

THE  
HARPER  
ANTHOLOGY



ISSUE XIV

## STUDENT WRITERS



Jennifer Amburgey	Gina Matthiesen
Idalia M. Argumedo	Merry Moran
Mary Aurand	Meghan Moyer
Anna Balice	Lynn Mutch
Carol Booth	Dan Pahlman
Christopher J. Brien	John Penczak
Nick Colosi	Maria Photopoulos
Philip de Boer	Dana Popp
Jenny Dolan	Paul M. Rollins
Chyi-Ling Evans	Brett Rush
Bertilia Frias de Douglas	Jessica Sanders
Jennifer Gardner	Melissa Schaefer
Nanci Goodheart	Colleen Seisser
Yukie Haruna	Maria Senise
Elizabeth Jelich	Rachel Shine
Joe Kaul	Jennifer Smith
Linda Kiscellus	Megan Stolz
Charles Kitzman	Maciej Szydowski
Nicole Kline	Pete Thomas
Charles Kostomiris	Michele Veverka
Mary Kronos	Amy Winter
Mari Anne La Fleur	Michael Wolff
Jenni Li Petri	Kristen A. Zanon

The  
Harper Anthology  
of Academic Writing

Issue XIV

2002

William Rainey Harper College



Harper Faculty:

Would you like to submit your students' writing for a future issue of this publication? If so, please use the tear-out submission form on pages 3-154 of this issue.



---

# Table of Contents

---

- Kris Piepenburg  
*Foreword*
- Jennifer Amburgey  
*Negligence*  
(English 100)
- Idalia M. Argumedo  
*Looking at Art: One Piece on the Harper  
Campus*  
(Fine Arts 113) 4
- Mary Aurand  
*All Dicks Are Not Created Equal*  
(Literature 217) 6
- Anna Balice  
*Cathedral*  
(English 02) 9
- Carol Booth  
*Parasites of Pain*  
(Literature 5) 3
- Christopher . Brien  
*The First Day*  
(English 100) 6
- Nick olosi  
*A Change of Venue*  
(English 200) 17
- Philip c oer  
*What Did I Know?*  
(English 102) 20
- Jenny olan  
*The Wooden Box Under the Bed*  
(Literature 210) 21
- hyi-Ling vans  
*My Life as the Wife of a High School  
Dormitory Parent*  
(ESL 069) 24
- Bertilia Frias de ouglas  
*Those Who Suffer*  
(English 100) 26
- Jennifer Gardner  
*William Kentridge: Drawings from Felix in xile*  
(Art 105) 27
- Nanci Goodheart  
*Social Class Distinctions within William Shakespeare's  
A Midsummer Night's ream*  
(English 102) 30
- Yukie Haruna  
*A Portrait of a Lonely Woman*  
(English 102) 35
- lizabeth Jelich  
*Eclipse/Finsternis*  
(German 02) 39
- Joe Kaul  
*Time Together*  
(English 200) 40
- Linda Kiscellus  
*Pesticides in the Soil*  
(Plant Science Technology 110) 42
- Charles Kitzman  
*Ecuador's Adoption of the US Dollar*  
(History 121) 45
- Nicole Kline  
*I'm So Glad To Be Me*  
(English 01) 49
- Charles Kostomiris  
*Circle of the Inspired*  
(Literature 105) 52
- Mary Krones  
*Grrrls Can Play, Too!*  
(English 01) 55
- Mari Anne La Fleur  
*The Essence of Sexuality*  
(Philosophy 15) 57
- Jenni Li Petri  
*The Lost Diaries of Remedios the Beauty*  
(Literature 5) 61
- Gina Matthiesen  
*Open Adoption and the Moral Philosophies  
Of Immanuel Kant and John Stuart Mill*  
(Philosophy 05) 64
-



## Table of Contents

- Merry Moran  
*An Indelible Image*  
(English 101) 68
- Meghan Moyer  
*Women of the Nineteenth Century*  
*Make Lovely Pets*  
(English 102) 70
- Lynn Mutch  
*Home*  
(English 101) 75
- Dan Pahlman  
*Hidden Room*  
(Reading 099/English 100) 79
- John Penczak  
*Succumb*  
(Literature 105) 80
- Maria Photopoulos  
*"Where Are You Going, Where Have  
You Been" and Other Important  
Questions*  
(English 102) 82
- Dana Popp  
*The Social Structure in Back of the Yards*  
(Literature 115) 87
- Paul M. Ro lin  
*Politics 2001 and Economics 212*  
(Economics 212) 91
- Brett Rush  
*A Casualty of War*  
(Speech 101) 95
- Jessica Sanders  
*Reflections: Understanding the Meanings Behind  
Yusef Komunyakaa's "Facing It"*  
(English 102) 97
- Melissa Schaefer  
*Friend or Foe?*  
(English 101) 102
- Colleen Scisser  
*Looking at Art: One Piece on the Harper Campus*  
(Fine Arts 113) 104
- Maria Senise  
*Gregor vs. Sarty According to Mill*  
(English 102/Philosophy 115) 106
- Rachel Shine  
*Whirlwind*  
(English 101) 112
- Jennifer Smith  
*Duality in Amiri Baraka's Dutchman and Essex  
Hemphill's "Cordon Negro"*  
(Literature 223/History 214) 114
- Megan Stolz  
*The Question*  
(English 200) 118
- Maciej Szydlowski  
*An Examination of Hawthorne's  
"Young Goodman Brown"*  
(English 102) 120
- Pete Thomas  
*Franz Kafka's Three Parables: Existentialism  
And Alienation*  
(English 102) 125
- Michelle Veverka  
*Words Do Hurt the Body*  
(English 100) 131
- Amy Winter  
*Hamlet's Utilitarian Calculation*  
(English 102/Philosophy 115) 133
- Michael Wolff  
*The Beauty of the Future*  
(English 102) 137
- Kristen A. Zanon  
*A Picture Is Worth a Thousand Words, but  
A Word Is Worth a Thousand Pictures*  
(English 102) 143
- Harper Students on Writing* 147
- The Harper Anthology Selection Committee:  
*What Is Good Writing?* 149
- Martha Simonsen  
*Afterword: On the Road* 150
- Harper Anthology  
*Submission Forms (2003/2004)* 153
- Alternate Table of Contents* 156
-

# Foreword

Dear Readers,

I know that some of you are familiar with this publication from past years, and I hope that you enjoy this fourteenth edition as much as you have others. I recognize, though, that many of you have never seen this publication before—perhaps you are a student whose instructor has given you this copy, or perhaps you are a newer member of the Harper administration, faculty, or staff. In that case, some definition is in order.

*The Harper Anthology* collects the highest-quality student writing produced over the academic year at Harper, not only to honor good student writing through publication, but also to serve Harper faculty and students in the classroom through presentation of models of good writing, in as many academic fields as possible.

Submissions to the *Anthology* should be received from instructors by mid-December of the current year to be considered for the next issue by the faculty panel of judges. At the present time, submissions for the 2003 issue have been gathering since January 2002, and we expect to receive any more by December 2002, at the end of the fall semester. With the upcoming issue, we are encouraging faculty to submit manuscripts on disks, as Word files, but accompanied by a hard copy of the submission, as well as the two completed submission forms included on pages 153-154 of this volume. These forms may be photocopied for multiple submissions.

Generally, evaluation and selection of manuscripts to be published takes place in January, and authors and faculty are notified of their inclusion in February. From March into July, copy-editing, typesetting, proofreading, and production result in the volume you are presently reading.

The *Anthology* rarely publishes poetry or fiction, except as it may directly relate to course content; submissions of strictly creative work should be directed to another English department publication—*Point of View*. Instead, *The Harper Anthology* collects the somewhat unsung but crucial writing that is so critical to success in higher educa-

tion—essays, reports, research papers, responses, letters, and speeches, etc. This is not to say that the *Anthology* is full of dry, uncreative material. On the contrary—these pieces have been chosen for their spark, their beauty, their humor, and their life, as well as for their exactness and appropriateness as models to use in the classroom.

Students *are* the *Anthology*—this volume is evidence of their inspiration, creativity, diligence, and competence—and this year, 46 students have written with such excellence that the seven-member faculty panel of evaluators has chosen their work, from over 130 manuscripts, to include as the most exemplary of all submitted and as the highest-quality writing produced by all the thousands of Harper students. Faculty, also, are the *Anthology*—this collection is evidence of the inspiration, creativity, diligence, and competence of *faculty* as they develop meaningful assignments requiring writing and evaluate hundreds of papers over the academic year, toward the eventual publication of these select few.

This year, eleven departments of study are represented in the *Anthology*—English, Literature, Philosophy, Art, History, English as a Second Language, German, Plant Science Technology, Reading, Economics, and Speech. This represents increased diversity of departments over the 2001 issue, when only seven departments were represented. Personally, as editor of the *Anthology*, I am most excited by the papers from Art and Economics. Over the years, few papers related to art have been published in the *Anthology*; the three published by students of instructor Deborah Nance (two of them with accompanying sketches) represent a new, interesting flavor of academic writing for the *Anthology*, a flavor which I hope our future readers are able to enjoy regularly. Also, the paper by Paul M. Rollins, submitted by instructor Getachew Begashaw (from his Macroeconomics class), seems to be the first ever Economics paper published in the *Anthology*. The paper succinctly analyzes the current economic conditions of the US, and as Professor Begashaw put it, “The unique ability of the writer to make the otherwise thorny article in economics enjoyable is impeccable.” This article is a triumph in every aspect.

And of course, all of the articles presented in this volume represent triumphs. In fact, in reviewing the table of contents, I detect a strong theme running through much

of it—“love coming difficulty”—and I see this as evidence, that powerful, meaningful writing often has to do with a human struggle of some sort. In this volume, students wrote of their own struggles—as in Lynn Mutch’s lyrical, poetic essay on her home in Scotland (pp 75-78) or Merry Moran’s account of an intense childhood moment (pp 68-69)—but more often, even in the composition of research papers, students wrote of the struggles of others. Within these pages are excellent explorations, through literary analysis, of the struggles of immigrants in Chicago’s stockyards (Dana Popp, pp 87-91); of the difficulties of having seen action in Vietnam (Jessica Sanders, pp 97-101, and Kristen A. Zanon, pp 143-146); of being young and artistic (Michael Wolff’s paper on Willa Cather’s “Paul’s Case,” pp 137-142); and of coping with simply existing (Pete Thomas’ paper on the three short works by Franz Kafka, pp 125-130). These papers are provocative and interesting reading, and they, along with quite a few others, are excellent models for those learning to write research papers.

Other papers deserve special highlighting here, for their creative and insightful excellence. Jenny Dolan (pp 21-23) writes in the voice of a modern Ophelia, revealingly amplifying a voice that was softly heard in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, and Amy Winter applies a philosophical idea of John Stuart Mill’s to Prince Hamlet’s dilemma, in a well-reasoned and entertaining read (pp 133-136). If you are in the mood for something a little more humorous than Shakespeare and Mill, there are Nicole Kline’s “I’m So Glad to Be Me” (pp 49-51), in which the writer unflinchingly examines “who she is” (according to interviews with those closest to her), and also Nick Colosi’s delightfully wry account of his career path at CDW Distributors (pp 17-19). Or, if you are interested in reading a personal essay of remarkably professional sincerity and restraint, have a look at Joe Kaul’s “Time Together” (pp 40-41). There is much wisdom in this writer’s words.

By its nature, *The Harper Anthology* is a collaborative project; without the interest of the many contributing faculty members and students, this publication would not be what it is. In closing for this year, I thank in particular the many retiring Harper faculty who have submitted papers to past issues and to this issue. Also, I thank and encourage the many newer faculty members who have begun to submit papers to contribute to it, and I extend a hand of friendship to those who are just beginning their careers

at Harper and are considering submitting student papers for the first time. *The Harper Anthology* has helped develop cross-departmental collegiality and understanding, and we hope to continue that tradition as the Harper faculty continues to reshape itself.

This publication would also be impossible to produce without the extra, extended efforts of a number of individuals. English faculty and selection committee members Paul Bellwoar, Barbara Hickey, Judy Kaplow, Kurt Neumann, and Catherine Restovich carefully read and responded to each of the submissions, over Christmas break; committee co-chair Andrew Wilson also evaluated manuscripts and provided day-to-day guidance as the publication took shape; Deanna Torres typeset and corrected proofs of this issue in a timely fashion despite an interstate move at a critical time; Matt Nelson, Peter Gart, and the staff of Harper’s print shop provided invaluable production assistance and oversaw the printing of 1,200 flawless copies of this volume.

Finally, I personally thank three Harper faculty who have been of great assistance to me, with regard to this publication and in other professional areas, as well. First, I thank recently retired Professor Martha Simonsen for professional guidance and for providing this year’s Afterword, in which she writes of an activity we both love: traveling and writing about it. Also, I thank recently retired Dean of Liberal Arts, Dr. Harley Chapman, for professional guidance, good humor, and unfailing support of this publication. And, I am indebted to nowhere-near-retired Associate Professor Andrew Wilson, for having helped bring me to this point, for working in a profession I love, chairing a committee that works well together, and editing a publication that has significant educational value for the students and faculty at Harper. Andrew’s guidance as chair of *The Harper Anthology* committee for three years and as co-chair with me for the past two has been helpful, sound, fair, and consistent; thus, he has been himself in directing this publication.

Thanks, Andrew, and thanks, all.

Kris Popenburg  
Chair, *Harper Anthology* Selection Committee



# e gligence

Jennifer Amburgey

Course: English 100 (Composition)

Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

Assignment:

*Identify an area or behavioral pattern of your life that has caused you difficulty for some time—or a long struggle that you have been involved in, and that you have overcome (or are in the process of overcoming). Write an essay that “tracks” the development of the struggle from its beginning.*

When I was six, one day my mom went into the kitchen and answered a phone call from her older brother, and as I listened in on the phone conversation, I heard her say, “Okay, I will be there to pick them up as soon as I can.” She hung up the phone and walked into her bedroom, where she carelessly started throwing my smart head phones into a tiny blue suitcase. Sitting on the edge of her bed, I asked her, “What’s going on? Why are you packing?” She told me that things had gone bad, and her brother could no longer take care of their mom or their mentally ill sister, so she had to go and get them, to take care of them here. From that day when she left the house, I knew that my relationship with my mother would never be the same again.

\*\*\*\*\*

I had to adjust a lot when my aunt and grandma came to stay with our family. At first it was great, because there were new faces in the house, and I love my relatives;

however, as a six-year-old with much older sisters, a dad who worked the night shift, and now a mother who spent all of her time watching my grandmother, I no longer got the attention that the last baby girl in the house was supposed to get. As years went by, I got used to it, and I learned not to depend on other people as much. I became very angry with my mother, and sometimes, I felt no love for her anymore, because I felt she had chosen her mom over me. Secretly, inside, I hated my mother for the choice she had made. My bitterness would really show when I was on the park district softball team and she never could attend any of my games. I also got upset when she never went to any of the parent house meetings at school and could not look at all my artwork, which I had earned to be placed on the wall. Over the years, my grandmother was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease. She would forget who anyone was and became very weak. She walked more slowly than what I was used to, and at night, she would get frightened and yell out her sister’s name. She would yell, “Dellie, Dellie, come and get me, Oh Lord, Dellie.” This was an all night thing that happened almost every night. My mom quit working because my grandma and aunt needed constant attention. My aunt, who is mentally ill, always had to have my mother in her eyesight no matter what the situation was. My aunt, who was about 65, acted as if she had the mental capacity of a five-year-old child. She literally had to be standing or sitting two feet away from my mother all the time. Inside, I became very angry with everyone that I lived with, and I hated competing for my mother’s love and devotion.

\*\*\*\*\*

When I was a freshman in high school, my mother had been taking care of my aunt and my grandmother for about eight years. I could see the toll that it was taking on my mother. She had gained a lot of weight, and there were always wrinkles under her eyes from not getting enough sleep. My grandmother fell one night while going to bed, and it put a scar above her right eye. She got more weak and sick from it. She was not feeling any better; therefore, she could no longer walk as well as she had before. She needed instant care from my mom. This went on for about a month, and my mom decided she had done all that she could do. One day when I

walked into the house from being at school, I found out that my mom was putting my grandmother in a nursing home. She said to me, "Jennifer, I did all that I could do, for as long as I could, but Grandma has to go into a nursing home." After hearing those words come out of her mouth, it was like pins and needles had been shoved throughout my whole body. I had been waiting for her to say those words for eight long years, but now that it had finally happened, I felt very bad inside for wanting it to happen. My grandmother brought joy to my mom's life, and now my mother would be very depressed that she was gone, something that affected me, too. I didn't want my grandmother to leave, but I knew it had to be done. It was done; my grandmother was sent away, and my aunt was sent to go live with my mother's older sister.

\*\*\*\*\*

A month went by, and my mother felt that she had to go on living her life. She went out and applied for a factory job, and she got it. My mother finally had a life; therefore, she could do what she wanted, when she wanted, and now she didn't have to worry about satisfying anyone's needs but her own. It was the first time actually felt some kind of real love for her. She was there now when I needed her. I had my mother back after a very long time. We watched television together, went shopping, and now she was asking me what kind of things I liked for her to cook for dinner. It was a great feeling, and I finally got to know the kinds of loving emotions a daughter is supposed to feel for her mother. Slowly, she was coming back to me, and now I could talk to her about things that were going on in school, like the "A" I got on my math test—the new boy that I liked at the time. My life was now complete for the first time; I could hardly believe that my time had come to be happy again.

\*\*\*\*\*

As the saying goes, a good thing must come to an end at some point another. When I was a sophomore in high school, my mother had decided to make an appointment to see a gynecologist because her menstrual cycle was very irregular. I had my driver's permit, so my sister and I took my mother to the doctor after school one day. It was in the fall, because it was already dark as I got out of school, and it was raining. I still got to drive,

but what was going to be a routine checkup ended up being a horrible slap on the face. We finally got to the doctor, and my sister and I were waiting in the area we were designated to. We thought it was nothing, and my mom would just need some medicine. When my mother was finally out of the doctor's office, and we were walking to the car, she told us that something was wrong with her. As she started to cry, she told us that she had a tumor the size of a grapefruit in her ovaries, and there were a bunch of little ones that needed to be taken out as well. I held in the tears as she told me, but my sister started to cry as we all hugged each other in that dark empty parking lot. We got home, and I went straight to my bedroom and only then started to cry; as I had become older, I knew I was the one that had to be the strong one to hold everything together. All that I could think about was why God had punished my mom when all she did was help others and not take care of herself. That was the key—she did not take care of herself—maybe God works in mysterious ways, but in my opinion she had this problem because she never went to the doctor to make sure everything was okay. That was the reason she gained so much weight, and it was because she had this killing thing in her body that was taking up space, forcing its way, slowly growing into her body and making her look overweight. Shortly after this, she had a full hysterectomy and had the tumor taken out. She had to miss work, but now at least it seemed like all our troubles had gone away.

\*\*\*\*\*

Everything was good again—we took the good with the bad, right? Wrong.

About a month later, one night as I lay on the floor watching the MTV music awards, with my mom sitting in the chair beside me, we made comments about all the singers. She was laughing and said, "Busta Rhymes' hair looks like a rat's nest." We laughed, and shortly after that, she complained of a headache. After a half hour of taking the pain, my mom told me that she was going to bed. She said, "Goodnight baby." I said, "Goodnight mom." That was the end of that. I went on watching my show and went to bed shortly afterward. In the middle of the night, about two or three in the morning, I heard a noise coming from my mom's room. She was saying, "Jennifer,

come and help me, I have to go to the bathroom.” I thought she was still sore from the surgery and needed help getting up to the bathroom. Half asleep and a little mad because I was awakened from my dream, I stumbled in the dark into her room. I grabbed her by the arm and helped her sit up. I said, “Come on, let’s go, if you have to go to the bathroom.” Something was not right; she stood up, and once we started to walk, she fell. For no reason at all, she just fell. I didn’t know what the problem was; I was thinking, what is wrong with her? So I said, “Mom get up, come on.” With slurred words, her reply was, “I’m trying, and I can’t.” So I ran to the next room and got my sister. She shook her head and said, “Get up, hurry, something is wrong with mom.” She got up, and we got my mother up and we called for my dad. We all looked at her, and she could not move the left side of her body, and her speech was slurred. We called 911, and she was taken to the hospital in an ambulance. It turned out that she had a blood clot that went past her heart, directly to her brain, and it caused a severe stroke; it was unbelievable.

\*\*\*\*\*

As I drove to the hospital with my sister, all that I could think of was, how could this happen to my mother again? What had she done to deserve this? I knew that I could never get an answer, but I still was strong, and I did not cry. We got there and called my other older sister, and she quickly came to meet up with us. My mom was put into the intensive care unit for a month. The first time I got to see her, she was just lying in the hospital bed, and my sister was just holding her hand, saying, “It’s going to be okay, you are strong, I know you will be just fine.” I walked in there, and right away I felt this lump in my throat as I leaned over to give her a hug, and the tears filled up in my eyes, and I quickly turned the other way from her so that I would not upset my mother by letting on that things were really terrible. As the tears came streaming down my face, it was at that exact moment that I realized I couldn’t fathom living without a mother. She was like a totally different person; she did not look like the mother that I had grown so accustomed to seeing every day of my life. She looked different; her smile was slanted, and her hand was curled up into a ball where the stroke had paralyzed it. She did not look well at all; it was as if someone had just come and drained the

life out of her. It reminded me of what happens when lightning strikes a tree and splits the branches from the trunk. After that happens, you can’t fix the tree; you can only hope that it still lives on. All that was going through my mind was, she will never look the same again and will never be the same again. I felt outraged, and there was nothing that I could do to help her.

\*\*\*\*\*

I realized from that day on that anything can change overnight before me, and it could never be the same again. My mother had taken the same steps as my grandmother had a year before. They both went to bed one night and were found the next morning to never be the same as they once were.

\*\*\*\*\*

My mother came through the whole ordeal; however, she had to have a lot of rehabilitation and therapy to regain her speech. It all came back, but she still has lost most use of her left arm and right leg. She can walk with a cane, and her facial structure has returned back to normal. I feel no resentment towards my mother. Somehow in this whole tragedy, I became close to her again, and one way or another, I got my mother back. We care for each other and I ask her if she’s doing okay. We always make sure we have time for each other to talk about what is going on in our lives. Our relationship has grown to a high place that I will cherish for the rest of my life. In one instant she could have been taken away from us, but in some mysterious way she was chosen to stay here for a while, and I thank God every day. I let this be a lesson to me, that I got a second chance to trust someone again and to love again. I have found the strength and a new courage to feel okay to depend on someone once in a while. I thank her for teaching me that lesson in life, and I know from now on that I can now handle whatever it is that life may throw at me.

---

Evaluation: *Jennifer writes not only and effectively about a true pattern in her life that has taken ironic directions and has taught her much about living.*

---

---

# Looking at Art: One Piece on the Harper Campus

---

*Idalia A. Atgumedo*

Course: Fine Arts 113 (History of Art III)

Instructor: Deborah Nance

---

## Assignment:

*Analyze a work of art displayed at the Harper Campus. Consider the content, images used to convey the content, application involved in making the artwork, and possible influences in making the work. Incorporate art vocabulary wherever possible.*

When this “art observation” activity was assigned to our class this morning, I was very glad to have the opportunity to experience my favorite piece of art on the campus (besides the Picasso) once again. This is the loudest, yet the subtlest picture I have ever seen. I think the medium is some type of print. It is in black and white and looks very still and silent, as a woman is sitting sadly and patiently in a chair, with her right hand over her throat and jaw and her left hand over her head. She holds her head in a motionless tilt, her eyes and mouth closed, and she gives the viewer a feeling of tension, pain, and silent suffering.

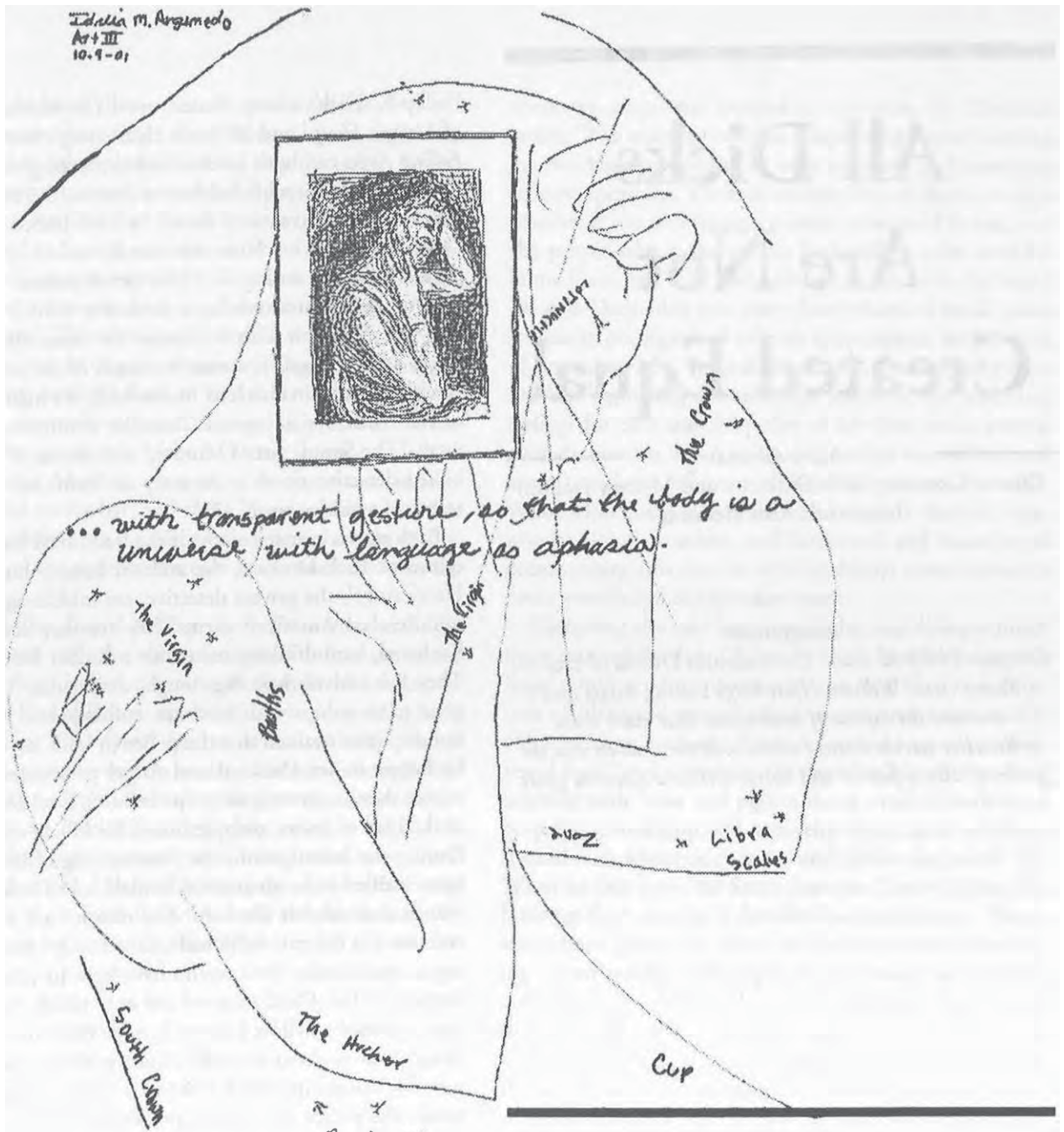
The focal point is the woman’s oversized hand, which gently covers her throat (you may later

realize, her vocal cords, after reading the title: “Language as Aphasia”). In my linguistics class, I had learned that aphasia is the loss of understanding or expression of speech, usually after a great trauma. But when you look at this artwork, you don’t have to understand the meaning of the word aphasia; the woman’s inability to express herself and to connect with the outer world is evident. She is stuck in the space within herself. This is an experience I once knew for long periods of time, not because I have ever suffered from aphasia, but because I am bilingual, and at one time I was monolingual, and in the interim I was in a limbo between languages. Expressing myself and connecting outside of my own inner space was frightful and unknown to my experience of an earlier age. I find myself far beyond all barriers at my later age, but the earlier experience is unforgettable. This is the reason this work caught my attention so powerfully the first time I walked into Harper, and every time I walk past it.

Observing this work closely, one notices many things. Besides the dark shadows in the background, this black and white print has layers and layers of textures and patterns that resemble cloth, paper, and maybe even a dark wax texture. There also seems to be a faded map effect, plus black and white etchings of a pair of men’s legs in tights, and a woman’s foot in a sandal, with a long flowing robe. There are layers of very subtle stars and words printed throughout, giving repetition and rhythm of subliminal messages imprinted on the arms and body of the figure. These very descriptive messages speak loudly: virgin, cup, booth, archer, scorpion, South crown, Libra scales. Map lines and constellations give unity and variety to the overall drawing, poignantly linking communication to horoscopes, feelings, inner spaces, sexuality, suffering. Who knows—it is quite open to personal interpretation.

Linguistics has huge significance in my judgment of this artwork. This piece of art always speaks to me. I connect through language, spoken and unspoken. As a bilingual person, I have doubled my capacity to interpret signals, visual signs, and body language—which speaks





Sketch of R.T. Beinardi's "Language as Aphasia."

the loudest silence, which transcends into the essence of human understanding through suffering and pain. While the written word (as a visual tool) is almost solete, the language of the figure is sublimely understood, as the message in the stom of this pint states, "... with transparent gesture, s that the body is a universe with language as aphasia." This message is printed in big ack letters, covered y white, on the stom of the fame.

Evaluation: As a bilingual person, the writer analogizes different kinds of language. Th author recalls a time when she was in limbo between languages, linking her experience (of owing between languages) to the definition of the title of the piece: "Language as Aphasia" (the inability to articulate language). It is i portant to note that titles can give the viewer greater insight into the meaning of an artwork. She also discerns between written language and gesture as ody language of the figure us d within the artwork. Both are powerful forms of communication.



---

# All Dicks Are Not Created Equal

Mary Aurand

Course: Literature 217 (Detective and Mystery Fiction)

Instructor: Kurt Hemmer

## Assignment:

Compare Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* with William Hjortsberg's *Falling Angel* and examine the aspects of both novels that mark them as detective novels. Focus on how well these novels mix the genres of science fiction and horror with the detective genre.

Phillip K. Dick's science fiction novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and William Hjortsberg's horror novel *Falling Angel* can both be classified as mixed-genre novels. In addition to the sci-fi and horror themes, the authors use many of the conventions found in hard-boiled detective ("dick") fiction. The classic detective formula is apparent in characterization, setting, and plot development. However, *Falling Angel* succeeds as a detective novel, whereas *Androids* does not. This is because the main character in *Angel*, Harry Angel, is a man in search of the truth. Rick Deckard, the main character in *Androids*, is a man in denial of the truth. As Raymond Chandler commented in his essay, "The Simple Art of Murder," the essence of the hard-boiled detective novel is the story of "man's adventure in search of a hidden truth" (21).

Both novels contain many of the traditional hard-boiled elements. Rick Deckard, the android bounty hunter, and Harry Angel, the private detective, are middle-aged, lower middle-class American men. They are skeptical, street-smart, hard-drinking men with a disdain for authority. They live and work in big, tough, dirty cities. They have poor relationships with local law enforcement. This relationship is so strained that the police in both novels would be happy to see Deckard and Angel persecuted for the crimes they are investigating. In *Androids*, Deckard is taken to the Hall of Justice and questioned for killing an android. During the investigation, the interrogating officer, who is later revealed to be an android himself, asks Deckard, "Are you an android, Mr. Deckard? The reason I ask is that several times in the past we've had escaped analysts turn up posing as out-of-state bounty hunters here in pursuit of a suspect" (114). Deckard must not only justify his actions, but convince a fellow bounty hunter that the officer in charge is an android himself. Similarly, there is an antagonistic relationship between Angel and the police. Angel teases the police with jokes and references they do not understand, such as telling them Ezra Pound was an old war buddy and that a satanic ritual invitation written in Latin is an invitation to a nephew's confirmation. Knowing that Angel has outwitted him, but not quite sure how, the detective threatens, "Guys like you play jump rope with the law. Someday real soon you're gonna slip, and I'll be there waiting with open arms" (196).

*Androids* and *Angel* also follow the hard-boiled formula for settings. Both novels take place in bleak, oppressed

cities. In *Androids*, the world has experienced a nuclear war, and a constant haze floats above earth. Anyone eligible has emigrated to other planets, leaving only the police, bounty hunters, some businessmen and the physically or mentally ineffective (the “chicken heads”) on earth. Animals are either endangered or extinct, and the earthbound humans regard live animals as status symbols. Those who cannot afford a live animal often purchase an electronic one and pretend that it is real. This ruse is so complete that electronic animal repair people disguise themselves as veterinarians, and owners buy artificial food to feed their artificial animals. Likewise, the world depicted in *Angel* is grim. Set in New York, most scenes take place in seamy locations, such as Time Square, Harlem, a cemetery, an abandoned subway station, and smoky bars and clubs. Angel is a character that seems to gravitate to the night rather than the light of day, and most of the significant scenes in the book occur in the evening.

Despite the dismal settings, both Deckard and Angel find love, but with the wrong woman. This is a consistent theme in hard-boiled detective fiction. Deckard has an affair with Rachel Rosen, an android—the very thing he is supposed to kill. Angel has an affair with Epiphany Proudfoot, a young woman we later discover is actually his daughter. However, in this aspect we see a significant difference between Deckard and Angel, and this begins to explain why *Angel* succeeds as a hard-boiled novel and *Androids* does not. Deckard is married, and his affair with Rachel is a short-lived fling. He soon returns to his wife and resumes his “normal” life. While they did fall in love with the “wrong woman,” it was only a brief infatuation with no lasting effect on his character. In opposition, Angel is a single man, and his incestuous affair with Epiphany, capped by her graphic death, leads the story to a shocking climax: his discovery that he is Johnny Favorite. When Angel arrives at Epiphany’s crime scene, he has an epiphany about himself and resigns himself to his true fate. As the last line in the book explains, “This time, the joke was on me” (289). Thus, Angel’s affair with the “wrong woman” leads him to a truthful revelation about his quest and himself, while Deckard’s affair is simply a fling resulting in no character development or discovery of an essential truth.

*Angel* is also more successful as a hard-boiled novel because Hjortsberg does not dilute his story with social

messages. *Angel* was created to entertain. As Chandler wrote, “The murder novel has a depressing way of minding its own business, solving its own problems and answering its own questions. There is nothing left to discuss, except whether it was well enough written to be good fiction, and the people who make up the half-million sales wouldn’t know it anyway” (2). *Androids* fails as a hard-boiled novel because Dick adds too many heavy-handed social commentaries on organized religion (Mercerism), authenticity of emotions (the Voigt-Kampff test, the empathy box, Deckard’s growing emotions for androids, the androids, feelings for each other), quality of life (live versus electric animals, humans versus androids), nuclear war (fallout and kipple), and the influence of the media (Buster Friendly). While Hjortsberg also deals with religious themes (organized religion, voodoo, and Satanism) and some social commentary (interracial relationships), these elements never overshadow the detective story.

Hjortsberg also uses language, cliché, and dialogue much more successfully than Dick to create a hard-boiled world. *Angel* is told as a first-person narrative, and Harry’s description of his world creates classic mean streets scenes. His office building overlooks Times Square and a smoking billboard for Camel cigarettes. He describes his office as cluttered together with “soot and pigeon dung...tucked between a peep-show bookshop and a novelty place, show windows stacked with whoopee cushions and plaster dog turds” (2). When he first meets the Satan character, Louis Cypher, the building they meet in is described as resembling a “forty-story cheese grater” (4). Later, he describes a sunrise by noting “dawn smudged the night sky like rouge on a chorus girl’s cheek” (90). Angel also uses hard-boiled euphemisms to describe himself (“I was beginning to feel like a sucker in a snipe hunt” [48]) and other characters. His description of the boardwalk fat lady paints a graphic picture: “somewhere under those acres of suet lurked a little girl with a brand-new party dress” (112). Language like this is never used in *Androids*, which is written in the more conventional third-person narrative style.

Yet, the most definitive difference between the characters of Deckard and Angel is how they approach their quest for truth. Deckard does not want to find the truth. Angel does. Deckard kills androids that are masquerading as humans because he believes that it is wrong for androids to

pretend to be what they are not. This is very hypocritical, considering his personal life is a series of lies: his sheep is electric, the android's human wife uses a machine to dictate their emotions, and he believes in a religious charade enacted by a drunk on a movie sound stage. Deckard wants to believe that as a bounty hunter he is preserving human order, yet he will not acknowledge that his own life is a sham. In his attempt to discount the growing empathy he feels for the androids he kills, he becomes less and less human himself. In opposition, Angel relentlessly pursues the truth, and this pursuit results in his own demise. From the minute he meets with Cypher, he senses that this is not a good case. When he notices Cypher's hands, he describes them as "Languid yet lethal, the cruel tapered fingers perfect instruments of evil" (5). Despite numerous satanic and voodoo symbols and rituals, and increasingly violent deaths, Angel plods on, intent on finding the missing Johnny Favorite. At any time he could have quit the job and told Cypher to find another detective, but this would not be consistent with the character of a hard-boiled dick. A hard-boiled dick sticks with the job to the end. It is his code of honor, what distinguishes him from the police detectives. The police are bumbling in search of an easy answer and their next coffee break. In contrast, the hard-boiled dick wants the true answer, regardless of the consequences. He will not be deterred by superficial distractions. As Angel says, while lunching with Louis Cypher (Lucifer), "Nothing's going to stop me from getting to the truth" (172). And for Angel, the truth has hellish consequences.

#### Works Cited

- Chandler, Raymond. "The Simple Art of Murder: An Essay." *The Simple Art of Murder*. 1950. New York: Ballantine, 1984. 1-21.
- Dick, Phillip K. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* 1968. New York: Ballantine, 1996.
- Hjorsberg, William. *Falling Angel*. 1978. New York: St. Martin's, 1996.

---

Evaluation: *I was impressed with Mary's essay because she focused in on what she felt was the essence of the detective novel and made a convincing argument.*

---

---

# Cathedral

---

*Anna Balice*

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Andrew Wilson

---

Assignment:

*Write a literary research paper.*

There are few individuals who experience epiphanies, or sudden realizations, that allow them to get outside their own lives and understand the world from totally different perspectives. In contrast, there are many individuals who live their lives through limited perspectives without ever opening up and fully understanding the world they live in. A clear example of this idea can be seen when certain individuals in our society have preconceived notions or prejudices about other groups of people even though they have never had any human connection with them. For example, say a white man discriminates against his new black neighbor just because of the color of his skin. The white man does not have the ability to see his neighbor apart from his ethnic background because he does not allow himself the opportunity to have any significant communication or contact with him. The white man is figuratively blind and lives an empty life because of his limited perspective and lack of insight. Raymond Carver offers another illustration of this universal truth in his well-known short story “Cathedral.” In “Cathedral” the narrator experiences a life-changing epiphany, through sightless communication with a blind man, which allows him to suddenly improve his thinking and see life in a more profound way.

“Cathedral” opens with an irritated narrator whose wife has invited a blind friend to spend the night. The story unfolds through the narrator’s limited point of view, which leaves the events open to many interpretations. Because the point of view is limited, the readers of “Cathedral” must read between the lines and fill in the gaps of information left out by the narrator in order to construct meaning to the story. In the first few lines of the story, the narrator tells us immediately that his visitor’s blindness bothers him and that he is not looking forward to having a blind man in his house. We learn that all his ideas about blind men, he admits, come from the movies. According to him, “the blind moved slowly and never laughed. Sometimes they were led by seeing-eye dogs” (Carver 117). Throughout the rest of the story the narrator states other preconceived notions that he has about the blind, such as “dark glasses were a must” (120) and “the blind didn’t smoke because...they couldn’t see the smoke they exhaled” (121). It becomes obvious that the narrator seems to be uncomfortable with the notion of blindness, with his wife’s friendship with the blind man, and with his own inability to relate to other human beings. “But the story moves towards a moment of illumination and transformation, taking the limited narrator to a rare epiphanal moment” (Stern 660). After an evening of heavy drinking and pot smoking, the narrator turns on the television and begins describing what he sees to the blind man. When clips of a cathedral appear on the screen, the narrator has a difficult time describing the cathedral. The blind man teaches the narrator to “see” the cathedral through drawing, and the narrator experiences an epiphany and the possibility of change (seeing things in a purer sense) in his life.

Throughout most of the story the narrator’s thinking is immature and insensitive, and there is an important passage in the beginning of the story that easily proves this. The narrator flashes back to a story of how his wife met the blind man when she worked for him as a reader, while her first husband was in an officer’s training school. The narrator tells us that the blind man and his wife had become good friends. He also tells us about her last day working for him and how the blind man touched her face: “And she told me something else. On her last day in the office, the blind man asked if he could touch her



face. She agreed to do this. She told me he touched his fingers to every part of her face, her nose—even her neck!” (Carver 117). The narrator “emphasizes the eroticism of the blind man’s touch,” as critic Mark Facknitz says (111), and in doing so he reveals his jealousy towards his wife’s close friendship with the blind man. The touch of the blind man’s fingers on her face is an essential moment in her life, something that the narrator is too insensitive to understand. Moreover, the narrator’s wife writes a poem about the blind man touching her face, and the narrator also seems a little uneasy about all this:

She never forgot it. She even tried to write a poem about it. She was always trying to write a poem. She wrote a poem or two every year, usually after something really important had happened to her.... In the poem, she talked about what she felt the time, about what went through her mind when the blind man touched her nose and lips. I can remember I didn’t think much of the poem. (Carver 117)

His wife having written a poem about the blind man touching her face links human closeness to reading and writing in an obvious way, but the narrator’s thinking is immature, and he is perfectly incapable of understanding and “seeing” the significance of his wife’s poem and her connection with the blind man.

Another example of the narrator’s immature thinking is his view of his wife’s correspondence with Robert through the exchange of tapes, and more importantly, his wife’s attempted suicide. Robert and the narrator’s wife keep in touch for many years by making tapes and sending them back and forth to each other. This connection between them seems to be an important constant in her life, something that confuses the narrator. At one point in her marriage to the air force officer and before her marriage to the narrator, she tried to commit suicide because she felt so lonely and isolated. Her correspondence with Robert through the exchange of tapes continues into the present and appears to be her only outlet for her feelings. It is obvious that the narrator is too inconsiderate to realize that his wife has been suffering and that her connection through the exchange of tapes with Robert is the only conversational intimacy that exists in her life up to now. Moreover, the narrator’s view of his wife’s suffering and attempted suicide is without sympathy:

She sent tapes from Moody AFB, McGuire, McConnell, and finally Travis, near Sacramento, where one night she got to feeling lonely and cut off from people she kept losing in that moving-around life. She balked, couldn’t go it another step. She went in and swallowed all the pills and capsules in the medicine cabinet and washed them down with a bottle of gin. Then she got in a hot bath and passed out. But instead of dying she got sick. She threw up. (Carver 118)

As critic Mark Facknitz states, “Suicide is mundane, for him merely a question of balking at life, and balking is roughly the equivalent to throwing up, something one might do instead” (111). By analysis of the detailed description of his wife’s attempted suicide, it is obvious that the narrator is too immature and does not “see” how to communicate with his wife and sympathize with her feelings in profound and important ways. The narrator also does not see how this isolation damages the relationship he has with his wife.

The narrator’s view of the blind man’s marriage and relationship to his wife Beulah is also childish. After eight years of being happily married to the blind man, Beulah was diagnosed with cancer and died shortly thereafter. The narrator thinks about what Beulah must have felt while married to a blind man:

I was beyond my understanding.... And then found myself thinking what a pitiful life this woman must have led. Imagine a woman who could never see herself as she was seen in the eyes of her loved one. A woman who could go one day after day and never receive the smallest compliment from her beloved. A woman whose husband could never read the expression on her face, be in misery or something better. Someone who could wear makeup or not—what difference to him.... And then slip off into death, the blind man’s hand on her hand, his blind eyes streaming tears—I’m imagining now—her last thought may be this: that he never even knew what she looked like, and she could express to the grave....Pathetic. (Carver 119)

“In the cinematic of the passage, the narrator contradicts his admission that ‘It was beyond my understanding’; in fact, ‘understanding’ and ‘imagining’ become identical” (Hathcock 37). The narrator changes the story of the blind man’s marriage given by his wife, and he manages his own immature comprehension of truly “imagining” what the marriage truly must have been like. The narrator believes that Beulah did not receive compliments from



her husband because of his blindness, but he cannot “see” that the blind man could have complimented her on things other than physical characteristics, such as her sweet smell, her kind nature, or even her soft touch. Also, the narrator cannot “see” that Robert could have sensed Beulah’s feelings and thoughts (other than the physical expression) by the tone of her voice or by a natural silence. Although the narrator “understands” that he is describing the relationship he imagines existed between Robert and Beulah, the truth is that the description more accurately describes the relationship between the narrator and his wife. Robert and Beulah had a deep, meaningful relationship, but the narrator excludes and isolates himself from any such relationship with his own wife.

All of these events have occurred before the narrator even meets the blind man, but when the blind man finally arrives, the narrator continues to be jealous of his relationship with his wife. When the narrator’s wife and the blind man arrive home from the train station, the narrator gets up from the sofa and goes to the window to have a look. The narrator describes what he sees when the car pulls into the driveway:

I saw my wife laughing as she parked the car. I saw her get out of the car and shut the door. She was still wearing a smile. Just amazing.... My wife took his arm, shut the car door, and, talking all the way, moved him down the drive and then up the steps to the front porch. (Carver 119)

There are many repeated allusions to sight in these lines, but the narrator is only jealous and is unable to see his wife in any other than the most basic, physical sense of the word. He stresses the fact that his wife is laughing, smiling, and talking with Robert, and in doing so, he reveals his jealousy (once again) towards their close relationship. The narrator fails to recognize that his isolation, which does not allow *him* to become close with his wife, damages himself, his wife, and their relationship.

Further, later in the evening when the three characters finish dinner and move to the living room to chat, the narrator decides that the blind man is “beginning to run down” (121), so he turns on the television. Television does not demand active participation in the same way that face-to-face communication does. This demonstrates the significant human communication that the narrator lacks, and the narrator continues only to listen

to the conversation that his wife and the blind man share: “they talked about the major things that had come to pass for them in the past ten years. For the most part I just listened.... They talked of things that had happened to them—to them!—these past ten years” (121). The two-way conversation that Robert and the narrator’s wife share (the narrator excludes himself from any such human connection) demonstrates how Robert has the ability to “see” (unlike the narrator) and know the narrator’s wife in ways that stretch beyond physical vision. This scene further displays the narrator’s ability to be jealous and his inability to relate to other human beings in profound ways.

Up until this point in the story it is obvious that the narrator’s thinking is immature and insensitive, but finally during the last scene of the story the narrator experiences a life-changing epiphany, and his thinking improves as he learns to “see” in a more profound way. When a television documentary begins showing pictures of cathedrals, Robert asks the narrator to describe them to him. The narrator tries, but because the narrator is not religious and because cathedrals don’t mean anything to him, he fails to create a picture that the blind man can comprehend. The blind man then suggests that he and the narrator draw one together. With some heavy paper, the narrator takes the blind man’s hand and constructs a cathedral. He then tells him to close his eyes, and the television station goes off the air. Together, they continue drawing a cathedral, and Robert says, “Never thought anything like this could happen in your lifetime, did you, bub? Well, it’s a strange life, we all know that” (126). At this moment, perhaps for the first time in his life, the narrator is actively participating in human communication. Then, surprisingly, the blind man tells the narrator to close his eyes as he completes the drawing. “It was like nothing else in my life up to now.... ‘It’s really something,’” he tells the reader (127). Drawing the cathedral with his eyes closed prompts the epiphany because “he learns that conventional vision is not the only way to see things and that the eyes are not the only organs with which one can view the world” (Campbell 66). The narrator also realizes that since he himself can draw with his eyes closed that it *is* possible for others to function (to draw, to eat, etc.) even without the sense of

sight. The narrator finally “sees” the essence of the cathedral, and more importantly, the essence of human life and human communication.

The ending of “Cathedral” contributes to Carver’s principle message. The closing scene explains how in a moment of quiet epiphany, the narrator appears to make a shift from ignorance to awareness, from confusion to understanding, and ultimately from isolation to active participation in life, made possible by the sightless communication he shares with Robert. As critic Ewing Campbell claims, “the protagonist discovers a profound truth that is necessary in order to take one’s place in mature society” (64). Before the drawing of the cathedral, the narrator’s thinking is immature, but we can conclude that from now on the narrator will view everything in his life differently from his initial attitude. The narrator as “moved from a posture where he cruelly mocked the condition of blindness, confiding that he knows nothing about the blindness except from seeing a blind man on T.V., to a position where he will close his eyes and draw, letting the blind man speak the drawing, and allowing their two blind hands to travel over the page together seeing images that neither man has actually ever seen” Stern (661). Also, before the drawing of the cathedral, the narrator has difficulty understanding his wife’s experience with Robert and her significant, meaningful poetry about her experience. By the end of the story, we can infer that the narrator has acknowledged that his experience is identical to his wife’s and that she is capable of understanding her poetry. Most importantly, the narrator overcomes his isolation and inability to relate to other human beings. He recognizes the significance of human communication, which will allow him to bring conversational intimacy into his life and his marriage. The narrator and Robert come together in the end to successfully explain Carver’s idea of coming to an understanding of human communication and its significance to life through communion with another human being.

## Works Cited

- Campbell, Ewing. “Maturity: ‘Cathedral.’” *Raymond Carver: A Study of the Short Fiction*. New York: Twayne, 1992. 48-66.
- Carver, Raymond. “Cathedral.” *Literature and Its Writers: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*. Ed. Ann Carters and Samuel Charters. 2nd ed. Boston: Bedford Books, 2001. 117-127.
- Facknitz, Mark. “‘The Calm,’ ‘A Small, Good Thing,’ and ‘Cathedral’: Raymond Carver and the Rediscovery of Human Worth.” *Studies in Short Fiction* 23.3 (1986): 287-96.
- Hathcock, Nelson. “The Possibility of Resurrection: Revision In Carver’s ‘Feathers’ and ‘Cathedral.’” *Studies in Short Fiction* 28.1 (1991): 31-39.
- Stern, Carol Simpson. “Cathedral.” *Reference Guide to Short Fiction*. Ed. Noelle Watson. Detroit: St. James Press, 1994. 660-1.

---

Evaluation: Anna has written a beautiful analysis of a beautiful short story. She has responded to Raymond Carver’s message with the maturity and wisdom of a sage.

---

# Parasites of Pain

---

*Carol Booth*

Course: Literature 115 (Fiction)

Honors Topic: Chicago Fiction

Instructor: Nancy L. Davis

Assignment:

*Use the following quote by Studs Terkel to discuss the nature of Nelson Algren's characters in the short story collection, Neon Wilderness: "Algren could talk about hell in such a way that he touched heaven" (289).*

Regardless of our background, be it from a monochrome, one-room, studio apartment or from a vista overlooking a crashing, bottle-green sea, most of us have seen antique photographs of family generations we've never known. We've noticed their unsmiling faces and wondered why they appear so pensive. Perhaps it was the accepted artistic style of the photographers of the time, but we can rarely recall any snapshot of happiness. We recognize that their lives were vastly different than our own. Perhaps we understand that they struggled in ways we have never experienced, but their faces look so melancholic—as though their lives were hellish. Family stories handed down, like recipes, from generation to generation, illustrate that there were hardships—but also heavenly moments. We use our imaginations to try to understand what we have not experienced ourselves, what we cannot see in the still exposures.

Nelson Algren uses words to demonstrate a similar kind of heaven and hell, skillfully capturing his characters' lives and settings like faded black-and-white records, the same way we visualize our ancestors in photographs. His stories feel dusky and somber, but, at the same time, they are full of the vivid pigments of reality. There is a sense of purgatory, yet, in the same breath, a sense of amusement. His writing entertains in the face of a bleak reality, beguiling his readers with ephemeral moments from limbo to euphoria and back again. As Terkel suggested in his own words, "...Algren could talk about hell in such a way that he touched heaven" (289). This style is reflected in many of his characters and stories, but "How the Devil Came Down Division Street" is the example that has a bit of hell appearing right from its title, an assemblage difficult to neglect.

"The devil lives in a double-shot," is our first experience with Algren's approach, in this particular story (35). Roman describes the parasitic worm that "gnaws and gnaws" on him and asks for assistance in freeing himself from this leech (35). Algren receives the intended response from every reader when considering such a worm: an evil, alien parasite living within our bodies—a hellish thought that makes us squirm. We understand that Roman is a drunk and is served this devilish tapeworm, to digest, for a reason: Algren wants us to consider why his character is "no longer really among the living at

all” (35). Roman is in this abyss, and Algren carefully shows us how we got there.

Quickly, Algren levitates us from the bar where we’ve made our first impression of Roman, to a tenement apartment lacking sufficient bedding for its inhabitants. We see the image through Algren’s lens: dull, poorly eaten, Roman’s empty-hearted father in a hellish, poor family’s home. He appeals to our humanity, showing us how Roman came to be the neighborhood drunk. His life was difficult. His mother cooked day and night, his father came home from work intoxicated, they had very little money, his siblings shared beds and fought, and Roman was responsible for their care when propelled from his sleep by his father’s early morning, inebriated return home from work: then his father slept while the family went to Sunday mass. While the family prayed in church, Roman’s father was haunted by the demon at home. Perhaps they touched heaven while their father had a visit from hell.

Next, Algren’s ghost-like story describes a young teen feeling a cold wind escaping an opened closet door, while in search of unusual sounds. The sounds of tapping or knocking, of unexplained breezes, of one all-knowing character dreaming of a demon, of a dead victim revisiting its past home—these are common ghost story or urban legend themes. We’ve heard the familiar tales: they are woven into our lives like the scratchy wool in our winter sweaters. We’ve seen these images in our perennially favorite movies, have read them in famous novels, or have heard them in local urban tales: “The Sixth Sense,” *The Stand*, “Resurrection Mary.” We’ve even dreamt about them at night. We recall the closet of our own youth: the entrance had to be closed in order for us to fall asleep safely. “The boy stiffened under the covers, listening with his fear” (37). Algren’s language transports us to our own recollections, our own youth, and our own lives. Roman is just a child, a human being, like any reader. He had youthful, innocent thoughts and fears just like our own. For a moment we become this character ourselves, and therefore, cannot help but to sympathize. When we truly see ourselves in a character, the author has ensnared our own souls and spirits.

Soon thereafter, not only his father, but Roman and his mother became aware of an uninvited presence. Roman heard the thumping sounds, and his mother had a remarkable dream of a drunken man in the hallway. It must be real! We feel the demon in the apartment—the bogeyman inside our own closet! Algren has us entangled in this mesh. We peel back the blankets from over our own heads and look for the monster ourselves. We are being entertained, as if we are hearing our first ghost story.

Next, Mama Z. goes to Mama Zolewitz’s neighboring apartment—the revelation begins. Mama Z. sees it all. She smothered the demon as she drifted through the history of the family’s predecessors. She verbally opened the proverbial closet door and showed Mama Z. the man who hung himself after beating his pregnant lady to death. She explained that the dead man’s ghost meant her family no harm; she only needed a prayer. The reader feels Mama Z.’s breath in her sigh of relief.

The family prayed together and seemed to be soaring upward towards a better life: “Mama Z. knew then that the knocking had been a sign of good omen, and told the priest . . .” (39). Algren had us seeing the angels of light for this family: “He said it was the will of God that the Orlovs should redeem the young man by prayer and that Papa Z. should have a wife instead of an accordion” (39). The family was healing, their spirits lifting towards heaven, as did ours—momentarily; but Roman would not mend.

In the end, we come full circle, to where we begin with Roman: a drunk in a Chicago bar. The pendulum swung back for Roman. In the absence of an available bed, he “roamed” the nights away, finding dangerous pandemonium in a bottle, as his father had taught him. He also inherited his father’s vampire-like habits, spending the nights out and sleeping during the day. We leave Algren’s story with Roman trying to kill his parasites of pain, his own memories and demons, in his double shot, wondering if anyone would ever hear his plea for help. He is in limbo, and now we understand how we got there. Algren has spun his silky web around us, entertained us for a moment, given us divine opportunity in the light, and then twirled us again until the life has spun

out of his Roman character. The perpetual darkness of hell returned.

As an author, Nelson Algren tempts us to consider his characters as the people in our own lives: the people we may have passed on the street, without understanding. He reminds us that every character has a story, and with wisdom and grace we can often uncover and redeem a heavenly soul. Algren has the ability to capture and enlarge a picture of a particular life, without a camera or its equipment and without contrivance, so plainly with his words. It is said that once we try to put an important story into words, the language cannot do it justice. Algren has a heavenly gift; he was able to lift his words from the written page and transform them into breathing, living portraits.

#### Work Cited

Algren, Nelson. "How the Devil Came Down Division Street." *The Neat Wildcat*. Chicago: Seven Stories Press, 1986. 35-41.

---

Evaluation: *With her precise, evocative writing, the author convincingly shows us how Algren could touch heaven while writing about hellish lives and places. This essay motivates the reader to sample Algren's heavenly hell for themselves.*



---

# The First Day

Christopher E. Briant

Course: English 100 (Composition)

Instructor: Judy A. Kulchawik

Assignment:

Using a photograph for a memory prompt, write a descriptive narrative that begins "in the center" of the story's action.

My eyes were closed; against my will, the darkness enveloped me. The only noise was the roar of the bus engine that cut through the silence like a knife. The tops of my legs were beginning to get damp from the sweat oozing from the palms of my hands; I was about to enter a world unknown to me. Erect, like a statue in an unnatural position, I knew they were already asking too much of me as the pain started to creep up my spine. Every turn felt like a forceful wave as I felt out of control and helpless in the suspended state. The occasional burst from the imperceptible heightened the fear of the unexpected, but that was what I was looking for. "Close your eyes!" said the voice, in a piercing grumble.

My concept of time was slipping away, as if life was in slow motion. Deep down I knew that I couldn't have been in the bus more than a fraction of an hour, but we turned off many roads, and I felt we were moving fast. Between the roar of the overworked bus and the hard turns that jolted me side to side, my need to see began to grow. My left wrist started to itch, a digging sensation, a reminder that I could cure my problem with a quick glance; my watch began to taunt me.

"I said left hand, left knee!" rumbled the voice. Then without warning this overwhelming voice stabbed at my ear like a dagger, "Right hand, right knee!" It was no more a rumble of an earthquake but the scream of a banshee. The monster was close; I felt its hot breath peeling at me like the fiery breath from a dragon. His stare was intense

and burning through me. I could feel it, even with my eyes closed, like an extrasensory perception. It was then that it came upon me. "Well, any freaking day!" he thundered, with hatred for me that I could not understand. As if awakening from a coma, I realized the positions of my hands, and I adjusted accordingly. The hot breath was no longer there, and the beast moved on to another prey. I pictured the hands of time moving again, and I thought, "It's as if time itself even control time itself."

I began to calm myself, taking deep breaths until my lung capacity couldn't bear to hold any more, and I released slowly. I tried to focus back on the home I left and the life I had. It was like a dream, so peaceful I could have fallen asleep. But once again, like lightning, pain shot up my spine and then down to my knees with an electric flow. I began to distance myself from the chaos, focusing inward. The yelling was nothing more than a low mumble as if someone were shouting under water, and for a short while there was only me. I was in tune with myself. I could feel the sweat racing down my face and my back, and the pores of my skin gasping for air. Like a madman, my heavy heart pounded frantically against my breastbone, and with every thump, my chest ached more. My hands began to pulse, ever increasing until my fingertips were about to burst. I could no longer feel my feet, so numb as if they had slipped off the bones from this uncompromising position.

Then came another voice, not loud, but it had authority. "When I say eyeballs, you will open your eyes and say *ap. tt*. Do you understand me?" As if merged into a single man, everyone on the bus thundered, "Yes Sir!" The voice ordered, "Eyeballs!" and we replied as commanded, "Snap, Sir!" My eyelids sprang up, and my eyes focused on the figure before me, like a photographer with his camera. The brim of his hat cast a shadow over his face, and all I could see was the glow of his eyes. His belt buckle shone like a star and demanded obedience. Then he spoke, "You are now at the United States Marine Corps Recruit Depot." Then he roared, "Get off my bus!" And so it began.

---

Evaluation: *Chris's wonderfully descriptive snapshot of the tense bus ride kept the reader interested until its unexpected conclusion.*

---

# Change of venue

---

*Nick Colosi*

Course: English 200

(Professional Writing: Grammar and Style)

Instructor: Trygve T. Oreson

Assignment:

*Compose an essay in which you imitate the style and tone of Charles Lamb's "The St. Petriannuated Man." It*

A brief caveat, to the reader, in comprehending this bitter account of my sales experience at my present employer. Only by understanding the eternal solitary confinement of my tiny cubicle, without the possibility of my taking an actual lunch break, compiling numerous hours of unused vacation and sick time, can one begin to understand the burnout one can succumb to in the workplace.

It has been four years since I first stepped through the automatic glass doors at CDW Computer Centers. Bright visions of currency shoved aside fading memories of college days and the immature, drunken stupor-laden evenings aplenty; they were replaced by long, laborious hours in my cubicle. The desire of wealth can entice most people to stop at nothing to obtain it. I admittedly became such a ravenous animal, a vulture hovering over a fresh kill.

In reality, I had my weekends free to do what I pleased, but gradually, the week meshed together with the weekend, leaving no break in the monotonous work cycle. On Saturdays, a dark cloud hovered over my cubicle, the looming issue of success. I longed for the pulsating bass of a dance club in downtown Chicago, sweat and energy in the air as bodies convulsed and swayed in rhythmic cadence to the latest techno hit blaring from the monstrous speakers thumping high above. The incessant beeping of the time clock annoyed me. The thought of missing my friends saddened me. Camaraderie, conversation, all the simple pleasures and the idleness of relaxation that make an arduous workweek bearable were blocked out. No Saturday journey to Barnes and Noble. No new people to pledge into one's social realm. Not one person was in sight with a look differing from the blank stare, impassive mostly, of those dedicated few sacrificing the much-needed joy of a free weekend. The very thought of working on that Saturday was unsettling.

Other than the normal days off during Christmas and Thanksgiving, I had only taken two other days off during my two years in sales. The mandatory time off during holidays, year after year, is what has held my sanity intact throughout the year. But even during this time off, did the lingering image of my commission check control my every waking thought? Or did I manage to push aside such an image and attempt to enjoy this much-needed rest? Usually, before I could fully contemplate

---

these questions, the holiday had ended. Although the very next day I was back in my cubicle, the thought of an impending day off kept half a smile upon my weary lips. Without the holidays to look forward to, stress might have overpowered my relief.

Despite my dependability, I had known for many years that I was not long for the business world. With each hour that I worked, my resentment noticeably grew; one could see it in my weary eyes. My mood swings became a virtual roller coaster set on a continuous downward spiral, which I would be unable to handle. At twenty-five years old I found myself making ale calls in my dreams. My telephone headset had morphed into a permanent fixture upon my head, a the meta frame fused with bone that previously hid my subconscious.

Tim, my sales manager, would constantly attempt to lift my spirits; until he started doing that, I had no idea that he had seen through my guise of bliss. Then, one Friday at month's end, he pulled me aside and questioned me about my job satisfaction. With my stress level at its peak, I verbally exploded. Mumbled words ran wifflingly from my mouth, a frightened rabbit dart, pursued by a fox. He feared his reaction to my displeasure, and I quickly mentioned that I wished to search for a new direction within the company, not merely to give up and quit. He eased my fears with carefully chosen words, and we both went on with business as usual that day. For the next three days I apprehensively kept cover, in my cubicle, under the blanket of potential culprits I needed to contact, hoping my outburst would not cause my termination, and waiting all the while to see my manager's name appear on my caller I.D. On the fourth day of my self-imposed hibernation, as I prepared to head toward the cafeteria to order my lunch, I received an e-mail, flashing in my inbox, from my manager and the senior manager of our division, to report to conference room 1A for a brief meeting. I thought up an infinite number of scenarios in my head, and ultimately I surmised that this must be a meeting to discuss my discharge. As I slowly approached the closed oak door of conference, I could see my manager and his manager sitting side by side, talking, laughing at what I assumed was a quip at my expense. Was this a joke to them? Did they enjoy firing people? I hoped my paranoia was not visibly noticeable.

Oren, the senior manager, began to speak before I hit the soft gray cushion of the oversized desk chair. To my astonishment, he listed a variety of accomplishments and milestones I had reached in the past year; he even commented about my gregarious attitude and overall work ethic. I reeled backward in my chair, shocked that any of this had been noticed. He gave a sermon on the desire to reward those deserving, those who put in their time for the good of the company, asking me about my other aspirations within CDW, and my visions for the future, of which I had many. As swiftly as the inquisition had begun, it was now over; he finished with an offer of relief from this personal hell I had lapsed into called a lie—a new job—which my manager, Tim, agreed I could explore. An offer of job security and change of venue was on the table, an incredible purchasing position in our corporate office; I was amazed! Following my grateful acceptance of the offer, I was informed that the change would take place within the week to follow. I left the meeting, and moments later went back to my cubicle, where I would diligently work for the next week.

But for the next week I had to contain my excitement, my exuberance. I worked hard, pretending to have a glimpse of job satisfaction, knowing that I had none at the current moment. I was like a dog in Pavlov's experiments, reacting at the thought of my rewarding position to come. It was like a rite of passage, for it is torture to wave a reward in one's face when one can not yet grasp it. It felt to me as if this was an illusion and not reality. But I must warn those seeking occupational bliss, with a laceration, not to make known their interests outside of their current employer, for this is highly frowned upon. I felt the heated breath of Big Brother watching down on me as well, but I was content knowing that happiness was waiting for me only a few short miles away in our corporate office. I boasted a comfortable sentiment at the luck of my future endeavors. I was overjoyed. I had a future. I felt a though I had a new life. If I remained stuck in sales, I could have quit, but I did not fear the days as I had only days before. I no longer felt afraid; I radiated confidence, as I could have done all along.

Amid the colossal upheaval from my current position, about which my feelings had not completely faded, I realized I would be leaving many friends and teammates

behind. I could not have dreamed this day a year ago. My friends and the managers that I had known for these two years and over time had grown so close to, whom I would be leaving, seemed less important to me now. To retain those friendships, I still visit them near their homes on weekends, to play PlayStation or drink a beer, merely to stay in touch. But I find as time passes, the visits become less frequent.

At times I missed my small cubicle, as I had become so mentally attached to it. I thrive on chaos and perform better under the pressures my previous position ingrained in me. I now feel a sense of freedom from strong-handed oppression. It is often that I do take an hour lunch break, and perhaps even go to a restaurant near my office. I discover myself in control of my day, from the time I arrive in the morning until the time I leave. I have time to eat breakfast and get coffee if necessary. I have the liberty to arrange my day as I please. Why did I waste so much time in my other position? Was everyone else missing out? Are they genuinely happy in what they do for a living? It was not by chance that I happened upon this new position, whose timing seemed to be perfect. Fate was my guide to my current surroundings. I have total faith in the mysterious ways of the universe. Monday would last an eternity in the past, seeming to travel in the opposite direction of Saturday. I have learned to appreciate each day as it comes, knowing that Saturday will be here soon. The weekend, as poorly misused as it was, has become an integral stopping point for my weekly routine. I can enjoy a weekend of reading or writing without the daunting grip of work bearing the weight of guilt on my conscience. I have time to do the things I like to do. I can taunt friends that remain in sales while they are slaving away in the office on a Saturday afternoon. I can jest of the time I wake up in the morning, knowing my friends are on the Metro at 6 am. It is divine gratification to observe others, whom I no longer work with, typing and calling, like telemarketers, continually ambling over a repetitive list of phone numbers around dinner time each night. And what purpose does such unhappiness serve? A person deserves to be happy in his or her daily workplace. If I could offer advice to all the people I talk to, I would convey the importance of bliss in one's life, including professional life. People, I believe, as long as they are

unhappy, contain less motivation to succeed. I am optimistic and opportunistic. Bring me that ball of discontent a majority of the world feels, and I will throw it in the trash.

I no longer answer to the grueling demands of a sales manager at CD. I look forward to work and in turn work more attentively. I have known bliss in the workplace, changed my venue, and embraced a hungry attitude for success on my own terms. I do what I want, when I want, as long as my work is done at the end of the day. I take shape into a more confident form. I can do anything I want, will do anything within my means to achieve satisfaction, and have a constructive career path to follow.

---

Evaluation: *It's not easy to imitate the style of an eighteenth-century British essayist and apply it to a modern situation, but Nick brings this off quite skillfully.*

---

---

# What Did I Know?

---

*Philip De Boer*

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Hanley Kanar

Assignment:

*Respond to one of the poems we read for class.*

I can identify with the person Robert Hayden wrote about in the poem “Those Winter Sundays.” My mother was frequently sick, so my father usually was the one who got the day started in our house. I can vaguely remember, before the furnace was converted from coal to fuel oil, my father having to shovel coal into the furnace and later remove the cinders. I can’t recall what happened to the cinders, but I suspect they were collected, like trash. He was a Protestant minister so did not have the calloused hands depicted in the poem. Being a minister, my father usually wore a suit with a white shirt and tie. It was not uncommon for him to come from the office and start a project like mowing the lawn before changing clothes. My mother’s countenance, frequently, could not unfrown itself.

Even when our house was warm, I felt it was cold and confining. I could not wait to get away, and I sensed my parents were only too willing to oblige when I wanted to quit school and join the military. I felt the same chronic angers the author describes. What I did not appreciate then was that they were only trying to rear me in the best way they knew how. What did I know?

Even with the hostility I felt, when I needed something, all I had to do was ask. For example, they gave me my first car. When I ran out of gas and was flat broke, my father brought gas in a can and helped me nurse the car home. Maybe I thanked him.

My father performed the wedding ceremony when my wife and I were married. Shortly after that, he was killed in an automobile accident and did not get the chance to see that his kid had turned out OK after all. He’d filled love’s austere and lonely office. What did I know?

I know now.

---

Evaluation: *Phil’s very personal response mirrors the tone of the poem.*



---

# The Wooden Box Under the Bed

Jenny Dolan

Course: Literature 210 (Introduction to Shakespeare)

Instructor: Andrew Wilson

Assignment:  
*respond creatively  
somehow, some way  
to one of the plays we've read.*

"Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be."  
—Ophelia

## *Years Old*

I met her for the first time when I was ten years old. He said I stuffed my bra, and that annoying, shrieking, pre-pubescent cackle of his, and a tiny fire ignited in my stomach, spreading to my hands, and then to my fingers, which were holding the scissors. Some of the blood leaked onto the desk with the tall black letters of my full name taped on the front of it. Floating on the surface of a perfectly formed circle of blood, a tiny embryo, the size of a thumbnail, glided in circular patterns in a tame fashion. I marked a spot on the perimeter of the circle and observed with fear that at every few seconds, the little see-through, wrapped-in-rosemary, glided past it again. I quickly wiped the blood off my desk with my bare hand. It was an immense flood that came.

## *5 Years Old*

At fifteen, I sat in the bathroom after dinner one night, wanting to heave my stomach, chock full of chicken and rice, into the toilet. I stared intently at gleaming below the way you stare at the man who stands fifty paces from you with his gun pointed outward, and I hear the faintest girly giggling. Peering even closer, I never looked that close into a toilet bowl before, a woman the size of my finger appeared. Swirling frantically inside of that murky water, I couldn't make out her features.

Lifting black hair down to her feet, tiny hands, but mostly she was white. It was like someone was stirring a batch of vanilla pudding in my toilet. Worn a beautifully embroidered wedding dress with such a long train!

She must be happy, I thought, thinking such silly things. As she swirled faster and faster, the water came up faster and faster until I thought the toilet might overflow. I flushed, and down she went into a dark deep hole.

I got up from off the floor and looked at myself in the huge mirror. I was wearing the dress.

## *13 Years Old*

I was thirteen at the time. He said it felt like coming home to a soft, warm place, a place he'd been before, like he recognized it, like it was part of his collective unconscious. I immediately turned away, tears in my eyes,

grabbing the small blanket is grandma knit before she died, in an attempt to throw dust on where I' just been trampled. I would never know a home like the one described.

That night my room filled with thick, red blood. I watched it erase my photographs and my sunsets and my cd's. I watched it stain the carpet and the mahogany dresser my mom just bought for me. I felt, in terror, all the air leave through a tiny slit in the window. I tried to scream. I jumped up and down on the floor, thinking they would hear me and open the door, letting all the blood out, down the stairs and out the front door. I wiped it on my face in madness, performing for an audience, the way we tend to do when we are sad or lonely in our cars or on the floor.

Finally it reached my mouth and my nose and my eyes. It blinded me. I swam up and down my bedroom, pushing on the ceiling, banging on the window. I felt a tail fin sting the back of my leg. She flapped the surface incessantly, chipping away bits and pieces of myself. All my buried treasures floated to the surface. I opened my eyes and saw she was green and slimy and an inch away from my face. My skin felt like a giant canker sore, and she rubbed up against it. I curled in the corner of a lighthouse, examining cracks of my skin for signs of redness and swelling, some physical evidence.

I can't swim! I can't breathe like you can!

The rocks of the red ocean cut my toes open and made tiny incisions on my feet, but they were unnoticeable.

Lying on a wooden mattress every night, my back hurt and I felt the folds of my skin unraveling and reassembling, folding over new skin. I fingered the wall in silence.

I woke up in the same position. I was still human. I woke up a woman on a soft pillow under soft covers. I woke up as if it never happened! I searched the sheets for blood, I put my hands on my body, searching for cuts, for physical evidence, but my body was as it always been. Healthy.

In sleep the lines were erased, the scabs fell off, and every day was the same. I hated Ophelia sometimes, her tapping fingernails. I strangled her.

### *19 Years Old*

Now I am nineteen. Her fins still sting my skin some nights. I try to breathe, but I wake up under clear water, my hair swaying like a yielding reed. I kick my legs back and forth frantically. My skin tastes of algae and salt and seaweed. I think I liked it better when it was red. But what can I do? Wake up every morning, put on my pants, and wiggle my toes.

### *Ophelia and My Sisters*

I think Ophelia met with my sister last night. I saw watermarks on my wall, and I hear a rip drop from the corner of my room where the carpet ripped. I felt bad.

Now my sister uses tampons in a wooden box under the bed, the way a rug dealer swallows his paraphernalia. My sister uses tampons under the bed, as if they're not the same little white cylinders that adorn the dirty tiled floor of the bathroom we've shared together for eight years, as if they're not the same delicate tissue-paper-wrapped presents we give to the cheap plastic waste basket every 28-35 days.

I know this because I was in her room one day while she was at school. It smells like the dentist in there, and lipstick stains adorn the brand new carpet. You have to push all of your body weight against the door to open it. I imagined a secret security camera peering at me from behind the twelve dozen boyfriend pictures on the dresser. I was scared, but I think it's important to know your enemy, so I stood in the middle of my sister's room, on a mission, looking for some sort of evidence. I wouldn't read her diary or anything like that. I just needed to know, but I already did; Ophelia was an ally, not an enemy.

Your own reflection startles you from all angles. I reached my hand under the bed and got a paper cut from a magazine page. But I didn't retreat. I pushed forward until I felt the wooden box. It looked like a jewelry box we used to have as kids, with a dancing ballerina and the Nutcracker Suite playing when you open it.

There was a picture taped on the front of the box, a picture I hadn't seen before. She must have been very young, maybe three years old. It was probably taken at my grandma's house on the porch because I recognized those flaky blue stairs. She stared into the camera, smiling up at me.

imagined a pocket her boyfriend had given her inside of the box, or maybe a secret diary, or a letter in calligraphy, or expensive perfume from the cosmetics counter at Marshall Field's. I picked it open, and it squeaked like it hadn't been opened in years, like it was rotting in a hot, dry place. Inside I found 10 Tampax Tampons with Applicator. I don't even know how to use an applicator.

I put the box back, quietly closed the door behind me and went downstairs to watch some TV. It was over for my sister. She'd been initiated, and she'd accepted without a fight.

*Ophelia, the Pervert*

What many people don't know about Ophelia is that she's a pervert. She really is. The first time she had sex, she was hugely disappointed. It was very anticlimactic. Hamlet crawled through her window and into her bed and just stared at her for the longest time. Ophelia wasn't scared or anything. She kind of liked the idea that this strong, crazy, prince-in-waiting would dominate her. She waited and waited for him. He wrote something down in a little book that looked like a list of pros and cons. After about seventy-five minutes, she climbed back through her window and back into the night.

She couldn't sleep, which was lucky for her because she came back three hours later. He looked into her eyes, and 3 minutes after she was done, and she left. Like I said, Ophelia was hugely disappointed. The truth is Hamlet wasn't very good in bed.

But that's the four hundredth and sixty-fifth time they had more fun. This is what she said to me: *Pray, let's have no words of this, but when they ask you what it means, say you this.*

*Hamlet said I was a cock tease. Do you think I was? looked at it together for some time. It was our quality time together, our silent time, our R and R time, the family-sitting-at-the-dinner-table-on-a-Monday-night-eating-the-casserole-Mom-baked time, realizing we have nothing to say. Well, I couldn't speak. I never could.*

*Anyway, I munched on my food quickly and quietly, stared at it together some more. It was beautiful to me. I don't know. I even gave it a name, not a creative one. I just called it junior: Junior listens to oldies and drives a Dodge Intrepid. He is seemingly middle class and middle age;*

*maybe he works at Motorola and wears a striped tie. He looks up at me with a sort of vulnerable yet confident stare. When he shakes your hand, he really shakes hard because he knows how important first impressions are, especially business wise.*

*touched it together, my fingers grazing over his fingers. He had square fingernails. Did you know that? After a while, it was only me touching it, and at first I am lost in a desert; I am thirsty and scared. I bury my face in the side of his stomach when I do it, like I'm in a bomb shelter just waiting to see if I built the thing strong enough. I close my eyes so tightly, I don't even watch. I listen to him breathe, and I die with every hint of a moan.*

*Just when my forearm begins to hurt, my little helter comes crashing down, and I sit up and look around. Everything is the same as how I'd left it. I'm still there in my bedroom. I'm still human.*

*I thought about how my father and my brother would kill me. Anyone in their right mind would kill me if they knew what a pervert I was! Oh worse, no man would ever deicide me again. But I wasn't castrated because Hamlet and I were getting married, and there was nothing else in the world.*

"I know that story," I said.

"I know you do. It is all our stories."

My sister hides her tampons in a wooden box under her bed, and I tack them on the wall next to Ophelia, my weedy trophy.

Evaluation: *This remarkably unique paper rescues Ophelia from the conventional opinion of her as feeble. In fact, Jenny suggests here that Ophelia's predicament is, to some extent, every girl's/woman's predicament. What a wonderful piece of writing—a true pleasure to read!*

# My Life as the Wife of a High School Dormitory Parent

---

*Chyi-Ling Evans*

Course: ESL 069 (Writing IX)

Instructor: Linda Dunne

---

Assignment:

*The students were to write a narrative essay in which they expressed a predominant emotion. Since it was their first essay, they needed to conform to essay structure.*

What is it like to be the wife of a high school dormitory parent in Mississippi, for a foreigner? Can you even imagine living with nine teenaged boys? The experience was quite interesting and unforgettable.

I came to the United States on October 11, 1988, to reunite with my husband, who had been waiting for my arrival for ten months since our wedding. We lived in a small apartment on top of an old lady's garage. My husband worked as a high school teacher in a small town, Brooklyn, twenty miles from our apartment. I took some piano and harpsicord lessons at a nearby university. We were poor, but our almost newlywed life was easy and sweet.

Unfortunately, this peaceful life did not last very long. At the end of October, the superintendent, Mr. Lowery, and the principal, Mr. Shepard, from my husband's school, asked him to be the dormitory parent for the boys. Even though it meant more work for my husband, it also meant some extra money and free room and board. We could not resist the offer, so we moved into the boys' dormitory two weeks later. The place we stayed in was an old but spacious apartment in the building. It was dirty and took us some effort to clean it up. We even had mice and fleas as our roommates, occasionally.

After we moved in, I met the supervisor of the dormitory, Val, and her band director husband, Bill. We had a lot of similarities. Both of them had graduated from the same university as my husband and I. They were also childless. As for the girls' dormitory parent, Gail, we got along but had little to do with each other besides the work. I also got to meet Mr. Lowery's and Mr. Shepard's families because they all lived on the campus. They were very friendly and sweet. Last but not least, I met the boys and girls who lived in the dormitory. There were nine boys and eight girls in total. Some of them were from Central America. Some were from other states. Most of them were from troubled families. My young heart wanted to help these kids. I found out only later that it was almost impossible.

The first few nights after we moved into the dormitory, my husband had to go upstairs every thirty minutes to stop the boys' fighting or playing. One boy had gotten a sword from home and was chasing the others with it until my husband took away the sword. Another boy, Eddie, knocked on our door after midnight to borrow a

nail clipper. (Later I got Eddie a nail clipper as a Christmas gift.) We could not believe how much energy they had at night. Of course, they could not get up the next morning, as a result of having stayed up late. My poor husband was exhausted from dealing with them at night and working as a teacher during school hours. No wonder the dormitory parent had quit. I started to lose my ambition to care for the boys and change their behavior as the day went by, especially after a boy threatened my husband when my husband caught him cheating on a test.

I also found that life was very different for a foreigner living in a small town of two hundred people. When I went to the store or laundry, people—especially children—just stared at me, because they had never seen a foreigner before. I was told that a lot of people here had never even traveled outside their town all their lives. People were polite to me, but I still felt like an outer space alien. As a piano teacher, I could not get any students there. I was lonely and had few friends.

Then, on a beautiful April morning, my life changed. I found out that I was pregnant. I was happy and excited. My husband was not. He worried about the medical expenses, since his work did not have any insurance for the employees. His mother also worried about her first unborn grandchild and us. She urged us to move to Chicago to be close to her. I knew very little about Chicago, but I was ready to move. The small town living was just not for me. So, my husband turned down his contract as a teacher and dormitory parent for the coming year. Around the same time, we found out that Val was also pregnant, and she and Bill were leaving their jobs as well. The teachers from the school gave both families a nice baby shower at the end of the school year.

On June 11, 1989, we loaded our a few belongings into a big rental truck and headed for Chicago. I ganged back at the high school and dormitory for the last time without regret. Good-bye, dormitory; good-bye, Mississippi.

---

Evaluation: *The structure of Chyi-Ling's essay is exemplary, and from the moment I began reading it, I found the content compelling and saw it as a gem of a short story.*

---



---

# Those Who Suffer

---

Bertilia Frias de Douglas  
Course: English 100 (Composition)  
Instructor: Kri Piepenburg

---

Assignment:

*Identify an area or behavioral pattern of your life that has caused you difficulty for some time—or a long struggle that you have been involved in, and that you have overcome it (or are in the process of overcoming). Write an essay that tracks the development of the struggle from its beginning to its end.*

If one were to hire a clown, an acrobat, or a magician for a child's celebration, no one would give a second thought; however, if one were to hire an actor or actress to perform at the burial of one's dead child, eyebrow might be raised. More than my eyebrows were raised when I had to struggle with the way that an actress performed one day when I, at the age of sixteen, was walking the streets of Campeche in the Yucatan.

It was not that day that the dry earth was beginning to crack. A man who I passed that day about twelve o'clock reached to his forehead, which was shiny with sweat. It was on this August day that I and my grandmother were coming home from the market with our maid, carrying some fruit and flowers we had just purchased. From the street behind me, I heard loud crying that sounded like many people pleading. Out of curiosity, I turned. Moving slowly toward us was a float covered with a purple cloth, upon which sat a brown box. A group of maybe twenty young girls was walking behind this float. They were loudly crying.

---

We stopped to look; the three of us stood silently and stared. "That's a funeral. This is the way to the cemetery," said grandma.

I was amazed by the painful sound coming from these young girls, who I realized were the mourners. I waited for them to pass by me. Some of the girls were holding hands; others were holding their faces in grief. While these young mourners passed me, one of them approached me, with her hands reaching towards me. She was about to embrace me.

"Why did Manuelito die? He was a good boy," she said. She collapsed at that moment. I rushed down on my knees. My tears were dropping on her face. Timidly, I tried to dry my tear from her face. I sobbed and held her in my arms. Meanwhile, the other mourners began to stroke my hair and my arms. I became involved in the suffering of this young mother.

She woke up and started crying. She looked into my eyes and asked, "Why is my Manuelito dead? Now I am destined to live my life without hope." I cried even more deeply. We were both helped up by the others, and I joined their journey to the cemetery. After waiting for a block, my grandmother reached my hand and said to me, "Es un teatro." ("It is a performance.")

I didn't believe my grandma. I struggled to believe that they lied to me so convincingly. Even today I struggle to believe that it was not true. I suppose that someone has to be the voice of those who suffer.

---

*Evaluation: Although this test does not review a pattern or struggle, the essay does look back on a memory that has occupied the writer's conscious for many years. This is a moving and mysterious essay.*

---

# William Kentridge: Drawings from *Felix in Exile*

Jennifer Gardner

Course: Art 105 (Introduction to Arts)

Instructor: Deborah Nance

### Assignment:

*With the Jeanette Witterson reading in mind, you are to visit the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, and to contemplate two drawings by William Kentridge for one hour. Discuss the content, image, application, and technique used by Kentridge in the two works you select for your paper.*

Twentieth-century contemporary artist William Kentridge was born in Johannesburg, South Africa in 1955. His artistic style and content have been significantly influenced not only by his visions of the desolate landscape of his hometown, but by his personal observations of the extreme social and political unrest of apartheid. Kentridge's use of symbolism and character placement within these settings, when incorporated with his self-described (as stated on the placard at the exhibit) "impulsive," yet seemingly intuitive, design technique (charcoal drawing and re-erasure), tell stories which are full of emotional and artistic energy. This energy is so prevalent, in fact, that after viewing one of his films, it becomes very difficult to consider the individual drawings or "frames" which compose the films as separate, "static" works of art. Each drawing is essentially an active moment in time captured within a two-dimensional picture plane; therefore, there is always a desire on the part of the viewer to relate an individual drawing to those that immediately precede and follow it. There is a sense of literal and metaphorical "movement" or "process" in Kentridge's work that cannot be ignored.

### Drawing for the film *Felix in Exile*, 1993 (Billerton Collection, Johannesburg)

A 1993 drawing from the series shows Felix sitting alone on a chair in a room. The walls of the room are filled with pictures, and its floor is strewn with papers. Drawn in charcoal and pastel, the work is primarily monochromatic, a Kentridge tendency which, intended or not, appropriately conveys a certain "bleakness," which might be associated with feelings of emotional exile and loneliness. This sense of isolation is further accentuated by Kentridge's use of the design elements of balance and focal point. The "radial" or circular balance of the drawing leads the viewer's eye immediately to a visual center point, or emphasis to the solitary figure of Felix, himself (see Illustration 1).

### Illustration 1:

Radial balance emanating from a focal point.



Felix's character is completely alone. He has been emotionally severed from both his lover (the recently deceased Mrs. Eckstein) and his country (he is a white man who has been a forced witness to the immorality and violence of apartheid in black South Africa) and has been inundated by his own tormented thoughts, particularly by haunting images of death and desolation (as the viewer later discovers in the film), which are metaphorically represented by the framed pictures on the walls that surround him. The flood of additional feelings and memories Felix experiences as a result of these thoughts is further symbolized by the many papers that appear to have literally emanated from the depths of his "soul" (signified by the open briefcase), pouring out all over the floor in front of him.

There is a sense of "movement" and (thought) "process" within the drawing: a visual rhythm that is definitely created by the energy of Kentridge's overall rough, sketchy line quality, by his repetition of the framed-picture and paper motif, and by the texture of the lingering lines and images left in his multiple charcoal erasures. These design elements provide evidence that a flowing, free-associative, and painful self-introspection has just taken place. It becomes apparent to the viewer that Felix Teitlebaum has been emotionally and morally exiled from the life he once knew.

*Drawing for the film Felix in Exile, 1994*  
(Private Collection, South Africa)

The emotional, as well as physical culmination of Felix's exile is illustrated in Kentridge's final drawing (for the film) done in 1994. In it, Kentridge depicts Felix standing naked in a waterhole in the middle of the ravaged, desolate South African landscape, his back turned to the viewer. Done in charcoal and traces of pastel, the mostly monochromatic color scheme again contributes to the drawing's overall theme of desolation, as well as accurately represents the harshness of the African terrain. As was the case in the 1993 drawing discussed previously, there is a certain synergy between the design elements Kentridge utilizes and the symbolism he conveys.

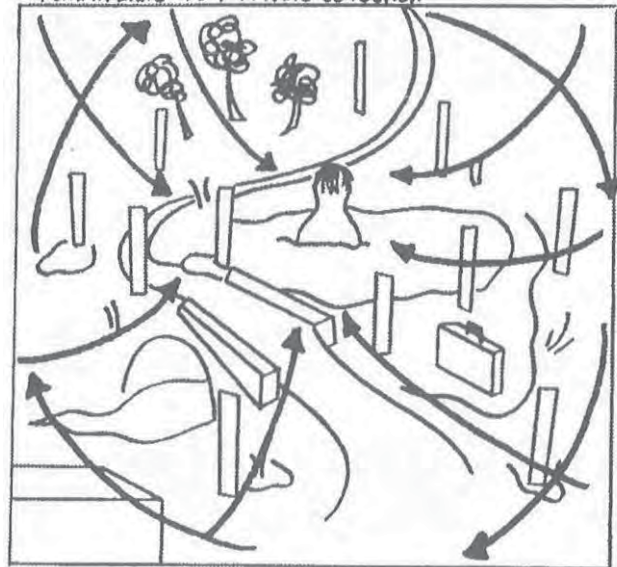
The focal point of the drawing is Felix standing in the

waterhole. He is naked, which is how he is typically depicted by Kentridge; however, the scene suggests a "finality," in which his nakedness indicates his complete exposure to the emotional and physical, sociopolitical evils of South African (and his own) life. Metaphorically, his life is as naked, barren, and empty as the actual landscape he exists in. Although the circular balance within the design leads the viewer's eye directly to Felix, his prominence is seemingly diminished by the repetition of vertical lines (posts) around him. His figure becomes somewhat "lost," just another of the many lifeless, meaningless, protrusions of the landscape itself (see Illustration 2).

**Illustration 2:**

Radial balance directing to focal point, and vertical lines diminishing prominence.

*Felix in Exile, 1994. Private Collection*



While the 1993 drawing discussed exhibits "movement" and process, capturing Felix in a moment of intense self-introspection, Kentridge's final illustration portrays him as merely reflective and passive. Despite Kentridge's typical use of a sketchy drawing style and line quality, there is a certain "stillness" to the drawing and

the sense of a “contemplation” taking place, which foreshadows the choice Felix must make between ultimate emotional exile and inner peace. His figure appears despondent and worn down by his constant struggle with morality and emotion. He has literally “turned his back” (his back is to the viewer) on life and what he once knew to be true. He appears to seek renewal—of mind, body, and spirit. In the arid despair of South Africa, he has found water, the long-proclaimed symbol of “new life.” His soul (represented by the briefcase, which sits near the edge of the waterhole) still exists somewhere between self-imposed isolation and reconnection with this new life. The memories and feelings (of the death of Mrs. Eckstein, of apartheid) are too horrible to forget, and Kentridge’s trace use of red pastel indicates that reminders of the violent past will always be there. The existence of the water, however, seems to promise Felix’s gradual healing and salvation from exile.

---

*Evaluation: Detailed visual descriptions are concretized examples of abstract ideas stated in thesis sentences. Note that the use of illustrations can dramatically highlight key ideas.*

---

## Social Class Distinctions within William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

---

Nanci Goodheart tt

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Elizabeth Turner

Assignment:

*Compose, revise, and edit an interpretive essay on tt  
Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream.*

*Secondary sources are required. tt*

During the Elizabethan times, children of all classes went to grammar school together. However, once those years passed, the "upper class youth moved on to more years of education, the lower class youth moved into the labor market" (Ascham 180). This distinction in education created different moralities in the social classes. Nobility, such as Theseus and Lysander in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, find it difficult to resist putting down the lower classes. In this play, William Shakespeare creates observable differences in the upper and lower social classes by creating a play within a play, *Pyramus and Thisbe*. *Pyramus and Thisbe* is about two young lovers separated by their families. As they are determined, they agree to meet at the tomb of Ninus. Upon arriving, Thisbe sees a lion and drops her veil; the lion picks it up and stains it with blood. Pyramus sees a stained veil, assumes Thisbe was eaten, and kills himself. Thisbe returns and sees Pyramus dead and ends up killing herself with the same word (Kirkwood 82). Lack of education restricts the mechanicals' understanding of the play itself, and, therefore, the actor

became the butt of the noble's jokes. During *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the nobility consistently mock the lower social class in order to make themselves feel more powerful.

The noble class in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is represented by Theseus, Hippolyta, Demetrius, and Lysander. On his wedding night Theseus is asked to choose an entertainment for the evening. Of all the choices, he picks "A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus and his love Thisbe; a very tragical mirth" (5.1.56-57). While presenting the entertainment, the philostrate tries to sway Theseus's decision. He feels that the actors only worked with their hands and never had to think with their minds, when he claims the "hard-handed men" had never before "labored in their minds" (5.1.72-73). John Allen notes that "because he is a Duke," Theseus' political nature pushes him to recognize "a ruler's most valuable asset is the loyal affection of his subjects"; he desires to watch a play performed by the lower class. By watching a performance by the lower class mechanicals, Theseus will give them the impression that they are important and hopefully gain their support. Although the actors are trying to "take the initiative to promote themselves before their prince in the hope of being 'made men'" (Ashem 180), the philostrate claims the play is "not for you" to Theseus, meaning it is much below the Duke, and the play itself is "nothing, nothing in the world" (5.1.77-78). By claiming the "company of amateur players" have never thought before they tried to create this play, he shows the first sign of the noble class mocking the lower class simply due to a social difference (Ulrici 369). Although Bottom feels the play would "ask some tear" (1.2.19) for the acting, the philostrate talks of "merry tears" due to laughing aloud (5.1.69). Theseus ignores the philostrate's plea and decides this play will be a perfect opportunity to laugh at the lower class due to their lack of education and inappropriate mannerisms.

Theseus intends to have "sport" from the actors' "mistakes" (5.1.90). Peter Holbrook explains how the mechanicals' mistakes are due to "their awkwardness in the aristocratic setting," one outside of their own (78). The mechanicals feel that "if the plot should be revealed, then there would be no 'surprise'" because they are trying



to make the play a sophisticate (a possible Snider 385). Theseus sees the play a chance to escape from normal and boring “great clerks...with premeditated welcomes” and offer Theseus a chance to see common folk who are not trying to impress him simply because of his status (5.1.93-94). When the nobles see that they can think more precisely and at a higher level than the lower class, it creates a sense of power for the nobles by enhancing their self-esteem. By enjoying the “tongue-tied simplicity” of the mechanicals in their attempt at a wonderful play, Theseus sees the contrast to the nobles’ silver-tongued complexity (5.1.105). Believing that they can think at a greater level than the simpletons, the Athenian court feels that controlling the lower class is the next logical step.

Armed with the knowledge that the actors will not fight back when made fun of, the Athenian court tries to control the lower class because their “sophistication is not equaled by the mechanicals” (Kenilworth 124). Due to their inability to question the royals, the actors ignore the rude comments throughout the play. For example, as the Athenian court mocks Moon for explaining himself, Moon cowardly explains, “All I have to say is to tell you that the lanthorn is the moon, I am the man in the moon, this thornbush my thornbush, and this dog my dog” (5.1.241-243). The actors are afraid of the noble class because they have more status, which delights the noble class. By being afraid, the lower class gives the impression that the nobles can say anything, therefore creating an idea that the nobles are the law whereas the lower class is powerless.

Although the nobles are trying to maintain power over the lower class, the mere fact that the noble class is watching a play performed by a lower class shows that they “come down to a level with the common, every-day sort of folk” (Ulrici 369). By the noble class bringing themselves down to a lower level, they need to constantly mock the actors’ incompetence in order to keep their status known and to feel better about themselves. After Pyramus’ dying line, “Now lie, lie, lie, lie, lie,” Demetrius claims, “No die, but an ace,” referring to rolling a ‘one’ on a die (singular of dice), and Lyander takes it further by calling him “less than an ace...for he is dead” (5.1.287-290). Not only do they say his worthi-

ness is extremely low, but they say his performance was not at all well done. They poke more fun at the performance when it is Thisbe’s turn to die, for Hippolyta claims, “Methinks she should not use a long one for such a Pyramus. I hope she will be brief” (5.1.297-298). The nobles are trying to make fun of the acting itself by trying to “entertain each other with display of wit at the mechanicals’ expense” (Kenilworth 124). The nobility is saying the performance of the play is in itself not entertaining, so they need to add their own comments in order to spice up the evening.

Though Theseus chose the mechanicals’ play in order to laugh at the mistakes they make, it is interesting that he would choose a tragedy. As Peter Holbrook points out, the nobility desires to laugh at the poor class trying to make a tragedy, since “tragedy is consciously taken to exclude lower-class experience, and the juxtaposition of the two is clearly an incongruity to be avoided: plebeian tragedy is comical” (78). In the nobles’ opinion, only the higher class is important enough to have experiences traumatic enough to be tragedy while the lower class itself only has tragedies that are of comical status. Bottom shows how hard the mechanicals worked in trying to create a tragedy by claiming, “we will meet, and there we may rehearse most obscenely and courageously, take pains, be perfect” (1.2.83-84). Bottom comments on working “courageously,” knowing that the lower class does not often perform tragedies. The actors hope that it will be a wonderful tragedy; Theseus feels that it will turn out to be a comedy because it is the lower class performing. The play that the actors try to create becomes the most comical entertainment for the court.

While the mechanicals try to create a play, the nobility finds fault, and therefore more laughter in their performance. John Snider claims that the mechanicals themselves “are trying to represent a play—a work of Art—which lies far out of their comprehension” (385). They do not understand the meaning of the play or even the meaning of a production. Bottom and the rest of the actor truly do not comprehend that the plot itself is not the meaning, but the meaning lies within the plot. At one point, Bottom claims that “we must leave the killing out,” which would reduce the entire meaning of sacrifice in the play (3.1.12). Because they are so preoccupied with trying

to get the audience prepared for their acting, the mechanicals are, in turn, taking away the meaning of the play by destroying the imagination involved. Snider also claims that the mechanicals' "prosaic explanation," or full explanations, show that they are constantly trying to explain the characters they are representing, and at the same time, they lose the true meaning of the play two overs (385). The nobility are familiar with different plays, and therefore find it hilarious that they constantly try to explain themselves. The noble court concentrates on their acting as well and takes great pleasure in watching them fumble. At one point, the court mocks the player by commenting on their acting, "Well roared, Lion./ Well run, Thisbe./ Well done, Moon," however, they only comment on the actors' lack of importance (5.1.248-250). When the nobles can maintain aught, they feel they are themselves more powerful than the mechanicals.

It is the mechanicals' attempt that the noble class finds humorous. The mechanicals, on the other hand, are trying to prove their worthiness. John Allen points out that none of the actors "a any suspicion that the performance of *Pyramus and Thisbe* will strike the audience as the illiest stuff that ever they heard, and that they themselves will instantly be put down by the opportunity of a band of impostors" (457). The actors themselves try to understand the play and the parts in it. However, they get caught up in the characters and are worried that the audience will be frightened by the lion or saddened at the deaths. They feel they need to explain that "I, Pyramus, am not Pyramus but Bottom the weaver" and other such simple ideas (3.1.16-17). The mechanicals do not understand that they are playing the part of characters. One scholar, Denton J. Snider, explains that the clowns "have not the primary notion of the drama; they do not comprehend that it is a representation and not reality" (385). The idea of not understanding the play shows their lack of education and higher thinking. The nobles take great joy in watching the actors try to explain what they are. When the nobles see a lack of comprehension for a meaning they understand, they can easily say that they themselves are more sophisticated. Seeing a play put on by the lower class boasts their own sense of intelligence.

A result of the lack of comprehension, the mechani-

cal add extreme confusion to *Pyramus and Thisbe*. The title itself is "merry and tragical" and "serious and brief" (5.1.58). The mechanicals are, in fact, correct in their title. The nobility feels the play is merry because it is so funny to them; however, it is a tragedy in itself. The audience of upper class would feel the play is serious because the mechanicals do not understand how to make a play; however, the play is brief due to the short number of lines. The mechanicals' confusion is only more humor for the nobles, and they feel a better sense of stability for themselves, "for it is through their clumsiness that the court group reaffirms its own solidarity" (Holbrook 78). The mechanicals, although they try to create a coherent play, can only gain the laughter of the aristocratic audience.

Not only do the nobles mock the mechanicals' lack of understanding of the play, but they find humor in almost every line the actors speak. In the middle of the play, moonshine explains that "this lanthorn doth the orner moon present" (5.1.227). Demetrius interrupts this line by claiming, "He could have worn the horn on his head" (5.1.228). Other nobles come in and blatantly make fun of the moon to his face. This disrespect of the moon shows how the noble class has no regard for the actors.

Other comments from the nobles include mockery of the supernatural underlining the play. The Athenian court reflects "laughter of rational people at superstitious people" (Herbert 450). The noble class mocks the ideas of the playwright's supernatural aspect of inanimate objects because they feel that they are above the supernatural and do not need that dependency that Pyramus and Thisbe show. As Pyramus claims to the wall, "Curse be thy tones for thus deceiving me!" Theseus remarks, "The wall, methinks, being sensible, would curse again" (5.1.176-177). Theseus is stating that if the wall had a much liveliness as Pyramus gave it, it would talk back. He mocks the mere idea of giving inanimate objects human characteristics.

T. Walter Herbert points out that during *Pyramus and Thisbe*, "Both Pyramus and Thisbe attribute intelligences to everything, animate and inanimate" (449). Theseus is trying to show that the actors are trying too hard. He laughs at their mistake that everything in the play has intelligence except the two lovers. Theseus, being of

higher rank, allows himself the opportunity to look down upon the actors. As he makes fun of their superstitious attitudes, he reassures himself that his own ideas are correct and better. Because "*Pyramus and Thisbe* unmistakably implies the only intelligence is human intelligence," Theseus is reaffirmed in his philosophy that because the noble class doesn't believe the supernatural, they are, in turn, more intelligent than the lower class (Herbert 449). Understanding that Theseus and the rest of the nobles don't need superstition, the nobles are heightened in their own confidence and power over the lower class.

Along with being separated by superstition, the two classes are separated by their understanding and knowledge (or lack thereof) of the mythology behind *Pyramus and Thisbe*. Antony Brian Taylor explains that Shakespeare used the version of *Pyramus and Thisbe* from "Golding's version in his translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*." Golding was very highly regarded by the Elizabethans as a translator of Latin mythologies and therefore widely used (25). Because the nobles would be much better versed in such stories as *Pyramus and Thisbe*, they would therefore dismiss the playwright's attempt to portray it. Just as Pyramus and Thisbe meet on different sides of a wall, the two classes have been separated. However, during the play, "the moral is down between the two neighbors" and differences are noted in the form of insults (5.1.200).

The attitude that the noble class takes during the play shows how little appreciation they have for the actors. In an article entitled "Kenilworth and Coventry," the achievements of the actors are noted. For example, they succeed in organization, a passion for playing, versatility, and a wardrobe of disguises (125). Not only do the actors memorize their lines overnight, but they also have men paying women. Bottom desires to play every part, and they are disguised to mimic other people. Demonstrating a lack of understanding, the nobles only scoff at and humiliate the cast. They do not understand the amount of work that went into the play production and therefore don't respect the efforts of the actors.

Because the nobles refuse to give any appreciation to the actors, it is easy to understand their keen ability to tell the actors what they should be doing throughout the

play. The fact that the mechanicals "brought their 'company' to court to entertain the nobility," is amusing to the nobles, and they find every chance they can to tell the actors how to change their play (Taylor 28). After the prologue, Theseus claims that the prologue "doth not stand upon points," Lysander states that he "knows not the stop," and Hippolyta complains of it being "not in government" (5.1.119-123). All three observe that the prologue is not congruent and is too long. They critique the playwright when they ask, "Who is next?" after hearing the prologue (5.1.125). The nobles ask this question as if to challenge the actors to show them anyone with good acting. At the end of the play, Theseus prays for no epilogue, implying that they did such a bad job that the nobles wish to hear no more. This humiliation is meant to discourage the actors from further acting and places the lower class under the directions of the noble class, thus giving power to Theseus.

During *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the nobility show their lack of compassion, first by causing the tragedy, then by taking advantage of the lower class. Theseus, on his wedding night, chooses a play that is about two lovers who kill themselves. It is more than a bit morbid to see a play of death on the night of his wedding. John Allen ponders that "if death is typically the form which sacrifice assumes in tragedy, marriage, the acceptance of one's place in the mortal scheme of things, is its equivalent in comedy" (458). Theseus could see a tragedy on the night of his wedding in order to reaffirm the importance of love and its place in his life. He sees it as a comedy instead of the tragedy it is meant to be and claims it was "palpable-gross" (5.1.343). The noble Athenians spend time making fun of the actors during the performance and every effort that is put into the play in order to fee superior.

Similar to the Athenians within the play, Shakespeare's play itself can show the distinctions of the Elizabethan social class. Denton Snider captures Shakespeare's true genius: "there is no work of our author that is so universal—that appeals so strongly to high and low, to old and young, to man and woman" (382). *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, along with the inner play of *Pyramus and Thisbe*, are intended for all audience members. John Stow points out that the play itself is a combination of "an eclectic mix of classical and local mythologies" (275). Not only

did the higher members of society enjoy the classical allusions, but the lower class would have noticed the local mythologies as well. In order to satisfy all of the audience members, Shakespeare created moments when the "educated members . . . would have recognized the literary allusions" (275) and times when the lower class could enjoy the action of the play, like Bottom's head turning into an ass's head. So even though there are social orders in the audience or readers of Shakespeare, everyone is satisfied.

#### Works Cited

- Allen, John A. "Bottom and Titania." *Shakespearean Quarterly* 13.1 (Winter 1967): 107-117. Rpt. in *Shakespearean Criticism*. Vol. 3. Ed. Michelle Lee. Detroit: Gale Group, 2000. 457-458.
- Ascham, Roger. "From *The Schoolmaster*." London, 1570. Rpt. in *A Midsummer Night's Dream: Texts and Contexts*. 1600. Eds. Gail Kern Paster and Skiles Howard. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1999. 179-180.
- Herbert, T. Walter. "Invitations to Cosmic Laughter in 'A Midsummer Night's Dream.'" *Shakespearean Essays*. Ed. Alwin Thaler and Norman Sanders. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1964. 29-39. Rpt. in *Shakespearean Criticism*. Vol. 3. Ed. Michelle Lee. Detroit: Gale Group, 2000. 449-450.
- Holbrook, Peter. "Shakespeare and the Social Symbolism of Art," *Literature and Degree in Renaissance England: Nash, Bourgeois Tragedy, Shakespeare*. University of Delaware Press, 1994. 105-124. Rpt. in *Shakespearean Criticism*. Vol. 50. Ed. Michelle Lee. Detroit: Gale Group, 2000. 75-80.
- "Kenilworth and Conventry." 1575. Rpt. in *A Midsummer Night's Dream: Texts and Contexts*. 1600. Eds. Gail Kern Paster and Skiles Howard. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1999. 119-125.
- Kirkwood, G.M. "Pyramus and Thisbe." *A Short Guide to Classical Mythology*. Wauconda, Illinois: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, Inc., 1995. 82.
- Shakespeare, William. *A Midsummer Night's Dream: Texts and Contents*. 1600. Eds. Gail Kern Paster and Skiles Howard. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1999. 12-86.
- Snider, Denton. "'Midsummer Night's Dream.'" *The Shakespearean Drama, a Commentary: The Comedies*. Sigma Publishing Co., 1890. 348-427. Rpt. in *Shakespearean Criticism*. Vol. 3. Ed. Michelle Lee. Detroit: Gale Group, 2000. 383-385.
- Stow, John. "From *The Annal of England*." London, 1601. Rpt. in *A Midsummer Night's Dream: Texts and Contexts*. 1600. Eds. Gail Kern Paster and Skiles Howard. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1999. 275-276.
- Taylor, Anthony Brian. "Golding's Ovid, Shakespeare's 'Small Latin', and the Real Object of Mockery in 'Pyramus and Thisbe'." *Shakespeare Survey: An Annual Survey of Shakespearean Study and Production*. Vol. 42. 1990. 53-64. Rpt. in *Shakespearean Criticism*. Vol. 16. Ed. Michelle Lee. Detroit: Gale Group, 2000. 25-28.
- Ulrici, Hermann. *Shakespeare Dramatic Art: And His Relations to Calderon and Goethe*. Trans. A.J.W. Morrison. Chapman, Brothers. 1846. 270-279. Rpt. in *Shakespearean Criticism*. Vol. 3. Ed. Michelle Lee. Detroit: Gale Group, 2000. 368-369.

---

Evaluation: Nanci has done a superb job of focusing on her subject to create an effective thesis statement that she supports with interpreted evidence. Her reasoning is sound and her style is graceful.



---

# A Portrait of a Lonely Woman

---

*Yukie Haruna*

Course: English 102 Composition)

Instructor: Barbara Hickey

Assignment:

*Write a literary research paper.*

*Incorporate references to at least eight secondary sources.*

If it is possible to say that long historical novels are described as grand wall paintings in majestic cathedrals, it might also be possible to say that short stories are small portraits displayed in nearby hallways. Grand wall paintings contain an enormous amount of detail in their huge space and make great impressions on viewers; in contrast, small portraits focus on a main theme in a limited space. As an outstanding portrait seems to reflect the whole life of a person, an excellent short story provides the reader with an opportunity to explore different perspectives about the main character. “The Chrysanthemums,” by John Steinbeck, is certainly a work of art that portrays a lonely woman, Elisa Allen, in a perfectly designed background. In this story, a woman’s frustration in her marriage and an isolated male-dominant society is described with well-planned characterization and effective symbolic implications.

Steinbeck clearly projects Elisa Allen’s unfulfillment in the story through her involvement with her husband, Henry, and the traveling tinker. The objective narrator keeps his distance from the characters, but he perfectly positions the characters so we can clearly understand their minds and motives. Joseph W. Beach calls Elisa Allen “one of the most delicious characters ever transferred from life to the pages of a book” (322). Elisa Allen is thirty-five and

“Her eyes were as clear as water” (246). Her face is “lean and strong” and “eager and mature and handsome” (246). John H. Timmerman notes “the usage of masculine terms in her depiction” (174). Her first name, Elisa, is a woman’s name, which sounds very feminine, but her last name, Allen, is a man’s first name. Therefore, her name implies her ambivalent personality. At the beginning, she wears a heavy “gardening costume” and “a man’s black hat” and “leather gloves” (246). As “a figured print dress” is almost completely covered by “a big corduroy apron” (246), Elisa Allen’s femininity, which will later be awakened by the traveling tinker, is hidden under her masculine exterior.

Elisa lives in the valley like “a closed pot,” which is isolated “from all the rest of the world” by “the high gray-flannel fog of the winter” (246). As the fog closes off the valley from the rest of the world, she is isolated from the society around her. In her husband’s farm, she has a fenced flower garden. “The wire fence protected her flower garden from cattle and dogs and chickens” (247), but at the same time the fence isolates her from the surrounding world that needs only masculine power for farming. In this fenced garden, Elisa cultivates her chrysanthemums energetically. Her work with scissors “was over-eager, over-powerful” (246-47). She also maintains “the neat white farm house,” “hard-swept” and “hard polished” (247). Elizabeth E. McMahan explains that Elisa’s excessive energy in an unsatisfying marriage is poured into cultivating her chrysanthemums and cleaning the farm house (453).

Elisa has no children, but her chrysanthemums substitute for them. That is why the way Elisa Allen takes care of her flowers resembles the manner that mothers raise their children. Mordecai Marcus notes that Elisa’s “devotion to the chrysanthemum bed is at least partly an attempt to make flowers take place of a child” (55). Another reason Elisa Allen cultivates her flowers is her pride. She knows she has a gift to raise plants—planter’s hands just like those her mother had: “She could stick anything in the ground and make it grow” (247). She is proud of her chrysanthemums and her ability to nurture.

When the traveling tinker drives up in an old wagon and presses for a small job, Elisa has a decent cautiousness towards the stranger. She firmly refuses the tinker’s demand: “‘No,’ she said shortly, I tell you I have nothing like that for you to do” (249). She shows her strength and



masculine image. However, her attitude changes after the tinker admires her chrysanthemums. Her cautiousness disappears, and Elisa gradually opens her heart to the tinker. At the same time, her femininity is awakened. "She tore off the battered hat and took her dark pretty air" (250), and she no longer wears her gloves. She eagerly demonstrates to the tinker how to raise the chrysanthemums from the shoots. Her eagerness heightens her emotions, and she becomes sensual: "Her breasts swelled passionately" (250) and "Elisa's voice grew husky" (251). She also dreams of the tinker's wandering life, which seems adventurous and romantic. Elisa is excited and feels an irresistible impulse to touch him: "Her hesitant finger almost touched the cloth" (251). However, she dropped her hand to the ground, and she is ashamed of her behavior: "She crouched low like a fawning dog" (251). Joseph Fontenrose indicates that the tinker's visit makes Elisa realize she can break away from her secure domesticity (62). As she gives the tinker a send-off, she whispers, "That's a bright direction. There's a glowing there" (252). She hopes to get out from the isolated valley and seek a new bright life.

Marilyn H. Mitchell indicates that Elisa feels guilty about her attitude toward the tinker, but she realizes her own physical and spiritual allure (164). She scrubs her body to purify her soul, and she dresses in her nicest dress with elaborate makeup to express her femininity. When Elisa finds the discarded sprouts on the road, she feels as if a part of herself and her dream were trampled. She realizes that she has to live in the isolated, male-dominant society forever. Elisa wants to go to the prize fight to see the men punishing one another with gloves "heavy and soggy with blood" (235). However, she feels it useless and wants to drink some wine to ease her pain. Charles A. Sweet notes that Elisa is defeated and accepts her passive social role (213).

Elisa's husband, Henry Allen, is not well described. However, because the narrator is objective, the conversation between Elisa and Henry is important to reveal her mind. R. S. Hughes indicates that Steinbeck neglects to describe Henry in any detail (60). Readers do not know his physical features nor his age. Henry does not speak much, but it is obvious that he is a successful farmer and a capable businessman. Although he leads a steady, settled life, he neither satisfies Elisa nor understands her deeply. Henry praises Elisa for her chrysanthemums' size and not

for their beauty "I wish you'd work out in the orchard and raise some apples that big" (247). Because he is pragmatic, she does not understand how important the chrysanthemums are to Elisa. When Elisa dresses up for going out, Henry commends her for her strength, not for her prettiness. Moreover, his description is poor and too practical, which makes her irritated: "Why – why, Elisa. You look so nice...you look different, strong and happy" (252). He adds, "You look strong enough to break a calf over your knee, happy enough to eat it like a watermelon" (252). Henry's words stiffen Elisa, and she complains of his description of her. In the last part of the story, Henry shows his thoughtfulness to Elisa and says, "I ought to take you to dinner oftener" (253). However, when she asks him about the prizefight, she is confused and is not able to read his mind. He only repeats, "What's the matter, Elisa?" (253). He does not comprehend her feelings. He never notices the least sign of her loneliness. She knows it is vain to expect him to understand her, and "She turn[s] up her coat collar" and does not show her tears.

The wandering tinker is a totally opposite character to Henry. He is big, and "his hair and beard were graying." "His worn black suit was wrinkled and spotted with grease," and "His eyes were dark," and "They were full of brooding" (248). The tinker's gray, dark image is far from a successful one and foreshadows the development of the story. He is traveling in the wagon and earns a precarious living. He says, "I ain't in any hurry... I aim to fow nice weather" (249). The encounter with the tinker stirs Elisa's mind. Timmerman states that the tinker brings Elisa a dream of freedom and makes her realize that there is a road leading to freedom outside of the farm (174). From the beginning of the encounter, the conversation between Elisa and the tinker takes a lively turn. The tinker jokes about his mongrel dog, and Elisa laughs. Then, she jokes back, and the tinker laughs. The tinker brings Elisa cheerful conversation that Henry has never brought her. The tinker also is a glib salesman. In order to get work, he gets Elisa's attention by praising her chrysanthemums; moreover, he makes up a story about the lady who wants chrysanthemum seeds. His description of chrysanthemums is much more artistic than Henry's description. He describes the flower as "a quick puff of colored smoke" (249) and makes her believe they have the same

sense of beauty. However, Elisa's condition makes her ejected.

Steinbeck uses symbols effectively to make readers understand the characters easily. Jackson J. Benson indicates that describing the outside fully is more indicative of inner condition than describing the inside directly (119). Various symbols are used in the story, and the most prominent symbol is the chrysanthemums, which also represent some different thing. First of all, they represent Elisa herself. They have a "bitter mell" (249) and a masculine image. This image overlaps with Elisa's "strong" and "handsome" image (246). Despite the chrysanthemums' masculine image, these beautiful flowers stand for Elisa's hidden femininity. Their bloom is large and powerful, but each petal in the flower is tiny and fragile. The chrysanthemums surely represent Elisa's ambivalent personality. Next, David J. Piwinski indicates that the chrysanthemums are also Elisa's pride and self-esteem (4). Cultivating chrysanthemums is the only way for her to express herself and her sense of beauty. Surrogate children are another image of chrysanthemums. The eagerness that Elisa pours into raising them is exactly the same as most mothers do for their children. Her love for the chrysanthemums also appears when she hands the flowerpot to the tinker: "She held the flower pot out to him and placed it gently in his arm" (251).

Some minor symbols are effective also. The pot is one of the minor symbols, and it implies domesticity. Piwinski notes that Elisa is restricted to domestic chores (4). A metaphor, "a closed pot" (246), which Steinbeck uses in the setting, implies isolation. Elisa's dress is also a symbol and means prettiness. Both "a figure print dress" (246), which she wears during the gardening, and the dress she wears when she goes out with Henry are "symbols of her prettiness" (252). Although Elisa tries to express her femininity by wearing the pretty dress, Henry does not notice. The fence garden is also an essential symbol, and it implies her isolation. Sweet indicates, "Elisa's fence garden functions as a microcosm of Henry's farm" (211). Her garden is a tiny space that can exist only in Henry's farm, which seemed to be a vague galaxy. The fence protects "her flower garden from cattle and dogs and chickens" (247). However, in reality, the fence isolates her from the rest of the world. The fenced

garden also indicates that she has no freedom, but a long aisle inside the garden, she is safe. The tinker's mongrel dog is another minor but important symbol because it foreshadows Elisa's defeat at the end of the story. Ernest W. Sullivan, II indicates a parallel between Elisa and the mongrel dog (78). Elisa "crouched low like a fawning dog" and she raises her upper lip a little, "showing her teeth" (251) like the mongrel dog that "lowered his tail and retired under the wagon with raised hackles and bared teeth" (248). Both Elisa and the dog are failures.

Elisa's symbolic act helps readers see into her mind. When she thinks the beauty of her chrysanthemums is appreciated, she takes off her hat and forgets to wear the "heavy leather gloves" (248). These acts mean she reveals her femininity to the tinker and she shakes "out her ark pretty air" (250) and shows her bare hands. At the beginning of the story, when Henry appears at her garden, both Elisa's hair and hands are covered. Therefore, her act indicates that she opens her mind not to Henry but to the tinker. Another symbolic act is scrubbing her body. After the encounter with the tinker, "she scrubbed herself with a little block of pumice...until her skin was scratched and red" (252). This act means she purifies herself from the emotional excitement. Showing her interest in the prize fighting also is a symbolic act that the reader should not miss. At the beginning of the story, she is not interested in the fights, but after she realizes that she has been betrayed by the tinker, she shows her interest in the fights. She wants to see men punish each other in the bloody fights for her revenge. However, she realizes it is useless and acknowledges defeat.

John Steinbeck brilliantly paints a portrait of a lonely, oppressed woman in the perfect background that is organized by the supporting characters and the well-illustrated symbols. As a painter keeps distance from an object to observe it well, Steinbeck does not get too close to the protagonist, Elisa Allen. Because Steinbeck is a male author, it is also natural to write the story from the objective point of view rather than to write looking into her mind. The more he describes the outside of the main character, the more we know the state of her mind. Although John Steinbeck is a ready admirer of a great author of long novels, the short story "The Chrysanthemums" tightens his reputation. It also grants

him the title of a great short story writer. Steinbeck artistically projects Elisa's state of mind in the limited pace. Elisa stands still in the landscape with gray fog and yellow field. What is the color of her mind?

#### Works Cited

- Beach, Joseph Warren. "John Steinbeck: Journeyman Artist." *American Fiction* (1948): 309-26. Rpt. in *Short Story Criticism*. Vol. 37. Ed. Anja Barnard and Anna Sheets Nesbitt. Detroit: Gale, 2000. 321-22.
- Benson, Jackson J. "John Steinbeck: Novelist and Scientist." *A Forum on Fiction* 0.3 (Spring 1977). Rpt. in *John Steinbeck*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea, 1987. 103-21.
- Fontenrose, Joseph. *John Steinbeck: An Introduction and Interpretation*. New York: Holt, 1963.
- Hugh, R. S. *Beyond the Red Pony: A Reader's Companion to Steinbeck's Complete Short Stories*. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1987.
- McMahan, Elizabeth E. "'The Chrysanthemums': Study of a Woman's Sexuality." *Modern Fiction Studies* 14 (1968): 453-58.
- Mitchell, Marilyn H. "Steinbeck's Strong Women: Feminine Identity in the Short Stories." *Steinbeck's Women: Essays in Criticism* 9 (1979): 26-35. Rpt. in *John Steinbeck*. Ed. R. S. Hughes. Boston: Twayne, 1989. 154-65.
- Piwinski, David J. "Floral Growth in Steinbeck's 'The Chrysanthemums'." *Notes on Contemporary Literature* 27.5 (Nov. 1997): 4-5.
- Steinbeck, John. "The Chrysanthemums." *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*. Ed. X. J. Kennedy and Dana Gioia. 8th ed. New York: Longman, 2002. 246-53.
- Sullivan, Ernest W., II. "The Curious Case of 'The Chrysanthemums'." *Studies in Short Fiction* 16.3 (Summer 1979): 215-17. Rpt. in *Short Stories for Students*. Vol. 6. Ed. Tim Akers. Detroit: Gale, 1999. 76-78.
- Sweet, Charles A., Jr. "'The Chrysanthemums'." *Modern Fiction Studies* 20 (1974): 210-14.
- Timmerman, John H. *The Dramatic Landscape of Steinbeck's Short Stories*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990.

---

Evaluation: Yukie, a literary artist of the highest caliber, brilliantly paints a portrait of a lonely, oppressed woman in her analysis of Elisa Alton, the main character in John Steinbeck's story "The Chrysanthemums." The superficial quality of Yukie's artistry is all the more remarkable because English is her second language.

---

# Eclipse/Finsternis

Elzabeth Jelich

Course: German 102 (Elementary German II)

Instructor: Renate von Keudell

Assignment:

*Write sentences, a paragraph, or a poem, using comparative and superlative adjectives.*

## Eclipse

Are you there, moon?  
drifting by in solitary splendor  
illuminating the best of us, the worst  
with shadows of ash

Are you there, moon?  
hiding shyly in the gentlest morn  
sometimes bluer than sky  
sometimes brighter than sun

Are you there, and not  
truth veiled and seen, present and distant  
graces overlooked by the louder stars  
vibrating only with the deadest light

Are you there, moon?  
shining covered in darkness  
singing enrobed in silence  
spinning engulfed in stillness

February 29, 2001

## Finsternis

Bist du da, Mond?  
treibst in einsamer Pracht  
erhellst das Beste von uns, das Schlechteste  
mit Schatten von schein

Bist du da, Mond?  
versteckst dich schüchtern an diesem sanftesten Morgen  
manchmal blauer als der Himmel  
manchmal heller als die Sonne

Bist du da, und nicht da?  
Deine Wahrheit verschleiert und gesehen,  
eine Anmut ist nicht bei den lautereren Sternen gesehen  
vibrieren nur mit dem totesten Licht

ist du da, Mond?  
scheinst in Dunkelheit bedeckt  
singst in Schweigen umgeben  
drehst dich in Ruhe verschlungen

29 Februar 2001

---

Evaluation: *Elizabeth skillfully unites the contradiction of shining and darkness—and singing in silence and pinning and stillness. The wonderful apostrophe uses the comparative and superlative and fulfills the assignment.*

---

# Time Together

---

*Joe Kaul*

Course: English 200

(Professional Writing: Grammar and Style)

Instructor: Trygve T. Oreson

Assignment:

*Write an essay on a subject related to the idea discussed in E. B. White's "Once More to the Lake."*

Like many of the sons of fathers from "The Greatest Generation," I got to know "Dad" in a roundabout way: less through conversation than through action and activity. Intimacy, such as it existed with or among the men of our household, was incidental to a routine of behavior that was expected to be simply decent and respectful. To purposefully cultivate closeness would have been both intrusive and threatening. Intimacy was something that was just supposed to happen, and not too often.

But even now, even in my memory and years after his death, I call him "Dad," a manner of reference ingrained in my soul through countless thoughts and conversations. The word, the title, the name, expresses for me, at once, intimacy and a hierarchical respect. I was once, as a preteen, stunned to hear a peer refer to his father by his first name. I had never before heard that such a thing was done. Now, in my existence, I've known an assortment of Bills, Freds, Cucks, and Eugenes, but in a of space and eternity, only one creature was bequeathed to me my eyes, an appetite for science fiction, and a perverse delight in puns and bad jokes. Body and soul, good and ill, I am of my father's *progeny*, a fact that would be obscured were I to simply call him Gene, as though we were no different or no more significant than other Genes.

And this unique creature, Dad, took pleasure in spending time with me. The most frequently enjoyable activity we shared was fishing. I had the good fortune to be raised

in western Pennsylvania, a hilly and wooded country well suited to a man and a boy with a taste for fishing, which we did with modest gear, and generally from the shore rather than a boat. Our most frequent haunts were creeks, and I came to share Dad's preference for out-of-the-way spots. These were approachable only by long walks through woods along steep creek banks, the branches of brush and trees grabbing at my gear and face, the thin mud path stamped out by other sons and fathers calling me along and directing the way. "There just had to be," my young mind thought, "fish at the end of a path like this." Men didn't tramp it out so they could come over here and not catch any fish. My juvenile logic did not always prove correct.

Dad and I weren't, in fact, very good fishermen. That is, we weren't very good at catching fish. We were, however, extremely skilled at finding a secluded retreat to share, a stretch of creek with a deep pool of cool, slightly muddy water running along an approachable shoreline. The spot was generally under a window of bright blue sky that was framed by the outstretched upper limbs of the surrounding trees, a warm, gentle wind, causing them to sway with a Pentecostal joy under the warm sun. There, we were compelled to stop, hooked to the pleasure of the water, sun, and breeze as much as the prospect of catching fish.

We walked softly on this ground, the ostensible reason being that we not disturb the fish. The general carefulness of our conduct created the ambiance of ritual: conversation was not whispered, but soft, and we approached the creek bank with light footsteps, careful to not disturb the water with the sound of footsteps or of carelessly kicked pebbles. We almost superstitiously avoided casting a shadow on the water, a precaution I thought excessive, but one which I was nonetheless careful to observe because Dad once yelled at me with persuasive conviction and irritation.

Other fishermen walked quietly past, looking for their own spots, and they would greet us usually only with eye contact and a nod of recognition. The chattier ones would for a few minutes talk to Dad about the fishing and then move along. Even as a boy, I recognized the ready fellowship between men of shared tastes and temperament.

Stalking bass in this way was delightfully sneaky and crafty, quiet and relaxing and refreshing, so that while catching fish was fun, it wasn't indispensable to the experi-



ence. These days I see fishing reports in the papers and watch the occasional angler's show on television, or I visit a sport shop and see the snarling water temperature gauges used by "serious" fishermen. A modern bass boat is a platform for a military assault, not a place for a relaxing afternoon with the kids. Dad never put so much effort into our trips. For him, fishing was a retreat from the bustle and noise of life; it wasn't really a commitment to catch fish. The fish serve their purpose mainly by living in secluded pools of muddy water to be found and fished by the angler truly evoted.

These periods of quiet companionship while fishing were substantial, but there was plenty of conversation, and more of it on the occasions I accompanied him on business trips. Our conversations were never overtly philosophical; they were more contests of wit. Whether by the water, in the car, or at a restaurant, he was ever alert in a conversation for an opportunity for humor, and I responded with a boy's natural competitive yearning to outdo his father.

There dwelt behind his eyes a benign jester, peering out, ever vigilant, and conscious of the alternate definitions of words. It may be considered by some of cultivated literary taste, childish, or even boorish, but Dad never met a pun he didn't like, and he made the acquaintance of an unusually large number in the course of his life. But always liking to turn a phrase, he did on occasion get into trouble. While speaking the end of a man he had just met who worked for the Presto T Company, Dad asked, and he thought humorously, to speak with Mr. Presto. The gentleman replied, "I'm John Presto." Dad, ever the salesman, recovered quickly, but he later admitted to me of a second of disorientation as he realized he was talking to the business owner and not merely joking about marvelously well working tools.

Despite my Dad's humor and friendships, I recall those business trips that no amount of hearty male comradeship could make other than numbingly boring. They were all made during a couple of my late childhood summers in Dad's big Mercury, which was comfortable enough for travel, but a terrible place in which to be stuck sitting still under a hot, glaring sun, waiting on Dad as he sold electronics parts to manufacturers and distributors everywhere between Harrisburg and Beaver Falls. To this

day, my empathy is acute for panting dogs locked in cars in grocery store parking lots. Not that Dad locked me in the car, but I nonetheless felt trapped while waiting for him. To pass the time, I listened to scores of radio stations and read science fiction novels. These distractions ultimately failed under the unrelenting psychic and physical discomfort of the boredom and heat, which both evaporated the final sweat of effort I could put into making the wait tolerable. I will never forget the heat—the bright, seemingly senseless heat—that lived in even the bits of shade I might find to seek shelter. At last, I simply had to endure the heat, the boredom, and wait.

I could never bring myself to refuse to go on those dreaded trips, not wanting to hurt his feelings. I accepted the boredom and the mild torture of waiting while he sold electronic parts across western Pennsylvania because I knew he would be not only disappointed but also hurt if I refused to go with him. Dad, I think, sympathized in turn with my boredom, and tried to make up for it by treating me to almost anything at mealtime (we never went to restaurants at home) and by a ceaseless cheerfulness when we were together. It was this, that he was so consciously and ceaselessly nice to me, that communicated to me how desperately lonely he was on these trips and how much he needed companionship. But he could be a big-hearted and decent man, and he could read the clues to my evident misery. He finally quit taking me along, for which, at the time, I was grateful. Now I'm grateful that he took me along.

Through times both pleasant and unpleasant, I inherited a great deal from Dad. By time and example, I grew and for ill, he left his imprint on my soul. He never had with me a fatherly chat about the importance of honesty. He just was, and expected me to be, too. And his faults I ingested to, as naturally as a branch sucks up water. So, I will not mimic the sin of Ham and publish his faults, because discretion is a blanket not only for his failings, but my own. Love is discreet, and a sinner ought to begrudge neither love nor discretion to another, least of all his father.

---

Evaluation: *John explores a complex relationship with an abundance of telling details and in an unusually graceful prose style.*

---

---

# Pesticides in the Soil

*Linda K scellus*

Course: Plant Science Technology 110 (Soil Science)

Instructor: C et Ryn ak

Assignment:

*For partial fulfillment in Soil Science, a report or papers required. The subject must pertain to soil information.*

Few chemicals have been the subject of as much controversy in recent decades as pesticides. Broadly defined, pesticides are agents used to kill or control undesirable insects, weeds, rodents, fungi, bacteria and other organisms, and they include insecticides, herbicides, fungicides, miticides, nematicides, and soil fumigants. Much of the debate has focused on the long-term effects pesticides may have on humans via their presence in groundwater or food crops. What has remained out of the public's eye, however, is the effect pesticides can have on the soil and its ecology ("Pesticides" 2, 4).

As one of the Earth's most vital ecosystems, soil is essential for the continued existence of life on the planet. It is a source, warehouse, and transformer of plant nutrients. Soils buffer and filter pollutants, store moisture and nutrients, and are important sources and sinks for carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxides. Soils are a key component for the geologic cycle. More important, to humans, soils continuously recycle plant and animal remains and determine the agricultural capacity of the land in a given region. Soils also provide an archive of past climatic conditions and human influences ("Soil Quality" 1).

Healthy soil teems with life, and most of it is invisible to the naked eye. Bacteria, fungi, and protozoans are just a few of the microfauna that inhabit the soil. It is the presence of these microbes that converts nutrient elements into carbohydrates and proteins plants can use. They also act as decomposers, returning organic matter to a nutrient element state. It is a self-perpetuating cycle that makes life possible.

Pesticides generally are manmade organic compounds. Some are selective against a given pest (known as the target organism), while others are relatively nonselective, taking aim at a large group of organisms. The herbicide Roundup (glyphosphate) is nonselective; it is used to kill many types of plants. Parathion acts against a broad spectrum of insects.

What happens to a pesticide after it is applied to the soil depends on chemical, biological, and physical forces. It may be taken up by plants or ingested by animals, worms, insects, or microorganisms in the soil. It may move downward in the soil and either adhere to particles or dissolve (clay soils have a greater preponderance for

---

adherence with pesticide molecules). A pesticide may vaporize and enter the atmosphere, or break down via microbial and chemical pathways in other, less toxic compounds. Water may leach a pesticide out of the root zone or off the surface of the ground. Evaporation of water at the ground surface can lead to upward flow of water containing pesticides. Finally, pesticides are removed through harvesting of plant material.

Some pesticides will degrade when exposed to sunlight, such as 2,4-D, Treflan, and parathion. These photochemical reactions are limited to the soil surface, so once a pesticide is incorporated into the soil, it is protected from photochemical transformation.

The majority of pesticides disappear from the soil due to microbial decomposition. Common soil bacteria and fungi can degrade the majority of these compounds into simple, nontoxic products such as carbon dioxide and water. A few, however, convert to chemically complex products that can accumulate in the environment, such as atrazine, which converts to diethylatrazine. Some pesticides are resistant to microbial breakdown because they are toxic to microorganisms. In other instances, pesticides are leached beyond the root zone, where the microbe population is substantially decreased. Pesticides leached beyond this depth are less likely to be degraded (Rao 1-2).

Degradation time is measured in half-life, a measure of the amount of time it takes for one-half the original amount of a pesticide in soil to be deactivated. Half-life is sometimes defined as the time required for half the amount of an applied pesticide to be completely degraded and released as carbon dioxide. Such a half-life measurement can be considerably longer than by deactivation alone, especially if toxic or nontoxic metabolites accumulate in the soil during degradation.

Soil persistence is the term used to relate the rate of disappearance of a pesticide from the soil, and this can vary from a few days to years, depending on the pesticide, soil moisture, organic matter, temperature, and pH. In general, pesticides considered to be nonpersistent disappear from soil in less than one month, while moderately persistent chemicals take from one to three months. Persistent chemicals are present for any months up to several years. Diazinon and glyphosphate, commonly available to the farmer and homeowner alike,

are moderately persistent (40 and 47 days); linane (Isotox) and imidicloprid (Merit) have a half-life beyond one year (400 days) (Rao 1-2). 2-4,D, an herbicide used to rid lawns of dandelions and thistle, was found to be active in household carpeting two years after its application outdoors.

The most important factors that influence biodegradation are temperature, moisture, oxygen levels, organic matter, and clay content. If soil is cold (below 50° F) or dry, microbial activity is slow and degradation is limited. Some microorganisms function best under aerobic conditions, while others are active in the absence of oxygen. Microbial populations and activity are directly affected by the addition of organic materials to soil, which can accelerate pesticide degradation. Certain pesticides bond to the surfaces of organic particles and clay minerals. This process, known as adsorption, limits the access of microorganisms to the pesticides and slows the rate of decomposition.

Some pesticides must be taken up by plants, insects, or other target organisms in order to be effective. Nontarget plants may also take in the pesticide through root or leaf absorption, later to be ingested by animals. Once inside the tissue of an organism, they are transformed by the action of enzymes or can be stored unchanged (Doxtader 2).

Repeated or excessive use of pesticides (and synthetic fertilizers) can alter, and often destroy, the balance of life within soils. The nutrient cycle is broken, and soil can become a lifeless form, no longer capable of sustaining growth or converting pesticides to harmless compounds.

Many developments in agriculture, based on the strategy of producing more and doing it more efficiently, exist under the assumption that soil and water were renewable resources without limits. Agricultural chemicals, used occasionally, if at all, during the early 1950s, are currently the largest expenditure many farmers make in producing their yearly crops. In 1956, 200,000 lbs of pesticides were produced; in 1984, that number had soared to 1.7 billion lbs. In many areas, pesticide use has increased tenfold, yet crop losses due to pests and disease has doubled ("Down on the Farm").

Depleted soils, void of critical life forms, can only support chemically dependent crops. Such farms are productive, but not sustainable, and many farmers and ranchers

have come to question the benefits of pesticides. They have come to regard pests and diseases as symptoms of poor management. "Pesticides, like antibiotics and drugs, are no longer the 'magical bullets' that can eliminate problems. The real situation is that we do not suffer from pests because of a deficiency of pesticide in the environment, just as we do not get a headache because of a deficiency of aspirin in the blood" (*Agricultural Chemicals*...5-6)

Are there viable alternatives to pesticide use? Organic, nonpersistent pesticides have moderate success rates, and given their short half-lives, require frequent application. A more effective solution is to farm (or garden) under a new paradigm.

Sustainable agriculture is the current trend to produce high yields in farmland crops without destroying the environment or undermining productivity. It encourages crop rotations (growing different crops in succession in the same field) as a means of pest control, since many pests have a preference for certain crops. Continuous culture—growing the same crop year after year—guarantees pests a steady food supply, and their populations grow. Growing different crops interrupts the pest life cycle and keeps populations in check. In addition, farmers can plant crops, like legumes, to replenish plant nutrients (and reduce the need for chemical fertilizers). Corn grown in a field previously home to soybeans needs less added nitrogen to produce high yields (*The Sustainable Approach*...1).

When cover crops are planted between cropping periods (such as hairy vetch, clover, or oats), soil is not exposed to erosive forces of wind and rain. There is also greater weed suppression, and soil quality is enhanced.

Companion planting is a practice now being researched by scientists. Certain plants emit odors and root secretions that affect the activity of insects and the growth of nearby plants (both positively and adversely). Garlic chives repel Japanese beetles from roses; nasturtiums discourage striped cucumber beetles from cucurbits (and reduce the occurrence of verticillium wilt).

Soil that is rich in organic matter and is not sterilized by the overuse of pesticides teems with life. In turn, crops tend to be more robust and less vulnerable to pests and diseases. Natural pest predators, such as birds and

insects, become a part of the agricultural ecosystem. Integrated pest management programs encourage prevention and then offer responses that range from bio-control agents such as ladybugs, to microbial control of root problems.

Soil is arguably the single most prized element of agricultural ecosystems. Good soils can improve yields and produce robust crops resistant to disease and pest problems; abused soils often require heavy fertilizer and pesticide application to produce high yields. It is possible to maintain and enhance soil quality, but short-term successes may need to be set aside for long-term gains. As consumers, we need to judge the success of agriculture less by supermarket prices and more by its responsible actions on behalf of future generations.

#### Works Cited

Doxtader, K. G. *Fate of Pesticides in Soil*. N.p.: Colorado State University Cooperative Extension, 1992.  
"Down on the Farm." *Nova*. WGBH, Boston. 1984.  
Ecological Agriculture Projects. *Agricultural Chemicals in the Soil*. N.p.: McGill University, 1995.  
Rao, P.S.C. *Behavior of Pesticides in Soil and Water*. Fact Sheet SL40. N.p.: University of Florida Extension, 1999.  
"Soil Quality." The U.S. Global Change Research Information Office, n.d. <<http://www.gcrio.org>>.  
Union of Concerned Scientists. *The Sustainable Approach to Agriculture*. N.p.: 2001.  
United States. Environmental Protection Agency. "Pesticides." *Guide to Environmental Issues*. Washington: GPO, n.d.

---

Evaluation: *M. Kiscellus has presented an outstanding report on a pertinent problem in the environment. The paper is informative and very well written.*

---

# Ecuador's Adoption of the US Dollar

Charles Kutzman

Course: History 121 (History of Latin America)

Instructor: David Ricson

## Assignment:

*Students were to research a current event or problem facing Latin America and explain the domestic and international effects of the issue. Furthermore, students were to explain the involvement of the United States in the topic.*

On January 9, 2000, Jamil Mahuad, then president of Ecuador, announced that he was making the US dollar the official currency of Ecuador. This move came as somewhat of a surprise and was viewed by some observers as a desperate attempt on the part of the beleaguered Mr. Mahuad to stay in power. Ecuador had experienced severe inflation, high unemployment, devaluation of its currency, and default on its international debt during Mr. Mahuad's seventeen months in power. Under his plan, the Ecuador sucre would gradually be replaced with US paper currency, which would serve as legal tender in the country. Coins would still be minted by Ecuador, with values and sizes that would mimic US coinage. This process is called dollarization by economists. Ecuador is seen by supporters of dollariza-

tion as a real-world test of its viability in helping to stabilize a developing economy. Dollarization is viewed by these economists as a cure-all for many of the problems facing troubled Latin American economies. Opponents feel that the purported benefits of dollarization cannot make up for what a country must give up in the way of control over its own monetary policy and also the sense of national pride that comes with using one's own national currency.

Ecuador's move to dollarize does not make it the first country to use the US dollar as official currency. Panama has done so since gaining independence from Colombia in 1903. Because of the US presence in Panama in the Panama Canal Zone for most of these years, and the small size of Panama's economy, this example of dollarization is considered to be unique and not necessarily applicable to other countries such as Ecuador. Latin Americans have viewed Panama as having traded in national sovereignty for economic stability.<sup>1</sup> The African nation of Liberia, and also some South Pacific islands, also use the US dollar as their official currency. While these examples are quite different in size and scope, there is a long history of the US dollar circulating as an unofficial secondary currency, or parallel currency, in many developing countries throughout the world, including Ecuador.

To dollarize a currency differs from "pegging" a currency to the dollar, such as Argentina has done. The Argentine peso is given an official exchange rate of one peso to one US dollar. In this case, the peso is still the official circulated currency of Argentina. By pegging the peso's official exchange rate, it is hoped that the peso will gain stability and be more attractive for use in foreign exchange. Unlike Ecuador's action to dollarize, a pegged currency such as the Argentine peso can quickly be freed from its US dollar anchor and be set to a new exchange rate, or be allowed to float freely in the currency markets, where currency traders would determine the peso's value against the US dollar and other currencies. In contrast, the action taken by Ecuador to dollarize, while not impossible to undo, involves a more permanent commitment to currency and monetary reform. The action, first announced on January 9, 2000, obtained legislative approval in March and was not fully implemented until



September 9, 2000, when the sucre stopped being used for transactions.<sup>2</sup>

According to *The Economist*, inflation in 1999 was 60.7%, and the sucre had lost 65% of its value when compared to the dollar. Ecuador's economy sank in 1999 by 7.3%, and foreign debt was close to \$14 billion, or almost the country's entire gross domestic product for the year.<sup>3</sup> The banking industry is deeply troubled, with 70% of banks now controlled by the state. Adding to this list of woes is the fact that in 1999, Ecuador also became the first country to default on its Brady bonds. Brady bonds, named for former US Treasury Secretary Nicholas Brady, were created in 1989 to help stabilize the debt problems facing many Latin American economies. The bonds are partially backed by US Treasury securities and also have the implied guarantee of the US government. The intention of this program was to make the purchase of Latin American debt more attractive to US banks and foreigners. Another benefit is the ability to obtain loans at more reasonable interest rates than these countries could obtain based on their own credit rating. Ecuador's Brady bonds were initially issued in 1994 as part of a debt restructuring. The default by Ecuador, some five years after the issue of the bonds, adds to the perception that Ecuador faces severe economic problems, even by Latin American standards.

It was against this backdrop that President Mahuad decided to dollarize Ecuador's economy. Although his actions received initial support, he was not able to hold onto power. Several weeks after announcing his plans to dollarize, he was removed from power by a three-man junta and replaced with his vice president, Gustavo Noboa. The military was seen as growing impatient with Mr. Mahuad's handling of protests from Ecuador's 4 million Indians and other impoverished groups, which compose up to 7 million of Ecuador's population of 12 million people.<sup>4</sup> Many of these protesters were concerned that their savings would be devalued in the conversion to using the US dollar. Mahuad was also criticized for protecting corrupt bankers. Noboa, however, supported the decision to dollarize despite the protests. Neither the United States nor the Organization of American States supported Mahuad's removal, seeing this action as contrary to Ecuador's constitution. The United States also claimed to be ambivalent toward Ecuador's plans to dollarize.

Support to dollarize the economy came primarily from financial and business interests. The US dollar already was commonly used as a medium of exchange in foreign transactions. Sales of goods are often stated in dollar terms, and so are many debt instruments used in commerce. To the business community, adopting the US dollar as the official currency will only make official practices that are currently widespread.<sup>5</sup>

The pros and cons of dollarization in Ecuador depend largely on the perspective of the viewer. James Petras, writing in the April 2000 issue of Internet publication *Z Magazine*, in his column, "Tired World Traveler," sees the problem in Ecuador stemming from neo-liberal policies forced on the country by Washington. The austerity programs prescribed by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank are also blamed for Ecuador's problems. He finds it unfortunate that while Mr. Mahuad was allegedly removed because of his inability to quell protests concerning plans to dollarize, his successor, backed by the same junta that had supported Mr. Mahuad, continues with his currency plans. Once people realized that prices would immediately rise to reflect dollar levels, yet their salaries would still be paid in sucres for some time to come, disillusionment with dollarization quickly occurred among the poor. Petras, an author and teacher of sociology at SUNY, Binghamton, N.Y., sees dollarizing as putting the economy of Ecuador under the direct control of US banking and monetary policy. In his thinking, dollarization exhibits US efforts to control Ecuador behind what he terms a "neo-liberal electoral facade."<sup>6</sup>

Petras' view, while certainly liberal and populist, does look at dollarization from the perspective of the large indigent population of Ecuador and the effect it will have on them. To these people, the future promises of economic benefits stemming from the use of the dollar cannot outweigh the fact that any segments of the population, such as the poor, will more than likely face harder times before the hoped-for benefits ever reach them. When people live in crushing poverty, the conditions of the present are what matter the most.

Another view sympathetic to the impoverished of Ecuador comes from Freida Burnstad of the Cloud Forest Institute, an educational, environmental, and

social activist organization. After spending several months at one of the institute's environmental sites in Ecuador, she writes that dollarization is in the interest of the IMF and foreign creditors but as one thing to relieve the widespread poverty in the country. She criticizes the government of Ecuador for privatizing national entities, such as utilities and schools, in order to pay back debt. She accuses the government of giving away natural resource concessions to foreign companies in order to encourage economic development.<sup>7</sup>

The economic consequences of dollarization can also cause problems for the national economy. Should currently high oil prices fall, Ecuador would face the loss of US dollars flowing into the country from its sale. This combined with falling prices for other natural resource exports could lead to a credit squeeze resulting from fewer dollars circulating in the country. Deflation or depression could follow as a result. Alan Greenspan, Chairman of the Federal Reserve, in discussing dollarization in Ecuador and other potential Latin American countries, stated that, "We would never put ourselves in a position where we envisioned actions that we would take would be of assistance to the rest of the world but to the detriment of the United States."<sup>8</sup> In other words, those countries that give up their currency for the dollar can expect no assistance from the US Federal Reserve in regards to its modification of policies for their benefit. Dollarizing is no replacement for a country following sound fiscal and economic policies.

One major negative to adopting the US dollar by Ecuador is the loss of national identity and pride involved with giving up the sucre. Currency helps build a national identity and shapes ideas about a country's past. The size, color, design, and people or artifacts portrayed can serve as a nonverbal form of communication about what a country holds to be important. To use the currency of another country takes away this rich form of symbolic expression. Former Brazilian Finance Minister Mailson da Nobrega commented on dollarization by saying, "You lose not only the ability to make monetary decisions but also some of your identity."<sup>9</sup>

Proponents of Ecuador's move to dollarize feel that the dollar's stability will help cure both the chronic inflation, which was as high as 150% annually before the

announcement to dollarize, and currency volatility. Without the ability to print dollars, the government of Ecuador cannot artificially inflate the currency supply. The use of the dollar would also help insulate Ecuadorian monetary policy from the whims of the changing leadership in the country. When President Noboa came to power, it signified the sixth change of leadership in the past four years. Although adopting the dollar would not add to political stability, the use of it would ensure that the people and the economy would have a stable store of value no matter who was in power.

Since much business, especially that involving foreign trade, is already done in dollars, larger businesses should adapt easily to the change to the dollar. Increased tourism is also a desired benefit from dollarization. American tourists will not need to concern themselves with converting their dollars to sucres, and at what exchange rate. Pricing of hotels, travel, and the like will be done in the same dollar that the US tourist is bringing into the country. This lack of understanding prices and the familiarity of using one's own currency could increase the attractiveness of Ecuador as a travel destination for Americans.

The nonpartisan Council on Foreign Relations feels that complacency about economic reforms could be detrimental to the pursuit of democracy in Latin America, especially in the Andean region.<sup>10</sup> The course taken by Ecuador addresses this complacency, although at a price to a large part of the population. It points out that reform in Latin America is needed on both political and economic levels and that it is difficult to achieve either unless both areas are addressed.

The policy of dollarization in Ecuador will not in and of itself cure Ecuador's economic ills. The main benefit will be a check on rampant inflation since the government can no longer inflate the currency. Other hoped-for benefits are a little more tenuous and depend on political and economic policy other than monetary policy. Taxation, labor reform, land reform, and building a sound banking system are just some of the other obstacles facing Ecuador. With almost half the country living in poverty, the further adoption to the US dollar as the legal currency will not solve all of Ecuador's ills.



Despite the many negatives of dollarization and the lack of solid benefits beyond the control of currency inflation, I feel that it is a policy worth trying. A currency is comparable to the lifeblood of an economy. Few countries with weak economies have strong currencies. The growing importance of international trade worldwide leaves countries with weak and widely fluctuating currencies at a disadvantage. For a small country such as Ecuador, this can be especially pronounced. As is common in much of Latin American international trade today, the values of contracts and debts are often stated in stronger currencies such as the US dollar and the euro. Add to this the overwhelming importance and dominance of the US economy in the Western Hemisphere, and Ecuador's decision to dollarize appears to be a risk worth taking. It will at least give Ecuador a strong currency, which could take a number of years, if ever, to achieve without dollarization.

Some of the maladjustments that occur during the transition period in using the dollar should disappear as the process of dollarization is completed. The fact that the country will be giving up control of monetary policy to a foreign government is offset when it is realized that Ecuador has had a little success on its own in this endeavor.

I would expect that in five years, should Ecuador continue with the dollar, that inflation will be well under historical rates. Export businesses will find it an advantage to use the same currency for pricing their goods as they use for paying expenses and meeting payroll. Those enterprises that have debt denominated in dollars will also be on more sound footing since they will no longer have the concern of trying to repay debt with a currency that is depreciating rapidly against the dollar. The matter of national pride (or lack of it) when using another country's currency as legal tender is more difficult to address. Coinage will still reflect the national heritage of Ecuador, as it will still be minted in the country. Dollar previously circulated freely in Ecuador, so dollarization will not be a complete shock for some. It can only be assumed that citizens of Ecuador will find it in their own self interest to hold the more stable dollar in stead of the depreciating sucre, no matter whose picture may grace the currency.

This is a bold move by Ecuador, and although it may have been caused by severe economic circumstance and the action of a president desperate to hold onto power, it may still result in benefiting the economy of Ecuador in positive ways. Much will depend on Ecuador enacting serious reforms to bring the Indian population and other economically deprived groups into the economic mainstream. A more stable, honest, and responsive government is also needed to complete the picture if Ecuador is to make economic progress.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup>Larry Rohter, "Using the Dollar To Hold the Line," *New York Times* 18 Jan 2000, sec. 3, p. 1.
- <sup>2</sup>"Dollarization," Embassy of Ecuador, 23 April, 2001. <<http://www.ecuador.org/news2.htm>>.
- <sup>3</sup>"Ecuador on the Brink," *The Economist*, 15 Jan 2000.
- <sup>4</sup>"Military Chief Dissolves Junta in Ecuador, Says Vice President in Charge," *The Times of India*, 23 January, 2000. 23 April, 2001, <<http://www.timesofindia.com/230100/23wor129.htm>>.
- <sup>5</sup>Rohter 7.
- <sup>6</sup>James Petras, "Rebellion in Ecuador," *Z Magazine*, April 2000. 23 April 2001, <[http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/South\\_America/Rebellion\\_Ecuador.html](http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/South_America/Rebellion_Ecuador.html)>.
- <sup>7</sup>Freda Burnstad, "Report from Ecuador," 23 April 2000. <<http://www.pacific-sites.com/~mec/NEWSL/ISS35/35.11Ecuador.html>>.
- <sup>8</sup>Rohter 7.
- <sup>9</sup>Ian Katz, "Currencies: Greenback Magic?" *Business Week*, 27 March 2000: 12.
- <sup>10</sup>"Complacency Is Newest Threat to Reform in Latin America," Council on Foreign Relations, 23 April, 2001. <<http://www.cfr.org/latinamerica/release.html>>.

### Selected Bibliography

- "Divided about the Dollar." *The Economist*. 6 Jan 2000, p. 32.
- "Ecuador." Embassy of Ecuador: Washington DC. "Dollarization." 23 April, 2001. <<http://www.ecuador.org/news2.htm>>.
- Hot Calaloo. February, 2000. 23 April, 2001. <<http://www.hotcalaloo.com/hc8v6.htm>>.
- Mises, Ludwig von. *Human Action*. 4th ed. San Francisco: Fox and Wilkes, 1996.
- Preston, Julia. "Mexico Measures Identity in Dollars." *New York Times*. 16 May 1999, sec. 1, p. 17.
- Trauger, Thomas. "Beating the Drum for the Dollar in Ecuador." *Business Week*. 22 Jan 2000, p. 6.

---

Evaluation: *Charles writes about a fascinating topic about which few Americans know anything. The paper is solidly researched and presents complex information in an accessible manner.*

# 'm So Glad To Be Me

Nicole Kline

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Paul Bellwoar

## Assignment:

*The essay focuses on the epistemic origins of self-knowledge, as it pertains to the big question: Who am I, and why am I here in the universe? Based on the premise that ultimately what we know about ourselves is biased in our own favor and sometimes shortsighted (yes, it can likewise be objective and have great foresight), I ask students to gather information about themselves from three people: a family member, a close friend who has known the student for a long time, and anyone they wish. The format for the essay is comparison and contrast structured around the three content areas of strengths, weaknesses, and abilities. They can use any of the comparison and contrast styles as long as they incorporate their own and others' ideas about themselves.*

I am a manipulative, impatient bitch who lies, preys, and doesn't have an ounce of respect for the people around me. Many thanks go out to my mom, best friend, and oldest brother for helping me come to this realization. Maybe I should tell them what I think they are. Then again, maybe I'd just be proving them right. With their help though, I've come to know that I already knew myself pretty well.

It was like pulling teeth when I asked my mom to give me honest answers regarding my strengths, abilities, and weaknesses. I could have bet money on the fact that she could name a million and one weaknesses right off the bat (that's my motto for you). She recited her answer with

pride when she finally got to tell her own daughter that I had a horrible temper. I immediately argued with her, screaming at the top of my lungs. "You're so wrong! I don't have a temper! Jesus!" I belted out before I froze in silence. *Oh my God! She's right!* She went on to inform me that I was a very impatient person, and I always cut her off when she tells me things that she thinks are important. "Drive slowly. There are a lot of slippery, wet leaves on the streets—," she says every time I get to the back door with my car keys in tow. "Mother! God! I'm not stupid! I know. You tell me that EVERY TIME!" I say as I slam the back door in frustration (I'm not alone here, okay, if you heard that a car thing come out of my mouth every time you left the house, it would drive you insane as well. It's not just what she says, it's how she says it, too. It takes her a half an hour to explain to me her worries about driving in the rain, snow, dark, sun—you name it, she's worried about it). Well. Anyway, she went on to bravely tell me that I am very impulsive when it comes to buying things. "Niki, you're very irrational. You see something and automatically want it and all of its accessories, or else I won't hear the end of it" (thank you, Mom). Well, okay, as much as I don't want to admit it AGAIN, she's right. Back in the Sega Genesis and Super Nintendo era, the coolest video game system emerged—3DO. I became obsessed with it and milked my mom for money to buy every game and useless accessory until we had a third mortgage on the house. Within six months 3DO was obsolete, and I was bored with it anyway. By then, I was into N64. History really does repeat itself.

Exhausted with fighting about my weaknesses, we moved onto my abilities. "Well, you speak Italian very nicely. I'd say that you have an ability to learn other languages with ease," she said. Okay, I agree. I learned two years of Italian, and I spoke it very well—for two years! "What else, Ma?" I continued. This could be considered a weakness, but she told me that I'm manipulative. I always pull the "but, Mom, I'm your only daughter" trick all the time (and it's 100% effective). I guess that is an ability I've picked up throughout the year. Another ability she pointed out could be the best thing I've ever come to realize. "You function in a dysfunctional family," she said in all honesty. It's true. With one gay

brother and parents who live under the same roof, yet hate each other, I do function pretty damn well. "Ma, you sure are right about that one," I said as we both burst out with laughter (this is a sick scene—mother and daughter, laughing about their oddities together at the kitchen table).

Almost automatically, my mother ran down a list of my strengths. "Number one, you're very talented with your art." I guess that means I'm artistic. Yeah, I agree. Taking four years of art will do that to a person. I've won numerous awards. One of my drawings was even put on the cover of Maine South's *Eginox* magazine. She also told me that I make friends with ease. That reminded me of my first day in sixth grade. I transferred from Mary Seat of Wisdom to Roosevelt Elementary with no companions. After the first day, however, I had met a group of fun kids who got a kick out of my arsenal of jokes. My mother went on to tell me that I'm really good at problem solving. Not the mathematical problem solving, but "all the stuff she couldn't do" problem solving. When she had given up on the bookcase from hell, I put it together in a half an hour while I watched a rerun of Saturday Night Live. She was amazed when I lifted it up the stairs to her bedroom, and I am now the "Ms. Fix It" of the household.

Just as my mother had finished dissecting my personality, my brother Phil, who threatened me with his brass knuckles if I didn't add the fact that he is NOT the gay brother mentioned earlier, came into the dining room with a whole new set of emotional ammo. My weaknesses have always been a key role to his reign over me. Now it was his turn to step up to the plate. This was his dream come true since I had literally asked for it this time. He didn't even wait for me to finish asking him when he brutally blurted out, "Nicole, you have a lack of respect for the most important person in your life, Mom. You probably have more respect for me because you know I can kick your ass. When you yell at her, and call her a bitch in a fit of rage, it hurts her feelings. That one time when she wouldn't let you borrow her car, you threatened a fit." Not wanting to agree, I said, "Okay, Rodney Dangerfield. Whatever," and wrote down what he said. "You have an aversion to menial tasks," he continued. What the hell does that mean? "It means that you only

do the things you think are necessary. For instance, your college applications were left half blank when I looked through them. You didn't even take the time to find out our extended zip code," he explained. Okay, I guess that's a weakness. I've never heard of it before, but I'll take it. He also told me that I can't jump high. He recalled a time in the backyard when we set up an obstacle course. We were creative children. I always fell on my face after the first hurdle. We laughed, and she forced me to use it as an answer. I concur. I really can't jump high.

My brother told me that I have a few abilities that he's jealous of. I maintain my responsibilities, or so he says. "You do good in school, and you've kept your job since Junior. You can take care of your present responsibilities," she said, trying to sound really cool. With a pen in his mouth like a pipe, he pooped himself like a lawyer and started getting really politically correct with me. "I'd have to say that you prioritize well. You're smart enough not to blow off a test, and you know when to party. I'd say you have that ability," he ended with a loud, demon-like burp (yeah, really politically correct there, Phil). He also told me that I know how to take a joke. I know exactly what he means here. Once or twice, he threw a verbal punch below the belt. When I was younger, it used to end me flying up to my room in tears, but I've learned to not take his (or anyone else's) in quite so personally. Two brothers and eighteen years later, I have to say a lot of things bounce off me. I agreed with him on that one.

His answers were similar to my mom's regarding my strengths. "Obviously the art thing. I don't need to go into that," he said. Okay, next please. "Fashion sense? Are you kidding? Well, I guess I dress okay. At least I don't wear rags from the five-and-dime," I exclaimed. Okay, so another ability I have is my great fashion sense. "The last one would have to be that you are intelligent," he remarked. I earn things with ease because I'm gifted with a hardy brain. It must have been all of those Brain Quest games my mother tricked us into paying with on the way to somewhere awful, like the dentist's office (yeah right, 'all the kids play them').

About an hour later, I drove over to see my friend Amy, who was babysitting her three cousins at her aunt's house. I was anticipating an exciting night, if you classify baby spit up as exciting. Anyway, she saw me roar down



the street and told me as soon as I stepped onto the porch, “Weakness number one. You’ve got road rage.” She hadn’t even let me in, and already she was battering me. I got her a few nasty words that Auntie Niki couldn’t have said in front of the kiddies, and she responded, “That’s number two—your temper! Wow, that’s easy!” I can always count on Amy to make me feel better about myself. “So, since we’re on the subject,” I started to say. “Yeah, uh, compulsiveness,” she interjected. “Jesus, Amy! What, were you rehearsing before I came over? What the hell?” I asked. She just smiled at me and made a pen and paper hand gesture.

When I talked her about my abilities, she jumped at the time, zoned into the Power Puff Girls movie (no surprise). I napped my fingers in front of her face and she blurted out, “Uh, you have learned how to shop with a bargainer’s eye, thank to me. You’ve learned to head straight for the clearance racks because you know last season wasn’t *that* far away.” Thanks for your mind-altering words, Amy. “Another one would have to be that you know how to balance your time. I give you credit for that. I juggle between school, work, friends, family, boyfriend, and yourself, you really divide it equally.” Wow, I was impressed that another came out of the mouth of a zombie-like baby sitter with three kids dangling from her neck begging for sugar cookies (a babysitter’s worst nemesis). “Anything else, Am?” I asked. “Yeah, you know how to pick good friends. I mean, look at me.” (Nice kidding.) “No, seriously, you can find the good in people and tell whether there is enough good in that person to stick with them.” I know what she means, and I have to give her credit for trying to explain it.

“Okay Am, what are your strengths?” I asked, fishing for some compliments. She agreed with my opinion and Patti when she listed my artistic talent at number one. I was always assigned the designer when we decorated our friends’ lockers in seventh grade. She said that my humor is combusive and never ending. We reminisced about those countless times we sat on her front porch and choked on our lemonades for hours. “I agree with you, but I’d have to say that if it wasn’t for you, I would never have exercised my funny bone,” I remarked. “Nicole, this one has come in handy a lot for me. You know how to solve fights. When I was fighting with my sister, you were

the one to step in and help resolve the ordeal.” (Episode #352: The Case of the Clothes Burglar.) “You saw an answer neither of us saw, and now I can finally talk to Jessie,” she said. The happy hugging commenced, and it lasted until little Matthew decided that my shirt would look better if it had orange cupcake frosting smeared on it.

I think I know myself pretty well. I agree with a lot of their answers about me. I know I have a short fuse. I know I don’t respect my mother as much as I should. I also know that I have road rage, and I’m currently working on it. I’m good at prioritizing and keeping my responsibilities in check. I also think I function well for a person of my caliber. I know I’m a comedian, an artist, and I’m intelligent. I wasn’t really surprised with the answers I received. With that, I can thankfully say I’m glad to be me.

---

Evaluation: *Nicole's work is exceptional on a number of levels. Not only does she infuse the essay with irrepressible, parenthetical humor, she beautifully weaves the qualities listed in the opening lines of her introduction into the syntax of the essay. With the reckless control of a stock car racer, via her control over the sentence structure, she speeds the sentences and paragraphs along, all the while never suppressing her witty patience and self-assured wit. This ability to control the pace and humor of the essay would be interesting if she utilized it on occasion; however, she not only uses it successfully throughout the piece, she excels at it, making the essay highly entertaining and a joy to read: she definitely emphasizes the student's art. Regarding the question of who she is, for now, she responds with this unapologetic and assertive artistic answer of an essay.*

---

---

# Circle of the Inspired

---

*Charles Kottler*

Course: Literature 105 (Poetry)

Instructor: Barbara Hickey

Assignment:

*Write an original analysis of a poem.*

As a child, I often contemplated the meaning of life. I cherished those sleepless nights of quiet meditation as I stared through the window, desperately searching and questioning my own existence. Why are we here? What is the purpose of the human soul? What is God? My mind would consider questions that I had originally thought to have no answers. At times, however, I would experience moments of clarity and inner peace. Enraptured by the beauty of the art, literature, and music that I loved, all of a sudden, within that moment, everything would somehow seem to make sense. What was it that I was feeling? This artwork was so moving and inspirational, it would actually touch something inside of me. For the first time in my life, I experienced the emotion known as love. It seemed clear to me that the creativity that I had found was the link between God and man. Since God created me, what better gift can I give to my creator than to be creative myself? Is there a better purpose for any life than to create something that will outlive it? As artists, we assess the situations that we encounter by what we feel in the moment. With this emotional and subjective outlook on life, we tend to leave ourselves more open to both sides of the deepest of human emotions. There seems to be a struggle—an eccentricity—within the artist, that brings him or her incredible amounts of despair, as well as joy. An even though the road may be painful, we must learn to hold onto our inspirations, knowing that the end will one day justify the means. Neil Peart illustrates this paradoxical situation in the lyrics of the Rush song "Mission." Inspired art and the creative process are two of the most beautiful facets of the human experience, but sometimes with great love comes great sadness.

There are three main voices that we hear in this poem: the voice of the "inspirational," the voice of the "inspired," and the voice of the "experience." Peart's use of interplay between the two voices in the first seven stanzas suggests that the tone is that of a conversation with God, or prayer. The voice that we hear in stanzas 2, 3, and 6, is the voice of the inspired artist:

I hear the passionate music  
Read the words that touch my heart  
I gaze at their feverish pictures  
The secrets that set them apart

---

When I feel the powerful visions  
 Their fire has made a drive  
 I wish I had that instinct—  
 I wish I had that drive

I watch their images flicker  
 Bring light to a lifeless screen  
 I walk through their beautiful buildings  
 And wish I had their dream

The artist reveals his emotional attachment to several forms of art within the three stanzas. Music, literature, television, and architecture are all experienced by the artist through the use of denotation. Paintings and photography are encountered through connotation in the line “I gaze at their feverish pictures.” To how just how emotionally inspired the artist is by these pieces of art, Peart assigns each form of art a human trait of existence. The music is personified as passionate. The words, figuratively, touch the artist’s heart. The painting and photographs are feverish. The images on the television flicker and bring light to a lifeless screen. The buildings dream. And every piece of art, unto itself, is personified as holding secrets that set apart from the others. Peart’s use of imagery in the three stanzas, in particular, is extremely vibrant, colorful, and dynamic. Our sense experiences are directly appealed to in the manner in which Peart describes this inspirational art. Auditory imagery is represented by the passionate music. The sense of touch is represented by the action of walking through the buildings. Our visual sense is stimulated in the reading of the literature, the appreciation of the paintings and photographs, the flickering of the images on the television, the beauty of the buildings, and the power of the visual impact.

The voice that we hear in stanzas 1, 4, 5, and 7 is the voice of the “inspirational,” or the voice of God:

Hold your fire—keep it burning bright  
 Hold the flame ’til the dream ignites  
 A spirit with a vision  
 In a dream—with a mission

Spirit fly on dangerous missions  
 Imagination on fire  
 Focused high on soaring ambitions  
 Consumed in a single desire

In the grip of a nameless possession—  
 A drive to the drive of obsession—  
 A spirit with a vision  
 Is a dream—with a mission

But dreams don’t need to have motion  
 To keep their spark alive  
 Obsession has to have action—  
 Pride turns on the drive

Peart reveals the encouraging “within” force, actively describing the beauty and power of creation, in the most inspirational sense. The sound of this voice reinforces the meaning and beauty of the word being spoken and the intensity of the conversation. Peart uses mostly euphonic sounds throughout the three stanzas to give the reader an almost floating effect, alluding to the heavenly voice of the speaker. He uses long, full-sounding vowels, (*hold, burning, soaring*) and soft, vibrant-sounding consonants (*vision, mission, possession, obsess on, motion*) throughout most of these stanzas. He does also use a few well-placed cacophonous sounds (*focused, consumed, park, action*) that really reinforce the intensity and seriousness of this inspirational moment. The phonetic intensity of the “f” and “fl” sounds are often associated with the idea of moving quickly (Arp and Johnson 213). This symbolizes the creative process and the inspirational process, which is the idea of this entire piece. Peart represents this course of action with the words *flicker, flame, fly, feel, and fire*. The word “fire” is used as a metaphor, and it is symbolic of one’s intense feelings associated with emotions such as passion, inspiration, love, joy, curiosity, and desire. He represents this theme of the four stanzas written in this particular voice. Ironically, the inspirational “God” figure is assigned with the visual imagery of fire (in the passion of creation). Usually, fire gives a connotation of evil or hell. Since Peart colors this poem with words that give a positive connotation and an encouraging tone, any notion of negative energy is completely negated.

In the final three stanzas, we are introduced to the third and final voice, the voice of the experience itself. This is the voice that addresses the paradox involved with the beauty of creativity and the depths of the pain that many artists suffer:

It's cold comfort  
To the ones without it  
To know how they struggle—  
How they suffered about it

If their lives were exotic and strange  
They would likely have gladly exchanged them  
For something a little more plain  
Maybe something a little more sane

We each pay a fabulous price  
For our visions of paradise  
But a spirit with a vision  
Is a dream with a mission ...

This voice is a serious, “come-to-grips” tone to it. Peart alliterates the hard “K” sound in the first line to represent the cold-heartedness involved. The first of the three final stanzas addresses the naïve, inspire artists-to-be. From an outside perspective, the artist seems to have it all, but inside perhaps lives an indescribable suffering. We can only speculate about the artist’s emotional frailties through the vague windows left behind in his work. We rarely get a glimpse into the pain, struggling, openness, and sacrifices that were made. Their experiences are what made them look inside of themselves for answers and gave them a different outlook on things. And that’s where they found something unique, something beautiful. In the second of the three final stanzas, Peart suggests that the artistic eccentricity is not chosen by the artist, but is inborn. The artist does not choose, but is chosen. This explains why some of the brightest and most beautiful artists die at a young age. They have given us their creative accomplishments, and thus fulfilled their lives’ purpose: to be creative. In the final stanza, Peart finishes the piece with an optimistic tone to show agreement among the three voices. The beauty of the art is worth the suffering. For the suffering will live temporarily, but the art will live and inspire forever.

The purpose of this poem is to share an outlook or experience. “Mission” is a dramatic outlook on the soul-searching involved in creating art. The total meaning is to show the relationship between God and the entire creative process, and the paradox of the artist suffering and dying for the life of his artistic integrity, creativity, and visions. The encouraging and positive tone reveals that although one’s time here may be a struggle, the artist knows that true creative and inspirational energy will never die. With every song the singer sings, every poem the poet writes, every painting the painter paints, and every piece of wisdom the teacher teaches, a part of the artist will live on forever and thus step forward into eternity.

#### Works Cited

- Arp, Thomas R., and Greg Johnson. *Perrine's Sound and Sense*. 10th ed. Fort Worth, Tex: Harcourt, 2001.  
Rush. “Mission.” *Hold Your Fire*. Polygram, 1987.

---

Evaluation: Charles writes a powerful analysis of the lyrics of the Rush song “Mission,” which, as he masterfully demonstrates, “is a dramatic outlook on the soul-searching involved in creating art.” As a gifted literary artist, Charles will, along with Neil Peart, “step forward into eternity.”

---

# Grrrls Can Play, Too!

Mary Krone

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Peter Sherer

---

Assignment:

*Compose a stipulative definition of a term that your audience likely does not know well. Use traditional definition patterns, especially example, and use language that energizes the speaker's voice. Write correctly, but take some style risks.*

Picture a small urban music club, late one weekend night. The lights are turned down low, the floor is sticky with cigarette butts, and the bodies of twenty-somethings are crammed in, breathing on each other's necks. Suddenly, the lights on stage glare against the crowd, catching the glimmer of each pierced face. Tattooed arms rise above the fans' technicolor hair styles as they scream for the darkened figures appearing on stage. "1, 2, 3, 4!" Drumsticks twirl, the bass line throbs, guitar strings bend, and the lead singer steps up to the mike to scream out her lyrics.

*Her lyrics?!*

As with other "hard-core" music genres, punk rock is known as a mainly male pastime. Females, although a part of the punk scene since its emergence in the late seventies, have remained in the background, seen only as sexual fantasies or mere decorations. A few early female punk bands (or bands with female members) existed—such as Siouxsie Sioux, The Slits, and X—but they never gained the popularity and acceptance of all-male punk bands like The Clash and The Sex Pistols. This continued until the early nineties.

1991 was named "The Year Punk Broke Out." With bands like Nirvana, Pearl Jam, and Soundgarden reaching the tops of the music charts, punk was beginning to go mainstream. At the same time, a small sexual revolution began in the punk scene of the Pacific Northwest. Young female punks united and began starting their own bands and striking out against the male dominance. Eventually, the movement became nicknamed the Riot Grrrl Revolution; "grrrl" was used to symbolize the nature of the revolution. Female bands like Bikini Kill, Hole, Babes in Toyland, Bratmobile, and Seven Year Bitch began giving the bad boys of punk a run for their money. Refusing to be classified as the "submissive little women," these "grrrls" began to prove that they could scream out their angst against a set of guitar riffs just as well as any guy could; and in some cases, they could do it even better.

One of the founders of the revolution was Kathleen Hanna, lead singer of the all-female group Bikini Kill and publisher of the fanzine *Riot Girl*, which became the basis of the movement's name. *Riot Girl* quickly rose in popularity, and soon young women around the world were beginning to identify with the movement and its



purpose: to ignore gender stereotypes in music and in any setting. *Riot Girl* not only published articles about the musical aspect of the movement, but also about politics, feminism, sexual liberation, and female unity and support. Soon other "zines" such as *Bust*, and *Bitch*, were published, and in 1992 the first Riot Grrrl Convention was held in Washington, D.C.

The Riot Grrrl Revolution was not about women trying to act like men. It was not "penis envy," or "feminazism." Riot Grrrls saw themselves as the new wave of feminism. At a time when *Nutsweek* and *Tee* were stating that feminism was dead, young women began asking themselves if this was true. Had they missed the gender revolution? Had women come as far as they could? Is this it? The Riot Grrrls disagreed. Although they realized that, thanks to the previous generation of feminists, women were able to enjoy most of the same opportunities as men, they wanted more. The Riot Grrrls wanted to be socially equal.

The riot grrrl revolution opened the door for female punk musicians. Without it, girls would still be afraid to pick up guitars. Without it, all-female concerts like Lillit Fair and Ladyfest wouldn't exist. Without it, bands like Bikini Kill and Sleater-Kinney would still be referred to as great girl bands; now, they are just great bands. Without it, females who identify with punk music, who dream of starting their own garage bands, who want to be more than groupies, would be left in the cold. The Riot Grrrls made it possible for punk music to appeal to both genders. In the words of one riot grrrl band, "What will you do? WE'RE THE REVOLUTION!"

---

Evaluation: *Mary's essay interests even those of us who know little of the music she writes about. This essay's intelligent topic treatment and fresh style.*

---

---

# The Essence of Sexuality

---

*Mari Anne La Fleur*

Course: Philosophy 115 (Ethics)

Instructor: Barbara Solheim

Assignment:

*Carefully explain and then evaluate Alan Goldman's view on sexual morality in his essay "Plain Sex."*

Sex is intricately woven into all aspects of our society. It exists at every level, from television to the written word, and from the fashion industry to the boardroom. In addition, sex is a unifying feature of our natural world. Sex is something all living organisms have in common, from some simple single-celled bacteria all the way up to the amazingly complex human being. But, what *is* sex? Is sex the intimate communication between two people? Is sex the representation of complete trust and respect? Is sex the expression of love and commitment? Is sex the attempt to control and dominate another individual? Or is sex simply a physical act imparting physical pleasure? Imagine a beautiful rose with layers of delicate petals intricately intertwined to produce the final product. As the petals are peeled away, the core of the plant is revealed. Eliminating all the extraneous parts leaves the most basic component of the plant, namely the stem. Sex can be compared to this rose. The intertwined yet removable petals are like the ways in which sex can be manifested. Trust, respect, love, communication, and control are peeled away to reveal the core of what sex really is: the physical contact and the

pleasure it produces. Alan Goldman, a professor of philosophy at the University of Miami, holds this libertarian view of sex. Goldman's view is grounded in the concept of "Plain Sex" (309). Goldman believes that our concept of sex and sexuality has been distorted by the petals of the rose. Let the petals fall to the ground in order to reveal the core of what sex really is, namely the physical contact with another's body and the pleasure this contact produces (309). This essay will explore the details of Goldman's open-minded view as well as discuss the strengths and weaknesses associated with such a view.

The most predominant form of analysis of sexual behavior that exists in the literature is what Goldman refers to as the means-end analysis of sex. This form of analysis of sex attaches a necessary external goal or purpose to sexual activity. Sexual activity is analyzed as a means to a particular end (310). Some analyses link the external goal of sex to reproduction, while others have said that the purpose of sex is to express love. Additionally, others have attempted to broaden the scope of the purpose of sex to not just express love but to serve as a form of communication. The goal of the means-end analysis of sexual activity is to clearly define sex as having a concrete purpose outside of the physical aspect of the behavior. For example, the Catholic Church maintains a position on sex that states the purpose of sex is to have children within the context of marriage (300). This is a means-end analysis of sexual behavior, with the goal of sexual activity being reproduction.

Is such an analysis correct? Is the purpose of sex to meet some defined further end? Alan Goldman does not endorse the means-end analysis of sex and sexual desire. Goldman contends that such an analysis is inadequate and incorrect in understanding sex and sexual desire. By adhering to the means-end analysis, Goldman believes "all definitions of this type suggest false views of the relation of sex to perversion and morality by implying that sex which does not fit one of these models or fulfill one of these functions is in some way deviant or incomplete" (310). It appears that these models are attempting to associate sex with the higher, more refined intellectual function and to ignore the more base and crude physical aspect of behavior. Consider a married couple. Even though they have been married for a number of years,

---

there still exists an intense physical spark between them. More than anything, this couple desires a child to call their own. They have used all opportunities possible to conceive a child. One evening, a spontaneous force overcomes them. They forget ovulation cycles and temperature charts and they give in to pure, unbridled physical attraction that still exists between them. Their expression was in the form of genital as well as oral-genital sexual activity. Was the couple's act somehow morally incorrect or deviant because the goal of a child was not the purpose of this act? According to the means-end analysis that aligns the purpose of sexual activity with reproduction, this act would not have been morally correct because their goal was not conception; it was instead the desire for the physical act of sex and the intense pleasure that results. Goldman finds fault with such an analysis. There are definitely times when the goal of a sexual act is reproduction, but this is not always the case. It is entirely possible to desire sex without also desiring a child. Sex without the goal of reproduction can still be good sex (312). Just as sex is a biological function, eating is a biological function. We eat to survive, of course, but we also eat for pleasure, to alleviate stress and a myriad of other reasons. Therefore, is it immoral that we eat junk food because it tastes good and not just to survive? Of course not. Then why should it be immoral to have sex for pleasure and not strictly for its biological role in reproduction (312)?

Another example of the short-sightedness of the means-end analysis of sex is the alignment of sex and sexual desire with love. According to this analysis, if love is the ultimate goal of sex, then sex without love is somehow deviant and morally incorrect. Is this justifiable? Is sex without love really morally impermissible? Goldman maintains that the correlation between sex and love is weak at best. It is absolutely true that sexual desire and sexual activity are enhanced by love, but love is not a necessary component for sexual activity. Sexual desire is not always the same as love. These are not interchangeable concepts. It is possible to sexually desire many people in our lives, but we truly and genuinely will only "romantically" love, at most, a few people (313). Furthermore, love can be displayed in many different ways without engaging in sex. Bringing our partner breakfast in bed, ironing their clothes, celebrating a vic-

tory together or crying together to share pain are all ways of expressing love. Conversely, sexual desire and sex can happen without love. It is very possible to experience a sexual desire for someone without being in love. Sex without love can still be good sex without it being immoral or deviant. Love and sex are not two halves that make up one whole. Therefore, it is clear that since it is possible to separate sex and love, then the means-end analysis aligning sex with love is again weak.

If the means-end analysis has not provided an adequate framework by which to understand sex, then what definition is adequate? Goldman offers an alternative analysis of sexual behavior. According to Goldman, "Sexual desire is desire for contact with another person's body and for the pleasure which such contact produces; sexual activity is activity which tends to fulfill such desire of the agent" (310). Basically, we should accept sex for what it is: "Plain Sex" (309). Sexual desire is the desire for physical contact with another person's body and the pleasure it brings, nothing more and nothing less. Many traditional writings have likened the physical component of sex with our basic animal tendencies. These tendencies are considered the most vile and vulgar representations of human behavior. Therefore, instead of accepting this type of behavior, it is quickly condemned and, instead, attempts are made to associate sex with our higher, intellectual capacities (312). Goldman does not perceive our physical behavior as being base or vile. By understanding sex at its most basic and physical level, there will not be the inclination to attach false views of sexual morality which arise from thinking sex is something else beyond the physical act (312).

Objections to Goldman's stunningly simplistic view on sex have been raised. One criticism of his definition is that it is too broad and all-encompassing. Where do we draw the line in terms of physical contact? What about contact made in sports such as football? Goldman addresses this criticism by pointing out that the actual desire for contact in the game of football is not purely for the contact itself. The physical contact is necessary to reach the further goals of winning the game or blocking the other opponent (311).

Other objections that have been raised suggest that Goldman's definition is too narrow and confining. Suggesting that sex is simply the need for physical con-

tact with another person's body excludes the idea that other attributes can be sexually attractive. For example, a person's personality can be the source of sexual attraction for another person. Goldman contends that such an attraction will not end with just the desire to talk. Instead, this attraction will ultimately lead to the desire for physical contact (311).

It is clear that Goldman's analysis of sexual behavior is aligned with the physical manifestation without association with any intellectual baggage. In line with this view is the idea that the sexual act is morally neutral. Sex is simply a physical behavior not unlike eating or sleeping. There is no morality inherent in the sexual act itself. According to Goldman, "Any analysis of sex which imputes a moral character to sex acts in themselves is wrong for that reason. There is no morality intrinsic to sex, although general moral rules apply to the treatment of others in sex acts as they apply to all human relations" (317). Sex is morally neutral just as a business transaction is morally neutral.

This, however, does not suggest that there is no morality associated with sex. According to Goldman, the moral ethics underlying the sexual act are grounded in the Kantian framework (318). Immanuel Kant was an eighteenth century German philosopher who established a moral theory using duty as its framework. According to Kant, a rational being should "[act] in such a way that [one always treats] humanity, whether in one's own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end" (48). In other words, the individual must always be respected. The way this moral rule can apply to sex is that the desires, preferences, and interests of others *must always* be respected (Class notes). One example of how morality fits into sexual behavior is evident in child molestation. *Child molestation* *always morally wrong* not because it is a sexual act but because it violates the interest of the child. Such an act will have a profound effect on the immediate and future emotional and sexual life of the victim. The child's interest is completely disregarded, and this violates the general moral rule of treatment of others. The physical act of sex is immaterial (318). In summary, when any person engages in sexual activity, the preferences and interests of their partner must be upheld

in order for the sexual behavior to be deemed morally correct.

"Plain Sex" as presented by Alan Goldman suggests that sexual desire and sexual activity are simply the desire for contact with another person's body and the pleasure such contact produces. Is Goldman correct? Is this really the best way to define and describe sexual behavior? I believe there is some validity to what Goldman presents, but I also believe there are some inherent weaknesses associated with such a view. One major weakness with Goldman's concept of sexual behavior is his alignment of sex solely with its physical manifestation. Sexual behavior is a complex, intertwined package of sensations that cannot be separated without destroying the beauty of the sexual experience. Using the example of the rose from the beginning of this paper, the rose is a beautiful, complex flower composed of many intertwining layers of delicate petals. These petals are so intricately placed that it is difficult to see where one ends and the other begins. As each petal is stripped away from the plant, piece by piece, the integrity of the plant is destroyed until nothing remains except the most basic component of the plant: the stem. Is the stem the best representation of the rose? I do not believe so. The rose is a wonderfully complex package of attributes that tantalize our eyes, nose, and sense of touch. As the petals are stripped away, the rose loses its complexity as well as its beauty and significance to the beholder. I believe sexual desire and sexual activity are very much like the rose. Without all the wonderfully intertwined attributes, the sexual experience loses some of its significance. The physical attribute is immensely important but so is the connection to love, communication, and awareness that are so important to the overall experience. The sights, sounds, smells, and sensations involved in sex make it what it is. Peeling away the petals and describing sex as just the physical act is not enough. Sex is many physical, emotional, social, and psychological attributes all intertwined into one glorious rose. Goldman's definition is merely the stem, and the stem is not the rose.

Conversely, one of the very strong and valid points made by Goldman is the way morality is connected with sexual behavior. I completely endorse the idea that sex should not have special moral rules associated with it

solely because of its nature. There aren't special rules for eating or sleeping, so why should there be for sex? The general rules of morality are sufficient to define the morality of sex. Rape should not be immoral because of the sexual act; rape should be immoral because of the horrific violation of the victim's interests. Society is much too preoccupied with the intimate nature of sex, and therefore does not always apply the moral rules justly. Goldman's approach to sexual morality is clear and objective.

All in all, Goldman presents an interesting, insightful view of the extremely complex subject of sexual behavior. Unfortunately, she presents us only with the stem, not with the entire rose.

#### Works Cite

Goldman, Alan. "Plain Sex." *Contemporary Moral Problems*. 6th ed. Ed. James E. White. Belmont, Calif: Wadsworth Publishing, 2000. 309-321.

---

Evaluation: *This is, first, a wonderful example of clear expository writing, that successfully sets out Goldman's view along with its several nuances. Second, Mar Anne uses the metaphor of a rose both to convey her own idea of human sexuality and to underline what she sees as a weakness in Goldman's view.*

---



---

# The Lost Diaries of Remedios the Beauty

Jenni LiPetri

Course: Literature 115 (Fiction)

Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

Assignment:

*This paper is a response to one essay choice related to our reading of Gabriel Garcia Marquez' One Hundred Years of Solitude, in which students could write diary entries or an interior monologue from the point of view of one of the characters in the novel.*

[Author's note: Because Remedios the Beauty was never formally taught how to read and write, I feel it necessary to point out that her form of communication may have involved invented and imaginary letters and spellings of words. When I wrote this diary from her perspective, I concentrated more on getting her message across than on possible linguistic differences in her writing style.]

Today our house flooded with people. I walked to the dining room in my usual manner, and there were at least fifteen people in there, eating and talking loudly. Great-grandma yelled at me and jumped in front of me and would not allow me to eat breakfast until I went and put something on myself. Aunt Amaranta tried to put me in one of those froofy dresses! Can you imagine? To walk around my own house! She tightened a piece of fabric with bones in it around my stomach and pulled it until I could not breathe anymore. Then she scuttled around me and gave me petticoats, bloomers, and dresses. I was so hungry that I soon gave up and took off the dress. It takes too long to get ready wearing one of those things. Then I went to the sewing machine and sewed together two pieces of fabric, making holes for my arms and head, and went back to get my food. I do not understand why anyone would want to bother themselves with a that lace and ribbon. Mom never worries about my clothes, but NaNa and Auntie A were not pleased with my choice. However, I imagine they are too busy to worry themselves about it at this point. Even as I am writing I can hear voices I have never heard, knocking, and the opening and shutting of doors. I am glad that they are too busy to try and make me learn how to cook and clean. Now I will have more time to read and decode the parchments that Melquiades brought to my great-grandpa back when Macondo was first founded. Mequiades came to me in a dream several years ago and told me that I am the reincarnation of his sister. I was put in this body, and if I can discover the secret of the parchments, I will rise up and join him in the clouds, as is my destiny. He told me that when the time to discover the secrets of the parchments came, I would know. I have been looking at them and realized they are the history of the Buendia family. I explained some of my theories on people that I have learned from the parchments to Uncle Aureliano, and he was impressed at the insight I had. More later.

\* \* \* \* \*

I have learned why Aunt Amaranta is such a bitter old hag. The man she loved was in love with Rebeca, her sister. What terrible luck. Today, I shaved my head. I no longer have to deal with people braiding it because I am going to use it to make wig for the aunts. It is so much more comfortable without all that hair. I am probably ten degrees cooler. I have met many new family members recently. All of Uncle Aureliano's seventeen sons are visiting Macondo. They are so much fun! They get dressed up as a man and roll around in sand so I could climb the greased pole. It was tough, but I got the hang of it, and even made it to the top! NaNa was not happy with me. I do not understand why. I think climbing a greased pole is a pretty big accomplishment. None of the other girls could do it. Well, I am getting hungry. I think I'll go eat.

\* \* \* \* \*

Somehow, today a man got on our roof. As I was bathing, I saw him through the tiles of the roof. I told him to be careful because it was easy to fall. He looked scared. I felt bad for him because I would be cared up there, too. I explained to him that wet leaves rotted the tiles, and that scorpions filled the bathroom. I had to take a bath more quickly than usual. I wanted that man to get down from the roof. He did not listen to me, and instead asked me to let him soap me. Imagine! Why would I want anyone else to soap me? I have two hands. God gave me two so I could soap myself. Then he said he wanted to soap my back. Ha! That's funny. I never heard of anyone soaping their back. I got out of the tub more quickly than usual, and as I was dressing, the man began crying and asking me to marry him. How absurd. Why would I want to marry a man who had just missed lunch to watch me bathe? What kind of person enjoys watching others bathe? To make matters worse, the man lifted off two more tiles even though I warned him not to, and then he slipped and fell into the bathroom. He cracked his head on the cement. The noise caused everyone from downstairs to come up, and some foreigners happened to remove the body. The whole incident ruined my morning, because I finished my bath early, and when I was done I was not hungry yet. I am finally hungry now, however. It's time I go eat.

\* \* \* \* \*

Oh, you will not believe what happened! NaNa said I could go look at the new plantings with my friends. I am so excited; I do not get to leave the house much. When I do, it is a joyful occasion. Well, I have to go get ready. NaNa said that if I want to go, I have to find a decent dress and a hat to wear.

P.S. I have read in the parchments to the point where I was born. They were supposed to name me Ursula like NaNa, but instead gave me the name Remedios.

\* \* \* \* \*

The banana plantings were interesting, but my friends and I were assaulted. They even must be trapped there, because from the way they acted, one would think they have never seen a woman before. As soon as we realized the danger we were in, we ran to the nearest house for refuge. In the midst of the scuffle, one man attacked me. He grabbed my stomach with a hand like a claw. I whirled around to face the man, and his eye looked so sad that I was frightened. I will never forget what they looked like. When I faced him, he let his claw hand go, and I managed to keep up with my friends. I do not want to tell anyone what happened, because I am sure the man did not even know what he was doing. Men are impulsive-minded. They do stupid things like travel long distances just to see me at church, or like the man just a week that watched me bathe. I would not want to watch a man bathe. I do not understand why a man would want to watch anyone else bathe. Anyway, we were in this woman's house, too, so I had to leave, when four of my cousins Aureliano came to save us. They escorted us home and we were safe. I guess men are good for something.

\* \* \* \* \*

I read about Uncle Aureliano's war experience today in the parchments and went to talk with him about it. He was, as usual, asking for little gold fish. They are beautiful little fish. One thing I realized from reading the parchments is that making the fish is the only thing that keeps Uncle Aureliano sane. He enjoys living a simpler life. The constant threat of war proved to be too much for him. Aureliano seems happy when I go in there and talk to him. He told me that I am the most lucid being that

he has ever known. Finally, someone who understands the joys of implicity. Ursula has been upon me again, telling me I will never find a man that could put up with the negligence he will receive when with me. I hope he will give up again. It does not matter to me if someone will “put up” with me or not. As soon as I am done reading the parchments, I will join my brother Melquiades in happiness that will have no end.

\* \* \* \* \*

My dream was not lying to me. In the parchments today, I read about my own levitation. Fernanda is jealous—ha-ha! She is just awful. I do not know why Aureliano Segundo wanted to marry her. He should have married Petra Cotes. I like her much better. She has the patience and love for Aureliano Segundo that he needs. Uncle Aureliano, however, is going to die soon, while leaning against the chestnut tree where great-grandpa spent his last days. My niece, Meme, is going to turn out just like her father, but eventually, her mother will drive her away. I must get back to the parchments. My time to go is coming soon.

\* \* \* \* \*

How sad. As much as I do not like Fernanda, her bitterness and disillusionment sadden me. Her children grow up to deceive her. She spends much of her days thinking that elves are moving her things, when it is really her mind that loses track of them. When she dies, she spends four months rotting on her bed before her son gets home. I will have to talk to Melquiades and see if there is something I can do to preserve her in death. These parchments are getting sadder and sadder. I understand why Fernanda is the way she is; her parents raised her to be crazy. It rains for four years and all of Macondo is flooded and ruined. Ursula dies, and my poor mother will be left to take care of everything. When she realizes she can not do it, she gets on a train, and dies with no family around her, and her body is thrown into the ocean by the conductor. I do not know if I can bear to finish reading the parchments. The sadness of it all overwhelms me. Of course, I knew this would happen.

\* \* \* \* \*

I have not written in months. Sorry. I stopped reading the parchments for a while. This will be my last time writing. I am joining Melquiades tomorrow. In the parchments, I finally discovered two people in this family of solitude that have true happiness. They are my niece Amaranta Ursula, and my niece Meme's son, Aureliano Babilonia. In childhood, they will have many a happy time together, and when they meet again later in life, they will realize how much they missed each other. However, like everyone else in this family, they will have an unhappy end. Their child will bring about the death of Amaranta Ursula (in childbirth) and the death of the baby, and Aureliano will discover the secrets of the parchments and die, and die while reading the last line. It is time for me to go. I must prepare for tomorrow. I want to look around and remember everything as it was when I live here. Then I will go sit out here tomorrow morning. (I do not want to break through the roof on my way skyward.)

*Evaluation: Jenni has written a convincing account of events surrounding Remedios the Beauty, an angelic, clairvoyant, but simple-minded member of the Buendía family in Marquez' novel. Jenni's idea of giving a voice (and reading and writing abilities) to this mainly mute character demonstrates a powerful imagination at work, and her successful establishment of this character's naive point of view creates considerable dramatic irony and shows a clear understanding of (and ability with) this technique.*

---

# Open Adoption and the Moral Philosophies of Immanuel Kant and John Stuart Mill

Gina Matthiesen

Course: Philosophy 105 (Introduction to Philosophy)

Instructor: David Williams

Assignment:

*Analyze a personal ethical experience or issue  
using the moral theories of Kant and Mill.*

## The Philosophies of Kant and Mill

One of the main questions that humanity asks itself is “How shall I be an ethical person?” People face ethical decisions daily. Some are minor, such as “Shall I tell my friend the awful truth about that purple outfit that she loves so much?” or “Shall I throw my cigarette butt on the ground or look for the nearest ashtray?” These questions seem minor, but they can have a great impact on our lives. Is hurting your friend’s feelings *really* worth a disagreement in style? Do you *really* want to see a bunch of cigarette butts on the ground? Major ethical decisions are much more difficult. Should you risk a friend’s anger by confronting him about his alcoholism? Should you support hate-crimes legislation?

Eventually, we all seek guidance to answer such questions. Clergy, psychologists, teachers, various officers of the law, and grandmothers everywhere have been looked to for advice. Some read self-help books while others

study religious texts. Human history is filled with a variety of ethical systems. The Aztec Empire, modern China, and the hunter-gatherers of prehistoric France may not seem to have much in common, but each developed a system of ethical rules. Human ideology, which includes religion, social customs, and philosophy, is filled with explanations, formulations, and debates of such rules.

Western philosophy, like all other ideological systems, has wrestled with ethics for a long time. Most agree that some form of moral code is necessary for our existence. We disagree on what exactly morality is and how we to achieve it. People wonder about what makes a moral decision *right*. Two important Western philosophers, Immanuel Kant and John Stuart Mill, worked diligently to answer some of these questions. They are by no means the only philosophers to study such questions, but their influence is still discussed today.

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) was born in Prussia. His parents were devout Pietists, who were morally severe and emphasized the individual’s relationship with God. As an adult, Kant grew to resent Pietist theology, but he never lost his regard for righteousness and moral severity. He never married, did not travel, and was known for his personal rigidity and routine. However, Kant was also considered a brilliant professor of logic and metaphysics. He harshly critiqued the two major schools of philosophy at the time, Rationalism and Empiricism, and attempted to make them into one sensible whole.

Kant talks about morality in terms of duty and practical reason. Since humans are rational creatures, they cannot help but have a sense of duty. Duty is an innate, a priori sense of what we “ought” to do; it is the obligation that we feel toward our fellow human beings and morality in general. It is a conscious choice and has no regard for our desires, inclinations, or sentiments. Correct ethical decisions are based on what we know we ought to do whether it suits our preferences or not. Making correct decisions is a matter of conscious effort and will. The purity of our motives is paramount; the consequences of our actions are unimportant.

The basis for moral decision making is the categorical imperative. This imperative is a command of a moral nature that is universally binding on all rational beings. Kant tells us to think of these commands as applying to



everyone, including ourselves when it is inconvenient or painful. Kant's categorical imperative is to act as if our motives and actions were to become a universal law of nature. For example, were I to throw my cigarette butt on the ground rather than in an ashtray, I need to think of the consequences of everyone else doing the same. Since this scenario is undesirable, I know that such a choice is morally wrong. Kant's categorical imperative is quite strict and not at all socially or culturally relative. Kant sees morality as objective.

John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) had a different approach to morality. He was born in the British Isles to parents who were emotionally estranged from one another. His father was a disciple of philosopher Jeremy Bentham, whose beliefs were socially reformist and based on hedonism and egoism. Bentham taught that we should act on the principle of utility: to act always to promote the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people. Mill's upbringing was an experiment to prove Bentham's theories correct. Ironically, this upbringing did not include much happiness. Mill later had an emotional breakdown that caused him to rework Bentham's utilitarianism to include the effects of human emotion. He felt that love saved him.

Mill saw morality as the ultimate product of rational pleasure-seeking for others and ourselves. Utilitarianism taught that people naturally seek pleasure and try to avoid pain. We equate the pleasurable with the "good" and "right" and painful things as "wrong." Mill separated pleasures into the "higher" and the "lower." Higher pleasures include intellectual, emotional, and moral activities that can sustain our souls and bring about lifelong happiness. Lower pleasures are based on physical sensations and are therefore only temporary. For example, reading a well-crafted novel is a higher quality pleasure than eating a bowl of one's favorite ice cream. The more educated that people become, the more they will seek higher quality pleasures.

Jeremy Bentham based moral decisions on enlightened self-interest: we are happiest when others are happy as well. Mill reworked Bentham's utilitarianism into a truly altruistic social philosophy. He wrote that we have the

capacity to promote the welfare of others and would naturally do so with the proper education. Science and clear thinking will produce an environment conducive to both altruism and the betterment of ourselves. We need to view our own and others' interests impartially, then make moral decisions that will best benefit all concerned. True happiness is achieved when we overcome our own natural selfishness and view others as having an equal value to ourselves. Mill wrote that we must seek this happiness outside of ourselves.

### The Ethics of Open Adoption

The most important moral decision I have ever faced was placing my newborn son Daniel<sup>1</sup> for adoption. I truly believed that I was in a stable life-long relationship when I became pregnant. I believed that Jim<sup>1</sup> (Daniel's birth father) and I could successfully raise a child. However, Jim committed suicide several months before Daniel was born. I was suddenly in a situation where I did not feel that I was either emotionally or financially ready to become a good single mother. I decided to choose between parenting and adoption.

I called a couple of adoption agencies and tried to learn as much about adoption as possible. I decided to place Daniel in an open adoption with a wonderful couple through The Cradle, one of the oldest adoption agencies in the country. In an open adoption, birth and adoptive parents meet one another and often develop a life-long relationship to best benefit their child. Children are provided with their full medical and genetic history and learn that their adoption was an act of love, not abandonment. Birth parents can see that their children truly are growing up in a loving and stable home. Adoptive parents are never treated as surrogates for "real" parents. They *are* "real" parents; a DNA match is unimportant. An open adoption is considered to be healthy by all participants, rather than a shameful secret.

I feel that my decision was morally sound. However, I know that society is split about the ethics of adoption. On the one hand, people will tell a birth mother that she is making a "wonderful and selfless" decision. Individuals who hold this opinion are usually those who have had

<sup>1</sup>Names in this document have been changed for privacy purposes.



some kind of experience with adoption, such as birth parents, adoptive parents, adoptees, and their family and friends. On the other hand, many others will say that a birthmother is “selfish,” “irresponsible,” and “did not really want her child anyway.” These people are incorrect and seem to have no idea that their comments are hurtful. Even the common expression “giving a child up for adoption” is a negative moral judgment. One gives up candy or cigarettes, not children.

We can judge the morality of placing a child for adoption in the terms of Kant and Mill’s philosophies. Adoption can easily be set in terms of the “duty” that a parent has to provide a loving home for their child. Open adoption, much like school desegregation, also seems to be a good example of a utilitarian idea. Both birth and adoptive parents put someone else’s interests above their own.

In Kantian thought, the birth parents “ought” to consider what is in the best interest of their child. A child ideally needs a stable and loving home. A woman or couple faced with an unplanned pregnancy “ought” to look at their lives honestly to determine if she or they can provide such a home for their child. If not, placing a child for adoption with a loving and stable family is a good option and a sound moral judgment. It is based on one’s duty as a parent.

Adoption is a very painful decision for a birth parent to make. This option is contrary to our impulses, since it requires critical self-judgment. One decides that someone else can provide a better upbringing for *one’s own child*. In such a case, doing the right thing does not make one feel immediately “good.” Positive feelings are mixed with guilt, sadness, regret, and anger. According to *The Cradle*, about half of their clients decide to parent because placing a child for adoption is so painful. Placing a child for adoption requires a great deal of willpower and determination.

Adoption creates a pretty good categorical imperative, as well. “If you are sure that you cannot successfully parent your baby, place them into a well planned adoption.” This imperative could save many children and adults a lot of grief. We need to be careful, though; this imperative should never become a command to the poor that they may not raise children. A successful parent is not

necessarily a wealthy parent. The second part of the imperative needs to be addressed as well. An adoption must be well planned by both birth and adoptive parents to most benefit the child. The results of a poorly planned adoption are tragic, as seen in the “Baby Richard” case, among others.

There are some problems with Kant’s philosophy that John Stuart Mill seems to address. Kant ignores most psychological factors other than “duty,” which is very similar to Freud’s superego. People for whom the superego becomes overly dominant are considered unbalanced and quite unhappy. Kant also said that the purity of our motives matters most, not the consequences. A birth mother may have the purest of motives when she places her child for adoption, but if the adoption is not well planned, things can go terribly awry. For example, if no one attempts to contact the birth father so she can surrender his parental rights, the whole adoption may be invalidated. And what of the birth mother who has a well planned and successful adoption plan, but whose motives may have been a little “selfish?” Is her decision immoral, even though she did the “right thing?” John Stuart Mill recognized the importance of our emotions and believed that we could be selfish and yet not completely immoral. Selfishness must be overcome in order for us to lead fulfilling lives, but it is natural and not the sign of a permanent defect.

In Mill’s terms, open adoption is a sound moral decision because it requires a person to put another’s interests above one’s own. The birth parents, even though it causes them emotional pain, consider what is best for their child. Adoption may be the answer. Open adoptions are even better since there is no secrecy or shame for anyone involved. A successful open adoption requires education about the process, reason, and goodwill for both sets of parents. Mill believed that with the proper amount of education, reason, and good will, we could all live happy, fulfilling lives and make our world a better place.

Open adoption seems like an excellent example of Mill’s altruistic utilitarianism. It improves the lives of all participants and therefore also improves society. A tremendous amount of emotional wealth is invested in this relationship, so the decision becomes soul-sustaining. Birth parents, adoptive parents, and adoptees find

themselves having to constantly educate others about open adoption. This education improves society since it causes people to think about experiences outside themselves and open minds. An opened mind is better able to overcome one's natural selfishness. Once such selfishness is overcome, we can see that everyone is worthy of moral consideration, and true equality will eventually result.

In Mill's philosophy, open adoption is superior to traditional closed adoptions. In a traditional closed adoption, no medical history is made available to a child and their adoptive parents, which can be disastrous. For instance, what would happen if Daniel's parents did not know that Jim's family has a history of alcoholism and severe depression? If these disorders have any genetic component at all, Daniel could be at risk. Daniel would have no information about why he was placed for adoption. In fact, he may not even know he was adopted until an obnoxious cousin tells him. Were he to search for his birth parents and find that his father committed suicide, he may truly feel abandoned. His parents, whom I adore, would be legally treated as somehow not being "real" parents in a traditional closed adoption, and I would never want them to feel that way. When thinking about open versus closed adoption in Kantian terms, the distinctions would probably not matter. Adoption is a consequence, not a motive.

I would like to see elements of Kant's and Mill's moral philosophy combined. Our innate duty to our fellow human beings is important, but so are our emotions. Both motives and consequences *must* matter. Our motives may be pure, but if our actions cause more harm than good, we have accomplished nothing or worse. Our sense of duty must be tempered with intelligence, competence, and compassion. Mill's emphasis on life-long happiness and Kant's emphasis on moral duty could really improve human character. Is there such a philosophy as Universalist utilitarianism? It seems to be a great idea.

---

Evaluation: *This paper is an exceptionally clear and coherent application of the principles of two major moral philosophers. It succeeds not only in illustrating the merits of each ethical approach but also their limits.*

---

# An Indelible Image

Merry Moran

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Peter Sherer

Assignment:

*Write a personal experience essay in which you focus on an incident which helped you mature in some way. Make your speaker a participant. Use detailed and some colorful concrete language as you narrate and describe.*

I blamed the house. Of course, it made no sense to do so. After all, it was just a house, an old one at that.

It stood at the edge of a cornfield, at the end of a small, semi-circular, blacktop driveway, just a few yards from County Highway H. The nearest town was some seven miles away. I had driven out from the town just to see the place.

When I lived there over fifteen years ago, the house was already badly in need of repairs. The black shutters had suffered under the cruel, stifling hot winds of many Wisconsin summers and the biting chill of the winters.

Oddly enough, despite the passage of time, the house looked the same, except for the profusion of weeds that now nearly obliterated the driveway and the uncut and wild grasses that threatened to engulf the second story windows. (How well I remembered the windows.)

Perhaps it was that undying sameness that stirred up the indelible image of an event that took place one cold, winter night so many years ago.

As I looked at the house from the comfort of my car suddenly I had the sensation of being a child of seven or eight years old again. I could almost hear the shutters rattling under the icy fingers of the wind and feel the cold as it crept thief-like through the cracks in the doors and windows.

It may have been that cold invisible intruder who awakened me from a restless sleep in the upstairs bedroom that I shared with three of my older siblings.

Stirring from my slumber I soon realized it was neither the wind nor the cold that had awakened me. Rather, it was the voice of my father echoing through the floorboard between my room and the kitchen below.

He and my mother were shouting at each other. Keeping several blankets wrapped around me, I scuttled crab-like over the opening in the floor where the pipes had been exposed in a failed attempt to repair the plumbing. From my vantage point, I was able to peer through the gap in the floorboards and observe another set of events taking place in the kitchen below.

My father had made a rare appearance at home. He would often go off to work in the woods, cutting timber or delivering goods to the local lumber mill. His "responsibilities," as he called them, would often take him away

---

from home for weeks at a time. Later, I found out it was the lure of the taverns that kept him away.

His return after one of these long absences was the spark that had ignited this night's shouting match.

I heard my mother say accusingly, "You're drunk again!" Then she rattled off a series of laments: "The children need clothes. They have outgrown their old winter jackets. The jackets that still fit the younger children are too worn to be of any use."

Peering through the opening in the floor, I saw my father. He looked angry. His face was flushed, and he was glassy-eyed. My mother was just out of view, but I heard her say, "We've had no heat for the last ten days. Mr. Schrok has been asking for the rent." My father stepped towards the door and retorted, "Didn't the kids just get some clothes last month? All I ever hear when I come home are complaints!" My mother stepped forward, and I saw her slap my father. I could hear the sharp, stinging sound all the way upstairs. I could almost feel the responding "thud" as he struck her. The sound of breaking dishes added to the cacophony in the kitchen as she hurled several of them at him.

He shouted all the more loudly. Our dog Blackie, a stray we had picked up some years ago, awoke from his slumber by the door. Agitated by the noise and my father's aggressive attitude, he began to growl. I saw my father kick him because Blackie was blocking his way out the door.

"I'm going to kill that dog," my father slurred. He kicked the dog again and stormed outside to his pick-up truck where he kept three rifles on a rack in the back window. I wanted to go downstairs to comfort my mother. I feared for Blackie, but I was too scared or nervous to move.

I heard, rather than saw, my father come back into the kitchen. Blackie began to whimper. My father came into view as I saw him drag Blackie by his collar out the door. The door slammed shut. A single gunshot rang out.

A momentary silence enveloped the scene. My siblings had their heads buried under the blankets. I peered through the floorboard again. My mother was sitting at the wobbly kitchen table, her head buried in her hands. She was crying. The roar of the pick-up's engine smothered her weeping. Its tires squealed on the black-topped

driveway, forever marking the pavement with the recognizable impressions of anger and frustration. I hear the truck enter the dirt and gravel road, pebbles clattering against the solitary mailbox.

When I looked out the window, all I saw, in the pale moonlight, were a swirling trail of dust and the barren stalks of corn standing as silent sentinels to the event I had just witnessed.

That was the last time I ever saw my father.

---

Evaluation: *Merry's story engages as it poignantly tells of a childhood experience which surely shaped her life thereafter. It is a true story both in subject matter and style.*

---

---

# Women of the Nineteenth Century Make Lovely Pets

---

*Meghan A. Moyer*

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

Assignment:

*Write a research paper on a work of literature,  
incorporating at least even secondary sources.*

Charlotte Perkins Gilman's short story called "The Yellow Wallpaper" describes a woman's battle through postpartum depression and confinement in order to cure herself from a "nervous condition." This is a fictionalized recounting of the author's own hospitalization for depression under the care of renowned specialist Dr. Silas Weir Mitchell, who prescribed her the rest cure in the nineteenth century (Lavender 1). The narrator, Jane, is confined by her mineering physician-husband to her bedroom like a caged animal, with her secret journal as her only comfort and unbiased friend through this journey. During this compulsory seclusion from friends and family, she starts to hallucinate, seeing things appear in the wallpaper of the room and around the grounds of the mansion her husband has let during the summer for Jane; their newborn child; and John's sister, Jennie. By the end of the story, Jane becomes completely delusional and delirious. The reality of the situation, in my opinion, is that the stress of being a new mother was confused and overwhelming for Jane, causing her to abandon the conventional gender roles of this time. "Her husband John (a physician), her brother, and her doctor all concur that she needs complete rest and a cessation of her work if she is to 'recover,' by which they mean 'appear as a normal female in a world created by and for men'" (MacPike 122). This punitive treatment of solitude to properly cure Jane of her rebellion becomes more unbearable than her actual affliction. The narrator's tragedy displays the utter neglect, struggle, and misunderstanding of women in this period.

In order to understand Gilman's style and major factors in her decision to write this short story, we must first appreciate the things that influenced her upbringing. Charlotte Anna Perkins was born on July 3, 1860 to Mary Fitch Westcott and Frederick Beecher Perkins, "a magazine editor [who] frequently left the family for long periods of time" (DiGrazia 1). He ultimately left his wife and children soon after Gilman's mother was instructed not to have more children. Some critics believe that his fear of killing his wife was the reason Perkins left the family ("Domestic Goddess: Charlotte Perkins Gilman" 1). Faced with extreme destitution, "they were forced to move nineteen times in eighteen years" ("Biography of Charlotte Perkins Gilman" 1). Although she suffered the

---



absence of a father figure, Gilman had a strong feminist upbringing with the influence of her well-known great aunts Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*; Catherine Beecher, an advocate of "domestic feminism;" and Isabella Beecher Hooker, a supporter of women's right to vote (DiGrazia 1). She later married a man named Charles Walter Stetson and had a daughter, Katherine Beecher Stetson. Within a few months, Gilman developed severe postpartum depression and was hospitalized under the care of Dr. S. Weir Mitchell. After her release, she chose to divorce Stetson and give custody of their daughter to him (DiGrazia 1).

Gilman was diagnosed as having "neurasthenia" and immediately prescribed what is called a "rest cure," which involves resting in bed without intellectual stimulation or socialization. Upon her discharge, she began to deteriorate due to Mitchell's strict instructions to "'live as domestic a life as far as possible,' to 'have but two hours intellectual life a day' and 'never to touch a pen, brush, or pencil again' as long as [she] lived," all at the young age of 27 (Gilman, "Why I Wrote 'The Yellow Wallpaper'" 1). She chose to toss the doctor's words out and went back to writing. Rather than let this experience get the better of her, she used her talents to expose the effects of the rest cure to the public with "The Yellow Wallpaper." She sent a copy of the story to Mitchell and although he never acknowledged it, he apparently altered his treatment of this affliction as a result (Gilman, "Why I Wrote 'The Yellow Wallpaper'" 1).

Mitchell's refusal to admit the effects Gilman's short story had on his practice is typical of this time and in the story, this is reflected in the character John's treatment of his wife, Jane. Much like Gilman's struggle with the rest cure, Jane is constantly controlled by her husband and has her thoughts and ideas dismissed by him as if she were the family pet or a little child. The two discuss possibly redecorating her bedroom because the wallpaper bothers her so much, but he cannot allow it, saying "that after the wallpaper was changed, it would be the heavy bedstead, and then the barred windows, and then that gate at the head of the stairs and so on" (Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper" 543). These blockades are suggestive of a "pet-proofed" or "child-proofed" home, with locks on the cabinets and gates to keep the animal's boundaries in check, reminding it of its place.

Jane then tries to bargain, for a change to a downstairs room with a floral motif. John refuses to move her and calls her a "blessed little goose" (544). Her husband's usage of this pet name is used to acceptably scold and demean the narrator for having desires to change the way things are set out. Greg Johnson points out that "The central symbol of the story ironically equates her crisis with an item of feminine frivolity—mere wallpaper—that is far beneath serious male consideration" (8). He goes on to say that "Even John wants to repaper the room, but after his wife complains about the wallpaper, he benevolently changes his mind, since nothing was worse for a nervous patient than to give way to such fancies" (4). In fact, his denial of her propositions to make their stay in the house more comfortable seems to accelerate the progression of her madness rather than cure her in accordance with his original intentions. Critic Elaine R. Hedges shares my thoughts, stating "It is soon apparent that [John's] treatment of his wife, guided as it is by nineteenth-century attitudes toward women is an important source of her affliction and a perhaps inadvertent but nonetheless vicious abettor of it" (119).

Jane's infirmity is without a doubt worsened by the overwhelming control her husband has over her. He does not allow her any leisure activities, nor is she allowed to have visits from relatives: "When I get really well, John says we will ask Cousin Henry and Julia down for a long visit; but he says he would as soon put fireworks in my pillow-case as to let me have those stimulating people about now" (544). The narrator has no one she loves to support her or keep her spirits up while she sits in this mock-asylum, trying to heal from independent thought. John refuses to have these cousins over, "Instead inviting Mother and Niece and the children, a group which suggests conventional domesticity" (Johnson 5). John uses his own family to reinforce traditional gender roles with the knowledge that perhaps he cannot change her by himself.

Jane encounters many troubles throughout the story, most of them a direct result of John's own confrontation with personal difficulties. He is utterly consumed by his profession, never taking off the white coat even on a date to relax with his spouse. "John is away all day, and even some nights when his cases are serious" (543). We may interpret this as a reflection of Gilman's father's absence

---

from her life during her childhood. He spends his days away from his wife, but upon his homecoming, expects time spent examining his wife and enforcing restrictions on her to be satisfactory marital interaction. Jane feels estranged from her husband and even starts to “[get] a little afraid of John” (549). While she recognizes the troubles emerging in her marriage, she cannot confront the man she is bound to about his attitudes and actions toward her.

Throughout the course of the story, John constantly attacks the one personal thing that his wife loves the most and can call her own: her writing. Upon writing in her journal, the narrator says, “There comes John, and I must put this away,—he hates to have me write a word” (543). This strict enforcement to keep her silenced and subdued only results in further deterioration and mental strain on the part of the narrator. Jane is in constant fear of being caught with her secret journal and expresses it by saying, “I did write for a while in spite of them; but it does exhaust me a good deal—having to be so sly about it, or else meet with heavy opposition” (542). However, John is not the only person in the house who is opposed to Jane’s writing. John’s sister Jennie acts as a caretaker while he is away with patients, and she makes it her business to act as a security guard against any writing that may go on.

The character Jennie is introduced as being on John’s side—the oppressors—but eventually proves herself to indeed be a feminist, in favor of tearing down the wallpaper! Upon thinking about her sister-in-law, Jane says, “She is a perfect and enthusiastic housekeeper, and hopes for no better profession. I verily believe she thinks it is the writing which made me sick” (545). Jennie is the perfect model of how a woman in the nineteenth century should have thought and behaved. Having this constant reminder of these expectations Jane’s world wants her to conform to is enough strain without the stress of bringing a new wife into the world. Jennie, however, is eventually influenced by Jane’s unbending will against the wallpaper of her room. At John’s refusal to change rooms or wallpaper over the repulsive yellow presence, Jane takes it into her own hands to tear down the wallpapering. Jennie goes to check on Jane, and Jane relates the incident: “Jennie looked at the wall in amazement, but I told her merrily that I did it out of pure spite at the

vicious thing. She laughed and said she wouldn’t mind doing it herself, but I must not get tired” (551). Jennie’s realization takes her from her “enthusiastic housekeeper” mentality to finally seeing the light of her ways, and her attitude becomes one of enthusiasm for nonconformity.

This control of mind and motion John and Jennie impose on Jane drives her to hallucinate out of perhaps both boredom and necessity. Jane is used to having an active imagination and uses her writing as a creative outlet to release these energies. In one of her more vivid hallucinations, Jane is convinced that there is a woman trapped inside of the wallpaper. She notices that this woman can get out by daylight, but when she escapes, Jane sees her “creeping up and down...and when a carriage comes she hides under the blackberry vines. I don’t blame her a bit. It must be very humiliating to be caught creeping by daylight” (550). The creeping woman is a reflection of Jane herself and of the other women in this time who must hide their rebellious tendencies from men and conforming women. The detail of the blackberry vines offering the only shelter from the world to this woman leaves one to deduce that there is no haven available that is not painful and staining.

The grounds of the mansion offer no sanctuary to creeping women, and “there are greenhouses, too, but they are all broken now” (542). All aspects of the mansion—the grounds, the house, and the room with yellow wallpaper—signify the imprisonment of women by social norms and obligations during the time of the story’s completion. The narrator says in her bedroom on the “great, immovable bed [which] is nailed down” (546) while analyzing the pattern on the wallpaper. She notices that the wallpaper “was not arranged on any laws of...alternation...or symmetry” (546). This signifies that gender roles of that time were unbalanced and unchangeable. The fact that she lies on this heavy bedstead while she notices this fact gives further emphasis to the inflexibility of these roles.

At her first arrival to the estate, Jane describes it as “A colonial mansion, a hereditary estate, I would say a haunted house, and reach the height of romantic felicity—but that would be asking too much of fate” (541). This quote describes the feminist point of view and theme throughout. The fact that the estate is colonial and hereditary describes the tremendous age of this tradition of conform-

m ty that women pass onto their children, of being slaves to their men, of being controlled and not passing second judgment on this way of life and thinking. The haunted attribute of the house represents the powerful and threatening features of this standard of sorts. The entire mansion and its grounds serve as a representation of the very thing that keeps women in the k.

From the very beginning of Gilman's story, the wallpaper has a strong effect on the characters within it. The wallpaper affects John by turning him from an otherwise devoted husband and father to rigid physician and slave driver. It seems that when confronted with the wallpaper, those devoted to the accepted ways of behaving see the sheer absurdity of it, and those who have strayed are faced with the necessity of this unwritten law, both sides eventually changing their ways. Unfortunately, the wallpaper has the worst effect on Jane. "At the end of the story, on her last day in the house, as she peels off yards and yards of wallpaper and reeps around the floor, she has been defeated. She is totally mad" (Hedges 120).

There are contrasting views on how the conclusion of the story leaves our narrator. Beate S höpp-Schilling, however, believes that "through her exclusive preoccupation with [the wallpaper's] design, she descends into madness, which ultimately enables her to creep triumphantly over her husband" (121). Mary Jacobus also believes that the ending is indeed a triumph for Jane, with her thoughts that "The narrator of 'The Yellow Wallpaper' enacts her affective state first by timorousness and stealth (her acquiescence in her own treatment, and her secret writing), then by creeping, and finally by going on all fours over the supine body of her husband" (134). Another critic brings to the table that "the fact that she is crawling on all fours—as opposed to lying still and docile under her husband's restraint—suggests not only temporary deangement but also a frantic, insistent growth into a new stage of being" (Johnson 9). I feel that the crawling over her faint husband signifies that she has broken free from the control of her husband and the world—an ultimate dominance—and that it also signifies closure to her sedentary treatment.

This story is a poignant example of the subjugation of women. John holds this power of freedom over Jane's head, provided that she comply with his terms of once again becoming the model of a perfect female socialite

and mother. Critic Juliann E. Fleenor feels that "'The Yellow Wallpaper'...[has] as a theme the punishment of women, by both women and men, for being women. In fact, women are punished for having babies because doing so imprisons them in the social structure symbolized by the house" (130). It is disturbing to see that Gilman's radical view on motherhood was called a "nervous condition" in those times, and that her narrator is obliged of her liberty until it finally drives her beyond the point of lunacy. With the passing of time, we have come to the realization that the expectations for women in those times were absurd. However, "The problems [Gilman] addresses and the solutions she sought are, unhappily, as relevant to the present as they were to her time" (Lane 125). The "wall coverings" of our history should not be torn down, but left up as a reminder of the lessons learned and hurdles overcome. "The Yellow Wallpaper" is one such "wall covering" and remains proudly on display in the halls of Women's History. The notion of controlling women as one would slaves is not terribly far away from the way things are presently, but keeping in touch with the mistakes of the past will keep us on the path toward rectification.

#### Works Cited

- "Biography of Charlotte Perkins Gilman." 2000. 11 Mar. 2001. <<http://www.scribblingwomen.org/gilman.htm>>
- D Grazia, Jodi. "Charlotte Perkins Gilman 1860-1935: American Writer and Feminist." *Catherine Lavender, Ph.D., CSI History Department*. Ed. Catherine Lavender. 2 Feb. 2001. Research Collection, Department of History, College of Staten Island of The City University of New York. 16 Mar. 2001. <<http://www.library.si.cuny.edu/dept/history/lavender/386/cgilman.html>>
- "Domestic Goddess: Charlotte Perkins Gilman." 9 Mar. 2001. 11 Mar. 2001. <<http://www.womenwriters.net/domesticgoddess/gilman1.html>>
- Fleenor, Juliann E. "The Gothic Prism: Charlotte Perkins Gilman's Gothic Stories and Her Autobiography," in *The Female Gothic*. Ed. Juliann E. Fleenor. Eden Press. 1983. 227-41. Rpt. in *Short Story Criticisms*. Ed. David Segal. Vol. 13. Detroit: Gale, 1993. 127-131.



- Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. "The Yellow Wallpaper." *The Norton Introduction to Literature, Shorter Seventh Edition*. Eds. Jerome Beaty and J. Paul Hunter. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998. 541-553.
- . "Why I Wrote 'The Yellow Wallpaper.'" Rpt. in *Catherine Lavender, Ph.D., CSI History Department*. Ed. Catherine Lavender. 8 June 1999. Research Collection, Department of History, College of Staten Island of The City University of New York. 16 Mar. 2001. <<http://www.library.si.cuny.edu/dept/history/lavender/whyw.html>>
- Hedges, Elaine R. Afterword. "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1973): 37-63. Rpt. in *Short Story Criticism*. Ed. David Segal. Vol. 13. Detroit: Gale, 1993. 118-121.
- Jacobus, Mary. "An Unnecessary Maze of Sign-Reading," in *Reading Woman: Essays in Feminist Criticism*. Columbia University Press. 1986. 229-248. Rpt. in *Short Story Criticism*. Ed. David Segal. Vol. 13. Detroit: Gale, 1993. 131-137.
- Johnson, Greg. "Gilman's Gothic Allegory: Rage and Redemption in 'The Yellow Wallpaper.'" *Studies in Short Fiction* 26.4 (1989). 521-530.
- Lane, Ann J. "The Fictional World of Charlotte Perkins Gilman," in *The Charlotte Perkins Gilman Reader: 'The Yellow Wallpaper' and Other Fiction by Charlotte Perkins Gilman*. Ed. Ann J. Lane. Pantheon Books. 1980. ix-xlii. Rpt. in *Short Story Criticism*. Ed. David Segal. Vol. 13. Detroit: Gale, 1993. 124-127.
- Lavender, Catherine. "Charlotte Perkins Gilman, 'The Yellow Wallpaper.'" *Catherine Lavender, Ph.D., CSI History Department*. Ed. Catherine Lavender. 8 June 1999. Research Collection, Department of History, College of Staten Island of The City University of New York. 16 Mar. 2001. <<http://www.library.si.cuny.edu/dept/history/lavender/ywdsuss.html>>
- MacPike, Loralee. "Environment as Psychopathological Symbolism in 'The Yellow Wallpaper.'" *American Literary Realism 1870-1910*. 8.3 (1975). 286-288. Rpt. in *Short Story Criticism*. Ed. David Segal. Vol. 13. Detroit: Gale, 1993. 122-123.
- Schöpp-Schilling, Beate. "'The Yellow Wallpaper': A Rediscovered 'Realistic' Story," in *American Literary Realism 1870-1910*. 8.3 (1975). 284-286. Rpt. in *Short Story Criticism*. Ed. David Segal. Vol. 13. Detroit: Gale, 1993. 121-122.

---

Evaluation: *This paper is an excellent scholarly work that informs, illuminates, and argues, without ever boring you or letting us down. Meghan's writing has a relentless drive to it, constantly propelling us forward; her convincing and sharply focused prose is a pleasure to read.*

# Home

---

Lynn Mutch

Course: English 101(Composition)

Instructor: Greg Herriges

---

Assignment:

*This is a combination of two assignments:  
an essay focusing on definition, and an essay focusing on  
a family gathering, using a combination of writing odes.*

## Moorings

What does the word *home* mean to you? For me it is a journey away from stress and hassle and the pressing in on every side of people's expectations to a place that fills my soul up to overflowing with peace, so that I can dip in and drink of it when endless days are draining my strength and patience.

I am one of those people whom others can lean on. I don't know how I became one, but I did. I never would have characterized myself as strong, but I have earned that I can be when needed. When my mum became ill I moved home to help care for her. Some days she was relatively okay if a little cantankerous. Other days were terrible. It rushed my heart to see her red and bleeding, raw where her skin should have been. She was unable to sit or stand or breathe without feeling incredible knifing pain. She would stand in her bedroom with her arms outstretched, waiting for me to smooth on the ointment that would give her a few moments of relief. She became barely a shell of the vital, fun-loving woman she had always been. And yet I would still see the essence of her, deep in those bleary red-blue eyes as she stood in her soft, rounded nakedness. She had a dignity that it hurt my eyes to see. I will never forget it.

My family was rudderless. My "little" brother was off playing soldiers and completely in denial, and my father was numb with the realization that he faced a life without the soul mate he had cherished. I was the one they turned to. I was the one they leaned on. Not because they were selfish or they didn't care about me, but because I let them, I needed to be needed. I hid my own grief, fear, hurt and betrayal beneath a blanket of unflapability in order to carry on with what had to be done. I found myself giving comfort and reassurance at every turn. I worried about how hard it was for everyone else. It was easier to put my own feelings aside; after all, they needed me to be strong.

I lived from day to day. I couldn't talk to Dad or John. It would have been selfish of me to burden them. Instead I locked myself in the bathroom at work and cried quietly when I couldn't hold it back any longer. Sometimes, though, that wasn't enough, and I would need to get away and be by myself completely. Those days I would



find myself driving away from the gray granite sadness of Aberdeen and its green patchwork surroundings, toward the harsh brown crags of the highlands.

My home is far down the road to the isles, almost to Mallaig. It's hidden away from the road by a tangle of prudish green (sometimes yellow) gorse. Most people rush right past the small rectangular signpost that points you to this auspicious spot. Once you have picked your way through the gorse, you clamber across and climb some ancient craggy rocks to a large flat boulder that rises from the choppy waters of the loch like a stately duchess raising her skirts before crossing a puddle. Behind you, the heat of brown, mist-enshrouded hills close in and enfold you in their protective embrace. Ahead there is the whole length of Loch Linnhe and the islands in the Minch beyond.

It was here that Bonnie Prince Charlie first alighted onto his native soil, before the 1745 uprising put paid to all his hopes of a free Scotland. I often wonder whether he gazed as I do with awe at the ageless beauty around him and felt his own mortality. History is all around you in the deafening quiet—the future, too, in the unchanging solidity of the hills. Standing in this place of iridescent beauty, I feel my heart revel in its solitude and my shoulders lose their burden. I am always left feeling lighter, serene. Somehow I know that even though my life is small and insignificant and it may all be gone in an instant, it's silly to care about what is ahead. Instead, I should enjoy the here and now of beauty and tranquility when it can be found.

In the summer months, the skinny twisting roads that lead to Loch Linnhe are choked with English tourists. German camper vans sit in the day-bys like bulbous carbuncles defacing the land. Winter is when it is the most beautiful here, at least to me. In the dreach early January mornings it all seems Marsian, so itary, and steeped in magic, especially when the mist hasn't yet lifted from the water and it muffles the sound like a down quilt. The dawn creeps golden and pink tinged across the gray horizon, touching the islands with fire and turning the leaden loch waters to molten gold reflections in the distance. When you close your eyes you hear—nothing except maybe the solitary shriek of a gull, the swoosh of the waves, and the rhythmic slap as they meet the rock. The

light changes slowly from gold to cold glittering blue, and the playful shadows fade. The air hums with a deep satisfying silence. There is a sacred quality here as though you were in a cathedral. God is in every detail; the mystery of creation and the cycle of life are evident all around. Clarity is the word I think of when I try to describe the feeling it gives me, clarity of outlook and mind and heart. It helps me to define what is really important. The air is untouched by chemicals, with only the faint salty tang of seaweed to adulterate it. The smell of the ocean and the peaty earth are a heady mix that intoxicates me as no alcohol ever could. The wind nips at my skin and snakes through my sweater to chill me. It tosses my hair into my eyes in a vain attempt to grab my attention. It only makes me feel more alive. It heightens the senses and sharpens my perspective.

When Mum finally passed away, I often find a need to seek solace there. It was safe to let go of all the feelings I still couldn't share. How I love it. No other place can soothe me like that. Even though I have been through the saddest of times, it has never failed to give me ease. Now, when I am far from home, I long for just a few minutes of the amazing beauty I find there. How lucky I am to have found this place. My heart and soul can come together there and find the strength to heal. It is home in the truest sense of the word, a place where I feel safe, loved, and anchored. Home has never let me down like life has.

Eventually, after I lost my mother, my feelings deteriorated into a sense of isolation. In the beginning when the pain was fresh and new, I subjugated them in order to function. I found it impossible to admit I needed help, much less ask for it.

I refuse to deal with my anger, pain, or resentment, so it simmered just beneath the surface. Eventually, as is always the case, I reached a point where I just couldn't contain it any longer and those same feelings bubbled to the surface and directed themselves at those around me, at those that I care for the most. I became so disconnected from my family that when I did eventually ask for help they saw it as my way of controlling them and turned away.

I felt bewildered, betrayed, alone, and no longer a part

f the things and places that had always grounded and nourished me. I would still drive to the west coast, but it was not enough. I loved it still and it gave me peace, but the peace was momentary. So I ran away.

I ran to a place where I had no past and no need to deal with what was painful. But in doing that I lost a sense of self. I lost the connections that helped form me and keep me grounded.

When the time eventually came for me to go back to Scotland on a visit, I was ambivalent about the trip. I worried about what the time away would have done to my relationships with the people I care about. I wondered what we would have left in common to bring us. I was worried about being sucked back into all the traumas I had tried so hard to leave behind. I found that home had not changed, but that I had.

I had gained in distance a sense of perspective and wholeness apart from my family that allowed me to be objective and appreciate all of their faults and failings, as well as their wonderful individuality. Distance allowed me to reclaim my history and replant my roots. Distance enabled me to reassign value to home and family.

## The Gathering

I left home, I thought, for a very good reason. And for the last year, I've had no desire to go back. How is it then that I find myself pressing to go downstairs and see in the year 2001, all of my family around me, and I'm actually king of reward to it?

I sat on the plane dreading this very thing, but feeling that I had to come. Now, a few short days later, I am reading going back to school. Life has another way of surprising you like that.

As I walk down the stairs, I reflect on my feelings the way I left home. Relief. Pure and simple. I had been unhappy and stifled for so long that getting on that plane allowed me to breathe deeply again for the first time in years. I loved my father, but we didn't relate anymore. He'd gone from being my dearest friend and closest ally to someone I barely talked to.

My brother, bless him, was acting like a total waster. I could see so much potential in him, but he was unwilling to buckle down and use it. His life was a long series of traumas that I was always there to pick up the pieces for.

My stepmother had wished me a million miles away from the minute Dad and she had gotten together. Her desire for take-off was a palpable thing between us.

I loved all of my family, but I felt burdened by their needs and expectations. While I was at home, I knew that I'd never be free to put myself first. None of this meant that leaving was easy. None of it meant that I didn't love them more than ever. It just meant that I had to be brave enough to break away and start living my life for me.

The only person I felt guilty for leaving was my little Granry-Poo. He's a nine-year-old holy terror, with no regard for anyone but me. He's the light of my life. I see in him so much potential and joy for life. All that the others see is precociousness and cheek. I try to show him his own worth so that he will see the same in others, which is a very strange idea that my family thinks is some weird American thing I picked up. No one takes him on adventures now. No one gets sick with him in winter, playing at the beach. What will he do with out me? Or, should that be, what would I do without him?

I pause, listening, at the foot of the stairs and smile at the jet engine rumbles unobtrusively from the living room. Quiet is not a war that could ever be used to describe us when we are all together. The amber rectangle of warmth emanating from the pen or draws me forward, mothlike, and I enter smiling.

Granma sits in her corner by the fire wreathed in smiles, breathing in the nebulizer fumes she relies on now. Her eyes are so joyful it makes my heart glad. She is so fragile now, I wonder if this will be the last time we are all together.

Dad and Kate are next to her. Dad cries when I stepped off the plane. I realize now that he missed me as much as I missed him. No matter how many stepsisters or mothers he gives me, the only thing that can come between us again is me. He is just an ordinary man going slightly thin on top, with the beginnings of a paunch. To those who don't know him, he has a forbidding "mutchie" air. It is a standoffish, reticent demeanor that all us Mutchies share. Except maybe my brother, he has more of Mum's openness. If, though, you look closely behind Dad's glasses, you will see a wicked gleam in his eyes and his gentle hands and quick loving embrace show the soft and deeply caring interior of his soul.

John and his new fiancé sit side by side together in the back of the room. He doesn't even notice me. He is tall and painfully gaunt. I can see the bones of his cheeks, sharp and stark in his father's shadows. He still has so many demons to fight, but I am no longer afraid for him. He has more strength than I ever gave him credit for. He also has the love and support of his family. If he chooses to work hard and move forward, I know he can be happy and finally have the kind of life I know he wants.

Aunty Iris is a red-headed firecracker, talking a mile a minute to no one in particular and everyone in general. Argument is a way of life to her. She makes me think of a cactus, short and strong, able to withstand most things, prickly, but on the inside soft and liquid. Aunty Helen is listening with half an ear to Iris while reprimanding Grant for whatever it was that he did that annoyed her. Since Uncle Raymond left, she has become so bitter that it's changed her whole outlook on life. All the things we have loved about her have been hidden away. She is touchy and nitpicky and judgmental. She pushes us all away, but I know that it's because she feels unworthy of love. I feel the same when Graham left. She's tougher than that though, if she would only look for it, I know the strength that got her through breast cancer will get her through this too if she wants it, if she can find her purpose again.

My little Pooh-bear is by my side hugging me tight before I even get all the way through the door. Whatever Helen was saying has sailed clean over his head—as does most things adults say to him—and he is grinning impishly up at me. He is at such an awkward age. He feels stupid and gravitates towards trouble like a moth to a flame. I worry so much about him. I know Iris loves him, but how can she cope with his often dreadful behaviors and make him walk a straight path when she isn't even on the same planet a good portion of the time? I have learned that it isn't my responsibility, though. I can be there for him, and support him whenever he needs it, but he is not my son.

I look around the room and I feel utterly at peace with myself, and my choices. I am enveloped in warmth and love, and I'm so glad I am.

As we raise our glasses to toast the New Year, we are a family with our own problems and cares and worries and hopes, but at this moment we are together and unified by our care for each other. And I realize that no matter how far I go, or how much I hate Aberdeen, it will always come home simply because they are there. Leaving will be so much harder this time around. What a difference three days can make to my perception of life. I left Chicago with misgivings and fears, but I will return with my family reinstated to me, and all my bitterness evaporated.

---

*Evaluation: Lynn understands that no mode exists alone; throughout this essay, she combines her considerable descriptive talent with definition to create an off-the-cuff freshness and an almost lyric quality. Her most intimate recollections of her family are shared in a particularly warm fashion.*

---

# Hidden Room

---

*Dan Pahlman*

Course: Reading 099/English 100  
(Learning Community)

Instructors: Chris Poziemski and Barbara Hickey

Assignment:

*Write a descriptive essay about  
a special place in your childhood.*

A place that I remember going when I was younger was a room in my grandma's house. It was a room that I could get lost in and a room I felt very comfortable in. I can remember spending many days in that room, hiding from my fears and problems. In that room, a little boy could find freedom from everything. It was a room no one knew about and a room no one has ever seen for many years.

When I was five years old, I found a room in my grandmother's basement that no one else in my family knew about. It was a room that had never been disturbed until I found it. It was in the basement of this big, beautiful, red-brick house. The basement was cold as ice and dark as the night, and no one really ever went down there. The only thing in the basement was a bunch of wine racks, with bottles on every rack, and a big refrigerator that a person could walk into. The basement was so dark I couldn't see anything without the help of the one hanging light and a flashlight, and even with the two bright lights, it was hard to see. The dark covered everything.

When I found the room, it was by accident. My brothers, my cousins, and I were playing hide and seek. I hid in the basement under the stairs, crouched down and up against the wall. As I sat there, the old wall began to whine. I moved to look at what was making the noise, and as I moved, the wall fell out from behind me. I screamed on the way down like a cat being stepped on. I got up slowly and reached around, trying to find the wall that I fell from. I reached and reached and reached and found nothing. Soon I came across a knob on the wall. It felt like a light switch, so I flipped it. As the lights filled the room with light as bright as the sun, I closed my eyes.

The storm of dust from my fall still filled the air, and I began to choke. I tried to hold my breath so my siblings and cousin couldn't hear me. I stood up and looked around the large, dusty room. It looked like it had snowed because everything in the room was covered in dust. In the room, I found an old couch and a picture of a family that used to live in the house, I think. It seemed to me that I was the first person in that room for over fifty years. I sat on the feathery couch and dust jumped up off the couch. The couch was long and made of soft red velvet. As I sat on the couch and looked around the room, the dust began to fall asleep. I sat there and thought about my discovery. I felt so proud of myself, finding this small place. I left the room and don't mind my game, never telling anyone.

Over the years, I would visit my little room very often. I would go there to hide when my parents would argue, and I would go there to hide from my fears and troubles. It was a place where I could be alone and never be found. I took things of value to me and hid them in my room so no one else could play with them. I took pictures of my friends and family and toys that were my favorites. Everything I put in the room never came out, and now over the years it has turned into a time capsule of everything in my life.

---

Evaluation: *Dan enhances his description of the "hidden room" with memorable imagery and imaginative figures of speech.*

---



---

# Succumb

---

John Penczak

Course: Literature 105 (Poetry)

Instructor: Barbara Hickey

Assignment:

Write an original analysis of a poem.

In many cases, poetry is inspired by love, death, or nature, but the inspiration for these comes from only one thing: God. Although religions differ in thousands of ways, there is a basic premise. Religion seeks to understand the being above us and our connection to it. Most religions would believe that God is the inspirer of human feelings and that the love for God is the highest of all loves. One need not be a religious person to get the feeling of an overwhelming being and inspirer in John Donne's "Batter my heart, three-personed God." Donne professes his love for God and his surrender to him. In his succumbing to God, he also confesses the imperfection of man, his enemy, and that God must take him over if he is ever to be free of it. Donne conveys this message in a complex sonnet almost entirely comprised of simile, metaphor, and paradox.

Donne opens the poem with the line "batter my heart" (1), suggesting, like a medieval battering ram, that God must break down the walls of his imperfect humanity to find the infinitely good soul within, that which is given by God. Throughout the poem, Donne asks God to help him be a more pious person in hopes to "be loved" (9) by God. In the second line, Donne introduces a multifaceted metaphor of verbs, referring to the "three persons" of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. At its first mention, Donne asks for God to "knock, breathe, and shine" (2) on him, and then in line 4 finds glory in His "force to break, blow, and burn" (4).

The first pair of verbs, *knock* and *break*, suggest power, even further, the power of the battering ram. This is a reference to the Father, in Donne's "three-personed God" (1), which holds all omnipotence, the power to create, and the power to destroy. Donne asks not for the use of these powers but for the help from God to live in the way that He sees fit. The second pair, *breathe* and *blow*, suggest wind or air, both forms in which the Holy Spirit may manifest itself, and maybe more important, an etymological pun on spirit itself, which was first believed to be an airy existence and was literally defined as breath. Even more interesting is the French equivalent, *sp rare*, which is defined in *Webster's New American Dictionary* as "to blow, breathe" (177). The word *spirit* itself has the connotation of being some kind of gaseous manifestation that cannot be seen, like wind or breath. The last pair of words, *shine* and *burn*, are activities of fire and taken to a higher level, of the sun, which shines upon the Earth and also burns. Without the previous references, it may be hard to distinguish this as a pun on son, referring to the Son in the "three persons" of God. Within the first quatrain, Donne asks God to help him in his quest for living the God-loved life, requesting God "to mend" (2) him and to "make [him] new" (4). This is the most direct reference by Donne in hopes that God will help him. Although it may seem that Donne may be trying to persuade God that he needs this help, it is readily known to him that God will help him, for Donne is asking the question that God loves most and has the most answers for: how can I be most like You and live the life You want me to?

The next quatrain introduces the idea of an enemy through use of a comparison to a town. Donne offers the following simile:

I, like a usurped town, to another due,  
Labor to admit of you, but oh, to no end;  
Reason, your viceroy in me, me should defend,  
But is captured, and proves weak or untrue.

This quatrain is very difficult to understand and would simply be paraphrased as such:

I, like a town captured without right, to which I owe to you,  
Try hard to do as you wish, but never do it perfectly,  
Make me your representative through your knowledge  
So that I can defend myself against the evil,  
For I am held captive by weakness and human imperfection.

---

Here, Donne professes that there is some thing, some evil, which he can not fight off without the help of God. He is like a town which has been taken over by a ruthless tyrant and forced to act in this way. This interpretation, when analyzed as such, is a form of overstatement, because Donne is not really possessed or forced to do these things; it is merely the fault of man that we will never be perfect and are doomed to sin. Donne makes his point clear, though, that he tries hard to break from this enemy, but that he can only do it with God's help.

The idea of the enemy is extended much more concretely in the sestet, where Donne first says that he is "betrothed onto your enemy" (10), meaning literally that he is promised to marry the enemy of God. First of all, this is another form of overstatement because it is clear that Donne is committed to God, but, more important, who is this "enemy"? At first, one might claim that the enemy of God is obviously Satan, but this seems confusing. This interpretation would mean that Donne is committed to evil, for Satan represents purposeful evil, or that which is done for the sake of evil. In conjunction with the overall meaning of the poem, the "enemy" most likely represents sin, not sin as explained before, but the sin that humans are doomed to commit because of forgetfulness or uncontrolled desire. Therefore, Donne is metaphorically married, or intertwined by extension, to this sin. He then asks God to "divorce" him from the enemy. He again asks God to help him, batter his heart, so that he may follow in God's way, and stray from the path of sin. The last three lines are very confusing, especially because they introduce two separate paradoxes. First, he asks God to "take me to you" (14) to be imprisoned by him, for he "never shall be free" (15) unless God "enthrall[s]" him. This is the first paradox because the literal meaning of *enthrall* is to enslave, but he could not be free. On this level, the paradox can only make sense by saying that freedom is defined as being a slave to God, or acting in the way God sees fit. This portrays some of Donne's belief, but the idea is more powerful when the second meaning of *enthrall* is used. *Enthrall* also means to hold spellbound. Therefore, Donne sees that he can be set free when he fully understands the glory of God and is held in awe by its perfection. The next line is a bit more confusing, and to some even

offensive. Donne says that he can never be "chaste, except you ravish me" (14), literally meaning that he can never be pure unless God rapes him. This is obviously not Donne's aim, though. The second meaning of *chaste* is not only pure but virtuous, which has a connotation of dealing with God, but, more important, *ravish* also means to overcome with emotion and especially in the case of joy or delight. In this sense, Donne is claiming that he can be virtuous only if God instills in him the glory, delight, and joy which are inspired by his presence, or even love for Him.

Thus, Donne uses this complex sonnet as a poetic prayer, professing his weakness to God, and confessing to his human tendency to sin. He then asks God to batter his heart, show him all the love that he can, and help him in any way possible so that he can do as God wishes. Not only does Donne look for help in finding approval from God, but he says, "Yet dearly I love you and would be loved fain" (9), meaning that he gives all the love he can to God in all hopes that he will be loved back. He humbly succumbs to God and requests of Him to do whatever necessary, whether it may be overthrowing, bending, or battering, so that he may find a place in God's glory.

#### Works Cited

- Donne, John. "Batter my heart, three-personed God." *Perrine's Sound and Sense: An Introduction to Poetry*. 10th ed. Eds. Thomas R. Arp and Greg Johnson. Fort Worth, Tex: Harcourt, 2001. 120.

Evaluation: *John's probing analysis of John Donne's sonnet is lucid and sophisticated. The discerning reader is certain to succumb to the power of John's prose.*

---

---

# "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?"

## and Other Important Questions

---

Maria Photopulo

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

---

### Assignment:

*Write a research paper on a work of literature,  
incorporating at least seven secondary sources.*

Themes run through Joyce Carol Oates' "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" like veins in the body. While many stories present us with one great moral, this short story applies the twists and turns of real life and the workings of fiction to give us a realistic legacy that illustrates more than just one main message. Upon completion of the tale of a typical, pretty, fifteen-year-old suburbanite, a reader could conclude that the story illustrates the transition into adulthood or sexual maturity; the corruption in suburbia; the realities of adult love; a murder; a rape; the need for a familial, religious, or spiritual foundation; or simply, change. Point being, the list of themes is endless. Because with "Where Are You Going..." Oates accomplishes a masterpiece of literature that depicts reality but also defines fiction.

In the story, we are introduced to Connie, the flighty teenager superficially interested in boys. While her physical experience with boys remains ambiguous, her knowledge of deep relationships and adult love is clearly nonexistent. Her family consists of her mother who Connie, "wished...was dead," an older sister, June, who "...was so plain and chunky and steady Connie had to hear her praised all the time by her mother," and her father who, "was away at work most of the time and...didn't bother talking much to them" (Oates 516). After a short glimpse into Connie's life, we suddenly find her home alone when a god car pulls up in her driveway.

In it are two men, Arnold Friend and Ellie Oscar. Friend does almost all the talking, and he tempts Connie to go for a ride. Eventually, he terrifies Connie completely with his claims that he is her "lover," his threats to kill her family, and his eerie presence, which she slowly comes to notice. Within the last few lines of the story, Connie "watched herself push the door slowly open... watching this body and this head of long hair moving out into the sunlight where Arnold Friend waited" (527). We can guess she will be raped and possibly murdered. There is, as stated before, so much more to the story than what is at the surface level. With complex characters and suggestive settings, "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" is a story about beginnings and passage points; and it is a story about endings: the end of childhood and the end of innocence" (Gillis 244).

Oates writes, "She wore a pullover jersey blouse that looked one way when she was at home and another way when she was away from home" (516). These lines describing Connie epitomize her character and all the teenagers she represents. Even her laughs differ in different settings: "Her laugh...was cynical and drawling at home... but high-pitched and nervous anywhere else..." (516). The fact that she is cynical at home implies an unsociable attitude and poor communication with her family; she is not happy. However, the high-pitched and nervous tone she uses elsewhere proves Connie to be a fake and flat character. Mark B. Rothen suggests, "Because Connie has no real identity—she is simply a symbol for her generation—she ultimately fails in her quest for identity" (100). While she is out with a bunch of strangers, she plays the role of the air-headed 1960s teenager. Yet, at home, her personality is not disclosed any more than it is in public. It seems as though Connie is up in the clouds with the boys, but being at home does not bring her back to earth. She has woven for herself a cocoon of naïveté, and the entire story revolves around whether she will emerge as a butterfly.

So who will help her escape from her innocence and prod her to find an identity? A savior, a sociopath, a demon, a satyr, the devil, a rapist, a murderer, a friend, a psycho, a lover, a dream concoction, Bo Diddley? How about all of these in the form of one character: Arnold Friend. Oates herself has described Friend as, "a fantastic

figure: he is Death, he is the 'elf-Knight' of the ballads, he is the Imaginaton, he is a Dream, he is a Lover, a Demon, *and all that*" (qtd in Easterly 542).

We know that Friend represents many things, but a few interpretations stand out in particular. Foremost is that he is based on a murderer from Tucson, Arizona, from the 1960s. Charles Schmid, dubbed "the Pied Piper of Tucson" by a *Life* Magazine journalist, shares similar traits with Arnold Friend. In Oates' writing of the story, this specific article in *Life* was "identified (by Tom Quirk) as the one Oates most likely used" (Coulthard 505-6). Schmid drove a golden car, just as Friend does in the story. Also, Schmid stuffed his boots with cans and towels, just as Friend stuffs his shoes to make himself look taller. Friend seems as though he is wearing makeup; Schmid also wore makeup. Arnold Friend is well built, and so was Schmid, as a result of having been a gymnast. When Schmid was arrested, he was twenty-three, but he still spent much of his time at teenage hangouts. Connie first sees Friend at such an establishment. Schmid had a sidekick named John Saunders, who assisted him in murdering a lady, and Friend arrives at Connie's doorstep with Ellie Osar (Moser 19-24). The question remains, as to why Oates chose to use Schmid as a reference for one of her main characters. A.R. Coulthard suggests the story's "principal characters are not personifications of abstract qualities but a demented killer and a giddy teen-aged girl" (506). However, D.F. Hurley coolly defies Coulthard's claims that the story was "pure realism." Hurley points out, "even the facts supplied (in *Life* magazine) are largely dependent on the stories told by one or more of the accused murderers or by informants who claimed to have heard such stories from the accused. In short, Oates borrowed more from *Life* than from life, and what she borrowed she made over into her story" (372). I believe that if Oates wanted to create a real-life account of Charles Schmid's actions, she would have been a journalist and not a fiction writer. Arnold Friend is just as much Charles Schmid as Hannibal Lecter is Jeffery Dahmer: they are both based on reality but are individualistic, three-dimensional characters in their own right. As we know, Arnold Friend is a many-faceted character and portrays much more than the role of a killer. Friend's character in relation to

Schmid personifies the genre of realistic allegory that Oates called, "a mode of fiction to which I am partial" (qtd in Slimp 179-80).

The obvious is that Arnold Friend is Connie's self-proclaimed "Lover." Connie is definitely scared by this prospect, but this does not stop him from saying things like, "Yes, I'm your lover. You don't know what that is but you will...it's real nice and you shouldn't ask for nobody better than me, or more polite" (523). Friend's role as Connie's lover is part of an entire theme: she is embarking upon adulthood, which includes the realities of sexuality. Jane M. Barstow points out, "Ironically, it is Arnold Friend who promises to teach Connie a lesson 'love,' typically the mother's role, while threatening to kill the entire family if she does not permit him to do so" (2579). Though Connie is afraid of Friend, perhaps he is a savior in the sense that he is making her confront the actuality of adulthood. David K. Gratz points out that Friend "certainly represents her fear of sex" (56). Arnold reads Connie his "secret code honey...33, 19, and 17." David J. Piwinski reveals "that their summing sixty-nine indicates Friend's sexual perversity" (195). And Larry Rubin claims, "What Oates seems to be showing us is the absurd emptiness and falseness of sexual fulfillment" (59). Connie has her "trashy daydreams," but when they become a reality, is she ready? On a later level, we anticipate Friend might rape Connie, thereby paying out his role as her "Lover." But when she leaves with him in the end, she does not only surrender to a terrifying man, but sacrifices her innocence; she is going to that "land that Connie had never seen before and did not recognize except to know that she was going to it" (527).

One major controversy over the story is whether or not Arnold Friend truly exists. Many critics believe that he is a concoction of Connie's subconscious, and furthermore, that the encounter with him is her dream. It is interesting that a renowned writer like Oates might take the forbidden literary step of "it was all a dream." If this is so, it is done in an original way: by not letting the reader know that it was, in fact, just a dream. D.F. Hurley smartly states, "the struggle between a nightmare and a nightmarish imitation of reality is not just Connie's but the reader's too" (374). This debate between dream and reality is perhaps part of what has



made "Where Are You Going..." so popular. Larry Rubin claims, "The first clue that we get that it is (a dream) comes before the Arnold Friend episode when Connie is daydreaming: 'But all the boys fell back and dissolved into a single face that was not even a face but an idea, a feeling, mixed up with the urgent insistent pounding of the music and humid air of July'" (58). Mike Tierce and John Michael Crafton interestingly observe, "Even the fact that the phrase 'as if' is used over thirty times suggests there is something dubious about Connie's experience" (222). When Friend shows up to Connie's doorstep, he knows her name and makes observations about the barbecue her family is at (which he also magically knows about). His knowledge is ghostly, and it could be argued that he knows about Connie because he is inside of Connie's head. Arnold himself claims, "I know your name and all about you, lots of things" (521). A.R. Coulthard debates that Arnold Friend's "'special knowledge' is simply guesswork...he speculates that a family cookout is likely to have corn-on-the-cob (it may or may not) and that there is a 'fat woman' present, an idea which startles Connie...Arnold's scam has worked so well that Connie imagines an outsider at the barbecue, and then wonders why she is there" (509). Are we to accept that Arnold Friend has done a little research on Connie and simply knows a few facts he has easily obtained? Or, perhaps he is "the subconscious nightmare version of Connie's waking desires and dreams" (Barstow 2579). Friend was the one, who the night before, "wagged a finger and laughed and said, 'Gonna get you, baby'" (517). It is both possible that he visits her in her dream, or visits her at her doorstep the next day. It is difficult to tell if she is dreaming or not, because Oates does not make it clear, though some details are arguable. For instance, "Connie sat with her eyes closed in the sun, dreaming and dazed with the warmth about her as if this were a kind of love, the caresses of love...She shook her head as if to get awake" (Rubin 58). Also, we read later, "the music from her radio and the boy's blend together" (519). This could indicate that her subconscious is picking up the radio sounds from before and incorporating them into her dream. However, it may not be truly important to decipher whether or not Connie's experience is a dream. Perhaps it is partly a dream and partly real. Maybe her experience was so daunting it put her in

a dreamlike state. Really, the debate is more important than the answer. The story is a combination of reality and fiction; we have already established that. What is most important is that we realize the story was not meant to be black and white and that the questions we form about "Where Are You Going..." are also our answers. Is it a dream? Yes. Is it real? Yes. As one critic stated about her writing, "Oates finds the day-to-day conditions of the real world more terrifying than any imagined nightmare" ("Joyce Carol Oates" 1).

At one point, Connie mutters to Arnold, "People don't talk like that, you're crazy" (523). It is easy to just say that he is crazy, but the question remains as to whether or not he is actually a person. We already know there have been claims that he is a figure in a dream. However, there is opportunity for different allegations. Tierce and Crafton report that "No critic has yet questioned Joyce Wieg's assertion that, 'Arnold is clearly a symbolic Satan'" (219). Mark B. Robson also references Wieg's ideas: "Friend's hair appears to be a wig; his face seems like a mask; he is awkward in his actions and cannot stand in his boots because his cloven hooves do not reach the bottom" (101). This is a possibility, since it is not so far-fetched that the devil would take on the role of Friend. After all, "Connie liked the way he was dressed, which was the way all of them dressed" (520). It would be characteristically insidious of the devil to wear, "that slippery friendly smile...that sleepy dreamy smile that all the boys used to get across ideas they didn't want to put into words" (522). Also, Friend claims he "ain't made plans for coming in that house where I don't belong but just for you to come out to me, the way you should" (525). Jane M. Barstow informs us that, "the Devil as an evil spirit cannot cross a threshold uninvited" (2580).

A good case may be made for Arnold Friend as the devil, but Joan Easterly interprets Friend as "representing a satyr." A satyr is a figure from Greek mythology that is usually represented as being fond of "righteous merriment and lechery" (*New World Dictionary* 1266). In her article, Easterly notes Oates' recognition of the importance of ancient Greek mythology as "artistic expression that will be meaningful today" (537). Easterly makes a case for the satyr theory first by addressing deification as a characteristic of a satyr: "Friend assures Connie that he is her 'friend,' but dropping of the two R's transforms the

name into 'an old fiend'...Connie's name suggests one who is 'conned' but in typical teenage fashion, she believes she an "out of most situations" 538). She goes on to address the similarities between Arnold Friend and satyrs: both desire physical relationships with women, both use music to seduce women, and both pursue women in pairs (Easterly 538-9). Whether devil or satyr, there she claims that Arnold Friend represents something inhuman, and this is an important element to consider when analyzing his character. Friend poses Connie and the reader with the question, "Don't you know who I am?" 525) Frankly, Arnold, we don't.

Music hypnotizes Connie. Whether she is alone or in public, the music plays a role and sets an undertone for the story. We first encounter music as it is described as "...music that made everything so good: the music was always in the background like music at a church service, it was something to depend upon" 517). Here, Oates not only emphasizes the importance of music to the characters in the story, but its importance to the generation of young people she is addressing in reality. The fact it was "something to depend on" also indicates the lack of foundation and security these young adults had at home. Further, the rock and roll is compared to church music, which indicates it nearly replaces a church setting for them. However, in this story, Oates is not suggesting this generation of teens, or any young people for that matter, should run out and become dedicated conformists to Christianity. It is merely a small puzzle piece of the big picture: these children are fundamentally lacking any foundation in their lives. The music is most important to them: are they just being snobby teenagers who hate their parents or young adults who will grow to be ignorant? Perhaps the *Life* magazine article that helped Oates to create Arnold Friend inspired this setting. According to the writer of the article, Tucson was a town where "One envisions teen-agers who drink milk, wear crewcuts, go to bed at half past 9, say 'Sir' and 'Ma'am,' and like to go fishing with dad" (Moser 24). The reality at the time of Schmid's time, 1966, included "50 runaways [being] reported to the Tucson police department each month" (Moser 80). Further still, "There (were) the rock 'n' roll bee joints" in Tucson, much like the hangout Connie's kind occupy. It is no

surprise that Oates would be inspired and intrigued by these statistics and facts. As she said herself, "I am concerned with only one thing: the moral and social conditions of my generation" ("Joyce Carol Oates" 1).

Also, the portrayal of romance through song is important to Connie's thoughts and behavior. As she daydreamed, "...he mind slipped over onto thoughts of the boy she had been with the night before, and how nice he had been, how sweet it always was... sweet and gentle, the way it was in movies and promised in songs" (518). Finally, the reader is not exactly sure what "it" is. "It" might be emotional love or physical love, as it were. "It" also may be romance. For a teenage to base her thoughts on love from pop culture is not an unusual prospect, even today. Connie identifies with the ideals of love played through songs, when she doesn't even really have a true identity. It is as though the rock 'n' roll is her.

While writing, "Where Are You Going..." Oates was listening to and inspired by Bob Dylan's "It's All Over Now Baby Blue" (Davidson 1). Since the story is dedicated to Dylan, we can be assured that he was a force in Oates' writing process. Lyric is like, "The vagabond who's knocking at your door/Is standing in the clothes that you own or wore," are obviously representations of Arnold Friend. The entire song, which is about "take(ing) what you have gathered from coincidence" and moving on, is what the story is all about. In fact the title itself, "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" poses the important questions when starting anew. And when starting anew, the future often depends on what one has "gathered" from his or her past. It seems as though Dylan's music has inspired Oates, just as rock 'n' roll has Connie.

In addition to Dylan's lyrics carrying thematic undertones of "Where Are You Going," the descriptions seem to be sprinkles of his characteristics in the story. We read a description of Arnold: "He spoke in simple lilting voice, exactly as if he were reciting words to a song" 521). And later we read, "She recognized this...the singsong way he talked, slightly mocking, kidding, but serious and a little melancholy" 522). It is certainly arguable that these could be descriptions also made about Dylan. Also, his appearance is slightly Dylan-esque: "His face was a familiar face, somehow: the jaw and chin and cheeks slightly darkened, because he hadn't shaved for a day or

two, and the nose long and hawklike" (520). Perhaps Friend's character had elements of Bob Dylan, but as we know, Friend is made up of many ambient factors. Music, as stated before, is important to the story, which is also a Dylan tie-in. Usually a person dedicates their work to someone who has helped him in his or her process of creating it. All psychoanalysis aside, Dylan simply helped Oates to write her story.

To fully examine this story minutely is a great task. As Jane M. Barstow indicates, "From the first line...to the last...this is a story in which every word counts" (2580). With so much detail compacted into "Where Are You Going," it is difficult to shuffle through and find the one main theme Oates wanted her reader to grasp. Artists like Oates seem to do their work on two levels: one for those of us who take things at face value and one for those of us who like to read into things deeply. The fact is, this story is a realistic allegory on both levels. With the use of a complex, multifaceted Arnold Friend versus the paper-thin Connie, Oates demonstrates her amazing ability to integrate psychological messages through fiction. For the dumbfounded and the highly analytical, "Where Are You Going" can evoke many emotional responses. But no matter who reads this, there is one feeling the majority of us will experience by the end, a feeling shared with Connie: scared.

#### Works Cited

- Barstow, Jane M. "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" *Magill Masterplots II. Short Story Series*. Ed. Frank N. Magill. Vol. 6. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Salem Press, 1976. 2577-2580.
- Coulthard, A.R. "Joyce Carol Oates' 'Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?' as Pure Realism." *Studies in Short Fiction* 26.4 (Fall 1989): 505-509.
- Davidson, Rob. "Dedication of Joyce Carol Oates Short Story to Dylan." 8 April 1996. <www.obertgd@omni.cc.pu.due.edu>
- Dylan, Bob. "It's All Over Now Baby Blue." *Bringing It All Back Home*. Columbia, 1965.
- Easterly, Joan. "The Shadow of a Satyr in Oates's 'Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?'" *Studies in Short Fiction* 27.4 (Fall 1990): 537-542.
- Gillis, Christina Marsden. "'Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?': Seduction, Space, and a Fictional Mode." *Studies in Short Fiction* 18.1 (Winter 1981): 65-70. Rpt. in *Short Story Criticism*. Ed. Thomas Votteler. Vol. 6. Detroit: Gale, 1985. 244-246.
- Gratz, David K. "Oates's 'Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?'" *The Explicator* 45.3 (Spring 1987): 55-56.
- Hurley, D.F. "Impure Realism: Joyce Carol Oates's 'Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?'" *Studies in Short Fiction* 28.3 (Summer 1991): 371-375.
- "Joyce Carol Oates." *DISCOVERING Authors*. CD-ROM. 1996 ed. Detroit: Gale Research.
- Moser, Don. "The Pied Piper of Tusson." *Life* 6 Mar. 1966: 3, 18-24, 80D-90.
- New World Dictionary*. Second College Edition. 1972.
- Oates, Joyce Carol. "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*. Ed. X.J. Kennedy and Dana Gioia. 6th ed. New York: Harper Collins, 1995. 515-527.
- Piwinski, David J. "Oates's 'Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?'" *The Explicator* 49.2 (Spring 1991): 195-196.
- Robson, Mark B. "Joyce Carol Oates' 'Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?'" *Publications of The Mississippi Philological Association* 3 (1982): 98-105.
- Rubin, Larry. "Oates's 'Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?'" *The Explicator* 42.4 (Summer 1984): 58-59.
- Slimp, Stephen. "'Oates's 'Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?'" *The Explicator* 57.3 (Spring 1999): 179-180
- Tierce, Mike, and John Michael C. Afton. "Connie's Tambourine Man: A New Reading of Arnold Friend." *Studies in Short Fiction* 22.2 (1985): 219-223.

---

Evaluation: *The synthesis of research sources in this article excellent, and the writer holds our interest through logical structure, good balance of secondary and primary detail, and especially, a personal voice. There is no dry exercise in writing from research.*

---

# The Social Structure in Back of the Yards

---

*Dana Opp*

Course: Literature 115 (Fiction)

Honors Topic: Chicago Fiction

Instructor: Nancy L. Davis

Assignment:

*Select an extended topic that focuses on what enriches your understanding of one of the fictional works we've read this semester. Write an eight- to ten-page research paper exploring what you've learned.*

Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* is a fascinating account of the Chicago packinghouse district and the immigrant workers that built it into the "eighth wonder of the world" as described by an advertisement for the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893. Sinclair's outrage over the conditions under which the workers and their families lived was the basis of the novel that eventually led to unionization and reform in the stockyards. The introduction to the novel by James R. Barrett is right on the mark when he states Sinclair's own concern focused far more on people than on meat:

For him, the slaughterhouses and the fate of the animals consigned there symbolized a much greater human tragedy being played out in factories and urban slums throughout the world.... What outraged Sinclair about the scene in the stockyards, packing plants, and surrounding neighborhoods was...the conditions under which the industry's workers and their families lived, worked, and died (xiii).

How accurate was Sinclair's depiction of the oppressive life in the Back of the Yards? How did the new immigrants

cope? Why did they stay? Based on research conducted at the turn of the century and the most recent research done in the past decade, Sinclair's description of the despicable working and living conditions are most accurate by all accounts. However, he fails to include the historical documentation of the critical social support provided by ethnic, religious, and union institutions that existed. Sinclair's statement regarding the human tragedy "being played out in factories and urban slums throughout the world" is an exaggerated statement in which he attempts to persuade the reader of the repressive nature of capitalism (in which the entire world is suffering) to promote his personal views of socialism. Sinclair writes:

The families were too poor and too hard worked to make many acquaintances; in Packingtown, as a rule, people know only their near neighbors and shop mates, and so the place is like a myriad of little country villages (83).

Exploration into this untruth reveals a healthy, cultural, prosperous city enriched with various ethnic groups and cultural diversity.

To begin to explore the social history of the Chicago stockyards, it is important to consider the total population of each ethnic group within the area. In 1898, the stockyards include a rich mixture of immigrants; in descending order of population were the Irish (31.6%); Germans (24.6%); Americans (19%); Slavs (10.2%); Scandinavians, Norwegians, and Swedes (4.9%); Poles, Bohemians, Hungarians, Russians, and Lithuanians (3.3%); English (2.4%); Canadians (2%); and Negroes (1.3%) (Jablonsky 289). It is easily deduced that the majority of the stockyard district was foreign, and the original settlers in the late 1860s and early 1870s were predominantly Irish immigrants and some Germans. By the 1890s, the neighborhood began to attract the new immigrants arriving from southern and eastern Europe. The Slavs, the majority of whom were Poles, were the largest new group to come to work in the district at this time. These multiethnic residents of the yards were all intensely different with their language and culture. What they shared was the common experience of starting a new life in a new land where cultural diversity flourished, while transitioning into the world of the meat-packers.

---



Language was no doubt the single most important reason for a segmented system between ethnic groups. By language, accent, name, and in a thousand ways, everybody quickly revealed their ethnicity. Ethnicity guaranteed that one would be understood, and there was a similarity of outlook, culture and customs, shared institutions (including church, school, stores and social organizations) and most importantly, the mutual support of others to turn to in times of homesickness and frustrations. Over time, totally independent social cliques were developed that handled all needs by using the group's resources. Their tight peer group stayed together, and their "lines of contact overlapped in every aspect of life on a regular, continuing and frequent basis, with few intruding strangers" (Bushnell 192).

This system of social segmentation worked for several reasons: each person could identify and be supported by his peers, and it followed actual patterns of antagonism from both the old world and the new. For example, Poles feared Ukrainians because they thought they were spies from Czarist Russia, which ruled over part of Poland; this was a "carryover" belief from the old world. Other Poles looked at the Germans with distrust for the same reason, and the pattern of distrust continued from their country to their new Chicago neighborhood. Each group determined its own understandings about outsiders. The Irish stuck out as being fighters and underhanded because they always managed to arrange "favors." As to Germans, the Poles never like them because of hard feelings in the partition of Poland. The Germans were known as fun loving but were not to be trusted. Lithuanians, the Rudkus' family heritage spotlighted in *The Jungle*, were referred to as peaceful, but if you got them mad you were in trouble because "they're hard-headed and very stubborn" (194). Centuries of warfare between the Poles and Lithuanians built up terrible bitterness. The Slovaks kept to themselves, acting friendly, but cautious. Bohemians, too, had a reputation: "you eat bread with them today and tomorrow you are going to get your head chopped off" (195). Bohemians had the reputation for thinking they were more elite than the Slavs. There was also hostility between regions, especially between Protestants and Catholics, who believed (in the Back of the Yards) that they were "the only real true

people on the face of the earth" (196). The Lithuanians were the last European group to move into Back of the Yards in substantial numbers. Only 99 newcomers from Lithuania migrated to Illinois in the last year of the nineteenth century. That number rose to 2,318 four years later and to 3,400 by 1905. Over the next fifteen years, Chicago developed the largest Lithuanian colony in the U.S. and became a national cultural center. Lithuanians found work in the packinghouses and opened their own businesses. By 1910, they had opened 112 businesses in Back of the Yards. Sinclair's depiction of the demise of a Lithuanian family was his attempt to influence the reader into believing capitalist America failed these people. There is no arguing they were poor and lived in slums, yet failure was not typical during this time, as evidenced by the fact that all ethnic groups prospered despite their hardships and newcomer status.

There was one major hostility stemming from hatred that began in America: everybody in Back of the Yards hated the Irish. To all others, the Irish represented the power structure; new immigrants resented the authority of these men, and Irish officers aggravated the matter by often acting out of extreme prejudice. However, by the time other ethnic groups settled in Chicago, the Irish had been settled for decades and held the better jobs in the stockyards as well as the political arena of the city. They used their influence to take care of their own and were known to deal harshly with subordinates they considered inferior. This fact was defined in *The Jungle*; Ona's boss was an Irishman who had the power to abuse his subordinates freely. His abuse of Ona led to Jurgis' rage in which he nearly killed him; he went before the judge, who sided with the Irishman—undoubtedly with political connections—and was subsequently jailed. Jurgis also had been confronted and threatened by an Irish union delegate who tried to enroll Jurgis into the union. "...the delegate, who was an Irishman and only knew a few words of Lithuanian, lost his temper and began to threaten him. In the end Jurgis got into a fine rage, and made it sufficiently plain that it would take more than one Irishman to scare him into a union" (Sinclair 57).

Another reason ethnic segmentation worked in the stockyards was the packers permitted and encouraged the

whenever possible. In this way, segmentation became a powerful tool for dividing the workers and preventing unions from developing. Sometimes they placed foremen of one nationality with workers of another, and then threatened the senior men's jobs on the grounds of competition from below. The result was intense resentment on both sides, with the company removed as a focus for anger.

The last reason segmentation worked in Back of the Yards was that it ensured a stable environment. The Europeans believed in staying where they were planted; their main goal was security. They basically sought a decent home, schooling for the children, and an even existence.

This system of segmentation between ethnic groups developed into larger groups than just the family: the clique that met at the store, the porch, the lodge and the church, and at all ethnic gatherings. These groups grew to be strong; they had the ability to help each other rise above the physical setting by creating a supportive environment where people could gain both the strength that leads to success and the brawn needed to survive hardships. The groups provided control and information, protection and support. The mix of ethnic, religious, and economic groups within each of the neighborhoods created the need for many social anchors. The surge in new comers led to the founding of many organizations, and an 1889 directory of the Town of Lake (a suburb of Chicago) listed 215 of these; fifty-nine of them were churches and ninety-one were secret societies (Jabonsky 315). This revelation is not mentioned in Sinclair's account of the lack of social support in Back of the Yards. Contrary to Sinclair's beliefs, membership in these groups provided contacts with like-minded people who shared their values, interests, commitments, and native tongues. The variety of nonprofit organizations was formidable; there were churches and religious societies, political parties, trade unions, secret societies, social clubs, and athletic, literary, dramatic, and musical associations. The Protestant and Catholic churches were the most predominant groups, but language and culture also bound people together, regardless of religious affiliations.

Relentless construction enabled the Town of Lake to accommodate new comers who boosted the population

from 18,000 to 85,000 in just nine years. Available land and the advent of horse cars kept housing costs within the grasp of workers, and thousands of families fulfilled their dream of home ownership. The population increases spelled opportunity for storekeepers, managers of halls, and owners of commercial blocks. Church formation and construction were significant measurements of growth and progress. The fifty thousand people living north of Garfield Boulevard, most of them Catholic, maintained 21 churches by 1889. The thirty-five thousand residents south of the boulevard, most of them Protestant, had 38 houses of worship. The people of this area's commitment and financial sacrifice that lay behind this aggressive church construction illustrate the importance of voluntary associations in building the social fabric of the community. The voluntary associations and the larger groups were evidence of a healthy community, its people committed to having a voice in molding their future. The establishment of ethnically identified churches inevitably attracted the people nearest "their" church. Their placement promoted "German" or "Slavic" or "Polish" neighborhoods and encouraged distribution of the different nationalities across the entire Back of the Yards community. These newly formed groups tended to reduce interethnic conflict by providing much needed social activities.

Saloons also bound people together regardless of language and cultural differences. A string of buildings along both sides of Ashland Avenue became famous city-wide as "Whiskey Row." At one time, there were over 500 saloons in the stockyard district. A 1911 survey reported forty-six saloons along the three blocks north of Forty-fifth street; these were the poorer workers' refuges from otherwise oppressive workplaces and homes. Sinclair was accurate in his description of the deplorable living conditions in Back of the Yards. In 1902, conditions within the area were so bad that the City Homes Association refused to include Back of the Yards in its survey of Chicago's housing stock: the situation was deemed not typical of the city. The housing problem was caused by extensive overcrowding that led to unsanitary conditions. With these conditions prevailing, it is not surprising that a principal social agency outside of the family was the saloon. For especially men, the saloon was

an important site for meeting neighbors and friends and the people to erase the ethnic or religious boundaries.

Settlement houses sprung up toward the end of the nineteenth century in hopes of closing the economic, social, and cultural gap between the worlds of the immigrant worker and the native-born middle class. They provided a range of important services to their neighbors, including classes in hygiene, civics, and English; recreational and bathing facilities for children and adults; child care; and a variety of clubs and social events. The University of Chicago Settlement house and gymnasium located on Ashland Avenue opened in 1894 and was created to provide a positive and much-needed place for families to socialize. Here, everyday classes, clubs, and societies of various kinds met that helped unite ethnic groups. It received some criticism for having middle-class roots that distanced it too far from the workers' lives, and its primary services were redundant in relation to the network of the churches. However, it provided vital services and support to the people of Chicago's stockyards and its surrounding areas.

It is important to mention that most of Chicago's business leaders honored the obligation to share a part of their wealth with the community, and they favored those organizations and institutions that enabled less fortunate people to improve and uplift themselves. The McCormick family endowed a seminary, Walter Newberry started a library, Marshall Field founded a natural history museum, and scores of businessmen helped the orchestra, the art museum, the new University of Chicago, hospitals, charity organizations, and social settlements. The men who made their fortunes at the Stockyards and in Packingtown were at the forefront of Chicago philanthropy. Stockyard owners Philip Armour and Louis Swift gave generously to philanthropic efforts and were known in the stockyard neighborhoods for their generosity to employees and to strangers coping with death, illness, and economic pressures.

Contrary to Sinclair's beliefs, there is substantial evidence of tremendous social support of the immigrants that settled in the Chicago stockyards; voluntary organizations such as churches, union organizations, and philanthropic organizers pulled together to help those who

together created the community. James R. Barrett eloquently says it all in his introduction to *The Jungle*:

[The people of Packingtown]...fought for what they felt was theirs and tried to improve the quality of life in their community...and in the end they proved what Sinclair must have understood all along at some level – that the human spirit was alive in the shadow of the slaughterhouse, that there was life in “the jungle” after all. (xxvii)

#### Works Cited

- Barrett, James. Introduction. *The Jungle*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988. xi-xxxiii.
- Bushnell, Charles J. *Social Problems at the Chicago Stockyards*. Diss. The University of Chicago, 1902. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1904.
- Jabonsky, Thomas J. *Pride in the Jungle, Community and Everyday Life in Back of the Yards Chicago*. Chicago: John Hopkins Press, 1993.
- Sinclair, Upton. *The Jungle*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988.

---

Evaluation: Dana has done an outstanding job researching the social context of Sinclair's novel. Her work highlights a critical time in Chicago's social history.

# Politics 2001 and Economics 212<sup>1</sup>

Paul M. Rollins

Course: Economics 212 (Macroeconomics)

Instructor: Getachew Begashaw

## Assignment:

*Write a brief analysis of the current recessionary economic conditions of the US, using the macroeconomic concepts covered through the course.*

“What,” you may ask, “do coffee beans and peanut butter and jelly sandwiches have in common?” At least one answer would be that until calendar year 2001, they were frequently used by macroeconomics professors to give a sense of reality to the otherwise arcane nature of the doctrines they were teaching to novice students. Such resort has not been necessary this year, when aggregate economic variables have been reported upon almost daily in the headlines of respected newspapers and are discussed in classic economic journals.

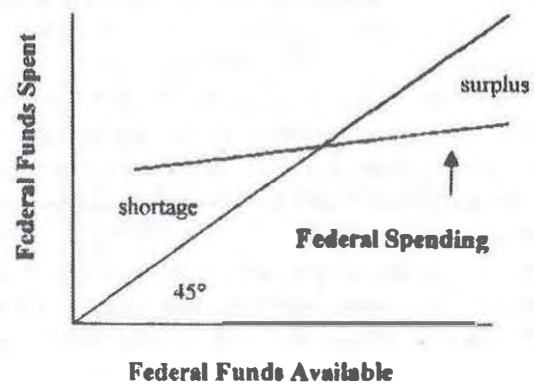
The stage was set for major economic events a early a the twentieth of January with the inauguration of our forty-third president. At that time a less than charismatic chief executive with an unclear mandate found himself facing a fractious Congress over how to dispose of a burgeoning surplus (Apple IV18).

Traditionally, the people of the U.S. give a new president a so-called “honeymoon” during which little criticism is offered the new president a he learns his job. Such was the atmosphere this spring. But, a this period of good feeling was going on, several worrisome factors were making themselves evident on the economic landscape (“New York Times Poll...” A1).

The stock market had been in retreat for most of 2000, and the advent of a new president to start the next year did not change the persistent downslide. This had a dampening effect upon the attitude of entrepreneurs and those venture capitalists who might otherwise have taken a financial stake in some deserving ventures. Investment by manufacturing companies in their own industry also slid by over 17% by the time the year came to a close. Even at the start of the year, the job market was in a sorry state. The number of workers in the labor force had shrunk markedly since its 1999 high, and the unemployment rate was inching its way upward at the same time. Manufacturing output, which had started to contract in late 2000, continued to fall through 2001. Prosperity, which in the late nineties seemed to be almost a natural birthright for most Americans, now seemed to be something that might steal out the backdoor (Roach A27).

The incoming president and his most ardent supporters were determined to give that surplus “back to the people.” Others felt the budget surplus posed an opportunity to do some “social engineering” such as making an initiative on prescription drug financing for seniors and shoring up social security funding more adequately (“Prescription Financing...” A3).

The surplus came about as a result of agreement between a prior Democratic president to raise taxes and an earlier Republican congress to hold the line on spending. A macroeconomic graph would appear thusly:



The inflow of tax dollars generated by the booming economies of 1996, 1997, and 1998 filled the federal coffers well beyond the experience of anyone in government

<sup>1</sup>All words in bold print are terms defined in the text and glossary of McEachern's *Macroeconomics: A Contemporary Introduction*, 5th ed.



presently. It is difficult to talk against tax cuts. They are classified in the same realm as those American virtues “baseball, ice cream, apple pie and lemonade.” So, by the time the first hundred days of Bush’s administration were drawing to a close, it became evident that the Executive and Legislative branches were resolved to take significant **Fiscal Policy Initiatives**. Fiscal Policy has two levels on it: **net taxes** and **discretionary spending**. Though there might not have been a groundswell of enthusiasm for the **tax cuts** as proposed by the Republicans, the Democrats felt they could not allow the initiative to move forward without their imprint. Therefore, the major features of the tax bill finally passed contained significant **tax relief** and givebacks to high-income individuals and corporations, as advocated by the Republican majority. Democrats, on the other hand, insisted upon including some sort of **tax relief** for middle-income individuals. The result, after much congressional posturing, was a decrease in **net taxes** plus a **tax rebate** (“Republican Senators Agree...” A1). The **decrease in net taxes**, in macroeconomic terms, should increase **aggregate spending** since it adds to disposable income. This **fiscal injection**, however, did not produce the desired result, which was to increase **consumer spending** (“Is The Tax Cut Working” 1:3).

By midsummer, the Tax Reform package had been passed. Back loaded, it pushed off many of its more significant reductions until the end of this decade. The main beneficiaries of the legislation were corporations and the upper five percent of taxpayers. The Republicans got what they wanted by giving the **supply side** significant advantages. The Democrats got part of what they wanted by the device of the **tax rebate** for middle-income taxpayers (“Congressional Republicans...” A1). However, the massive injection of consumer dollars looked forever occurred, as the **marginal propensity to save** became significantly more evident than had been the experience for many years past, and lower income taxpayers received neither relief nor rebates.

One reason the **tax rebate** did not work as advertised was because of **consumer attitudes**. For months, people have been reading stories about job layoffs. When they received their rebate checks (\$300 per individual, \$600 per family) it was, in their opinion, a **temporary tax relief** (“Tax Rebate Fails...” 1:2).

It was not enough of such duration to have an effect upon their **spending habits**. Normally, a tax decrease could have been expected to have had a **marginal propensity of consumption** of .80. This simply means that consumers could be expected to spend 80% of the total amount of the net tax decrease, resulting in a **marginal propensity to save** of 20%. However, because of apprehension about the future economy, consumers upped their usual **propensity to save** to approximately 40%, either directly saving the rebate or paying off credit card debt, another form of saving. Savings is a leakage from the **Circular Flow of Income and Expenditure**. Besides, a whole class of taxpayers received no tax relief whatsoever because the **payroll taxes** remained in full force. A **fiscal policy** used to spur spending was foiled because it was directed to a specific tier of consumer that did not use the rebate to spend but saved an inordinate amount of it (“Saving...” 1:2).

As the fiscal approach of lowering taxes was taking center stage legislatively, the **Federal Reserve** was continuing a series of monetary interventions it had begun in 2000, lowering the **Federal Funds Rate** in a series of steps (“Fed Lowers Rate...” A1).

As August gave way to September and leading economic indicators all pointed downward, Congressional leaders realized they had painted themselves into a neat little corner. Federal income was shrinking, but because of the new tax package, there was no buffer to fall back on. The campaign issue topics of Educational Reform, Prescription Drug Coverage, and Protection of Social Security and Medicare Funds were about to be moved off the docket (Krugman IV19).

By September 1, the Administration was openly announcing it did not consider Social Security funds to be sacrosanct. The President stated he would consider delving into them “in the event of either war or recession.” On September 11, both those contingencies occurred (“President Bush...” A1).

The loss of the Twin Trade Towers and the damage to the Pentagon, as well as the airliners used to carry out the attacks, were losses of **physical capital**. The loss of individuals was a depletion of **human capital**. Taken together, they amounted to the largest one-time adverse supply shock ever sustained by the U.S. economy. The blow to

the Trade Towers was both strategic and tactical. It was strategic in that it interfered with the orderly processing of international exchange. It was tactical in that it forced the closing of the New York Stock Exchange for several days and cleared the U.S. skies of commercial aircraft for almost a week. From a **consumer confidence** standpoint, it also carried a trenchant message. U.S. citizens, in their everyday affairs, were no longer immune from conventional warfare. They would spend much more reluctantly in the near future (“Consumer Confidence Plummet” 1:1).

Aside from the firemen and policemen who went about their jobs in the usual professional manner that day, there was one other organization that performed as it should. That was the **Federal Reserve System**. Even as the Towers were collapsing, the Fed was in the process of notifying the **European Central Bank**, other **Central banks**, and the **Twelve Federal Reserve Banks** that Federal funds were available to handle any bank runs that might develop in the wake of the tragedy. Because of the Fed’s prompt intervention, none did develop, and **solvency** was assured (“Federal Reserve Acts...” 1:3).

The actions of other agencies have been less laudatory. The New York Stock Exchange, as was predicted, took a smashing blow, dropping 15% of its valuation within the week following its opening. While official Washington was urging consumers to spend so as to beef up the economy, **mutual funds** were dumping their holdings to cover their assets. As its first course of action, Congress passed a massive airline bailout bill. Given a lead by the President as to the amount that would be appropriate, Congress doubled the amount of the suggestion. The airlines immediately responded to this salutary act by cutting tens of thousands of people from their payrolls, and two airlines declared bankruptcy within days of September 11 (“Airlines Grounded...” A1).

There are still many ills, in both Houses of Congress, providing instances of **Discretionary Fiscal Policy**; however, one of the prominent flaws in invoking such policy is the lag time required to put legislation into motion. Granted, the airlines received their bailout, but that has resulted in no additional spending on their part. By parking a k flights, parking planes in the desert, and laying off people, they have strengthened their balance sheets,

but the economy has received none of the multiplier effect normally felt from **autonomous government spending** (“Severe Cutbacks...” C5).

It took Congress more than sixty days to pass an airline security bill as members haggled over the ideological concept of whether the Government or private industry should supply the service. The resulting delay ensured that updated security would not be in place for air passengers over the holiday season (“Foot Dragging...” 1:17).

The Bill to provide relief to New York City still languishes in limbo somewhere between Congress and the President’s desk. If the amounts originally ballyhooed by the Executive Branch and the Legislative Branch had come anywhere near fruition, they would have had a **multiplier effect** of several hundred billion dollars. That has not occurred to date, and even military spending is coming mostly from **stocks** or military ordinance inventories.

On the other hand, the Fed continues to perform well. Through December, it has lowered the **Discount rate** eleven times, to the lowest level in forty years. Where uncertainty seems to reign in other branches of government, the Fed throws off an aura of certainty.

As this is being written, more than sixty days have passed since the demise of the World Trade Towers. The rolling thunder of economic discontent still remains. The **University of Michigan Consumer Confidence survey** for the month of November reflected a downturn in **consumers’ confidence**, the fifth month in a row such a decline has been noted. This means that potential customers are simply reluctant to spend their money (“Consumer Confidence Slips...” 1:3).

The rate of employment has dropped again in November, for the eleventh consecutive month, while the **Natural Unemployment Rate** has jumped to a most six percent, the highest rate since 1991. This type of unemployment, known as **cyclical unemployment**, is the type most worrisome to government and the type most difficult to reverse.

Moreover, in November, for the first time, the dreaded label of **recession** has been tagged onto the existing economic landscape. The official designation **recession** implies that there has been **economic contraction** for

---

each of the past six months. All that does is put a governmental label upon a condition that most U.S. consumers have felt since at least late 2000.

As recently as last year, Congress was determined to reduce the **national debt**, protect **social security**, and rein in the **federal budget**. Those goals no longer seem pertinent. The surplus has turned to deficit, and long-term interest rates are expected to move upward as both the Social Security and Medicare Trust Funds are aided.

dire as this set of circumstances may seem, there is some light at the end of the tunnel. Certain Congressional leaders from both sides of the aisles seem to be leaving the ideological extremes of their positions to arrive at programs of **discretionary spending** that will meet in the middle, giving some degree of **supply side incentives** while at the same time aiding consumers by combining aspects of payroll tax deductions, a **sales tax holiday**, and **additional tax rebates** to those who had not received them in the first instance. These would be **demand side incentives**. Add to this the effects of the **beneficial supply shock** occasioned by the OPEC price decrease, and there would be reason to believe the trough of the recession has been reached and consumer spending will recover ("Oil Prices Fall..." C7).

As the year hurries to its conclusion, there are other favorable omens. Personal income over the past two months exhibits a high degree of stability. Though Christmas shopping sales may not be as robust as hoped for, consumer spending overall increased by 2.9% overall in November. Durable goods purchases buoyed by 0% financing on automobiles have increased 18.3% over the comparable period in 2000 ("Zero Financing..." A1).

It's been sixty years since macroeconomics has seen this much excitement. If you were counting coffee beans as you ate your peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, you might have missed it.

#### Works Cited

- "Airlines Grounded by Attack." *Chicago Tribune* 14 Sept. 2001, sec. A:1+.
- Apple, R.W. "New Era of Republican Control." *New York Times* 21 Jan. 2001, sec. IV: 18+.
- "Congressional Republicans and White House Agrees." *New York Times* 2 May 2001, sec. A:1+.

- "Consumer Confidence Plummet." *Wall Street Journal* 13 Sept. 2001, sec. 1:1+.
- "Consumer Confidence Slides Again." *Wall Street Journal* 15 Nov. 2001, sec. 1:3+.
- "Fed Lowers Rate Again." *Chicago Tribune* 26 June 2001, sec. A:1:9+.
- "Federal Reserve Acts Quickly to Show Up International Markets." *Wall Street Journal* 14 Sept. 2001, sec. 1:3+.
- "Foot Dragging On Airport Security." *Chicago Tribune* 14 Nov. 2001, sec. A:1+.
- "Is The Tax Cut Working." *New York Times* 6 Aug. 2001, sec. 1:3+.
- Krugman, Paul. Letter. *New York Times* 9 Sept. 2001, sec. IV: 19.
- "New York Times Poll." *New York Times* 14 Mar. 2001, sec. A: 1+.
- "Oil Prices Fall to Two Year Low." *New York Times*, 7 Nov. 2001, sec. C: 7+1.
- "Prescription Financing for Seniors." Editorial. *Wall Street Journal* 17 Mar. 2001, sec. A: 3+.
- "President Bush and Majority Leader Daschle Agree." *New York Times* 3 Sept. 2001, sec. A: 1+.
- "Republican Senators Agree to Tax Cut." *New York Times* 23 Mar. 2001, sec. A 1+.
- Roach, Stephen S. "Federal Reserve Interest Rate Cuts Needed." *New York Times* Op. Ed. 4 Ju. 2001, sec. A: 27+.
- "Saving the Tax Break." *Wall Street Journal* 5 Sept. 2001, sec. 1: 2+. 5 Sept. sec. 2: 8+.
- "Severe Cutbacks at AAA Lines." *New York Times* 22 Sept. 2001, sec. C: 5+.
- "Tax Rebate Falls to Hit Mark." *Wall Street Journal* 5 Sept. 2001, sec. 1: 2+.
- "Zero Financing Sells Cars." *Wall Street Journal* 11 Dec. 2001, sec. A: 1+.

---

*Evaluation: An extraordinary understanding of the major economic concepts and amazing utilization of the theoretical underpinnings are on display in this article. The unique ability of the writer to make the otherwise thorny article in economics enjoyable to read is impeccable. Mixing wit with rigor, yet producing an unassailable paper, is rare.*

---

# A Casualty of War

---

*Brett Rush*

Course: Speech 101

(Fundamentals of Speech Communication)

Instructor: Louise Perry

Assignment:

*Prepare a eulogy in praise of a subject  
that you find personally important.*

“Wearing her favorite Kent Hrbek baseball earrings, Shirley Fischer spent last Sunday standing in the rain outside the Metrodome with thousands of other Twins fans” (Thousands Stand...” 1). Standing cold and tired outside the vacant stadium, these were the refugees of a war that no one wanted, a war that claimed a part of their family. They gathered outside the Metrodome, brought together by the deceptively comfortable embrace of denial. And who could blame them? Denial is often the first response when dealing with a tragedy such as this. The Twin Cities faithful held signs and raised banners in defiant protest of the inevitable, hoping beyond hope that their beloved Twinkies would return, like Lazarus rising from the dead. Says Jim Rantz, farm club director for the Minnesota Twins, “We’re still hanging onto hope this franchise is still alive. After all, we’re 100 years old” (Caple 1). Come spring training, this hope will give way to reality, and the cries for championship glory will be gone, replaced with deafening silence.

Less than a week after the conclusion of the 2001 World Series, Major League Baseball commissioner Bud Selig announced that baseball would contract from 30 to 28 teams. The two casualties in this latest move would most likely be the Montreal Expos and the Minnesota Twins. But let us not mourn the death of the Minnesota Twins. Instead, let us remember the moments of joy and celebration this great franchise brought to baseball fans around the world. Let us revel in the memories this wonderful team made, and let us appreciate the Twins for personifying the American way, in success and defeat. In life and in death, this team didn’t go down without a fight.

In many ways, the Twins were like you and me. They never enjoyed the glitz and glamour that the Yankees did. The boys from the Bronx were born to bask in the glow of awe and admiration from the city that never sleeps. You never saw George Clooney, Harrison Ford, or Jennifer Lopez at a Twins game, just average Joes—lumberjacks, salespeople, secretaries, fishermen, architects, and paperboys—real fans, people like you and me. The Minnesota Twins had to earn this kind of respect the hard way. The Yankees went out and bought championships for New York. Their owner, George Steinbrenner, acted like a kid in a candy store, throwing bags of money at high-priced talent and prima donna superstars. A lot of the time, the Twins were fighting with one hand tied behind their back. They were always near the bottom of the league in revenue, and they couldn’t always afford to bring back their best players, but the Twins always tried their best, no matter if the odds were stacked against them. Sometimes, the best wasn’t good enough. For a lot of us, it almost never is. Nevertheless, Minnesota gave their best anyway.

In a small market like Minnesota, money was always tight. The Twins took pride in developing their own talent from within the organization. They were a team of fundamentals. They had the intangibles that no one could buy: effort, courage, sportsmanship, and an undying love of the game. The Yankees have an ego to go along with their legend. The Twins had neither legend nor ego to speak of.

The Twins may not have given Minnesota the lion’s share of championship glory, but they left their fans with

---



plenty of memories. Who would get the 1991 World Series, the greatest series ever played? It was a championship where average no-name players became heroes. They didn't win that World Series with dramatic home runs. They won it with solid defense, with bunts and sacrifice flies. They played smart, and they won through sheer will and undying determination. With the game tied at 0-0 in the bottom of the tenth inning, Gene Larkin's pinch-hit single scored Dan Gladden with the winning run in a 1-0 nail-biter to seal out the most competitive World Series ever ("History of the Twins" 1). Five of the seven games were decided by one run, five were decided in the last at bat, and three games went into extra innings ("History of the Twins" 1). The victory gave Minnesota only its second professional sports championship, and it left the Twin Cities with the sweet taste of victory. More than that, the Twins gave our country aystal clear image of the American spirit at a time when we needed it most, during the war in the Persian Gulf. That 1991 World Series was a true story of David and Goliath, and there was no team better at personifying the underdog than the Minnesota Twins.

In their truest sense, the Twins were special because they were real. They weren't the fanciest team on the field, and I'm not sure they even wanted to be. The names of their players don't ring with the stuff of legends like the names of Ruth and DiMaggio do. I'm not sure many people could pick Kent Hrbek or Harmon Killebrew out of a lineup, even with a program, but that was the beauty of the Twins. They didn't exactly play in the most aesthetically pleasing of places, like Wrigley Field or Fenway Park. As a matter of fact, the Metrodome is probably the worst stadium in the majors. It was considered a good day at the Met when the air conditioning worked, but the Twins celebrated home, and they tried their best to make everyone smile. And so, today, we say goodbye to a great franchise, a great group of people, and a member of the family for so many Minnesotans. Baseball won't be the same without the Twins; it has lost a piece of its identity. We can only remember the Twins as they were: a part of us, champions, win or lose.

#### Works Cited

- Caple, Jim. "Twins Employees Watch and Wait." Nov 15 2001. <[espn.go.com/mlb/columns/caple\\_jm/1277996.html](http://espn.go.com/mlb/columns/caple_jm/1277996.html)>
- "History of the Twins." *Minnesota Twins Official Website*. Nov 23, 2001. <[http://twins.mlb.com/NASApp/mlb/min/h\\_mepage/min\\_homepage.jsp](http://twins.mlb.com/NASApp/mlb/min/h_mepage/min_homepage.jsp)>
- "Thousands gather outside Metrodome." CNN.com, Associated Press. Nov 18, 2001. <[http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/baseball/mlb/news/2001/11/18/twins\\_rally\\_ap/](http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/baseball/mlb/news/2001/11/18/twins_rally_ap/)>

#### Editor's note

As of July 10, 2002, during production of this issue, the Minnesota Twins have been making news in various ways, in the characteristic Twins fashion described by Mr. Rush in the text of his fine speech. On the evening of July 9, rising but relatively unknown star Torii Hunter made a spectacular catch in the All-Star Game, robbing megastar Barry Bonds of a home run. More significant, at the All-Star break in the season, the Twins were leading the Chicago White Sox in the AL Central division by 7 1/2 games, led by such nationally unknown players as A.J. Pierzynski, "Everyday Eddie" Guardado, and Corey Koskie. With difficult labor negotiations and an impending players' strike, however, the fate of the Minnesota Twins (and of the 2002 baseball season) indeed hangs in the balance—and agree with Mr. Rush, this is a sad state of affairs.

---

Evaluation: *What makes this writing outstanding is what makes all writing outstanding: passion. Without passion, this work wouldn't exist.*

---

# Reflections:

## Understanding the Meanings Behind Yusef Komunyakaa's "Facing It"

---

Jessica Sanders

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Andrew Wilson

---

Assignment:

*Write a literary research paper.*

*My black face fades*

*hiding inside the black granite*

As the speaker in this poem hides his face within the black granite, Yusef Komunyakaa, the poem's author, employs his unique poetic voice to bring to light several underlying themes. In "Facing It," Komunyakaa explores how the perils of war can take a toll on the human condition. Through complex metaphors and vivid imagery he illustrates the true conscience of a soldier who is trying so desperately to come to terms with memories that have burned themselves indelibly on his brain and will not let him go. The poet makes no effort to declare a glorious and patriotic war. This particular piece comes from Komunyakaa's 1988 book of poems titled *Dien Ca Dau*, which means "crazy American soldier" in Vietnamese. After distancing himself emotionally (and physically) from the Vietnam experience, Komunyakaa waited fourteen years before even trying to put any of the poems collected in his volume on paper. In an interview with critic Bruce Weber in 1994 Komunyakaa says that beginning these poems "was as if I had uncapped some hidden place in me....Poem after poem came spilling out" (Narins and Stanley 216). *Dien Ca Dau* details his life as an American soldier fighting in Vietnam during the 1960s. All of the poems in this book are in the present tense, and in essence, they capture the urgency and realities of war. The reader is transported back into a time that is historically long gone, but in these poems snapshots of yesterday are still fresh and animate in the poet's mind, and this is both a blessing and a curse. In reading, "Facing It," we journey with Komunyakaa, seeing war and post-war life through his sad eyes; as we experience this poem we climb—with the poet by our side—into moments of war and post-war regret.

Essentially, "Facing It" is a poem about reflections of the self when one's humanity is lost. Educator and critic Vince Gotera adds: "it is a 'facing' of the dualities that govern this everyday life: there and here, America and Vietnam, living and dead, day and night..." ("Depending" 233). Komunyakaa exposes the constant struggle to shake loose the ties that bind you to the past and the ones that haunt the present. Also, the poet plays on the psychological destruction of one who has seen the brutality that only war can induce. All of these elements

produce a collective theme. War is the contradiction of humanity, and when humanity is lost the self is lost, too. The lines that act as dividers between the past and the present and the lines that are markers between this world and the next are smeared, and all boundaries become obscure.

#### Facing It

My black face fades,  
hiding inside the black granite.  
I said I wouldn't,  
dammit: No tears.  
I'm stone. I'm flesh.  
My clouded reflection eyes me  
like a bird of prey, the profile of night  
slanted against morning. I turn  
this way — the stone lets me go.  
I turn that way — I'm inside  
the Vietnam Veterans Memorial  
again, depending on the light  
to make a difference.  
I go down the 58,022 names,  
half-expecting to find my own in letters like smoke.  
I touch the name Andrew Johnson;  
I see the booby trap's white flash.  
Names shimmer on a woman's blouse  
but when she walks away  
the names stay on the wall.  
Brushstrokes flash, a red bird's  
wings cutting across my stare.  
The sky. A plane in the sky.  
A white vet's image floats  
closer to me, then his pale eyes  
look through mine. I'm a window.  
He's lost his right arm  
inside the stone. In the black mirror  
a woman's trying to erase names.  
No, she's brushing a boy's hair.

In the first five lines of the poem we are introduced to the speaker. The poem's first image tells us something of the speaker's emotional state; he is hiding his "black [Afro-American] face" within the granite. When he hides his face in the reflective black stone of the wall, there is a sense of merging of the body into the surreal, even though the wall that he refers to is an actual, physical presence. This is the first time we see him cross the

line between what is real and what is memory. The wall is a manifestation of the past and his experiences in the war. Lines 3 and 4 illustrate the heart-wrenching pain that he tries, to little avail, to hold back: "I said I wouldn't, / dammit: No tears." The speaker — visiting the wall, looking at and into the wall — is bravely fighting back tears, perhaps in homage to his military training, which must have urged him toward a hardened heart. But his emotions are overwhelming, and these lines testify to the pain of remembering; they immediately learn that his attempt(s) to maintain equanimity are futile, for he breaks down. The contamination of past horrors haunts the present.

One of the most revealing lines that speaks directly to the emotional conflict of the speaker is line 5, in which the speaker says that he is first "stone," then "flesh": "I'm stone. I'm flesh." The hardness and coldness of stone directly contradicts the softness of flesh. Symbolically, this shows a kind of duality with the former grim-mouthed soldier who is now an emotional visitor at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. The stone is what he has become — willingly, to some extent — due to his experiences. Stones are rough and cold; they are hard to destroy, yet sympathy means. The "stone self" is one that has been hardened like a machine that disregards humanity and all of the feelings of the flesh. Since the war's conclusion, however, this part of him has become more vulnerable, and pain seeps through the now-crumbling, impassive wall that he had, as a young soldier, constructed with such seemingly invincible material. Komunyakaa is particularly careful to use the word "flesh." The flesh is tied with feeling, and in engaging the stone and flesh, the speaker personifies an internal struggle to depart from his colder, stone-like parts and reconnect with his fleshly parts. An unsuspecting reader may read the first five lines of this poem and interpret them as an exposure of a man who is simply making himself a part of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial by noting his reflection in the glossy black surface of the wall, but it is surely evident that there is more to these penetrating lines than can be gleaned from surface analysis. Critic Vince Gerhart writes, "Komunyakaa's surrealism varies from that of the other veteran poets because he does not depict Vietnam itself or the Vietnam experience as literally surreal as did

many of the other poets" (230). Gotera then points out that the true definition of "surreal" is when one tries to actualize the wonderland of dream and by doing so an artist (whether he/she be a painter or a writer) can let apparently ve-fantastic ideas un-rampant across the canvas—the lines of a novel poem. Gotera's criticism celebrates Komunyakaa's ability to stay within the boundaries of reality while he allows, also, for something like a revelation in the midst of that reality.

The next three lines expose the way(s) in which the soldier sees himself. He describes his reflection as a bird of prey, the profile of night slanted against morning." This "bird of prey" is the devotee of what was left of his humanity. The battle (in Vietnam and in post-war America) is still raging within him. He is fighting two sides of a self that is without peace. Also, he goes on to describe this bird as "the profile of night slanted against morning." The night is the darkness and weakness of the war itself, and the morning is like the light after the horrors. When the soldier sees himself, what he used to be is not reflected because he is now the product of a massive war machine. He is not ruined, but he is surely, negatively affected... permanently so.

Midway down the poem, the speaker's conflict with the past wages on. If he turns one way the wall lets him go, and if he turns the other way he is snatched by the wall again. Literally, this segment of the poem simply describes the speaker's physical ability to 1) turn away from the wall and thereby escape his own reflected image and the haunting names of the Americans who died in Vietnam, 2) turn toward the wall, becoming reset by the 58,022 names and, thus, the glassy reflection of his own face and body. Figuratively, however, this segment of the poem shows that the speaker has never left the present and the other in the past. One cannot exist in both worlds at the same time; thus, the speaker is losing his ability to live in either. When guilt un-ampant through a person's memories, it can be all-consuming. Even though the poet does not say directly that the speaker/ex-soldier harbors guilty feelings, elements of guilt are strongly present in this poem nevertheless. When he goes down the 58,022 names and expects to find... [his] own in letters like smoke," the reader can put him/herself in the speaker's place and imagine the guilt of not being able to help or save his/her fallen comrades.

rades. But just as smoke disappears quickly into the wind, the speaker's comrades' lives were snuffed out — probably quickly — in the still of war, and the speaker survived, physically whole but emotionally wracked with guilt occasioned by his own survival. What was death like for those soldiers? When he touches the name "Andrew Johnson" the speaker is thrown back to the moment when he saw the booby trap's white flash." Did the speaker actually know Andrew Johnson? Maybe. Maybe not. Did he, in fact, see a booby trap's white flash," or is he merely imagining as he stands the entrance of the Memorial, years later, that that's what must have happened to someone named Andrew Johnson? It's important to note here that Komunyakaa does not wrap the details of the deaths the speaker witnessed in shrouds of metaphors or similes, but instead he gives us raw facts — the "white flash" of an explosion — that in my opinion are more effective in keeping with the theme of this piece. There is a certain amount of mystery surrounding the name "Andrew Johnson." This may be the name of a comrade or a random name that causes the speaker to remember the horrible deaths that the other soldiers suffered. It is very interesting that Komunyakaa uses a concrete name in his poem because in a conversation with a critic he stated, "I've been going through faces in writing these Vietnam poems, and I'm surprised at how few of the names I remember.... I suppose that's part of the forgetting process, in striving to forget particular situations that were pretty traumatic for me" (Gotera and Komunyakaa 220).

The last parts of the poem contain some of the most compelling lines; we are not only given more instances in which the past creeps into the present, we are also introduced to issues involving race and direct camaraderie. The speaker sees a woman whose blouse carries the reflected names of soldiers from the Memorial, but when she walks away / the names stay on the wall." This is a final realization that no matter how hard the speaker would like to be carried away from a past that catches onto the hem of his soul, the reality is that he cannot change what he lives with. The speaker's eyes then view the sky. For anyone else, the sky is probably clear, blue, and bright. However, the poet will surely see this kind of unpolluted tranquility again. He sees a plane in the sky,



and though this is probably a regular non-war vehicle, the speaker will forever associate a plane in the sky as something that summons terrible wartime memories. Unable, once more, to distinguish between the past and the present, our speaker might occasionally mistake a Boeing 747 flying over Chicago and destined for Miami for a military bomber roaring toward another mission in Southeast Asia.

The line that introduces us to the white veteran and his relationship with the black veteran could have double meanings. First he says that the white vet's image floats closer to him and that his pale eyes look through his. This, we must remember, is an African-American speaker (early in the poem, he references his "black face"), and Wayne Koestenbaum states that "the old and familiar racial attitudes take hold, the old backhome racist conflict resumes for, after all, the white vet's 'pale eyes' are perceived as looking uncommunally *through* and not *into* those of his black counterpart" (227). If there is animosity in this segment of the poem, it might be justified, given the fact that large quantities (disproportionately large, in fact) of African Americans and other minorities went to Vietnam in comparison to America's white majority. Another meaning, though, is without such bitterness: he says that he is a "window" to the white veteran, and I see this as a possible statement of reconciliation. Despite the fact that the speaker is ultimately apart from the white veteran, the two shared a colossal experience, and the white veteran is able to "look through" the speaker's eyes, to see the war from his — the speaker's — viewpoint, because they were both there, black and white. A racist man from ethnicity X cannot "look through" the eyes of another man from ethnicity Y. Depending upon how the line is interpreted, Komunyakaa's white veteran possibly has the ability to "look through" another man's perspective and/or empathize with that man, and empathy is a skill that is decidedly unavailable to racists. I acknowledge Koestenbaum's negative readings of that line, but I lean toward a more positive sense of the line. The poet may be trying to say that after one has fought, bled, and died with people, sooner or later such things as ego are not important; camaraderie is so obvious.

The very last lines of the poem are the poet's last statements about the war and the future. We have seen Yusef Komunyakaa hide deeper messages with the simple context of this poem by camouflaging them with simple gestures, but never is this technique so eloquent and powerful than in his last three lines: "In the black mirror / a woman's trying to erase names: / No she's brushing a boy's hair." In order to grasp a better picture of what was happening in these lines, I proceeded to do my own experiment. I went into my bathroom at home and much to my mother's dismay, I wrote on the bathroom mirror with lipstick. What I wrote was gibberish; the point was not what I wrote but, rather, the fact that I was attempting to replicate the experience of standing before the Vietnam Veterans Memorial's reflective surface. I then stood in the mirror and began to unbutton my t-shirt. Lo and behold: it did appear that I was brushing across the words (the lipstick gibberish) in the mirror because it looked like those words resided on me. I concluded that this was indeed a clever trick, but more importantly it let me understand the poem more than I did before. The woman's actions were probably just that, a simple gesture that to her did not have any deliberate figurative meaning. However, this image says a lot about the past and future. This woman represents what is often thought to be the tightest bond of the human experience — the bond between mother and child. There is a collective innocence and safety that only a nurturing home can induce. When the speaker initially assumes that the woman is trying to "erase" the names from the wall, the woman herself becomes not only one mother but, also, all mothers who have lost their sons and daughters to the perils of war. This is the real pain that the Vietnam jungles produced, the pain of sons and daughters lost to mothers (and fathers, too). When the speaker looks again, he is back in the present and says that she is brushing her son's hair. Now she is the mother in the present who appreciates the fact that she has her son with her; she must treasure him and hope to no end that his name will never appear on such a wall. When one puts the ultimate insult to humanity, which is war, against the one feeling that we hold dear to our hearts, which is love, an interesting message is presented. What

matters in this world is not that you can fight but whom you love and who loves you. The number of people you bomb or shoot will not matter because sooner or later those memories of destruction will eat away at you, as they apparently eat away at the speaker of Komunyakaa's poem. It is refreshing that he ends this poem on a note of hope, because although those men on the wall died for causes that only God knows, there is a sense that future generations, represented by the boy whose mother is tenderly brushing his hair, will be given the chance to make life anew.

Yusef Komunyakaa's "Facing It" is not powerful because it echoes the "Star-Spangled Banner" or some similarly patriotic war cry. This poem has real power and effectiveness because it is real, without sugar-coating. The poet explores war in its not-so-glorious hour when participants, dead or alive, stand in the aftermath and reflect on the people they once were and the people they are now. Critic Alvin Aubert says that "Komunyakaa has succeeded as few artists ever have in depicting the artistic sensibility struggling to come to terms with experiences as harsh as those encountered in Vietnam" (226). In my opinion, Komunyakaa does more. "Facing It" has resonated in me, a person born years after the conclusion of the Vietnam War, a full sense of appreciation and humility. Hollywood so often shows war in one way: difficult but finally glorious. Thanks to Komunyakaa, I will never see war that fabricated way again.

### Works Cited

- Aubert, Alvin. "Rare Instances of Reconciliation." *Contemporary Literary Criticism*. Vol. 94. Ed. Brigham Narins and Deborah Stanley. Detroit: Gale Research, Inc., 1997. 225-28.
- Gotera, Vince. "Depending on the Light: Yusef Komunyakaa's *Dien Ca Dau*." *Contemporary Literary Criticism*. Vol. 94. Ed. Brigham Narins and Deborah Stanley. Detroit: Gale Research, Inc., 1997. 230-34.
- Gotera, Vince, and Yusef Komunyakaa. "Lines of a Tempered Steel: An Interview with Yusef Komunyakaa." *Contemporary Literary Criticism*. Vol. 94. Ed. Brigham Narins and Deborah Stanley. Detroit: Gale Research, Inc., 1997. 217-24.
- Koestenbaum, Wayne. "Distortions in the Glass." *Contemporary Literary Criticism*. Vol. 94. Ed. Brigham Narins and Deborah Stanley. Detroit: Gale Research, Inc., 1997. 225.
- Komunyakaa, Yusef. "Facing It." *Literature: Reading Fiction, Poetry, Drama, and the Essay*. 4th ed. Ed. Robert DiYanni. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1998. 804-05.
- Narins, Brigham, and Deborah Stanley. An Untitled Introduction to and Brief Biography of Yusef Komunyakaa. *Contemporary Literary Criticism*. Vol. 94. Ed. Brigham Narins and Deborah Stanley. Detroit: Gale Research, Inc., 1997. 229.

---

Evaluation: *English teachers are so times so lonely: they sometimes wait and wait, head hung slightly low, to get a student who is willing to give a single poem the attention and time it deserves, who will put herself to the test with a trifling poem. It's a long wait, sometimes, but less and her paper are proof that the wait is worthwhile.*

---

---

# Friend or Foe?

---

Melissa Schaefer

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Kurt Hemmer

---

Assignment:

*Find an advertisement in a popular magazine and write an essay analyzing its importance. Your job is to discern the particular desires the advertiser is trying to articulate.*

Automobiles are part of American culture; the average American family has at least two cars, and commuting by automobile increases traffic and pollution, leading to the production of smog in heavily populated areas, and eventually, global warming. As a result, lawmakers across the country have set higher standards for reduced emissions for car companies, but there are loopholes in the legislation that automobile manufacturers can find. According to the Friends of the Earth Organization, located in Washington D.C., current federal regulations allow sport utility vehicles less demanding fuel economy standards than those set for passenger cars (27.5 miles per gallon). Federal regulating authorities consider a sport utility vehicle a light truck, not a car, and light trucks have a fuel economy standard of 20.7 miles per gallon. However, some sport utility vehicles are so immense that they are no longer light trucks. The Ford Excursion is one of these exceptions: It has a fuel economy of only 12 miles per gallon (data from the US Environmental Protection Agency website). Although automotive makers continue to produce sport utility

vehicles, they would probably prefer not publicizing these low fuel economy values. Recently, the Ford Motor Company produced an ad about a hydrogen car, which gives a false impression of environmental friendliness. The ad has no mention of Ford's polluting sport utility vehicles currently on the market.

This advertisement was placed in the April 2001 edition of *National Geographic*, a magazine that is known for articles about the world's people and preserving their environment. The color ad is a two-page spread with simple black type on a clean, white background. This is unusual, since most car advertisements have the car in a setting of some kind. The white symbolizes the cleanliness of this new car. There are no emissions from the car because its end product is supposedly drinking water. The car frame and engine has three numbers pointing out the simple key areas of the new car design. The ad is supposed to simplify the heavy concepts behind the engineering that went into developing this vehicle. Where the gas tank is usually situated, the hydrogen is added. The combustion engine is replaced with two fuel cells, where the hydrogen and oxygen react to form water. The tailpipe has a glass of water under it: Water that families drink and use to cook meals.

Above the car's metal frame and fuel cell are the words, "Imagine being the dad who has to explain this one at the dinner table," in large black lettering. Mark Supek, one of the engineers who developed this car, is supposedly that father. This is another attempt to link Ford to the family. Ford wants to be seen as the company that cares for the American family. Ever since Ford began making the Model T in the early twentieth century, Ford automobiles have been seen as cars for the common man, and as being affordable. Just like Ford has done for previous generations, in this ad, it wants to appear as the champion for the everyday American. Ford also wants the public to believe that it wants to preserve the environment for the future and tomorrow's children. This image might be more believable if Ford had also voluntarily removed the large, environmentally unfriendly sport utility vehicles from the market. Ford would not even have to be that extreme if it reworks the current combustion engines to be more fuel efficient.

To emphasize the elimination of emissions, engineer

Mark Sulek is standing in front of a blue pool of water. He is dressed in a polo shirt and black pants, as an average person, just like the average Ford consumer. He appears as a peer to the advertisement's target audience and someone the consumer can trust. The engine, mechanical workings, and wheels are the only parts of the car shown. More important than what is shown is what is left out. There is no body style to the car. The advertisement gives no picture of the hydrogen car's appearance. Without the actual car pictured, the advertisement is selling an idea only, and no concrete products. There also is no picture or mention of the Ford Expedition, a sport utility vehicle that definitely hinders the environment with its low fuel economy.

However, the Expedition is on the market while this hydrogen car is not. The ad tells the reader that the car is to be tested in California later in the year. The main subject of the ad is not even ready to be marketed, and Ford is using it to get on the good side of the public. The ad implies that if a consumer supports Ford by buying from it, the consumer is supporting the environment. This is incorrect because Ford, like other big automotive corporations, has left their big emissions producers on the market. If Ford really wanted to support the environment, it would stop producing the sport utility vehicles or at the very least attempt to increase their fuel economy.

The sport utility vehicle is often seen as a car to explore the wilderness; however, it is the enemy of the environment. This new car might be the answer to preserving the Earth and its resources, if it were really available to the public. It is highly symbolic in the advertisement that the car produces water, the source of all life on earth and essential to the survival of the human race, while the current cars on the market produce emissions that pollute and produce smog.

Ford is not the only automotive corporation that wants to change the unpopular image of combustion engines polluting the air. Ford is trying to show how much money it is spending to save the environment. The only problem is that the cars this advertisement sells are not environmentally friendly. They are really the foes. If the car companies and oil companies truly did figure out a concrete way to preserve the Earth's resources, then they should advertise when it is ready to be marketed.

The way the American society is going, perhaps the real solution is far in the future. In that case, Ford is using a nonexistent product to sell their current stocks. This is not the first time car companies have marketed their *good deeds*. In the past, car companies advertised their sacrifices to gain consumers. For example, during World War II, car companies stopped car production to make airplanes for the war effort. Later, the advertisements showed this sacrifice, and consumers remembered these patriotic and American companies when buying a new family car. This is a good strategy to move products on a consumer market and improve business.

#### Works Cited

- Fuel Economy*. "Find a Car." The U.S. Department of Energy and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. October 7, 2001. [<http://www.fueleconomy.gov/feg/findacar.htm>]
- The SUV Info Ink*. "Environmental Double Standards for Sport Utility Vehicles." Friends of the Earth. October 7, 2001 [<http://www.suv.org/index.htm>].

---

Evaluation: *Melissa's essay is exceptional because she examines the behind-the-scenes motivations and tensions that give this advertisement its particular resonance.*

---



---

# Looking at Art: One Piece on the Harper Campus

---

Colleen Seisser

Course: Fine Arts 113 (History of Art III)  
Instructor: Deborah Nance

Assignment:

*Analyze a work of art displayed on the Harper Campus.  
Consider the content, image used to convey the content,  
application involved in making the artwork, and  
possible influences in making the work.  
Incorporate art vocabulary wherever possible.*

On one of my first days as a student at Harper College, I found myself walking down a hallway in the ever-populated Liberal Arts building, to get to an art class. It was in this main hallway, amid all the hustle and bustle of first-day jitters and confusion over classroom numbers, where I saw it. This main hallway is populated with artwork monotonously positioned along the wall, but this work screamed at me and jumped from its lifeless positioning. Perhaps at that moment I made a connection with the work because it so reflected the way I felt in this new environment on my first day of school at Harper, or perhaps I connected with it because it reflected the way I felt about my life as a whole. Whatever the reason, the woman in R. T. Beinari's "Language as Aphasia" captured my attention that day, and it has continually been the only piece that holds my attention when I walk down that hallway.

Before I even knew the title of the piece or saw the barely noticeable writing at the bottom of the work that says, "...with transparent gesture, so that the body is a universe with language as aphasia," I just stared at the work for the few seconds I walked by on the way to class. For two years, I have admired the mysterious woman with her hand caressing her face, but why did she lure my eyes for a longer time than I would allow for any of the other pieces of artwork? Perhaps it is the matter in which the woman is seated on her chair. Her arched back leads to a lowered head, which is barely held up by her hand at her chin, while her other hand is wrapped around the back of her head. The whole piece is draped in darkness, and when walking past it, I often looked at my own reflection in the glass, which put my face a little below hers. This woman seemed familiar to me, with her closed eyes and lifeless lips she seemed like she was supposed to be telling me something, but she could not find the words.

When I finally had the chance to evaluate this work, I was surprised at how much it continued to fascinate me. From my constant day-to-day looking at this woman, I was able to see that the front hand (the one resting along the chin and neck) was larger than it proportionally should have been. It wasn't until I really looked at the piece that I then realized that the woman's back arm is proportionally smaller than it should have been. Beinari must have really wanted to emphasize the woman's hand

caressing her face, because the smaller arm falls back into the piece, and the viewer's focused gaze back to the hand on the face. Beinardi was successful, though, because when I reflect back to the many times I quickly looked at the piece, I only remember seeing the woman's hand and her face. I completely missed the top of the chair that the woman was sitting on, the bare shoulders that were covered only with the straps of her tank top. I even missed the rings and bracelet on the woman's front arm. However, close inspection revealed that I missed a more important aspect of this piece.

The work appears to be a print (done in black ink), and one can only assume that Beinardi used an astrological map when printing, to cover the entire figure and hair. If looked at closely, one can see such things as a faint line on the woman's shoulder, little stars at the base of her neck. More noticeable are the fields from the map itself that act as guides, leading the eye through the figure. Another important feature that would be missed, if the work is viewed quickly, is that the woman's lips are very vague in definition. It almost appears that the woman's mouth is not able to open because the shadow that is caused when the upper lip falls over the bottom lip is nonexistent.

Obviously, when one connects the vagueness of the lips, the astrological map, the title "Language as Aphasia," and the barely legible words "...with transparent gesture, so that the body is a universe with language as aphasia," one can make conclusions as to Beinardi's intentions in this piece. In my opinion, Beinardi is trying to move the viewer into believing that expressive movements of the body do more to create emotions than any words ever could. Aphasia is the inability to express thought verbally, so when Beinardi says "Language as Aphasia," the artist is trying to say that there is only so much that words can do for us in their expression; it is the movements and facial expressions here that really stir up our emotions.

And isn't that what this piece has actually done to me? Day after day, I couldn't help but look at the dark woman with her ached back, her sullen look, and her enlarged hand holding up her chin. Would the piece have had the same effect on me if it had said in big black letters, "...with transparent gesture, so that the body is a

universe with language as aphasia?" I can guarantee it wouldn't have. The expression on the woman's face, being lost in a wave of emotion, with only her hand moving down her face as an anchor, leads me to empathize with her and wonder what may have caused her to feel this way. Each day I viewed this work, I would connect with it emotionally. On some days, I could envision myself being that woman, surrounded by darkness, unable to express myself verbally, relying on a release of emotion through a stretch upwards and the caressing of my hand down my face and neck. For others, this piece may seem uninteresting, just a woman in a chair with a hand touching her face; but for me, it is an expression of emotions that I can feel just by looking at her, with my reflection in the glass.

---

*Evaluation: Not how the author's description of her personal "connection" to the artwork engages the reader. The details of her private experience help the reader to both identify with the writer and imagine what the artwork looks like.*

---

# Gregor vs. Sarty According to Mill

---

Maria Senise

Course: English 102 (Composition) and  
Philosophy 115 (Ethics)

Instructors: Andrew Wilson and Barbara Solheim

Assignment:

*Each student was asked to write a final research project in which he or she somehow combined the two courses. Maria chose to analyze Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" and Faulkner's "Barn Burning" (two of the stories written in English 102) from the perspective of John Stuart Mill's Utilitarian moral theory (which was studied in Philosophy 115).*

Gregor Samsa from Franz Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" and Sarty Snopes from William Faulkner's "Barn Burning" both share a similar dilemma: They each have fathers who dictate the course of their lives in some manner. Even though their situations can be paralleled, each character handles his situation very differently from the other. Gregor wants nothing more than to save away for the well-being of his family and is not bothered at all by the fact that at the expense of his soul, his family is able to live a life of luxury and laziness, whereas Sarty warns de Spain, the owner of the barn that Sarty's father intends to buy, that Sarty's father intends to do just that, thus turning his father in and betraying, if he would call it that, his blood for the sake of his moral intuitions. The question to pose is this: Which character is acting in accordance with moral law? There are many ways to view both situations and many philosophies would use to do so, but I choose to use John Mill's philosophy of Utilitarianism to analyze Gregor's and Sarty's actions.

John Mill's philosophy embodies The Greatest Happiness Principle, which is as follows: "Actions are

right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce unhappiness" (Mill 36). In other words, Mill is saying that an action is more right if it produces more morally just when more people are made happy and a greater amount of happiness is generated. In order to figure out if an action produces more happiness than inaction would, Mill provides a Utilitarian Calculation. According to this method, one must list the people who would be affected by the proposed action. Then he/she must assign, as objectively as possible, likely utility or disutility for each person. After this is done, he/she must run a total, and thus the calculation is completed. The calculator, if you will, can decide whether or not to take an action because he/she now knows if the action is right or wrong, or rather produces more happiness or more unhappiness, respectively. Let's imagine, for example, that two lovers are contemplating whether or not to live together out of wedlock. This, for them, is a moral dilemma which, Mill would say, must be solved through the instruction of a list of all those persons who would be affected by the couple's co-habitation: the young man's parents and grandparents, the young woman's parents and grandparents, the young woman's five-year-old son, the young man's best friend James, and (in the interest of keeping this hypothetical list as brief as possible), the young woman's Catholic priest, Father Tom. The range of the aforementioned Utilitarian Calculation could/should be uncomplicated: From -10 (marking the most negative response to the couple's habitation) to +10 (marking the most positive response). (Are you still with me?)

Okay. Both the young man and the young woman would score a +10; if it were up to them alone, they would definitely, without hesitation, move in together, for they're deeply in love, and yet they're distrustful of the "legalizations" or contract-type forms which accompany the marriage institution. The young man's parents, however, would both score a -5. The young man's parents don't despise the idea of their son living with his lover out of wedlock (which is why each scores a -5 and not a -10), but they are, in general, socially conservative and calmly against the idea of non-traditional habitation. Each of the young man's grandparents, however, would indeed score a -10.

The young woman's parents, being extremely "liberal" with respect to social politics, would score +10 (each), and their parents (the young woman's grandparents) would also register in the positive side of the spectrum, since they, too, possess socially "leftist" beliefs each of the young woman's grandparents would score +8. The young woman's five-year-old son would at first respond negatively to a scenario in which he would, all of a sudden, be forced to live with his mother's boyfriend; however, that boyfriend (our young man over) loves the little boy and would, in the long run, serve as a nurturing "father-figure" for him. Thus, the little boy, too, would score in the positive half of the spectrum: he would receive a +5.

Two persons remain: James (the young man's best friend) and Father Tom (the young woman's Catholic priest). James is twenty-five years old and still "wild." Since he believes that the young lovers' cohabitation—whether or not they're married—would have a direct and negative impact on his ability to lure his best friend (the young man over) out for fast and loose evenings, he would score a resounding -10. Surprisingly, Father Tom would not score a -10; he, Father Tom, is a young priest whose devotion to the Catholic church is tempered by a realistic sense of love in the contemporary era. Father Tom would score a -2. He would, in his "heart of hearts," prefer that the two get married in a Catholic ceremony before cohabitating, but he loves the couple and mostly wishes for their happiness.

Our Utilitarian Calculation, then, looks like this:

The young man	+10
The young woman	+10
The young man's mother	-5
The young man's father	-5
The young man's grandmother	-10
The young man's grandfather	-10
The young woman's mother	+10
The young woman's father	+10
The young woman's grandmother	+8
The young woman's grandfather	+8
The young woman's little boy	+5
James, the best friend of the young man	-10
Father Tom	-2
<hr/>	
Total	+19

Because the Utilitarian Calculation results in a positive number (+19), it can be concluded that the young couple *should* move in together outside of wedlock. Doing so would cause the greatest amount of happiness for the greatest amount of people, and this is what makes it—unmarried cohabitation—the most moral action possible, according to Mill's Utilitarian theory.

It is also important to note another large factor of Mill's Utilitarian philosophy, and it is the issue of higher pleasures versus lower pleasures. Mill says that higher pleasures are those that are mental and intellectual, and lower pleasures are those that are physical. Lower pleasures are usually associated with the happiness of animals—base, instinctual, and nothing else. Mill "argues that in calculating pleasures the quality of the pleasure affects its quantity, that is, 'higher' pleasures of the more fully developed person outrank the 'lower' pleasures of the ignorant sensualist. 'It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied,' Mills writes, 'better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied'" (August). To find out what the higher pleasures in life are, Mill says that one needs to seek the counsel of competent judges who are familiar with both options. If all or most pick one option over the other, that option is the higher pleasure because, Mill believes, people will choose the more difficult or highest art as most pleasurable. Mill's principles can be applied to any moral situation in our lives, if we choose to view moral dilemmas in this manner, but it can also be applied to the literature we read, namely "The Metamorphosis" and "Barn Burning."

In "The Metamorphosis" we see Gregor Samsa, a hard-working young man, who willingly and wholeheartedly works the life and soul out of himself in order to make the three people that mean the most to him—his father, mother and sister—happy. A curious aspect of "The Metamorphosis" is that Gregor's story may very well be a depiction of Kafka's own life. A biography on Kafka says that "as the eldest child and only surviving son, Kafka was expected to follow a planned course in life, but from his childhood he considered himself a disappointment to his father and felt inadequate when compared with him. Kafka's artistic motivation is revealed in this passage from an unsent letter to his domineering father: 'My writing was all about you, all I did there, after all, was to complain about the things I couldn't complain about on your



reast” (Steinhauer and Jessiman). The biography goes on to say that “We order our lives in a fashion we are pleased with, but the people around us interfere, and they affect our plans and progress in life. This was certainly the case for Franz Kafka; he wished to write and quench the compulsion he felt to his art. However his family, especially his father, would interfere. In deference to his familial duty, his duty to his inspiration was often forced to suffer and wait. Kafka writes:

...I realize with perfect clarity now only two possibilities remain open to me, either to jump out of the window... or in the next two weeks to go daily to the factory.

Kafka sees only two alternatives, to die or to appease his parents” (Steinhauer and Jessiman). One should recall that it is Mr. Samsa’s act of throwing an apple into Gregor’s back that ultimately kills Gregor. From Kafka’s own personal accounts we can surely see the similarity between himself and Gregor Samsa. In fact “Kafka senior had called his son’s friend, a Yiddish actor, a flea-ridden dog and a vermin. It was a condemnation which the writer believed extended to himself” (Hibberd). This illustrates even further the connection between Kafka and Gregor. Gregor thinks that he is morally correct in his actions because, without realizing he is doing so, he is utilizing Mill’s Utilitarian calculation; he sees that he is making three other people happy while sacrificing the happiness of one, his own self, thereby generating the most happiness through his actions. Many people would say that sacrificing one’s self for the benefit of one’s family is a noble thing to do. In fact “Kafka has given Gregor a number of Christ-like attributes” (Holland 147). “Weinberg refers to Gregor as ‘Christkind,’ and surmises that Gregor’s metamorphosis is related to his desire to send his sister to the conservatoire” (Ryan).

However, Gregor’s calculation is a bastardization of Mill’s theory. Gregor may think he is making his family happy and better off, but in reality he is only prompting his family members to be lazier and more unappreciative; he is allowing them to succumb to the lower pleasures of life. And what he does not realize is that the more he works and the harder he works, the more he is motivating them to seek gratification from only those lower, menial pleasures, which is not what Mill thinks of as true happiness. To illustrate this point, the narrator of “The

Metamorphosis” points out that in the past five years that Gregor has been supporting his family, Gregor’s father “had grown rather fat and somewhat sluggish” (Kafka 311). Also, the narrator does not neglect to point out that Gregor’s sister, a seventeen year old girl who is old enough to work, has had an extremely pleasant and easy life due to Gregor’s efforts. Her life consists of “dressing herself nicely, sleeping long, helping in the housekeeping, going out to a few modest entertainments and a love all playing the violin...” (311). That sounds like a hard life; no wonder she does not have time to work! The narrator does mention the fact that Gregor’s mother has asthma and this ailment troubled her even when she walked through the flat and kept her lying on a sofa every other day panting for breath beside an open window...” (311). One may say this is a perfectly legitimate reason for the woman not to work and have Gregor support her; however, it is important to recognize that later in the story, when it becomes absolutely necessary for everyone in the household to earn an income, her asthma does not prevent her from completing the tasks required of her by her job. Hibberd recognizes that Gregor’s “duty to his family has apparently been defined almost exclusively in economic terms. It is possible to account for his alienation as a product of capitalist labor relations which, as Marx argued, dehumanize the worker” (Hibberd). The metaphor of Gregor’s insectual transformation is an extension of this idea of the dehumanization of the worker. The happiness of Gregor’s family is not valid because it is low and base, and their menial happiness weighs much less than the happiness Gregor could obtain from living his life as a whole human being.

It is also imperative to realize the future effects of Gregor’s actions. Even though his sister reaps the benefits of his hard work along with the rest of the family, Gregor is actually setting her up to continue what he has already started, and that is giving up his life for the benefit of his parents. At the end of the story, when Gregor’s family was riding the tram after Gregor’s death,

it struck both Mr. and Mrs. Samsa, almost at the same moment, as they became aware of their daughter’s increasing vivacity, that in spite of all the sorrow of recent times, which had made her cheeks pale, she had bloomed into a pretty girl

with a good figure. They grew quieter and half unconsciously exchanged glances of complete agreement, having come to the conclusion that it would soon be time to find a good husband for her. And it was like a confirmation of their new dreams and excellent intentions that at the end of their journey their daughter sprang to her feet first and stretched her young body. (329)

One could easily argue that the Samsas' "new dreams and excellent intentions" in finding a husband for Gregor are to find someone to replace Gregor as a financial support for the family. As one can see, even though Gregor believes he is helping his family, in reality he is not making their lives, the quality of their lives that is, any better and the effect is not acting in accordance with Mill's moral theory. Thus, Gregor's actions are morally wrong.

In contrast, however, Sarty Snopes from William Faulkner's "Barn Burning" acts in accordance with John Mill's Utilitarian moral theory, and thus his actions are morally correct. Sarty Snopes is a ten-year-old boy with a father who has made his life miserable. Sarty is young, hungry, illiterate, and poor, and along with his mother, aunt, two sisters, mother and father, he is constantly moving locations because of his father's penchant for burning the houses of his landlords. Abner Snopes, Sarty's father, feels as though his life is unfair and that he is a slave to the rich, and therefore he must defy the rich in order to show them that he can conquer them in some way. Abner's indignation comes from the fact that his slice of life was given him due to accident of birth. He is mad at the rich because they are born, most often, into their social status and wealth, and he is mad at his own plight because he was born into poverty. Benjamin DeMott, author of the article "Abner Snopes as a Victim of Class," says that "it remains true that, together with the ignorance and stupidity in Abner Snopes, there is a feocious, primitive undecievedness in his reading of the terms of relationships between rich and poor, lucky and unlucky, advantaged and disadvantaged. Abner Snopes has seen a portion of the truth of the world that many on his level, and most who are luckier, never see....when we fully bring him to life as a character, it's impossible not to include with our indictment a sense of pity" (DeMott 432). One may be moved to pity Abner's economic situation and feel that it is unfair; however, Abner handles his situation quite poorly. He overestimates the weight of

his actions, on the effect, rather, that they would have on his "enemies," just as his "stiff foot striking...with that wooden and cocklike deliberation...[is an] overstatement of the weight it carried" (Faulkner 152). No, instead of his actions allowing him to gain anything, monetarily or in principle, they cause him to drive his family into further poverty, hunger, and fatigue.

The boy, crouched on his nail keg at the back of the crowded room, knew he smelled cheese, and more: from where he sat he could see the ranked shelves close-packed with the solid, squat, dynamic shapes of tin cans whose labels his stomach read, not from the lettering which meant nothing to his mind but from the scarlet devils and the silver curve of fish—this, the cheese which he knew he smelled and the heretic eat which his intestines believed he smelled coming in intermittent gusts momentary and brief between the other constant one, the smell and sense just a little of fear because mostly of despair and grief, the old fierce pull of blood. (Faulkner 145)

This is a description of Sarty's feelings while he sat through his father's hearing in the courthouse/market. The poor child is incredibly hungry, and his stomach is bothering him because of it, but something even stronger than his hunger is aching at him—the fear, despair, and grief of having to be loyal to his father, even though he knows his father is guilty. The theme of the hold that food (family) has on Sarty is repeated throughout the story. Sarty is fond of food, and that pull is constant, strong, and dictates his life along with the lives of his other family members. Write Susan Yunis says "if I try to imagine Sarty...I see a boy whose family has been forced to leave their home, huddled by a small fire in the cool night and who has huddled by such a small fire even on freezing nights to evade the retaliation of angry landlords. I see discomfort, anger, even despair at the repetition of this situation and at the powerlessness of the family to change it" (Yunis).

Sarty is a good son, and throughout the story he is constantly trying to show compassion and loyalty to his father. For instance, in the beginning of the story Sarty gets himself into a little scrape with another boy after the boy calls Sarty's father a "barn burner" (146), even though Sarty knows that this is true. When returning the landlord's cleaned and newly damaged rug that Abner intentionally messes, Sarty asks his father, "Don't you

want me to be p?” and “Don’t you want to ride now?... We kin oth ride now” (152). Even as Abner is rightly fined for damaging the rug (a small fine it is, at that), Sarty still sticks by his father’s side, saying, “He won’t git no ten bushels either. He won’t git one...” (154). Sarty figures “that the one way to keep Abner’s love, to control his anger, is to stay small and dependent: to do what Abner expects before he demands it” (Yunis). However, Yunis goes on to say that “the price of these strategies for identifying with the powerful in order to control them is emotional death—a numbing of the self to personal injuries.... The personal cost of a voice which agrees to cauterize its feelings to control the anger of its audience is a betrayal of one’s own integrity—of one’s self” (Yunis). Even though Sarty is incredibly loyal and compassionate, his father completely neglects to reciprocate. He is a cold, depthless man who looks as though he was “cut ruthlessly from within, depthless, as though, sideways to the sun... [he] would cast no shadow” (Faulkner 149). He obviously has no qualms about making his family move locations repeatedly for the sake of his own pride. He is an over-the-top spiteful man. When leaving his landlord’s house, he makes sure to dirty the rug as much as possible by “[p]rotruding” on the good leg and “[making] the stiff foot drag around the arc of the turning, leaving a final smudge and fading smear” (150). In order to fully carry out his spiteful plans he has his two daughters clean the rug with harsh yeast that is very strong and harmful, thus endangering their health to a certain degree, and he rubs it with a stone to leave “long, watercloudy scoriations resembling the sporadic course of a Lilliputian mowing machine” (151). “Abner fought his own war, against everyone, for his own purposes; his entire life was ‘war,’ and war, as they say, is Hell. Is it coincidence that Abner’s war-wound is a minie-ball lodged in his left foot? The Devil, in folklore, limps in his left (cleft) foot, and given his connection with fire, there is something truly devilish about Abner Snopes” (Bertonneau). Abner tells Sarty that he has “got to learn to stick to... [his] own blood or... [he] ain’t going to have any blood to stick to... [him]” (Faulkner 148). Abner Snopes is a hypocrite because he himself has many times betrayed his own blood, thus allowing Sarty not to stick to him any longer.

Towards the end of the story we see that Abner is preparing to burn de Spain’s barn, and while he is doing so, we are told that Sarty’s mom is weeping and Sarty is struggling to break free to warn de Spain. In fact, during the struggle Sarty’s aunt says to “Let him go... if he don’t go, before God, I am going up there myself!” (156). Obviously no other member of the Snopes family is happy with the idea of Abner burning another barn. “And at least initially only the women express feelings of guilt at Abner’s fires: ‘the mother tugged at [Abner’s] arm until he shifted the lamp to the other hand and flung her back, not savagely or viciously, just hard, into the wall, her hands flung out against the wall for balance, her mouth open and on her face the same quality of hopeless despair as had been in her voice’” (Yunis). During this scene, Mrs. Snopes cries “Abner! NO! NO! Oh, God, Oh, God. Abner!” (Faulkner 155). Thomas Bertonneau says that “by invoking God, Mrs. Snopes invokes the morality, the transcendental model of ideal human relations, which Abner’s egomaniacal rivalry with a large and sundry repeatedly and terrifically violates. Mrs. Snopes’s cries also implicitly ask for deliverance from the cycle of violence” (Bertonneau). Sarty, according to Mill’s calculation, would be making more people happy by warning de Spain than if he refrained from doing so. [De] Spain would be happy because he would save his barn; all other potential future landlords would be happy because Sarty would have put a stop to his father’s nasty habit; his mother, aunt, brother and sisters would also be relieved to put a stop to the endless cycle of picking up, leaving and starting over again. “Sarty’s actions—escaping from his mother... running to the de Spain manor to warn the Major about his father’s likely plans—do not form a perfectly calculated or transparent whole; Sarty, a ten-year-old illiterate, responds to partially assimilated intuitions about right and wrong. It seems to be the case that he has no real intention except to thwart an act of violence, and to thereby thwart the continuous dissolution and meaninglessness of his family’s wretched life” (Bertonneau). But above all, Sarty would be happy, and his happiness can be accredited with more value in the calculation because it would be of a higher level. Sarty is willing to cut himself off from his family and be an orphan in order to break free from the overwhelming hold that his father’s

blood has had in him for the sake of doing what is just and right in his mind. He is willing to accept the challenges of loneliness and survival for the sake of his morals, and that is a pleasure of an incredibly high art.

Sarty's situation at the end of "Barn Burning" is still unenviable; but some progress has occurred which must be recognized as such. Sarty has, by an act of his own will, turned from a primitive bond (the supposed blood-bond) toward an abstract morality which, because it is not a person, tends to minimize the resentment of those who espouse it. The 'slow constellations' which rotate in the sky as Sarty watches from his hilltop symbolize the raising (however meager) of the pitiable boy's consciousness. The price of wisdom is suffering, but the price of freedom, of whatever kind, is wisdom, and this painfully, in some tiny measure, Sarty has gained. (Bertonneau)

It is interesting to see how two parallel situations can be handled so differently. In one, we see a man living and dying for his blood, but instead of his actions being morally correct, as one would normally think, his actions are morally incorrect according to Mill's philosophy. In the other, we see a little boy, courageous enough to break free from the ties of blood in order to do what is morally correct according to Mill. When one utilizes a specific philosopher's theories to analyze moral dilemmas, he/she may be surprised with the results.

#### Works Cited

- August, Eugene R. Untitled Article. *Dictionary of Literary Biography*. Ed. William B. Thesing. Vol. 55 (Victorian Prose Writers before 1867). Detroit: Gale Research, 1987. 196-218. Rpt. in *Literature Resource Center*. Electronic. Gale Group, Detroit, Mich.
- Bertonneau, Thomas. "An Overview of 'Barn Burning.'" *Short Stories for Students*. Ed. Tim Akers and Jerry Moore. Vol. 5. Detroit: Gale, 1999. 12-15. Rpt. in *Literature Resource Center*. Electronic. Gale Group, Detroit, Mich.
- DeMott, Benjamin. "Abner Snopes as a Victim of Class." *The Bedford Introduction to Literature*. 4th ed. Ed. Michael Meyer. Boston: Bedford Books, 1996. 431-32.
- Faulkner, William. "Barn Burning." *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*. Ed. X. J. Kennedy and Dana Gioia. 7th ed. New York: Longman, 1999. 145-58.
- Herd, John. "'The Metamorphosis': Overview." *Reference Guide to World Literature*. Ed. Wesley Henderson. 2nd ed. New York: St. James Press, 1995. Rpt. in *Literature Resource Center*. Electronic. Gale Group, Detroit, Mich.
- Holland, Norman. "Realism and Unrealism: Kafka's *Metamorphosis*." *Modern Fiction Studies* 6 (1958): 143-50.
- Kafka, Franz. "The Metamorphosis." *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*. Ed. X. J. Kennedy and Dana Gioia. 7th ed. New York: Longman, 1999. 296-329.
- Mill, John Stuart. "Utilitarianism." *Contemporary Moral Problems*. Ed. James E. White. 6th ed. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 2000. 36-42.
- Ryan, Michael P. "Samsa and Samsara: Suffering, Death, and Rebirth in *The Metamorphosis*." *The German Quarterly* 72.2 (1999): 133-52. Rpt. in *Literature Resource Center*. Electronic. Gale Group, Detroit, Mich.
- Steinhauer, Harry, and Helen Jessiman, eds. Excerpt from a Biography of Kafka (title unknown). *Modern German Stories*. Oxford University Press, 1938. Rpt. in *Literature Resource Center*. Electronic. Gale Group, Detroit, Mich.
- Yunis, Susan S. "The Narrator of Faulkner's 'Barn Burning.'" *The Faulkner Journal* 6.2 (1991): 23-31. Rpt. in *Literature Resource Center*. Electronic. Gale Group, Detroit, Mich.

---

Evaluation: *This paper does so many things so wonderfully, it's hard to know how to begin to celebrate it. The explanation of Mill's theory is presented with clarity. What's more, Mar's readings of Kafka and Faulkner, two challenging writers (to say the least), are thorough and wise. We love this essay!*

---



---

# Whirlwind

Rachel Shine

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Catherine Restovich

Assignment:

*In "The Myth of the Cave," Plato describes the human condition using an analogy of the cave. The assignment, then, was to describe the human condition or an aspect of the human condition using another analogy.*

They climb the first incline, gathering experience, and education, preparing and building the inevitable cycle of high-speed twists and banks. In rearing position on the cars during the ride will give them the leverage and momentum that will free them through the inevitable continuation of the mid-life. The ones in the front cars are the ambitious newcomers, ready to get every ounce of thrill out of every drop, turn, and loop. Members of the middle smile at the beginners, remembering when they were like that, young and fresh and excited. The elite in the last cars look to the stagnant land and the kids in the platform waiting line, wondering if the eager riders know what they are getting themselves into.

Arriving at the apex of the first hill, the front cars raise their arms in anticipation, working late hours, coming in early, unmasking their eagerness and potential. The second cars, impressed by the conduct, already begin evaluating who will be asked to join them in the second cars during the next rotation. The most experienced cars, albeit energized by the kids in the front, are tired and want to get off. However, they know that that might mean that someone, unable to deal with the little jump the back cars did at the top of the first hill, or the unusually rough ride, will be appointed to replace them in their seat. Promoting someone to a position they are not yet ready for would unsettle them. The inexperienced would place their hands and arms outside the car while

the ride is still in motion, or worse, they might stand. Ultimately, everyone may rise, and the ride would have to shut down, thus indicating the definite end for everyone.

So, even though the ticket line back dream of being back on solid ground, they know they cannot get off until a pre-specified time, determined by a contract for the individual economic success. This time of rest and release, in most cases, does not go into effect until late in life, around sixty-five years of age, or sometimes even later. Some are usually lucky, however, and "strike it rich" in some way, and that member is allowed an early and respectable exit. Most middle-class and ends look forward to this time with great anticipation.

Just like everyone, however, the middle-class know that if they were to exit before this predetermined time, their desire to still be in the park might drive them to try to become the ticket-taker. This teacher and host of the Whirlwind holds a very prestigious position, but the chance is small and the opportunity virtually nonexistent to actually rise to that level. Besides, it's not an easy life either, just an extremely well-maintained pace, a bit slower, and not nearly as rewarding. All those that pass by the ticket-taker show no respect, and usually complain about the slowness of the service, or the lack of quality of education the children come away with. Sometimes people will even question the importance of the ticket-taker. This is generally not a highly sought-after position, so anyone who feels the need to exit is usually left penniless and meaningless, a surprisingly preferred position to being the ticket-taker.

Over the hill, and the roller coaster in full motion; its speed is deliberate evidence that the prior preparation was not only a "good idea," but pertinent to the success of the coaster to conquer all the steep grades to will undoubtedly encounter. Realizing the stalwart roller coaster, made of unbreakable steel with expert machinery, is unfaltering and protecting, a few of the front-riders have been known to get a bit too confident in their car and position. The front-riders get frustrated with the continuous loop of the coaster, and suggest that maybe it does not have to be this way; maybe there is a different approach that could be taken, or a rail that is less traveled. They try to watch the familiar view from a different perspective: a very dangerous thought-provoking enter-

tain. Because they do not want to exit, they stand, which results in a permanent escort out of the park.

The idealistic nature of these front-riders is very attractive to the mid-folk, as those in the middle can get restless during the daily grind and routine of the coaster. Once in the greatest while, one member of the middle cars will gather the gumption to attempt the feat that they see front-riders seeing as so obtainable. The mid-folk think that members with their tenure and experience could accomplish with greater success what the front-riders set out to do. Unfortunately, those in the middle are greeted with the same fate as those from the front, of course, and their peers learn from their mistake. It is then shown that no matter who you are, it is futile to try to change something that is so efficient and commonly accepted the way it is.

Generally, however, the mid-folk are very placid, knowing their allowances and limitations. They are comfortable and secure, but only to an intellectually allowed amount. Not without regular American social morals, the mid-folk have families and picket fences, but have long ago forgotten what it all looks like. They are on this roller coaster twenty-four hours a day and literally know nothing else. After hours, when they go home to it all, the wife, the kids, the dog, it doesn't matter. It doesn't even register because the vibrations of the coaster still shake their bodies, and the laughter of the front-riders still echoes in their heads. These mid-folk have been here for years, and know full well that there are many years left to go before they get to know their home again. It is that sense of futility that drives them to become fidgety and try to conquer the park.

The enders. Ah, so close to getting off. So close to a life of freedom and travel and Florida. Sadly, this is the idea that keeps them going. This hope is what drives them. Long ago they gave up trying to change the track of the coaster, and realized the force and power of the ride is overwhelmingly too strong for one of them to take on, and their fellow riders are too comfortable with routine. Picturing every lap as their last in their contractually bound existence, they find the patience to go just one more lap every time. And that's okay with them; the fruitfulness of it all doesn't bother them anymore. They

have lost interest in the means of the end, and the coasters are just something they do nowadays.

But back when they were young and blooming it was all a game, much like it is for the front-riders the enders watch now. The first few years were really very enjoyable, meeting all of their fellow front-riders and maybe hobnobbing with some of the mid-folk in an attempt to get their lap bar loosened a bit. (The ride always gets to be more fun when the leeway of the lap bar is increased.) Pure anticipation of all the possibilities is a great accompaniment to a job they all start off loving. But the excitement doesn't last, and just before front-riders are promoted to mid-folk, they find their thrill gone. It becomes just another coaster, because they all look the same traditionally, and the front-riders find they have lost their passion. Only one out of 50,000 still enjoy the ride, and those are usually the ones with the exuberance to stand. The rest of the passengers of the whole ride, for that matter, are just filled with trepidation for what may happen lest they exit.

---

Evaluate on: *What can I say? Rachel's writing consistently forces the reader to reevaluate his or her worldview. Her analogy of corporate America as a roller coaster is ingenious and effective.*

---

---

# Duality in Amiri Baraka's *Dutchman* and Essex Hemphill's "Cordon Negro"

---

Jennifer Smith

Courses: Literature 223 (Minority Literature in America)  
and History 214 (African- and Native-American History)

Instructors: Andrew Wilson and Tom DePalma

Assignment:

*Write an essay pertaining to something  
we've studied during the semester.*

Acceptance does not come easily to most people. Even today, in the twenty-first century, people all around the world are wearing masks to make themselves appear differently than they are. It is a defense mechanism that often comes naturally. To hide the true self, however, is not only deceitful to others, it is also truly a betrayal to one's self. Masks are worn by everyone of every race, creed and sex. Some individuals have a greater need to protect themselves from the outside world, and they become consumed in the stereotypes. It is a game of pretend that has been played for centuries, especially by African-Americans prior to 1965. For example, slaves would never make it known to their masters that they were unhappy, because their masters would just make them work harder. They sang songs instead; to whites, these songs seemed to signify happiness, but in truth they were songs of desperation and pain. African-Americans had been oppressed for so long that they felt they had no choice but to wear masks and conceal who they were. Amiri Baraka's play *Dutchman* and Essex Hemphill's poem "Cordon Negro" are two excellent literary examples of black writers who portray their characters as leading a "dual life."

*Dutchman* begins on a train when a beautiful white woman, Lula, decides to sit next to a young black man Clay. Immediately, the two begin having a conversation, and Lula begins to make assumptions about Clay. Lula assumes that from the way Clay appears that he lives in New Jersey. She continues on by saying, "You look like death eating a soda cracker" (Baraka 8). Clay tells her that he's from New Jersey, even though the reader is led to believe that Clay is simply agreeing with Lula and is not really from New Jersey. The next conversation involves Lula's hunger for compliments when she says, "Would you like to get involved with me, Mister Man?" (11). Clay does his best to flatter Lula, although he is not being genuine. These are clearly atypical conversations between two strangers of different races. Not only are these conversations among two strangers, they are also sexually charged, full of assumptions and insults. Lula describes Clay as a "well-known type" (12), which confirms the evidence that stereotypes play a predominant role in black and white relationships. The next significant remark made by Lula is when she critiques the way



Clay looks. Clay is dressed rather professionally in a suit jacket and a tie. Astonishingly enough, Clay remains calm during Lula's assumptions and incessant ridicule and continues to mask his true feelings. He doesn't fit the stereotype that Lula has of black men, and she confronts him regarding that when she asks him, "What right do you have to be wearing a three-button suit and striped-tie? Your grandfather was a slave, he didn't get Harvard" (18). Lula continues to make fun of Clay and his "black Baudelaire" ways as she brings up the history of his race (19). She refers to Clay as a murderer and says that each of them will have to "pretend" to be free from their pasts (21). This is an intriguing statement because despite the mask that Clay is wearing, Lula and the white society will still not let him be free from his history of slavery and rebellion. So why is the mask being worn? What purpose is it serving since it really is not bringing about any significant change in the way white society looks at him?

In the second scene, a major change takes place in Clay. Clay is "loosened up" with his tie undone, as he begins to conform to what Lula thinks a typical black man should look like. The conversation continues with strong sexual tones and Clay begins to kiss her neck and fingers. They speak of the "party" that Lula invites herself to, even though it is obvious that neither of them will be accepted if they are seen with each other. Before long, Lula pushes the conversation too far by telling Clay that the people entering the train must be frightening him because he is "an escaped nigger" (29). She makes another assumption, thinking wire surrounded the plantations his ancestors worked on, and Clay quickly tells her how the plantations actually were. He continues not to inform Lula how the lues were run. What Lula does next is what truly brings about a change in Clay. Lula proceeds to make up a blues song, and she is dancing in the aisle, asking Clay to "do the nasty" and "rub bellies" with her (30-31). Clay is surely embarrassed, but continues to watch and listen for the hope of getting at least some enjoyment out of Lula embarrassing herself. She continues rambling on about wanting to have sex with Clay, and finally, Clay has had enough. He requests for her to sit down, but she does not obey, and she continues on with ridiculing him. Clay is enraged now and he

begins a long passage describing the duality of his character and the ridiculousness he sees in Lula's assumptions. As Clay is pushing Lula against the train seat he says, "You don't know anything except what's there for you to see. An act. Lies. Device. Not the pure heart, the pumping black heart....I sit here, in this buttoned-up suit to keep myself from cutting all your throats" (34). These lines describe the "fake persona" that he offers to society. He feels that he must wear a mask for his own sanctity and sanity. Clay mocks white people when he derides the way they, the whites, claim to "love Bessie Smith" (34). He feels that there is no possible way that a white person could understand the African-American artistic culture that stems from the hatred of being oppressed. The African-American arts are an extension, if you will, of the mask and the dual nature of African-Americans. The African-American arts hide the pain, shame, guilt, and hate and turn them into something more constructive and beautiful. The mask and its extension of black culture prevent complete disarray and insanity and anarchy. Clay claims that with out these devices or masks, African-Americans would just "turn their backs on sanity" and murder their oppressors. He begins to trail off and continues on his quest to explain that he would rather be insane and keep his words and thoughts safe than be left with blood on his hands. After this tirade is over, Lula claims that she has heard enough, and soon afterwards, she murders him on the train. Lula most likely murders Clay because he is too willing to take off the mask that he wears. When he denies her sexual advances and begins digressing about his black culture, she finds him threatening. Clay is finally used to her if he does not play her games. Clay's character personifies a duality by attempting to be something he isn't in the first scene and by showing his true colors and feelings in his second scene.

Baraka uses Lula's character in order to challenge Clay to come out from behind his dual nature. Lula wants him to take off the mask because that is his only protection, and he will become vulnerable once it is removed. In the introduction to the reading, Baraka says, "Lula...is not meant to represent white people... but America itself...the spirit of America" (Gates and McKay 1879). This is an interesting remark, considering it comes a year



Baraka was criticized for his dramatization of white society due to racism and inappropriate behavior. However, if Baraka truly did intend on Lula representing collective America, this story represents every race's desire to see the masks removed for purposes of vulnerability. If certain individuals were made to be vulnerable, it would put others in control. From the history of African-Americans and other minorities, it is clear to see that every group was striving for a balance in control, but it was usually the whites that maintained that control. This theory could also explain how other African-Americans would look down upon someone like Clay, who attempts to conform to white society on the surface. In my opinion, many blacks during the 1960s would condemn fellow African-Americans who tried to discount their history, culture, and differences, such as Clay was doing in the first scene. *Dutchman*, however, is only one example of the duality presented in African-American literature.

Essex Hemphill's poem, "Cordon Negro," is an interesting look into the duality that exists not only in an African-American, but also in a homosexual African-American. The title "Cordon Negro" is taken from a sparkling wine that is nicknamed as "black bottle bubbly." Hemphill refers to drinking most likely Cordon Negro wine in the first line of the first stanza. The first stanza literally explains that he'd rather bring destruction to himself by drinking than by leaving his house and destroying others. In the second stanza, Hemphill describes what it is like to be a homosexual man. It bothers him that he is "twice as fast as any other American between eighteen and thirty-five," but he hides it by pretending he doesn't care and wearing his mask. Hemphill illustrates how life is both a blessing and a curse in the third stanza. He may be suggesting life's blessing is short lived because he is ill with HIV, or perhaps it is just hard for him to pretend to be something he is not in the public eye. In the fourth stanza, Hemphill speaks of being killed or even killing himself. He has a strong distrust for society, including his fellow African-Americans, probably because they have stigmatized his sexuality, too. He continues by saying that no one but himself cares about him, and sometimes he doesn't even care. This is an oxymoron that shows an example of the duality of Hemphill's har-

acter. He loves himself, but at the same time he despises himself. In the next stanza, Hemphill is not as clear as he was in earlier stanzas when he refers to "choosing violence or a demeanor that saves every other life but my own." At first glance, the reader would believe he was referring to his homosexuality, but why would the cessation of homosexuality bring about violence? Hemphill is faced with choosing two pathways to death. He can choose violence and act out his rage towards his oppressors (the whites and the heterosexuals), or he can choose homosexuality, which will most likely lead to death from disease. This is a difficult decision because choosing violence will vent his frustrations, but it may cause more harm than good in the end. However, the latter is not a clear choice either, because it will bring him pleasure, but at the cost of stigmatization and, again, possible disease-induced degeneration. It is as though he faces two choices, and each choice requires a sacrifice on his part. In the sixth stanza, Hemphill speaks of his determination to remain homosexual and not cross over to heterosexuality. Still, in the seventh stanza, he contradicts himself again by describing how angry he is about being an "endangered species." It is clear by the seventh stanza that Hemphill feels trapped in a no-win situation. The eighth stanza is perhaps the most remarkable and important part of the entire poem. Again, Hemphill speaks of his hopes of resorting to violence or wearing the mask of calmness. He suggests he could go "downtown and raise hell on a rooftop with my fle" or he could "masquerade another day through the corridors of commerce and American dreams." Those last three lines in the eighth stanza are very significant, because not only are they better in the show of distaste for his own duality, but they also illustrate how the duality doesn't make him a different person inside. He is still the same person with the same problems, whether he wears the mask or not. In the last stanza, it seems that Hemphill has come to the realization that he no longer needs the mask. Hemphill says, "I leave my shelter, I guard my life with no apology." Leaving his shelter most likely refers to leaving his dual nature and mask behind him and being true to his needs. In my opinion, those lines signify that he has no regrets in the way he lives. He may have to take his Valium every morning, but he is alive. Pretending he is something he is not will not take him to

<sup>1</sup>See the Works Cited page for the complete bibliographic information on Hemphill's poem.

a sanctuary where everything is accepted, and the last stanza is proof of this point. He ends the poem by saying, "my concerns are small and personal." To me, this is just an extension of what he has just realized. He cannot change who or what he is, and it seems best to him if he keeps his thoughts and feelings to himself since he feels he cannot trust anyone.

"Cordon Negro" is like *Dutchman* because in each piece of literature the character is trying to escape the mask in order to be true to himself and keep his identity. If any individual hides behind a mask has a duality of character, he/she is most definitely doing an injustice to the self by not living out his/her true desires and feelings. At the same time, minorities like the African-Americans and African-American homosexuals feel that the duality is the only thing that will bring them shelter. However, is this really necessary? Is it serving the greater good? If more individuals were willing to remove the mask and escape the duality, everyone of every race and sect would have equal vulnerability, and fewer and fewer hands would prepare, each passing day, faces to meet the other faces.

#### Works Cited

- Baraka, Amiri (LeRoi Jones). *Dutchman*. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1964.
- Gates, Henry Louis, and Nellie Y. McKay. "Amiri Baraka." *The Norton Anthology of African-American Literature*. Ed. Henry Louis Gates and Nellie Y. McKay. New York: Norton, 1997. 1877-79.
- Hemphill, Essex. "Cordon Negro." *Gay and Lesbian Poetry in Our Time: An Anthology*. Ed. Carl Morse and Joan Larkin. New York: St. Martin's, 1988. 186-87.

---

Evaluation: Among the many reasons why we love Jennifer's paper, two particular stand out: a) Jennifer has opted to focus on two "lesser known" writers (Baraka and Hemphill), and b) she has somehow managed — through rock-solid criticism and clear writing — to link together two seemingly disparate pieces. This is a successful analysis.

---

# he uestion

---

Megan Stolz

Course: English 200

(Professional Writing: Grammar and Style)

Instructor: Trygve Thoreson

Assignment:

*Compose an essay in which you imitate the style and tone of Richard Selzer's "The Knife."*

One holds a question carefully in the forefront of the mind. Not to say that questions do not lurk in the far dark corners of the mind, but for the question to be asked, one must bring it to the front and examine it in the light of consciousness. To not hold the question carefully is to risk losing it before it can be asked. Or worse yet, one could say something to give away the intent of the asking. Within your questions lies the power of the inquisitor, the power to probe deeply into another human being.

A good line of questioning is a surgery of sorts; the questions are your instruments. One must choose the correct instrument to lay open the particular portion of the person you wish to see. One must be careful with the big questions, such as "Why?" To merely ask *why* is to use an axe to perform surgery. Though a powerful tool, it is rather unwieldy and likely to lop off some important part of what you are looking for. And the patients are

likely to have some of the same distrust and urge to flee they would have if you came after them with an axe. A good question is small, sharp, and specific.

As in surgery, one does not blindly hack away with vague questions. In doing so, the patient is sliced to ribbons, and one may or may not be any closer to the answers sought. One must have a good idea of what is wanted. Deeper and deeper into the elements of this person, one must use finer and finer instruments. The questions become more and more specific. One reaches gently for the answers, being careful not to touch the subjects that would aggravate the patient. It is not the patient himself, but the relationship the questioner has with him that would die of complications. One attempts to control the inflammation of the psyche with soothing words. "No, that's not what I mean at all." "Of course you were right to do that." And the morphine of standard responses, "I understand."

I recently was performing such surgery on a friend of mine. "I will answer any question you ask me," he said. I have learned from experience that this is actually fraught with danger. General, axe-like questions just earn me short, evasive answers. "What is your life's story?" tends to result in "I was born. I went to school. I went to college. I graduated. I got a job." Some important parts definitely get chopped off in that operation. Hmm, I must get a little more specific. "Where did you go to college?" "Wright State." Finally, I may have a usable incision. I can't see the organs yet, but at least I haven't chopped anything necessary off. At least, as far as I can tell. "Where did you live while in school?" I say, slicing a little deeper. This query results in some details about sharing an apartment with three other guys. I may see pinkish lumps in the distance. "Were these guys good roommates?" I attempt to open the incision so I may see better. Soon I am being regaled with tales of the flying couch tackles, things flying across the kitchen, and other stories of male bonding and roughhousing. I think I see a kidney! Time for some suction. I make assorted nods and other agreeing gestures. This brings out the stories of settling roommate disputes; does it matter if one of the guys brushes his teeth in the shower? Something about this second kidney seems abnormal. While I understand the need to be impartial, this warrants further investiga-

tion. "How often did you get drawn into dispute resolution?" His reply indicates this was a regular occurrence. "And this bothered you but you never told them to bug off?" Hmm, looks like he has poems expressing his actual opinions, and he just tends to go along with whatever is said. The e seems to have an unusual lump on this kidney. Is it malignant? I just can't seem to find the right instrument to get in the e. "Do you always just go along with what anybody says?" His reply, "Pretty much, I'm easygoing," has a distinct flash of yes. This could be problematic. I detect the faint overlay of danger. I may have hit a sensitive spot. Did I use the wrong instrument? Was the blade too long? Did I just carelessly ignore how close I was getting to sensitivity? Just close the wound and get out before something infectious gets in. It was just an exploratory surgery; I did not glean all that I could. But now I have seen much more of him as a person, so all is not lost. I decree this surgery to be a success, and I relieve the patient with ease over.

The questions have been put forth. The answers have been given. Sometimes the instruments seem especially awkward and unwieldy, but it is a surgery of the psyche nonetheless. My further questions are dismissed to the back of my mind where they wait for the next opportunity.

---

Evaluation: *This is an unusual *comparative* contrast essay that deftly applies Seer's surgical description to a very different kind of operation.*



---

# An Examination of Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown"

Maciej Szydłowski

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Ibs Gomez-Vega

---

Assignment:

*Write a research paper on a work of literature.*

Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown" is one of the most widely examined short stories in American literature. Over the years since its creation, many researchers have analyzed the story in a great variety of ways. Michael Titt, for example, looks at the psychology behind Goodman Brown's projections of guilt to those around him. Frank Davidson writes about the progressive evolution of Brown's thoughts and their eventual realization into evil deeds. James C. Kell, on the other hand, analyzed Hawthorne's use of nineteenth-century gender ideologies in a story that is supposed to portray Puritan values and ideas. John S. Hardt links the pastoral setting of the story with Brown's discovery of the limits of human knowledge, whereas Deb Johanyak examines the same Edenic settings and their influence on plot and character development. Therefore, with each different interpretation of the story, the image of "Young Goodman Brown" becomes more and more complex and interesting.

In "Young Goodman Brown: Hawthorne's Intent," Frank Davidson states that Hawthorne's reason for writing his famous story may have been quite simple. Davidson argues that the "author's purpose is to have the reader realize keenly the transforming power and the paralyzing deceptiveness of an evil thought which once entertained... proceeds to the perpetration of an evil deed." (68).

In his article, Davidson points out that Hawthorne "was displaying considerable interest in the relation of the

'evil in every human heart' to evil thought and evil deed" (68). According to Davidson, in the year following the publication of "Young Goodman Brown" (1835), Hawthorne wrote "Fanatic's Show-Box" in which he stated that "all the dreadful consequences of sin will not be incurred, unless the angels have set their seal upon the thought" (68-69). Davidson also argues that the overall pattern of "Young Goodman Brown" is similar to Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. In both characters, "conflict between conscience and evil desire" results in the inevitable "consummation of evil thought with evil deed" (69). However, Davidson suggests that in the case of Brown, the sin is "more inclusive and profound.... It is a cynical skepticism based in the conviction, falsely arrived at, that the nature and destiny of man are evil" (69).

In the article, Davidson repeatedly argues that the theme in Hawthorne's story is that of "evil thought in its progress toward the guilty deed" (69). He points out that of the 18 pages containing the short story, 16 describe Goodman Brown's journey into the forest, where his evil thoughts give rise to evil actions. "In those pages Hawthorne traces the visible course Brown pursues, part way with a guide [the Devil], and simultaneously the invisible inner journey" (69). Davidson states that, from the moment Brown decides to "meet" with the devil, he begins to question his morality. When he tries to stop this self-doubting train of thought, he absolutely stops and refuses to go any further. However, as Davidson points out, under the pressure from his guide he resumes his walk, and at the same time, the "unconscious" and suspicious train of thought. As they move on, "the companion urges more 'speed,'" and therefore Brown's thoughts become more and more doubtful. Davidson continues by stating that as they begin to move faster in the dark forest, Brown's evil companion fuels his increasing paranoia with ever stronger proof that he's not the only one who is guilty of sin. The devil includes Brown's ancestors, and eventually, pious people from his village, in a procession designed to increase his suspiciousness. According to Davidson, what is even more important is that the sinners seem to materialize before Brown only after he thought of them first. "Trust in family virtue, trust in the religious tradition of his community, trust in the sincerity and goodness of

his childhood instructor have been subverted, and the devil's thought seems to have become one with his own" (70). Davidson points out that it is Brown's original, evil thoughts of self-doubt that allow for the evil to develop in his mind. Brown's delusions begin to involve people from his community, which in the end leads him to distrust them all.

Davidson states that Brown succumbs to his paranoia after hearing his wife, Faith, in her way to the same imagined meeting with the devil. Feeling betrayed by everybody, even his beloved and seemingly pious wife, Brown breaks down in the forest. "Deluded fancy convinces him his last bastion has crumbled. Grief, rage, and terror master him, and any shred of resistance he might yet possess fades. He invokes the devil and...invites the chaos of total disorder and darkness" (70). Davidson points out that the terrible revelation about his wife speeds up his journey, both physically and in his inner self. Brown "flies along the forest path," his mind immersing even deeper in its distrusting, doubtful nature. In a climactic evil thought he imagines his whole village, including his wife, at a celebration of devil worship. "All, however, is but the deception of a mind seduced by evil" (70), for as Brown calms down, he finds himself alone in the forest. As Davidson points out, however, the damage has been done. From the single evil thought about his own morality at the beginning of the journey, Brown's mind creates a progressively worse paranoia, which in the end results in his "cynical disbelief of any good in man" (70). According to Davidson, the culmination of Brown's evil thought is his treatment of his wife and neighbors in a harsh and contemptuous manner. His constant distrust of the people around him, Davidson argues, is the evil deed resulting from his initial evil thought.

Unlike Davidson, who looks for a simpler explanation, Michael Titt analyzes the story in a much more complex perspective. In "'Young Goodman Brown' and the Psychology of Projection" Titt examines the psychology behind Brown's behavior, following his disturbing journey into the dark forest. Titt argues that "in an attempt to *escape* his guilt-consciousness and the concomitant moral anxiety, Brown projects his guilt onto those around him" (114).

According to Titt, most readers receive of Brown as *self-consciously* guilt-ridden and thus desperate, at the tale's

end" (114). After all, as Titt points out, Brown decides to meet with the devil out of his own free will. Later, Brown purposely gives up his faith in the goodness of humanity and surrenders to evil. "He becomes a demoniac" (114) and runs through the forest in a horrid frenzy. Titt argues that many readers believe Brown to actually feel unconsciously guilty after his sinful behavior in the forest, and that his later withdrawal from Puritan society results from that guilt. In truth, however, "Brown's desperation at the end of the story is not the result of a guilt-consciousness, but rather originates with the guilt he is unable to recognize and admit. Conceiving himself unscathed, Brown locates the source of his anxieties in those around him" (Titt 114).

Titt points out that, although the events in the dark forest involved both Brown and his neighbors, Brown fails to admit in his mind to any evil deeds. When he makes a walk through his town the following morning, he sees around him "a community of devil worshippers" (115). Even though it was only Brown who truly sinned in the forest, the young Puritan projects his anger and loathing at his neighbors and not at himself. When he sees his former catechist, Goody Cloyse, teaching a little girl, he snatches her hidden away, believing that the old woman will somehow corrupt her. Titt states that Brown behaves in this way because he "believes himself untainted, at least less tainted than various members of his community" (115).

According to Titt, "Brown's impulsive condemnation of others, along with his consistent denial of his own culpability, illustrates a classically defined case of projection" (116). "A person is projecting when he transfers to another person a trait of his own that would be too painful for his ego to admit" (Titt 116). Brown is projecting because he unconsciously denies his own malignant nature to members of his community. In truth, his fellow Puritans are not the evil fiends that Brown thinks them to be. As Titt points out, Brown's ego simply does not allow him to admit that he is in fact the true sinner. "Brown believes himself to be without guilt, even though... 'the unsavory desire trait is still in [his] subconscious'" (Titt 116). By projecting his guilt onto the others, Brown is unconsciously defending himself from the awful, true nature of his sin. Unfortunately, the anxiety about sin is not only as directed to others around him but also keeps "festering within" Brown's mind. "As a result, Brown is trapped, an unwary

prisoner of forces acting from within, though ironically, in trying to 'defend' himself, he feels victimized from without" (Tritt 117). Ultimately, Brown's projections of his own guilt upon others cause him to distrust his community and become an old, sad shell of a man.

Whereas Davidson and Tritt emphasize the analysis of Brown's psyche, Hardt looks closer at the connection between Brown's surroundings and the limits of his perception. In "Doubts in the American Garden: Three Cases of Paradisal Skepticism," John S. Hardt examines three tales, among them "Young Goodman Brown," in which the main characters "journey into settings with paradisaical associations, only to encounter doubts and uncertainties" (249). Hardt attributes the protagonists' fleeing with drawal from the same settings to the "recognition of limits in human knowledge," a pattern he calls "'paradisaical skepticism'" (249).

Hardt implies that the "apparent paradise [such as that of a quiet Puritan village of Goodman Brown] can only seem such so long as its inhabitants maintain the unrecognized illusions about it and about their own abilities in it" (249). Once those illusions are gone, Hardt continues, the "setting's paradisaical dimensions disappear" (249). Paradisaical skepticism arises when humans realize that there is more to know about the world around them than they previously thought. At the same time, when their perception hits a limit beyond which they cannot advance, the image of the surrounding world becomes less perfect and more uncertain than it was before their quest for knowledge. According to Hardt, "Young Goodman Brown" is a good example of such a pattern.

Hardt points out that Hawthorne establishes a paradisaical setting in "Young Goodman Brown" by describing a community of God-fearing Puritans surrounded by an idyllic forest. This structure of paradise is further emphasized in an "allegorical level" (252). Hardt states that "through his description of the stranger whom Brown meets in the forest and the association of this stranger with the serpent, Hawthorne implies that this forest is a version of the Garden of Eden, albeit a darkened one already controlled by the serpent" (252). In this environment, Brown crosses the boundary over the "unacknowledged illusion" about his Puritan community. He discovers dark and evil secrets about the inhabitants of a seemingly Edenic town.

However, as Hardt points out, in gaining knowledge about the others, Brown can only rely on his sensory perceptions. At that point Brown reaches the limit of his knowledge, because with his limited human senses, he cannot determine whether or not his visions are true.

According to Hardt, Brown emerges from the forest haunted by "doubts and uncertainties" (254). Due to the limits of his perception, he is unable to overcome the limits of his knowledge about the events that seemingly took place in the woods. His doubts paralyze Brown, to the point where "he no longer trusts the appearances which his senses offer him" (254). His previously paradisaical surroundings seem the same, but because Brown can no longer trust his perception, he doubts everything and everyone. This in turn leads Brown to his downfall, for he spends the remainder of his life suspecting evil in all that surround him. In the end, as Hardt points out, the only knowledge that Brown gains in the forest is "primarily a knowledge of how little he knows and can know, through his senses and his faith, of himself, his fellow villagers, and his world. Ultimately, his initiation is not so much into knowledge as into confusion and uncertainty" (255).

Contrary to all previously mentioned writers, Keil concentrates not just on Brown's character but also on Hawthorne's use of gender concepts. In "Hawthorne's 'Young Goodman Brown': Early Nineteenth Century and Puritan Constructions of Gender," James C. Keil analyzes Hawthorne's well-known story of Puritan religious and social ideals. Keil argues, however, that Hawthorne's description of Puritan concepts is clouded by his nineteenth-century ideology. According to Keil, "'Young Goodman Brown' takes as part of its context fundamental changes in gender and gender relations in middle class world of New England" with the emphasis on "the nineteenth-century ideology of separate spheres" (35).

In his article, Keil points out that "men and women had lived socially, economically, and politically distinct lives in the Puritan period" (35). However, in the nineteenth century, the 'male' world was even more and decidedly self-consciously distinct from the 'female'" (35). Men were seen as the "sole economic providers of the household," and therefore were expected to go off to work, while women were supposed to "provide all the other needs of family, ... only within the house" (35). In terms of sexual

context, women were perceived as “virtually passionless.” According to Keil, they were supposed to be the ideals of “delicacy and spirituality” (39). Imagined y society as “Angel of the Home” (42), a middle-class, nineteenth century woman was charged with housework as well as the moral education of her children. Men, on the other hand, were seen as “sexually predatory” (39), and had almost nothing to do with the moral upbringing of their progeny. In contrast, Keil points out that before the nineteenth century, “men [including the Puritans] played important roles in the moral upbringing, education, and socialization of children” (41). Puritan women were seen as temptresses, their image “based on Eve’s seduction by the devil and her deception of Adam in the Garden of Eden” (40). In other words, Keil argues that in a truly Puritan society, men would be perceived as more pious and moral, while women would be seen as more sexually aggressive.

Keil states that, in the story, Hawthorne’s main character thinks of his wife and of his marriage in nineteenth-century terms. When Goodman Brown attempts to leave his house at the beginning of the story, his wife, Faith, asks him to stay with her in bed. According to Keil, such a request goes with the Puritan idea of women, since they believed women to be sexually aggressive. Brown’s response, however, does not fit Puritan concepts. He “misreads her sexual desire and fear of being alone as anxiety about his marital fidelity” (41). Such a misconception, Keil argues, would fit much better with the thoughts of a nineteenth century middle-class man, who being “sexually predatory” and working away from home, might be suspected of infidelity by his wife.

Keil also suggests that Brown thinks of his wife not as a seductive and sexually charged being, but as an “Angel of the Home.” While leaving home, he is surprised by his wife’s request to sleep with her, which is part of the reason, according to Keil, why he responds as described above. While he’s on his way to meet the devil, Brown thinks “he will ‘cling to her [Faith’s] skirts and follow her to heaven” (44). Keil also points out that Brown might think of Faith as an angel, as well as his mother to “whose skirts he is clinging” (44) and avoid the consequences of his meeting with the devil. The nineteenth century saintly image of a wife and mother arises again, showing “the difficulty Brown has in differentiating love of mother from love of

wife, a dilemma with which Hawthorne and his contemporaries were not unfamiliar” (44). Keil argues that,

Wife came to replace mother as the moral guardian and disciplinarian of a nineteenth century, middle-class young man’s family. The move from mother’s home to wife’s, from child’s world to man’s world should not, then, be all that difficult. Of course, in reality it is far from simple, particularly because the grown son must spend half his life away from mother-wife in the world of men for which his childhood in woman’s sphere has not prepared him. Many young men must have found adult life frightening and confusing. (45)

Therefore, as Keil points out, Brown’s feelings about his wife belong more in Hawthorne’s own nineteenth century rather than in the Puritan times where the story takes place.

Keil also argues that it is when Brown discovers that Faith is also present in the forest (where his sinful meeting with the devil takes place) that his saintly ideals of his wife are shattered. “His wife Faith is also literally gone; if she is present in the forest, then she cannot, according to his belief system, be who he thought her to be” (51). Here, Keil again raises the idea that Brown thinks of Faith in nineteenth-century terms. He thinks she should be moral and spiritual, but instead Faith turns out to be as sinful as he is, for as Keil points out, she also travels through the forest to meet the devil (Keil also points out that in Puritan times meeting with the devil would be synonymous with a sexual experience). Brown “refused to acknowledge his wife’s sexuality” (53) and her “sinful” nature, which caused him to become a bitter and old husband.

Similarly to Keil, Debra Johanyak also looks at more than just the character of Goodman Brown. In “Romanticism’s Fallen Edens: The Malignant Contribution of Hawthorne’s Literary Landscapes,” she examines Hawthorne’s use of settings in plot development. Johanyak argues that forest settings of tales such as “Young Goodman Brown” contribute “substantially and malignantly” (353) to the development of the plot and of the characters.

According to Johanyak, “Edenic gardens and pastoral woodlands grace countless works of the Romantic era, wherein Adam- and Eve-like lovers succumb to tempta-



tion and find themselves not only cast out of their normative societies, but often to learn from each other as well" (353). Johanyak also points out that the most interesting tales "utilizing a contributory landscape are those emphasizing a Puritan backdrop against which a conflict-laced love story unfolds" (353). Among those is "Young Goodman Brown," considered by Johanyak one of Hawthorne's "strongest revivals of the Edenic legend featuring Puritan protagonists" (353).

As Johanyak points out, the story of "Young Goodman Brown" places the main character in a deep, dark forest "representing the hero's troubled state of mind" (354). In this somewhat threatening, yet at the same time peaceful and quiet setting, Brown "begins a journey at dusk toward a universal temptation which dooms his relationship to Faith—his literal wife and metaphorical spirituality—when he is forced to face the all-pervasive weak and sinful nature of humanity" (354). Johanyak argues, "Hawthorne likens his forest path to the spiritual journey of a man questioning his religious faith" (354). Inevitably, as Brown progresses down the path, the initially peaceful, Edenic forest setting becomes more and more twisted. The further he goes, the more he questions his "personal human nature and, later, that of his wife and surrounding community" (354). The forest, as his spiritual journey progresses to more evil and suspicious thoughts, the forest setting becomes increasingly menacing.

Eventually, the story culminates with Brown reaching the peak of his depravity. In his mind, he suspects every member of his community of being evil and corrupt to the core. By that time, his surroundings change accordingly, to a "heathen wilderness" (356). The forest becomes an even darker and more brooding place, where a good Christian man should not be. Then in the final act of delusion, Brown becomes convinced that his loving wife, Faith, is also among those who have succumbed to the devil. At that moment, he loses all faith in humanity and gives himself up to the devil as well. The setting changes once again, as Johanyak points out, to a "pathetic inversion of the original Edenic setting" (356). The forest is made to "conform to the [supposed] Satan-worship" of Brown's community. Nature appears wild and untamed, reflecting Brown's own chaotic state of mind. In the end, Brown regains some grip on reality. Following the incred-

ible visions at the end of his spiritual journey, the setting around Brown changes back to a peaceful one, and the man himself returns to his village surroundings (suggesting a normal state of mind). Johanyak points out, however, that the "knowledge of the world's pervasive evil—represented in the personified forest—haunts him all his days" (357). Brown is no longer able to look at his wife and his community, as he was able to before his journey. The experiences in the personified forest forever rob Brown of his happiness.

Through their analysis of Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown," writers like Davidson and Johanyak give a much more complex view of a story that initially looks as a simple conflict of good versus evil. Explanations and views of writers like Keil, Hardt, or Tritt allow for an in-depth examination of the turbulent and troubled mind of Goodman Brown, as well as the ideologies and concepts that Hawthorne included in this famous story.

#### Works Cited

- Davidson, Frank. "Young Goodman Brown—Hawthorne's Intent." *Emerson Society Quarterly: A Journal of the American Renaissance* 31 (1963): 68-71.
- Hardt, John S. "Doubts in the American Garden: Three Cases of Paradisal Skepticism." *Studies in Short Fiction* 25.3 (1988): 249-259.
- Johanyak, Debra. "Romanticism's Fallen Edens: The Malignant Contribution of Hawthorne's Literary Landscapes." *College Language Association Journal* 42.3 (1999): 353-363.
- Keil, James C. "Hawthorne's 'Young Goodman Brown': Early Nineteenth-Century and Puritan Constructions of Gender." *The New England Quarterly* 69.1 (1996): 33-55.
- Tritt, Michael. "'Young Goodman Brown' and the Psychology of Projection." *Studies in Short Fiction* 23.1 (1986): 113-117.

---

Evaluation: *The student understands the complexity of critical writing and is able to report in clear, simple language.*

---

# Franz Kafka's Three Parables: Existentialism and Alienation

Pete Thomas

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Tony Hammer

---

Assignment:

*Pr par a research paper on a significant writer.*

*Th sis:* The philosophy of existentialism claims that man, due to his freedom to make choices, “makes” himself a worthwhile man by his actions. The men in Franz Kafka’s Three Parables suffer a pervasive feeling of alienation, and this feeling renders them incapable of action. This inaction keeps them from “making” themselves into worthwhile men.

1. Existentialism is the study of the individual in his or her actual existing situation
  - A. The purpose of existentialism are threefold
    1. It is an attempt to help people understand their place in an absurd world
      - a. WWI caused many people to search for answers in established religion
      - b. The inability of established religion to explain the absurdity of war caused many people to search for answers in other belief systems and philosophies
    2. It is an attempt to help people understand their obligation to face up to their freedom
    3. It is an attempt to help people understand the kinds of ethics available to them in a world bereft of absolutes
  - B. The appeals of existentialism are threefold
    1. It marries thought and action
    2. It analyzes modern anxiety
    3. It expresses its ideas in the media of print and film
  - C. The importance of existentialism is fourfold
    1. It has a capacity for formulating ideas of modernity
    2. It searches for meaning in the absence of religious faith
    3. It expresses a belief in the dignity of the individual
    4. It is concerned with human subjectivity

- II. In his life, Franz Kafka experienced many of the struggles that existentialism seeks to explain
  - A. He experienced alienation from both the language and the religion of his birthplace
  - B. He suffered lifelong oppression by his father
  - C. He developed a fear of marriage
- III. The Three Parables deal with existential themes from Kafka’s perspective of alienation, oppression, and fear
  - A. “Couriers” is a short parable that appears in various collections of Kafka’s short stories
    1. The couriers are bound by oaths to nonexistent kings
    2. Constraints of the mind lead to meaningless lives
  - B. “Before the Law” is a parable in the novel *The Trial*
    1. The doorkeeper does not block entrance to the Law, fear does
    2. Unquestioning acceptance of authority is seen as “false wisdom”
    3. Man’s inability to act proves he is not worthy to enter
    4. Man deludes himself into thinking he cannot act
      - a. It is easier to blame the situation than to act
      - b. It is easier to shun responsibility for our actions than to act
  - C. “An Imperial Message” is a short parable in the story “The Great Wall of China”
    1. The dying emperor has a message for you
    2. The messenger from the emperor cannot reach you because of the crowd in the palace
    3. Should the messenger persist in his hopeless task?
    4. There is a ray of hope: you dream the emperor’s message, and you dream your own worth

The existential view of man existing in a world void of absolutes is mirrored in the writings of Franz Kafka. Existentialism claims that every man, due to his freedom to make his own choices, continually “makes” himself into a worthwhile man by his actions. The men in Kafka’s writings suffer from a pervasive feeling of alienation, and they are rendered incapable of action. This causes them to invariably “make” themselves into failures. The feelings of alienation often occur because they do not understand the overwhelming circumstances into which they have been placed. Other times they are rendered incapable by fear of the situation or by a blind belief in the rightness of the authority that has determined their circumstances. A careful study of Kafka’s Three Parables, “Couriers,” “Before the Law,” and “An Imperial Message” will help us understand some main existential themes and how they relate to Kafka’s presentation of man’s actions (or inaction), leading to his own demise.

Many people were appalled by the violence of World War I, and in the years after the war, they turned to esta-

lished religion for answers. To many philosophers and thinkers, the absurdity of war and religion's inability to explain it called religion into question. If something as violent and unexplainable as war could exist, they asked, how could there be a "higher power?" These thinkers began to search elsewhere for answers, and some attempted to formulate new belief systems to explain the world's absurdity.

One of these new belief systems or philosophies was existentialism. Existentialism has its ancestry in the works of Soren Kierkegaard, a Danish philosopher. Kierkegaard declared that "the crowd is untruth," and that to fully understand the role of man in this absurd new world, we must conduct an intense study of the individual person in his or her actual existing situation (Cunningham 434). Kierkegaard believed that the absurdity of the world had rendered previous belief systems meaningless, and he sought to formulate a meaningful belief system. He chose to study the single individual in specific circumstances at a particular time in history with a specific consciousness (Cunningham 434). In this aspect, Kierkegaard established the focus of his philosophy as being on individual man, not on a supreme authority.

The philosophy of existentialism was greatly expanded and explained by the French writer and philosopher Jean Paul Sartre. Sartre declared that the brutality of war and the world's absurdity had made all previous religions void and had proved that there is no God. Sartre lamented this absence of God, not because he held any great love for God or religion, but because he realized that if there is no God, then there is no ultimate significance to the universe (Cunningham 434). If there is no God, then there is no religious blueprint of what a person should be. Man is on his own; as Sartre said, "People are condemned to be free" (434). Sartre sought to explain man's function in a world without a God.

Sartre explained that man comes into existence with no predetermined pattern of what he should be. He has no "essence," as Sartre explained it. A candle, a bed, a tree: all these things have a predetermined "essence." Even if we do not have a candle, a bed, or a tree in our vision, we know what they are, we know their form, and we know what they will consist of when we do see them. Their "essence" precedes their "existence." There is, however, no "essence" of man; there is no form that we know man must take. Man comes into existence, then each man determines what

he should be and will be. At first, man is nothing, then he wills himself to be a man (432). Hence, man's "existence" precedes his "essence" (Feinberg 432). Sartre declared that *the full responsibility of existence rests on each individual* (432). To Sartre, there are no excuses; there is no God or Satan for man to blame his actions on (437). Man is continually making himself into a man; he is continually evolving. A supreme authority does not determine the blueprint for man, but each man makes his own blueprint.

Sartre's writings on existentialism attempted to help people understand their obligations to face up to their freedom from a "higher power" (Cunningham 434). If there is no God, Sartre said, then there is no infinite and perfect consciousness. There are no absolutes of right and wrong that govern man's existence (Feinberg 432). Sartre postulated that because there are no absolutes, each individual man decides what is right and wrong for himself.

Living in a world without absolutes would encourage anarchy, and the thinkers who espoused existentialism did not want that to happen. Instead, they sought to help people understand the kinds of ethics available to people in this new uncertain world. As Albert Camus, a French novelist, demonstrated in his stories, man becomes a hero when he fights the ultimate absurdity of the world with lucidity and dedication, and without illusions (Cunningham 434). Camus showed that virtue comes in man's dignified acceptance of the world's absurdity, knowing he will not attain permanent ends (Collins 227). Existentialism claims that man must be ethical not because he hopes to gain any reward in an afterlife, but because it will increase his "essence" of being a man.

Existentialism appeals to people because it seeks to marry thought and action (Cunningham 434). Sartre actually states that "There is no reality except in action" (Feinberg 437). Existentialism also appeals to people because of its analysis of modern anxiety (Cunningham 434). Instead of relying on centuries-old rigid concepts of good and evil, existentialism attempts to explain the problems facing the individual modern man. The willingness of existential writers and philosophers to express their views in the media of print and film also appeals to people, as the message of the philosophy is disseminated in a modern format (434).

The importance of existentialism lies in its capacity for formulating modern ideas (Cunningham 434). Some of these ideas include the search for meaning in the absence of

religious faith, the belief in the dignity of the individual, and the concern with human subjectivity (434). In these aspects, existentialism is a form of humanism, as it concentrates on man's ideas, beliefs, actions, and feelings.

Among the novelists who continued the expansion of existential themes was Franz Kafka. He was born into a Jewish family in Prague, Czechoslovakia, in 1883. Kafka earned a doctorate in law and also attended a technical institute in Prague. He then worked as an intern in the law courts, and subsequently as a staff member for an insurance company. He became a specialist in work-place safety and an accident prevention in the government's Workers' Accident Insurance Institute, and also, during that time, he worked at the Prague Asbestos Works factory ("Kafka" pars 24 and 30). Kafka became increasingly ill from 1912 on, and he finally died of tuberculosis of the larynx in 1924.

Between his duties at these various jobs, Kafka found time to write numerous short stories, some novels, an extensive diaries. Some of these include "The Hunger Artist," "The Judgment," "The Metamorphosis," *Amerika*, *The Trial*, and *The Castle*. Some of these stories lack organization and endings, and they were arranged and published after Kafka's death by his friend, Max Brod ("Kafka" par 65). These posthumous volumes, when combined with Kafka's previous publications, established him as one of the twentieth century's major literary figures. He is, as some claim, the writer who captures in words the essence of twentieth-century experience, angst, and life (Foulkes par 1). As Ernest Pawe writes, Kafka articulates the "anguish of being human" (qtd in "Kafka" par 8).

In Kafka's life, we see some of the struggles that existentialism seeks to explain. He was alienated from both the language and the religion of his birthplace; he was a German-speaking Jew in the Czech-speaking Orthodox city of Prague. Anti-Semitism was rampant in Eastern Europe at that time, and most Jews, including Kafka's parents, were forced by economic and social disadvantages to live in "ghettos" ("Kafka" par 9). This traumatic beginning contributed to Kafka's pervasive feeling of alienation.

Besides feeling alienated from the outside world, Kafka was oppressed by an overbearing father. His father was loud and impatient and had no sympathy for the young Kafka's sensitive nature ("Kafka" par 10). Kafka wrote later of an incident that occurred in early childhood that remained vivid in his memory. He recalled crying from being for a

rink of water, whereupon his father drove him to a balcony and locked him out of the house. In "Letter to His Father," Kafka wrote,

For years thereafter, I kept being haunted by fantasies of this giant of a man, my father, the ultimate judge, coming over me in the middle of the night, and for almost no reason at all dragging me out of bed onto the balcony—in other words, that as far as he was concerned, I was an absolute Nothing. (qtd in "Kafka" par 10)

This sense of oppression continued throughout Kafka's life, as his father constantly demanded more involvement from Kafka in various family businesses, considering his son's interest in writing to be a wasted life ("Kafka" par 20).

In addition to alienation and oppression (and perhaps because of them), Kafka also suffered from various types of fear. As a child, he developed a fear of his own perceived inferiority, and his schoolwork suffered greatly ("Kafka" par 12). As an adult, he was involved in various relationships and was actually engaged more than once, but he never married. He seemed to have a fear of marriage, or as he claimed to his friend Max Brod, he was unsuited for marriage because he was incapable of love ("Kafka" par 50). Obstacles in the way of his relationships continually thwarted him, and he was never able to overcome them. This contributed to his lifetime of fear incapacitating and eventually ruining the

In keeping with the themes of alienation, oppression, and fear, a pattern can be seen in Kafka's presentation of his stories. They are not like most other stories. Clemens Heseler, a German literary critic, characterizes them as *Antimärchen*, or "anti-fairy tales" (qtd in Szanto 18). Critic George Szanto relates other critics' assertion that Kafka's stories have a recurrent theme: "the unsuccessful arrival or the failure to reach the goal" (18). This leads "to a condition of alienation" (18). Szanto recognizes five stages that lead to this point: an awakening, a feeling of disconnection, a new role as an outsider, a need to justify oneself, and a realization that it is too late to act. The protagonist in a Kafka story is able to sense that he is disconnected, but he cannot determine why, and he cannot rectify it. By the end of the story, the protagonist is made aware that he is responsible for his situation, even if he does not know *why* he is responsible (21). Kafka places a great emphasis on man being responsible for acts *omitted*, not *committed* (22). By the end of the story, Kafka's characters realize that "self-



assertion is no longer possible; the only remaining realization is that everything has come to an end" (Kaufman 67).

Among Kafka's writings are three very short stories, or actually parables, called "Couriers," "Before the Law," and "An Imperial Message." They are part of the texts of two of Kafka's longer stories or novels, but they have been published as independent works in collections of Kafka's short fiction. These three parables deal with existential themes from Kafka's perspective of alienation, oppression, and fear.

"Couriers" is a very short parable (four sentences long) that describes "people offered a choice between becoming kings or the couriers of kings" (Kaufman 151). They all choose to become couriers, and now they hurry about shouting messages to each other. However, because there are no kings to give authority to the message, the messages are meaningless. The couriers would like to end this pointless exchange of message, but they are not because of their oaths of service (Kaufman 151).

This first problem we see is that the couriers have oath of service to nonexistent kings (Kaufman 151). There are no kings, so why do they think they must continue to serve? Lives a courier is all they know, and as David Grossvogel explains in "Structure as Mytery," they "can only do what an angel has always done before the presence of the unknown: fasten on the presence of the known" (108).

Kafka is making a statement here about the courier's mental constraints. Their blind belief in an authority they do not know has led to their meaningless lives (Kaufman 151). This relates to the existential theme articulated by Sartre that man must constantly seek "outside himself" for fulfillment, and must continually "make" himself a man (Feinberg 433). He cannot allow duty, religion, or anything else to bind him in and keep him from building his "essence" as a man.

"Before the Law" is a parable in Kafka's novel *The Trial*. *The Trial* is the story of Josef K., a minor bank official who is arrested, interrogated, and condemned for an unspecified crime. His futile efforts to find out the nature of the charges against him and to deal reasonably with the authorities take on the grotesque qualities of a nightmare. Josef K. protests his innocence throughout the story, but he is never able to find out what he is accused of. Within the story, a prison chaplain tries to inspire upon Josef K. the need to stop procuring his innocence and start examining

his guilt. He does this by telling a parable called "Before the Law."

In this parable, a man arrives at the door to the Law, seeking entrance. The door is open, but the doorkeeper informs the man he cannot enter at this time. The doorkeeper also tells the man that he is free to try to enter, but that there are other doorkeepers inside who are so terrible a man cannot bear to view them. The man, upon hearing this news, sits down to wait to be admitted to the Law. He remains there his whole life, at one point bribing the doorkeeper (to no effect), and eventually pleading with the flea on the doorkeeper's collar to intercede for him. At last he dies, but he manages to ask the doorkeeper why no one else but himself had come seeking entrance to the Law these many years. The doorkeeper replied that this door to the Law was meant for only him, and he was the only one who could have entered by it (Kaufman 145-151).

In the novel, after the parable is told by the chaplain, Josef K. is eventually beaten by the doorkeeper, saying he issued the man by refusing entrance to a door that was meant specifically for the man's entrance (Kaufman 146). Kafka, however, through the voice of the chaplain, makes some very interesting points.

The chaplain points out that the doorkeeper does not block the entrance to the Law, he merely discourages entry (Kaufman 148). In actuality, it is not the doorkeeper who keeps the man from entering into the Law, it is the man's own fear of the doorkeeper. Jürgen Born, in his "Reflections Toward a Positive Interpretation," claims that the fearfulness of the one seeking entry gives the doorkeeper his power (Collins and McRobbie 162). Entry to the door of Law is not denied, only discouraged, and the man decides on his own to wait, rather than—what? He surrenders his first belief that he must gain entrance to the Law, and Born sees this as the impetus to the man's ruin (Collins and McRobbie 158).

Born continues, "His [the doorkeeper's] power (or lack of it) depends totally on the inner stance of the one desiring admittance" (Collins and McRobbie 158). Born goes a step farther in claiming that "Those entitled to admittance establish their right by proceeding through the door despite the doorkeeper's warning" (159). The man's decision to enter or not enter pronounces his own verdict. The doorkeeper cannot keep the man from entering, only the man's personal fear and doubt can (159).

Ingelborg Henel in "The Legend of the Doorkeeper and its Significance for Kafka's *Metamorphosis*" equates the unquestioning acceptance of authority, represented by the doorkeeper, with "false wisdom" (Rolleston 41). She claims that the man's obedience to the external law of the doorkeeper prevents his entrance into the "true law" he seeks (41). She points out that Kafka himself in his *Diaries I* writes that people "see fully in every motion that strives straight ahead and makes itself forget everything else," but the real fully "is to stand like a beggar before the threshold, to oneself before the entrance, to rot and collapse" (quoted in Rolleston 41).

Almost all critics of this parable agree that the man's inability to act proves he is not worthy to enter. James Rolleston claims that "the man should pass through the door to the law, not in hope of salvation, but because it is the only genuinely human possibility" (2). Walter Emrich announces that the true strength of man is "possible, that is to say, when man inquires into the extermination of his own existence instead of staring, as if hypnotized, by the menacing 'power' and superiority of the world" (329).

The saddest part of the parable is that the man has deluded himself into thinking that he cannot act to enter the world to the Law. Ingelborg Henel asserts that the man takes "the form of a beggar who has no life but decay" (Rolleston 41). Fear has paralyzed, degraded, and humiliated him, and his submission to the doorkeeper's prohibition causes him to miss the meaning of his life (41).

Ingelborg Henel says that the man in "Before the Law" eludes himself for two reasons. First, because he finds it is easy to blame the situation he is in for his inability to enter the door to the Law. In the doorkeeper's prohibition to enter, the man finds an excuse for failing to attain his goal, and he does not realize that his goal "is attained not through following procedures, but by staking a life, in defiance of all circumstances and of one's own inner weakness" (Rolleston 48). Henel echoes Sartre when she states that man, being free, bears the full responsibility for his actions and cannot blame the situation (43).

Second, he eludes himself because he has a fear of accepting responsibility for his actions. Henel points out that the man resorts to accusing others in an attempt to cover up his own guilt (Rolleston 49). She makes an excellent point when she explains:

Between the perfection of understanding on the one side and the lack of strength on the other, man finds himself in

such a desperate situation that he tries, since he cannot increase his strength, to reduce and obscure his understanding. The obscuring of the understanding is advanced by man's attempts to shift the responsibility of his actions from himself to his circumstances, to his fellow man, and to the world in general (47).

She goes on to say that "man seeks to evade the torment of his conscience by projecting his own sinfulness into the external world and representing it as evil and hostile" (47). It is easy to blame the world for our troubles when we have convinced ourselves that the world is evil and is out to get us.

Kafka is making a statement here about each man being responsible for his own actions, and not allowing fear to paralyze him. The "free man" in Kafka's parable allows fear to rob him of the capacity for action. He becomes exactly like the woman later on in *Metamorphosis*, who responds to Josef K.'s cry of "And don't you want to be free?" by screaming "No, no, no, not that at all, above all, not that! What can you be thinking of? That would be the ruin of me!" (quoted in Rolleston 38). This is a direct echo of the existential theme characterized by Jean-Paul Sartre's two statements, "People are condemned to be free" (Cunningham 434) and "There is no reality except in action" (Feinberg 437).

"An Imperial Message" is a parable contained in the text of an unfinished story called "The Great Wall of China." In the parable, a messenger is dispatched from the ying Emperor with a message for you alone. The messenger fights his way out of the crowded court, then through the innermost halls of the palace. If he could somehow push his way through the innumerable rooms of the palace, then he would have to fight his way through the crowded streets around the palace. The messenger will never be able to reach you, who live on the outskirts of the city, because there are far too many streets and people between him and you (Rolleston 2). As Kafka put it, the messenger cannot hope to make his way through "the center of the world, crammed to bursting with its own refuse" (quoted in Kaufman 124). You wait, unaware that the Emperor seeks to recognize you. This picture shows that you are alienated, without hope for a better future. Even the messenger is hopeless and unable to reach his goal. The question the parable asks is "Should the messenger persist in his hopeless mission?"

The last sentence of the parable provides a startling twist, however, as it relates how "you sit at your window when

evening falls and dream it to yourself" (Kaufman 145). Your mind has created a thought as important as a message from any Emperor. As Roy Pascal interprets it in "Kafka's Parables," this ending means you are on equal footing with the supreme authority of the world (119). Kafka is making a statement here about the power of man's mind, dreams, and actions. This parable reflects the existential view that there is no "higher power," no Emperor, and that you do not need a message from some supreme authority to be a worthwhile person. Like Sartre claims, you think yourself into existence; you create your own worth (Pascal 119). Pascal concludes that "An Imperial Message" shows that "it is the creative dream of mankind," not recognition by a supernatural power, "that has enabled man to think and act beyond his definable scope and his tangible needs" (119). This seems like a ray of hope, but the parable ends, and we are left to wonder if this might anticipate the overwhelming alienation and aloneness.

Kafka's three parables are littered with a sense of frustration, undefined fear, and guilt (Bloom, endnote 6). These truly are "anti-fairy tales" (Szanto 18). Kafka himself, when asked by a friend if there was hope in the cosmos, declared "Plenty of hope—for God—no end to hope—only not for us" (qtd in Bloom 1). This bleak view is reflected in his life and writings and is influenced by the alienation and aloneness that existentialism seeks to understand. Existentialism proclaims that man can "make" himself better through his actions; Kafka's parables demonstrate how men succumb to alienation, oppression, and fear, thus crippling their ability to act.

#### Works Cited

- Bloom, Harold, ed. *Modern Critical Interpretations: Franz Kafka's The Trial*. New York: Chelsea House, 1987.
- Born, Jürgen. "Reflections Toward a Positive Interpretation." *New Views of Franz Kafka*. Eds. R.G. Collins and Kenneth McRobbie. University of Manitoba, 1970.
- Collins, James. *The Existentials*. Chicago: Regentry, 1968.
- Cunningham, Lawrence, and John Reich. *Culture and Values: A Survey of the Western Humanities*. Vol. 2. 4th ed. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace, 1998.
- Emrich, Walter. *Franz Kafka: A Critical Study of His Writings*. Trans. Sheema Zaben Buehne. New York: Ungar, 1968.
- Feinberg, Joe, Ed. *Reason and Responsibility: Reading on Some Basic Problems of Philosophy*. 5th ed. Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 1981.
- Foulkes, A.P. "Franz Kafka: Overview." *Reference Guide to World Literature*. 2nd ed. (1995). 5 pars. Gale Group. 18 Oct. 2001. <wysing://48http://www.galanet.co>
- "Franz Kafka". *Contemporary Authors Online*. (1999). 67 pars. Gale Group. 18 Oct. 2001. <wysing://42http://www.galanet.co>
- Grossvogel, David. "Stultice as Mystery." *Modern Critical Interpretations: Franz Kafka's The Trial*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House, 1987.
- Kaufman, Walter. *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*. Cleveland: World, 1965.
- Pascal, Roy. "Kafka's Parables." *The World of Franz Kafka*. Ed. J.P. Stern. New York: Holt, 1980.
- Rolleston, James, Ed. *Twentieth Century Interpretations of The Trial: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1976.
- Szanto, George H. *Narrative Consciousness: Structure and Perception*. Austin, Tex: University of Texas, 1972.

---

Evaluation: This is a sensitive and clear discussion of an often obscure writer. This paper helps us understand three Kafka parables in the context of a major intellectual movement of the twentieth century.



---

# Words Do Hurt the Body

Michele Veverka

Course: English 100 (Composition)

Instructor: Kri Piepenburg

---

## Assignment:

*Identify an area or behavioral pattern of your life that has caused you difficulty for some time—or a long struggle that you have been involved in, and that you have overcome (or are in the process of overcoming). Write an essay that “tracks” the development of the struggle from its beginning.*

“Ms. Piggy, M . Piggy.”

These are the words that enter my head when I think back to my middle school years. Why? I remember myself thinking, I did not think I was fat, but I must not be seeing what everyone else is seeing. I felt I was an average girl in middle school. At that time I was in size five jeans, which I thought was normal. So why was I the one getting picked on? I remember the feeling of my heart dropping to the pit of my stomach when I would walk into the school doors, for I knew what my day would consist of. I can picture myself walking down what seemed to be the longest hall in the world. A minute seemed to take a long and an hour to go by. I would hear the same words over and over.

“Ms. Piggy, here come M . Piggy.”

My anger started to grow by the days. Any day would not pass that I was not in the blue and white bathroom at school, crying my eye out, wondering what I could do to make myself smaller. What would make these words, which hurt more than a sharp knife being jabbed into my gut, go away?

One night after trying to convince my mom to let me go to school the next day, I was lying in my bedroom crying, when I noticed a special on television about anorexia and bulimia. I couldn't help but to think, this might be my answer. I knew that I would never be able to get away with not eating, considering I was from a family that ate together every day, so I decided to make myself vomit after every meal. I knew this was my breakthrough; this was my way to get away from all the horrible pain that I was going through every day.

The next day I managed to leave the house without breakfast. On my way to school, I stopped at the grocery store on the corner of my street. I took out my last three dollars and purchased a little purple toothbrush and travel-sized Crest toothpaste. I knew I had to cover up the vomit smell in some way, and it gave me an excuse to use the restroom after lunch.

I walked into school that day, more confident of myself than I have been for a long time. I got through my morning classes with such excitement for lunch. I am not sure why I was so excited; was it that I was asking myself vomit or that I would soon be smaller? Lunch came and I ate the small hamburger, potato tots, and peaches. I was given juice because of my allergic reactions to milk. That day I wished I had milk, for the reason that I would have been able to vomit a lot easier. After eating my lunch in record time, I grabbed my toothbrush and toothpaste and asked the lunch lady if I could use the restroom. She handed me the pass, and I was on my way. I slowly walked to the bathroom while thousands of thoughts rushed through my head: What if it won't come up? What if someone walks in? What if someone questions me? Oh well, I was willing to take the risk. I walked into the blue and white bathroom, into the last stall and knelt down. I then slowly glided my finger down my throat until I could feel my tonsils; I gagged a few times, but nothing came up. I then repeated the same procedure, except this time, I played with my tonsil a couple of times, until I succeeded in my goal. I did it a couple more times until I felt that there was nothing else in my stomach. I then flushed the toilet, picked up my purple toothbrush and brushed my teeth, making sure that there was no trace of vomit. I walked out the door and returned to the cafeteria as normal.

---



This process continued this way, after each meal, for weeks. Nobody ever caught on. I was down to a size three before I even knew it, but nothing stopped at school. I was still Ms. Piggy to everyone, and I was not sure what to do. I figure I was just still too big, and I continued doing this to myself. As time went by, I notice that I did not have to put any effort into making myself throw up anymore. I would now simply ben over after I would eat, and it was out. My family eventually started questioning why I was so small; no one understood why I was losing weight instead of gaining, when at my age it was more common for someone to gain it. No one ever thought that I was bulimic, until I went to the dentist; he pulled my aunt to the side to ask her if I vomited a lot. She responded, "The only time my niece ever vomits is when she drinks milk, why?"

He then told her that he suspected a problem with bulimia, because I had a discoloration on the inside of my teeth. I was completely nervous; I knew what they were talking about. I examined the holes in the grid-like ceiling, trying to keep my mind off of what was going to happen next. My aunt then took me to the emergency room, to which I was admitted almost instantly. In a matter of minutes I had IV's in my arms, blood drawn, and food shoved down my throat. There were any different people in the room: the doctor, a psychiatrist, dietitian, my aunt, and the nurse. Many questions were being asked at once, and my mind felt like a tornado; I was unable to think fast enough to answer the questions. The food I was given to eat did not take but ten minutes until it was all over my bed, because I was unable to use the washroom by myself. I was then given special medicine in the form of an IV, which gave me the nutrition that food and vitamins would. It was a matter of two days until I was able to keep my food down. A psychiatrist was coming to speak to me daily about my problem and my self-esteem issues. After a week and a half in the hospital, I was released and instructed to attend counseling meetings twice a week. Once a week, I saw a counselor one on one, and the other session was with a group of teenage girls, who struggled with the same problem. I developed a fear of specific foods, especially food with oil, grease, and anything that would put fat into my body. Three days after I was released, I went back to

school, with so much fear. Thoughts rushed through my head: What if everyone knows? What if it continues? What if I am escorted to the washroom every time I have to go? I wondered what kinds of questions people would ask me. In some strange way I think I was prepared to answer those questions. I had a hope inside me that some miracle would happen and everyone would just forget my so-called nickname, but they didn't. When I walked in the doors, the first thing I heard was,

"Ms. Piggy has returned."

For some reason it did not hurt as much. I was calm, and I acted as if I hadn't heard it. That day was a lot easier for me than I imagined. I made sure that I did not ask to go to the restroom after lunch, because I knew that I would have an escort. I was asked questions, and to my friends, I answered truthfully; to others, I answered, "Some place you were not." I finished up junior high, and I was lucky enough that my family loved me, so I was able to escape my nickname. My first day of high school, I made more friends than I thought I would. I was now a social butterfly, involved in many activities. I was part of band, ROTC, dance, and gymnastics. I enjoyed every aspect of high school.

I am now a freshman in college, and I don't even like to think back to this time in my life. I am not afraid of food; there are even times that my best friend Lill and I will go out to eat and pig out on all the greasy food. My favorite foods are now hot dogs, French fries, and ice cream. I am not going to say that all my self-esteem issues have subsided, because they have not. I still become depressed because of my weight, and I feel that I am ugly, but I have had great support from my boyfriend, and from Lill. When I started college, I gained ten pounds, which put a real strain on me, but I know that there is no way I will ever put myself, physically or mentally, through what I did before. There are better solutions to recovering from problems like these.

---

Evaluation: *In reviewing this period of her life, Michele writes a tale that cannot fail to move a reader.*

# Hamlet's Utilitarian Calculation

Amy Winter

Courses: English 102 (Composition) and  
Philosophy 115 (Ethics)

Instructors: Andrew Wilson and Barbara Solheim

Assignment:

*Write a research paper applying a philosophical theory  
we've studied to a work of literature we've read.*

One of the most influential British philosophers of a time was a man by the name of John Stuart Mill. Mill was a utilitarian who lived from 1806 to 1873. He introduced what is known as the Greatest Happiness Principle, which is otherwise known as the Principle of Utility. The Greatest Happiness Principle (GHP) "holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness" (Mill 36). In simpler terms, this means that any action that produces happiness would be considered correct or good; likewise, any action that produces the reverse of happiness (sadness, maybe) would not be correct or good.

The GHP is concerned with the overall happiness of a group of people. This means that everyone's interests are equally important when concerning a matter; a person's own interests are important as well. This would make utilitarianism an impartial moral theory, which means that any one individual does not get to favor his or her own interests over the interests of the group. Mill says that the happiness, or interest, of every individual should be placed "as nearly as possible in harmony with the interest of the whole" (39).

The GHP can be applied by using what is called the utilitarian calculation. The utilitarian calculation can help to solve moral dilemmas or problems by taking into account all people who would be affected by the problem. In fact, it helped solve one man's burning question of whether or not he should kill his uncle. That troubled young man is the one and only Prince Hamlet, from the famous Shakespeare play, *Hamlet*. The following passage is an excerpt from the Prince's own journal and is a great example of how the utilitarian calculation actually works. Hamlet wrote:

\*\*\*\*\*

It was about several months back that I, Prince Hamlet, saw a play which seemed quite remarkable to me. The player, a man much like myself, had a problem that was troubling him very deeply. His problem was that he did not know if he should or should not commit a adultery with his brother's wife. As absurd as his problem was, he did come up with a unique way of solving it; this happened to be the most remarkable part of the play. The player solved his problem by using what is called the utilitarian calculation. The utilitarian calculation was devised (or will be, according to Professor Jeremiah at Wittenburg, one of my Philosophy teachers who possesses the power to see clearly into the future) by a man by the name of John Stuart Mill, and it involves three steps. The three steps include to first make a list of people who are likely to be affected by your proposed action, then assign (as objectively as possible) likely utility or disutility results for each person, and lastly, run a total of the utility and disutility results. If the results of the total show more utility than disutility, the proposed action should be carried out. On the other hand, if the results show more disutility than utility, the proposed action should not be carried out. I have to say that I was absolutely astonished by this unique and clever way of solving moral problems. Therefore, I have since planned to solve all of my own moral problems with the use of the utilitarian calculation as well.

It was just last night that I encountered what I believed to be the ghost of my dear father. During this strange and unusual visit, the ghost relayed a most disturbing message to me. From this message, it seems that my father did not die by the poison of a serpent after all. Instead, he was murdered by his own brother Claudius!

The ghost, who is quite possibly my father's spirit, told me to "revenge his foul and most unnatural murder" (1.5.25). Although I would like to do just that, I do not know for sure that this ghost really is the spirit of my father. According to Professor Jeremiah, a future critic by the name of George Santayana believes that "In the Ghost's presence...[I]...[am] overcome with feeling, in its absence with doubts" (129). Therefore, I do not know if I should kill my uncle or not. Since I am having trouble with my decisions, I am going to rely on Mill's utilitarian calculation for help. By applying the calculation to this most horrifying situation, I will hopefully be able to decide whether or not I should kill King Claudius. I plan to assign likely utility and disutility totals for the people who would most likely be affected by his death. These people include myself, King Claudius, Queen Gertrude, the ghost, Polonius, Ophelia, Fortinbras, and the people of Denmark.

I will start my calculation with no other than myself. For the purposes of my calculation, I have decided to assume that the ghost is, in fact, telling me the truth. With this in mind, my uncle apparently killed his brother (my father) in order to become king and is now sleeping with his brother's wife, who is my mother! Of course it would please me very much to see him dead! However, the act of murder is a very serious crime. Although it would bring me great joy to avenge my father's death, I do not know if I could go on to live a happy life knowing that I killed a man. What would happen to my mother? How would she feel? What would other people think of me if they didn't know the real truth or reasons behind my murderous actions? On the other hand, if I chose not to kill Claudius, what would my father think of me if I did not avenge his death? Why, I wouldn't be much of a son, would I? I also wouldn't be much of a man! Therefore, on a utility (happiness) scale of 0 to 1000, I rate myself a 500. I cannot assign myself more than 500 because of my troubled conscience. However, I cannot give myself anything less because of the happiness that my uncle's death will bring me.

The next person I will calculate like my utility or disutility for is the proposed victim of my murderous plot, King Claudius. Certainly he would produce the greatest amount of disutility, or unhappiness, for the simple fact that he would be dead. I know that I would express great

unhappiness to be killed myself! Claudius' disutility would then produce a negative number. Since I have proposed a scale of 0 to 1000 for utility, I will likewise propose a scale of 0 to -1000 for disutility. Therefore, Claudius would have a disutility of -1000. I would not expect anything less than that.

Continuing on with my utilitarian calculation, I will next assign appropriate utility or disutility to my mother, Queen Gertrude. It seems to me that she will have the next highest amount of disutility, just below Claudius. Certainly she will be unhappy if her husband is murdered, especially if she were to find out that it is her own son who is the murderer. However, her disutility might not be as high as one would think it should be. After all, she did seem to get over the passing of her first husband rather quickly. My poor father has been dead for only two months and, in this time, my mother has a ready gotten remarried to her dead husband's brother and gone to bed with him! And just yesterday, when my mother saw that I, unlike her, am still in mourning over the loss of my father, she told me this:

Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted color off,  
And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.  
Do not forever with thy veiled lids  
Seek for thy noble father in the dust.  
Thou know'st 'tis common, all that lives must die,  
Passing through nature to eternity. (1.2.68-73)

Professor Jeremiah told me that critic Carolyn Heilbrunn simplifies my mother's words (above) in her own belief that "She [Gertrude] is, in short, asking him [me] not to give way to the passion of grief..." (146). Obviously, my mother will be unhappy to so agree if her husband is murdered by her own son. However, since she seems to get over death rather quickly, I am not going to assign her a great amount of disutility. I would think about a -700 should be appropriate. Queen Gertrude may overcome Claudius' passing quickly, judging by past experience, but it might take her longer to overcome the fact that I, her son, am the killer.

The fourth person I will include in my calculation is not actually a person at all; rather, it is a spirit, or the ghost itself. One can only assume that since it was the ghost who had told me to kill Claudius in the first place, that the act of murder, if carried out, will bring it nothing but utility. After all, not only will I have listened to it



and trusted what it was said to be true, but I will have obeyed it and carried out its will. Therefore, I will assign the greatest utility of 1000. No one could be happier than it about the death of King Claudius, especially if it really is the spirit of my father. In the case that it is, I will be proud to have adequately fathered my offspring.

My utilitarian calculation continues with the father of my beloved Ophelia, Polonius. Polonius, the fool, is the councillor to the king. Of course Claudius' death would cause him disutility, because he would then be out of a job. Polonius is a man who takes his job very seriously; he treasures it dearly. In fact, I happened to overhear him tell the king these very words: "I would give as much as I would give you, / Both to you Go and to you gracious king" (2.2.44-45). It is uncertain exactly how much disutility the king's death will actually cause him; I would think that his disutility should not be greater than that of my mother's (-700). Therefore, I will estimate his disutility to be at a -500. If I am wrong and his disutility is in fact greater than that, maybe I will consider him to be my councillor if I become king one day. It will be hard not to take pity on the fool!

The sixth person I will consider to be affected by the murder of the king is my dear sweet Ophelia. Although Claudius' death itself would not affect her greatly, the fact that I am the killer certainly should. Another future critic, named Theodore Lutz, believes, "It is not... surprising that a driven girl [Ophelia] mad but, rather, ... murdered by Hamlet [myself], the person she loved upon whose love she has placed her hopes" (157). Also, Ophelia loves her father very much, and I assume that if she is unhappy, then she will be a wreck. I know Ophelia loves and respects her father because "... [she] is repeatedly... [my] letters and... [my] access to... [her]" (2.2.111-112) only because her father wished her to do so. In fact, "Her passion was approved and directed by her father..." (Drake 73). Regardless, I know Ophelia till love me, and the fact that this murder will cause some amount of unhappiness, a well as a late possible chance to become king myself, might not make her unhappy after all. Therefore, I will assign Ophelia a low disutility of a -200. I do not fear that she will be greatly affected by the possible murder of Claudius, seeing that she is of no relation to her.

Let me continue my calculation with one individual who will surely express utility to someone else over the death of King Claudius: Fortinbras. Fortinbras, the Prince of Norway, was apparently upset by the loss of the Norwegian land to Denmark and was planning an attack against us. When Claudius found out about the plot, he quickly put an end to it by writing a letter to Fortinbras' uncle. Apparently, his uncle did not know of his nephew's intentions and, upon finding out, put a quick stop to all plans of attack against Denmark. Therefore, I would think that if Fortinbras were to find out that Claudius, the very person who outsmarted his plans, were murdered, he would be elated. Also, if Claudius were murdered, there would be a temporary lack of a king, which would make Denmark a bit more vulnerable to any plans of attack. I would think Fortinbras would certainly be glad about that! With this in mind, I will assign the Prince of Norway a utility amount of 500. I would not think his utility would be any greater than his own!

Lastly, I do not think it would be appropriate to exclude all of the people of Denmark from my calculation, considering the fact that I might very well end up murdering their king. The people of Denmark recently lost their previous king, my father, unexpectedly. They would not definitely be upset at yet another loss of a king, especially soon after the passing of the father. Like the rest of the people included in my calculation, the citizens of Denmark do not know the true Claudius, the murderous beast of a man! In fact, Professor Jeremiah told me that future critic Bentham Joseph had this to say about Claudius: "To look at him no one would imagine the foul crimes of which he is guilty, the murder of a brother, the filthy, animal sin of incest" (140). Therefore, the people of Denmark have no reason not to like their current king since he appears to be such a great man and ruler. They do not know that "Claudius is not a mixture of good and bad, he is an evil man who seems good" (Joseph 141). I have no choice but to assign a large amount of utility to the citizens of Denmark. I would think an amount of -800 would be appropriate.

To conclude my utilitarian calculation, I will now run a total of all the assigned utilities and his utilities to see if, I, Hamlet, should avenge my father's death by killing



King Claudius. There happened to be only three individuals, myself, the ghost, and Fortinbras, who expressed utility towards the possible murder of the king. Together, our three totals add up to a total of 2000 for utility (500 + 1000 + 500). The five remaining people, including Claudius, Gertrude, Polonius, Ophelia, and citizens of Denmark, all express disutility to some degree about the idea of the murder of King Claudius. Claudius' -1000, Gertrude's -700, Polonius' -500, Ophelia's -200, and Denmark's -800 add up to a total of -3200 for disutility. Since there is a greater amount of disutility (-3200) than utility (2000), the act of murder upon Claudius by myself should not be carried out. Unfortunately, Mill's utilitarian calculation did not work out in my favor. However, I told myself that I would solve my moral problems in this manner and that is exactly what I did; I solved my problem. I will not avenge my father's death by murdering the current king. Hopefully, I will find another way to honor my father's death.

\*\*\*\*\*

Did the utilitarian calculation work for Hamlet? The answer is...apparently not. Although Hamlet was able to answer his moral problem of whether or not he should kill King Claudius, his answer to the question and what he actually does do not match up. The utilitarian calculation, which Hamlet uses to answer his question, suggests that Hamlet should not kill his uncle. This is because the death of the king would upset more people (cause a greater amount of disutility than it would make people happy). However, at the end of the play, Hamlet does end up killing the king after all! This evidence suggests that the utilitarian calculation did not work at all! If the utilitarian calculation did not work, then what can be said about the GH Principle? The GHP is supposed to take into account the overall happiness of a group of people. If the calculation, which measures the happiness (utility) and unhappiness (disutility) of the group of people does not work, then the GHP is apparently not a good moral theory. Therefore, as it turns out, everyone's individual interests would then be more important than their interests as a group combined.

I believe the objection raised in the previous paragraph, that the utilitarian calculation does not work,

poses a serious threat to the GHP. Since Hamlet ends up killing the king even after discovering that he shouldn't, he apparently finds his own interests to be more important than the interest of the entire group of people who would be affected by Claudius' death. This would suggest that Hamlet is ultimately a selfish or self-centered person. Therefore, if at anytime a selfish or self-centered person has a moral dilemma, he or she will most likely act upon his or her own interest before that of the group's, regardless of whether or not the utilitarian calculation was used. I do believe, and have always believed, that the GHP is one of the greatest moral theories. However, the idea of it actually ever working is a little unbelievable, especially now in this day and age. I believe the example I have presented with the character Hamlet, from the play *Hamlet*, is enough proof that the utilitarian calculation, along with the GHP, may need some fine tuning before it will ever actually work.

#### Works Cited

- Drake, James. *The Antient and Modern Stages Survey'd. Shakespearean Criticism*. Ed. Laurie Lanzen Harris. Vol. 1. Detroit: Gale Research, Inc., 1984. 73-74.
- Heilbrun, Carolyn. "The Character of Hamlet's Mother." *Shakespeare for Students*. Ed. Mark W. Scott. Vol. 1. Detroit: Gale Research, Inc., 1992. 145-149.
- Joseph, Bertram. "The King, the King's to B come." *Shakespeare for Students*. Ed. Mark W. Scott. Vol. 1. Detroit: Gale Research, Inc., 1992. 138-145.
- Lidz, Theodore. "Hamlet's Enemy: Madness and Myth in *Hamlet*." *Shakespeare for Students*. Ed. Mark W. Scott. Vol. 1. Detroit: Gale Research, Inc., 1992. 156-158.
- Mill, John Stuart. *Utilitarianism. Contemporary Moral Problems*. Ed. James E. White. 6th ed. Belmont, Calif: Wadsworth Publishing, 2000. 36-42.
- Santayana, George. Untitled Article on *Hamlet*. *Shakespearean Criticism*. Ed. Laurie Lanzen Harris. Vol. 1. Detroit: Gale Research, Inc., 1984. 128-130.
- Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet. Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*. Ed. X.J. Kennedy and Dana Gioia. 7th ed. New York: Longman, 1999. 1522-1635.

---

Evaluation: *Hamlet meets John Stuart Mill! What a clash of stars and comets! This is an original piece of writing.*

---

# The Beauty of the Future

---

*Michael Wolff*

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Kri Piepenburg

Assignment:

*Write a research paper on a work of literature,  
incorporating at least seven secondary sources.*

“It was only one splendid breath they had . . . and it was a long game in the end, it seemed, this revolt against the homilies by which the world is run” (Cather 120). This sentence represents a microcosm of the short story “Paul’s Case,” by Willa Cather. In this particular incident, Paul, the title character, is lamenting the fate of some flower he has been drooping in a glass case. David Carpenter suggests that the idea behind this phrase is important because the entire story “succeeds in linking Paul symbolically to flowers—flowers cut from their roots, preserved for a time behind glass against both the cold world and the appearance of their own death” (596). This is true because Paul’s entire existence here on this earth paralleled that of a flower’s: he has always wished to become something more unique and fascinating than the common and ordinary that continually surround him. By the end of his story, Paul realizes that there are severe flaws in his way of thinking, but by that time, it is too late for him: he chooses to commit suicide after a life devoid of true and lasting beauty. Claude J. Summers suggests that “Paul’s failure to analyze his society and to perceive possibilities of accommodations within it are personal (a though understandable) failures that contribute to his tragedy” (111).

“Paul’s Case” is a multifaceted story that appeals to a vast segment of the population in one way or another. The story could be interpreted as a cautionary tale on a wide variety of social and economic fronts. Perhaps “Paul’s Case” is revealing the delicate balance between healthy dreaming and hopelessly fantasizing for a life that simply does not exist. It may also be exposing the fallacy that a change of environment can solve all our existing problems: some problems are internal and cannot be solved by a change in scenery. Furthermore, Claude J. Summers suggests that the story may be illustrating “The inability of conventional society to understand, and to deal humanely with those who are different” (111). Regardless of how the story is analyzed, it is plain to even the most casual reader that Paul was a young man entirely disconnected from the world that surrounded him. This estrangement was due to a variety of factors, each being equally important because of the unique part they played in Paul’s life.

Paul was a young man who felt he had a very clear

understanding of the beauty that this world had to offer. He was fascinated by the sweet strains of music he heard at Carnegie Hall, and he was enchanted by the acting talents of the players at the local theatre. Paul also had a strong appreciation for the beauty of the arts, and he often spent his hours touring the galleries in town. He enjoyed the aesthetic appeal of all these things, and the beauty of the creations became uniquely transposed on him. All of these collective experiences helped to create a young man who was quite impressionable, both on a positive level and a negative one.

Unfortunately, the negative aspects of Paul's life ultimately created a lasting affect on him that was to eventually lead to his demise. The negative aspects of Paul's life were just as powerful and varied as the positive ones, and they taxed Paul throughout each day. These negative aspects included the indifferent teachers at his school, as well as a father who never really showed a true love and passion for his son. Paul also faced more personal concerns such as his resentment towards his home and the town where he lived, and his apparent concern over his homosexuality, which was in direct contrast to the established societal norms. All of these varied influences contributed to a fast and unpredictable way of life for Paul that often resembled a roller-coaster, not only because of the ever-present aspect of uncertainty in his life, but also because of the adding reality of never really knowing what new or dangerous thrill was next, or how his life was destined to turn out in the end.

Paul felt that his formal education at school was a complete waste of time. He was constantly in trouble with his teachers, and they were at a loss at what to do with him. "Disorder and impertinence" were offenses listed by all his teachers as problems, but they were confused about why Paul constantly displayed this type of behavior (102). In fact, his teachers felt "it was scarcely possible to put into words the real cause of the trouble" (102). Claude J. Summers maintains that "The teachers are not unkind by nature, but they lack the imagination to understand sympathetically Paul's temperament" (111). Paul was discontented with his experience at school; he believed that there were other things he could be doing to occupy his time, and that would be much more rewarding. This displeasure was shown in a variety of ways, and

David A. Carpenter contends that this was simply "an illustration of his intense desire to escape his environment and, since essentially he is his environment, to escape himself" (601).

Paul displayed his animosity for his teachers in a variety of ways, but he always made sure to dress and act in a manner that would put his teachers at ease. When Paul entered the school principal's office, facing a possible ban from school, he was "suave and smiling," portraying an attitude of confidence in which "there was something of the dandy about him," and wearing a carnation that completed his picture of arrogance in the eyes of his teachers (102). Loretta Wasserman believes that "The badge of Paul's fidelity to his realm, his talisman, is the carnation he wears in the buttonhole of his shabby coat as he confronts his teachers" (125). Paul had meant to provoke his teachers' ire, as the flower was his way of showing both indifference toward them and independence from their way of thinking. Paul was nonchalant throughout his interview with his teachers, and they believed "his whole attitude was symbolized by his shrug and his flippancy re: carnation flower" (103). At the conclusion of the meeting to discuss his status at school, he gracefully exited the room with a bow that was "a repetition of the scandalous red carnation" (103). Edward W. Pitcher sums up Paul's interaction with his school's environment: "Paul is shown to be in an unhappy relationship with teachers and classmates and, generally, cannot endure the academy without infusing that world with his own sense of color and need for embellishment" (547). Ultimately, his teachers were unable to make any progress in their journey to discover what made Paul tick, but they all agreed that "there [was] something about the fellow" and that "there [was] something sort of haunted" about his continual smile (104). Perhaps if one of his teachers had taken the time to sit down and talk with Paul, his journey through life might have been different, and his destination less frightening.

During his frequent visits to Carnegie Hall, Paul was able to bask in the happiness that was constantly feeding him. Paul truly enjoyed his job as an usher, and the sound of the music helped to drown out his numerous problems. Michael N. Salda suggests that this music was such a powerful force in Paul's life that "During these fantasies,

he loses track of time, place, and self" (114). Although Paul was mentally refreshed during his trips to Carnegie Hall, Paul also managed to be a "model usher" who acknowledged his job as "his greatest pleasure in life" (105). He was well-liked by the people in his section who "thought him a charming boy" who was forever "gracious and smiling as he ran up and down the aisles" (105). This is a dramatic contrast from Paul's appearance at school or at his home. Paul truly was a different person surrounded by the sounds and sights he loved, and the "first sigh of the instruments seemed to free some hilarious and potent spirit within him" (105). Michael N. Salda gives us his insight into this experience and suggests that "For reality he substituted images drawn from the newspapers and the stage, from fairy tales and romance" (114). Whatever technique Paul used to reinvigorate himself to face anew the trials in his life, a truly rhapsodic persona was free each time he listened to the ebb and flow of the resplendent harmonies. Carnegie Hall represented one of the few places of sanctuary where Paul could be at peace with himself and his state in life.

Charley Edwards' dressing room was another place where Paul loved to spend his time. Charley Edwards was one of the young actors who played at various theaters in Paul's hometown. Paul had been spending his time around Charley for over a year, and "he had won a place among Edwards' favorites" (110). Paul's imagination was in overdrive when visiting Charley, for "this was Paul's fairy tale" where he could imagine himself "doing and saying splendid, brilliant, poetic things" (110). During these imaginary journeys, Paul forgot about his involvement in school and his home life, and "all stupid and ugly things slid from him, and his senses were deliciously, yet delicately fired" in a way that Paul had never consciously imagined (111). Loretta Wasserman declares: "The pattern beneath Paul's search can now be discerned—it is the ancient Parsifal tale: the clumsy boy whose mistakes and embarrassments melt away in light of the grandeur and mystery of the ideal served" (127). Instead of having realistic goals in focus, Paul spent his time idly dreaming of childhood fantasies that would never come true because of his obvious lack of real desire to actually work toward fulfilling those dreams. Edward W. Pitcher succinctly sums up this idea: "Paul yearns for freedom from the

labor prescribed while wanting the fruits of the destiny promised" (548).

Paul's father represented a repulsive presence in his son's life: he was a complex puzzle for which Paul could never see to find all the pieces. Paul was clearly intimate with his father, and it is quite possible that Paul's father abused him, either verbally or emotionally. This question is raised after Paul is reluctant to come home after working late at the theatre one night. Paul is apprehensive about a run-in with his father, and a mental picture of his father, "with his hairy legs sticking out from his nightshirt" and "his feet thrust into carpet slippers," is truly disquieting to the boy (107). Loretta Wasserman gives her impression of this thought: "His father in his night clothes stands at the head of the stairs demanding explanations, as threatening death, imaged as suffocation by drowning" (124).

Along with his obvious discomfort over his father's physical presence, Paul was also in opposition to his father's financial views and his thoughts regarding Paul's future endeavors. Paul's father was the strongest authority figure in the boy's life, and he took great pains to express to Paul the value of hard work. Paul's father worked for a railway company, and he "had a worthy ambition to come up in the world" (110). To Paul, his father was "the advocate of the world of Puritan pragmatism and Yankee capitalistic hard work" (Pitcher 547). Paul's father had raised his son on "a highly respectable street" where other "businessmen of moderate means begot and rear large families" and sought to give them the best that this world had to offer (107). Paul's father was extremely proud of his family's dwelling on Cordelia Street, and his only thoughts of his son's future involved him having his own house someday soon. Paul's father gave little thought to his son's individual desires or concerns: he fully expected his son to grow up and become a carbon copy of himself, with similar views and a comfortable financial status. Paul's father did not understand his son, and took no time out of his busy schedule to attempt to do so. Regardless of his own wishes, Paul's father should have spent more time with his son and learned of his son's thoughts and feelings, irrespective of his own. Claude J. Summers suggests that Paul's father "is a concerned, though inept and unimaginative, parent face with a if-



difficult situation, the full extent of which he fails to recognize" (114). Paul's father could have been a shining beacon of light in Paul's life; instead, he became a constant shadow that clouded Paul's mind and generously contributed to Paul's continual pessimistic outlook.

Paul's house on Cordelia Street was an expansion of his father's repressive presence. David A. Carpenter contends that it represented even more than that: "From this street came Paul's motivation; there, in fact, was Paul" (595). Whenever Paul neared his house, "he experienced all the physical oppression which followed a debauch" and wished that he could be anywhere else (107). His room, "the ugly sleeping chamber," was merely an extension of this discomfort (107). Paul hated his tiny upstairs room and wished it would just disappear. He especially disliked "the pictures of George Washington and John Calvin, and the framed motto, 'Feed my Lambs'" (107) that were prominently displayed on his walls. One might wonder why Paul didn't take these items down from off his walls and simply throw them away. It is possible that his father required their presence in his room, and that the punishment for Paul's disobedience of this request would have far exceeded Paul's desire to promote interior redecorating. Claude J. Summers also regards these additions to Paul's room curiously and offers that they "prefigure a sameness to human nature that does not admit difference, and they turn out to be ineffective in helping Paul" (115).

One component of Paul's façade that is often overlooked was his attempt to keep his apparent homosexuality a secret. This aspect of Paul's life would help to explain "his sense of alienation from a society that has only contempt for what it considers effeminacy in a young man" (Rubin 129). Although Catherine does not directly confront the issue of Paul's sexuality, she does drop a number of broad hints throughout the story that, if evaluated cumulatively, point strongly, if not unmistakably, in this direction (Rubin 127). These subtle clues gradually form a growing claim of evidence that point towards Paul's deviation from what would be considered the sexual norm (Rubin 129). The tragic consequences of Paul's conflict with the narrow confines of "normal" society are a warning that should propel each individual to be more considerate of the thoughts and feelings of others, as well as become more tolerant of behavior that might be considered less than typical.

Paul had been searching for something his entire life. He had never been too sure about exactly what he was searching for or about how to obtain it: all he knew was that his life seemed empty and devoid of purpose. Loretta Wasserman gives her interpretation of Paul's search: "The call that Paul heeds, the call to the soul's life, is—not to put too fine a point on it—the call of Beauty. Paul is the most familiar of Romantic figure—the yearner for an ineffable world, beauty in this one a the promise of the truth of the other" (125). Apparently, Paul believed that beauty existed only in the presence of material possessions and a grand style of living. Paul believed that money and a life filled with constant pleasures would be the instant ticket to his dreams. At his age, it was impossible for Paul to earn the vast amount of money he needed for the fulfillment of his wishes, so he took the shortest possible route to this destination. He simply stole it. Loretta Wasserman describes Paul's motivation behind his theft as "the conversion of romantic longing into a devotion to the medium of exchange (of change) itself—currency, the coin of this democratic realm, the glass slipper that can change a cow's ear into a silk purse" (128). Paul had been working for Denny and Caron's for some time when he formulated the scheme behind his theft. As a trusted employee, one of Paul's duties was to take the company's weekly payroll to the bank and make their deposit. One particular Friday, Paul was also required to take the company's ledger in to be balanced, and Paul came to know about the details of the trip ahead of time. Paul asked his boss for the entire weekend off, citing some very plausible explanation, such as some pressing academic concern at his school or a required outing with his family. When Paul took the deposit down to the bank, he neatly pocketed one thousand dollars, knowing that the accompanying ledger would not be returned to his company's office until Monday. Paul used this newly acquired fortune as a springboard into the fantasy world that had always been out there outside his greedy grasp.

Paul boarded the earliest train bound for New York City, "the symbol of ultimate glamour and cosmopolitan sophistication at the time" (Rubin 128). He had dreamed of this place any time, and "had gone over every detail of it" with the slim hopes that some day he might experience its glories. (113) Paul felt no remorse for his theft,

only “a curious sense of relief” at being able to fulfill his wildest fantasies (114). After he arrived in New York, he took great care to select the finest clothing and accessories for his stay, for he wanted to be surrounded by all the finer things that life had to offer. David A. Carpenter suggests that Paul “favors the satisfaction he can draw from appearances whose worth he determines by how well they reflect what he wishes to see of himself and the world” (597). For his fantasy to be complete, he checked into a hotel room at the Waldorf, one of the most prestigious hotels in the city. This is the place where it finally sank in for Paul that his long-awaited dreams had become a reality. This was truly the type of life that he had wished for all his waking hours. To finally be experiencing it was Paul’s version of heaven on earth. Loretta Waerman maintains that his choice of hotels “hint at Paul’s sense of alienation from this world, at his need for refuge, at the security money can buy, at religious apostasy, or paganism: a temple for the sense” (125). Paul, even in his state of euphoria, noticed a lack of flowers in the room, so “he rang for the bell boy and sent him down for flowers” to serve as a constant reminder to him that he was not in Pittsburgh any longer (114). Paul had always felt that his home and his room were not worthy of flowers, but here, in the Waldorf, they seemed to be a necessary part of the landscape. Paul was completely at home in his surroundings, and he had no regrets over his counterfeit happiness. To Paul, “the natural nearly always wore the guise of ugliness...a certain element of artificiality seemed to him necessary in beauty” (111). Paul cared little about how his tranquility was achieved; he was content with his mere existence. Paul was happy because he had finally found his place, and he no longer had to only pay his part (Page 556). Paul was content to bask in the fulfillment of the glory, knowing that he had waited his entire life for this particular moment in time.

As with everything in this mortal life, there is an end to even the most satisfying moments. Paul’s theft had been discovered, and it was more that his father was on his way to New York City to retrieve his wayward son. The money was nearly all gone. Philip Page suggests that “Paul’s grand week among the wealthy followed by the inevitable reckoning repeats the boom-and-bust pattern of Carnegie Hall and Cordelia Street” (555). Paul’s spirit

was broken by the mere idea that he would be forced to return to Pittsburgh, and thoughts of “the tepid waters of Cordelia Street that were to close over him finally and forever” were too much for him to bear (118). Paul remembered his trips to Carnegie Hall, and “he had the old feeling that the orchestra had suddenly stopped, the linking sensation that the play was over” (118). For Paul, his jaunt down Broadway had ended, and the realization that he had been living abruptly false to black.

Paul was faced with the daunting reality of returning to the dreariness of his former life. This unfortunate truth overcame the barriers that Paul had fashioned with his short-lived fantasy life, and he succumbed to defeat, ever to be barred from reaching his future. Edward W. Pitcher states that “Paul has planned not to return to hell, and he conceives it; to accomplish that he plans, appropriately, to end his life” (549). Paul blinked first while staring his future in the face, and chose suicide as the fastest way out of the reoccurring nightmare that had become his life. David A. Carpenter suggests: “Regardless of his imagining, even if he had tolerated more money and thereby afforded himself a longer stay than in nine days in New York, his life would have come to the same end: Cordelia Street, Pittsburgh, not as it existed external to Paul, but as it existed as a force within him” (604). Even as he was ending his life, Paul realized that this final decision was the most foolish of them all. He absorbed the true “folly of his haste...the value of what he had left unone” (120). In death, Paul finally understood that the reasoning behind his life’s action had been completely false and misguided. He too had a special place in life, a specific niche that he had been destined to fill. What that niche was, he would never know, because he was hopelessly content to be a voyeur, rather than a participant in the game of life (Summers 113). There were many things that he had been fated to do, and a pace that he was destined to go. However, through his own selfish and self-fulfilling action, he was mercilessly gypped himself out of his own future. He had cheated himself out of a chance at his own life. He would never go on to become the man that he always imagined himself to be. Permanent serenity, beauty, and financial security would remain just outside his grasp for all eternity. If only he had known.

“Paul’s Cause” is a tragedy on a variety of levels, not the

least of which is the heart-rending finale. There are many people just like Paul. They feel trapped within the daily fabric of their lives. Fortunately, there is a shimmering: everyone is given the chance to have a bright and promising future. However, it is up to each individual to make the most of all his tomorrows. Paul could have overcome his middle-class environment, his small-town roots, and his lack of quality social relationships with an inner drive to succeed despite the overwhelming odds against him. Children should never be afraid to hope, imagine, or dare to be different regardless of age, race, or family background. They should also not be fearful of the next step: putting feet on their dreams. In life, anything is possible: all we need is the determination to see those dreams become our reality.

#### Work Cited

- Carpenter, David A. "Why Willa Cather Revisited 'Paul's Case': The Work in Art and Those Sunday Afternoons." *American Literature* 59.4 (1987): 590-608.
- Page, Philip. "The Theatricality of Willa Cather's 'Paul's Case.'" *Studies in Short Fiction* 28.4 (1991): 553-556.
- Pitcher, Edward W. "Willa Cather's 'Paul's Case' and the Faustian Temperament." *Studies in Short Fiction* 28.4 (1991): 543-551.
- Rubin, Larry. "The Homosexual Motif in Willa Cather's 'Paul's Case.'" *Studies in Short Fiction* 12.1 (1975): 127-131.
- Salda, Michael N. "What Really Happens in Cather's 'Paul's Case?'" *Studies in Short Fiction* 29.1 (1992): 113-119.
- Summers, Catherine J. "A Losing Game in the End: Aestheticism and Homosexuality in Cather's 'Paul's Case.'" *Modern Fiction Studies* 36.1 (1990): 103-118.
- Wasserman, Loretta. "Is Cather's 'Paul's Case?'" *Modern Fiction Studies* 36.1 (1990): 121-129.

---

Evaluation: *Through his own insights and careful use of secondary research, Michael illuminates several layers of depth to this story and its main character. Michael's excellent competence as a writer is markedly mature, sharp diction. This is a refreshing read.*

---

---

## A Picture Is Worth a Thousand Words, but a Word Is Worth a Thousand Pictures

---

*Kristen A. Zanon*

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Andrew Wilson

---

Assignment:

*Write a literary research paper.*

Suffocating heat presses into a jungle so thick that the foliage seems to breathe together as one iconic monster. The rain becomes such a constant that it is capable for a man to forget the sight of a sun-filled sky, and the memory of sleeping in a dry place becomes a fantasy. Bodies are angled beyond recognition by an unseen enemy. It is like fighting a ghost that you cannot turn your back on. Every sight and sound and sensation is amplified to a hellish level. Fifty-eight thousand Americans did not get to come home from the grasp of this twentieth-century war. Their last thoughts were that of unimaginable horror, and for the thousands that were lucky enough to return home, the word “lucky” seems to be a twisted label. Images of such an unearthly experience haunt the thousands that survived. They might have escaped the terror of the Vietnam War, but the war will never escape them.

From 1959 to 1975, the small country of Vietnam was caught in a bloody conflict. This civil war spawned from an eight-year struggle for freedom from French rule. Upon gaining independence, the country was split into political opposites: North and South Vietnam. “North

Vietnam came under the control of the Vietnamese Communists who opposed France and who aimed for a unified Vietnam under Communist rule. The South was controlled by the Vietnamese who collaborated with the French” (“War in Vietnam” 319). Each side struggled to gain control. With strong anticommunist ideals woven through the American government of the 1960s, it was no surprise that the United States took notice of this Communist collaboration fighting to spread itself through Vietnam.

Powered by a fear that if South Vietnam fell to Communism it would eventually spread through all of Southeast Asia and beyond, the United States, with much controversy, took action. “In 1965 the United States sent in troops to prevent the South Vietnamese government from collapsing” (“War in Vietnam” 320), thus beginning one of the most talked about and argued conflicts in American history. Our military threw itself into the tiny country, “hitting it with more tonnage than has been dropped in all previous wars, not because the country threatened us but simply because we did not agree with its government” (Davis). Reasons and intentions were not made clear for the citizens of the United States or those of Vietnam. The Vietnam War fell into a decade of anger and confusion.

In the end, for the first time, the United States failed to achieve a military goal. Ten years after the first troops were sent into the jungles and rice paddies of Vietnam, the country was reunified under complete Communist control. Between three and four million Vietnamese citizens were killed as a result of the war. Many of these were innocent civilians wanting nothing more than freedom from the violence. American soldiers were sent home only to be mocked and ridiculed for taking part in, and losing, the Vietnam War.

A question remains: Who are these people whose faces show the wear of unspeakable experiences? What lies behind the innocent quietness of a Vietnamese expression? Who are the men who press their fingers to etched names and close their eyes to shut out the reality that is vibrating through their fingers? What dwells just beyond their thoughts? They are always fighting, fighting for their independence, for their beliefs, and for their lives.



Through movie, songs, and novels, tales of the Vietnam War have been immortalized. Each one paints an equally moving and memorable picture, yet reflections of the war have been shared in a quieter way as well. A few men have mastered the ability to weave their experiences in the serene melody of poetry. The vigor of their words has taken endless days of bloodshed and nightmares and crafted them into a powerful art form. These veterans have cast the images and messages of the Vietnam War into a design that can strike even the casual reader in the heart. Not only have these poems opened a window into the minds of our unrecognized heroes, but they also have provided insight into what it was like fighting for the other side.

When comparing poetry from American veterans to that written by a Vietnamese soldier, a reader is presented with two very different views of the Vietnam War. A poem translated to English, written by a Vietnamese, can hold a certain determination and quiet loyalty to a cause, whereas a poem by an American is haunted with images of indescribable horror. How can the same experience harbor two drastically different reactions? Looking deep into their poetry may provide an answer.

"In the Forest at Night" is only one of the innumerable accounts of the Vietnam War from the point of view of a Vietnamese soldier. This personal chronicle from Duc Thanh speaks of a tireless misery but never loses sight of its loyalty: "Many days and months have passed / And till I fight. / Living with difficulty and hardship / I am the soldier of liberation and trained" (45). Thanh takes on the burdens and pain of war with a certain understanding of his duty and role in the war. There is an underlying pride in his purpose, and Thanh's motive is made clear by the second stanza: "I roll in the dust. I leap in a bed of thorns / To bring peace to my country" (45). There is no mention of glory or fear of defeat; it is nothing more than a simple desire for peace.

The duration of this violent conflict is portrayed with a tired image of Thanh's home life. He starts by saying, "Oh friends, my other world" (45). This use of the word "friends" pulls the reader into Thanh's life. All at once a person can picture himself sitting next to Thanh, lost in a heavy Vietnamese night, with sudden rumbles of battle breaking over the trees. His brow will

wrinkle with the treachery of his country's war, and his shoulders are hunched with the weight of a thousand deaths. He continues, "She waits for me in our village. / Every night she waits to see me return / So she can finally close her eye" (45). In the face of Thanh's patriotic devotion, she returns to this image of his mother, or more specifically, the image of home. "I'm afraid she will die before seeing me again. / When I think of losing her, / I love her more, friends" (47). In taking the idea of Thanh's mother and setting it as a symbol of his home and a land that is familiar to him, Thanh's concern is evident. The thought of losing all that she loves is a fear of his, but the more he thinks about it, the more he is willing to fight for it. In those stanzas, Thanh is telling the reader, as his "friend," that the thought of losing the war fuels his allegiance and reinforces his intentions.

As Thanh brings "In the Forest at Night" to a close, he takes a turn from a sentimental reflection to a motivational message aimed at those that have joined him in this battle for freedom. Once again, he uses the word "Friends" to point the poem directly at someone, as opposed to the reader simply witnessing his thoughts. "Friends, we are the young men of a heroic nation. / Though we struggle with hardship and sacrifice, / We will win at last in the end" (47). This is Thanh's pep talk to his fellow Vietnamese. He is recognizing the fact that this war will not be easy, but he exposes the fact that they are not alone in the fight. Each one of them is a part of this "heroic nation." Thanh does not merely suggest a victory but proudly tells them of it.

After reading a poem such as "In the Forest at Night," it is hard to recapture the images of chaotic battles and undecided motives that cloud the American view of the Vietnam War. People tend to believe only the side of the story that they are given, but "In the Forest at Night," is only one example of the insight and understanding that can be gained from sliding into another person's shoes. Poetry is simply a less publicized medium in which a person can achieve a different vantage point on an issue.

The impact of the Vietnam War and the events directly after have been shown to have a far more than lasting effect on veteran soldiers. Let us leave Thanh's side in the Vietnamese jungle and travel a few years down the road. We are in the company of an American veteran

who has long since returned home from the war and has resettled into his routine life with his family. It is a quiet evening, and in his poem "Song of Napalm," Bruce Weigl is enjoying the fresh world that is uncovered after the rain: "We stood in the doorway watching horses / Walk off lazily across the pasture's hill" (317). Although he is thousands of miles and hundreds of memories since his time in the Vietnam War, like a predator, the war can sneak from nowhere and tug at the thoughts of the unsuspecting: "Trees scraped their voice into the wind, branches / Criss-crossed the sky like barbed wire" (317). Weigl makes a reference to his wife soon after: "But you said they were on your branches" (317). This single line paints an image of a home life that is constantly aware of the demons that can haunt an American veteran.

By the second stanza, Weigl is fighting yet another battle in the name of Vietnam. This one is taking place within the depths of his consciousness. The poet states,

Okay. The storm stopped pounding.  
I am trying to say this straight: for once  
I was sane enough to pause and breathe  
Outside my wild plans and after the hard rain  
I turned my back on the old curses. I believed  
They swung finally away from me (317).

An apparent struggle and frustration rings through the second stanza. Weigl is aware that "the old curses" of the Vietnam War are pushing to break through and take over. It seems that until the thought he was free from them, they are returning with a seductive terror.

As the poem progresses, the reader watches Weigl slip into a dark flashback of the war. He states, "But still the branches are wire / And thunder is the pounding mortar" (317). Powerless against the images, the reader is left to experience memories so vivid that it is hard to remember that Weigl is still standing on a porch with his wife. He goes on to describe a memory of seeing a young girl running from her village with napalm stuck to her rear. His memory turns to fantasy as he gives the girl wings so she can fly above the death and destruction of the war. As a result, his fantasy is interrupted, "And the girl runs only a far / And the napalm allows / until her burning tenon and crackling / Muscles draw her up / Into that final position" (318). Even on a quiet evening at his home, Weigl cannot escape the inevitable memory of death.

This "curse" is a common one that ties veterans of the Vietnam War together in a delicate web of torment. In our nation's capitol, a memorial for the fifty-eight thousand and twenty-two Americans who did not return from Vietnam has been erected. It stands as a solemn black wall half submerged in the ground. On it, the thousands of names sit silently, watching visitors pass over them with melancholy murmurs. The wall remains as an ever-present reminder of not only the lives lost but the lives altered by the Vietnam War.

Acclaimed poet Yusef Komunyakaa is an African-American Vietnam veteran who draws on his experience in the war in his poetry. "He focuses on the mental horrors of war—the anguish [that is] shared by the soldiers ... and rage behind the eyelong after the actual fighting has ceased" (Jones 178). Through the lines of Komunyakaa's "Facing It," the reader is presented with an image of the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, DC. Komunyakaa is facing the reality of the wall as a veteran of the war:

My black face fades,  
hiding inside the black granite.  
And I wouldn't,  
dammit: No tears.  
I'm stone. I'm flesh (919).

Like in Weigl's poem, the reader finds Komunyakaa fighting against the thoughts and feelings brought on by a reminder of the war. There is the same tone of a struggle to remain strong and not give in.

An element of disorientation and defeat also arises in "Facing It," as it did in "Song of Napalm." "I turn / this way—the stone lets me go. / I turn that way—I'm inside" (919). This image of being "inside" carries along with it the image of being trapped and held back. Unlike "In the Foret at Night," which emphasizes an inspiring message, both of these American poems reflect a much darker side of the war.

As Komunyakaa stands at the Vietnam War Memorial, he shares his observations of what is happening around him. At one point, another veteran has joined him. "A white vet's image floats / closer to me, then his pale eye / look through mine. I'm a window" (920). Komunyakaa's specific mention of a "white" veteran brings a racial issue. Also, the fact that the vet is looking

“through” Komunyakaa symbolizes a certain invisibility that African-Americans felt during and after the Vietnam War. As Wayne Koestenbaum observes, “Komunyakaa writes sensitively about the difficulties of being a black American soldier fighting alongside white men” (50). There is an underlying disturbance stirring in the back of Komunyakaa’s mind, despite his thoughts of the war.

The Vietnam War was for freedom and for the love of a country. The Vietnam War was worth nothing more than haunting images of death. The Vietnam War was another window into the readily apparent segregation of Americans. These are three drastically different opinions about the same sequence of events. Stopping at just three is like taking only a few steps into a marathon and claiming victory. The Vietnam War harbors opinions so numerous and drastically obscure that if a reader did not know exactly what they were reading about, they would never link them alone. People believe the information that they are given if it is the only one presented. Yet, is it fair to shut out a thousand other voices crying out their deepest thoughts from the other side?

Movies can be made with millions of dollars of special effects. Novels can be written by those that have studied the war extensively. Pictures can be blown up and published and flashed through living rooms across the country. Yet, how can a society ignore the personal accounts of the brave men that led these battles? How can a person overlook the beauty of poetry that has grown from even the most horrific experiences? Do we not owe the nameless heroes from both sides of the Vietnam War an open ear and an open mind? It is time to shut out the dramatized and touched up “truth” that is presented and listen closely to the quiet voices of a million differing points of view. Because after all, a picture is worth a thousand words, but a word can be worth a thousand pictures.

#### Works Cited

- Davis, Peter. “The US Image We Still See—Ruefully, Uneasily—Is That of a Failed Imperial Power: Vietnam: A Cracked Mirror.” Electronic. Detroit: Gale Research, 2000.
- Jones, Kirkland C. “Yusef Komunyakaa.” *Dictionary of Literary Biography: American Poets Since W.W.I.* Ed. R.S. Gwynn. Vol. 120. Detroit: Gale Research Inc., 1992. 176-179.
- Koestenbaum, Wayne. “Distortions in the Glass.” *The New York Times Book Review* 94.39 (24 Sept 1989): 50-51.
- Komunyakaa, Yusef. “Facing It.” *Literature and Its Writers*, Ann Charters and Samuel Charters. Boston: Bedford / St. Martin’s, 2001. 919-920.
- Thanh, Duc. “In the Forest at Night.” *Poems from Captured Documents*. Selected and Translated by Thanh T. Nguyen and Bruce Weigl. Amherst, Mass: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1994. 44-47.
- “War in Vietnam.” *Funk & Wagnall’s New Encyclopedia*. Ed. Robert S. Phillips. Vol. 24. New York: Funk & Wagnalls, Inc., 1993. 319-327.
- Weigl, Bruce. “Song of Napalm.” *The Vietnam War in American Stories, Songs, and Poems*. Ed. H. Bruce Franklin. Boston: St. Martin’s Press, 1996. 317-318.

---

Evaluation: Though Ms. Zanon was born years after the fall of Saigon, her essay features the power and emotion of a first-hand witness. Her words are indeed worth a thousand pictures.

---

# Harper Students on Writing

---

## Carol Booth

When reading literature or listening to a creative speaker, I often find myself pausing to admire an unusual or refreshing word combination or phrase. Writing gives me the opportunity to reflect and improve upon my own communication skills, allowing time to collect resources and to produce my own original ideas.

When writing an assigned response to a particular literary work, I try to discover or create a theme in my essay. This premise may be unrelated to the work, or I may play with a scheme presented by the author. Finding the opportunity to be creative in an essay is what challenges me to construct my best work.

Additionally, one cannot underestimate the value of an instructor who acknowledges good writing, creating enthusiasm in a student's efforts. And finally, I cannot disregard the value of numerous, separate revisions: my eyes will almost always find areas for improvement after I've separated myself from my composition for a period of time.

## Nick Colosi

Writing represents a personal journey into the vast abyss I prefer to call my creative mind. Akin to an artist, I am able to paint images upon an incredibly unique canvas, tell a story, or convey a message. The written language is one of the most pure forms of communication, continuously used by all, yet mastered by few. With each work I compose, I strive to achieve such mastery.

I make a conscious effort to put a creative idea down on paper daily. Whether it is a short story or merely a poem, writing continues to suffice as my escape from reality. I owe my motivation to write this essay to Professor Thoreson, for his constant guidance and grammatical prowess throughout the semester. Thank you.

## Philip De Boer

When our class was told to write about "Those Winter Sundays" by Robert Hayden, I was reminded of my self-centeredness as a child.

Many years ago my father was killed in an automobile accident, not knowing how his son would turn out. I am sure he would be pleased knowing this honor was extended to me.

## Yukie Haruna

For me, writing is spinning words into a long, smooth thread. As soon as I try to write, words start to swirl in my brain exactly like a chaotic Paleozoic sea. It is not an easy task to pull a thread from the chaos. Often I have to cut a thread into pieces, change its order, and reconnect the pieces. Sometimes, whole threads are discarded and new threads have to be spun again. Once in a while I feel an irresistible impulse to destroy my spinning wheel. One day my daughter told me the words that her professor told her: "Confusion is the beginning of wisdom." Certainly my writing begins with confusion. I thought to myself, "If I continue writing, sooner or later I will become the wisest of all."

## Charles Kitzman

A writer is, by necessity, also a thinker. Each word and phrase is carefully chosen in order to convey the precise meaning I wish my reader to come away with in order to gain understanding of the topic. This process will often lead me to achieve a greater understanding of the topic than if I had not written about it. The wonderful thing



about writing is that it is not only a way of communicating, but also a way of earning.

### Merry Moran

Writing, for me, is like a golden key that opens the door to a room filled with memories of my childhood. Sad or joyful, hurtful or humorous, they form a part of the real me, hidden from a world mesmerized by the allure of advertising or befuddled by daily events. Thus fortified, when I write, I am better able to confront life's challenges, weighing them in the balance of my own experiences.

### Robert Rush

For me, writing is a source of vitality. Great writing can make me laugh, it can make me cry, it makes me angry, and it makes me sad. It can provoke thought and inspire action, and rarely a moment passes when it doesn't reaffirm the fact that we're all emotional beings.

### Jennifer Smith

For me, writing is the epitome of self-expression. The ability to formulate my numerous thoughts and ideas onto paper allows me to be both creative and innovative. Whether I am writing for class or for myself, I am sure to put forth my greatest effort in order to create my own personal masterpiece.

### Michael Wolff

Writing is important to me for so many reasons, just one of which is that I really enjoy putting my oft-jumbled thoughts down on paper and watching them converge into place like a finished puzzle.

Writing is an opportunity for me to display my thoughts and emotions in an organized manner and see an outward finished product that is a mirror image of my inner feelings. It is an opportunity for me to share a little piece of myself with the reader, and help them to better understand what makes me tick.

Did you ever want to share with someone how you felt and maybe were afraid to for one reason or another? Well, I've certainly felt that way, and my writing is an opportunity to tell everyone just how I felt on that particular day. Personally, I could write about the same subject on two different days, and the material would be slightly different to reflect how I felt at that particular moment.

Writing is an opportunity to achieve perfection at a point in time. All you have is a blank sheet of paper and a pencil; the rest is up to you. Your past stains and imperfections are wiped clean, you have a fresh start, and the possibilities are endless.

Writing expands your boundaries and increases your creativity. In writing, there are no limits. Your boundaries are the four sides of the paper, and what you express within those walls is up to you.

Talk about pain, glory, reward, suffering, tragedy, inspiration, the future—whatever. Just say it. No one will know how you feel unless you do.

---

## What Is Good Writing? The *Anthology* Judges Give Their Standards

---

**Paul S. Bellwoar**

Good writing moves a reader to forget who he/she is for a while, and it's this temporary suspension of self that allows one to breathe another condition and share in the infinity of the human experience. So often this is why I feel revitalized after an especially remarkable read. The writer has given me the gift of himself/herself and an opportunity to cease being me for a moment.

**Barbara Hickey**

In Mark Twain's words, "Eschew surplusage."

**Judy Kaplow**

In all writing, something—an idea, an image, a memory, opinion, concept—gets moved from one mind to another. Good writing gets that job done with a minimum of fuss. Very good writing hands to us as a present the something, which turns out to be surprisingly useful or fun or interesting. But when it's *great* writing, the something comes to us as an extraordinarily courageous and generous gift—a key to the strongbox where the writer keeps his or her self, and the truths of a life stored there. Such a gift can only be wrapped and moved with anxious care. *That's* writing.

**Kurt Lumm**

Good writing is linear, logical, and orderly; or the other way around: digressive, analogical, allusive. It's highly crafted, like ourselves, and therefore vulnerable. It is seldom profound, often interesting, and always individual. It is personal, social, ideological, and political. Sometimes it is practical and sometimes it exists for its own sake. And the best writing, for my taste, is salted with a little irony and humor.

**Kris Levenburg**

All writing begins with reading—whether reading of physical or mental reality or another text. Good writers "have their feelers out" before and as they write, to soak up the details and

depth of experience, whether lived or read. For whatever world a writer recreates and brings to—whether involving technical concepts, a topical issue, a historic moment, a state of mind, a literary work, or a meaningful memory—I want to hear about that world through a focused, frank, unaffected, and unpretentious voice, and I want to get a full sense of the world, to be able to move around in it as in a "virtual reality." When a writer has strong sensitivity to actual reality and brings it faithfully to life in his or her writing, the virtual reality becomes as rich and deep as the actual.

**Catherine Lovich**

Good writing . . . good writing. Let's talk about great writing. Great writing, like any other endeavor we consciously and passionately pursue in our lives, is a magical blend of the tangible and the intangible. In the tangible realm, we study mechanics and invest countless hours in learning and relearning the rules that a language calls us to adhere to. In the intangible realm, we listen to, and write from, that indefinable pulse that can not be ignored because it is, simply, who we are. Great writing is great writing when pure fundamentals meet pure energy. Good writing, then, is like confidently sinking a free-throw in overtime after shooting one thousand free-throws all day the previous summer. Great writing is like driving to the basket as the clock slowly ticks down—"5"—she drives to the right—"4"—she dribbles behind her back—"3"—she drives to the left—"2"—she pivots, swinging back to the right—"1"—she makes a hook shot over her opponent's reach—SWISH—"Buzzer sounds."

**Andrew Wilson**

A piece of writing might describe a chair. A piece of poor writing might have a man in that chair. A piece of super writing might show that man finishing—sitting, standing, sitting again; speaking, laughing, crying, moaning, babbling incoherently, drooling, or all of these. Super writing would tell the reader how that man's shirt clashed with the fabric of that chair, and how that fabric *shooshed* as the scratchy wool of the man's shirtsleeve brushed across it, bringing cigarette to mouth. Super writing would describe not only a chair and not only a man, but also the state of that man's hair, and how he smelled, and the peculiar timbre of his voice. In other words, in my view, super writing features illustrative details—not exactly to the point of saturation or exhaustion, but I'd eat an overcooked chicken before I'd eat a raw one.

---

# On the Road

by Martha Simonsen

---

*The passing day and months are eternal travelers in time. The years that come and go are travelers too. Life itself is a journey; and as for those who spend their day upon the waters in ships and those who grow old leading horses, their very home is the open road. And some poets of old there were who died while traveling.*

*There came a day when the clouds drifting with the wind aroused a wanderlust in me, and I set off on a journey to roam the seashores. I returned to my hut on the riverbank at the end of summer, and by the time I had swept away the cobwebs, the year was over.*

*But when spring came with its misty skies, the god of temptation possessed me with a longing to pass the Barrier Gate at Shirakawa, and the road gods beckoned, and I could not let my mind to anything. So as I ended my breeches [and] put new cords on my hat, I was already dreaming of the moon over Matsushima.*

So wrote the great Japanese haiku poet, Matsuo Basho, in his prologue to *Narrow Road to the Far North*, a poetic account of a six-month journey he made in 1689 from Edo (Tokyo) to northern Japan.

His words reflect the pattern of his life. From the age of 22, Basho spent his life writing and traveling, studying Zen Buddhism and teaching poetry. His life makes the connection between writing and traveling.

Like Basho, I have always found the song of the road gods irresistible. Like many immigrants to America and many native-born Americans, I have been on the road much of my life. Boston to Louisiana to western Montana

by the age of four, degrees and credits from east coast, west coast, and Rocky Mountain universities, teaching jobs in the South in the 60s, tramping about Europe and up and down the western mountains, organizing an annual 28 study tours from Harper to places all over the map—from Kenya to Thailand to New Zealand to London, Rome, the Greek islands, Japan and China. Americans are people “in constant motion,” noted Alexis De Toqueville, a 19<sup>th</sup> century visitor to this country. I am clearly one of those Americans.

I did not need to read Basho to feel this wanderlust. My mother claimed she would return home from a journey, walk in the front door, and be ready in 10 minutes to walk out the back door to another destination. Emily Dickinson wrote, “There is no frigate like a book.” I’ve always wanted both the frigate (once I learned what that was) and the book. I’ve always wanted to travel and to write about my travels.

I fall into the category one writer, Paul Fussell, has labeled *traveler*. The *explorer*, Fussell notes, seeks the unknown, the undiscovered—Captain Scott, for example, who journeyed to the South Pole, and wrote in his journal when he arrived, “Dear God, this is an awful place!” The *tourist* seeks what the mass tourist industry has packaged in glossy brochures—which is as much like home as possible, complete with internet, air conditioning, Starbucks, and smiling natives. The *tourist* wants to duplicate home. Africa: Palatine with elephants, Greece: Palatine with ruins, Bali: Palatine with temples, etc.

I prefer playing the *traveler* role. The traveler seeks what has already been discovered. The traveler rediscovers. We can all play this role. Basho sought out vistas and villas described by earlier writers. So can we. Many have laid maps and road signs for us. We can follow them. We can sail into the harbor of Ithaca having absorbed an *Odyssey*, stroll the heaths of northern England with the voices of *Wuthering Heights* alive in our ears, sit quietly at Walen Pond. I once stretched out on a moss-encrusted tombstone in a churchyard where Bram Stoker was inspired to write the novel *Dracula*.

The World Wide Web does not connect me to the spirit or reality of Walden Pond, the canals of Venice, the dusk on the floors where I wait for Heathcliff or Dracula. I must be there.

When I travel, I write. And I encourage others to do so as well. As travelers, we *should* write.

Why not record our travels on film? There’s Martha rafting on the Missouri, eating spumoni beside the Colosseum, herding students around the Louvre in Paris. I

have plenty of those pictures, *tourist* picture. Don't we all? But so often pictures are *not* worth 1,000 words—or even 100 words. Pictures make a place familiar, cozy, and safe, a *National Geographic* reality. They fail to capture the traveler's private, personal experience in the place. They fail to capture *it*. What I felt, reflected on, tasted, heard, smelled. The affective side is missing, as well as the thoughtful. To make a complete record of a journey, write about it.

Here are a few suggestions on how and when to write while traveling.

1. Travel with those who have gone before. Find mentors, travel writers, modern and ancient. Edward Abbey for New Mexico, Thoreau for Maine, Homer & Herodotus for Greece, Mary McCarthy for Venice, Basho for Japan. A band of travelers, pilgrims, has gone before you. Find them. Join them. Stuff them in your backpack.
2. Carry a small notebook for quick word catches. Jot down impressions and fact in quotations, on walks, in coffee shops. F. Scott Fitzgerald jotted down fragments of overheard conversations. Keats took notes on Greek art in London museums. Basho recorded bird calls and crumbling walls.
3. Look, listen, smell. Use the senses. Be quiet. Leave the electronics at home. Be intent. The cry of the hawk, his watchful circling above, the eucalyptus scent of wild thyme—chatter and music prevent such moments.  
The hawk may cry only once. A breeze may carry that scent away. Your note at the time may be brief—lists, phrases, fragments of conversations like Fitzgerald's or isolated descriptions. Basho wrote his poems in pieces as he walked, then composed the entire poems later. He captured what the Japanese call "the sigh of the moment." One of his haiku reads:  
*Into this hush profound,  
Into the very rocks it leaps  
The cicada sound.*  
Basho could not have written that wearing a headset.
4. Recoil in tranquility, as Wordsworth advised. Basho each evening lit his lamp in the inn where he stayed. He saw the lighting of the lamp as the first step in the act of remembering. "After light-

ing a lamp I took out my pen and ink and closed my eyes, trying to remember the sights I had seen and the poems I had composed during the day." He asked himself what he had seen and felt.

Sometimes Basho would set a goal: a poem a day, a poem each new pace. I try to write something every day on the road. For me, that means transposing the few instant notes into a more permanent notebook, then editing them in tranquility.

Finally, why write while traveling?

1. From your travel writing may emerge honest-to-God poems, stories, and publishable journals. How much fine writing comes from travel! Think of Shelley dejected in Naples, Byron in Greece, R.K. Narayan visiting California, Karen Blixen in Kenya, Isabella Bird in Arabia, Henry James all over Europe, Basho in the far north of Japan. Think of Fitzgerald's and James's novels set in the places they traveled.
2. You will know where you have been (for memory's sake) and you will know what your travels meant. James Thurber said, "I don't know what I think until I read what I have to say."  
Write it down or its meaning and point will be lost.
3. You will take meaning of your life. "The unexamined life is not worth living," said Socrates. For me, the unexamined journey is not worth taking.  
An unwritten thought is not remembered.  
An undescribed moment did not happen.  
An unnoted hawk, circling, was not there.  
Alan Watts, another student of Zen, said, "We usually don't look. We overlook."  
Be mindful, the Buddhists tell us. Be a mindful traveler and writer, and your travels will count for more. Your life will, too, because you are keeping track.  
  
I started to keep track of my travels rather late (start now!). I had moved back west and was pending the summer in the Rockies. By reviewing my journal entries of that time, I can see what mattered then (and what still matters).



I can see where I was not mindful enough. I can encourage myself to do better on my next journey. Here is what I discovered while poking around in some early entries:

*July 30, 1965: On a bison preserve: bison, antique, solemn and majestic, glance indifferently at us. Wise and complacent and shaggy, they, like the Indians who hunted them, are preserved for us to stare at. Birds in abundance on these treeless hills, sparrow hawk, magpie, vesper sparrow, meadowlark, lazuli bunting, eastern kingbird.*

*August 19, 1965: 14 miles. Saddle Mountain, steep switchbacks, exhausting, exhilarating. Dappled with sunlit woods, rushing rocky brooks, high above Bow Valley, Paradise Valley, lurching in a motley colored meadow, we cool our feet in Lake Annette, stretch out in the warm sun beneath snow-capped Mt. Temple. Martlets whistle. Distant avalanches elch.*

*Sept. 9, 1965: Wake to gray skies and Wilson warblers warbling. Hike despite rain up Cascade Canyon, sun patched, along placid Jenny Lake. Spruce & fir forest, thimbleberry floor. Higher reaches: autumnal colors everywhere, enhanced by Hiroshige rain, oranges, grays, mauves, deep greens, browns. Late blooms of paintbrush, arnica, monkshood, fleabane, aster. We pass a moose sunning itself and startle a coyote on the trail. 11 mi. today.*

*And, later, my first trip abroad. I had been reading Herodotus, the Greek historian, while camping that fall in Greece.:*

*Oct. 3, 1966: On the peninsula w. of Athens in the Corinthian Gulf. Clear, windy, comfortable pink and gray rocky mountains, covered with feathery pines, heady scent of thyme. Herodotus tells the story of Cleobis and Biton, two Argive youths who died after pulling their mother to a temple festival in an oxcart. The Argives sent statues of these exemplary boys to Delphi. We see them in the Delphi museum, Archaic statues, large, heavy youths, striding side by side, full of purpose.*

I have returned to Greece and Delphi many times. But the sweetness of first seeing those grand figures I had admired only in books I can relish today. The words I wrote preserve that day, that hour.

May you travel many open roads and find your own treasures on the way. Bon voyage! And don't forget to write.

**HARPER FACULTY:**

**HELP YOUR STUDENTS PUBLISH THEIR  
EXCELLENT WRITING!**

**SUBMIT IT TO THE  
HARPER A THOLOGY**

THE EDITORS WANT TO PUBLISH YOUR BEST STUDENTS' WRITING IN THE NEXT ISSUE...

**✎ ESSAYS ✎ REPORTS ✎ RESEARCH PAPERS  
✎ STUDIES ✎ INTERVIEWS ✎ LETTERS ✎ RESPONSES ✎ SPEECHES  
✎ ANY ASSIGNMENT THAT REQUIRES WRITING**

SUBMIT YOUR STUDENT'S WRITING (AS A WORD FILE, ON A DISK  
PLUS A HARD COPY) AND THIS COMPLETED FORM  
(BOTH SIDES) TO KRIS PIEPENBURG (6513), LIB ARTS.

SUBMISSION DEADLINE FOR 2003 IS: THURS., DEC. 19, 2002

SUBMISSION DEADLINE FOR 2004 IS: THURS., DEC. 16, 2003

YOUR NAME:

YOUR DEPARTMENT:

YOUR STUDENT'S NAME:

COURSE TITLE/NUMBER:

THE ASSIGNMENT (IN APPROXIMATELY 25 WORDS):

YOUR EVALUATION (IN APPROXIMATELY 25 WORDS, SAY WHAT MAKES THIS  
WRITING OUTSTANDING):

# WILLIAM RAINEY HARPER COLLEGE

## *Harper Anthology Release\**

The undersigned hereby grants to William Rainey Harper College one-time rights to publish the following in *The Harper Anthology of Academic Writing*: The undersigned also grants to William Rainey Harper College the right to publish the following in a second publication for use only in courses at Harper College to be sold at cost to students.

---

(List the title of your work here.)

The undersigned further releases and holds harmless William Rainey Harper College, its board members, staff, faculty, and students as to any matter which may arise relating to its publication. The college may, but need not, copyright this work. The college shall, upon the written request of the undersigned contributor thereof to that effect, relinquish its rights, if any, directly to the undersigned contributor.

I certify that this is my own work and to the best of my knowledge that it does not infringe on any existing legal copyright or the privacy rights of others.

---

Student Name (printed)

---

Student Signature.

---

Address

---

City, State, Zip Code

---

Date

---

Telephone number/e-mail

\*Board Policy 3.8, Procedure 4.29, Section 8.2





---

# Alternate Table of Contents

---

<b>Art</b>		<b>ESL</b>	
Idalia M. Argu e o	4	Chyi-Ling Evans	24
Jennifer Gardner	27		
Colleen Seisser	104	<b>Foreign Languages</b>	
		Elizabeth Je ic	39
		(German)	
<b>Economics</b>		<b>History</b>	
Paul M. Rollins	91	Charles Kitzman	45
		Jennifer Smith	114
<b>English</b>		<b>Literature</b>	
Jennifer A burgey	1	Mary Aurand	6
Anna Balice	9	Carol Boot	13
Christopher E. Brien	16	Jenny Do an	21
Nick Co osi	17	Charles Kostomiris	52
Philip De Boer	20	Jenni Li Petri	61
Bertilia Frias de Douglas	26	Jo n Penczak	80
Nanci Goodheart	30	Dana Popp	87
Yukie Haruna	35	Jennifer Smith	114
Joe Kaul	40		
Nicole Kline	49	<b>Philosophy</b>	
Mary Krones	55	Mari Anne La Fleur	57
Merry Moran	68	Gina Matthiesen	64
Meghan Moyer	70	Maria Senise	106
Lynn Mutch	75	Amy Winter	133
Dan Pahlman	79	<b>Plant Science Technology</b>	
Maria Photopolus	82	Lin a Kiscellus	42
Jessica Sanders	97		
Melissa Sc aef er	102	<b>Reading</b>	
Maria Senise	106	Dan Pahlman	79
Rachel S ine	112		
Megan Sto z	118	<b>Speech</b>	
Maciej Szydlowski	120	Brett Rush	95
Pete Thomas	125		
Michele Veverka	131		
Amy Winter	133		
Michael Wo ff	137		
Kristen A. Zanon	143		

Getachew Begashaw

Paul Bellwoar

Nancy L. Davis

Tom DePlima

Linda Dunne

Ibis Gomez-Vega

Tony Hammer

Kurt Hemmer

Greg Herriges

Barbara Hickey

Hanley Kanar

Judy L. Kulchawik

Deborah Nance

Louise Perry

Kris Piepenburg

Chris Poziemski

Catherine Restovich

David Richmond

het Ryndak

Peter Sherer

Barbara Solheim

Trygve Thoreson

Elizabeth Turner

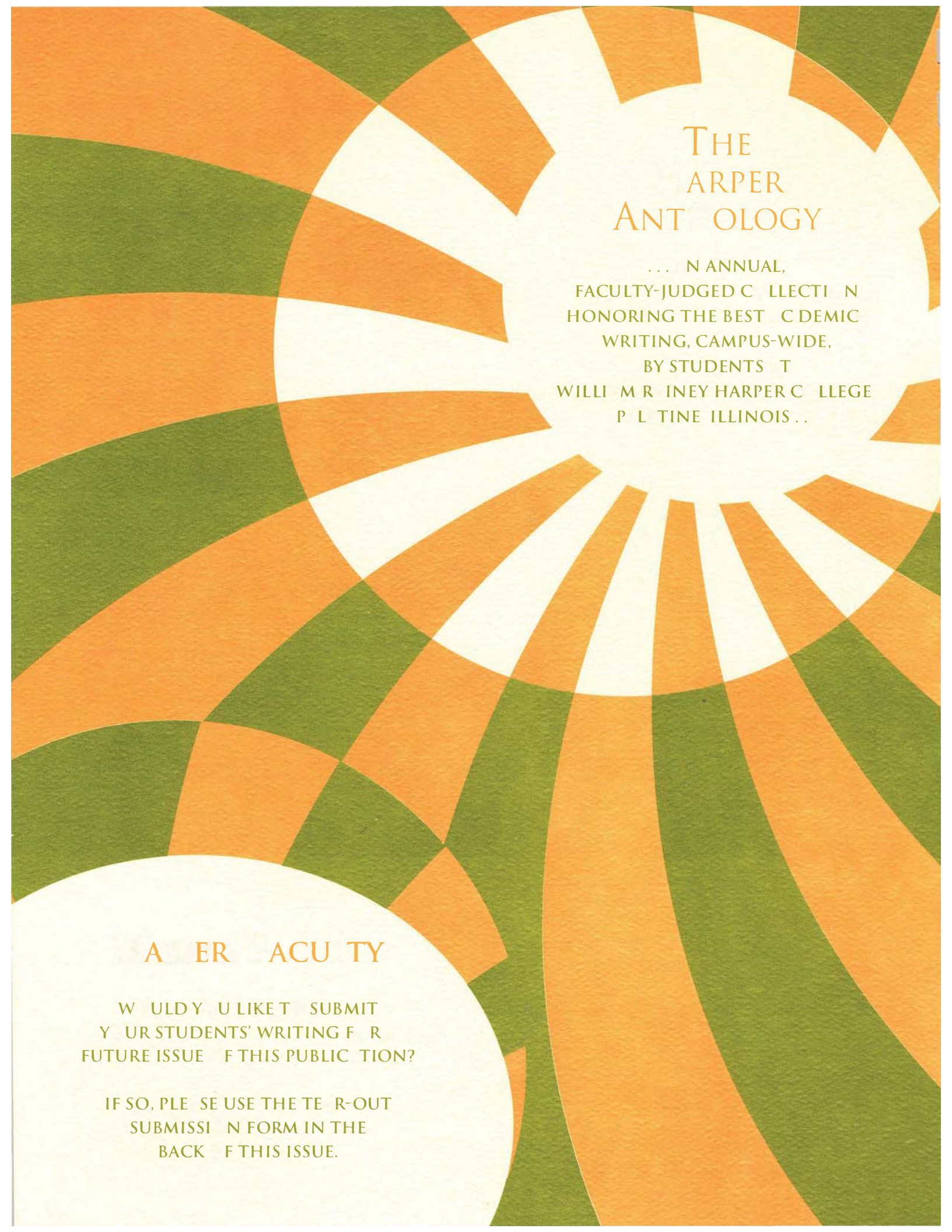
Renate von Keudell

David Williams

Andrew Wilson

## CONTRIBUTING FACULTY





# THE HARPER ANTHROLOGY

... AN ANNUAL,  
FACULTY-JUDGED COLLECTION  
HONORING THE BEST ACADEMIC  
WRITING, CAMPUS-WIDE,  
BY STUDENTS OF  
WILLIAM RINEY HARPER COLLEGE  
PELLETINE, ILLINOIS...

## A RECRUITMENT

WOULD YOU LIKE TO SUBMIT  
YOUR STUDENTS' WRITING FOR  
FUTURE ISSUES OF THIS PUBLICATION?

IF SO, PLEASE USE THE TEAR-OUT  
SUBMISSION FORM IN THE  
BACK OF THIS ISSUE.