers went down. I noticed many of the dancers seemed genuinely uncomfortable in their costumes, fidgeting in them and trying to stretch the fabric to cover more of their bodies. Given that dancers are such at such a high risk for eating disorders and body dysmorphia, it really does make me question why these girls are being forced into these tiny costumes and to look a certain way, especially when they do not feel comfortable. This question was quickly answered during the award ceremony, when I noticed that all of the numbers that placed in the top ten were coincidentally the same numbers with the flashiest, most revealing costumes. I will say that their performances were stellar and definitely deserving of a high score, but I couldn't help but wonder if other numbers would have placed higher if they hadn't been judged on what they were wearing.

As far as the teachers go, I still got the general sense that these young dancers still look up to their instructors. While walking by a few pep talks backstage, I could hear the genuine pride and love in the teachers' voices. Having been in that position before, and having given many of those pep talks, I could really feel the connection between the teachers and their dancers. Those kids were hanging onto their every word, and I could see it in their bright eyes that they wanted nothing more than to make their teacher proud. I witnessed one dancer come off stage, visibly disappointed in herself after her solo. Instead of scolding or reprimanding her, the teacher gave her a hug,

reassured her that it was the beginning of the season and she had plenty of opportunities to do better, and that she was proud of her regardless. While I'm sure that there are teachers out there, such as Abby Lee Miller, who are more harsh and give dance teachers a bad reputation, I honestly have never personally witnessed this throughout my dance career, nor at this dance competition. This was one aspect that I was so happy has remained the same since my dancing days. I know how much I relied on my dance teachers, growing up, not only for dance lessons, but for many life lessons and just a sense of stability overall, and it was really reassuring to see that this is still a very real practice in the dance world.

And then we have the dance moms...now, as I previously mentioned, back in my day, our parents remained supportive without getting overly involved. There were still plenty of parents sitting back, watching as my parents once did, but there seemed to be a whole new generation of dance moms...an army of self-righteous, my-kid-can-do-no-wrong, bedazzled jacket-wearing, Starbucks latte-sipping dance moms. They seemed to be everywhere...I would almost call it an infestation. I could hear them whispering behind me in between sips of wine from their Yeti cups, "That girl looked horrendous in her costume....That studio always has horrible choreography....Why do they even try?...Here, Susan—fill me up...." I even saw one of them approach an instructor after her daughter's dance didn't place at the awards ceremony and say, "Maybe if you would have moved Kaylee to the back and put my daughter in front, we would have actually placed." While one mom was yelling at her daughter for forgetting part of her dance, another mom was vocalizing her disappointment in the outcome of the overall weekend. "Please, mom. Stop. You're embarrassing me," her daughter pleaded while everybody tried not to watch. I was embarrassed just to be witnessing this whole situation. I'm not sure whether they were encouraged by the moms in the television shows like *Dance Moms* and *Toddlers and Tiaras*, or what sparked this whole revolution, but it was definitely something I didn't expect to see, or to actually be true. Again, this was just a select group of moms (and a few dads). There were still many parents who seemed to be there for the right reasons, but there appeared to be a handful of these crazy dance moms from each studio.

One thing that I did notice, and this is just a general observation, was that the dancers of the parents who were acting like parents and not characters on a trashy television show did seem to be happier and having more fun. They were not stressed out by their parents hovering over them. They were focusing on the event and all of the fun experiences that come with it, rather than focusing on monitoring their parents' words and actions. They were backstage, cheering on dancers from other teams, wishing them good luck as they headed on stage, and high-fiving them as they came off. They appeared to be having the same experience that I was fondly remembering having when I was their age, and that really made me feel better after witnessing some of the changes I did that weekend.

David Foster Wallace offers a remarkably thorough, sometimes stinging critique of our treatment of lobsters in particular and the animals we eat in general, but he does not, in "Consider the Lobster," aim to turn his readership into vegetarians or vegans. He only wishes, it seems, to unmask the truth of how our food arrives at our tables. Keeping in mind David Foster Wallace's humility in his fascinating essay, I'm not writing this review to sway anybody's opinion. I still reflect on my dance competition days as one of the best parts of my youth and can honestly say that the benefits of dancing are endless. Dance as an art form and a culture is constantly evolving and changing. Additionally, there is so much more to the dance world than competition dance...it is so much larger than that. I'm not a parent, so I'm probably not in any position to critique anyone's parenting skills. As far as the dance competition scene goes, I believe it truly does come to personal preference. I think, as the parent of a dancer, it's important to know what type of studio you are sending your daughter or son to and doing what you believe is best for them. Some parents prefer these flashy studios, and I don't think that makes them any less of a good parent...again, it's about personal preference. I will be over the moon with happiness if my future children decide to take up dancing and will do anything to support them in their dreams. At the same time, because it is my personal preference, I will also take measures to protect their innocence and make sure that the focus of their dancing is on their actual dancing, and that they grow to be confident and well-rounded people who know their self-worth.

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Evaluation: *It is a pleasure to read Lauren's prose. More than that, though, this paper seems important: a meaningful, occasionally biting look at the subculture of competitive dance and the way(s) in which very young participants are sometimes disturbingly sexualized (and pressurized). Lauren writes frankly, sometimes from personal experience, but she keeps a reasonable, professional distance, too. This is an exemplary cultural review/critique.*

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# Analysis of Arguments for and against Pornography

Grace Marcham

Course: Philosophy 105  
(Introduction to Philosophy)  
Instructor: John Garcia

Assignment: *Students were asked to write an “argument analysis” paper in which they comment upon an academic article on a controversial moral issue. (Students were provided a list of articles and issues from which to choose.)*

We are currently in the middle of a sexual revolution. Today, the Pew Research Center reports that 248,787,000 Americans—77% of the population—own smartphones (Smith). In the age of unlimited data plans and increasing cellular coverage, lightning-fast Internet access is available in the pocket of almost anyone, anywhere in the country. For the most part private and anonymous, the Internet acts as a reservoir to hold topics too taboo or blush-inducing to discuss in face-to-face conversation, including sex. This can manifest on the Internet as advice, discussion, or a virtual marketplace, but often the public eye boils down the mix of the Internet and sexual content into one loaded word: pornography.

Today, Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary defines pornography as “printed or visual material containing the explicit description or display of sexual organs or activity, intended to stimulate erotic rather than aesthetic or emotional feelings.” While this definition makes an attempt to divorce pornography from emotion, for many, the two are not mutually exclusive. This is true for Helen E. Longino, who has strong feelings about pornography and the harm she perceives it having towards women, and she calls for banning of pornography for this reason. However, her reasoning goes a bit deeper when you learn that her definition of “pornography” differs from the

Merriam-Webster one given above. Offering an argument in defense of pornography, Wendy McElroy looks at the subject more broadly, after having interviewed sex workers and women with various feminist views. McElroy examines arguments both against and in defense of pornography, and she comes to the captivating conclusion that not only should pornography *not* be banned, but that the implications of allowing pornography have benefits in much greater intensity to women than its harms.

Before we can begin to talk about Helen E. Longino’s argument against pornography, we must clearly explain the terms in which she speaks. According to Longino, “pornography” is, by definition, content that involves the “degrading and demeaning portrayal of the role and status of the human female” (Longino 437). She goes on to say that even media that does *not* contain any sexually explicit content may be categorized as ‘pornography’ by her definition, as long as it involves a demeaning portrayal of women. Along the same token, not all sexually explicit imagery or text is “pornographic”—non-demeaning sexual content would be “erotica,” which she states is an encounter characterized by mutual respect (Longino 437). Pornography is immoral, she argues, not because of its expression of sexuality, but because its behavior is dehumanizing to women (Longino 439).

Longino states that pornography is injurious to women and that its harms can be summarized into three distinct points. First, it harms in that the dehumanizing nature of pornography implies and may initiate violence towards women. Pornography is power trip-granting, as its purpose, and it is addictive. Its indirect messages on men gaining the affections of women and exerting power over them (a scenario they may not get in real life) gets into the minds of its consumers, whether intentionally or not, and influences marketing and society as a whole. This is reflected in products such as album art, which can have women chained up or in poses suggesting submission, knowing that such art will improve sales. As its second major harm, pornography spreads “deep and vicious lie[s] about women”—that the sexual lives of women are secondary to the service of men, and that women’s pleasure comes from pleasing men and not themselves (Longino 441). Longino worries less about men believing this lie than she does women, saying that



women may have no source of support for an alternative view of female sexuality, find themselves unable to resist the submissive message ever-present in mass media, and as a result live their lives closed off to a major part of their humanity. As a third harm, pornography disseminates a very distorted view of women's nature and sexuality. The caricature of women that pornography promotes reinforces oppression and exploitation of women. It is Longino's belief that pornography nourishes sexism. She states that the campaign against it is an "essential component of women's struggle for legal, economic, and social equality" (Longino 441).

McElroy's argument on pornography is compelling in the sheer variety of viewpoints it offers, and the objective depth at which it explores each viewpoint before the author states her claim. It is important to note, however, that she never clearly defines "pornography" as Longino did. Whether she is using Longino's definition or Merriam-Webster's is left up to interpretation. However, McElroy does give us some big food for thought: "degrading" is subjective. Knowing this, it may not matter what definition McElroy uses, since the "degrading" content Longino spoke of may in another's eyes be empowering.

McElroy divides up different views on pornography into three feminist positions and gives the arguments from each. The first, anti-porn feminism, would probably be the camp that Longino fits best into. This position argues that women are exploited by pornography, which is an expression of male culture, and that because of this it should be banned (McElroy 319). The second viewpoint, liberal feminism, is actually split on whether or not pornography should be banned. Some supporters of this viewpoint say that people have the right to consume pornography even if liberal feminists personally dislike it, showing an awareness of the dangers of censoring to oppressed or minority populations. We will get more into these dangers when we discuss pro-sex feminism in a moment. Meanwhile, a different portion of liberal feminists say that they would gladly sacrifice free speech (by banning pornography) in order to protect women. Both sides to this liberal feminist viewpoint largely dislike pornography as a whole. They dislike its sexist representation of women, and they feel that it leads to a cycle that reduces society to consumer groups: "We

pay dearly for the rights of a few to make profits from the rest of us" (McElroy 319). The third viewpoint of pornography within feminism is a pro-sex viewpoint, against the censorship of pornography. It preaches the mantra "a woman's body, a woman's right" and agrees with the portion of liberal feminists who warn of the dangers of censoring. Pro-sex feminists worry about the censorship of sexual content that women could benefit from, on the basis of it being "demeaning" or unsuitable to some, such as educational videos on how women can self-pleasure, or pornography with unmarried women, or lesbian pornography.

It would be hard to argue that McElroy is anything but a supporter of pro-sex feminism. She uses the last half of her essay to invalidate the top anti-pornography arguments: by referencing research on whether pornography actually leads to more violence towards women (experts disagree), debating the claim that pornography is degrading (this is subjective), interviewing sex workers on whether women are coerced into pornography (McElroy doesn't disagree that it can happen, but none of the sex workers she interviewed reported being coerced or knowing women who had been), and pointing out the flaws of the argument that women who pose for pornography are so traumatized by the patriarchy that they cannot give real consent (this is what we call in the modern day "slut shaming" and gives opportunity to have what women choose to do judged, leading to more oppression). Not only disproving the claims of anti-pornography arguments, McElroy goes on to state a pro-sex defense and lists the benefits of pornography to women. Pornography is free speech applied to the sexual realm, she says (McElroy 321). She lists pornography's main benefits to women as giving a view of the world's sexual possibilities (such as information on masturbation), allowing women to safely experience sexual alternatives and fantasies (such as the common rape fantasy), and offering emotional information or giving a sense of how it would feel to do something (for women who have no partner or couples who want to see alternative sexual acts before trying them). In the end, McElroy says that the arguments boil down to the ever-present debate: individual freedom or law protecting choice versus social control or law protecting virtue.

What makes comparing Longino's writing to

McElroy's so difficult and interesting is how precisely Longino defines "pornography," giving it meaning different than its colloquial use today. This contrasts with McElroy—who is not as explicit about her definition, allowing what Longino called "erotica" to be rolled into its meaning—seeming to say that the definition of "pornography" *would not matter* should her argument of "demeaning" being subjective apply. Longino's views seem firmly rooted in Kantian arguments: content that makes someone be treated "beneath her or his dignity as a human being" is immoral (Longino 437). However, the major flaw with Kant's excessive focus on autonomy is that it eventually reaches a point of getting so controlling that it draws boundary lines based around its own prejudices of what being "human" and "autonomous" means. McElroy argues that we don't mind that the men in pornography are not much more than "body parts" themselves, and that we would not judge a female character if she was being portrayed as only her "brains," despite real women having many more facets than just "sexuality" or "brains" in reality. In attempting to define what giving up capacity for autonomy looks like in practice, those preaching Kantian principles may find themselves ironically denying the freedom to choose altogether.

McElroy's argument stands on a much more stable foundation. The basis of her argument is that shared by John Stuart Mill on the dangers of censorship. In a perfect world, perhaps we can dissect which actions and statements are being made with intention to harm and work together to ensure these statements/actions and the resulting harm does not come to pass. In the real world, however, lines are blurred, intentions remain mostly up to speculation, and what is immoral to someone may be a ray of hope for someone else. The sad truth is that the oppressed calling for censorship of content (obviously, of content that further dehumanizes them) too often results in said censorship being used back against them. McElroy gives an example of this happening when in 1992, in the Canadian Supreme Court's attempt to protect women by restricting the importation of pornography, one of the first victims of the ban was a lesbian/gay bookstore. McElroy's argument succeeds in how many viewpoints it examines, and how it offers an answer to both those for and against pornography: that those who are looking

to protect women and minorities should know how dangerous the censorship of pornography could be.

Women are no stranger to trying to carve out spaces for themselves. Women are no stranger to being shot down and mocked when they do so, perhaps only further proving the case that such spaces are needed. On July 17, 2017, the announcement of the actor cast as the next Doctor Who—a character who is meant to defy space and time in part by "undergoing a transformation into a new physical form," which has happened to be a middle-aged white man for every regeneration—drew controversy for being female actress Jodie Whittaker. "It's the loss of a role model for boys," argues Peter Davison, who played the fifth Doctor Who in the early 1980s, for a show that has been running for 54 years with fans of all backgrounds, races, and genders, "who I think Doctor Who is vitally important for" (qtd. in DeSantis). In May 2017, a single screening of *Wonder Woman* hosted by the Alamo Drafthouse in Austin, Texas was billed as being "women-only, with movie-goers buying tickets for various reasons, one fan saying she came because she "didn't want to overhear fanboys cracking wise about Gal Gadot's physique." This was met with complaints—of note, Richard A. Ameduri's letter to the mayor of Austin, Texas asking that every man "boycott the theater and do what he can to diminish Austin and to cause damage to the city's image" (qtd. in Lang). Any point being made in the letter seems to be buried under unrelated sexism and the implication that this man may have been hurt by *Wonder Woman* herself in his past: "The notion of a woman hero is a fine example of women's eagerness to accept the appearance of achievement without actual achievement." Backlash can make women wary of expressing the stories they'd like to see in traditionally male-dominated spaces.

What, then, barring censorship, is the solution for women who wish to see themselves in pornography—and not the false caricature of women that is present in far too many videos? Perhaps we need to start early, in our education to both sexes. Knowing how difficult it is to prevent young people from experimenting and finding pornography, perhaps our sexual education shouldn't stop at pointing at black-and-white cross-section drawings of anatomy and should go into the emotional implications of sex, what an abusive relationship looks like, and what it

means to have a partner. This could begin to address the issue, but how do we continue making progress when it comes to pornography? Remarkably, women are *already* in the process of carving out their space in pornography. According to statistics from Pornhub in 2016, on the rise in popularity is the subcategory of pornography referred to as “female friendly,” which places more focus on the portions of sex that traditional pornography does not typically address: emotional connection, foreplay, and less of the violent, in-your-face visuals other pornography tends to have (“Pornhub’s 2016 Year in Review”). Continued advances like these would give women a new arena in which to explore their sexuality. Perhaps there is some truth to the age-old saying “kill them with kindness”—and that we should be placing our focus not on eliminating bad content but overwhelming it with good.

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Evaluation: *Grace pulls off something quite difficult in this paper. She is able to succinctly capture Helen Longino’s argument (in “Pornography, Oppression, and Freedom”) that certain kinds of pornography create harms to women that would justify prohibiting it. She then carefully explains Wendy McElroy’s argument that Longino’s position is actually anti-feminist. Grace then weaves her own voice into the conversation, staking out her own position by making use of examples from society as well as popular culture and by working through difficult ethical concepts. Her paper is a wonderful example of how students can integrate their own voices into larger and ongoing academic conversations about societal issues.*

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# Pieces Left at War

Jay Patel

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

Assignment: *Write a research paper about a work or works of literature that we read for class, incorporating effective use of at least seven secondary sources.*

The story “Redeployment,” by Phil Klay, reveals the reality of the main character, who has returned home from recent deployment at war in Iraq. The main character, Sergeant Price, has trouble readjusting to civilian life due to not being able to let his guard down, which begins to put strain on his relationship with his wife. His dog is old, and he cannot stand seeing him in such ill health, which becomes his only reason to leave his home. He agrees to go shopping with his wife and is quickly overwhelmed, which amps him up. When he returns home, he decides he needs to put his dog down himself to let him out of his misery. He first freezes up when attempting to shoot his dog but pulls it together and completes the deed, to be left without any idea of what he planned on doing with the body of his now deceased companion. The story “Play the Game,” by Colby Buzzell, also explains the experience of the main character in the first year since he has returned to the United States from his deployment in Iraq. The main character in this story, Specialist Dunson, wakes up one morning and cannot find his car and assumes it was stolen. Later, Specialist Dunson finds a job working for a real estate company to dance with a sign to direct traffic to an open house, where he quickly feels degraded by the job and abandons it. A few days later, he finds his car with burger wrappers inside and reassures himself that it was stolen but soon remembers what seems like a dream to him with himself in an In-n-Out hamburger stand, causing a scene. “Redeployment” is a sad story that opens the reader’s eyes to the difficulties of assimilating back into civilian life and the effect PTSD has on the wife of the veteran, while “Play the Game” is a story that shows the attitude of a broken veteran attempting to move on. Sergeant Price is a damaged person who returned from

war physically but not mentally. Specialist Dunson is a cold, resentful person who returns from war and spends his time drunk and interacting with others without regard for their feelings, due to his own shame. Overall, with respect to the effect of the war experience on veterans, it seems that “Redeployment” provides insight into the struggle for veterans to continue their marriage from where they left off, readjust to an at-ease mindset, and face guilt, and “Play the Game” examines the attempt of veterans to assimilate back into normal civilian life while dealing with a sense of shame. Both stories exemplify the problems of desensitization and lack of interest and/or motivation caused by PTSD. The lack of physical exercise or any activity, for both veterans, can also be put to blame for the exacerbation of their symptoms. According to the American Psychiatric Association, PTSD “symptoms are organized into the following three clusters: re-experiencing of the event (e.g., repeated, disturbing memories of the event), avoidance of reminders of the event and numbing (e.g., efforts to avoid reminders of the trauma, diminished interest or involvement in activities that were of interest before the trauma), and hyperarousal (e.g., hypervigilance, problems sleeping)” (qtd. in Sims et al. 7). Many of these symptoms can be seen in both of the veterans and have detrimental effects on their lives.

Desensitization or numbing is a symptom of PTSD and can be seen in both veterans. The difference in the levels of desensitization of the main characters can also be observed throughout both stories. In “Play the Game,” Specialist Dunson had just woken up and was looking out of the window and saw a young girl who was crossing the street get run over by a truck. As she is lying in the middle of the road, Specialist Dunson says, “then I felt kind of tired, so I got back in bed and went to sleep” (Buzzell 88). Any normal person would have been left dumbfounded by this experience and would have made an attempt to help this girl in any shape or form. Rather than stumbling to call 911 as fast as possible to save the girl’s life, Dunson just goes back to sleep because he felt tired. This reaction to a young girl getting run over illustrates the extent to which Specialist Dunson has witnessed death on his deployment, leaving him dehumanized.

Sergeant Price’s dog, Vicar, was old when they adopted him. Over the time of his deployment, Vicar

had become rather ill, and it pained Sergeant Price to see him that way and had decided to put him down. Sergeant Price takes Vicar to a dirt road near his home and says “when I put him down and stepped back, he looked up at me. He wagged his tail. And I froze” (Klay 14). In an interview with a WWII veteran, he described:

a great dislike for dogs, an antipathy caused by his experiences with dogs that he encountered overseas. He had seen hounds devour the bodies of American and Japanese soldiers which was naturally distasteful to him. When he came back to the United States, the veteran experienced feelings of revulsion whenever he encountered a dog. (Levinson 262)

Sergeant Price did not have this level of disgust for dogs, as he still enjoyed Vicar’s company. Including the fact that Sergeant Price froze and couldn’t shoot his sick dog right away shows the level of humanity left in comparison to the WWII veteran and Specialist Dunson. As someone who had been to war and had shot dogs prior, he still struggled to pull the trigger on his companion. However, Specialist Dunson witnessed the death of a human child and had no reaction. Albeit the little girl that died had no relationship to Specialist Dunson as Vicar did to Sergeant Price, it can be said that the death of child should be more astounding than that of a dog to anyone. This difference in behavior shows the levels of distancing from normal emotion between the two main characters.

It seems that the veterans in these stories return home and only live in the moment, with no ideas for the long term, due to the in the moment thought process required at war. This thought process required at war is explained by Sergeant Price when he says “you free up brain space to take in everything about the next moment that might keep you alive...focus on the next. And the next. And the next” (Klay 13). One of Sergeant Price’s war buddies was going through a rough patch, so he spent a considerable amount of time with him. Sergeant Price says, “when I wasn’t with Weissert and the rest of the squad, I sat on the couch with Vicar, watching the baseball games Cheryl’d taped for me” (Klay 11). This implies that other than drinking with friends, he sits at home watching TV, waiting for his wife to return home. The sergeant never mentions his aspirations for life after discharge and

does not seem like he does much other than he described. Specialist Dunson is living in a run-down hotel in Los Angeles and says that his current living conditions are temporary until he finds a job. After discharge, he says, “Six months later, I got out of bed and stumbled over to the window...Was today Sunday? I thought about that for a minute” (Buzzell 88). Six months have passed, and he has not done anything productive yet, and he doesn’t even know what day of the week it is, showing that he is just letting time pass by without any idea of what he wants in the long term. He is just drifting through, day by day, without considering the actions he needs to take today to get to where he wants. However, a simple solution to help alleviate the PTSD that arose from their deployment would have been physical activity. It can be seen that both veterans had a significant amount of down time in which they could have exercised. According to LeardMann et al., “Engaging in vigorous activity 120 to 300 minutes per week was associated with reduced odds of persistent PTSD symptoms.” The same article states:

Of the 38,883 participants, 89.4% reported engaging in at least 30 minutes of physical activity per week. At follow-up, those who reported proportionately less physical activity were more likely to screen positive for PTSD. Vigorous physical activity had the most consistent relationship with PTSD. Those who reported at least 20 minutes of vigorous physical activity twice weekly had significantly decreased odds for new-onset (odds ratio [OR] = 0.58, 95% confidence interval [CI] 0.49, 0.70) and persistent (OR=0.59, 95% CI 0.42, 0.83) PTSD symptoms. (LeardMann et al. 371)

Even through a mild workout routine, consisting of only two sessions of 20 minutes a week, the study shows that people suffering from PTSD had significantly lower odds of their PTSD symptoms persisting.

The ability for veterans to interact with others around them seems to be affected, post-deployment. Sergeant Price had just returned to the United States and was about to be picked up by his wife. When he finally sees his wife, he says, “I moved in and kissed her. I figured that was what I was supposed to do” (Klay 8). This suggests that it is difficult for him to interact normally with his

wife as someone doesn't kiss their wife because it's what they're supposed to do but because they want to, especially after months of being apart. He should have been ecstatic at the opportunity to embrace his wife and kiss her, but instead, he is only doing so because it is what would be considered normal. Even on the car ride home, his wife asks how he has been and Sergeant Price replies with "Good. I'm Fine" (Klay 8). This implies that he is not comfortable around her as he once was, which is why he is nervous when seeing her again. This seems strange because after not seeing his wife for seven months, it would be expected that Price would have an immense number of things to talk about and not be able to stop interacting. He is also not even trying to create small talk, which is what someone would do in this awkward silence if he's been gone so long, in order to fill the void, but instead, he sits there quietly and drives. One of the important approaches to help people suffering from PTSD is to provide emotional support. According to Cohen et al., "The functional approach may be further subdivided into the types of functions provided by these interpersonal relationships. One is emotional support, characterized by having someone who listens to problems and provides indications of caring and compassion" (qtd. in Sims et al. 15). Sergeant Price's wife is willing to support him emotionally, which would aid in his mental distress, but he does not provide the dialogue needed for her to listen to and be compassionate towards him. This lack of dialogue with his wife could be caused by the trauma he experienced at war. According to Laufer and Gallops, "Exposure to war trauma also should affect patterns of intimacy...Men who have these experiences may find themselves incapable of generating the types of intimacy that they had known before the service." This lack of intimacy is causing a rift in Price's relationship with his wife. Proper communication with Cheryl would allow him to use her as an emotional crutch in order to recuperate, but he is no longer able to generate intimacy with his wife, as seen in the kissing scene as well as in the lack of dialogue after their first interactions after returning. The lack of intimacy could ultimately lead to the demise of their marriage. Many veterans' marriages fail after returning home from war. Laufer and Gallops state, "For those married before they entered the service, there should be a higher rate of marriage disruption and failure in the form of separation and divorce than among civilians of

comparable ages" (842). It would not be a stretch to say that Sergeant Price's marriage is heading in this direction due to the lack of intimacy and communication between the couple.

Although Sergeant Price may be the one suffering from PTSD, it does not mean that he is the only victim of the illness. According to Beckham et al., "Spouses of war veterans with PTSD have reported having higher levels of anxiety, depression, and poorer mental health than spouses of war veterans without PTSD" (qtd. in Dekel et al. 64). In the same article, Ahmadi et al. states, "In addition, a study of Iranian military veterans found that the severity of the PTSD in the veterans predicted the degree of traumatic stress in their wives" (qtd. in Dekel et al. 64). The effect of a returning veteran on his intimate partner's mental health is present. These problems may occur due to a concept known as ambiguous loss. According to Boss and Greenberg, "PTSD among veterans has already been conceptualized as a case of ambiguous loss, in which the husband is physically present but psychologically absent.... This ambiguity can lead to depression and loneliness" (qtd. in Dekel et al. 64). This phenomenon of ambiguous loss can be seen for Cheryl through her interactions with her husband. He is back from war physically; however, his mind was left back in Iraq. The struggle of having her husband finally home, but not being able to return to the status quo of their relationship prior to his deployment, must take a toll on Cheryl's mental health.

Specialist Dunson interacts with people in a way that is cold and unwelcoming. A homeless, middle aged woman approaches Specialist Dunson at a park. This woman suggests that he shouldn't smoke, and Specialist Dunson throws a vibe at her that says, "please, lady, don't fucking talk to me" (Buzzell 92). The woman goes on to suggest not to drink coffee either, and Specialist Dunson retorts with "Can I help you?" (Buzzell 92). The woman shares that she is a veteran as well and tells him that he drinks and smokes a lot now because of his level of endorphins not being as high as they were at war, and Specialist Dunson thinks to himself, "I wanted to ask her if she was a fat, homeless slob because of the endorphins" (Buzzell 93). The woman is only trying to help him from her experiences as a vet, and he thanks her with rude replies and defining her as her weight and social status. This suggests that he didn't put any importance on what

she says and just disregards her advice and moves on in his day. The advice of someone who has been through what he has should be valuable to him, as it would give him insight earlier into what is needed to be done to progress, but he completely disregards it. He is also judging others for being “homeless slob” while he is living in a rundown hotel, which could suggest that he is projecting. He is pushing his problems with his own status onto others to make himself feel better about his own situation, as a defense mechanism. Further projection can be seen when Specialist Dunson is on the bus on his way to his new job as someone who attracts attention using a sign and he says, “The hangover wasn’t as bad as having to get on the bus with the 7 a.m. work crowd. All these Mexicans and black guys and women going to their shitty jobs, looking at me like I’m some kind of stain” (Buzzell 96). He is again judging people and berating them in his mind. These people are on their way to work at what he assumes is a shitty job, which is exactly what he is doing. Dunson is verbally aggressive due to his own shame. According to Gilligan, “The present study indicates that veterans with a history of combat/military trauma who are experiencing shame are more likely to engage in verbally aggressive behaviors. Gilligan suggested that individuals become aggressive in an attempt to regulate shame levels” (qtd. in Crocker et al. 524). He is ashamed of himself and is projecting his problems onto others and is verbally aggressive in his own thoughts, in a way that would seem as if the situation doesn’t apply to him as well.

Specialist Dunson feels judged and that his value to society is being diminished during his time in Los Angeles. After acquiring the job where he needs to draw attention to an open house by dancing with a sign, Specialist Dunson says “a white SUV pulled up to the light and I heard this kid ask his J.Crew-looking dad, ‘Daddy? Why’s that man holding a sign?’ J. Crew looks over at me, then looks away...I can hear him chuckle, driving away...Well he’s holding up that sign because that’s what happens to people who don’t go to college. That’s what happens to people who don’t have a plan.’ Or something like that, anyways” (Buzzell 99). According to Hulin et al., “Work provides many benefits, is often central to how adults view themselves, and hence is a relevant reintegration domain area” (qtd. in Sims et al. 16). He could have assumed that the father just replied with, “he is trying to get attention to the open house,” but instead, he jumps to these negative

conclusions due to his view of himself and because of the job. It could be said that Specialist Dunson indeed thinks that what the father said to the son is true for himself. Specialist Dunson doesn’t know what the father actually replied to his son but assumes that it was something along those lines, suggesting that he feels judged, dismissed, and disappointed in himself.

Sergeant Price behaves in a way that demonstrates that he feels uncomfortable and unsafe in the civilian environment. After reaching the base where the families pick up the soldiers, Sergeant Price must turn in his rifle, and he says, “that was the first time I’d been separated with it in months. I didn’t know where to rest my hands. First, I put them in my pockets, then I took them out and crossed my arms, and then I just let them hang, useless, at my sides” (Klay 6). He is so accustomed to having his firearm with him that he no longer knows what to do with his hands without his rifle in them. This suggests that civilian life is going to be extremely difficult for him if he can’t even remember what his hands are supposed to do back home. Later, Sergeant Price agrees to go shopping because he can’t stand to see his dog so sick. Walking down the streets of his town, Sergeant Price explains, “in Wilmington, you don’t have a squad, you don’t have a battle buddy, you don’t even have a weapon. You startle ten times checking for it and it’s not there. You’re safe, so your alertness should be at white. But it’s not. Instead you’re stuck in an American Eagle Outfitters. Your wife gives you some clothes to try on and you walk into the tiny dressing room. You close the door, and you don’t want to open it again” (Klay 12). Sergeant Price feels unsafe walking around town without his battalion having his back. He spent months in life and death situations where he had a squad watching his back, and he feels naked without them, even walking through his hometown that is not a war zone. He feels so distressed at the mall that he doesn’t even want to leave the fitting room where he feels that he is safe and has control of the situation. About PTSD, one article states the following:

Because PTSD symptoms, such as hyperarousal, often persist even when veterans are out of the war zone, counselors need to assess and process with treatment-seeking veterans’ aspects of their war-zone experiences that felt life-threatening or traumatizing. Veterans often feel ashamed and angry at themselves for not being able to control

their flashbacks or hyperarousal, which tends to lead to isolation. (Huang and Kashubeck-West 11)

This event that occurred at the mall is a perfect example of this feeling certain veterans have. Sergeant Price was not able to control his hyperarousal, which caused him to lock himself in the fitting room, fitting the concept of isolation. His experiences at war and walking in open places where he would be vulnerable have him in a state of fear that is carrying over to events at home.

Sergeant Price seems to have a deep sense of guilt due to his deployment. While on the plane, Sergeant Price is thinking about things from his time in Iraq, and he says, "I tried to think of other things, like my wife, Cheryl. She's got pale skin and fine dark hairs on her arms. She's ashamed of them, but they're soft. Delicate. But thinking of Cheryl made me feel guilty, and I'd think about Lance Corporal Hernandez, Corporal Smith, and Eicholtz" (Klay 3). Sergeant Price feels guilty thinking about his wife and begins to think about his fellow soldiers. I think that this could be a potential reason for the difficulty in interaction with his wife once he returns home. According to Leskela et al., "Shame is common among combat veterans with PTSD. This may be because often traumatic events that precipitate PTSD in these individuals involve 'moral injury,' or the violation of deeply held moral beliefs due to witnessing, failing to prevent, or carrying out certain acts (e.g., killing civilians, failing to save comrades; Litz et al., 2009), which may lead one to believe that he or she is a bad person" (qtd. in Crocker et al. 521). It makes sense that if he feels bad just thinking about his wife, he would feel bad being back at home interacting with her instead of being back on the battlefield helping his fellow soldiers.

"That was the first time I'd been separated with it in months. I didn't know where to rest my hands" (Klay 6). These two sentences, spoken by Sergeant Price, are a perfect representation of the difficulty for veterans to return to civilian life. Something as simple as where to rest his hands seems like a foreign concept to Sergeant Price, showing the level of disintegration of veterans to normal, everyday life. The struggle to assimilate is hard for both Sergeant Price and Specialist Dunson, due to the symptoms of PTSD that can be observed throughout the

story. They came back from war desensitized, with a loss of touch for how to interact with others, with no plans for the future, and with feelings of guilt or shame. These problems even leak in to the mental health of loved ones, such as Cheryl, showing the severity of PTSD.

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Evaluation: *This paper is an excellent example of how scientific and psychological research can be brought to bear on discussion and interpretation of works of literature. Jay avoided conventional literary sources such as critical articles, authors' biographies, and book reviews, and as a result of this, his paper is quite unique and convincing in its argument.*



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# Understanding Our Surroundings: Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*

Celeste N. Pena

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Kurt Hemmer

Assignment: *Students were to write about what theme or message from Jack Kerouac's novel On the Road they believe has the deepest impact on contemporary readers.*

Jack Kerouac depicts the pitfalls and the treasures hidden within something as seemingly simple as the life of an average person in his most prominent novel, *On the Road*. His unique approach to storytelling stirs the minds of curious readers as he describes brief and ordinary events in great detail. Today, in a society when individuals are frequently caught in the trap of mindlessly going through the motions of a day rather than fully analyzing their own surroundings, few are fortunate enough to be able to notice their intricate, everyday surroundings. By taking his time to carefully construct detailed imagery, Kerouac effectively gains control over the speed at which he wants the reader to process any given information or situation. The most significant message from Kerouac's *On the Road* to contemporary readers is to recognize the importance of everyday life experiences, no matter how big or small, because they may come and go in a matter of seconds and are therefore easily capable of slipping away unnoticed.

Kerouac's approach is to offer a complex cocktail of various hyperboles and similes to create a lasting image in the mind of his readers. While telling of his experience at a jazz club, Sal Paradise, Kerouac's persona, describes how, "The hornman sat absolutely motionless at a corner table with an untouched drink in front of him, staring gook-eyed into space, his hands hanging at his sides till they almost touched the floor, his feet outspread like lolling tongues" (202). Kerouac molds the image of the

musician so that the reader is forced to creatively conjure his body language. Even the phrase "untouched drink" offers new insight into the scene as it depicts the hornman as one who is drinking socially and quite comfortably rather than obsessively and drunkenly. Kerouac's skillful use of image-inducing phrases and techniques gives the reader a precise portrayal of events throughout the novel as Kerouac himself wishes them to be seen.

In addition to Kerouac's generous use of vivid imagery, he also employs a strategy of omission to convey a lack of significance within his novel. While describing a desperate attempt to make travel arrangements, Sal reveals, "We were too bashful to approach anyone. We wandered around sadly. It was cold outside" (162). The abrupt shift to such bland and factual observations acts as a noticeably sharp contrast to the previously rich and emotionally indulgent phrases from the jazz-club scene. As evident by the lack of passion and emotion to be found within such lines of his text, Kerouac successfully places heavy emphasis on the urgent need to distinguish between the events that are worth fully comprehending in life and the events that deserve to receive little more than a brief acknowledgment as they come and go. The amount of time and thought Kerouac places on each individual event that takes place throughout his novel directly corresponds with his idea of how important situations should be in everyday life. By intentionally omitting or adding any emotionally charged words, Kerouac demonstrates that not all of life's events are worth pondering and analyzing. While his ability to generate crystal-clear images through the addition of words is one of great importance, his ability to create images that are equally effective while utilizing a lack of words is absolutely essential in this novel, as it creates a means of prioritizing the types of events that should be thought about in life.

Combined with his selective use of descriptive phrases, Kerouac also effectively provides the reader with meaningful background information as various characters and events are introduced throughout the text. Shortly after enjoying a brief game of catch with his road companion, Dean, Sal recalls, "Back in the house Dean took his wallet, harrumphed, and handed my aunt the fifteen dollars he owed her from the time we got a speeding ticket in Washington" (253). The inclusion

## Understanding Our Surroundings: Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*

of this background information is critical in evoking an emotional response from the reader as it emphasizes not only the importance that Dean places on commitment but also the generosity of Sal's aunt. Although the omission of these background details would have had little impact on the plot itself, the decision to include these details is a crucial one as it seamlessly ties various emotions into an event that could have otherwise been described as simply factual, involving the transfer of money between Dean and Sal's aunt. This seemingly minute detail is actually one of great importance, as it highlights the fact that any situation observed by an individual can contain far more depth and significance than it may appear from an outsider's perspective. Kerouac reminds the reader that not everything in life can be fully understood simply by observing and analyzing. Oftentimes, in fact, it is the possession of background information that generates a far more accurate portrayal of life's events.

The literary techniques used by Kerouac throughout *On the Road* successfully speak to people of all ages about the importance of making sense of their surroundings. Oftentimes, people direct their attention toward the senseless negativities they encounter in their everyday lives. As a result, they typically fail to discover the emotions and satisfaction that accompany the recognition of a positive life experience, no matter how subtle the event may seem. Kerouac embraces this concept as he skillfully turns an ordinary, ten-second encounter into a descriptive cascade of multiple paragraphs that results in an overflow of imagery and newfound emotion. The ability to find beauty in the everyday situations is Jack Kerouac's gift. *On the Road* successfully emphasizes the need to sometimes slow time down.

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Evaluation: *Through an examination of mundane passages, Celeste is able to emphasize the importance of Kerouac's descriptive powers.*

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# Technique and Ornamentation in Ottoman Ceramics

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Margaux Rafii

Course: Art 133 (non-Western Art)

Instructor : Karen Patterson

*Assignment: This assignment required students to investigate a single artwork over the course of a semester through a series of short “mini-papers” to be assembled into one longer essay at the end of the semester. Each “mini-paper” demanded a different approach to the art object. In Phase 1, students explored their own reactions to and questions about the artwork, without knowing anything about it other than its appearance and a few basic facts. In Phase 2, the student was asked to describe and analyze the visual structure of the artwork. Phase 3 brought research to bear on understanding the artwork. Then, Phase 4 involved a reexamination of the student’s original thoughts and questions, requiring them to reflect on the writing and learning experience as a whole.*

The object central to this essay is a large ceramic drinking cup, a tankard, from Turkey, made sometime between 1570 and 1599: *Tankard (Hanap) with Tulips, Hyacinths, Roses, and Carnations*. The tankard is a ceramic vessel made of fritware with underglaze painting in blue, turquoise, red, and black. The dimensions of the tankard are 7 ¾ inches by 5 7/8 inches by 4 1/8 inches. The objective of this paper is to examine the tankard using a series of different methods of interpretation. First, I will explore my reactions to the tankard, create some initial hypotheses about it, and pose questions for future research. The second part of the paper aims to describe and analyze the visual structure of the tankard. In the third section, research will be used to create a context through which to understand the tankard. Finally, I will

reflect on the writing experience and what I have learned about both the tankard and my own learning process.

This cup caught my attention in part because it falls into the same basic category as the ancient Greek kylix that I wrote about in a previous course, Art 130. Like the kylix, the tankard has very beautiful, intricate decorations. This tankard is interesting because of its very colorful floral decorations. Since Turkey is a Muslim society, it almost certainly was not used for alcohol, unlike the more well-known tankards made in Germany, which were used for beer. Most likely, this cup was used for tea or coffee.

One can assume that the meaning behind this cup is that even though it was an everyday utilitarian object, it was important to the artist, and especially important to the person who owned it, because of its beauty. We today tend to think of roses and tulips as very nice flowers, and we could guess that the same was true for people in Turkey back in the 1500s. Given how elaborate it is, the owner was probably someone of elevated rank and great wealth, likely someone who had servants. It also looks like the sort of fancy china that would only be used on special occasions.

Some of the more important questions inspired by the tankard include the meaning of the kinds of flowers that decorate it. Do roses, tulips and carnations have any specific significance. Secondly, how was the cup actually used? Was it used on an everyday basis, or only on special occasions? What accounts for the unusual design of the handle’s shape? Why is the tankard as tall as it is, especially when most tea and coffee cups that we are used to are not this size? Also, what can we infer about the owners of the cup? Was this person a wealthy private individual, or was he a member of the Ottoman court, if not the sultan himself?

The tankard is tall; it is approximately twice as tall as it is wide. Its profile is fairly narrow and straight. The only curves in the basic form of the cup are in the handle. There is an upward curve in the upper half of the handle, and a downward curve in the lower half. The handle is actually one-third the full height of the cup. The part of the handle that one grasps attaches to long, thin pieces of porcelain mounted on the side of the cylindrical form of the cup. The texture of the cup’s surface appears to be very smooth. There are no rough, jagged, or projecting



Fig. 1. *Tankard (Hanap) with Tulips, Hyacinths, Roses, and Carnations*. Fritware with underglaze painting in blue, turquoise, red, and black, 1570-1599. 19.6 × 15 × 10.5 cm (7 3/4 × 5 7/8 × 4 1/8 inches).

elements other than the handle itself. Like most pieces of porcelain, it has a polished, glazed finish (fig. 1).

As far as value is concerned, there is a strong contrast between lighter and darker areas. The foreground of the design stands out very sharply from the background. The colors we see in the tankard are set against a white background. They are mostly cooler colors, primarily blue and green, but there are also areas of red that stand out and become focal points in the whole design.

The elements within the design are carefully framed by a thin border along the top and the bottom of the cylinder. The objects making up the design are scattered across the curving surface of the cup, and on the handle as well. However, even though the design is very lively, it does not look cluttered. The major areas of red and blue are spaced well apart, and the white background helps to create a “breathing space” between the principal objects in the composition.

The design does not reveal significant illusions of three-dimensional depth. The parts of the design appear to overlap each other, but for the most part, the colors have been applied in a flat, uniform way. The artist does not attempt to incorporate shading or variations in the intensity of color to generate a feeling of objects in space.

The composition of the design consists of flowers, including blue tulips, rosebuds, red carnations, and hyacinths. The flowers are attached to long, slender, curving stems. Green appears in the leaves along the stems. The leaves are most prominent at the bottom of the cup, where they are long and tapered, almost like blades of grass. There are also smaller leaves containing the red rosebuds, and at the base of the carnations. The images of the flowers are depicted in a very elegant, but stylized way. The artist was not trying to create a realistic image of flowers, even though it is obvious that these are flowers and leaves. The main purpose of the decorations is to make the tankard look attractive, rather than to create a believable illusion.

How would this object look from different perspectives? A bird’s-eye perspective would not reveal much about the decorations. It would only give one an idea of the basic form of the tankard, namely, the circular shape of the cup and the projecting form of the handle. If one adopted a worm’s-eye perspective, the object would seem monumental in size, and might give the viewer the impression that he or she was walking through a giant garden. Viewed at eye level, one gets the most accurate impression of the surface decorations on the cup.

The tankard is tall for an object of this type, but it is not monumental. The proportional relationship between the cup itself and the handle is roughly 3-to-1 in height, and the handle projects out a length roughly half that of the diameter of the cup.

The different parts of the design seem to fit easily together, because the materials used, plus the colors of the decorations, create a very unified feeling. There is a considerable variety of forms in the decorations on the surface of the tankard, including curving lines for the flower stems, different colors used for the flowers and leaves, and the different shapes and proportions in the various leaves and flowers. The most obvious repetition and pattern is in the curving linework of the flower stems,

which run up and down the height of the cup in a roughly parallel manner. There is also repetition and pattern in the designs of the top and bottom borders.

When one looks at the cup and its decorations, the curving forms of the flower stems give the impression of swaying in the wind, so that one's eyes tend to move from left to right, and gently from the bottom to the top. As far as focal points are concerned, the flowers, especially the red carnations, tend to draw one's attention the most forcefully. The blue tulip in the center also serves as a secondary focal point.

Overall, the composition of the tankard and its decorations feel well-balanced. However, if one could point out any one aspect as somewhat unbalanced, this would be that the leaves at the bottom create a slightly bottom-heavy feeling. There are no similar leaves along the top of the cup.

Lastly, the size relationship of the decorative features to the form of the cup itself is very harmonious. The flowers, leaves, and stems cover the surface of the cup, without too much crowding, and without leaving any large blank areas.

Looking at this tankard and its elegant decorations, one can assume that the owner of this object was someone of fairly high rank, and the vessel could possibly even have been owned by a member of the Ottoman royal family. The obvious effort that went into the decorative features suggests that this was the sort of cup that may have been intended for more formal settings, although that is only a guess based upon the attractiveness of the design.

The tankard that we have been looking at is an elegant and, in many ways, typical example of the kind of ceramic art that was produced in the Ottoman Empire during the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. Ceramic art in Turkey started out in a somewhat experimental way before the artists were able to create very refined pieces like the tankard from the Art Institute of Chicago. During the Middle Ages, the Islamic world imported a great number of ceramic objects from China, which has always been famous for this kind of art. Like other cultures in the Islamic world, the Turks had to learn techniques for making pottery that could compare with the finest Chinese examples (Blair and Bloom 234).

The tankard is an example of what is called "vitrified," where the clay paste is baked in a compound with other minerals that gives the material a glassy, waterproof finish similar to modern-day fine china. In this way, objects like the tankard could be made, with its fancy decoration covering the body of the ceramic piece with an underlayer that concealed the natural color of the clay, but this method also made it possible to apply beautiful decorative motifs on the surface of the object ("Blue and White Ottoman Ceramics").

At first, Ottoman artists experimented with different methods for creating this kind of surface ornamentation. Eventually, they developed a technique called "underglaze," which was very well-suited to applying multicolored, or "polychromatic" decorative designs on the surface. What the artist would do is apply an undercoat to the pastes that made up the object by mixing clay with marble powder and mixing that with combinations of soil and water. Then, he would draw the design over this undercoat and add colors to it. After he had drawn and colored the design, he would place the object in the kiln to bake the colors into the body of the object. After that, he applied a transparent glaze and then put it back in the kiln. In this way, after the second baking, the colorful design was protected by the glaze, and that is why the design is called "underglaze." Ottoman artists used seven different colors in their designs. These were turquoise, dark blue, green, eggplant violet, white, black, and later a tomato red, such as we see in the tankard ("Blue and White Ottoman Ceramics").

The Ottoman Turks used ceramics for all sorts of things besides making tankards, cups and dishes. The kind of ceramic design we see in the tankard was also used very heavily in the mosaics of many of the grandest mosques in the city of Istanbul, as well as in the imperial palace called the Topkapi. Ceramic tile was used as a wall decoration and sometimes even in domes. A famous example of this kind of interior architecture was the Rustem Pasha mosque, located in the historic center of Istanbul. It was built in the 1560s by the architect Sinan, for a high-ranking official working for the Ottoman royal court (Macaulay and Harris).

In this mosque, Sinan used ceramic tile more than he did in most of his other buildings, which is why the



Fig. 2. Rustem Pasha Mosque, Istanbul. View toward the ceiling.

Rustem Pasha mosque is especially famous for its tilework. Like almost all Ottoman Turkish mosques, it has a large dome over the prayer hall (fig. 2). The triangular areas underneath the dome, called “pendentives,” are covered in blue and white ceramic tiles. If one looks closely at the designs in the pendentives, one can see calligraphy surrounded by flowers and leaves, similar in style to the flowers and leaves in the tankard. The calligraphy is placed in a large round medallion in the middle of each pendentive, and the edges of the pendentive have a thin decorative border, like the borders on the tankard.

However, the most elaborate use of glazed ceramic tile occurs farther down. Below a line where the windows begin, the entire wall and all of the major piers are completely covered in polychromatic ceramic tile, mainly in different shades of blue against a white background. The qibla wall and the mihrab are especially beautiful, which is not surprising, because the mihrab is always the most sacred spot inside a mosque. One aspect of the mihrab that is very typically Turkish is the fact that the top is not an arch, but a tall thin triangle (fig. 3).

If one looks closely at the decorative motifs in the qibla wall, they are vaguely similar to the ones on the tankard, because they contain flowers, often imaginary flowers that the artist dreamed up, instead of real ones, and they are connected by vines and long elegant leaves.



Fig. 3. Rustem Pasha Mosque, Istanbul. Qibla wall and mihrab.

The Rustem Pasha mosque illustrates that Ottoman ceramic art covered a large area of creative activity, and the decorative style Turkish artists developed were intended to be transferable to many kinds of objects, even to buildings (fig. 4).



Fig. 4. Ceramic tile from the Rustem Pasha Mosque, Istanbul.



Fig. 5. Underglaze painted charger, Iznik, ca. 1480, Gemeente Museum, The Hague.



Fig. 6. Underglaze painted charger, Iznik, ca. 1490, Istanbul Archeological Museum.

There were several centers of ceramic production in the Ottoman Empire, but the most important one was the city of Iznik, located not far from Istanbul. The demand for beautiful ceramic objects like the tankard gained great momentum after the Ottoman Sultan Mehmet II conquered Constantinople in 1453. Over the next several decades, Mehmet and his successors launched major building projects, especially of mosques and palaces, which required lots of furnishings, including carpets, furniture, and ceramic objects. For the next 200 years or so, Ottoman ceramics were famous for their high quality, but there is no doubt that the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when the tankard was made, was the high point in the history of Ottoman ceramics, and Iznik was the most famous production center (“Iznik and Ottoman Ceramics”).

The reason why Iznik became such an important center had to do with the military victory of the Sultan Selim I over the Persians in 1514 at a major battle in a place called Chaldiran. Part of Selim’s booty was his control of the Persian city of Tabriz, and his transfer of several Persian ceramic artists to Iznik. The Persians were also very famous for their beautiful ceramics, and many of the best Persian artists had workshops in Tabriz. After their transfer to Iznik, these Persian artists taught

the next generation of Turkish students to design elegant pottery, establishing Iznik’s very high reputation (Blair and Bloom 237).

Although there are beautiful pieces of Ottoman ceramic from before 1514, after the resettlement of Persian craftsmen in Iznik, Turkish artists developed a style of design and decoration that is considered the “classical” phase of Ottoman art. The tankard from the Art Institute is a good example of this classical style. However, to show how Ottoman ceramic decoration developed over time, we can compare a couple of examples of ceramic from the late 1400s with a few examples from the 1500s. One excellent example is a charger (a large plate) from about 1480, currently in a museum in The Hague, The Netherlands (fig. 5). It is a kind of pottery inspired by Chinese blue-and-white porcelain. It is very densely covered with small flowers and leaves with pointy tips, and the design is clearly divided into three zones: an out border, a middle section where the dish curves down toward the middle, and the round central portion of the plate. The flowers, which look like they were imagined, rather than copied from actual plants, are connected by very thin stems. The general impression is that the decoration is extremely busy. A similar character is

evident in another charger in the Istanbul Archeological Museum, also from circa 1480 to 1490. This dish is also divided up into three concentric zones. The outer rim and the central surface are decorated in the same way as



Fig. 7. Underglaze painted dish, Iznik, ca. 1550, British Museum, London.



Fig. 8. Underglaze painted dish, Iznik, late 16<sup>th</sup> century, British Museum.

the first charger, but the middle zone features a pattern of fluting (fig. 6).

The classical phase of Ottoman ceramics began with the reign of Suleyman the Magnificent, the most famous Ottoman Sultan. If we examine a few examples of the classical style, sometimes called the “Saz” style, the contrast with the earlier pieces is obvious. One example is a charger from circa 1550, currently in the British Museum, London (fig. 7). The pattern of the design is less densely packed. The leaves and flowers are much larger, more spread out, and the white background is much more conspicuous. The flowers are in blue and green, but they are composites. They are not images of real flowers, but “fake” flowers invented by the artist who drew the designs. The leaves are long and serrated, and their ends curl up to a sharp point. This is a quite common characteristic in classical Ottoman ceramic design. A second example (fig. 8), also from the British Museum, and also from the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, shows a similar design of composite flowers, and long, curling, serrated leaves, but here, the composite flowers are combined with tulips. The tulips have been drawn in a very similar manner to the ones on the tankard. The similarity between the tulips on this plate and on the tankard indicates that both pieces are from the same period, and possibly even from the same workshop (Blair and Bloom 238-240).

A third example of the classical Ottoman style, and one that is a little closer to the tankard, is a ewer in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (fig. 9). This piece features red flowers in a way that draws the eye like the carnations in the tankard. It also has a border running along the rim, as well as a chevron band around the neck. Its handle is lightly decorated in blue, and the tulips once again appear, also in blue. While we cannot be certain of this, the style of decoration on this ewer is so similar to the decoration on the tankard that it could also have been made by artists from the same workshop.

What is the significance of the kind of decorations we see on the tankard and on these other pieces? The first and most basic point to keep in mind about Islamic art of this kind is that, even though it is specifically Turkish, the fact that the decoration is made up exclusively of flowers, leaves, and vines is a consequence of the fact that in Islam, depicting animals or people was strongly discouraged (although it did happen in some places). This forced





Fig. 9. Ottoman ewer, late sixteenth century, Los Angeles County Museum.

Islamic artists to invent new and original patterns that either involved extremely complex geometric patterns, which we call arabesques, or they would invent original ways of representing plant life.

The passion for inventing composite flowers can be attributed to the fact that clients and artists delighted in the challenge of creating original designs. The tulip, however, held special significance for the Turks. This flower grows all over Central Asia, which is where the Turks originally came from. It was the subject of medieval Persian poetry, which had an influence on Turkish culture, and it was used as a motif by the Seljuq Turks, whose empire came before the Ottoman period. But it was in the Ottoman period, and especially in the 16<sup>th</sup> century when the prominence of the tulip as an artistic motif surpassed almost all other symbols. Ottoman Sultans loved to fill their gardens with this flower. For the Turks, the tulip symbolized many things. For one, like the eagle for Americans, the Turks saw the tulip as a kind of national symbol. Because it is such a beautiful flower, it was

also associated with paradise, with perfection and with feminine beauty. These and other associations are among the reasons why the tulip features in so many pieces of Ottoman ceramic like the tankard from the Art Institute of Chicago (Behiery).

Researching and writing this paper has been a new and very challenging experience for me. Up to now, I was never asked to write anything as long and detailed as this assignment. What I have learned about the learning process itself is, first of all, that it takes a great deal of time and energy to compile information about subjects like this piece of art. Learning about an object like the Ottoman tankard, something I have never seen before, is necessarily a very gradual process. This is partly because we cannot analyze a piece of art in isolation from the culture or environment in which it was made if we want to understand the object more completely, and to understand the motives behind making it, and the kinds of uses to which it might have been put. This is the reason why I came to recognize the value and usefulness of bringing Ottoman architecture into the discussion, and specifically the way major Ottoman monuments, like the Rustem Pasha Mosque in Istanbul, incorporated ceramic tile decoration with floral motifs similar to those on the tankard. The tankard's design and decorations do not just tell us something about Turkish ceramic vessels, but equally importantly, they inform us about what Turkish people thought of as beautiful.

When I first looked at this drinking cup, my initial assumptions about it were somewhat vague, but they were not far from what I later came to learn about it. I could tell immediately that it was the kind of object that a wealthy person would be more likely to have owned. I guessed that the tankard was something that, because of its elaborate decoration, might not always have been intended to use at meals; it may have been an object created for the client to simply display. What I did not know was that the kinds of floral motifs on the tankard were not limited to this cup or to similar kinds of drinking vessels, but were popular throughout Ottoman art, even in the decorations of large buildings. An especially significant discovery was when I learned that the tulip is a flower that for the Turks is a kind of national symbol because it grows everywhere in the Turkish countryside.

One advantage that I brought to researching

this object is that I do not think I was too hampered by strong preconceptions, except perhaps that I was a little bit inclined to think the tankard may have been used in the same sorts of social occasions as the ancient Greek kylix that was the subject of my earlier paper in Art 130. If I were to make a general conclusion about how I use formal analytical skills, it would be that it is important to establish a very focused subject, in part because I am something of a perfectionist, and approaching a subject too broadly would lead to research that was too wide, but not very deep. It is easier to research a subject in greater depth and detail if I do not try to take on too much as the focus of my analysis. In other words, it is easier to write a solidly researched paper about an Ottoman tankard, or even about Ottoman tankards as a *type* of object, than to write a paper about, say, Ottoman art in general.

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*Evaluation: One strength of Margaux's paper is her ability to make research on what could have been considered peripheral subjects astoundingly relevant to the tankard in question. There is little published on this particular tankard, but Margaux makes use of robust research, alongside one of the key strategies of art history, compare and contrast, to provide a rich framework through which to position this art object.*

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## Géricault and the Guillotine: Capturing the Politics and Gothic Romanticism of Restoration France

— Hadley Richardson-O'Brien —

Course: Art 131 (Art History)

Instructor: Stephany Rimland

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

The works of Théodore Géricault capture the tumultuous political landscape and the dark Gothic Romantic undercurrent flowing through Paris during the early 1800s in Restoration France, after the Reign of Terror. Théodore Géricault's painting *Head of a Guillotined Man*, a 41- x 38-cm oil painting created around 1818 (Art Institute of Chicago) encapsulates romantic sentiment during the period. Through his beautifully painted yet grotesque subject matter, Géricault is able to imbue the viewer with a sensation of discomfort, yet at the same time pull them in and question what is really behind these intense realistic displays of the darker parts of French life.

Géricault sets up *Head of a Guillotined Man* (fig. 1) in an unsettling way, creating a normal still life with an obviously abnormal subject being an actual guillotined head. The piece seems almost like an over-the-top vanitas painting, a vanitas being a still life with subtle elements alluding to the fleetingness of life. *Head of a Guillotined Man*, on the other hand, is a smack to the face of the inescapable nature of death. Though the piece is possibly a study of an actual corpse, and it still has the elements of a completed painting and not just a quick study. As mentioned earlier, the piece is set up like a still life, with the head placed gently on a folded piece of white cloth, to offset the green-gray color of the skin, and also placed on



Fig. 1. *Head of a Guillotined Man*, Théodore Géricault. Oil on Panel, 1818-1819. 41 x 38 cm. On display at the Art Institute of Chicago

top of what seems to be a small shelf or a box. The head is placed squarely in the center of the composition, and though the head vanishes a bit into the dark background, the head is still the center of attention, along with the large, bleeding gash that is angled toward the viewer. The viewer's eye can't help but be pulled to the highlighted ear at first glance. The ear seems to still retain some of the color of normal skin, and it works as a good point of contrast when looking at the rest of the surreal, green, decomposing head. That flash of normal flesh tone brings the viewer back into remembering that this is not just an inanimate still life object, this was once a human head just like theirs. The subject matter is presented with intense realism, capturing the color of decomposition but also the sallow gauntness of the face. At the same time, though Géricault does not try to create a completely smooth rendering of his subject, instead of small, refined strokes, he uses larger, painterly strokes, especially in the blood coming from the neck of the head, with just one large

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streak of red on top of another. This creates both a sense of motion but also of emotion in the piece, common in other Romantic pieces of the time, focusing on expressive use of paint to convey the feeling of the grotesque in the quick brush strokes that mimic the decomposing flesh, but also the feeling of introspection, in that the brush strokes are creating movement in the object of the guillotined head, which should be still, reminding the viewer that this was once again a person.

To understand the possible political implications, and put *Head of a Guillotined Man* into context, Géricault's masterwork *The Raft of the Medusa* (fig. 2) must be mentioned. *The Raft of the Medusa* is a history painting in oil created in 1819, capturing a great tragedy and a political scandal in Géricault's time. The story behind the painting was that the Medusa's captain, who though given the position did not have much recent sea-faring experience, ran the ship aground and placed himself and other higher-ranking passengers of the ship on the few lifeboats available. The rest of the 150 sailors were left on one poorly constructed raft and were left behind by the lifeboats. After 13 days, only 10 of the 150 survived

the tragedy, some of the survivors even having to resort to cannibalism to stay alive (Laborie). Géricault's piece at the time gained buzz concerning both the subject matter of the piece, and the realistically depicted dead and dying on the raft, but also the political implications as well, as the piece seemed to be a commentary on political appointments, showing what can happen when someone who does not have the job experience is given a job, and tragedy results. This piece is important to understanding *Head of a Guillotined Man*, because the head is believed to be a study for *The Raft of the Medusa*, so Géricault could more realistically depict the corpses of the sailors in the process of decomposition, and create a greater response to the realistic depiction of the event. The piece also has importance in that it shows that Géricault was not afraid to make statements about the ruling class, or about political issues he disagreed with.

Some believe that *Head of a Guillotined Man* is not just a study for his masterwork but also a piece going against public executions, and specifically executions by guillotine. Géricault was known to be a part of many liberal groups such as abolitionists against slavery and



Fig. 2. *The Raft of the Medusa*, Théodore Géricault. Oil on canvas, 1818-1819. 491 cm x 716 cm. The Louvre.

execution and other groups, as well, and that many of his friends were major members in these groups. Géricault had also done previous studies with the body parts of execution victims, and he had even taken a trip to London and drew the public hangings in action and had in the past “had lent his support, and his brushes, to one Liberal cause after another” (Athanasoglou-Kallmyer). Judging from the work he produced, executions were definitely a topic that interested him, along with the ending of executions for smaller crimes or the use of the guillotine in general. A piece of evidence that this study might be discussing the topic of the guillotine is the fact that the cut of the neck is angled toward the viewer, and though the head is an old one from the morgue, Géricault painted blood gushing from the neck and onto the white cloth below the head (Athanasoglou-Kallmyer). It seems odd that if this piece was purely a study, and that he was trying to capture just what was in front of him, that he would have included that detail, a detail that causes the viewer to remember how that head got there and by what gruesome means. Géricault’s studies represent the climate of Restoration France, where the guillotine had fallen from revolutionary tool to be used by the ruling class indiscriminately for any and all crimes. Coming from The Reign of Terror to then continue with the excessive use of public executions by guillotine, a darker undercurrent formed in France in politics and the arts.

Romanticism in France came with Gothic undertones in both the fiction produced during this time and the art. Géricault’s *Head of a Guillotined Man* mirrored greatly the tone of contemporary novels of the time, a common Romantic trait of pulling more from novels and emotions than from direct representations or biblical stories. Contemporary to Géricault’s time were books such as *Frankenstein* or *L’ane Mort*, a French story that concerns the fall of a poor woman who came to Paris to find her fortune and then ended up experiencing one piece of bad luck after another and finally the guillotine, her body eventually cut up and used for medical dissection (Athanasoglou-Kallmyer). Both these contemporary pieces showed a morbid interest in the act of the guillotine, dismemberment, humanity, and death itself. This same current is easily visible in Géricault’s *Head of a Guillotined Man*, a realistic study of an actual head. Previously, an artist would not have likely used this

### Student Reflections on Writing: Hadley Richardson-O’Brien

Writing is a time capsule. Whether you are actively writing to try to capture a moment in time, writing an essay, a novel, a shopping list, any bit of writing, a part of you from that time always ends up mixed into the words. Looking back on my essay “Géricault and the Guillotine” written 4 years ago, I can’t help feeling like I’m brought back to the moment I wrote it. I was not writing about how the sunlight was slanting into the painting studio at Harper as I flipped through a book on the artist Géricault, or how my favorite art department professors’ voices sounded as they spoke to one another in the hallway as they passed by, but reading the words on the page about the guillotine and the painted study of a man whose life was cut too short brought me closer to that room than to Restoration-era France.

Writing has a multitude of functions and outcomes. This essay was to inform others as well as to gain a better understanding of an artist and his work and the circumstances that created it, but this reflection has had the purpose of being a piece of introspection, remembering why the me of four years ago wanted to study the gruesome topic of the painting of the guillotined man, the emotions that lay behind the words, the moment of time of the essay’s creation being encapsulated in the writing choices and style of the previous me and how they differ from the me of today. Looking over this piece has reminded me that writing meant for others can also be meant for ourselves, and that we might just need to reread it in a few years to realize it.

subject matter in a piece so directly. The piece not only fulfills the morbid curiosity of the time but also poses questions of humanity to the viewer. Also, in the way that it is painted, this piece carries across the more expressive emotion that is central to the Romantic style, with the brush strokes quick and painterly causing the feeling of

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Fig. 3. *David with the Head of Goliath (Vienna)*, Caravaggio. Oil on wood, 1607. 90.5 cm x 116.5 cm. Kunsthistorisches Museum.

movement in the piece but also the expressiveness of the painting style creating a feeling of sadness, because the painterly strokes suggest that the head could come alive at any moment, reminding the viewer of what is being looked at. In an article concerning Géricault's studies, Stefan Germer puts it best in saying, "That the mouths and eyes are open is 'uncanny,' so that the head seems to speak to us, to stare. These heads are thus possibly—even though apparently separated from their bodies—not dead but rather still living" (Germer).

Géricault's work shows a clear transition into the more expressive style of Romanticism from previous styles. A piece that works well in comparison with *Head of a Guillotined Man* is Caravaggio's *David with the Head of Goliath* (fig. 3), painted in Vienna in 1607. Caravaggio's piece was created during the Baroque period of art, a time where subject matter was depicted more realistically, with emotional intensity, and usually capturing a moment in time or being in the middle of an action. Though both pieces depict a severed head, the subject matter still differs greatly based on what was important or desired during the period that it was created. Caravaggio's piece depicts the biblical story of David defeating Goliath, as representations of biblical story, were still the main subject matter of paintings at the time, while Géricault's piece *Head of a Guillotined Man* is a piece more closely related to both the political climate of his time and the trend of fiction then. Caravaggio's piece was created during the time of the Counter-Reformation

in Rome, a period of spiritual revival within the Catholic Church, with a focus on pieces transporting the viewer to a religious and spiritual state through emotion expressed within religious artwork. Caravaggio's piece fits into his era as both a religious story, but it is also presented in such a dramatic way to make the viewer feel a part of the story so they may better understand it. Géricault, on the other hand, created work during the period of Enlightenment, where there was a move away from a focus on the church, and instead focusing on rational thinking and issues such as equal rights. Géricault's piece shows the step away from the church in its subject matter having no relation to the church at all, and also being a piece that is critical of a topic such as public executions and using it as a means to fight for the rights of people unjustly going to the guillotine. Stylistically, both paintings use a completely black or nearly black background to push their subject matters, which are lit, to the foreground and focus of the paintings. Where Caravaggio uses his characteristic intense tenebrism, a more pronounced chiaroscuro where the subject is illuminated, Géricault instead uses a softer, more realistic lighting for his piece. Though both pieces are trying to capture an emotion, the shift to more expressive paint strokes from Baroque art to Romantic art is evident, Caravaggio's *David with the Head of Goliath* being carefully rendered, the brush strokes nearly becoming invisible to create a sense of realism in the piece. Géricault, on the other hand, though in the midst of a study, instead focuses on capturing the emotion of the

guillotined head, and on expressing emotion not through the subject matter completely but through the way that he paints it as well. Both artists at times were caught up in controversy for some of their paintings, but in each of their stylistic periods, they experimented and pushed the boundaries in their art.

Géricault as an artist with his work captured expressively and with emotion the climate of restoration France around him, and the period of Romantic paintings. His work through the use of the combination of realism and the grotesque mimicked and attacked head on the world Géricault found himself in. *Head of a Guillotined Man* may be just a study or may be a piece with larger implications meant to showcase Géricault's ideals at the time, and whether that is the case or not, this piece is an unusual still life and unusual study encapsulating the emotion-fueled period of Romanticism and turbulence of the French Restoration.

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Evaluation: *The student creates a strong connection between the visual elements and the sociopolitical backdrop of the painting to place the work within the dark landscape of Restoration France.*

## A Pilgrimage Through Time and the Classification of Patti Smith as a Pilgrim

— Alexis Rojas —

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Katelynn Moxon

*Assignment: Your final project will consist of a seven-to ten-page paper on one of the books we covered in class. You must create an argumentative thesis and examine, analyze, interpret, and present your findings in the research paper. You will need at least five outside sources to complete the paper in addition to the primary source material. All sources can be digital. You must see me for approval of your thesis.*

The word pilgrim is derived from the Latin word *peregrinum*, which means “traveler” (Villarrubia). Pilgrims embarked upon spiritual journeys, called pilgrimages, to reach a significant (either physical or metaphorical) landmark called a shrine. Upon reaching the desired landmark, pilgrims relished in the opportunity to be in the presence of relics and shrines. Relics and shrines are of the utmost importance in pilgrimages, as they can have a personal (spiritual or otherwise) importance that can be as meaningful as the journey itself. Relics are thought of as objects with a historical, sentimental, or religious interest. Although one can be led to believe that religion is a vital part of pilgrimages, in this paper, I will discuss the unimportance of religion in the distinguishment of a pilgrim and pilgrimages. The problem is that in modern-day pilgrimages, religion is seen as a necessity, when in fact the priority should be placed on the physical pilgrimage and personal significance of the spirituality involved within relics or shrines. To show that pilgrims and pilgrimages are not dead in secular societies, I will demonstrate how Patti Smith is a modern-day pilgrim through her love of travel, pilgrimages to tombs and shrines, and an absolute adoration of objects, or relics. I will use Patti Smith’s memoir *M Train* to aid in reasoning through the classification of Patti Smith as a pilgrim.

Before delving into Patti Smith, I will outline a brief history of pilgrimages throughout the world and the different religions associated within each of the subtypes. It is important to understand that pilgrimages have different ambitions based on the religious affiliation (or lack of) for the traveler (pilgrim). Since religions have discrepancies, pilgrimages will serve a discordant purpose in each religion. I will now briefly elucidate the use of pilgrimages in Buddhism, Catholicism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism.

Since the inception of Buddhism, pilgrimages have been looked upon as a vital aspect of the religion, as can be seen in the article “The Importance of Buddhist Pilgrimages”:

In the Pali Tipitaka, the oldest surviving body of Buddhist literature, the Buddha speaks specifically about the importance of pilgrimages. According to the Buddha, practitioners should try to make a pilgrimage to one of the four holy sites in their lifetime. The journey must be made with a devout heart and will bring various benefits to one’s spiritual growth. (Malandra 1)

The Buddha understood that pilgrimages could be used as a platform to promote spiritual growth within the religion. This is further expounded when Malandra states, “Buddhists use the pilgrimage, which is traditionally done on foot and often takes weeks or months to complete, as a vehicle for grounding their faith” (Malandra 1). The most important pilgrimages to Buddhists would be to the places where Buddha experienced the most momentous components of his life. There are four significant locations: Lumbini (Buddha’s birthplace); Bodhgaya (where Buddha attained enlightenment); Sarnath (where Buddha preached the First Sermon); and Kusinara (where Buddha passed away) (Krishna et al. 2).

Considering the above, the importance of pilgrimages in Buddhism has been established. Now, the preeminent objective of a pilgrimage in Buddhism is clear from what Malandra states:

The true importance of the pilgrimage is in the devotion that each individual pilgrim puts into it. Some Buddhist pilgrims stop and prostrate



themselves at every step of the path, thereby extending the length of time needed to reach the destination considerably. This is because the true pilgrimage is an interior journey, meant to train the mind and elevate the spirit, as the true path and destination in Buddhism are one and the same; inner peace.

The main takeaway is that the literal act of traveling is what substantiates the Buddhist pilgrimage, resulting in the realization that relics are not important to Buddhist pilgrimages.

Alternatively, in Catholic pilgrimages relics and shrines play a more pivotal role. This can be seen in the article “Shrines & Pilgrimages”:

Both the journey and the destination are important in understanding pilgrimage. What is said to have been long true of Catholics in Celtic cultures applies to many, but certainly not all cultures: “The actual act of walking was a sanctifying activity; the act of walking in a group, processing, was a liturgical act of the first order.” Though the relative value of journey and destination may differ for different pilgrims, the process of having to leave one’s home to travel to another—sacred—place is crucial.

In Catholicism, shrines are the destination of a pilgrimage and hold a significant value through the entirety of a pilgrimage. Although the importance of shrines differs between Catholicism and Buddhism, the aspect of the actual physical journey remains similarly grand. This is supported in by Dan Burke, who states, “Taking time for your spiritual well-being and/or physical healing is an important part of our journey here on earth as Catholics. Through a pilgrimage, we can find solace in the planning, traveling and visiting of shrines themselves” (1). Again, the importance of “traveling” is demonstrated.

The importance of relics in Catholicism is presented by Al Kresta when he states, “Scripture favorably describes...the veneration of relics. Since the early days of the Church the remains of martyrs and holy persons have been called relics, from the Latin *reliquiae*, meaning ‘remains’” (Kresta 1). Relics were also additional motivation, seeing as how being in the presence of relics

can bring one closer to their faith, for people to undertake pilgrimages. There is a vast amount of pilgrimage locations and destinations in Catholicism such as Lourdes, the Holy Land, the Vatican, and El Camino de Santiago.

Hinduism conversely uses pilgrimages in a markedly different way, as seen in the article “Hinduism”:

Hindu pilgrimage is rooted in ancient scriptures. According to textual scholars, the earliest reference to Hindu pilgrimage is in the Rigveda (c. 1500 bce), in which the “wanderer” is praised. Numerous later texts, including the epic Mahabharata (c. 300 bce–300 ce) and several of the mythological Puranas (c. 300–750 ce), elaborate on the capacities of particular sacred sites to grant boons, such as health, wealth, progeny, and deliverance after death. Texts enjoin Hindu pilgrims to perform rites on behalf of ancestors and recently deceased kin. (Gold et al. 1)

Hinduism places more emphasis on the actual pilgrimage site as opposed to the journey itself. The added emphasis on pilgrimage sites is used as an impetus to go on pilgrimages for personal rewards. This differs from standard pilgrimage decorum as there is less of a personal divine connection to pilgrimages in Hinduism.

Another goal of pilgrimages in Hinduism is to gain an appreciation of nature and to improve the caretaking of the planet. Gold corroborates this sentiment by writing, “Pilgrimage sites are often located in spots of great natural beauty thought to be pleasing to deities as well as humans. Environmental activists draw on the mythology of the sacred landscapes to inspire Hindu populations to adopt sustainable environmental practices” (Gold et al. 1). As pilgrimage sites are meant to be aesthetically pleasing, there are sites located in Vrindavan, Haridwar, Dwarka, and Rishikesh, all beautiful cities with marvelous temples (shrines).

One of the most recognized pilgrimages in the world comes courtesy of Islam: the pilgrimage to Mecca. A crucial detail differentiates pilgrimages in Islam and the remainder of other pilgrimages. This detail is that a pilgrimage to Mecca is required (mandatory), as supported in “Divine Among in Islam: The Hajj or Pilgrimage to Mecca”: “Most everyone knows that every Muslim is expected to come to Mecca at least once during

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his or her lifetime” (Spiegelman 1). While pilgrimages are recommended, no other religions or secular societies demand their followers to set on a pilgrimage. The objective of Islamic pilgrimages is adequately described by Hastings Donnan in “Pilgrimage and Islam in Rural Pakistan: The Influence of the ‘Hajj’”:

Pilgrims are often drawn even to the smallest shrines from a wide variety of geographical areas and socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds, bringing with them a range of experiences and opinions. All kinds of information may be exchanged: from the price of cattle to eligible spouses, from the chances of work to the price of shares on the international market. But most crucially, of course, such sites act as sacred centres where faith can be renewed, values confirmed and religious knowledge acquired.

Islamic pilgrimages prioritize social congregation, while also providing a platform for informal interactions. Fundamentally, Islamic pilgrimages function as an approach to bring a community together in the presence of a divine site or shrine.

In contrast, Judaistic pilgrimages stress the importance of the visitation of tombs. Gideon Bar states in “Reconstructing the Past: The Creation of Jewish Sacred Space in the State of Israel, 1948–1967,” “The saints were perceived as intermediaries between a petitioner and god—and in this sense, Judaism was not different. From at least the Crusader period until today, Jewish pilgrims venerated the different sacred sites, most of them tombs of Jewish Saints” (2).

Another interesting factor of Judaistic pilgrimage is that it shares many shrines with Islam. This can be seen in “Jewish-Muslim Veneration at Pilgrimage Places in the Holy Land,” when the author states, “Jewish imagery illustrating the holy places sacred to Jews depicts sites that were sacred to Muslims as well, and often those jointly venerated pilgrimage sites were represented in Jewish art with Muslim religious symbols, such as crescents, a depiction that apparently neither Jewish artists nor Jewish patrons objected to” (Berger 4). This is a unique set of circumstances, as the other religions have separate shrines, relics, and landmarks.

Although the common theme among the pilgrimages

I have described is a religious devotion, I argue that one does not need to partake in any religious activity or affiliation to go on a pilgrimage or be a pilgrim. There are pilgrimages that are of spiritual importance to the individual self that can either enlighten one’s own self-reliance along the journey or consociate one’s personal beliefs and hopes with the understanding of the importance of the journey itself.

This is supported by Susan Morrison when she states, “Pilgrimage seems easily comprehensible in terms of space: the pilgrim leaves profane space, the home, for sacred space, the shrine or church or cathedral. But the divisions between sacred [connected with God {or the gods} or dedicated to a religious purpose and so deserving veneration] and profane [denoting attitudes, activities, or other things that have no religious or spiritual basis] are not necessarily easily distinguished” (Morrison 83). When Morrison talks about the division between sacred and profane, it leaves room for interpretation. Since there is trouble distinguishing the differences in sacred and profane, there is a distinct separation of religion from pilgrimages. This is further endorsed by Heidi Oberholtzer in “Pilgrimage in Literature of the Americas: Spiritualized Travel and Sacred Place” as she declares:

The body may experience the curious marks of holiness even when the mind and spirit remain doubtful. Pilgrimage, then, does not necessarily exclude from participation the atheist, agnostic, or skeptic, as quest allows for the uncertainty of destination and for bodily participation accompanied by a reluctant soul. (6)

By including members of a secular society (atheists, agnostics, and skeptics) in pilgrimages, we can conclude that although religion is an immense component of many pilgrimages, religion does not have to be present in a pilgrimage.

In brief detail, I have distinguished the roles of religion, relics, and shrines in pilgrimages. Patti Smith is not religious and does not adhere to any of the tropes I have explained. In an interview with *Rolling Stone*, Smith said, “I left organized religion at 12 or 13, because I was brought up a Jehovah’s Witness.” Her pilgrimages have

nothing to do with religion, but with personal beliefs and spiritual benefits. In addition to her pilgrimages, her love of relics and shrines (tombs) is also evident in *M Train*.

As outlined in this paper, traveling is vital to pilgrimages. Smith is an active traveler, and this is prominent throughout *M Train*. For example, in the first chapter, Smith says, "In 1965 I had come to New York City from South Jersey just to roam around, and nothing seemed more romantic than just to sit and write poetry in a Greenwich Village cafe" (Smith 8). Here, Smith is seen traveling to New York City without a sense of destination, although she ultimately finds a personal shrine in the cafe shop. After falling in love with New York City, she ends up living there for a while. Smith then soon leaves New York City for Detroit, thus continuing her pattern of traveling. This pilgrimage was one of love though, as she moved to be with her future husband, as she states, "Just as...Fred implored me to come and live with him in Detroit. Nothing seemed more vital than to join my love, whom I was destined to marry" (Smith 9).

Later on in the same chapter, Smith embarks on a personal pilgrimage to Saint-Lauren-du-Maroni, which is adorned by one of her favorite authors, Jean Genet. Within this pilgrimage, we see the importance of relics to her, perseverance through a difficult journey, and fulfillment. Since Smith is going to visit the remains of a prison that was held in high regard by Genet, the remains became relics to her. This is corroborated when Smith states, "At seventy, he was reportedly in poor health and most likely would never go there himself. I envisioned bringing him his earth and stone" (Smith 11). As Smith is only bringing back stone and earth, we see how she brings an intense level of relevance to simple objects, thus turning them into relics.

Along the way to the remains, Smith encounters various physical and natural obstacles that severely toughen the physical journey. She mentions extreme heat, armed soldiers, and a torrential downpour that had to be overcome. As was seen above, sometimes the journey itself is what makes a pilgrimage spiritual. In the end, these laborious conditions contribute to make her destination all the more paramount. Smith states, "I dug a few inches, seeking stones that might have been pressed by the hard-calloused feet of the inmates or the soles of heavy boots

worn by the guards" (Smith 17). After gathering the stones, she writes, "He placed it in my hands, the first step toward placing them in the hands of Genet" (Smith 17). This demonstrates a sense of accomplishment as her goal was to retrieve these relics for Genet. Multiple aspects of a pilgrimage are evident here: the appreciation of the pilgrimage itself, the importance of relics, and the accomplishment of getting to the desired destination.

Smith is seen throughout the entirety of the memoir taking photographs of various objects (relics). Since the photographs are what she herself created of these objects, the photographs themselves become relics to her. The magnitude of the photographs is brought to the forefront when Smith writes, "I taped one of the photographs of the stone table above my desk. Despite its simplicity I thought it innately powerful, a conduit transporting me back to Jena" (Smith 104). Here, Smith leaves no doubt as to how much relics mean to her.

*M Train* is also a collection of her pilgrimages to tombs. Smith visits the tombs of late writers and poets for the sheer connection that she can feel to the writers themselves. This is confirmed when Smith declares, "I sat before Brecht's grave and hummed the lullaby Mother Courage sings over the body of her daughter. I sat as the snow fell, imagining Brecht writing his play" (Smith 56). Smith is conveying that the idea of just being in relative proximity to Brecht is the reason for her pilgrimage to the tomb. Throughout the memoir, Smith travels to various tombs, showing her commitment to pilgrimages for her own spiritual awareness.

Another aspect that is prevalent in Smith's pilgrimages is the representation of art. This is a crucial detail to Smith's own pilgrimages, as "Art constitutes one element in the performance of pilgrimage" (Morrison 5). Art being part of the process of a pilgrimage is acknowledged by Smith herself as she corroborates:

A letter arrived. It was from the director of Casa Azul, home and resting place of Frida Kahlo, requesting I give a talk centering on the artist's revolutionary life and work. In return I would be granted permission to photograph her belongings, the talismans of her life. Time to travel, to acquiesce to fate. For although I craved solitude, I decided I could not pass on an opportunity to speak in the

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same garden that I had longed to enter as a young girl. I would enter the house inhabited by Frida and Diego Rivera, and walk through rooms I had only seen in books. I would be back in Mexico. (Smith 110, 111)

Various aspects of a pilgrimage are illustrated here. First, relics again are highlighted when Smith mentions she'll be allowed to photograph Frida Kahlo's personal relics. In the process of photographing Frida Kahlo's belongings, Smith creates her own relics, which she'll be able to keep. Second, the act of traveling is almost inescapable to Smith as seen by her phrasing "to acquiesce to fate," resulting in her journey to Mexico. Finally, a shrine of personal significance is established when she discusses at last being inside the house, occupied by two artists she admires, that she had longed to visit after only encountering the house in pictures.

Although most pilgrimages today still have an essential religious significance, the distinguished importance of religion in today's pilgrimages is debunked by the fact that *M Train* provides a reliable framework where various traits of a pilgrim are substantiated by the secular Patti Smith. Her love of travel satisfies the basic component of a pilgrimage, which is to go on a journey. Her admiration of objects is comparable to the relics encountered on a pilgrimage. Her visitations of tombs is akin to a pilgrim visiting a shrine. When all of this is taken into account, one can see how Patti Smith is a modern-day pilgrim.

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## *Te burao (The Hibiscus Tree)*

Britta Roper

Art 105 (Introduction to Visual Art)

Instructor: Karen Patterson

*Assignment: Students were to write a formal analysis of an artwork, describing its visual elements and design principles, and analyzing their role in generating meaning and/or aesthetic effects.*

As I wandered the Art Institute of Chicago, *Te burao (The Hibiscus Tree)* caught my eye. It was created by artist Paul Gauguin in 1892, using oil on a cotton canvas with dimensions of 68 cm by 90.7 cm. It was a landscape painting, portraying trees, plants, bushes, an animal, hut, campfire, small figure, and of course, a large hibiscus tree. At first glance, it was simply an interesting take on a classic landscape. What I came to discover was that Paul Gauguin, in his work *Te burao (The Hibiscus Tree)* utilizes certain visual elements, such as color and line, to show how chaos and order can fit together in a world of diversity.

The first and most obvious visual element that Gauguin uses is color. While there are many important aspects to the way that Gauguin uses color, I will only focus on his choice of color and the repetition of color in the work. Gauguin's choice of color portrays a certain message. Since the colors have lower intensities, rather than being highly intense or "neon," the color scheme has a sense of reality. If the colors were not this more "natural" level of intensity, the work would not allude as it does to the sense that it could be a real place. Yet, the color choice is not completely true to reality, as some objects are a different color than they would be in the real world. This almost realistic color scheme gives it both a sense of believability and unbelievability, of both chaos and order. The second way that Gauguin uses color is through repetition. The main hues in the work are green, blue, yellow, red, and purple. Each shade or tint of the main hues is strategically placed in a variety of diverse sections on the canvas, moving the eye through the work.

Examples of this are impossible to miss. The blue in the left background has undertones of yellow and purple, similar to the blue in the right foreground. This serves to pull the two ends of the piece together. The green in the right background extends across the horizon line, connecting the right and left sides of the piece. Subtle bright red brush strokes are found by the campsite, below the bush in the center, in the right foreground, and directly beneath and on the tree trunk. Yellow is also a repeated color, such as in the sand of the left background, foliage in the left and right foreground, and undertones of the sky and bushes. Of course, some portions of the canvas are very uniform in color, such as the sky, ocean, beach, or bundles of trees. Yet, many sections are diverse, as seen in most of the foreground. This color concept not only contributes a strong sense of movement, but also a sense of uniformity. Each section of the canvas belongs to each other, because they all share the same basic color hues. The color choice creates a scene that is vast and even chaotic, yet the color repetition contributes to the work's overall unity. Artistically and creatively, yet quite subtly, Gauguin seems to be suggesting that all of this chaos and diversity can and must work together in harmony.

The second visual element that Gauguin uses is line, both actual and implied. His first tactic is the use of actual lines, composed of the roots and sticks in the foreground. The length and direction of the roots in the foreground not only move the eye through the painting, but also create a sense of movement in the painting itself. This can especially be seen in the way that the roots twist, overlap, and turn through the length of the painting, all of which lends to this feeling of movement. The implied lines of Gauguin's painting function slightly differently. An important implied line is the horizon line, most clearly seen in the far left background, where the ocean meets the sky. This subtle, yet incredibly important implied line gives the work a sense of reality and believability. Because the work is thus grounded in a horizon line and a proper concept of depth, all the objects of the work can be scaled in a more or less realistic and believable way. A second implied line can be seen in Figure 1. The tree line creates an implied triangle whose apex meets directly below the bush in the center of the work. The black lines superimposed over the work at right represents

*Te burao (The Hibiscus Tree)*

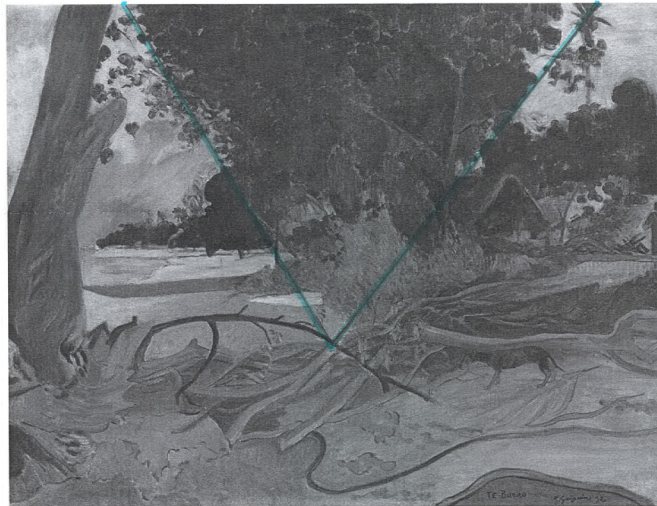


Figure 1. *Te burao (The Hibiscus Tree)*, Paul Gauguin. Oil on cotton canvas, 1892. Actual size, 26 3/4 by 35 11/16 inches (68 by 90.7 cm). On display at the Art Institute of Chicago. A triangle has been drawn on this reproduction of the artwork, showing how the use of shape, achieved by implied line, creates a strong sense of stability in the work.

where these implied lines would be located. This use of shape, achieved by implied line, creates a strong sense of stability in the work. The shape of a triangle in particular brings a sense of completeness or simplicity. While the actual lines serve to create movement and even chaos, the implied lines of the work create a sense of unity, stability, and completeness. Gauguin is asking his viewers to consider how these apparent opposites can possibly fit together in one piece.

Throughout his work, it is obvious that Gauguin is working in opposites. Specifically demonstrated in his use of color, both color choice and repetition, as well as line (actual and implied), Gauguin shows us how to fit both chaos and order into one frame. He asks us to consider how *we* are to balance these opposites in our own lives and world. How will human innovation interact with nature? Why is it that the world has so much inherent order, and yet is so unstable? How is it that you and I can speak and act intelligently, even as inexplicable and uncertain emotions constantly surge through us? The concept of opposites deals with these questions, as well as so many more. While Gauguin may not know the answers to these questions, *Te burao (The Hibiscus Tree)* gives us a beautiful taste of what it means to simply experience opposites and discover their place in a diverse world.

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Evaluation: *Britta's paper results from careful observation and critical analysis, and it is in turn both sophisticated and at times eloquent.*

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# Will Movie Theaters Go the Way of Blockbuster?

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Olga Saburova

English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Andrew Wilson

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*Assignment: Students were to critique some aspect of our contemporary culture or climate—a media phenomenon, maybe, or an often-visited place, or a trend, etc.*

Ever since I visited the United States in 2004 and returned, for good, as a permanent resident in 2010, one of my favorite activities has been going to a movie theater; in Russia, the experience is drastically different. First, most of the movies are Hollywood exports, usually poorly dubbed in Russian. It has only been recently, spurred by the success of Timur Bekmambetov (*Wanted*; *Abraham Lincoln*, *Vampire Hunter*; *Unfriended*) in the United States, that a movie industry has begun to arise. Second, there is not the same focus on the overall moviegoing experience when it comes to comfortable seating, food options, and projection quality. Third, the availability of pirated movies (and lack of copyright enforcement) makes it much easier for the typical Russian to just download a movie and watch it at home. Finally, moviegoing in Russia is seated in novelty and curiosity. Prior to the fall of the Soviet Union 25 years ago, Western movies were not available through legal means and certainly were not shown in movie theatres. The dissolution of the USSR opened up unprecedented access to the West, including big-budget Hollywood films.

Before having a child, my husband and I would go to the movies weekly. Our initial go-to theater was the AMC 30 in South Barrington. At the time, it was a typical American movie theater (according to my husband, anyway). General admission seating meant we would usually arrive at least a half-hour early to ensure that we

were not stuck in the front row. That extra time would offer us the opportunity to talk, eat unhealthy food like chicken strips or popcorn slathered with pseudo-butter (thanks to a very limited menu), or eavesdrop on the conversations of others around us.

After several of these visits, however, we both began to be frustrated about a number of things, beginning with the published start times. When your movie ticket shows a start time of, say, seven pm, which actually refers to when the advertisements and trailers begin. Even over the period of a couple of years, we noticed that there were more advertisements shown. In addition, the length of each trailer extended to nearly three minutes. It used to be that you would count on 10 minutes' worth of trailers before the movie would begin. Then, it increased to 15 minutes. At our last movie, we sat through just over 20 minutes of Coca-Cola advertisements, theater promotions, and too-revealing movie trailers (more to come on that, later). When you couple this with the fact that the majority of movies now run over two hours, the entire experience feels, somehow, more exhausting. On a side note, I also do not understand why they are called "trailers" when they are shown before the movie. My husband could only offer a sarcastic comment about "trailers" sounding better than "before-ers," though we both agreed that "previews" made more sense.

Once the lights go down and the feature presentation starts, out come the smartphones with the blaringly loud screens with only half-hearted attempts to shield them from the other moviegoers. Do people not realize how bright the screens are, or do they just not care? Why is it so hard to leave a phone off for a couple of hours? If people are expecting important calls, perhaps they shouldn't have committed to that particular showing. I can't even blame it on the ignorance of youth (though that doesn't seem to make up the majority of offenders), because I see people of all ages doing it. I was raised to consider how my actions affect those around me, and I'm frustrated to see that this is not a universal lesson. Thankfully, in recent years, the problem does seem to have lessened noticeably. Whether this is due to the movie theaters being more aggressive in announcing their "no cell phones during the movie" policy or people finally becoming aware of their impact, it is a welcome change.

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What hasn't changed, however, is the number of people talking during a movie. Conversely, the violators here skew toward middle-age and the elderly. Maybe they have a need to share their movie experience with others, or they don't realize how loudly they're talking/whispering. While I would expect it from children (though that does not make it any less annoying), I'm perplexed as to how this behavior hasn't lessened with certain people. What I do find encouraging for parents with young children (such as myself) is that AMC now has showings that are targeted for them. The lights are dimmed, but not all the way, and the volume is a bit lower. Children are encouraged to express themselves, which actually makes for a different, but very enjoyable, viewing. This program originally started for families with autistic children, but it was so popular that they've added more showings and market it to all families. I only wish they had similar offerings for adults who can't keep their mouths shut.

Another annoyance that seems to have been short-lived was charity buckets. As part of the previews, there would be an advertisement for a charity that I no longer recall the name of. After it showed, the lights would be brought all the way up and miserable-looking employees would walk around with a bucket like it was a church offering plate. I am all for charitable causes, but I felt like this wasn't the best time or place for such an activity. It would cause a great deal of discomfort for everyone sitting in their chairs, faces stuffed full of popcorn while downing a half-gallon of pop. The cell phones would quickly come out as a way of avoiding eye contact with the poor soul saddled with the bucket like the ancient mariner with the albatross around his neck. From the looks of those buckets as they completed their walk of shame, and the collective sigh of relief as they exited the theater, I expect that not enough money was raised to continue that particular effort.

There are many other things that would frustrate us about our visits to AMC. They were/are the only theater chain in the area that charges a fee for its rewards program. It's a relatively minor complaint, but I have a hard time coming up with any business, not just movie theaters, that charges an annual fee to belong to their "frequent shopper" program. The value of the data they collect is far more than they would get from such a yearly charge. With other

competitive theater chains opening up in the area, it feels like a slight against their customers. Of more importance were maintenance-related problems. Fewer employees would be working each shift, resulting in theaters not always getting cleaned between each show. Dirty seats, sticky floors, popcorn strewn about, and general wear-and-tear would also make the customer's experience feel marginalized. Finally, we would frequently run into issues around the actual projection. I don't know if there are still dedicated/union projectionists in this digital era, but we would, on a regular basis, see films displayed out-of-focus, without sound, or with the framing "off" (like the entire picture would be shifted down or up, like it was out of alignment). This would result in a reluctant, unspoken contest of who would be the first person in the venue to finally get fed up and complain to a manager. This, again, takes customers out of the experience and makes them feel less valued.

The sum of all these experiences coincided with rise of competitors such as Marcus, Muvico and iPic. All of these chains offered relative luxuries like reserved seating, a more satisfying menu, reclining chair, and even alcohol. Where movie venues were once primarily focused on the young, these newer, emergent chains were focused on an adult experience, first and foremost.

My husband brought me to the iPic Theaters in South Barrington, just a couple of miles away from the AMC 30. It was an eye-opening experience. When you walk in the door, it's like entering a lounge. There are pool tables, fireplaces, comfortable seating, a wine-tasting area, a full bar, and a menu that could be considered gourmet (for a movie theater, anyway). Having reserved seats meant that we could enjoy ourselves in the lounge area. For the same price as a ticket to an AMC showing, we were experiencing relative luxury. For a few dollars more, we would get reclining seats with blankets, pillows, and chair-side food service. This elevated experience also seems to draw in a different, more considerate group of moviegoers. I have never experienced someone using a cell phone during a movie, or having a disturbing conversation, and I have never had to worry about sitting in a dirty seat with my feet stuck to the floor.

I think iPic tapped into a significant market as there seems to be a large contingent of people who want a more



“VIP” experience. Marcus and Muvico followed iPic into this same arena, with expanded menus, better (and reserved) seating, and higher-quality sound and video.

For a few years, iPic became our new theatrical home. We could book our tickets online and either arrive just a few minutes before the start time or show up an hour ahead of time and just enjoy a drink or two in the lounge and grab a decent meal. With the arrival of our son, our movie trips became much less frequent. In the first year, I don’t believe we went even one time. But, with age, and willing grandparents, we have begun to reclaim some of our “us” time. This has had an interesting effect. Because we have traded quantity for quality, we have found that we have a higher standard and greater expectations for our ventures out of the house. This means that we now only see movies that we feel benefit from the “big screen,” much to the joy of my science-fiction and superhero-loving husband. And while I may have sounded curmudgeonly in my previous comments, we would rather just avoid the frustrating scenarios and just do our best to ensure that we have a drama-free evening.

But iPic, as with AMC, was the relationship that started out great. We held hands, wrote silly notes to each other, sat on the phone with excessive silences asking “whatcha doin’?”, and drew hearts on our notebooks. But people change, and not always for the better. iPic slowly ratcheted their ticket prices up over time. They also started to charge for their loyalty program, and their food prices became just as obnoxious as every other theater. While the overall experience was still superior, the other chains were catching up.

Marcus has two theaters closer to us (Addison and South Elgin). The new Muvico in Rosemont is a bit further, but they have an experience that equals iPic at about five times the size. Very late to the game, even AMC started to renovate their theaters to include the reclining chairs, reserved seating, and additional food options. However, they only literally completed this upgrade at the AMC 30 we frequented within the last few weeks.

While it seems that there is a cultural shift towards a higher-end movie-viewing experience, there are other things that retard the growth of the industry. First, ticket prices always go up. Not only that, but there are surcharges for 3-D, for IMAX and, I’ve just read today,

that there are chains testing out variable pricing. Want to see that new Marvel movie? It’s going to cost you more than that Bollywood flick one screen over. So that now-\$15+ ticket covers the cost of just buying the movie on Blu-ray when it comes out a couple months later, which brings me to my next point.

While I did not personally experience this, my husband told me that movies used to be in the theaters for months at a time. And if you wanted to own it on home video, you may have been waiting up to two years because of exclusive deals between the studios and rental chains like Blockbuster Video.

These days, even blockbuster movies are rarely in first-run theaters for more than a few weeks. And if you missed that window, you only have to wait a couple more months before you can rent it at Redbox, see it on Netflix, or pick up the DVD or Blu-ray at Amazon or Best Buy. This compressed window devalues the theatrical experience and minimizes the feeling of exclusivity or the need to see it for any other reason except it being “on the big screen.” I’m not sure what the cultural driver is for this except perhaps a “now now now” attitude and/or the desire for the studios to make as much money as quickly as they can.

While it hasn’t achieved a critical mass yet, companies like Netflix are experimenting with the idea of simultaneously releasing a movie in the theater and making it available through video-on-demand (VOD). The studios and theater chains, of course, are opposed to this for obvious reasons, but I feel that this will eventually result in one of two paths. First, the theater chains will eventually partner with companies like Netflix and Amazon for survival. This may also mean that there will be less reliance on big-budget blockbusters in the future and more focus on medium-budget and independent flicks. The other option is that the theater chains hold out and either become niche markets, or they fade away entirely as they cut off their noses to spite their faces (like Blockbuster Video).

I also believe another issue that is caused by the production studios but has had a cultural impact is removing the buildup and anticipation of movies yet to be released. Before the YouTube era, you would only see the movie trailers in the theater ahead of a feature

## Will Movie Theaters Go the Way of Blockbuster?

presentation. My husband told me that he attended a film several years ago only to see the trailer for the first *Spiderman* movie. He doesn't even remember what the feature film was, but he remembers the excitement of seeing that two-minute tease for a movie that wasn't due out for another year. Now, trailers can be watched on-demand on YouTube, spoiling the novelty of seeing the same previews in the theater. It reminds me of Sven Birkerts' "Into the Electronic Millennium" essay. In that piece, Birkerts mentions an interview with Robert Zich of the Library of Congress. Zich talks about how libraries will become museums and will go the way of train stations and movie palaces. While I do not have perspective on the moviegoing experience of earlier generations, I feel that the overall movie theater industry is moving away from an "iconic" institutional status to something more diluted thanks to all of the new ways we can watch video. But even here, a rebalancing will be required as the studios continue to make a number of missteps in their attempts to hold on to profits while adapting to technology. One of these missteps is publishing movie trailers that essentially reveal the entire plot in a two- to three-minute segment, essentially spoiling much of the guessing and anticipation one goes through when watching a film. In some cases, it's tantamount to announcing, "Bruce Willis was dead the entire time!" in the trailer for *The Sixth Sense*. This unwillingness of the studios to maintain any semblance

of mystery or surprise has resulted in a bit of a mini-revolt, where groups of people are now refusing to watch these trailers as they don't want the final experience to be spoiled or tainted as a result. The studios and theater chains will continue to have challenges if they don't have their fingers on the pulse of their customers.

In summary, I was initially enamored by the experience of seeing a movie in the United States. As the novelty wore off, peoples' (mis)behaviors became more apparent, and the theaters seemed to have their priorities in the wrong places. The introduction of a more luxury moviegoing experience from chains like iPic, Marcus, and Muvico resolved many of those concerns while introducing new ones as it related to the escalated costs of tickets and food. Technological advances and more ways to watch films (and to see them sooner) is resulting in a cultural shift where people don't value the experience as much as prior generations. In future decades, companies like Netflix and Amazon will be producing as many movies as Sony, Paramount, or Disney, and those movies will be available first on your television. I believe I will welcome that shift with open arms.

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Evaluation: *Olga's essay is excellent. It offers a fresh perspective on the experience of seeing a movie in the second decade of the twenty-first century, and her essay is detailed and fun to read, too. It seems at times to read like a piece of old-fashioned, light-hearted investigative journalism from the Sunday newspaper. (Then again, does anyone still get a Sunday newspaper?) The fact that Olga is originally from the former Soviet Union leads to a moment here and there of interesting contrast.*

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# Limitations of English

Mariia Shaniuk

Course: ESL 073 (Reading V)

Instructor: Andrew Wilson

Assignment: *Students were asked to respond, in writing, to a simple question: with whom do you agree? Amy Tan, author of "Mother Tongue," who points out that "fractured English," while intimate and even wonderful in a thousand ways, can be a drag on the more complete North American experience? Or, do you think that Tan's mother might be right, that learning English is fine...but not necessarily a mandate?*

Amy Tan, an Asian-American writer, was born to immigrant parents from China. In "Mother Tongue," she examines her understanding of English as a tool of communication for her as a writer and for her immigrant mother, who is (in Amy's view) limited by her imperfect English: "Some of my friends tell me they understand fifty percent of what my mother says. Some says they understand eighty to ninety percent. Some say they understand none of it, as if she were speaking pure Chinese. But to me, my mother's English is perfectly natural. It's my mother tongue" (Tan 161).

I too am a non-native speaker of English. Like Tan's mother, I too believed, at one time, that I was a good enough speaker to express my thoughts in English. I (supposedly) knew all I needed to know about English. I found out I was wrong, however. In Amy's "Mother Tongue," she shows how non-native speakers are limited by their deficient English. According to Tan, many non-native speakers have "broken" and "fractured" English. To illustrate that, she gives examples from her personal life: as I will discuss below, Amy's mother sometimes could not express her thoughts in a phone call or an in-person conversation, and this is familiar enough for me, as well. Amy Tan emphasizes that her mother's "limited" English almost had an effect on limiting her possibilities in life, and her conclusion is that people must decide to improve

their English skills, that they need to educate their children and family to not give up enhancing non-native language skills. I agree with Amy: non-native speakers are limited by their "broken" English; also, parents' "fractured" English impacts their children's possibilities; and finally, limited English in the USA impacts the professions that people are able to be part of.

"Broken" English makes some non-native speakers incomprehensible to native speakers. Amy Tan describes it vividly in her essay "Mother Tongue" by giving empirical facts, that people in department stores, banks, and restaurants did not understand her mother, and refused to give her good service because of her not-perfect English. I used to experience the same when I moved a couple years ago from the Ukraine to the USA. When I went to the hospital for the first time in the USA to get a medical examination for my children, I could not explain in perfect English the reasons for my visit to the health professional. My daughter and son did not get a regular health checkup, because the medical assistant pretended that she could not understand my explanations, which I delivered in poor English, I admit. My English was half understandable, like Amy's mother's English was not understandable for her daughter's friends. Also, I remember how many times I refused to spend time with my new American friends. The reason of my refusal was just my limitation of English. My "fractured" English gave wrong assumptions about me as a person and transformed me from speaker, which I always was at my homeland, to listener. This made me feel exhausted and ashamed. I also used some people to make phone calls from my name, exactly as Amy's mother used to have Amy call people on the phone and pretend she was her mother. Moreover, Amy, in this guise, had to complain and yell at people who had been rude to her mother. For me, it looks like Amy's mother is isolating herself from the surrounding world. "Limited" English makes one dependent on others who speak and understand non-native language perfectly.

Parents' language has a huge influence on their children. If those parents speak "fractured" English in the USA, this limits their children's possibilities in life. Amy Tan states how the language spoken in her immigrant family affected her results on achievement tests, IQ tests, and the SAT. She had a great score in math, because it did

not require a lot of English knowledge, but her score in English was lower, because when she made the answers on the tests, she was using the grammatical structures that she heard at home, and that were inappropriate for English but could be used in Chinese, according to her mother. I agree with Amy that parents' "limited" English impacts, or negatively influences, their children's lives. My daughter used to get a bad score in the achievement tests when I tried to help her and teach her in my imperfect English. I tried to adapt grammar rules from my own language to grammar rules in English, and in the end, she could not get a great score in her school's exams. I'm a little bit embarrassed, because I made trouble for my daughter when I taught her English pronunciation. In that time, I thought my pronunciation was perfectly understandable for other people, and I demanded from my daughter the same pronunciation, which was like a punishment for her. After two years, I realized that my articulation was horrible, that I was making my daughter speak in my "limited" English. Sometimes, parents' overbearing help limits their children's possibilities in their life.

Amy's argument, finally, is that "limited" English also impacts the professions that people get. She had been thinking about why there are more Asian-Americans represented in engineering than in literature. And this made her understand that the "broken" English spoken in Asian-American families makes students choose more precise specialties. Perhaps, the students' teachers were steering them away from writing and into math and science, which was what happened with Amy (even though, later on in her life, she turned back toward her desire to write). I have a friend. She lives in Chicago, but originally she is from Turkey. She has been working as a journalist for the last 13 years. My friend wants to grow her career as a journalist; but due to her limitation of English, she has to give up and work temporarily as a driver. She is looking for a new specialty — a more precise one, one that does not demand the high level of academic or business English. "Broken" language, especially for immigrant families, plays a critical role in decisions like my friend's. My friend has had to make a choice against her passion for journalism, and she is only one example: a lot of legal immigrants in the USA change their profession because of their lack of English. I know a

couple women who were accountants in the Ukraine, and now they are working as babysitters. My husband was an engineer in the Ukraine, but he is working as a driver, because his "limited" English does not allow him to get an education as an engineer right now. I agree with Amy that you have to be a rebel and enjoy the challenges life brings to you. She proves that you have to keep going and get your desired education despite the opinions of your family and colleagues, who might not believe in you. But in America, at least, that starts with mastering English.

In conclusion, I agree with Amy Tan that non-native speakers (like Tan's mother) are limited by their imperfect English. They feel alienated among native speakers; moreover, non-native speakers may not get good service in banks, restaurants, or social departments, because they cannot express their thoughts in clear and understandable English. However, a lot of immigrants truly believe that their "limited" English is adequate to interact with native speakers. Like Amy's mother, such people move inward, retreat into their communities, find friends who speak in their native language—and they use their family, friends or acquaintances, who know English well, as interpreters. I also agree with Amy that parents' "broken" English makes a huge effect on their children's possibilities in life. Parents mean well but often try to impose their "fractured" English in a hope of helping their children, thereby causing a number of troubles to their children in the process of getting an education. And finally, limited English in the United States of America heavily influences decisions some non-native speakers make in choosing a profession, and sadly, this can sometimes mean a surrendering of one's passion.

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Evaluation: *Mariia's response to Amy Tan's "Mother Tongue" is organized and packed with details from Tan's essay, and of course the personal details that Mariia includes enrich the essay considerably.*

## Shiva as Lord of the Dance (Nataraja)

Anastasia Sitnikova

Course: Art 133 (non-Western Art)

Instructor: Karen Patterson

*Assignment: This assignment required students to investigate a single artwork over the course of a semester through a series of short “mini-papers” to be assembled into one longer essay at the end of the semester. Each “mini-paper” demanded a different approach to the art object. In Phase 1, students explored their own reactions to and questions about the artwork, without knowing anything about it other than its appearance and a few basic facts. In Phase 2, the student was asked to describe and analyze the visual structure of the artwork. Phase 3 brought research to bear on understanding the artwork. Then, Phase 4 involved a reexamination of the student’s original thoughts and questions, requiring them to reflect on the writing and learning experience as a whole.*

In this essay, the bronze sculpture *Shiva as Lord of Dance* from the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago (fig. 1) is analyzed in three steps—initial observation, formal analysis, and research. The purpose of this study is to determine how these different approaches can affect the interpretation of the work of art. This statuette attracted my attention because of the intriguing and paradoxical combination of joy and threat in one image, and I will try to find an explanation of this impression.

The statue is an example of Hindu art: it presents one of the Hindu gods: Shiva. The figurine is not very tall—it’s only 27 and  $\frac{1}{4}$  inches in height. This leads me to a conclusion that it couldn’t be used for public religious services. There is still a possibility that the statuette was used as a decorative element in a temple, but I am inclined to think that it was part of a private home interior that served personal religious needs.

The figure of Nataraja is simplified, but at the same time it is very plastic and dynamic and effectively demonstrates motion. We see the Lord of Dance as a four-armed male person, with long hair and a tall crown on his head, dancing in a ring. The figure is standing on a round podium shaped as a lotus. His eyes are closed, and his dancing body is frozen in the three-bends pose. There are some drapes on his arms and legs that represent thin, weightless clothes. There is also some jewelry in Shiva’s ears and on his head and neck. In one of his left hands, Nataraja holds a flame of fire. In one of his right hands, there is a cylinder, probably a scroll or a ring. A snake is lying across Shiva’s shoulders, and a kind of tail connects his body to the external ring. His hair is highly decorated: snake-like locks alternate with strings of beads and flowers. Many elements that might have symbolic meaning are integrated in the hair and contiguous areas: the praying figure on the right and a small round shape on



Fig. 1. *Shiva as Lord of the Dance (Nataraja)*. Tamil Nadu, India. Chola period, c. 10th/11th century. Bronze, 27  $\frac{1}{4}$  by 24  $\frac{1}{4}$  by 9  $\frac{1}{2}$  inches. On display at the Art Institute of Chicago.

the left; different flowers, some of which resemble daisies, and others with a square shape; a perfectly round hole in one ear and a stretched-out hole in the other. On one of the shoulders, a small, bird-like figure can be noticed.

The crown on Shiva's head may reflect his leading position among other Hindu gods—he may be the supreme god, or at least one of the most powerful gods. The expression of Nataraja's face is calm but very concentrated. I would say that he looks too serious for a dancer. Based on this fact, I can guess that probably his dance is a set of ritual motions that is made on purpose, and that he must follow a certain sequence of movements to reach his goal. It is a very interesting question, what this goal is.

In Western tradition, dance is usually associated with joy, happiness, and celebration. But in this composition, two human figures are presented, and neither of them looks happy. The first figure is sitting on Shiva's hair in a praying pose, probably hoping or begging for a better fate. The second one is lying under Shiva's feet. The pose of the latter figure tells us that this man can't move freely: he is either stuck between the base and the external ring, pressed with Shiva's weight, or just too scared to stand up. At the same time one of the man's legs is bent. He is looking up on the god. Based on the man's pose, I can assume that he is probably trying to creep away and escape.

Another interesting element is the external ring that develops further the dualism of the composition. On the one hand, a ring is often associated with a circle of life: endless life lasting through generations, a kind of immortality. On the other hand, in the Hindu tradition, a circle may stand for reincarnation, which is often supposed to be punishment (for misbehavior), not a privilege. In some circumstances, a circle may mean law, order, or inevitability—something a person can't escape, or a vicious circle. In this statuette, the ring is on fire, and the fire was probably started by Shiva, since he is holding flame in his hands. In combination with inevitability, that may stand for the circle, and the two suffering figures of human beings represented in the composition of the statuette of Shiva may attempt to make a fearful and alarming impression on viewers, reminding them of some consequences of what they do or fail to do.

Formal analysis added more details to the initial observation. The bronze image is exhibited at Alsdorf Gallery of the Art Institute of Chicago, which is located on the bridge between two museum buildings. Windows on one of the walls of this narrow gallery let in some daylight in addition to artificial illumination, creating a cozy, warm light effect. The statue is set in a glass showcase and available for examination from all sides.

The bronze statue is in excellent condition, with no obviously missing parts. Bronze is a durable medium, so it can be assumed that the figure was created for use of long duration. Although currently the surface of the statuette is dull and covered with patina, initially it could have been more polished and shiny, reflecting light well. Thus, the statue could invite more attention, especially in placement with muted warm light.

On the whole, the composition has a lot of negative space, which makes it weightless and elegant. The lines used in the image are curved, delicate, and soft. The body of Shiva is idealized and stylized, but still very naturalistic and organic when it comes to proportions. The lines of the body are smooth and round. Without knowing the context, it would be possible to assume that the figure represents a woman, though it's known that the deity has male nature. Possibly, it may reflect an idea of the relativity of male and female origin, and the thin border between them.

Although it is difficult to judge about the size of the statue out of its original environment, it looks rather miniature, obviously smaller than the life-size. Besides, the figure of Shiva is set in the big exterior circle, which makes it especially light and graceful. At the same time, Shiva's figure is much bigger than any other element in the image except the circle; it clearly dominates in the composition. The scale of different figures may refer to their relationships to each other: the praying figure is the smallest one, the creature underneath is relatively larger, and Shiva is far larger than any of them.

The composition of the sculpture is asymmetrical but very well balanced. Albeit it's unknown how the statue was originally placed, in the museum, it is installed on a podium so that the face of Shiva is located exactly at eye level, attracting attention. Even if originally the face was moved from eye level, together with the horizontal

line of the hair and the vertical line of the crown, it forms a stable cross in the composition, whereas the rest of the image is very dynamic and consists mostly of diagonal lines. Different textures used in the sculpture are also highlighted in the area of Shiva's head, drawing sight to this focal point.

Most of the elements of the image are fairly plain, with slightly visible decorative lines representing the clothes and the jewelry. Even the face of Shiva is simplified. It's interesting that the most heavily decorated area of the composition is Shiva's hair and crown. Many types of textures in certain rhythmic patterns are used to illuminate the hair. The wriggling plain locks end with a repeating circular pattern, like a rattlesnake's tail. They alternate with chains of round circles representing beads. The crown is decorated with repeating rows of oval shapes and flowers. The care with which the hair was crafted might reflect some important symbolic meaning to the hair. However that may be, the hair serves the purpose of creating a focal point around Shiva's face.

The composition is very dynamic. It also demonstrates a great unity: all the elements are connected to each other, while the external circle fixes everything together. The composition is an interesting combination of organic lines and geometric forms. It's formed by a combination of diagonals of arms, legs, and torso, and the cross of the hair and the crown, all inscribed in the circle. But at the same time, every single line except the exterior circle and the podium is very organic. Furthermore, the image represents a lot of repetitions in patterns, lines, and shapes. For example, the diagonals are repeated in the arms, the legs, the feet, the torso, and the belt. The horizontal lines are repeated in the hair. The flames of fire are repeated along the circumference of the circle, and Shiva holds one flame in his hand. Round lines are repeated in the jewelry, the clothes, and the crown. A vertical flower ornament in the hair replicates the curve of the external circle. All these repetitions create a feeling of rhythm. The variety of lines together with the rhythmic repetitions and the large amount of negative space create an impression of motion. This perfectly fits the topic of the image, which is dance.

Research on this subject confirmed some preliminary assumptions and rejected others. It showed that although

the statue under consideration is unique, it belongs to a very determined type of art objects, all of which share many common features and serve the same function. Such representations of Shiva as Nataraja are very important in Hindu art. They are an essential part of cultural and religious tradition and can be found in many Hindu temples in India and in museum collections all over the world.

The sculpture exhibited in the Art Institute of Chicago comes from the Tamil Nadu region of India. It is dated 10th/11th century, Chola period, the time in which this type of Hindu art is originated ("Chola dynasty"; Zimmer 152). According to the Smithsonian's Museum of Asian Art, Tamil artists began to make bronze statues of Shiva Nataraja in the early 10th century, under supervision of the rulers as an element of courtly art, so that this representation of the god "became an iconic religious image and potent political symbol" ("Chola dynasty").

As for the practical function, the statue is an example of "utsava murti"—"processional images" (Cush 366). In contrast to the images that were permanently assembled within a temple, such bronze statuettes were regularly used outside in religious processions. "Once made and brought to life through ritual, Nataraja lives in the temple, moving out daily and during festivals, facing his devotees within the temple and in the streets, as he processed through the town with song and ritual" ("Shiva Nataraja Iconography"). Such mobile use of the statue could explain its modest size; such images usually don't exceed four feet in height (Coomaraswamy 70), and this sculpture is only 69 inches tall. At the bottom of the pedestal of the sculpture, there are holes that could be used for fixing the statue to a platform during processions. These days, this type of sculpture is also used in home shrines ("What Is Hinduism" 182).

Shiva is a key figure in Hindu tradition and mythology. Usually, Shiva is considered as being one of the three main Hindu gods of the so-called "Hindu Trinity," where Brahma is the creator, Vishnu is the preserver, and Shiva is the destroyer of the universe. At the same time, some branches of Hinduism, in particular Saivism, believe that Shiva is supreme to other gods, and thus he represents all three aforementioned functions (Cush 799). According to historians, the rulers of the



Fig. 2 Crescent moon on Shiva's crown. *Shiva as Lord of the Dance (Nataraja)*, on display at the Art Institute of Chicago.

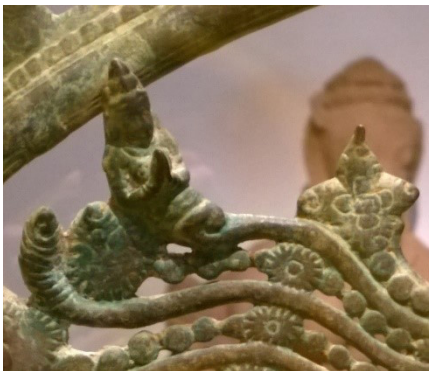


Fig. 3. Ganga, snake tail locks, and datura flower in Shiva's hair. *Shiva as Lord of the Dance (Nataraja)*, on display at the Art Institute of Chicago.

Chola dynasty also prioritized Shiva among Hindu gods and attributed him supreme power over other deities (“The Origins of Shiva Nataraja”). Modern Saivism followers believe that Saivism is an ancient religion that “has no beginning” (“What Is Hinduism” 22), and many scholars at least partially support this point of view, finding some prototypes of Shiva in the art of the Indus Valley civilization (Topsfield 92; Zimmer 169). Understanding of the god evolved significantly during the endless time he was worshiped, and this is probably the reason why Shiva has so many manifestations and such paradoxical nature, uniting many opposites in one character: “He is both peaceful and wildly destructive, ascetic and erotic,

a warrior and world-renouncer, the supreme divinity and yet shunned by all other gods” (Cush 800). These contradictions are reflected in full in the sculpture of Shiva as Lord of Dance, with huge contrast between extremely dynamic composition and absolutely imperturbable facial expression of the god: “A tension exists between the marvel of the dance and the serene tranquility of this expressively inexpressive countenance, the tension, that is so to say, of Eternity and Time, the paradox—the silent, mutual confutation—of the Absolute and the Phenomenal, the Self-Immortal and the perishable Psyche, Brahman-Atman and Maya” (Zimmer 156).

Images of Lord Shiva as Nataraja refer to many ideas and myths of Hinduism. Literally, every element of these sculptures has a symbolic meaning related to a Hindu philosophical concept. Along with some elements unique to these sculptures, a typical bronze image of Nataraja includes many essential attributes of Shiva, which can be found in almost any piece of Hindu art representing the god in his iconic form. Among such key elements are the third eye, a crescent moon, matted locks, Ganga goddess, a circular female earring in the left ear, and a mythical water creature Makara in the right ear, “Eyes of Rudra” necklace, and a cobra coiling around Shiva's neck or hand. All these elements can be found in the sculpture discussed in this paper and have important symbolic meaning.

The third eye represents Shiva's “cosmic knowledge” (“Shiva Nataraja Iconography”). This essential attribute of Shiva is connected with a myth, according to which when Shiva's wife Uma closed his eyes, “the world became dark, lifeless and destitute of oblations” (Wilkins 108). The darkness cleared when “a third eye, luminous as the sun, was formed” (Wilkins 108). In this particular representation of Shiva as Nataraja, the third eye, usually represented with a line between two eyes, is not visible, at least to the naked eye of an observer. At the same time, this attribute is so important that there is no doubt that initially it was there but was wiped away by time.

A crescent moon can be found on the right side of the crown (fig. 2); it is another typical element of any iconic representation of Shiva. There is no single theory why Shiva is associated with the moon. According to some scholars, the ever-changing moon symbolizes the circle of time, and the moon on Shiva's crown declares



Shiva's control over time: "The destroyer of time" is one of Shiva's significant manifestations (Zimmer 126). The crescent moon may also symbolize "the newborn baby," and then, "Shiva is a promise of life and life-strength, gentle but irresistible" (Zimmer 167). In this sculpture and in many other similar compositions, Shiva wears a crown of cassia leaves (Coomaraswamy 69; Kaimal 393). Blossoms of this plant are "the flowering symbol of Shiva's honeyed grace in our life" ("What Is Hinduism" 96).

Matted snake-like locks of Shiva form a unique hairstyle, *jatabhara* (Jansen 22). The matted locks are attributed to Shiva as the Supreme Yogi. "Shiva is regarded as the greatest of all mendicants and itinerant seekers after truth, and is indeed their patron" (Blurton 86-87). As a great ascetic, he retreats from the vanity of the material world. "He sits in splendid isolation on a solitary summit of the Himalayas, unconcerned with the worries of the world, steeped in pure and perfect meditation, absorbed in the crystal-clear, supreme Void of his own divine essence" (Zimmer 115). The locks are ended like snake tails (fig. 3), and in many other compositions, snakes are included in Shiva's hair as a decorative element. "The snake is the symbol of eternal cycle of time and immortality" (Jansen 50). In some cases, Shiva's hair is decorated with flowers of datura, a component of an intoxicating mixture (Zimmer 166)—a "flower sacred to Shiva" (Kaimal 393). In the sculpture, there are three flowers in the hair that are different from all others and remain datura in shape: two on the top locks, and one on the very bottom lock on the right (fig. 3). It is possible that datura is associated with Shiva due to his connection to a Vedic god Indra, who is often named one of Shiva's prototypes. One of the legends says that Indra fought against his enemies under the influence of the "intoxicating soma plant" (Jansen 66).

Ganga, goddess of the river Ganges, is another typical element of Shiva's representation. In this sculpture, Ganga sits on the top right lock of Shiva's hair (fig. 3). "She presses her palms together in the gesture of respectful address (*anjalinudra*)" (Kaimal 393). This refers to another Hindu myth, according to which Ganga flowed in the Milky Way and was invited to the Earth by King Bhagiratha, who asked her to wash out a curse cast on his ancestors. Being afraid that the might of Ganga can destroy the earth, Shiva agreed to hold her in his hair to

soften her power (Long 122). In his right ear, Shiva wears an earring in the form of *Makara* (fig. 4.1), a mythical water creature ("Shiva Nataraja Iconography"). *Makara* is a "sea monster with a fairly strong resemblance to the Gangetic dolphin," the "animal vehicle of Ganga" (Long 192) (fig. 4.2). On the philosophical level, "the Ganges as river symbolizes fertility, health, abundance and dynamic

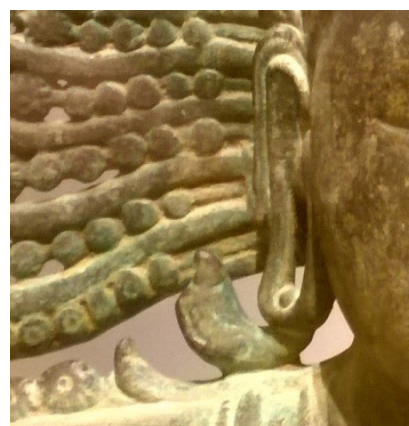


Fig. 4.1. *Makara* as Shiva's earring. *Shiva as Lord of the Dance (Nataraja)*. On display at the Art Institute of Chicago.



Fig. 4.2. *Makara* as an animal vehicle of Ganga. Ganga, Janhavi. Late 19th-century Kalighat painting.



Fig. 5. Ardhanarisvara. Tiruvenkadu, Thanjavur District. About eleventh century AD. Government Museum, Chennai.

life force—the waters of life nourisher, healer and beauty” (Merchant 4).

In his left ear, Shiva wears a round earring, typically worn by women (Jansen 35). It reflects understanding of Shiva as neither a man, nor a woman, but the absolute being that includes all the opposites. “In popular Hinduism, God is represented as male, and God’s energy, or Shakti, is personified as His spouse... Philosophically, however, the caution is always made that God and God’s energy are One...” (“What is Hinduism” 130). This idea is also reflected in the Ardhanarisvara manifestation of Shiva as “The Lord Who is Half Woman” (Zimmer 126), “a representation of the divine couple, Shiva and Sati, as one being” (Long 40). The image of Ardhanarisvara can be found in many other Hindu artworks (fig. 5).

Around Shiva’s neck, there is a long necklace. Usually, it represents *rudraksha*, “sacred beads known as “Eyes of Rudra” (Cush 799). Rudra is an “awe-inspiring and fearsome Vedic deity better known in later Hindu traditions as Siva” (Long 257). Rudraksha seeds are “prized as the compassionate tears Lord Siva shed for mankind’s suffering” (“What is Hinduism” 98).

A cobra, or *naga*, is coiling around Shiva’s upper right hand. The cobra is an important animal in Hindu tradition. In one of the myths, Shiva was attacked by a snake, under the spell of sages, but Shiva seized it and wrapped it around himself. In Hindu philosophy, the cobra symbolizes *kundalini*, “cosmic energy coiled and slumbering within man” (“What is Hinduism” 98). Its inclusion into the image of Shiva may represent Shiva’s control over cosmic energy.

Shiva stands on a lotus pedestal, another common element of Hindu representation of gods, including Shiva. Traditionally, the lotus represents purity in Hinduism: “The flower grows from the depths of muddy water to emerge above its surface, pristinely beautiful” (“Shiva Nataraja Iconography”).

While the statue shares many essential attributes of Shiva with other forms of Hindu art, it also has some unique features. The sculpture was inspired by a well-known myth about Shiva. Details of it vary depending on the source, but the core canvas is the same. As this myth is retold in the *Dance of Siva* essay by Ananda Coomaraswamy, Shiva went to the forest of Taragam (Chidambaram in other sources [“The Origins of Shiva Nataraja”]) to confuse heretical rishis. The rishis tried to destroy Shiva with their incantations. First, they sent against Shiva a fierce tiger created in sacrificial fires, but Shiva seized it, stripped off its skin, and wrapped it around his hips. Then, the rishis created a huge snake, but Shiva seized it and wrapped it around his neck as a necklace. Finally, the rishis sent against Shiva a dwarf called Muyalaka, but Shiva stepped on the monster, breaking the monster’s back, and started his dance (Coomaraswamy 68-69).

This cosmic dance, Shiva’s “dance of furious bliss” (Kaimal), symbolizes cycles of birth and death in the way to salvation. The fundamental interpretation of the artwork is that it represents Shiva as destroyer and re-creator. The upper right hand of Shiva holds a drum that when shaken produces “the original sound which is the beginning of all things, the rhythm and vibration strength of creation” (Jansen 44). This sound permeates the universe “as symbolized by the ring of fire that is filled with the loose, snakelike locks of the god’s hair” (“Shiva as Lord of the Dance”). “Nature and all its creatures are

the effects of his eternal dance” (Zimmer 152). In the upper left hand, Shiva holds a flame of fire, “symbolic of cosmic destruction and inner purification” (Cush 799). Scholars stress that the purpose of this dance is not destruction of the universe, but rather its rebirth in a better quality: “Siva is known as the destroyer of evil and ignorance, not destroyer for the sake of destruction, but for the sake of regeneration; transformation, transmutation, for recreating, cleansing out and eliminating the debris, the dross and the gross, transforming into strength, power, force” (Merchant 3). The circle around Shiva may have different meaning and symbolize “universe” (“Shiva as Lord of the Dance”), but also the “holy mantra AUM” (Zimmer 154), “the basic sound of creation” (Jansen 111).

According to a deeper interpretation, the dance represents five activities of Shiva as the Supreme God: creation, preservation, destruction, illusion, and salvation (Coomaraswamy 70; Zimmer 154). While the drum stands for creation and the fire stands for destruction, the other three actions are represented through different gestures. Preservation is reflected by the “fear not” mudra of Shiva’s second right hand, indicating “blessing, protection and reassurance” (Jansen 21). Shiva’s second left hand is in the “elephant gesture,” a “sign of the greatest strength and power” (Jansen 24), “signaling for devotees to humbly seek the grace of the spiritual teacher” (Cush 799) to obtain grace. This hand points to the uplifted left leg of Shiva, which symbolizes salvation (Zimmer 153). The right foot of Shiva steps on the dwarf demon Muyalaka, who symbolizes the illusion that stands between a person and his or her salvation: “life’s blindness, man’s ignorance” (Zimmer 153). Conquest of this demon is “release from the bondages of the world” (Zimmer 153).

The analyzed sculpture is a classic representation of Shiva as Lord of Dance, the tradition of which goes back to Chola dynasty and even beyond. This piece of art full of symbolic meaning reflects the paradoxical nature of the world where destruction and creation exist in a volatile balance. Nataraja gives his devotees hope to get rid of the burden of reincarnations. Ananda Coomaraswamy cites words from Unmai Vilakkam that summarize the religious meaning of the sculpture: “The Supreme Intelligence dances in the soul... for the purpose of removing our sins. By these means, out Father scatters the darkness

of illusion (maya), burns the thread of causality (karma), stamps down evil (mala, anava, avidya), shows Grace, and lovingly plunges the soul in the ocean of Bliss (ananda). They never see rebirth, who behold this mystic dance” (Coomaraswamy 74).

The research conducted shows the greatest extent to which interpretation and understanding of a work of art depends on the knowledge of the historical and cultural context in which it was created. The initial brief observation let me absorb only the very surface meaning of the sculpture. In its turn, the formal analysis confirmed some of these assumptions and called others into question. However, only research finally let me understand the core meaning of the sculpture and the impression that the piece of art was initially intended to make.

The attempt to interpret the artwork without knowing any background information, which is usually the case for most regular art museum visitors, was not completely successful. The sculptor did impressive work delivering the basic features of the composition, its dynamic character and paradoxical nature. These characteristics are communicated so effectively and clearly that they are obvious even for an unprepared viewer. At the same time, taking the prostrate demon of ignorance for a human, I was totally confused about the meaning of the sculpture, suggesting that it was designed to make a fearful effect on the devotees.

The formal analysis let me step from this assumption closer to the real meaning. The figure of Shiva is cast with a kind of adoration. Thanks to delicate curving lines, perfect balance, and a large amount of negative space, the figure of the god looks very gentle, elegant, weightless, and even beautiful. It doesn’t correlate well enough with my assumption about his harmful nature. Also, Shiva’s face as the focal point of the composition demonstrates peacefulness rather than a threat. Nevertheless, without additional information, it was not possible to explain this paradox between the suffering “human figure” and overall calming effect of the composition.

Research helped me to answer my questions, and it also showed that to arrive at an accurate interpretation, not only cultural, but also historical contexts are important. This type of bronze was created in certain historical conditions, and historical conditions can affect interpretation of artworks. In general cultural and

religious context, Shiva is the Hindu god responsible for destruction and re-creation, which is reflected in the statue. If we rely only on this information, the meaning of the Shiva as Nataraja is limited to the reflection of the circle of life and death. If we step back in time, when understanding of Shiva was closer to the Vedic god Indra, we find out that earlier representations of his dance were focused mostly on destruction, which still let some scholars question the constructive function of Nataraja. If we take into account the real historical context, in particular that of the Chola dynasty, which commissioned this bronze, for which Shiva was the supreme god, the meaning of this representation of Nataraja will be wider. Many scholars interpret the core meaning of this type of sculpture as salvation through purification and release from reincarnation, which explains the paradox between the calming effect and destructive content of the image.

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Evaluation: *Anastasia does an impressive amount of research into the iconography of Shiva Nataraja, and she successfully synthesizes all this information into a logical, cohesive essay (which is not an easy task). Her analysis of the sculpture’s visual structure is sophisticated and insightful as well.*

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# Individualism and Collectivism in Communication

Haruka Smith

Course: Linguistics 205 (Language and Culture)

Instructor: Alina Pajtek

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

Language is used everywhere, every day. In our day-to-day lives, we use language to communicate with the many different people we come into contact with. It is no question that language is an important part of establishing relationships with those around us, and that it is integral to the function of our society. Despite its significance, however, we may not always stop to think about how our language use might differ from others', and how that might impact our communication. There are many factors that can influence the way we use language: age, gender, geographic location, and social class, to name a few. Another part of a person's identity that can influence language use is cultural background. Often, when people of different cultural backgrounds have different cultural expectations and interpretations of people's methods of communicating, the interactions between these people result in miscommunication. To avoid miscommunication across cultures, people can learn about these differences and try to increase their knowledge of the people they may interact with. By increasing their background knowledge, people can be more mindful of the differences that may cause miscommunication and anticipate language use that varies from their own. One aspect of cultural background that can vary is how individualistic or collectivistic the culture is. Individualism refers to the idea that the individual is independent from and prioritized over the group. Collectivism refers to the idea that people are parts of the whole, and the group is prioritized over the individual. These attitudes can vary across cultures, and

## Student Reflections on Writing:

Haruka Smith

Looking back on the essay that I wrote during my time at Harper, I can see where I have changed and where my foundations remain. There are parts of the essay that I might change if I were to write it now, and rereading the essay as it is, unchanged since I turned it in for a class I took in 2020, feels a bit like seeing a time capsule of my past thought processes. Since transferring from Harper, as I learned more about writing and put those lessons into practice in my papers, I feel I have formed a record of not only what I was thinking about, but also how I was thinking while writing. I can also see where my approach to writing a paper has stayed consistent. Even though there might be things I want to tweak, the foundations that formed before transferring from Harper were not done away with altogether. They have been built upon.

Over the past several years, I have felt how reading and writing (often about what I am reading) have influenced the way I think and express my ideas, which in turn influence my writing. The various ways we interact with language are connected. As I wrote in my paper, as a form of communication, language is an integral part of our lives. Continuing to practice writing is a way to practice communicating to others, and I feel that improving my writing could help me to be clear and concise when expressing my ideas even verbally. I would like to think that the thoughts I have when I look at my past writing are a positive sign that I am continuing to work on my writing skills. I am curious to see how my writing has changed and excited to see where my writing will go in the future. It is my hope that I will continue to develop my voice and grow as a writer as I keep putting thoughts to paper.

some cultures are more collectivistic, while others are more individualistic. In both cases, of course, the idea does not apply to every situation and not every person within the culture will hold the same beliefs. More individualistic cultures may at times value the group, and vice versa. Nonetheless, these cultures often have differing norms, and their values can influence the way people communicate. There can be differences in the way people from more individualistic or collectivistic cultures use language. This paper will be exploring the differences in language use between individualistic and collectivistic cultures and people, as well as the significance that these differences have for cross-cultural communication.

It seems that there is a relation between the language that a person uses and how individualistic or collectivistic their attitudes are. A study conducted with students at the University of Cape Town, South Africa predicted that the language that students identified as their home language would be related to whether their attitudes were more collectivistic or individualistic (Eaton and Louw). African cultures are considered more collectivistic, while Western cultures are considered more individualistic. The study found that the students who identified an African language as their home language had more collectivistic attitudes, while those who identified English as their home language had more individualistic attitudes. Despite being students at the same university in the same country, the students' differing backgrounds correlated with the language they speak. A similar study was conducted with Lebanese students. Once again, the participants were students, this time from multiple universities. The study found that "respondents who used the Arabic language were consistently more collectivist than those who used either English or French," while those who used English had more individualistic attitudes than those who used Arabic (Ayyash-Abdo). A possible explanation for this correlation is the use of personal pronouns (Kashima and Kashima). In some languages such as English and French, the use of first- and second-person pronouns ("I" and "you") as the subject of a sentence is obligatory. Users of these languages tended to be more individualistic. Meanwhile, in some languages, such as Arabic, subject pronouns can be dropped. Cultures with these languages tended to be less individualistic. It could be, then, that

differing cultural backgrounds are linked to the frequency with which people emphasize the individual in a sentence. When communicating across cultures, it may be helpful to keep in mind that people who speak certain languages could have different expectations about whether the individual or group is prioritized, even within a sentence. If language influences thought—and in this case, relates to how collectivistic or individualistic a person is—perhaps learning a second language could impact a person's alignment with a particular set of values. This seemed to be the case with the Lebanese students who were Arabic native speakers but learned English or French (Ayyash-Abdo 515). If that is the case, it could be that when a person who uses a language that allows pronoun dropping learns a language that requires the use of subject pronouns, they are learning to focus on the individual and self when expressing their thoughts. The opposite could be said for a person who uses a language with obligatory subject pronouns. This could influence the way a person sees the self, either as an independent entity that needs to be identified as separate from the context, or as a part of a whole that is included in the context.

The correlation of language and attitude could also be the result of people learning different cultural norms from their families. In the case in South Africa, for example, students who use a certain language in their homes also likely learned a certain set of values that came with the language. Usually, the family is the first group a child is socialized by. Although they may later learn other ideas from their peers or in school, there is still a particular set of rules and values at home. Language is a significant aspect of a culture, so it is not unanticipated that people who share a language would also share cultural values.

Part of being socialized by the family is learning about roles and cultural norms through conversations. These communication practices can vary by family and by culture. Families that are more collectivistic or more individualistic can have different expectations of how to communicate with people in a group setting. A study in New Zealand compared the conversation patterns of twelve European and twelve Chinese families (Sik Hung Ng, et al.). In the more individualistic European families, addressing a single person when speaking was more common than in the Chinese families. On the

other hand, Chinese families more commonly addressed multiple people than in the European families. There were differences between Chinese families as well. Recently immigrated (and therefore less acculturated and more collectivistic) families addressed multiple people more and a single person less than Chinese families who had been in New Zealand for two or more generations. The more acculturated families also used more English than the recently immigrated families. There were even differences within the Chinese families. Family members who were more acculturated had more single-addressee turns of speaking than their less acculturated family members. Children who grow up in more collectivistic households, then, would be learning a more group-focused way of conversing. If their family is in a country that has a more individualistic culture, the children would need to adjust to a more individual-oriented conversation style once they are in school. This would make their language socialization more complex than peers whose households are individualistic. Not only do they need to learn the two different methods of communication, but they would also need to know when it is appropriate to use each style. People who have little or no exposure to the more individual-focused way of communicating could be at a disadvantage when placed in an individualistic institutional setting, where there may be an expectation of how to address others. In cross-cultural group conversations, it is possible that not everyone in the group would be used to addressing the entire group, and others may not be used to singling people out or being singled out, which can impact how the group members interact. If a person does not identify a specific person they are addressing, it may not be that they neglected to mention the addressee, but that they were socialized to address the group as a whole.

Another study also compares the conversation patterns of families with different cultural backgrounds. In that study, mealtime conversations of twenty-two Norwegian families in Oslo and twenty-two American families in or near Cambridge were compared (Aukrust and Snow). The more collectivistic Norwegian families focused more on narratives, while the more individualistic American families focused more on explanations. The differing families had similar amounts of utterances that

were both narratives and explanations, but they were both for different reasons. The Norwegian families would use explanations within a narrative to help tell the story. The American families used narratives within explanations, sometimes as examples or support. The topics differed, as well. The Norwegian families talked more about social practices, and their narratives were often about deviations from a normal day or set of events. The American families had more utterances “in the categories ‘behavior’ and ‘internal states’” (Aukrust and Snow 238). The American families’ explanations focused on physical events and individual behaviors, while the Norwegian families’ explanations—like their narratives—were about social norms. Children with these differing backgrounds would have more practice in one type of conversation over the other. One child might be more adept at telling a story, while another might have an easier time providing explanations. Both of these skills are useful when communicating with others, but when placed in a situation where the expected skill is not the one the child is more practiced in, effective communication could be difficult. Without the ability to effectively communicate their thoughts, the interaction could result in miscommunication. The focus on differing topics could influence the ability to communicate, as well. The children in Norwegian families, who had fewer utterances related to internal states, could have more difficulty when communicating their feelings than those with more practice. When communicating with people from different cultures, some may struggle with certain topics and ways of speaking that they are not used to. It could also be that depending on their cultural background, some children would find it easier to understand a narrative than an explanation, in which case providing a narrative as an example could be effective when teaching children with varying backgrounds.

Differences in cultural backgrounds can affect the construction of arguments as well. In one study, the argumentative writing styles of college students in Taiwan (a more collectivistic country) and the United States were compared (Wu and Ruben). The study found that there were differences between the Taiwanese and American students, as well as differences between the Taiwanese students’ Chinese and English essays. American students writing in English were more direct than the Taiwanese

students writing in Chinese. They presented their thesis statements earlier on in their essays, meaning the Americans preferred to or were expected to directly state their argument to the readers before providing too much information beforehand. To an American who expects a clear presentation of opinions early on, the Taiwanese students' style of writing may seem roundabout; while to a Taiwanese person, the American students' essays may seem too direct. People with different cultural backgrounds don't always have the same ideas about the best way to order information, which can lead to frustration and miscommunication. It can be important to provide people with enough time to lead up to stating their arguments, or to wait for more explanation after a person has stated his or her argument. The American students also used more personal anecdotes (Wu and Ruben 164). Meanwhile, the Taiwanese students used more proverbs and appealed to human goodness and virtues that support group solidarity. It would appear that these two cultures value certain types of information more than others as supporting evidence in an argument. What may be a good argument in one culture may not be in another. An American students' use of personal anecdotes could seem to some like there is too much focus on the self. It may not be considered a good support of the argument because it neglects the group that the person is trying to persuade. Others may find the Taiwanese students' essays less persuasive because of the lack of personal connection to the topic. The proverbs and appeals to virtues could seem less relatable than a narrative. Clearly, the criteria for a well-presented argument varies across cultures. While individualistic cultures may stress the individual and their opinions, collectivistic cultures may stress groups and their values. The methods of constructing an argument are not universal. We should be careful not to judge the quality of a person's argument and their rhetorical skills based on our own cultural standards.

This study also found differences between the Taiwanese students' essays that were written in Chinese and those written in English. As when writing in Chinese, the students continued to be indirect, appeal to human goodness and collective virtues, and limit personal anecdotes when writing in English. However, their English essays were more likely to include personal

pronouns, less likely to include proverbs, and were less assertive. The assertiveness was based on the frequency of hedges, which are phrases that signal probability rather than full certainty. As with the Lebanese students, learning a second language could be influencing the students' ideas. It could also be that some languages are more suited to certain styles of writing than others. While there were some differences depending on the language the Taiwanese students wrote in, many of the traits that separated them from the American students remain in their English essays. Even if a student from a collectivistic culture learns a language from a more individualistic culture, they were still socialized to construct their arguments around certain types of supporting evidence. The cultural norms that they are accustomed to are not easily swayed. They would likely need to be exposed to a different way of writing and practice it before they can change their style and still convey their arguments effectively. Therefore, meeting a teacher's expectations right away may prove difficult for international students or students who have recently immigrated. Schools that offer writing support could help these students adjust, but at those who don't, the student could end up failing to meet the teacher's standards for good argumentative writing, even if their writing would be perfectly acceptable in the student's own culture. It is not unlikely that this could result in a loss of confidence for many. Perhaps it could be beneficial to provide students with more practice in writing essays in their target language, even if their skills in the language are proficient.

A culture's attitudes and values can be reflected in its norms and linguistic characteristics, and this especially seems evident when other cultures are compared. However, while there certainly are different uses of language across cultures, individualism and collectivism are not mutually exclusive. The seemingly contrasting values can coexist and be integrated into one culture to varying degrees. While individualistic cultures tend to emphasize the role of the individual over the group, that is not to say that the group is not valued. There is more than one way to be individualistic or collectivistic. For example, though the U.S. and England are both considered individualistic, there are differences in the way they present their individualistic values. A study



that compared American and English mothers' ways of parenting found that American mothers were more likely to explain acceptable or unacceptable behavior based on the child's own behavior, while English mothers were more likely to provide an explanation based on social norms (Dunn and Brown). As indicated by this study, a culture might emphasize the individual in certain contexts but not in others. Behaviors that reflect a culture's individualistic or collectivistic values don't necessarily apply to all other cultures that are aligned with a similar set of values. Norms vary from culture to culture. We should take care not to make assumptions based on the norms of one specific culture and apply them to others. Remembering that people with individualistic and collectivistic cultural backgrounds can have different expectations around communication can still be helpful in avoiding miscommunication across cultures, but it is also worth remembering that generalizations—especially unsubstantiated ones—can contribute to miscommunication as well. Not all individualistic cultures are individualistic in the same way, and not all collectivistic cultures are collectivistic in the same way.

Another reason to be careful of generalizations is because cultural values are not fixed. This can be seen in the way that cultures change over time. Open any history book, and evidence of this will be found in its pages. Cultural shifts are not just a part of the past; they are continuing to happen. In China, for example, the millennials in the country have viewpoints and attitudes that are more individualistic than their parents, and that go against the collectivistic attitudes of previous generations (Moore). These millennials have been partially influenced by Western pop culture, and the new slang term “ku,” derived from the English “cool,” has been associated with these new attitudes. The spread of these ideas and the slang term are helped by the Internet. As this example demonstrates, people and their cultures don't exist in isolation from one another. With globalization, people are exposed to ideas from cultures that differ from their own, and cultural values from various cultures influence each other, even when the cultural groups are not geographically near each other. Advances in technology have made it easier for ideas to reach a wider audience, and information can spread quickly. What was

a collectivistic culture could over time incorporate more individualistic values. There is diversity within cultures, and as with China, there could be generational and individual differences in attitudes. Even if the intention is to improve intercultural communication, assuming that the collectivistic or individualistic characteristics of a culture apply to all members of the group will likely cause more miscommunication. “More likely to” is not the same as “always.” Although learning about other cultures and their norms is helpful, it is only helpful if it actually applies to the people being encountered and communicated with.

Individualistic and collectivistic cultures can differ from each other in language use and methods of communication. While the specific differences vary by culture, the fact remains that the expectations held by people from one culture don't always apply to people from other cultures with their own distinct values. People with different cultural backgrounds have been socialized to follow a unique set of cultural norms, which can interfere with attempts to communicate with people from other cultures. Learning about these differences and remembering that people's standards may not match your own, while avoiding generalizations, can help improve cross-cultural communication. If communication is something that is so ingrained in our daily lives, it is only natural that we should try to improve upon it.

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Evaluation: *Haruka’s paper examines the connection between language and thought through a discussion of individualism and collectivism in communication. Through multiple examples of research studies from different cultures, Haruka points out how language and cultural values are connected, and how they may influence the way we perceive reality and how we process information. Haruka’s paper is well researched, and the arguments that she constructs are strong and compelling.*

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# Thematic Unit Paper: Coming to Colombia

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Kate Stonecipher

Course: Linguistics 220 (Methods of Teaching  
English as a Second Language)

Instructor: Alina Pajtek

Assignment: *Write a thematic unit in which you show how you would teach a lesson plan sequence on a certain topic within the communicative language teaching framework. The unit should focus on integrating two or three of the following ESL skills: reading, writing, grammar, listening, and speaking.*

**Audience:** Public high school students in Colombia, assumed to be all native Spanish speakers, intermediate level English speakers, class three times per week, 50 minutes per class.

## Goals

There are many goals for this unit. The aim is to appeal to the cultural exchange aspect that the government is looking to incorporate into the Colombian school system, as well as to tap into students' knowledge and enthusiasm about their own country. By focusing on situations and relevant issues in Colombia, hopefully the students will incorporate what they learn, outside of the classroom. Colombia has recently become a more popular tourist destination, largely due to the diminishing drug and crime problem the country has been associated with in the past (Calderon, 2015). Increasing numbers of visitors to countries such as Colombia can have huge benefits as well as devastating effects. The fact that I (the teacher) am a foreigner visiting the country, both to teach and do some traveling, will serve to make the lessons even more relevant, and hopefully more interactive; the teacher will share where she is from and encourage questions and discussion. The lessons will incorporate language and skills that are used frequently in the English

language, and they will be immediately useful for the students. This aligns with one main goal, for the students to see and understand how relevant learning English can be in today's world.

## Learning Objectives

A terminal objective for this thematic unit is that the students will be able to understand and describe a variety of aspects of a country's culture. They will be able to examine the similarities and differences between cities, be able to promote travel within their country, and at the same time, realize how travel and tourism can affect a country such as Colombia.

## Authentic Materials

A few difficulties present themselves in using authentic materials in this classroom. One, the class is in Colombia, so most of the materials in that region will be in Spanish. Two, the school has very limited resources, so the teacher will be responsible for bringing what she can from the United States and making do with what is available. The teacher will bring with her postcards and travel brochures and will use YouTube videos for authentic materials. The post cards and brochures will be used for reading practice, examples of writing material that the students can use to assist in writing their own postcards, and later, in developing their presentations. These materials use more natural English as opposed to formal or academic English, so it will be something they can use for speaking "every-day" English. The postcards will also be handwritten, so they will give students practice reading English handwriting. According to a current teacher there, these high school students will most likely have Internet access at home and will be familiar with using technology and the YouTube website. The specific videos chosen will be used for listening exercises because they feature English speakers and use very casual, fairly slow, natural language. There are adjectives and contractions in these videos, so students will be able to hear a variety of grammar points in action and immediately see their usefulness. Also, they will introduce the topic of tourism and common themes in promotional materials used for this purpose (BookingHunterTV, 2013; Buzzfeed.com & Kunesh, 2015). The video(s) will be shown multiple

times, first just to watch and/or listen, and a second time, for the students to concentrate on certain aspects of the video.

### Assessments

Students will be assessed informally in multiple ways throughout this unit. At the end of every class, the teacher will present a question for the students to reflect on, and they will be assigned to write about it in their journals. By the end of the unit, the students will have written six journal entries. These will be collected after every class, so the teacher can read them and provide feedback, in the hopes of both engaging more with the students, as well as offering them a chance to improve upon their efforts. Before class ends every day, the teacher will ask students if they have any questions about the journal inquiry. She will remind them that only the teacher will see them and that she will not share them with anyone, to use full sentences when writing in their journals, and to try to use correct grammar.

At the onset of this unit, the teacher will inform the students to keep a portfolio of all the work they do. The portfolios will be collected at the halfway point. The teacher will do some light grading and give feedback, then return them to the students at the beginning of the next class. They will then be collected again at the end of the unit and will count toward the students' final grades. This is to be another informal assessment of the students' writing and grammar skills. Participation points will also be awarded to students as a way of assessing their speaking skills. The presentation at the end of the unit will be another way of assessing speaking skills and will be graded by the teacher, as well as by the students' peers. Students will be given a copy of the peer assessment sheet as well as the teacher's grading specifications the week before, so that they know what to concentrate on for the presentations. The final assessment method, which will be ongoing, includes the few activities that involve listening. The worksheets that are assigned afterward will help gauge the students' listening skills. Overall, the goal is to have sufficient assessment and evaluation throughout the unit so that upcoming lessons and teacher techniques can be altered if needed.

## SEQUENCE 1

**Key teaching points:** Adjectives, comparatives/superlatives, similarities/differences, modals, vocabulary, reading, listening, writing, speaking

### Lesson 1

**Objectives.** Students will be able to accurately identify adjectives in listening activities. They will be able to write five correctly formed sentences, using adjectives in the two patterns learned, to describe Colombia. They will understand and pronounce the four vocabulary words in this section, if they do not already know them.

**Rationale.** These students will likely know some adjectives, as they are assumed to be at an intermediate level of English. Given the sheer number of adjectives in the English language, different and more complex words may inadvertently be learned in this lesson. Adjectives are used frequently, especially when describing things to other people, and because the students will be learning about both new and familiar places and how to describe them, it will be useful for them to have more adjectives in their repertoire. Adjectives are used to enhance language, are frequently used in the world of tourism and in interactions between travelers, and among travelers and locals on the street: all situations in which the students may find themselves and need to use this new knowledge.

### Activities

**Brainstorming vocabulary—3 minutes.** Students will brainstorm some of their favorite places in/things about Colombia, and what makes Colombia unique. The teacher will write these on the board, highlighting the adjectives and adding appropriate synonyms to the list. Add this vocabulary to the list, if not brought up by students: colorful, beaches, coffee, peaceful.

**Colombia in 3 words YouTube Video activity (J.L. Pastor & SeeColombia.Travel, 2012)—5 minutes.** The teacher will pre-teach new vocabulary from the video (although the Spanish subtitles will be at the bottom so this might not be necessary).

**Adjectives lesson—15 minutes.** The teacher will introduce the two basic patterns of adjective use: before nouns, and after linking verbs, some of which relate to the senses (smell, taste, sound, look).

Examples to be written on the board:

Pattern 1: Before **nouns**- The Adjective modifies the noun and answers one of these questions: 1) “Which one?” 2) “What kind?” or 3) “How many?”

*Examples:* This is hot coffee! What kind of coffee is it??? It’s hot coffee!

The city has beautiful scenery. What kind of scenery is it??? It’s beautiful scenery.

The restaurant has amazing food. What kind of food does it have??? It has amazing food!

Pattern 2: After **linking verbs**- to describe the subject

*Examples:* This coffee *is* hot!

The mountains *look* beautiful.

The food *smells* amazing.

Adjectives in English do not have to agree with person, gender, or number. The teacher will explain to the class: “Their parties are crazy!” The spelling of “crazy” does not change, whether “their” refers to mostly men or women. Even though “parties” is plural, “crazy” still does not need to change. Explain that this is different from Spanish! If your girlfriends have crazy parties, you might use “ellas” and locas (for fiestas). You don’t need to do that in English.

**Adjectives chart (Errie, 2010)—7 minutes.** The teacher will hand out the chart to the students and have them write five complete sentences. They are to use the adjectives to practice writing sentences about Colombia, describing the cities, the culture, the food, and anything else, as long as they use some of the vocabulary (adjective) words. (See “Adjectives Chart” in *Materials* section).

**YouTube Chicago video activity (Buzzfeed.com& Kunesh, 2015)—15 minutes.** The teacher will introduce her hometown of Chicago and a few things she likes about

her city, concentrating on using adjectives. The video will be played part-way through once, without the sound, and she will instruct the students to pay attention and think of adjectives they would use to describe Chicago, based on what they see. There will be a short discussion and the teacher will clarify directions for the next part. Before playing the video again, she will write on the board some relevant vocabulary: Great Chicago Fire, reinvent, skyline, “El,” Sky Deck, boutique, deep-dish pizza. The video will then be played, this time with the sound. The teacher will direct the class to pay attention and really listen for any adjectives that are used, and to write them down as they are listening. As a class, review the students’ answers, go over any new vocabulary they heard, and leave time for questions about Chicago.

**Venn diagram—5 minutes.** The teacher will briefly explain the concept of the Venn diagram and draw a blank diagram on the board (Fig. 1). Instruct the students to set up their own diagram on a sheet of paper, with “Chicago” on the left. The teacher will tell the students to write words in the left-hand circle that describe Chicago, and make sure to include lots of adjectives. On the right side of the diagram, students are to pick a city in Colombia, and fill in the circle on the right with words and adjectives to describe their city. Have them leave the center part blank for now.

**Homework.** Remind students to keep their list of adjectives and diagrams and bring them to the next class. They will also need to turn them in with their portfolios at the conclusion of the unit.

**Daily journal inquiry.** What are some reasons you like living in your city (or in Colombia) and some reasons you don’t?

**Materials.** Board/white board, marker/chalk, paper, worksheet, computer, Internet, YouTube video

## Lesson 2

**Objectives.** Students will understand the uses of *same*, *similar*, *alike/like*, and *different*, and use them to accurately describe similarities and differences between

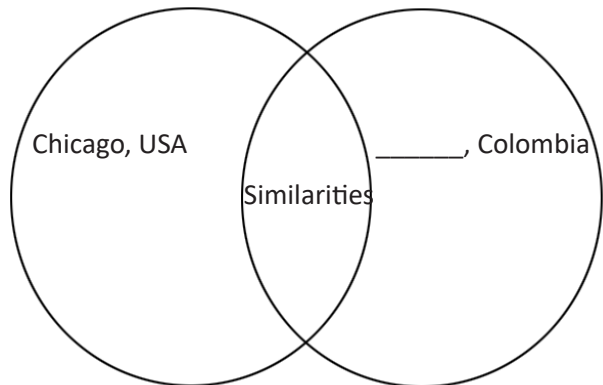


Fig 1. Venn diagram for use in Sequence 1, Lesson 1, to compare cities.

Chicago and a Colombian city. They will produce complete, accurate sentences, demonstrating their understanding of the three basic formulas they learned earlier.

**Rationale.** The aim is to share our cultures and show appreciation for where we come from. At the same time, we might uncover similar characteristics between our cities that can enhance our connection to each other. Differences will be inherent in the discussion and illustrated in the Venn diagram activity, so this will be noted. There are many other ways of describing similarities and differences, but only a few will be discussed in this unit.

Table 1. Making comparisons.

One-syllable: +*er* >2 syllables: *more/less*

> 2 syllables +ending in -y: remove (y) + -ier

warm=> warmer	beautiful=> more/less beautiful	happy=> happier
high=> higher	modern=> more/less modern	lazy=> lazier
green=>greener	difficult=>more/less difficult	easy=>easier

Some irregulars: good...better, well...better, bad...worse, far...farther/further

### Activities

**Lesson—15 minutes.** The teacher will explain to the class that these four words are used to compare things: same, similar, alike, and like. They help describe two things/people/places that have something in common. The teacher will have already written the following on the board:

*Basic formulas:*

A and B are \_\_\_\_\_.

A is \_\_\_\_\_ B.

*Same:* A and B are the same. 2) A is the same as B.

*Similar:* A and B are similar. 2) A is similar to B.

*Alike/Like:* A and B are alike. 2) A is like B.

When comparing things that are NOT the same, use *different* in this way-

*Different:*

A and B are different.

A is different from B.

**Comparisons: Similarities and differences—15 minutes.** Compare/contrast some favorite Chicago foods: Hamburgers & hot hogs! The teacher will direct the students to pair up with the person next to them. Give them 10 to 15 minutes to find two similarities and two differences between as many of the pairs on the worksheet as they can; write them down as complete sentences at the bottom of the page. The directions say “three,” but for the

sake of time, have them write at least two (Kifissia, 2012). Afterward, ask for volunteers to come to the board and write/say out loud some of their examples.

**Travel brochure activity—15 minutes.** The teacher will distribute a handful of brochures, both from Chicago and Colombia. Students will be instructed to look over them quickly just to get an idea of what is being said about the destination, and then pass the brochure around so that every student can see and can practice the target reading technique: scanning. As a class, the students will pick out the brochures they liked the most and discuss them. The teacher will have the class point out what they liked about the cities based on the brochures and what they thought the important points were. She will write these ideas on the board, categorizing under the headings of “Chicago” and “Colombia.”

**Continuation of Venn diagram activity—5 minutes.** The teacher will have the students get out the Venn diagram they started in the previous class. They can add in any more words they have learned within the two large circles. Now that they have learned about similarities, tell the students to compare the two cities, and in the center portion that overlaps, write what the two have in common!

**Daily journal inquiry.** How are you both similar to, and different from your friends? How are you similar to, and different from your brothers or sisters (or other family members if you are an only child)?

**Materials.** Board/whiteboard, markers/chalk, Comparisons worksheet, travel brochures, blank paper and pens/pencils so students can draw the Venn diagrams.

### Lesson 3

**Objectives.** Students will comprehend the functions and uses for comparatives and superlatives and be able to apply them to previously learned adjectives, as well as new ones. They will be able to correctly order a series of three pictures, by writing sentences and incorporating comparative and superlative adjectives.

**Rationale.** Comparatives and superlatives go along with adjectives, so it makes sense to learn them together. In a future lesson regarding the teacher’s upcoming visit to a secondary Colombian city, the students will need to use comparatives and superlatives in order to make their pick of a Colombian destination appear more desirable than others.

#### Activities

**Comparatives/superlatives Lesson—30 minutes.** The teacher will explain to the class that every adjective can be used as a comparative or superlative.

The teacher will have drawn a table (Table 1) on the board (using more or less information depending on the size of the board and time), “To compare two things...”

*Example:* India is warmer than China.

Explain to the class: Use the Superlative form when

Table 2. Superlatives (comparing three or more things).

One-syllable: + *est* >2 syllables: *most/least*

>2 syllables + end in -y: No (y)! Add -iest

warm => warmest	beautiful=> most/least beautiful	happy=> happiest
high => highest	modern=> most/least modern	lazy=> laziest
green =>greenest	difficult=>most/least difficult	easy=>easiest

More irregulars: good...best, bad...worst, far...farther/furthest

Table 3. Comparative/superlative table, partially completed, for students to use. Students should write the correct form of the adjectives in the table.

<i>Example: Spicy</i>	<i>spicier</i>	<i>Spiciest</i>
Tall		
	taller	
		**farther
big		
	more colorful	
**good		
		sweetest

comparing at least 3 things (write as much of Table 2 as will fit, and refer to it when explaining).

*Example:* Mt. Everest is the tallest mountain in the world. (There are many mountains you are comparing.)

**Student-completed table—15 minutes.** The teacher will hand out papers with a partially completed table (Table 3), and students will individually complete the table and discuss the answers as a class afterward.

**Waterfalls of Colombia (Favero, n.d.; Joisian & Michael, n.d.).** Have students individually put the waterfalls in order based on their height, and use superlative terms to write sentences about them (Fig. 2).

**Daily journal inquiry.** Describe a wish/hope/plan you have for your life, and use the adjectives we just learned about, to compare that to how your life is now.

**Materials.** Board/whiteboard, markers/chalk, Comparative/superlative worksheet, *Waterfalls of Colombia* worksheet, and pens/pencils

### Lesson 3A

**Objectives.** Students will understand how to form contractions, and be able to identify the following contractions within listening and reading samples: I’m, I’ll, you’re, you’ll, it’s, and they’ll. The students will understand the definitions of at least six of the nine vocabulary words introduced before the video, as three of them are mainly Chicago-centered and they may never encounter them again (Buzzfeed.com & Kunesh, 2015).

**Rationale.** It is hard to speak, hear, or write a sentence in English, without contractions. They are commonplace in the English language. If ESL students only learn the full-length versions such as “I am,” it will be much more difficult for them to follow along with a normal conversation in English, because native English speakers, more often than not, shorten their words. Contractions will be very important for the students to be able to recognize and use.

### Activities

**Contraction Lesson—15 minutes.** The teacher will





1) La Chorrera Waterfall, outside Bogota (590 meters tall).



2) Salto de Bordonos, near San Augustin de Huila (400 meters tall).



3) Tequendama Falls, near Bogota (157 meters tall).

Fig. 2. Pictures of Colombian waterfalls, to use for Exercise 2 (comparison). Students should look at the three pictures and read the information, then in the blank space on the paper, they should put the waterfalls in order by height: tall, taller, tallest. The adjective “high” could also be used, or for bonus points, students could use other adjectives that make sense, such as “beautiful” or “big.”

have already written the following on the board: “What is a contraction?” “To contract = to make smaller.”

*Example:* He **cannot** ride a bike= He can't ride a bike.

Describe in further detail to the class: This is what we do with many words in English. Take two words, and combine them to make one. Draw an apostrophe where you removed letters. The teacher will draw an example on the board, instructing the use of contractions in casual/

informal speaking and writing. If you are writing a resume, do not use contractions (Use “do not,” not “don’t”); write out the entire word.

The teacher will ask the students, “Can you think of something similar you do to words in Spanish?” Wait for a response, and then can suggest, “what about de + el=del? Or a + el=al?” No apostrophe is used here, and these are only two examples; English has many more.

Give these examples out loud: “**I am** teaching contractions = I'm teaching contractions.”

**Contractions worksheet—10 minutes.** The teacher will distribute the *English for Everyone* contractions worksheet (Englishforeveryone.org, 2016). Review the worksheet afterwards, soliciting volunteers to read the entire sentence in the answer aloud. Check for understanding and review if there is any confusion. Remind students to keep this worksheet so they can use it as a reference for upcoming activities.

**Chicago deep-dish pizza YouTube video—10 minutes.** The teacher will introduce relevant vocabulary before showing this video: style, shipped-in, layer, marinara sauce, pretend, thin crust, convenient, awesome, delicious (Buzzfeed.com & Kunesh, 2015). Show the video once in its entirety just for practice. Show a second time, and tell students to listen very carefully for all the contractions used, and if they can hear them, the full versions of the words as well. Have students write them down. Afterward, discuss as a class. Depending on how much the students come up with, the teacher can add what she knows was in the video: I’ve, does not, there’s, it’s, that’s, I’m, doesn’t, you’re. As a bonus, and if time permits, ask students if they can also come up with some *adjectives* that were used in the video!

**Postcard activity—15 minutes.** The teacher, as well as some English-speaking friends in various countries, will have written some postcards ahead of time, all with a focus on adjectives and contractions. Any vocabulary in the postcards that may need to be defined or reviewed, the teacher will write on the board and discuss, before handing them out. Divide the class into groups of around five, and give one postcard to each group. Students will

share the reading of the postcard so that they each get to read at least one sentence. After all the postcards are read, the class will together go back through and scan them, picking out the contractions and adjectives and shouting them out as the teacher writes them on the board.

**Daily journal inquiry.** Using some of the contractions we just learned, tell me 1) something you'd like to know about Chicago; and 2) what you'd like to learn more about in class.

**Materials.** Paper/pen/pencil, chalkboard/whiteboard/markers, preferably a projector, contractions worksheet, pre-written postcards, computer, Internet access for YouTube videos.

**SEQUENCE 2**

**Key teaching points:** Chosen modals, first conditional/If...then statements/cause and effect, vocabulary, reading, writing, speaking

**Lesson 1**

**Objectives.** By the end of this sequence, students will understand the uses of *should* and *shouldn't*, and be able to pronounce and correctly apply them in sentences to convey advice and recommendations. They will

comprehend the expression *would rather*, and be able to write complete, accurate sentences using these expressions to indicate their own preferences.

**Rationale.** *Should* is one of the modals that can be used in three tenses. In this sequence we are talking about the history of development in Colombia, and the past, present, and future effects of tourism, so *should* is very applicable. Additionally, the word *should* will come in handy when making recommendations, so students will be able to use it when talking to peers, teachers, and foreigners. Teaching the opposite, *shouldn't*, is also good for the same purposes, as well as for additional practice with contractions. *Would rather* is a very useful expression and can be used in making recommendations to tourists as well as by both the teacher and students as part of the upcoming class presentations. It can also be applied to conversations about the positives and negatives of rising tourism in Colombia, in that some students might prefer the way things used to be, and others may prefer the direction in which things are headed.

**Activities**

**Modal Lesson—30 minutes.** *Should* and *should not (shouldn't)* are ways of giving advice, or saying that something is a good idea or a bad idea. The teacher will write on the board:

Fig. 3. Worksheet: "What Would You Rather Do?" Students should find five other classmates and ask them what they would rather do. Answers should be in complete sentences using "I would rather" or "I'd rather." The example should be used for guidance, but students should come up with their own questions. It should be explained that some examples require more words to complete the sentence, so careful attention must be paid. An example question such as "Would you rather go to a Mexican restaurant or an Italian restaurant" could be given, followed by an example of the answer's construction: "I would (I'd) rather go to a Mexican restaurant."

- 1) Would you rather \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_?  
I would rather \_\_\_\_\_.
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_ go for a walk or go to the gym?  
I would rather \_\_\_\_\_.
- 3) Would you rather \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_?  
I would rather \_\_\_\_\_.
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_?  
I would \_\_\_\_\_.
- 5) \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_?  
I \_\_\_\_\_ rather \_\_\_\_\_.

*Example 1:* Evan should exercise more = “It’s a **good idea** for Evan to exercise more.” versus “Evan shouldn’t smoke = It’s a **bad idea** for Evan to smoke.”

*Example 2:* Foreigners who live in Colombia should learn Spanish so they can communicate with people. = It’s a **good idea** for foreigners to learn the language of the country in which they are living.

To talk about the past, we say, *should have*.

*Example 3:* She failed the test last week. I guess she *should have* studied more.

Negative example: He was a mean guy. I *shouldn’t have* gone on a date with him.

The teacher will explain that these words are often shortened when we speak, especially when talking fast. For example, I say, “*I shoulda*”...or “*I should’ve*”.

**Modal lesson continued.** Explain that we use *would rather* to talk about preferences. If I want to go to the beach more than I want to go to the movie, I can say, “*I would rather* go to the beach.” You don’t need to say “the movie” again. Often, we don’t say the verb a second time. Demonstrate (we don’t normally say, “*I would rather* go to the beach than go to the movie.”)

*Example of a question:* What do you want to do? (What would you rather do?) Play baseball or watch TV? Answer: I would rather watch TV. Reiterate that you don’t need to say *baseball* again. You can use a contraction here! I would = I’d

**“I can’t decide where to go” activity—10 minutes.**

The teacher will announce to the class that she wants to go on a weekend trip somewhere in Colombia, but she cannot decide where to go. Instructions to class: With the person next to you, discuss where I should go and why, and what I should do when I get there. If there are places I should avoid going to, tell me I shouldn’t go there, and why. Remember to use *should* and *shouldn’t*. I want to hear your recommendations when you are finished. I might use them!

**Partner/Interview activity—10 minutes.** “What would you rather do?” Students will be given a handout with one example and some sentences with blanks (Fig.

3). For about five minutes, each student will interview their partner next to them and record their partner’s answers. Afterward, the teacher will moderate a class discussion, check comprehension, clarify anything, and ask for volunteers to read some of their answers aloud.

**Homework.** Students will be assigned to research some interesting facts about a city in Colombia (randomly assigned to them). There will be overlap, so some students will have the same city. They will then write their own postcards and bring it in to the next class. Important instructions will be for students to use the grammar lessons we have learned up until now in their writing: adjectives, contractions, comparisons, making recommendations, and stating preferences using *should* and *would rather* etc. The teacher will reinforce the importance of completing this homework, because if one person doesn’t write their postcard, then a second student will also be left out. The postcards will be included in the students’ portfolios and collected next class.

**Daily journal inquiry.** Why should you learn English? If you don’t think you should, why not? What would you rather learn that would be more important to you?

**Materials.** Chalkboard/whiteboard, chalk or markers, “What Would You Rather Do?” worksheet, postcards, list of Colombian cities written out on small pieces of paper to give to students (with a teacher’s record of who got which city).

## Lesson 2

**Objectives.** The students will understand the differences between *may/might*, and *must/have to*, as evidenced by correct use within sentences on the worksheet, and by being able to support their choice of words, if it is questionable which one they could use. They will comprehend the four new words and understand their use in the sentences on the worksheet activity. In addition, they will efficiently use at least 15 minutes to talk with other students, start writing a script, and practice using the grammar that has been learned thus far.

**Rationale.** Learning words that express a degree of certainty about the future or a feeling of something you must do will be useful for several reasons: to discuss the changes in Colombia, to convey the necessity of

visiting certain locales in Colombia, and to talk about measures used to advance the country or keep it from being destroyed by tourism. These are things that may be discussed in the following two lessons and activities. *May* and *might* are often used in conjunction with *have to*, so they will be taught together. In addition to being used when talking about possible effects in the future, these words are also used when writing postcards to describe what you may/might do next on your trip, and when trying to convince others to do something; they will certainly be useful outside of the classroom.

### Activities

#### *May/might lesson—20 minutes for both lessons.*

The teacher will explain that when we are not very certain, we use *may* or *might* to say that there is a *possibility*. To say the same thing but emphasize the negative, say *may not/might not*. Write all, or at least the first half on the board, and explain the second half:

*Example 1:* If I have time, I *may/might* visit Bolivia while I'm here. (But I'm not sure I will have time, so I use *may/might*).

*Example 2:* I only have \$3.00, so I *might* cook dinner tonight. I *might not* go to the restaurant anymore.

***Must/have to lesson***—The teacher will explain, *must* and *have to* are both used when we are very certain about something, but not 100% sure (when we think something is necessary.) The students may already know that another use for *have to/must*, is to convey obligation, but review this if they don't. Write on the board:

Add not to emphasize the negative (*must not*). To express *have to* in a negative way (aren't required to) = *don't have to*.

*Have to* needs to be in the correct form, so "*he has to*" and "*they have to*," for example.

*Example 1:* Joey owns a very expensive car, so *he must* make a lot of money.

If he wants to travel the world, he *has to* take time off work.

***Predicting Your Future worksheet (Isa80, n.d.)—10 minutes.*** Hand out the worksheet to the class and have them complete it individually. The worksheet directions will be revised so that students can use the modals covered in class: *may* (not), *might* (not), *must*, *must not*, *have to*. Write the following words on the board (more words if needed), and make sure the students know them because they are on the worksheet: *to rob*, *medal*, *countryside*, *lottery*.

***Work on group presentation "Where Should We Go?"—15-20 minutes.*** The teacher will assign students to groups by counting students up to five. Within their groups, the students will pick one of the cities they were assigned for their postcard activity and write a short script. The aim of the script is to use the grammar points learned up until now: adjectives and contractions, *would rather*, and *should*, *must*, *have to*, etc., to convince the class and the teacher that their location is the best place to visit. Students will have the rest of the class period, possibly 15 to 20 minutes to work on their scripts. Tell the students that they will present these at the end of the unit, and they will be graded.

**Homework.** Tell the students to keep their scripts. There will be time to practice before presenting at the end of the unit.

**Daily journal inquiry.** What do you feel like you *have to* do in life, that you don't want to do? If you had lots of money and lots of free time, what *might* you do?

**Materials.** Chalkboard/whiteboard, chalk/markers, practice worksheet, postcards from homework

### Lesson 3

**Objectives.** By the end of the class, the students will understand the uses of the first conditional and be able to form sentences using the formulas: If (A), then (B) and If (A), (B). To complete the lesson, they will be able to use these expressions to identify the cause/effect relationship of increasing tourism upon various aspects of Colombian society. They will learn and be able to pronounce the vocabulary words in this lesson, recognize their use within the essay, and understand their relationship to the subject of tourism and its effects.

**Rationale.** To talk about something that is true, real, or possible, now or in the future, is exactly what is needed in order to discuss the possibilities we have been talking about in previous lessons. In regard to the actual changes that we can see now or possible future effects of tourism on Colombia, conditional sentences will also be beneficial.

### Activities

**Grammar lesson—20 minutes.** The teacher will introduce *first conditional* types of sentences: If we want to talk about something that is true, real, or possible, either now, or in the future, there is a common way to do it.

The teacher will write the following points on the board: There are two parts—an *If clause* and a result clause. Insert a comma after the first clause: *If I go home to Chicago this summer, I will eat deep-dish pizza.*

Explain: the second part of this sentence can stand on its own. The first part cannot. It makes no sense...it's not finished...you're waiting to know more.

They can be positive or negative. "*If.....then*" statements

*Example 1: If my friend comes to visit, I will take her to Medellin to ride the tram.*

*Example 2: If he doesn't do his homework, then he shouldn't go to the party!*

The tense in one clause does not have to be the same as the tense in the other clause. In the previous example, just because we say, "I will take" (future tense) in the second clause, doesn't mean we also need to use the future tense in the first.

**Vocabulary.**—Write these words on the board: transformation, innovation, infrastructure, and global economy. Quickly go over definitions with the class. Have the students write the words and definitions on paper to put in their portfolio, and tell them they will be useful to talk about the next topic.

**Eco tourism activity—15 minutes.** The teacher will introduce the subject to the class. Tourism can increase jobs and wealth in developing countries, but when large amounts of people start visiting, it can have negative effects. Review relevant vocabulary with the class first, explaining, as needed, these words: remote, footprints, damaging, fuels, greed, erosion, intentions, and banned. The students will then individually read the short essay,

"Ecological Tourism" (Cotter, 2016). The teacher will have the students individually answer the comprehension questions. Then, they will pair up with the student next to them, discuss the next questions, and answer them as a pair (emphasize to the class, answering the questions using the formulas we just learned). The teacher will walk around and help the students as needed. Refer the students to the board where the formulas for conditional will be outlined.

**Positive & negative effects of tourism table—15 minutes.** The table will be written on the board or displayed using the projector (students will also get their own copies). The teacher will distribute the table to students (BBC, 2014) and as a class, they will discuss what they have learned so far about traveling and exploring other cultures/cities. Ask the students if they have other ideas that they might add to the table.

**Homework.** The teacher will remind the students to practice their scripts for the presentations next class, and bring in their portfolios to submit for grading.

**Daily journal inquiry.** Are you happy with the increase in tourism to Colombia? Why or why not? If you could tell a foreigner like me ONE thing before they came to Colombia, what would it be? (Use the format we learned: If \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_. Or, If \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_).

**Materials.** Chalkboard/whiteboard, chalk/markers, projector (if possible), copies of the "Ecological Tourism" essay and table for students, computer, internet access, YouTube video

### Lesson 4

**Objective.** Students will be able to successfully give a seven-minute presentation about a destination in Colombia. They will incorporate grammar, vocabulary, and skills learned in previous classes, and speak with better fluency than in previous assessments (done before this unit started, and by the same teacher so that there is an appropriate comparison). The success of the presentations will be assessed by the teacher's rubric, in addition to a peer-grading sheet used for extra feedback (Faculty at Chemeketa Community College, n.d.).

**Rationale.** These presentations will give students

practice speaking in front of class, but within a group setting so as not to be too intimidating. It will also give them practice speaking in lengthier segments in a more natural way, rather than by just answering short questions back and forth in class. By having their peers also partake in the assessment, the aim is to enhance students' sense of accountability and motivation, as well as offer more practice using their listening skills.

### Activities

**Group presentations/assessment- 50 minutes.** Each group will have a group number, and they will give their presentations in order in front of class. There will be five groups, and presentations will last approximately seven minutes. There will be time allowed for set-up, changing of the groups, and filling out the peer review forms. When the rest of the class is acting as the audience, they will focus on the presentation, and immediately after each presentation, give ratings to the groups on their peer review sheet (Faculty at Chemeketa Community College, n.d.).

**Materials.** Students may need their papers to read from, possibly the board, blank paper for students to write down their ratings for each group; the rubric for these presentations is taken from Beare (2016) with a few alterations made to better fit this class.

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Evaluation: *Kate's motivation to write a thematic unit geared toward public high school students in Colombia stems from her interest in teaching ESL abroad, which she did after she completed Linguistics 220. The strength of Kate's lesson plan sequence lies in her well thought out conceptualization of the entire sequence, in her thorough explanation of the lesson plan steps, and in the creativity of her activities. Lastly, throughout the thematic unit, Kate demonstrated an impressive level of internalization and application of class material.*

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## Better Future

Joanne Todd

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Elizabeth Turner

Assignment: *Compose and revise a descriptive narrative that conveys the primary causes or effects of an important personal decision.*

The putrid scent of Captain Morgan erupted in my nostrils; Paul was home from the bar at 3:30 in the morning. His drudging footsteps led from the foyer onto the cold ceramic tile of the kitchen in search of another drink. Begrudgingly, I lifted my exhausted body from the warmth of my bed, gave my daughter a soft kiss, and crept out of the bedroom in hopes of keeping the potential disaster from exploding. The soft padding of the carpet muffled my already hesitant footsteps as I entered the hallway and sheepishly gazed into the fluorescently lit kitchen. Paul whipped his head around with fury, glared into my eyes, and demanded, “Where is my bottle of Captain?!” My heart was racing, palms were sweaty, and I tried to contain the nervous shake in my voice as I whispered my response of, “I don’t know.” The shattering sound of glass against the tiles told me that Paul knew of my deception. I retreated slowly into the living room and found comfort in the warmth of the couch as I prepared for what was next.

Slurs of cuss words streamed out of Paul’s mouth as he stomped into the room after me. “How dare you think you have a right to take what’s mine!” Paul bellowed at me. I sank lower into the couch cushion in hopes that this would be over soon. He stormed toward the balcony, the flash of a lighter guiding his path as he searched for the cigarette dangling out of his mouth. The creak of the door’s track echoed through the living room, causing me to shudder, worried that harsh words were again headed my way. Pacing back and forth from the balcony to the living room, Paul kept muttering profanities under his breath and clenching his fists. I attempted to gently calm him down by asking how his night was and if his friends were doing well. He halted at the sound of my voice and

eerily turned in my direction. Saliva spewed out of his mouth as he shouted, “Don’t dare speak to me until I have what is rightfully mine back!” Tears streamed down my face as I pulled my sweater tighter around me while I trembled. The wind whistled through the living room as he harshly pulled the balcony door shut and stomped angrily back into the kitchen. Crashing of cabinets created a frightening sound as Paul continued on his search for his alcohol. He peered around the corner, demanded one more time that I hand over his Captain Morgan bottle, and he then sent his fist flying through the sheet rock of the drywall in a fit of rage. I stood up slowly, wanting to assess the damage to the wall, but I couldn’t will my legs to move underneath me.

Silence suddenly fell over the condominium until I heard my daughter, Emily, wail from the bedroom. Paul’s eyes seemed to ignite at the sound of her, and he grinned, knowing that I would do what he wanted, as long as Emily stayed out of our argument. I raced to the bedroom to tend to her as he stumbled into the countertops, trying to make it to her before me. I snuggled her tiny body into me and tried to protect her ears from the degradation I was receiving. Rested against the wall, Paul pointed at me and slurred, “You’re going to raise her to be a senseless fool just like you. She will grow up and become another useless human being, unlike me. All because you’re a horrible mother.” I blocked his words out as much as I could, comforting Emily back to sleep, but tears continued to pour down my saturated cheeks. Once I put her back into bed, I moved back out of the bedroom, my will slowly starting to fade under his irrational behavior. I cowered back onto the couch, and cuss words continued to be spat at me with vengeance.

The sound of my heart pumping fiercely in my chest sent my mind into overdrive as my thoughts raced for a solution to the madness that continued. Fight or flight were my only options, and I didn’t have much willpower left to fight anymore. Paul retreated to the balcony once more, his shadow dancing back and forth across the wall behind me. I hesitated to move, in fear of him catching sight of me and zoning in once more. I glanced to the china cabinet across the room, wondering if maybe I went over and revealed his alcohol, he would leave me in peace for the remainder of the evening. He stumbled back

into the house, tripping over the raised threshold, barely maintaining his ability to stay upright. I averted my eyes quickly, not wanting to give away my hiding spot but in doing so became the intense focus of his inebriated world once more. Paul moved in my direction and wrapped his icy hands around my biceps. With just enough force to tell me that he was still hostile, his face moved toward mine, and he firmly whispered, "Tell me where it is now, or I will continue to make this night hell."

The only thought on my mind was Emily, asleep in the room next door and what a life like this would entail for her. In that moment, I realized that I needed to do better and be better for Emily. I lifted my head to meet Paul's gaze and with a newfound strength told him to remove himself from my path. My statement enraged him, but he complied and crawled away from me. I walked over to the china cabinet, bent down, and swung the door open so quickly that the knob stuck into the drywall. I yanked the bottle of Captain Morgan out from behind the tablecloths and slammed it onto the counter. As I did, Paul started to rapidly move toward me, his arms fully extended in front of him, anticipating finally having what he had been after. Ice cubes cracked as the tepid rum was poured into the tumbler on the counter and I eased backwards out of the kitchen and into the bedroom. Paul was finally distracted, and I seized the opportunity to gather necessities for Emily and me.

I grabbed the diaper bag from the back of the doorknob, the sound of the zipper filling the room with a harsh sound. My hand frantically searched the changing table in the dark for diapers, wipes, and a few clothing items for Emily to at least sustain her for a few days. My eyes adjusted to the lack of light, and I continued my

venture for belongings. Amidst my packing, I heard the clang of glass meeting the countertop and knew that Paul was refilling his drink, which meant I was no longer on the radar of his focus. I slowly closed the diaper bag and placed it against the wall, easily accessible on the way out. I gently lifted Emily out of her bassinet and laid her down in her car seat as she squirmed in my hands. The click of the car seat buckle echoed through the bedroom, and the sudden silence that surrounded me told me that I had caught Paul's attention. He demanded I tell him where I was going, and standing my ground, I informed him coldly that I was leaving with Emily and unsure of when I would return. He crossed his arms and stood in the doorway, appearing as though he wouldn't allow me to leave.

I used my shoulder and pushed my way through, tightly grasping the car seat in my hand. The illumination of the hallway caused my eyes to squint for adjustment as I headed toward the elevators to get down to the lobby. Crisp, damp air met my face as I briskly walked through the parking lot toward my dark blue sedan. After I secured Emily's car seat into place, my body dropped into the driver's seat, and the four-cylinder engine hummed with the spark of the ignition. I grabbed my phone, still trembling, and texted my mom, "I'm coming home with Emily." I gripped the cold leather of the steering wheel and pulled the car onto the dimly lit street, ready to leave the chaos behind Emily and me for good. As I pulled into the driveway of my childhood home, tears welled in my already red, swollen eyes, and the slow, steady stream saturated my cheeks again. I stepped out of the car as the glow of the sun started to peek around the clouds, and I found further affirmation that I had made the best decision for us.

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Evaluation: *Joanne's essay conveys its thesis with detailed information. She relies on strong symbols, a clear and consistent tone, and an effectively rendered chronology of events to advance her argument for the cause of the change she chose to make in her life.*



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## Frugal Forensics

Ronald Tragasz

Course: Law Enforcement and Justice  
Administration 217 (Forensics II)

Instructor: James Humenik

*Assignment: There was no assignment, but the student wrote this essay, unprompted, in appreciation for his instructor, generally, and specifically in response to his instructor's teaching of how some everyday items could be substituted for more expensive materials and implements required for evidence gathering. Further inspiration resulted from the instructor's students sometimes calling him "Sgt. MacGyver," after the main character of television's crime investigation series MacGyver.*

Watching *Forensics Files* or *CSI* gives some insight into the technology of crime scene evidence collection and processing. Everyone knows about "DNA," but fewer forensic fans can enunciate "deoxyribonucleic acid." Waiting to be regaled by the science of evidence collection in my first course of forensics, imagine how surprised I was to learn that we would be turning back the clock many centuries to ancient Japan and learning origami. "Here's how to make a pharmacist's fold," said one of our instructors, Tom Reed, a police commander from a local suburban department, and he showed us how to do it.

We all received a sheet of paper to make our own. Mine did not turn out well, until I realized the paper had to be perfectly square. When with a little help from the instructor I sheepishly folded the paper correctly, I said, "It's an envelope." "That's exactly what it is," the commander said. Druggists used them. Sometimes these are called Binder's folds; no one knows why. Smaller folds, called "bindles," are found in the drug trade. At crime scenes, they are used to collect trace evidence (hairs, fibers, small pieces of glass, etc.) that may prove useful during a criminal investigation.

Small evidence envelopes can be purchased from forensics suppliers, but printer paper is readily available

and less expensive, so like some smokers who choose to "roll their own," to save money, evidence technicians and police officers gathering trace evidence often use the hand-made envelopes. (Later, I would learn evidence collection frugality did not stop here.)

When we complained that the commercial ready-mix casting product, we used in Forensics II often turned rock-hard in minutes making it unsuitable for casting footwear prints, another of our instructors, a police sergeant, (Jim Humenik) explained that it was probably beyond its shelf-life. He said not to worry. "I bought this for only \$5.00 at Michael's" (a local craft store chain), he grinned. The white bucket he held read "Plaster of Paris." "This works well...you just have to add your own water." He then produced a recycled (of course) one-gallon water jug.

Scented or unscented? I asked, and the sergeant looked at the aerosol can in his black case. "Unscented," he replied. (It made no difference.) You see, before you can cast a footwear print, you must spray it with a hardener. The commercially available product costs around \$17.00. We used a \$3.00 can of ordinary hairspray. It worked.

"You have to carefully spread the casting material over the footwear print," the sergeant demonstrated...but you need a tongue depressor to do this." "Really, a tongue depressor?" I asked. "No," said the Sergeant, "These paint (mixing) sticks from Menard's work just fine." He produced four of them. Later, he cleaned them off to be used again. "They're still good," he said. I guess they were.

We made three footwear castings from that bucket at less than one-half the cost.

Cops do not "brown bag it to work," so if you see one buying fifty lunch bags at Walmart, he or she might be purchasing evidence collection containers, the sergeant told us. In a "pinch" (no pun intended), when properly labeled and secured with integrity evidence tape (it makes tampering quite evident), these brown bags are acceptable for some dry evidence collection. "They come in handy," said Sergeant Humenik "...and it saves the department money" (Ka-ching!).

Crime scene snoops know of "super-glue fuming." Like DNA mentioned earlier, only professionals or forensics zealots know to call the process *cianoacrylate fuming*. In the late 1970s, this was discovered to be a

top performer for developing latent fingerprints. Latent fingerprints are marks left at the scene of a crime that may not be immediately visible to the naked eye.

The super-glue vapors develop latent fingerprints deposited on surfaces because of the oils and perspiration from the pores of the finger. The fuming is performed in a developing chamber that can unsurprisingly look just like a 10-gallon fish tank from Petco. It has a tight-fitting lid, and there is a coffee-cup warmer inside, but an ordinary 100-watt incandescent light bulb does the trick, too. You just need warmth to facilitate the fuming process.

The main steps in fuming a fingerprint are: 1) Putting super glue and water into the developing chamber on a warming plate; 2) Placing the piece of evidence into the developing chamber; and 3) Allowing time for the fingerprint to develop. Once the print is visible, it can be enhanced by using dyes or powders. Super-glue fuming is a way to make a fingerprint semipermanent so the fingerprint can be dusted (lightly brushed with fine powder onto the residue left by the print) and lifted with tape. Clear tape is put over the developed fingerprint to acquire the print and place it onto a fingerprint card. Yes, you can buy fingerprint evidence tape, but as the sergeant demonstrated, "This often works, too." He held a roll of

ordinary clear shipping tape from an office supply store. We understood his point.

Since crime scenes vary, evidence collection does as well. The super-glue fuming provides one method to obtain fingerprints from evidence. The type of surface determines if dusting for fingerprints or super-glue fuming might be preferred. Sometimes, it is hard to visualize fingerprints on multi-colored surfaces because the fingerprint powder does not provide sufficient contrast.

We tried super-glue fuming with a beverage glass, and several prints appeared after about an hour. During the fuming process, however, I had snipped off a little too much from the top of the small super-glue bottle when I opened it, assuming it was a single-use container. Some glue still remained inside. I could not replace the stopper. "No problem," said the sergeant. He took the snipped off piece from the bottle, reversed it and sealed the bottle. Nothing goes to waste.

I told our instructor I was going to start calling him Sgt. Mac MacGyver, after the main character of a TV series that ran from 1985 to 1992 and was recently resurrected. MacGyver is a resourceful fictional government agent who solves problems by creating gadgets from everyday objects. Sergeant Humenik favored the idea. The two men even look alike.

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Editor's evaluation: *In a humorous journalistic writing style, Ron captures the essence of his instructor in Forensics II, Sergeant James Humenik, and he also conveys the valuable lessons the sergeant taught him. This is a fun and informative piece of writing to read. Ron has a well-tuned ear for dialogue and a sharp sense of how to organize the details of reality into writing that a reader can learn from and enjoy.*

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# The Educational Journey: Through the Eyes of Richard Yates

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Ryan Wexler

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

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Assignment: *Write a literary research paper about a work or works read for this semester's class, and incorporate effective use of at least seven secondary sources in your paper.*

“Doctor Jack-O’-Lantern” is a somewhat disturbing and saddening story that takes place in the early 1930s and gives us an inside look into the head and world of a child that is mentally unhealthy, which may possibly come from growing up in a rough environment. The main character of this story, Vincent Sabella, is an orphan who has recently been moved to a new school that is in a suburb of New York. Vincent grew up in a downtown urban area of the city that is, from the narrator’s perspective, far less luxurious than most people think of New York. This story is about Vincent’s adjustment period into his school and how he handles this change. The story “Fun with a Stranger,” also by Richard Yates, takes place in the mid-1900s and also is centered on interactions in a public school. This story allows additional perspectives on teachers’ roles in education, though none of the students seem troubled. The narrator of this story takes the reader into the classroom of a teacher that is not as enthusiastic as might be expected of an elementary school teacher, someone who is also somewhat harsh and even unrewarding. “Fun with a Stranger” directly compares this style of teaching to a very cheery and enthusiastic teacher who openly expresses how much she values her students and enjoys being in the classroom. In general, when using the social experience of school, and the styles of teachers and their effects on students as a lens through which to interpret these stories, we see that “Fun With A

Stranger” shows the potential downfalls of a school and the stark difference between different teachers that may both be teaching the same curriculum; whereas “Doctor Jack-O’-Lantern” shows the cracks in the system that a new student or a mentally unhealthy student can fall through within the realm of education, which may hinder experiencing school normally.

The author of these two stories, Richard Yates, “was born on February 3, 1926 in Yonkers, New York” (Baker 333). His mother was an aspiring artist, and his dad was a salesman and the breadwinner of the family. “Yates grew up in a household where sacrifices were made to further his mother’s largely unsuccessful artistic career. He and his sister were moved from apartment to apartment throughout the New York City area with the breezy assurances from their mother that something would happen soon to erase their poverty” (Baker 333). There is not much known about Richard Yates’s experiences in school before 1941 when he attended a prep school in New England called Avon Old Farms School. Later in life he wrote “A Good School” about this period of time and this story is also, chronologically, the first known account of his own life from Yates himself. Yates’s mother “insisted that he enroll in a New England prep school where he could possibly become friendly with the children of wealthy art lovers” because “she believed that if she mingled with the right people they would find her fascinating and her sculptures desirable” (Baker 333). After attending this school, Yates engaged in a number of different ventures in his life that eventually led to building a reputation for himself as a writer. One account details the range of these experiences:

Director John Frankenheimer employed him to write the screenplay for *Lie Down in Darkness*. Attorney General Robert Kennedy hired him as a speechwriter. Many women were willing to have sex with him. Eight colleges hired him to teach fiction writing although he did not have a college degree. The Jerry Seinfeld television show did an episode based, loosely, on him. (Naparsteck 10)

The life of Richard Yates was filled with many different segments of success and failure and attempts for an amazing career in many different forms of writing, but

## The Educational Journey: Through the Eyes of Richard Yates

in the end his work was really not appreciated until after he died in 1992, regardless of his many contributions to American literature.

As far as his writing goes, “Richard Yates just might have been the saddest writer America has produced” (Baker 333), but he was a great writer nonetheless. Blake Bailey, author of *A Tragic Honesty*, even said that “If the prerequisite of any great writer’s life is an unhappy childhood, then Richard Yates was especially blessed” (7). With regard to his gift for writing, “Yates’s admirers are nearly unanimous in believing his first novel, *Revolutionary Road*, is his masterpiece, and many call it an American classic, better some say, than *Moby-Dick* (which Yates thought was overrated) or *The Great Gatsby* (which Yates admired as much as anything he ever read...)” (Naparsteck 6). Yates at one point even said that “No single book made me decide to be a writer ... but it was F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*, which I read for the first time at 22, that persuaded me to quit fooling around and get to work” (qtd. in Baker 334). One thing that made Richard Yates’s stories so intriguing is that “Richard Yates was careful to assure that his novels, and his short stories began at some point and arrived at another and that the journey between the two points was convincing” (Naparsteck 1), and he “aspired to a high standard of decorum both in art and life” (Bailey 7). Ronald Nelson said that Yates’s prose “... masterfully chronicles the lives of his characters, capturing the essence of their personalities...,” and we see this in his writing. On some level, this may have been Yates’s ultimate downfall because “Although he published six more novels [in addition to *Revolutionary Road* and *Eleven Kinds of Loneliness*] and another collection of short stories, practically all that has been heard about him since his death in 1992 is the lament, mostly by other writers, that his work is tragically unappreciated by popular readers and academic critics” (May). May says that

The problem with Yates’ stories is that they may be just too plain, and his characters just too real. We don’t go to the short story for simple reality. We go to sense or secrets suggested. The short story writer, like the poet, must restrain language and intensify experience until it is almost unbearably loaded with

significance. Richard Yates is a very fine writer whose work should be read and studied more than it is, but ultimately he fails to infuse his fiction with the kind of uneasy magic, mysterious motivation and confounding inevitability that characterizes truly great stories.

Though Yates’s stories may not have been famous or popularized like some of the works Yates idolized, such as *The Great Gatsby*, to say that Yates’s stories do not “characterize truly great stories” may be a bit of a stretch. It is true that Yates’s stories do lack “the kind of uneasy magic” that people often look for in captivating stories, but this is likely because Yates’s stories are not magic, they are truly based on parts of his own life. Kate Charlton-Jones says that, “Yates’s work might now be called *autobiographical fiction*. Yates did not feel there was anything remarkable or difficult about mining and remining aspects of his own experience or about writing his own character into his work as long as he didn’t slip into sentimentality and nostalgia” (95). Yates understood that including aspects of his own life into his fictional writing “masterfully” captured the “essence of their [the characters’] personalities,” because they were essences that he lived through and experienced. Martin Naparsteck says,

Yates’s fiction drew its details heavily from his own life, but never does it slip into a mere retelling of that life.... The sources can be found in the repetition of details: Yates was born in 1926, making him 17 in 1943, the same age in that year as William Grove in *A Good School* [one of Richard Yates’s own stories]; and he was 29 in 1955, the same age in that year as Frank Wheeler in *Revolutionary Road*; and 36 in 1962, the age Emily Grimes was that year in *The Easter Parade*. He uses the advantage of knowing what it was like to be a particular age in a particular year.

Using this same logic when discussing the stories “Doctor Jack-O’-Lantern” and “Fun with a Stranger,” we know that Richard Yates was born in 1926, and the age of Vincent Sabella in the time of the story would have likely been eight years old, since he is in third grade. Similarly, John Gerhardt, the main character in the story “Fun with

### Student Reflections on Writing: Ryan Wexler

The comeback edition – hmm. My work included in *The Harper Anthology* after its longest hiatus since inception – four years. It’s funny. Since I wrote “The Educational Journey: Through the Eyes of Richard Yates,” I have checked the *Anthology’s* website over 20 times, hoping to find my work magically memorialized in the perennial publication of Harper’s English department. As the years ticked away, I began to forget what I had even written about. Now, at the *Anthology’s* most forgotten moment in my mind in over half a decade, I am asked to write a piece to those who will read work I am now estranged from. At the same moment, I am filled with inspiration.

Lately, I have found solace in writing. As a child, I would write short stories: imaginative, playful, and expressive. I expected I would always love to write, but my educational journey seems to have taken my relationship with writing on its own hiatus. Writing lost its luster; it became a chore of cheap, chapped effort riddled with puffy paragraphs of apathetic pander. School represented a requirement of authorship for work becoming decreasingly desirable. I now see its beauty. As an aspiring scientist and doctor, I write for the evaluation and approval of the most captious and educationally cultivated echelon of humans that civilization has ever created – peer reviewers. Yet, in my stupor of subordination to those supreme gods of academia, I find joy.

Art and creativity have always been archetypal to me: paint, piano, prevaricative writing. The expression of imaginative inclinations involved invention. Precarious poems petering ever closer to the sense of soul in those who create. At this stage, writing has again become an expression of authenticity – a zealous, zany, and coincidentally zen practice that has the potential to chronicle the zeitgeist of my zoism.

I am a scientist, a technical writer, and I feel so much joy to write something new. Non-fiction knocks on the door of my heart like the harmonious handiwork of a harpist. I have realized that my art form is one that is newer to humanity’s endeavor to communicate and has therefore been thwarted from thriving, in the throes of art aesthetes. Still, I derive delight from the mechanistic and intermittently monotonous meandering of Latin’s Lego-like wellspring of affixes in English. It allows me to convert passionless platitudes into sesquipedalian stories about the fundamental features of shared experience – a.k.a. life.

As I read my work from what feels like the mind of another, I am engaged in a metacognitive movement that seeks to create equanimity between phenomenological mismatches. Who was I as a writer then? What has made me the writer I am now? Who will I be as a writer in the future? I have been Vincent Sabella, and I am grateful for those in my life who have played Miss Price. Thank you, Kris, for this opportunity.

To the developing minds of readers: find ways to immortalize your propensity to construct anew, to manifest your mind; do not think small.

a Stranger,” would have likely been nine years old since he is in fourth grade. We know that the story “Doctor Jack-O’-Lantern” takes place in 1931 because the movie *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* was released in that year, which characters of the story go to see in theaters. Since Richard Yates was born in 1926, he would have been eight years old, or in third grade, in 1934, only three years after the year that we know the story had to actually have taken

place. Though a time gap of three years does exist, it is realistic to assume that Yates may be referring to this part of his own life when writing about experiences in elementary school. Naparsteck says, “Reading the stories in the order of occurrence, of course, emphasizes the autobiographical nature of Yates’s fiction” (25). The first two stories on this chronologically organized list of Yates’s stories are “Fun with a Stranger” and “Doctor

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Jack-O'-Lantern", so according to Naparsteck, these two stories may chronicle a part of Yates's childhood that we otherwise have little information about today. Whether or not Richard Yates actually lived through or witnessed some of these experiences, he writes about aspects of education that are still very prevalent today.

"Doctor Jack-O'-Lantern" and "Fun with a Stranger," though fictional, address major aspects of education while still emotionally investing the reader in Yates's fascinating world of fiction. The teachers' demeanors and even physical appearances are featured prominently in these two stories, and these seem to greatly affect a student's view of their teachers. Robert G. Dawes comments on this in his article "Personality Development and Teacher Training" by saying, "Nevertheless, his [the teacher's] success as a teacher will be determined, in great part, by his own personality and by his conduct as an individual. Mannerisms and manners, dress and grooming, speech and voice are significant and too often are unappreciated as contributing factors in the teaching process" (47). Dawes's language may sound very out of date, and his use of pronouns non-gender neutral, but that is because this article was written in 1948. Though published about a decade and a half after these stories took place, changes in education do occur slowly, and Dawes's perception of the education system is still very pertinent to Yates's stories. In "Doctor Jack-O'-Lantern", the narrator takes a large amount of time to point out the appearance of Vincent Sabella, which likely portrays the views of most of the kids in Miss Price's class. The narrator says,

...anyone could see at a glance that Vincent Sabella had nothing whatever to do with skyscrapers. Even if you could ignore his tangled black hair and gray skin, his clothes would have given him away: absurdly new corduroys, absurdly old sneakers and a yellow sweatshirt, much too small, with the shredded remains of a Mickey Mouse design stamped on its chest. Clearly, he was from the part of New York that you had to pass through on the train to Grand Central, the part where people hung bedding over their windowsills and leaned out on it all day in a trance of boredom, and where you got vistas of straight, deep streets one after another, all alike in the clutter of their sidewalks and all

swarming with gray boys at play in some desperate kind of ball game. (Yates 479-480)

Though none of the children in Miss Price's classroom even know him, they all, or at least the narrator, assume where he's from and how much money his family probably has. This kind of attitude shows up again later in the story as well as in the story "Fun with a Stranger." We see Miss Price's appearance also mentioned by the narrator of "Doctor Jack-O'-Lantern" after Vincent writes bad words on the alleyway outside of the classroom. When she goes to talk to Vincent after the incident, the narrator says "She had never looked prettier: her cheeks slightly flushed, her eyes shining and her sweet mouth pressed into a self-conscious frown" (Yates 490-491); "Clearly, Yates presents her as physically attractive, and Vincent's portrayal of her [at the end of the story] testifies to his appreciation of that beauty" (Nelson par. 20).

The appearance of characters in "Fun with a Stranger" is an even more important aspect of the story than it is in "Doctor Jack-O'-Lantern. "Fun with a Stranger" starts off by saying "All that summer the children who were due to start third grade under Miss Snell had been warned about her" (Yates 566). Obviously, with her future students being warned about how bad of a teacher she might be, it is even more important that she makes good first impressions on her students. Dawes says:

The honest and experienced teacher...place great stress on external manifestations of interest, emotion, and spirit. In a superficial production-line civilization, which provides little opportunity for extensive personal contact, first impressions are important—decry the fact as we may. A people so rigorously conditioned to vocal characteristic, personal appearance, and social competency cannot fail to carry its criteria of these qualities to the classroom. (48)

Even so, Miss Snell seems to have little concern for first impressions and acts just as her students were warned that she might have. The narrator then spends a significant amount of time explaining the physical attributes of Miss Snell, on the first page of the story, where she is described as being "probably sixty, a rawboned woman with a man's

face, and her clothes, if not her very pores, seemed always to exude that dry essence of pencil shavings and chalk dust that is the smell of school” (Yates 566). Obviously, this is not a positive description of a happy and vibrant person who would be attractive to younger students. “Snell’s personality clearly excludes the warmth that would help her pupils develop socially” (Naparsteck 57), and by appearing at school every day with a demeanor, as well as physical signs, commonly associated with a less than enthusiastic personality and combining this with her bad reputation, we have a room full of young students that are already intimidated and probably uncomfortable in that learning environment. Donald Medley says, “a large part of a teacher’s success depends on her own personality” (156). So, by coming into class with a negative attitude and an intimidating personality, she is not only making the students uncomfortable at school, but according to Medley, setting them up for failure. Teachers are professionals and should come to school as such so that they are setting good examples for their students that are not only proper, but also positive. “Fun with a Stranger” does a good job of setting a stark comparison between a great teacher and a teacher that is not very liked among students. This difference is laid out explicitly on a field trip that the two third-grade classes take to a railway yard:

The field trip itself only emphasized the difference between the two teachers. Mrs. Cleary ran everything with charm and enthusiasm; she was young and lithe and just about the prettiest woman Miss Snell’s class had ever seen...Through it all Miss Snell hung in the background, gaunt and sour, her shoulders hunched against the wind and her squinted eyes roving, alert for stragglers...She spoiled everything. (Yates 570)

Apart from Mrs. Cleary’s enthusiasm, this whole section is describing physical aspects or actions of the two teachers. These demeanors and appearances of Mrs. Cleary and Miss Snell change how the kids view them and how they then go on to experience the field trip based on the teacher that they are being led by. None of this passage talks about a harsh attitude or intimidating language that Miss Snell uses, but just how her external appearance and disposition is enough to “spoil everything”

for her students. In a study written by Hulya Cermik, it was found that “ethical and humanistic values” made up 36.10% of the collective themes for an ideal teacher. This was the most frequently chosen theme of six potential themes that comprise a good or “ideal teacher.” Within this theme fell traits such as loving children, tolerance and patience, sensitivity to students’ problems, helpful, and compassionate. Another important theme was “personal qualities.” Though this theme made up only roughly 9% of the “ideal teacher” in terms of participant responses, it is still almost double of the next lowest theme identified by participants of the study. “Personal qualities” included things such as positive attitude, optimism, and happiness. We know from the story that Miss Snell is none of these things, but Mrs. Cleary seems to exemplify all of these traits. This may be why Yates created such distinctly different characters. In this way, we can more easily identify what makes one teacher less liked by students and another teacher seem to have “charm and enthusiasm.”

A teacher’s dedication to their students is extremely important in the classroom, and because “Fun with a Stranger” has two different teachers in it, we can actually compare the dedication of three separate teachers through the perspective of the same author. In the story “Doctor Jack-O’-Lantern,” we see that Miss Price is very dedicated to seeing her new student, Vincent, succeed in her classroom, as well as doing everything she can to help her students enjoy their experience at school. The dedication of Miss Price is apparent from the very beginning of the story when the narrator says, “All Miss Price had been told about the new boy was that he’d spent most of his life in some kind of orphanage...It was enough [the information she was given], to fill her with a sense of mission that shone from her eyes, as plain as love, from the first morning he joined the fourth grade” (Yates 479). This is the first scene in the story “Doctor Jack-O’-Lantern,” and here we see that though the teacher of this class does not know the new student coming in, Vincent Sabella, she is very eager to help him acclimate to the new classroom environment and do her best to help him succeed. This eagerness comes from a type of passion and drive that not all teachers possess but is what sets Miss Price and other teachers apart from the ones who are really not as personally invested in what

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they do. “Yates goes to great lengths to present her as well-meaning, dedicated, and capable” (Nelson par. 7). Later in the story, the reader finds out that Vincent has been having some trouble adjusting to the school and most likely his new life in general, since he is living with new foster parents. This tough adjustment for Vincent becomes apparent not only in class, but also in social situations with other kids. Miss Price quickly realizes this and eventually tries to talk to Vincent about his situation and how he’s feeling. She gets up from her desk, “Making it clear that she was cutting her own lunch hour short in order to be with him” (Yates 485). She then uses this time to try and say something positive to Vincent to start off the conversation on a good note by saying, “Vincent, I’ve been meaning to tell you how much I enjoyed those pictures of yours. They’re really very good” (Yates 485). Though these may both be very small gestures, they can have a very large impact on a child who is having a hard time adjusting to a new environment. The act of taking time away from her own lunch to sit and talk with Vincent already shows him that Miss Price is going to take this conversation seriously because it’s important to her. After that, she takes a moment to compliment Vincent for the work that he has done already and help him to be positive about how much he could potentially continue to grow at the new school. Nelson summarizes Miss Price’s positive efforts toward Vincent:

She appeals to the best in him when she deliberately mishears his name and refers to him by the respectful, dignified “Vincent,” rather than “Vinny” or “Vince,” which she knows the children will call him; when she gently corrects his grammar; when she encourages him by praising his pictures; when she exercises restraint in allowing him to try to find his own way of fitting in at recess; when she tries to convince him that his own life would be sufficiently interesting to hold the children’s attention during reports; and when she involuntarily calls him “dear” and reaches out and holds his shoulder.

Miss Price goes to great lengths to do everything she can for Vincent, and her “efforts are those of a dedicated teacher...” (Nelson).

The teacher in the story “Fun with a Stranger,” Miss

Snell, is very opposite from Miss Price. She is a very strict and intense person who does a lot, intentionally or unintentionally, to make school unenjoyable for her students. The narrator says at the beginning of the story that “All that summer the children who were due to start third grade under Miss Snell had been warned about her... So it happened that the morale of Miss Snell’s class was low even before school opened in September, and she did little in the first few weeks to improve it” (Yates 566). The fact that this quote appears in the first paragraph of the first page of the story shows just how much Miss Snell’s attitude negatively affects the mood of the classroom and her students. She must know that students do not like her class, but she “does little to improve it.” We see her lack of dedication appear again in the story when she is giving a lesson on spelling. Miss Snell says to the class “...when school began this year I wanted very much to learn your names and remember your faces...It was confusing at first, but before long I’d made friends with all of you...because you can’t very well have fun with a stranger, can you?” (Yates 568)? This statement made by Miss Snell is extremely ironic considering that none of the children in Miss Snell’s class feel like they know her at all let alone are friends with her. It is also interesting to make a comparison to “Doctor Jack-O’-Lantern” because when one of Miss Price’s students, Vincent, is having trouble in school, Miss Price goes out of her way to make her student more comfortable and at one point even says, “... Vincent, I hope you’ll consider *me* your friend ...” (Yates 486). Miss Snell is still very different from Miss Price, though, and actions speak louder than words. Even though Miss Snell says that she made an effort and values her relationships with all of the students in her class, her students obviously do not reciprocate these emotions because of how she treats them.

Helping students feel comfortable in the classroom is an important aspect of expressing dedication towards your students. There is a lot of this that occurs in both stories, as well as some good examples of when it is done wrong. The first place that we see this in the story “Doctor Jack-O’-Lantern” is when Miss Price is introducing Vincent to the class. Miss Price introduces him by saying ““We have a new classmate this morning. His name is Vincent Sabella and he comes from New York City. I know we’ll all do



our best to make him feel at home” (Yates 479). Though this seems to be a very small and somewhat unimportant part of the story, it is valuable to note that she does as best as she can to help the new student feel welcome in the class. She gives an introduction for him because he is very nervous, and this also helps the class get to know their new classmate better. When class actually begins after a short time period of “reports” where students tell the class about their weekends, Miss Price says, “Now, we won’t expect you to take any real part in the work for the first day or so; just take your time, and if there’s anything you don’t understand, why, don’t be afraid to ask” (Yates 480). Though Miss Price may have messed up by not introducing Vincent to all of his new classmates, which would have taken out the difficult part of meeting all of them himself, she does make a conscious effort to understand that he is likely overwhelmed by the entirety of this new situation and sets realistic expectations for his participation in the classroom on his first day of school. Though he is probably already overwhelmed, this will help him become well-adjusted and transition easier. After some of the obvious efforts Miss Price has made, as described above, to help Vincent adjust to the new school, he is still having a very hard time becoming comfortable there, so Miss Price sets some time aside to talk to him and address some of these things during lunch. She walks over to Vincent’s desk and says, “Vincent, I’ve been meaning to tell you how much I enjoyed those pictures of yours. They’re really very good.... It’s never easy to come to a new school and adjust yourself to the—well, the new work, and new working methods, and I think you’ve done a splendid job so far. I really do” (Yates 485). This may have been a somewhat strange conversation for Vincent to have since the whole situation with being at his school was so new, it’s a very nice and positive gesture that Miss Price has set aside some time to talk to Vincent and let him know that she is there to help him when he needs and let him know that he is doing a good job at school since he’s been there. Vincent still has some trouble adjusting to his new school even after this conversation occurs, and unfortunately, he acts out and expresses his emotions in ways that are not very positive. Miss Price then makes another attempt at talking to him about how he is feeling. This time, “Miss Price left him alone until her own meal

was finished. Then, after standing with one hand on the doorknob for a full minute to gather courage, she went in and sat beside him for another little talk...” (Yates 488). Here, we see how Miss Price is making another attempt at building a relationship with Vincent to help him feel comfortable at his new school and continue to adjust.

In the story “Fun with a Stranger,” we once again see that Miss Snell is very much the opposite of a lot of things that Miss Price does to help Vincent. The narrator describes a time when a student forgot to bring his pencil to class and Miss Snell responded to this situation by saying “‘What’s the trouble back there?’ ... I mean you, John Gerhardt...Don’t mumble. Is it a pencil? Have you come to school without a pencil again? Stand up when you’re spoken to. And there would follow a long lecture on Proper Supplies that ended only after the offender had come forward to receive a pencil” (Yates 566). When a student makes a mistake in class, or forgets some materials, it is even more embarrassing for them to be put on the spot for it. In most cases, students understand that they have made a mistake by forgetting the proper materials needed for class, and by putting a student on the spot for it, a teacher is interrupting the flow of the class and the lesson being given to the rest of the students, making that individual uncomfortable, and turning a mistake into something that deserves a punishment. There were times in Miss Snell’s class when what Miss Snell did was so harsh that it even elicited intense emotional reactions from her students. The narrator says, “It was not uncommon to cry in Miss Snell’s class” (Yates 567). People function and learn best in an environment that creates positive experiences and stimulates growth, but pushing a student to have an emotional breakdown because of imperfections during the school day has no constructive purpose and is most likely going to be counterproductive in helping that individual become a better student.

Another aspect of education is understanding peer relationships in the context of a school. In “Doctor Jack-O’-Lantern,” Vincent has an extremely hard time adjusting, and on top of this, nobody at his new school has any interest in being friends with him. Right from the beginning, “The girls decided that he wasn’t very nice and turned away, but the boys lingered in their scrutiny, looking him up and down with faint smiles. This was

the kind of kid they were accustomed to thinking of as ‘tough,’ the kind whose stares had made all of them uncomfortable at one time or another in unfamiliar neighborhoods; here was a unique chance for retaliation” (Yates 480). Even though Vincent has only been in the class for a few minutes, the narrator shows us that the kids in the class already view Vincent negatively, and this greatly impacts his chances of making friends in his new school and becoming comfortable there. This type of social interaction among students is not unique to the new student situation of Vincent, though; when Miss Price is letting the class give reports, Nancy Parker is chosen to go first, and “The others fell silent as Nancy moved gracefully to the head of the room; even the two or three girls who secretly despised her had to feign enthralment when she spoke [she was that popular], and every boy in the class, who at recess liked nothing better than to push her shrieking into the mud, was unable to watch her without an idiotically tremulous smile” (Yates 481). This section of text points out some interesting ways in which children interact and have relationships with each other. Children use this to gain attention from their peers as a way to feel socially validated. Whether it be pushing a girl in the mud to look like the cool kid on the playground, or strutting “gracefully” through your classroom as a way to show off, children often find that this kind of attention is rewarding but not long lasting. Though this kind of behavior is normal for kids of this age, for adults it would be a very strange way to interact with each other. In a very opposite circumstance, Miss Price chooses Arthur Cross to give his report in class, but “There was a soft groan, because Arthur Cross was the biggest dope in class and his reports were always a bore. This time it turned out to be something tedious about going to visit his uncle on Long Island...everyone laughed with the particular edge they reserved for Arthur Cross” (Yates 483). Though these are fourth graders, they still have enough social understanding to make fun of someone for making mistakes and single out the kids that may not be popular or as liked. Vincent also experienced this type of social ostracism from his peers during his rough adjustment period to his new school. At one point, he acts out by writing on the wall in the alleyway outside his classroom. The narrator says, “He had put down four words and was

trying to remember a fifth when he heard a shuffling at the door behind him. Arthur Cross was there, holding the door open and reading the words with wide eyes. ‘Boy, boy, you’re gonna get it. You’re really gonna get it’” (Yates 489). We see here that Vincent is expressing his emotions in a socially inappropriate way and “The exaggerated size of the letters may be proportionate to the anger he feels. His public announcement of the vulgarity within him (the dark side of his young personality) may also be a cry for help that would occasion another private session with Miss Price” (Nelson). He later ends up getting in trouble for these actions while seeking attention, which he eventually received from his peers. There are many why Vincent may have expressed his emotions in this way, and the apparent lack of adjustment to his new school is likely a big factor, but it is also important to point out that Vincent may have been pushed into a situation that invoked this extreme behavior. Before he writes these words on the wall, Miss Price has a talk with him about his friendships with his classmates, or lack thereof. She says “...These reports we have Monday mornings—they’re a fine way for people to get to know one another. A person never feels he has to make a report; it’s just a thing he can do if he wants to. And that’s only one way of helping others to know the kind of person you are; there are lots and lots of ways” (Yates 486). This statement from Miss Price must have had some kind of impact on Vincent, because “at report time on Monday morning, nobody was more surprised than Miss Price when Vincent Sabella’s smudged hand was among the first and most eager to rise” (Yates 486). Though Vincent could have used his time in front of his classmates as valuable speaking time to introduce himself to his classmates and start to form bonds, he completely makes up his entire report. He says

“Saturday I seen that pitcha [referring to the movie *Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*]... I sore that pitcha. *Doctor Jack-O’-Lantern and Mr. Hide*... Anyways, I seen all about where his teet’ [teeth] start comin’ outa his mout’ and all like that, and I thought it was very good. And then on Sunday my mudda and fodda siz, ‘Vinny, wann go for a little ride?’ I siz, ‘Sure, where yiz goin’?’ He siz, ‘Anyplace ya like.’ So I siz, ‘Let’s go out in the country a ways, get on one of them big roads and make some time.’ So we

go out—oh, I guess fifty, sixty miles— and we're cruisin' along this highway, when this cop starts tailin' us? My fodda siz, 'Don't worry, we'll shake him,' and he steps on it, see? My mudda's getting' pretty scared, but my fodda siz, 'Don't worry, dear.' He's tryin' to make this turn, see so he can get off the highway and shake the cop? But just when he's makin' the turn, the cop opens up and starts shootin', see?" (Yates 487)

Vincent's Monday morning report continues to degenerate into an account of action movie drama and suspense that is about as far from the truth as a person can get. "Despite Miss Price's efforts and his [Vincent's] potential strengths, his poor image of self undercuts whatever chances of success he had. In his attempts to impress the others at Monday report time, he apparently feels compelled to make up a story rather than tell the truth" (Nelson). We can assume, like many people do in socially stressful situations, Vincent made up this story to gain social approval from the kids in his class. He most likely thought that by making up a story that was intense and captivating that some of his classmates would become more interested in getting to know him and that he would make more friends. We know that this is not the case when the narrator says, "by this time the few members of the class who could bear to look at him at all were doing so with heads on one side and mouths partly open, the way you look at a broken arm or a circus freak" (Yates 487). This look given to Vincent by his fellow classmates could convey a feeling of shock, disgust, or possibly some of both. "Recess was worse than usual for him that day; at least it was until he found a place to hide ..." (Yates 488). After a rough recess, Miss Price goes to talk to Vincent about his report, and she says, "we all enjoyed your report this morning, but I think we would have enjoyed it more—a great deal more—if you'd told us something about your real life instead" (Yates 488). When it becomes obvious that Vincent's imaginative story backfires on him, he lashes out by writing bad words on the wall in the alley that only perpetuate his bad reputation with his classmates and lose him the friend that he has in Miss Price when she says, "I've tried to be a good friend to you ... but this kind of thing—well, it's very hard to be friendly with a person who'd do a thing like that" (Yates 491).

"Fun with a Stranger" points at a different kind of peer relationship, though. It spends some time addressing places where a child might try to avoid attention from peers, as opposed to seeking it. "John Gerhardt and Howard White usually walked home from school together, and often as not, though they tried to avoid it, they were joined by two of the children from Mrs. Cleary's class [Freddy and Grace Taylor] who lived on their street..." (Yates 568). In this passage the key words are "though they tried to avoid it." We see that John and Howard are so embarrassed by what will be said on the walk about Miss Snell in relation to Mrs. Cleary's class that they actually try to avoid having a conversation with Mrs. Cleary's students. When John and Howard end up not being able to avoid this interaction, the narrator says, "'Mrs. Cleary says we're gonna take a lotta field trips.' Freddy said. 'Later on, we're gonna go to the Museum of Natural History, in New York, and a whole lotta other places. Too bad you're not in Mrs. Cleary's class'. 'Doesn't bother me any' John Gerhardt said. 'Anyway, I don't go to school to fool around. I go to school to work...'" (Yates 569). Here we can see how hard kids, especially at this age, try to gain social approval. Freddy is talking about how his teacher is and is trying to get some kind of a rise out of John. Obviously, John wishes that he had the same opportunities for field trips as Freddy does, but he responds in a way that shows he does not care so that he can look like the bigger man in the conversation. Baker says, "'Fun with a Stranger' explores the strange, defensive loyalty students have for their unpromising and disappointing teacher, Miss Snell" (341), and when looking at the above quote from the story, we may see some of this "defensive loyalty" expressed about Miss Snell by her students. Though Miss Snell is obviously not a teacher that John enjoys having, there is some level of insecurity within him about being in Miss Snell's class. John could have acted much differently in this situation than he did. Many people in these circumstances would have tried to tear at the heartstrings of the person in the better situation. It would have been easy for John to talk about how hard he has it in Miss Snell's class and gain some pity from Freddy, but instead, John becomes insecure and indirectly defends Miss Snell by saying that he goes to school to work, so not going on the field trip doesn't bother him.

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Social approval is a very important aspect of school, but when it comes down to the education itself and the people that run it, teachers are elements that must be discussed. It's valuable to recognize that though there are different ways in which students learn best and ways in which they may not learn as effectively, it is also important to realize that teachers themselves have their own teaching methods and styles. Miss Price in the story "Doctor Jack-O'-Lantern" finds one thing that works very well for her that the students like a lot, as well. After Vincent has settled into the classroom his first day there, she starts class by saying

"The first thing on the program is reports. Who'd like to start off?"...The idea of the reports—a fifteen-minute period every Monday in which the children were encouraged to relate their experiences over the weekend—was Miss Price's own, and she took a pardonable pride in it. The principal had commended her on it at a recent staff meeting, pointing out that it made a splendid bridge between the worlds of school and home, and that it was a fine way for children to learn poise and assurance. (Yates 481)

Sometimes, teachers have to get a little bit creative and step out of the box to be effective. All students are different, and not all students will respond the same way to all teaching styles. Because of this, it is important that teachers try different things, and using this activity every Monday morning as a way to collect the attention of the class and make school feel as comfortable of a place as home is an extremely good way to accomplish this. When one student takes too long on his report, though, Miss Price cuts him off because "...Miss Price never liked to let the reports degenerate into accounts of movies" (Yates 482). Even though Miss Price does give the students some time to socialize and bring their lives from home into the classroom, she understands that this period of time is only so valuable and that only some information is really worth telling. With this teaching style, she emphasizes the fact that one's personal lives are important, but keeping things short and sweet is important because they are in school and there is a time and place for everything.

Miss Snell seems to have a very opposite style of

teaching. Instead of encouraging students to talk about their lives in class and even understanding mistakes, she seems to try to teach students by making them aware of their mistakes to a degree that is likely counterproductive. This is apparent in the scene where John cannot find his pencil, and the reader notices it again later in the story when Miss Snell says,

"I've had this eraser for five years. I've never played with it because it's not a toy. I've never chewed it because it's not good to eat. And I've never lost it because I'm not foolish and I'm not careless. Now why can't you do the same with your eraser? I don't know what's the matter with this class. I've never had a class that was so foolish and so careless and so childish about its supplies." (Yates 567)

Miss Snell thinks that by showing her class her eraser, that she is helping the kids to understand what proper standards are. Though she may at first be telling the kids to take care of their supplies, it eventually turns into a statement that ultimately sounds like a guilt trip for all of the children. She is also speaking to a class of eight-year-olds and calling them "foolish," "careless," and "childish." These kids are not perfect, as is no one, and she has set an expectation for her students that is unlikely to be met, which will ultimately make the kids feel less comfortable and confident in her class. Miss Snell is not all bad, though, and before she takes her class on the field trip, she announces to them that "I think that the trip will be especially valuable because it will be instructive and at the same time it will be a real treat for all of us" (Yates 569). This is similar to what Miss Price did in "Doctor Jack-O'-Lantern," with the Monday morning reports. She is trying to build a bridge between the formal educational setting of school and the world outside of school. Miss Snell recognizes that the students are really just excited to get out of school and enjoy some time outside of the classroom, but she also knows that this is a valuable opportunity for the students to learn.

Lastly, we know that teachers are people, too, and that people make mistakes. Miss Snell and Miss Price are not exceptions to this rule, and it is very apparent many times throughout both stories. When Miss Price is introducing Vincent to his new class at the beginning of

“Doctor Jack-O’-Lantern, she says “I won’t take the time to introduce you to everyone by name, Vincent, because I think it would be simpler just to let you learn the names as we go along, don’t you?”” (Yates 480). Being in fourth grade, many kids are shy and having trouble making new friends. They have not yet developed many social skills or have a great understanding of how to interact with one another to make new friends. By leaving introductions for Vincent to do himself, she has unintentionally created another obstacle that prevents Vincent from feeling comfortable in the new school. He not only has to learn everything in the lesson plans, and get acclimated to the new environment, but he also has to find a way to be comfortable in this brand new social situation he is now stuck in. When his troubles with making friends become apparent, though she does later make an attempt at talking to him about this problem, she is not quick to act on this situation. Vincent was rejected by all of the groups of kids on the playground at recess, and “Miss Price stood watching all this from the doorway, and she spent the full recess wondering if she ought to go out and do something about it. She guessed it would be better not to. She managed to control the same impulse at recess the next day, and every other day that week” (Yates 484). Miss Price may have a good mindset here by wanting to let Vincent be independent and try and make friends on his own, but by staying so far removed from the situation and not helping him to feel comfortable around the other kids or even encouraging the other kids to include him in their games, Vincent’s ability to connect socially with his classmates was hindered, and it ultimately never becomes well developed in the story. The biggest mistake, though, is when Miss Price starts to feel so bad for Vincent and sympathetic for his situation that it affects how she treats him publicly. “All Vincent Sabella’s errors in schoolwork were publicly excused, even those having nothing to do with his newness, and all his accomplishments were singled out for special mention. Her campaign to build him up was painfully obvious.... By the end of the week he was well on the way to becoming the worst possible kind of teacher’s pet, a victim of the teacher’s pity” (Yates 484). Miss Price made a strong effort to help Vincent feel comfortable in the classroom, but in doing so, she made it so distinct from how she normally acts towards her

students that Vincent was “singled out” in the classroom to the point that he was even referred to as a teacher’s pet. Jay Blanchard and Ursula Casanova even go as far as to say that Miss Price “tries to satisfy the needs of a new student only to end up hindering his adjustment and reinforcing misunderstanding among other students” (34). Some of her mistakes seem small and easily forgivable, but people have an interesting way of choosing to remember negative things and forget positive ones. Though Miss Price’s mistakes were few and far between, they may have been enough to set Vincent off the course of a successful year of school and positive relationships with his classmates.

When comparing this to Miss Snell in the story “Fun with a Stranger,” we can see that many of Miss Snell’s attempts at what she may have thought were making her students feel comfortable were actually big mistakes. This is so clear by the end of the story that not only does Miss Snell give her students a gift that makes them feel that the bell ringing at the end of her class is “merciful” (Yates 575), but that her students enjoy running out of her class at the end of the semester. “Miss Snell was left behind now, farther behind with every step; if they ran fast enough they could even avoid the Taylor twins, and then there would be no need to think about any of it anymore. Legs pounding, raincoats streaming, they ran with the exhilaration of escape” (Yates 575). The narrator compares the experience of leaving school with the “exhilaration of escape.” School is supposed to create positive experiences where children can learn, grow, have fun, and build meaningful relationships. The unhappiness experienced by children of Miss Snell’s class, though, is so intense that her students talk about leaving school like they are breaking out of some type of prison.

After viewing Vincent Sabella’s actions throughout the story “Doctor Jack-O’-Lantern,” as a troubled child with few friends and an apparent inability to form healthy relationships, we can analyze his last two acts of showmanship in depth. As discussed earlier, Vincent had written some bad words on the wall of the alleyway after his Monday morning report didn’t receive such positive feedback. When Miss Price discovers what Vincent has written in the alleyway, she tells him to “take this [a water basin] to the boys’ room and fill it with hot water and soap” (Yates 491), so that he can clean the bad words off of the

## The Educational Journey: Through the Eyes of Richard Yates

wall. Though Miss Price tries very hard to help Vincent adjust and be a friend to him in school, “As fine a teacher as she is, she lacks the psychological or sociological training that apparently would be necessary to turn him around...” (Nelson) and help him go through school more successfully. When he has finished cleaning up his mess, Miss Price has a conversation with Vincent about hurting their friendship. When the conversation between Miss Price and Vincent is over, she says “All right, you may go now” (Yates 492), and he is on his way out.

As Vincent is walking out of the classroom, he sees two of his classmates waiting for him: “The silence made it all the more startling when he found, several yards down the concrete walk outside, that two boys were walking beside him: Warren Berg and Bill Stringer. They were both smiling at him in an eager, almost friendly way” (Yates 492). Warren and Bill push Vincent to tell them how the conversation with Miss Price went, and instead of being honest, Vincent chooses to adhere to his reputation as a liar and tell them that “She [Miss Price] let the ruler do her talkin’ for her” (Yates 492). Vincent could have even stopped there before he dug himself into a deeper hole, but as “their faces were stunned, either with disbelief or admiration” (Yates 492), he took advantage of the attention and expanded his lie by saying “on the knuckles, five times on each hand. She siz, ‘Make a fist. Lay it out here on the desk’” (Yates 492-93). When Vincent finally thought that he was going to receive some positive attention, Miss Price “quickened her graceful stride and overtook them, turning to smile down at them as she passed. ‘Goodnight boys,’ ... ‘Goodness, it is getting colder, isn’t it? That windbreaker of yours looks nice and warm, Vincent. I envy you’” (Yates 493). With this display of kindness and good intentions, it was easy for Vincent’s classmates to come to the conclusion that he was once again not telling the truth. After pushing him around, Bill Stringer references Vincent’s Monday morning report by saying “‘Even movies he lies about ... ‘Hey, Doctor Jack-o’-Lantern!’ It wasn’t a very good nickname, but it had an authentic ring to it—the kind of name that might spread around, catch on quickly, and stick’” (Yates 494).

When Vincent once again needed a way to express his emotions about the situation that he had put himself in,

he took to drawing on the wall in the alleyway. Vincent puts much effort into his drawing as he,

began to draw a head with great care...making the hair long and rich and taking his time over the face, erasing it with moist fingers and reworking it until it was the most beautiful face he had ever drawn.... He paused to admire it with a lover’s solemnity; then from the lips he drew a line that connected with a big speech balloon, and in the balloon he wrote so angrily that the chalk kept breaking in his fingers, every one of the words he had written that noon... then with bold strikes, he gave it the body of a naked woman.... (Yates 494)

He completes his drawing with detailed parts of the breasts and genitals, and “beneath the picture he printed its title: “Miss Price” (Yates 494). “The pressure he [Vincent] exerts on the chalk intimates the intensity of his frustration” (Nelson). This drawing was obviously very important to Vincent, as he chose to express his emotions in such an intense way. “The deliberate conscious elements include his depiction of the neck, shoulders, navel, and waist which are executed gracefully, presumably without distortion” (Nelson par. 26). It is hard to say what may have compelled Vincent to do something like this, because even an angry child would likely have handled this differently. Vincent may have been looking for the kind of social validation that the kids on the playground receive for pushing Nancy in the mud, or he may just want to “embarrass Miss Price, getting back at her for embarrassing him” (Nelson), by pushing him into giving a report to the class. In the words of the narrator, though, Vincent’s actions may have just fallen into the “subject of seriously disturbed children” (Yates 490). Nelson may have presented a different theory though, because when Vincent had finished his drawing, “He stood there looking at it for a little while, breathing hard, and then he went home” (Yates 494). This section seems unimportant, but Nelson points out that “The typescripts in the Mugar Memorial Library indicate that Yates deliberately changed the spelling from “Hyde” to “Hide” (Nelson), in the scene when Vincent is giving his report. Yates may be trying to emphasize Vincent’s comfort with staying behind the scenes, and when Vincent finishes his drawing

of Miss Price, going home is nothing short of hiding from the attention that he will inevitably get from his fellow classmates. As quoted earlier, it may also be that Miss Price was the one to hinder Vincent's growth in school, and this may be Vincent's way of getting revenge. Since Yates's writing is considered so autobiographical, there is some value in recognizing the level of artistic vision that went into Vincent's drawing. Art was very important to Yates because it was what his mother's whole life centered around, and Yates even said that as much as he hated to admit it, he preferred his mother. "... One of the essential truths of Yates's childhood—of his whole life, perhaps—is that he loved and admired his mother at least as much as he later claimed to despise her. She was a source of pain he could never evade, though writing about her helped" (Bailey 8), so it is very possible that Yates is writing about his mother's art, or his perception of art, through the eyes of himself at an early stage in his life. Richard Yates was very affected by his mother's art career. It left his family without stable housing during his youth because her career was unsuccessful, and before Yates was even old enough to adequately remember, he went to Paris with his mother so that she could study art, and he was even sent to a different high school so that his mother could get an in with wealthy art lovers. It is peculiar that Vincent spends so much time being artistically accurate during his depiction of Miss Price, especially considering how intense his emotions must be, based on the circumstances that led him to draw it in the first place. An eight-year-old boy in his situation who is also emotionally unhealthy would most likely have not taken so much care in his drawing, so maybe this drawing was more the work of Yates than it was of Vincent.

Many more factors could be discussed when addressing the subject of the social experience of school, and the styles of teachers and their effects on students, but the ones listed above somewhat comprehensively cover major areas related to these topics that all students face at some point in their educational career and that lots of children who fall in between the cracks in the education system, like Vincent Sabella, struggle with. In addition to school itself, Yates also incorporates many seemingly meaningful details of his own life into these stories that add a level of depth that, though the average reader may

not pick up on at first glance, affects the lives of the characters and their actions in more ways than we can understand. In the end, whether it is the 1930s, the mid-1900s, or the modern day, all children will face these obstacles at some point, but all of them are part of the educational journey.

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Evaluation: *Ryan's thorough and inquisitive research process led to some interesting material about the author of these short stories, which allowed him to place them into the context of the author's life, and his research into past viewpoints on successful elementary education also contributed some highly interesting perspectives to his discussion of the schoolteachers featured in the stories. He also made use of the few literary critical articles available on these works to expand his perspectives. Overall, this paper reflects highly competent and discerning research and writing abilities.*

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# An Argument Map: William Paley's Teleological Argument

Stephanie Wojciak

Course: Philosophy 101 (Critical Thinking)

Instructor: Brett Fulkerson-Smith

*Assignment: Each student in Critical Thinking is required to map and analyze a variety of arguments, from The Declaration of Independence to, as in this case, William Paley's argument for the existence of God. Argument mapping provides a way to visually represent the structure of an argument. In this form, it is much easier to identify common shortcomings: for example, false or unreasonable unsubstantiated claims, and formal and informal fallacies. These issues are highlighted and discussed at length in an argument analysis, a kind of report on the findings of a student's critical review of the argument.*

William Paley was an eighteenth-century English clergyman, utilitarian, and philosopher. Through most of his life, Paley was a Christian apologist. He spent his time defending the overall structure of Christianity and the beliefs on which the religion was built. In perhaps his most popular apologetic argument, "The Teleological Argument from Natural Theology," Paley argues in favor of the existence of God. He does so by forming his argument around the conclusion "the natural world was designed by an intelligence."

In order to further support his main conclusion, the author uses an analogy between a telescope, watch, and an eye. The analogy concludes that since both a telescope and an eye have a purpose, they are both designed by an intelligence. And, since a telescope is like an eye and an eye is just part of the natural world, then the natural world is designed by an intelligence.

To make his analogy and overall conclusion clear to the reader, Paley divides his excerpt into three

main sections. The first and smallest section of Paley's argument includes the comparison between a telescope and an eye. To prove that a telescope is like an eye, the author claims that both are made from the same principles, being the transmission and refraction of light rays. This section of the argument represents Paley's organic side to his analogy. However, this comparison is only relevant after comparing a watch to a telescope which is found in the second section of the argument.

The second comparison made by the author is the comparison of telescopes and watches. However, Paley only gives one similarity between the two analogs. He states that a telescope and watch are both designed by an intelligence because both have an obvious purpose. To support this similarity, Paley argues that it is obvious that a watch is made to tell time and a telescope is made to assist vision. Also, to support the single similarity given, the author says if different parts of the watch or telescope were shaped or sized differently, then neither would serve its purpose. Although the main part of the author's main conclusion is built on the analogy between a watch and a telescope, he spends most of his time proving that a watch is built by an intelligence.

In his third section of the essay, to prove a watch is built by an intelligence, Paley replies to eight objections. The first four objections are as follows: 1) The watch is not designed because we don't know who designed it or how they would have done it; 2) We don't know enough about watches to conclude they were formed by an intelligence; 3) A "principle of order" formed watches; and 4) A configuration in nature formed watches. These four objections are all replied to similarly by Paley. He states that these objections are false and replies by merely stating the opposite. For example, the author responds to the second objection, "we don't know enough about watches to conclude they are made by an intelligence" by simply arguing that we do know enough about watches to conclude they are made by an intelligence. However, the second four objections are successfully rejected by the author. First, it is objected that the contrivance of a watch is not proved by its mechanisms. Paley replies by saying that this is false because the mechanisms of a watch require an acquired knowledge and understanding to operate. Second, it is objected that because the watch



has flaws it is not designed by an intelligence. The author replies by arguing that just because something has flaws does not mean it wasn't built or designed by an intelligence. Third, it is objected that Metallic Nature contributed to the making of a watch. Paley replies by stating the laws of nature are not applicable without material to operate on, meaning that without the watch being there forever, the Metallic Nature Law is irrelevant. The last objection Paley uses as support for his conclusion is the objection that the complexity of a watch just makes telling time more difficult. However, the author replies by claiming the complexity in pieces of a watch are fundamental to its accuracy in telling time. The author uses his analogy sections to relate inorganic (watch) to organic (eye) in hopes of making a smaller gap between his larger comparison of the eye to the natural world.

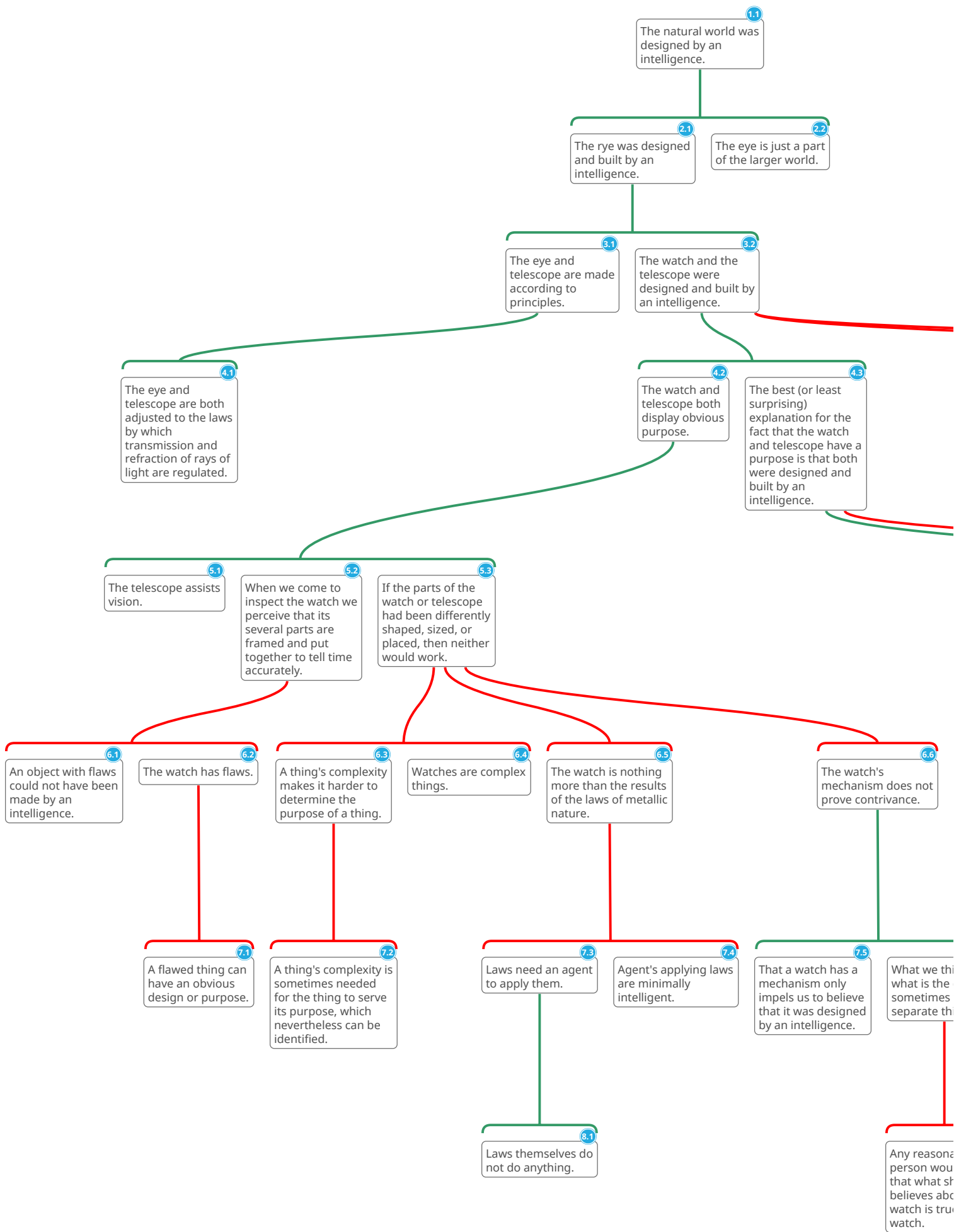
Throughout his essay, the author makes five notable assumptions. Only two of these assumptions need to be made explicit while three already have enough supporting evidence. The first assumption that does not need to be further evidenced is that a "telescope is made for assisting vision." This assumption is fair to make because it is an obvious claim that any reader would agree with. Another claim like this is "any man in his right mind would see the various machinery of a watch is too complex for nature." Although an assumption, this claim seems obvious enough to be agreeable amongst readers. The last fair assumption made is "we don't know who makes oval frames or how they were made." Though his claim is true, the author still assumes that all readers know what oval frames (an eighteenth-century portrait frame) are. However, this is a fair assumption for Paley to make because oval frames were very popular in the eighteenth century when the essay was written.

Paley makes two notable assumptions that need to be further evidenced. The first is the claim that "the best explanation is the least surprising one." This claim is abductive and establishes a standard solely based on inference. However, this is an unsubstantiated claim that is easily rejected. Take for example a family whose house is being broken into. When they come and notice their door is unlocked, they can either assume someone just forgot to lock it or there is a burglar in their house. The least surprising answer is that someone forgot to

lock the door. However, it is still possible someone is in this person's house, and that possibility should not be discredited just because it is more surprising.

The last assumption that needs to be made explicit is also a flaw in logic. Paley argues that the eye is designed by an intelligence and that since the eye is part of the natural world, the natural world is also designed by an intelligence. But, unfortunately for Paley, this is a fallacy of composition, meaning the assumption that what is true for a part of something must be true for its whole. However, this is untrue. For example, a car's tires are made of rubber. But, that does not mean the whole car is made of rubber. Without making this assumption explicit, Paley puts his whole argument at risk, allowing it to easily be rejected.

When using an analogy as support for an argument there are six specific guidelines that the author should keep in mind. The first is the analogy's relevance of similarities. This means that each similarity listed between analogs should include a factor that directly influences the conclusion of the analogy. In this essay, Paley only gives one similarity between watches and telescopes, being that they both have an obvious purpose. While this is a relevant similarity to the conclusion of both being designed by an intelligence, it is not strong enough to stand alone due to the second guideline. The second guideline to follow for analogies is the number of similarities between analogs. By adding more similarities, an author is able to provide more support, inevitably strengthening his or her argument. However, in his argument, Paley only provides one similarity between telescopes and watches. The claim is easily refuted by arguing that things in nature like the trees or the sun have an obvious purpose, yet they are not as easily believed to be made by an intelligence the same as a watch. Although the similarity is accurate, it is still too weak to independently support the conclusion that watches and telescopes were made by an intelligence. The third guideline is the nature and degree of disanalogies. This means that the author not only provides and supports similarities between the analogs but also then provides and rejects any difference that can be found between the analogs. Paley provides no disanalogies for neither how an eye is unlike a telescope and watch nor how a telescope is unlike a watch. By neither mentioning nor rejecting



1.1 The natural world was designed by an intelligence.

2.1 The rye was designed and built by an intelligence.

2.2 The eye is just a part of the larger world.

3.1 The eye and telescope are made according to principles.

3.2 The watch and the telescope were designed and built by an intelligence.

4.1 The eye and telescope are both adjusted to the laws by which transmission and refraction of rays of light are regulated.

4.2 The watch and telescope both display obvious purpose.

4.3 The best (or least surprising) explanation for the fact that the watch and telescope have a purpose is that both were designed and built by an intelligence.

5.1 The telescope assists vision.

5.2 When we come to inspect the watch we perceive that its several parts are framed and put together to tell time accurately.

5.3 If the parts of the watch or telescope had been differently shaped, sized, or placed, then neither would work.

6.1 An object with flaws could not have been made by an intelligence.

6.2 The watch has flaws.

6.3 A thing's complexity makes it harder to determine the purpose of a thing.

6.4 Watches are complex things.

6.5 The watch is nothing more than the results of the laws of metallic nature.

6.6 The watch's mechanism does not prove contrivance.

7.1 A flawed thing can have an obvious design or purpose.

7.2 A thing's complexity is sometimes needed for the thing to serve its purpose, which nevertheless can be identified.

7.3 Laws need an agent to apply them.

7.4 Agent's applying laws are minimally intelligent.

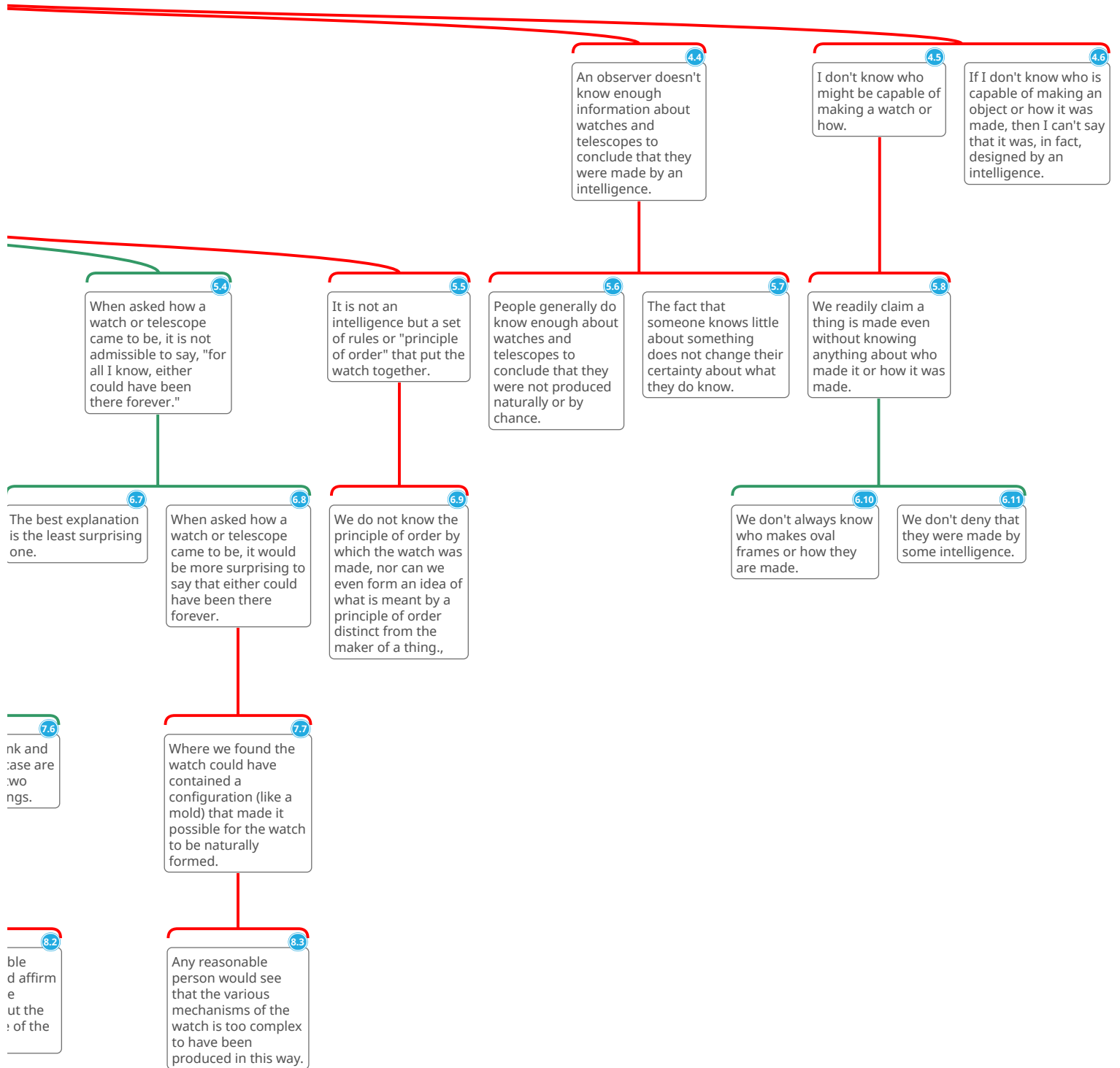
8.1 Laws themselves do not do anything.

7.5 That a watch has a mechanism only impels us to believe that it was designed by an intelligence.

7.6 What we think is sometimes separate from what is.

9.1 Any reasonable person would not believe that what she sees is a watch.

**Fig.1. Argument map showing the fallacies in William Paley's teleological argument.**



## An Argument Map: William Paley's Teleological Argument

any disanalogies, the author allows the reader to easily find holes in his analogy, making it more susceptible to be proven false. The fourth guideline while writing analogies is the number of primary analogies used. When an author increases the number of primary analogs, it increases the risk of counter-analogies. In this case, by bringing in three analogs instead of two, the author is able to lessen the gap between the overall comparison of an eye to the natural world and more clearly lead the reader to agree with the main conclusion. The fifth guideline for analogies is diversity among primary analogs. The two analogs of a watch and eye are almost too diverse for comparison, but as stated earlier, by bringing in the third analog of a telescope, the diversity is lessened between all analogs, making them easier to relate.

The sixth and final guideline an author should be aware of while writing an analogy is the specificity of conclusion. The more specific a conclusion is, the more chances an audience has to falsify it. Paley's conclusion that the natural world was built by an intelligence is very vague and not too specific. However, the direct evidence coming from the conclusion specifies Paley's argument into three objects that because not used properly, ultimately hurt the overall conclusion of his argument.

As a whole, Paley has a unique but weak argument to support his conclusion. The main problem of the essay is that the author spends too much time proving that watches were built by an intelligence instead of sufficiently supporting and structuring his analog. To do so, Paley uses objections and his replies as premises. Unfortunately, the author only provides adequate replies to four of the eight, which is not enough. Because Paley only gives one similarity between watches and telescopes and gives no disanalogies, his analogy is also weak. Paley writes his essay in hopes that readers won't notice his fallacy of composition and assumption within his conclusion. However, this fallacy cannot go unnoted, since it is the direct premise coming from the conclusion. All of Paley's flaws and non-explicit assumptions take too much away from the conclusion, leaving him with a weak argument.

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*Evaluation: Stephanie's argument map and analysis are exemplary specimens of critical thinking. Her argument map is carefully constructed, revealing a keen sense of the author's intentions, strategy, and execution. The accompanying analysis helps the reader understand Paley's argument precisely as an analogy, and it offers a careful evaluation of the argument with explicit reference to the essential features of such an argument. As such, Stephanie's work showcases quite well how to think about one of the most common argument forms.*

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# Is It Possible for a Late Bilingual to Become a “Perfect Bilingual?”

Madoka Yamaji

Course: Linguistics 205 (Language and Culture)

Instructor: Alina Pajtek

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

The area of bilingualism is intriguing to explore, as we all speak different kinds of languages to communicate with other people, and often we need to learn other languages besides our first language for various purposes. Speaking of bilingualism, it is quite commonly believed that early bilinguals who start learning their second language (L2) in their early age acquire it faster and with fewer hurdles compared to learners who start to learn a language later in life. Even early bilinguals’ progress in two languages could vary according to many factors like their starting age and learning environment. However, we could say that their chance of becoming highly fluent in both languages would be higher than that of late learners who start to learn language later in their lives. Considering these factors, my question is to what extent could late bilinguals be fluent in their L2? Could they still become so called “perfect bilinguals” like early bilinguals who can speak highly fluently like native speakers? In this paper, I will refer to the term “perfect bilinguals” as to be highly fluent in both languages. Considering my own experience in the UK, I wonder if it would be too late for someone who lived in an English-speaking country as a teenager to become fluent enough to become bilingual. Having lived in the UK from twelve to sixteen years old with no English learning experience before, I would say that I improved my English considerably, but I couldn’t acquire native-like fluency. Although I could understand my classmates and teachers, I was still an ESL student

who never spoke like a native English speaker. In this paper, I will examine factors that could have effects on late bilingualism, mainly focusing on the effect of age on people’s ability to become bilingual. Furthermore, I would like to discuss if we could become “perfect bilinguals” even in adulthood.

Before exploring into the topic, I will define some terms. In discussing bilingualism, age would be one of the vital aspects, as it affects acquisition of L2 throughout one’s life. Age of acquisition (AoA) is generally used to refer to age effects on bilingualism. According to Birdsong, “The term AoA refers to the age at which L2 learning begins in earnest and continues with little or no interruption, most often in immersion contexts such as immigration, but not to limited acquaintance

## Student Reflections on Writing:

### Madoka Yamaji

It was such a great opportunity to read my paper on late bilingualism after two years! I remember that I really enjoyed writing this paper because I was always interested in the possibility of adults being able to be fluent in their second language. Since English is not my second language and still I’m learning English, what I found out through the research and writing process of this paper is still a great asset to me today. I think the important thing about writing good papers is to find a topic that you are truly interested in and research it well. Researching and writing a paper like this is like finding answers to questions in my life and using the answers as guides for my future life. Currently, I’m working as Manager of People and Culture at a non-profit organization for planning and implementing human resources work. As I referred to in my paper, I strongly felt the importance of increasing exposure to the target language that I’d like to acquire, and my work has allowed that. Although I’m still far from the “perfect bilinguals,” I feel like my English is definitely getting better, and I’m confident that someday I can become a perfect bilingual if I continue to make effort.

## Is It Possible for a Late Bilingual to Become a “Perfect Bilingual?”

with the L2 that takes place on trips or in the foreign-language classroom” (2). It is commonly believed that the earlier the AoA is, the more likely it is for someone to be a successful bilingual. Typically, the term bilingual refers to people who can speak two languages at the same fluency level, whether low or highly fluent. Their native-like fluency regarding accents or pronunciations are not scrutinized here. Birdsong also states that “bilingualism is understood to mean routine use of two languages, at whatever level of proficiency in either language. Bilinguals who are immigrants or migrant workers may have acquired their two languages naturalistically only, or they may have had some classroom experience followed by immersion and frequent use” (2). In this paper, I will use the term “perfect bilinguals” to refer to bilinguals who are highly proficient in both languages and can speak more like native speakers. While the term early bilinguals refer to bilinguals whose AoA is before puberty, the AoA of late bilinguals begins after puberty. Contrary to early bilinguals, late bilinguals would generally have more difficulties in acquiring an L2, as various factors play a role in their process of L2 learning. Critical period is another important term related to age effects on bilingualism. Birdsong refers to critical period as a sensitive period which is susceptible to the environment, and which decreases over time (2). This is the reason why the critical period is acknowledged as a factor strongly connected with age effects on bilingualism.

There are several theories on factors that have an influence on L2 acquisition: L1 influence on L2; attitude and aptitude; motivation; level of education; and ethnic identity (Saito 547). Birdsong claims that plasticity, variability, and age are important factors in L2 acquisition and bilingualism (1). According to his study, “Much of what is known about the outcome of second language acquisition and bilingualism can be summarized in terms of inter-individual variability, plasticity and age” (1). Also, he states that “In the simplest terms, for the L2 context, plasticity is a property of the neuro-cognitive mechanisms, structures and systems that enable and constrain L2 learning” (1). Neurological maturation proceeds over time, causing decrease in brain volume, which would affect language learners’ cognitive function. From a neuropsychological perspective, critical period is

perceived as an optimal period for language acquisition. Neuroplasticity works differently from that of early bilinguals’, although it still occurs throughout one’s life (Berken et al. 224, 225).

Looking at nativelike attainment, Birdsong claims the general view that it is unattainable for adults to become nativelike as they have passed a critical period (4). There are two pieces of evidence to support this view: “the first is the nature of the function that relates AoA to [the] ultimate [language proficiency] attainment, and the second is evidence for comprehensive nativelike attainment across all aspects of knowledge, production, and processing of the L2” (4). The first position is that the L2 acquisition declines over time and it finally levels off. Therefore, it is impossible to be a successful learner after the critical period. The second position is that biologically early learners are likely to become successful, but it is unavoidable for late learners to fail at reaching nativelike proficiency. Birdsong mentions a research study by Flege et al. (1999), which tested 240 Korean adults’ knowledge of L2 English morphosyntax. The results showed that “participants with early AoA (up to about 7 years old) performed relatively homogeneously and within or close to the range of native controls” (7). This research reveals that the possibility of early bilinguals to speak more like native English speakers is higher than that of late bilinguals’. Although even early bilinguals are affected by various factors like educational environment or any individual differences, late bilinguals are considered more susceptible in many ways, as their brains would have less capacity to pick up new languages.

Variability in individuals is another strong factor that constrains L2 acquisition. “Variability in L2 attainment at the individual level is conditioned by factors that may be experiential, biological, intellectual, linguistic, conative, educational, and identificational in nature” (Birdsong 1). It is important to take into account that acquisition of an L2 is affected by learners’ individual differences, as nobody is the same from their birth. As stated by Birdsong, the outcome of L2 attainment varies with increasing AoA. Its outcome varies, as factors like the following affect L2 learners’ level of acquisition: the range of years and types of education; motivation diverse in consonance with goals; aptitude and giftedness for language learning;

types of tasks; and cognitive aging (8, 9). From a neuropsychological view, Wong et al. point out the presence and effect of individual differences on language learning in both native and second language acquisition and support the effectiveness of a “personalized learning” as individual differences affect the outcome of language learning (193).

Furthermore, I need to mention the relationship between the first language (L1) and L2. Booth et al. researched the influence of proximity of L1 and L2 among Indo-European, Japanese, and English controls, and found out that the more distant and complex the first language is, the more time and process is needed to acquire an L2 (63). In this paper, my focus is on Japanese English bilinguals, as I am Japanese. With regard to L1-L2 proximity, Japanese and English are posited distant as almost all language aspects are considerably different: alphabets, grammars, sentence structures, cultures, and accents. On the other hand, languages with higher proximity, like Chinese, would be easier for Japanese speakers to learn, than for English speakers, since some characters like “Kanji” are the same, and even background cultures are similar. My husband studied Chinese, which he thought much easier in terms of pronunciation and accent than English. Therefore, it is important to consider L1-L2 relationship as one of the factors that would have an influence on L2 acquisition. Also, we should keep in mind that domains also affect bilinguals’ level of comfort using a language or their fluency. For example, Japanese English bilinguals living in the US with Japanese parents would feel more comfortable speaking English when they talk about school, whereas Japanese would be preferred at home. When we think about L2 fluency, we should take into account domains as the level of L2 fluency could vary according to domains.

As we have discussed so far, age is strongly connected with various factors like plasticity and variability, and it affects bilingualism, modulating the level of L2 acquisition. Among all variables, AoA is considered a relatively strong predictor of L2 attainment. Saito states that “The earlier they arrive, the better their ultimate L2 performance tends to be, and the more likely it is to fall within a nativelike range” (547). There are two competing theories on age effects on post-pubertal ultimate attainment

and nativelikeness: the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) and the Cognitive Aging Hypothesis (CAH). The CPH holds the view that “any linguistic performance by late bilinguals is constrained by a loss of plasticity resulting from neural maturation after adolescence. Thus these learners’ acquisitional processes are fundamentally and qualitatively different from those of early bilinguals, who learn L2 automatically through mere exposure to natural input” (547). Contrary to CPH, researchers for CAH posit that “language learning capacity used in successful L1 speech acquisition remains active even after puberty and can be applied to late bilingualism.” According to this position, “adult L2 learners are able to continue to learn new sounds as long as they can intentionally or incidentally access some of the social and educational events that bilingual children likely experience” (547).

Saito conducted an interesting research study on age effects on late bilingualism focusing on the production development of /ɪ/ by high-proficiency Japanese learners of English. He explored this topic as “there is less consensus on whether and to what degree AoA is predictive of L2 pronunciation attainment in the case of late bilinguals whose intensive exposure to the L2 begins after puberty” (546). In his study, he chose the word-initial /ɪ/ as it is considered typically difficult for Japanese English learners to pronounce, since there is no sound like /ɪ/ in Japanese. If they had shown improvement and even could pronounce /ɪ/ like native English speakers, we could conclude that it would be possible to attain L2 even later in life. I would like to explain about his research briefly. In his research, he prepared three comparison groups: 88 high-proficiency Japanese learners of English, 10 low-proficiency Japanese English learners of English, and 10 native English speakers. All groups were given three tasks: word reading, sentence reading, and timed picture description. Also, their performance was judged by native English speakers and acoustic analyses. There are some other conditions controlled so that the result of the research would not be affected by other variables. The result demonstrated that there was a significant AoA effect on late bilingualism where enough L2 learning is required to attain the sound. AoA was more clearly reflected on the attainment of performance of /ɪ/ at a spontaneous (picture description) but not at a controlled (word and

## Is It Possible for a Late Bilingual to Become a “Perfect Bilingual?”

sentence reading) speech level, and in the development of the new articulatory parameter (561). In the controlled tasks, there were some late bilinguals who fell in the range of native English speakers, whereas nobody fell in that range in a spontaneous task that required more immediate reaction. Also, considering the development of the new articulatory parameter, /ɹ/ is a new sound for Japanese native speakers that requires a range of tongue configurations to produce the sound (548). Therefore, it was almost impossible for these late learners to acquire this sound. From these results, it is almost impossible to become a “perfect bilingual” later in life, as everyday communication is successive of spontaneous tasks. However, some participants showed nativelike fluency in controlled tasks, and the longer their residence was, the better they performed in all tasks. This means L2 attainment is possible even in adulthood (AoA after puberty) if certain environment is given and considerable efforts are made. In another study, Flege et al. examined accents of Korean children (early bilinguals) and adults (late bilinguals) and found out that some children fell in the native English speakers’ range. Although not all children fell in the native English speakers’ range, AoA was not considered as an influencing factor in this study, and they attributed this reason to the amount of L2 input (153). From this study, we could say that even adults could improve their L2 if they study and have enough L2 exposure.

Returning to my original question about the possibility of a late bilingual becoming a “perfect bilingual”, it is obvious now that various factors affect bilingualism and may try to hinder their L2 acquisition especially in late bilinguals. However, there is no need to be pessimistic about late bilinguals’ L2 acquisition, as there are some successful cases in which the pronunciation level fell in the native range even while learning a second language in adulthood. Since even these successful learners’ backgrounds vary, it is difficult to define rules for success, but there are ways to improve our L2 even in adulthood. One example of a good language learning method is the accent reduction training. Seferoğlu researched the effectiveness of an accent reduction software in two classes at the Department of Foreign Language Education at a university in Turkey. The study showed that the software program for the accent reduction training was effective under English as a

Foreign Language settings where natural language input is scarce (314). However, importance of interaction with more communicative activities was also pointed out, as only pronunciation practice of each word was not enough in actual communication. Then, the more effective and widely known language learning method is study abroad programs. Generally, study abroad programs are designed to give us the opportunity to have L2 exposure for a certain period of time. The environment is similar to early bilinguals’, where there is enough L2 exposure for a considerably long time. Muñoz and Àngels examined the effectiveness of study abroad programs with regard to the degree of foreign accents in children and adults. The study demonstrated that both groups of participants in the study abroad program had significantly milder accents in the post test. Also, there was no clear difference found between adults and children’s accents judged by listeners (442). As there was no clear difference in their accent improvement between adults and children, we could say that L2 acquisition was possible even in adulthood. In addition to a learning environment like with a study abroad program, a factor like high motivation is also an important aspect in becoming successful L2 learners.

Going back to my own experience, I couldn’t become fluent enough in English through my four years’ stay in the United Kingdom. I would say various factors affected my L2 acquisition, but the main reason might be attributed to AoA. Considering that early bilinguals typically learn L2 automatically with less effort compared to late bilinguals, I couldn’t learn it automatically but needed so much effort to learn English. Probably, I still had enough plasticity, and my critical period was barely open to L2 acquisition. However, other factors like length of my residence (four years is not long enough), lack of L2 input (I had no close English friends and spoke mostly Japanese at home), and low motivation (I always wanted to go back to Japan) likely affected my level of L2 acquisition. Referring to domains, I was quite comfortable at understanding teachers in class but very uncomfortable outside of school with my classmates, as I didn’t understand what they were talking about. Lastly, I would like to conclude my paper by emphasizing the impact of various factors on L2 acquisition, especially age effects on late bilingualism, which constrain L2 attainment over time. Unfortunately, L2 acquisition is not automatic, and we have to put in so much effort, but it is not impossible, and it is worth trying,



as we all have the chance of acquiring an L2 and speaking more like native speakers even when we begin to learn a language in adulthood.

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Evaluation: *In this paper, Madoka raises the question of whether one can become "perfect bilingual" later in life. After Madoka reviews some of the main theories on factors that have an influence on L2 acquisition, she concludes that while language acquisition in adulthood is possible, "perfect bilingualism" is much less likely to happen to individuals who are exposed to another language after adolescence. Madoka's paper is both informative and thorough and presents a detailed analysis of how various factors influence language acquisition.*

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## Afterword: Why We Write about Art

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*Karen Patterson  
Art Department*

In 1855, Roger Fenton created what is quite possibly the world's first faked war photograph. The British photographer was recording the Crimean War, but with the still-new medium's slow exposure times, Fenton was unable to capture combat or action scenes. Undeterred, he photographed an empty landscape, devoid of persons but littered with spent cannonballs—in fact, he photographed the scene twice, from the same camera position. The better known of the two shows a group of cannonballs silhouetted against a light dirt road. But when viewed in tandem, the two photos show evidence of manipulation. In between shots, someone—ostensibly Fenton—had repositioned those cannonballs.

Perhaps it seems like a small deception, to change the location (and possibly the number) of the cannonballs. Some might argue that it does not alter the truth of the battle *so much* that we should consider the photograph a fake. But we have a saying, don't we, that "A photograph is worth a thousand words?" And another: "Seeing is believing."

Today, with all the talk of "fake news" and "disinformation," it seems that people hardly know what's real anymore, and if they think they know, they cannot agree with their neighbor on what that truth is. With Photoshop, computer editing software, and the acceptance of photography as a form of artistic expression, we don't expect all of our images to be truthful. But then again, it depends on the situation, doesn't it? In some contexts, photography brings expectations of reportage, veracity, that cause us to sometimes take for granted the authenticity of the image. It could be a photograph of a large crowd at a political rally—digitally altered to

increase the size of the gathering, or miscaptioned to suggest a different date or location. Or, as it was in 2008 in Iran, it could be a government-sanctioned photograph of a test missile launch—with one dud missile apparently doctored to indicate complete success. One can scarcely take for granted that the images one sees around us are real anymore. And anyway, one can argue whether there really can be any such thing as a truly objective photograph at all, even when there is no overt intent to deceive.

But this is supposed to be an essay about the importance of writing about art.

The truth is, just like words, visual images communicate information, and they communicate it powerfully. We live in an incredibly complex visual world, constantly bombarded with ocular stimuli, from television imagery to pictures on the Internet to billboards and magazines. In an environment where we are barraged by a surfeit of both still and moving images—more so than at any other time in history—we have so often learned to merely glance. We don't really take the time to see—we can't, really, in this overly saturated visual world—and we certainly don't have the bandwidth to think deeply or critically about most of it. And so, most people have stopped seeing. Nonetheless, visual imagery, even when divorced from expectations of "truthfulness," communicates messages, messages about power, desire, beauty, justice, moral and ethical values. These images affect us, whether we realize it or not, and we have an obligation to untangle them. This is visual literacy.

I sometimes ask students to complete the following exercise: *Observe a piece of fruit, put it away, and write down what you remember about its appearance. Next, retrieve the piece of fruit, put it in front of you, and draw it for the next five minutes. Then, describe the fruit a second time.* After drawing the fruit, students notice details they had previously overlooked: variations in color, bruises, irregularities in shape, imperfections, and the like. The point of the exercise is to demonstrate how for an artist, drawing can serve as an aid to active seeing, helping us to really view the world around us in a careful fashion, as opposed to mere casual looking.

What does this have to do with writing? Students often state that art expresses what cannot be put into words. So then why write about it? As it turns out,

Roger Fenton, *In the Valley of the Shadow of Death*, salted paper prints, 1855. The lower photograph, without cannonballs in the roadway, is considered by most to have been taken before the upper image, in which cannonballs litter the roadway.



careful description *also* prompts active seeing. Writing, especially academic writing, is a slow process. It forces us to look at that artwork more than once, and to look again, and then again. We become aware of things we would not have otherwise, and because we are asked to write about it, we are forced to think about it as well.

Active seeing is important. And writing about art takes us further, beyond seeing, into another realm. If drawing is a way of seeing, then writing about art is a way to both actively see *and* think about what we are seeing. When we put our ideas into words, we are forced to think about the images in a sustained, critical fashion. And we have to use what we see to back up our ideas and interpretations of the piece. Writing about art involves critical thinking, analysis. It raises questions. Writing about art helps us think about what images say and how they say it. Skills that one might learn while critically interpreting a Van Gogh masterpiece can easily be applied to critiquing advertising images, political ads, or an influencer's Instagram feed. Learning to analyze and decode how and what art communicates provides strategies for becoming better informed and more educated citizens.

And so, when we write about art, and when we do it well, we do more than just actively see: we also think

critically. Take the Roger Fenton photographs. When we look carefully and describe the images, we note that they share the same composition; the camera and tripod have not been moved. The shadows to the left of the road in the second photo appear somewhat darker than in the first, suggesting perhaps the sun has moved and a duration of time has passed. (As it turns out, the "experts" are split on which photo was made first.) In both versions, the small, round cannonballs blend somewhat with the terrain, mimicking some of the stones on the ground, but in the famous photograph, the light area of the road is peppered with small, round, dark objects that stand out visually for their contrast in value. These are, of course, the cannonballs.

Describing these visual aspects should, hopefully,

prompt further questions. Why would Fenton move the cannonballs around? What does this add to the composition, and to what Fenton was trying to say? The Crimean War was unpopular in Britain. Was Fenton, aware of the expressive limitations of photographing inanimate relics of war, attempting to make the battle look more fierce, the chaos more intense? Was he trying to exaggerate the danger of his situation as a way of enhancing his reputation? Or was he trying to recreate the real feeling of the skirmish even if it meant falsifying actual appearances? Would doing such a thing be ethical?

And so we circle back to thinking, and to writing, and to writing about writing. In composing this essay, I have had to gather and then solidify my initial thoughts, albeit first in an undeveloped jumble that no one should ever have to read. I have set those ideas aside for a length of time, allowing them to marinate, coming back to them later with fresh eyes. I have let go of some ideas that seemed good initially. I have chosen a few to develop further. I have refined them. I have reordered words and phrases, combining like ideas and separating dissimilar ones. In this process, I have made connections and found new insights. And I have discovered flaws in my thinking. This is learning. This is why we write.



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