



The
Harper
Anthology
XVIII

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

Student Authors

Michelle Bierbower

Diane R. Kennedy

Joe Saldana

Carrie Clodfelter

Svetlana Kostigova

Steven Schultz

Margaret Dabkowska

Gina Kuffel

Amie Shadlu

Justin DeVault

Danielle LaGrippe

Sandra Siniscalchi

Lynne Erbach

Brian Lanning

Brittany Steffens

Emily Fuglestad

Ann Libner

Jarek Stelmaszuk

Gladys Gonzalez

Kevin Merkelz

Monica Stopa

Carson Griffis

Karen L. Murphy

Igor Studenkov

Steve Haftl

Nicholas Nusret

Beth Townsend

Elisabeth Higgins

April Oertel

Jeramy Wallace

Jennifer Johnson

Jennah Orchell

Laurel Waller

Chris Joncha

Sean Rafferty

Louisa Walsh



The Harper Anthology

Volume XVIII

2006

Foreword

The “front cover” of Harper College has changed considerably over the past few years, as reflected on the cover of this publication, in its creative transformation of the stone, steel, glass, concrete, foliage, and other materials that have added so much to the campus. The insides of the college have changed, as well, with technological modifications, new program offerings, and reorganizations of human resources. The Harper Anthology also has undergone alterations, but the mission of the publication, like the general mission of Harper College, has remained constant. Teaching and learning drive the philosophy and mission of Harper College, and this publication is a celebration of those activities.

This year’s collection covers quite a range of topics, from Louisa Walsh’s paper on soil degradation in American housing developments, to a paper by Carson Griffiths, on economic degradation in Latin American countries under CAFTA. Within that wide range are many excellent scholarly research-based papers, covering subjects such as Islamic extremism (Jarek Stelmazuk), Herman Melville’s Moby Dick (Justin DeVault), and the writing of Frederick Douglass (Sean Rafferty). A number of interesting and descriptive essays are also included, such as those about Milwaukee rock and roll legends The Violent Femmes (Danielle LaGrippe), and about what can be learned from hours and days and months spent picking radishes in Germany (Margaret Dabkowska). A very compelling Afterword, contributed by long-time Harper College adjunct professor and naturalist Chet Ryndak, reminds us of the importance of effective writing and communication in professional and public life, providing a sense of some of the professional communications activities that students are preparing for in many Harper courses.

Overall, this is another fine collection — the result of the serious scholarship efforts put forth by these students and encouraged by their professors. The essays published herein, and in past issues of The Harper Anthology, reflect student success, promotion of personal growth, the development of academic abilities, and overall academic excellence, all of which are central to the teaching- and learning-centered philosophy and mission of Harper College.

—Kris Piepenburg, Chair, for The Harper Anthology committee: Barbara Butler, Teresa Chung, Judy Kaplow, Chris Padgett, Josh Sunderbruch, Anthony Wisniewski

Submission Information

Deadlines

Submission deadline, 2007 issue:

Thursday, December 21, 2006

Submission deadline, 2008 issue:

Thursday, December 20, 2007

To Submit a Student's Manuscript:

Complete the submission forms included in the back of this issue, or available at the "Publications" tab of the Harper College English Department website:

www.harpercollege.edu/libarts/eng/dept.

Send manuscripts (hard copy and disk) along with submission forms by campus mail to Kris Piepenburg, English Department, Liberal Arts Division, or attach a Microsoft Word file of the student paper to an e-mail, and send it to kpiepenb@harpercollege.edu.

Manuscript Evaluation and Publication

Student manuscripts are read by the Harper Anthology committee once a year, during the winter break. Faculty and students are notified of manuscript acceptance and upcoming publication in February. Printing takes place in July and August, and a free contributor's copy of the publication is mailed to each student writer in September.

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Acknowledgments

Typesetting and page production:

Deanna Torres
(DoubleDzignz Graphics—www.DDzignz.com)

Proofreading:

Jan Bone (Jan Bone Writing, Inc—
janetwbone@yahoo.com)

Cover Design:

Laina Schmitt (potoroopictures@yahoo.com)

Division of Enrollment and Marketing/Harper College Print Shop:

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Harper Students on Writing

Carrie Clodfelter

The strange thing about writing for an English 101 class is that you never expect that your work will be seen by any one but yourself and your professor. It makes me wonder. How differently would students write if they knew that their work was going to be shown to the world? And how differently would people in the media or in political offices write if their work was only to be seen by an English professor? The world is driven by the power of the written word. So now we must ask ourselves: what are we going to do with that power?

Lynne Erbach

I find the written word to be very powerful when used in a creative and thoughtful manner. Writing helps me to organize my thoughts and puts them into a visible form. By doing this, I am able to share my ideas with a wider group of people, provoke thought, create discussion, and have a permanent reference. Ultimately, I hope my articles, and those written by others, will encourage readers to explore the possibilities of their ideas and dreams.

Gladys Gonzalez

In order to become successful writers, humans must undergo a metamorphosis similar to that of a butterfly. With every successive step one gains greater knowledge about the art of writing. The metamorphosis cycle is as follows:

1. Egg- One is born without a word bank.
2. Caterpillar- One acquires words and writes fragments.
3. Chrysalis- One learns grammar/syntax rules and applies them to create meaningful sentences and paragraphs.
4. Butterfly- One combines sentences and paragraphs to compose written masterpieces that convey a meaningful message.

Steve Haftl

At this stage in my life, I never thought writing would play such a huge role. Regardless of the topic, I want my passion about a particular subject to always show through. The ability to affect a reader is what is always first and foremost in my mind during the process. Going back to school to achieve the goal of becoming a teacher rekindled the fire in me to write again. Being a very competitive person, I wanted my writing to stand out above all the rest, and because of this, I attack every assignment as if it might be my last.

Writing functions as a form of therapy by giving me the opportunity to put my feelings on paper. Being able to put my ideas or interpretations forth for others to read is a privilege that I highly value. It is this thought that keeps me going during those hard times when nothing seems to be coming.

Ann Libner

The question is often asked, "What distinguishes man from other animals?" I do not believe there is much debate. The answer is inevitably, the use of tools. The most powerful tool man has devised is language. The ability to form thoughts and effectively communicate with others is what has enabled man to survive and thrive. For better and for worse, the communication of ideas has created, destroyed, and sustained civilizations throughout the ages.

Gutenberg's movable type printing press was voted the greatest invention of the second millennium. It brought words to the masses. To be exposed to the ideas and thoughts of others is to be connected to a greater society, a continuum of civilization. The ability to fix one's thoughts, ideas, and revelations into written words, on tapes, on films is to forever leave a piece of yourself behind for others to know. It is to give a little piece of yourself to all of mankind.

In my writing I strive to communicate who I am, where I have been, and what my dreams are. My writings are my equivalent of scrawling on a wall, "I was here."

Emily Fuglestad

Writing seems like classical music to me. Sometimes it comes easy, and just flows like a Chopin prelude. And sometimes it seems like a passage of fast notes when I have to work out the words and phrases, and doesn't seem very enjoyable, until I step back and listen, or rather read, the final result. I don't think I really can write lovely things, but I do enjoy it like I enjoy listening or playing classical music. It's an acquired taste sometimes, but it is always worth whatever time and energy I put into it.

Beth Townsend

Whenever I'm asked about such work, I always say I enjoy "reading and writing" together, because I think they go hand-in-hand. In order to convey depth and purpose to an audience, an author should be able to recognize those aspects in the writings of others, as well. Even if there is disagreement, it is important to be informed about various opinions, cultures, and events. It's no coincidence that the most famous novels and poems throughout history have often been critically analyzed and studied. Inevitably, there will always be those defectors who trash even the most beloved classics, but how and why they came to that conclusion is also valuable. That is why I would like to think that, as an essayist, I am less in competition with others than I am participating in a forum in which everyone can give their arguments, perspectives, and ideas with equal respect and gravity. Oftentimes, I find just as much satisfaction from reading an entertaining, meaningful book as I do getting my own inspirations down on paper. If I can happen to amuse or lend a fresh angle to someone else, too, then I am grateful.

The Stranglehold of Society in *A Doll's House*

Michelle Bierbower
Course: English 102 (Composition)
Instructor: Meera Kanaan

Assignment:
*Write an eight-page argumentative research
paper on a work of literature, using at least
eight secondary sources.*

Henrik Ibsen's classic play, *A Doll's House*, is often regarded as a feminist piece that draws attention to the plight of women in the Victorian era. Nora Helmer's struggle for independence often leaves readers with the impression that the play is a tale of "Everywoman's struggle against Everyman" (Templeton 36). Although there is no denying that an element of feminism exists in *A Doll's House*, the stranglehold that society has over the male as well as female characters is often overlooked. Upon further examination, it becomes evident that Ibsen is analyzing society in a scope that extends much farther than women's rights. Throughout the play, it is apparent that the majority of the characters are caught within the grip of a society that confines and shapes them.

Nils Krogstad is a perfect example of a character bound by his role in society. Although he is a forger and blackmailer, it is difficult not to have a bit of sympathy for him when his situation is examined. Krogstad is a man with a bad reputation. As Dr. Rank puts it, "he's rotten to the core" (Ibsen 1822). At one time, Krogstad was the fiancé of Mrs. Kristine Linde, until she left him because he "hadn't much immediate prospect in anything," (Ibsen 1850). Eventually, Krogstad married and had children. His wife passed away, leaving him to raise and support his children alone. With these facts taken into consideration, it is quite possible that Mrs. Linde's rejection of their relationship and denial of her true feelings for Krogstad in exchange for monetary financial support has had a long-lasting psychological impact on Krogstad. In other words, society tells him that if he wants to be truly worthy of a woman's love, he must be able to provide a stable financial environment for his wife and family. This supports the theory that Krogstad is a product of society, as he eventually goes on to commit forgery. It can be assumed, based on Mrs. Linde's rejection of him, that he either consciously or subconsciously attempts to attain society's goal of wealth by committing an act that is outside of society's acceptable parameters.

Krogstad's forgery is not his only problem. If he had just committed forgery, and had no societal repercussions from it, *A Doll's House* might be a different story. However, as a result of society's response to his offense,

he is “forced into usury” (Hardwick 294). In other words, society has and always will see him as a criminal although he has not been convicted of his crime (Hardwick 294). Krogstad’s only way to survive within society and to provide for his family, due to his reputation, is to commit shady acts similar to those that got him in trouble in the first place. This is exemplified by his blackmail of Torvald. In an attempt to elevate his position in society, he blackmails the Helmers. He does not only wish to “be a mere clerk; no, he must be Helmer’s right hand man and soon become the manager himself!” (Hardwick 294). Although somewhat unscrupulous, Krogstad is a man like any other who wants to have enough money to provide for his family. He is a man that has made a mistake in his quest to attain what society says is necessary to have, and unfortunately will never be able to escape his status in society. It is hard not to pity him.

While on the topic of Krogstad, it is also hard to ignore the affects that society has had on his former fiancée, Kristine Linde. Mrs. Linde left Krogstad to marry a man with money. Unfortunately, she did not have much of a choice, being left with her brothers and ailing mother to take care of, with no way to support them on her own. Her husband eventually passed away and left her penniless, forcing her to work her hands to the bone to survive. Kristine is not content with her life’s situation. In fact, she has “found life profoundly depressing and aimless without the anchor of a husband and children” (Northam 252). This is an unfortunate result of her role in society. Since Mrs. Linde was very young, she had always cared for her family. She took on a mothering role to her siblings and to her mother. Thus, this is what she has been trained to do in life. Women of that period were not encouraged to get an education and pursue a career. In fact, this was quite impossible for women to do so if they chose to. When Mrs. Linde’s husband died, she felt useless because she was not fulfilling society’s role for women as a caregiver. Additionally, her experience in the working world may not have been so negative if there were a place in society at that time for women in the workplace. Although it was possible for women to obtain jobs, they were not the type of jobs that led to any type

of success, or even provided comfortable work conditions. Had Kristine Linde lived in a different time and place, she might not have been so depressed about her situation. She might have been able to secure a better job, or even an education, and become proud of the fact that she is independent and capable of supporting herself. Rather, as a result of the role that she has been forced to take on, she has been made to feel useless and without purpose because she does not have someone (a man, in other words) to take care of.

While Kristine Linde and Nils Krogstad have their issues of being viewed as somewhat unsavory or unfortunate members of society, those who hold respected positions are not without their troubles. Torvald Helmer, although portrayed as an oppressive patriarch, is also a participant in a society that dictates his actions. Although Torvald first embraces his role in society, he is bound by it at the same time. As male and head of household, Torvald is “far more likely to be dominated by the social prejudices of their day” (Thomas 260). This is best exemplified through Torvald’s attitude of moral superiority. Ibsen originally establishes Torvald as an upright and honest member of society. As the story unfolds, it becomes clear that he feels so confident in his moral superiority that he has a duty to impart those morals upon other people such as Krogstad. Torvald decides to fire him on the basis that he is “morally depraved,” and would feel “physically sick in the presence of such people” (Ibsen 1832). However, appearances can be deceiving. Torvald obviously revels in the idea that he can pass judgment upon others, but his morality does not come from pure intentions. Instead, his morality comes from a fear of marring his reputation. This becomes obvious when Nora’s forgery is revealed to Torvald, and he decides to submit to Krogstad’s blackmail. He eventually goes into a rage, belittling Nora and revealing the following:

He was so dismayed at the thought of public disgrace. Nora reacts not to the explosiveness of his vituperation, but to the realization that he has thought only of himself. In the impending calamity he neither considers its causes nor is governed by the impulse to protect her. (Clurman 153)

Rather than live up to his claims of willingness to sacrifice himself for his wife to save her from a great peril, he submits to Krogstad's blackmail. Thus, Torvald selfishly violates his arrogant morals in an attempt to save his reputation.

Torvald's moral view of the world is not the only aspect of his personality that can be scrutinized. Torvald is obviously concerned with keeping up appearances on a basic level when he submits to Krogstad's blackmail; however, this same principle runs much deeper than just the obvious in the Helmer household. When he declares that he will submit to Krogstad's blackmail, he makes it clear to Nora that "their domestic happiness is irretrievably ruined, that the children will no longer be entrusted to her care, that the only thing left to save is appearances" (Weigand 237). Fundamentally, Torvald feels that he has been betrayed by his wife, but he is so horrified by the concept of being scorned by society for having marital issues and/or getting divorced that he is willing to go to preposterous lengths to conceal these issues.

Torvald does not limit his upkeep of appearances to the way others perceive him. He also finds it very important that the appearances of the environment around him be kept up as well. This idea is best demonstrated by Rank's reaction to the news of his own impending death. He decides that when he is positive that his death is near, he will give the Helmers one of his "visiting cards with a black cross on it" to notify them of the situation (Ibsen 1839). This is due to the fact that Rank wants to notify the Helmers of his condition without allowing Torvald to visit because he "loathes anything that is ugly" (Ibsen 1839). Additionally, Ibsen makes reference to the fact that Torvald likes to have the house kept a certain way. Nora speaks of her urge of "making the house nice and attractive, and having things just as Torvald likes to have them" (Ibsen 1820). Due to Torvald's attitude and lack of respect for his own wife, it first appears that Nora's role in the household is reduced to merely a pawn in Torvald's grand societal chess game. She is expected to be the perfect Victorian wife: beautiful, entertaining, and subservient. Torvald expects her to present herself in a certain way, thus illuminating the

idea that Torvald is ruled by society and not only accepts this role, but chooses to project its standards upon his environment and the others around him. His actions are an attempt to create a beautiful façade that fulfills society's aspirations. He thus embodies the paradox of being the oppressor and the oppressed.

Krogstad, Mrs. Linde, and Torvald are all compelling examples of the way society can create a stranglehold on one's life. However, it is important to remember Nora and the troubles that she has suffered as a result of the society that she lives in. Although the others are legitimate examples of Ibsen's illustration of a controlling society, Nora's situation is further elaborated and more complex. The simple fact that she has had to commit forgery to save her husband's life is a result of her station in society. If women had had the same legal rights, or even the ability to hold a career at the time, she would have been able to legally acquire a loan and pay it off without having to go behind her husband's back. In addition, Torvald's attitude toward his wife is indicative of a patriarchal society. Even if she had wanted to tell her husband of the situation she was in, it would have been "terribly embarrassing and humiliating for him if he thought he owed anything to [her]" (Ibsen 1819).

Due to Nora's existence in a patriarchal society, her roles in life are limited. She has not had the opportunity to experience life on her own terms, to get an education, or gain the experience to understand the world. Had she had any knowledge of these things, she might not have committed forgery in the first place. It is unfortunate that Nora does not understand "the serious business of the world to which her husband belongs" (Shaw 226). Rather than be allowed the capability to explore such things, Nora's roles in society have been restricted to "those of wife and mother," and even in that circumstance, she is not able to have full reign over those roles (Deer 261).

As a result of man's superiority to her in society, and his control over her life, she has also had to resort to manipulation to get what she wants. Rather than have an adult conversation with her husband, she "has learnt to coax her husband into giving her what she asks by appealing to his affection for her: that is, by playing all

sorts of pretty tricks until he is wheedled into an amorous humor” (Shaw 226). Thus, Nora unwittingly fulfills the role of a clueless and petty housewife in an attempt to hide her competence from the man that controls her. She is effectively “taking the line of least resistance with him,” in order to avoid conflict (Shaw 226). This characteristic unfortunately bleeds over into her other relationships. For example, her friendship with Dr. Rank borders on being inappropriate. It is not that she has any intention of being unfaithful to Torvald; however, “she flirts so cruelly with Rank...because it is the only way she knows of dealing with men” (Northam 251). Her initial superficial outlook toward life and attitude toward men is a result of the “spoiling of injudicious parents,” which is even further perpetuated in a never-ending cycle by her own husband (Gosse 84). Had Nora’s role as a woman been respected in her father’s house, as well as in Torvald’s, Nora may not have had to resort to “pretty tricks” to get what she wants. Rather, she would be seen as an equal, perfectly capable of thinking logically and practically.

Nora is also a firm believer in keeping up appearances. Rather than siphon money out of the funds Torvald allots her for the children, she spends all of it on them because she “couldn’t let the children go about badly dressed” (Ibsen 1820). She also spends much of her time with Mrs. Linde bragging about Torvald’s promotion at the bank and all of the money they will soon have. It is quite apparent through her actions that she is very concerned with how others perceive her and her family.

In addition to the lesser ways in which Nora attempts to put a good face on, the very fact that Nora contemplates suicide to save her husband’s reputation is the most extreme example of her intentions to keep up appearances. Not only does she show that she values his reputation, but by committing suicide, Nora would be able to ensure that Torvald’s image of her would always remain a positive one (Weigand 234). If she were to commit suicide, she would be perceived as though she were martyring herself for the sake of love. Torvald’s reputation would be forever protected, and she would not be remembered as a criminal, but as a woman who had sacrificed her own life to salvage her

husband and children’s honor. Under these conditions, it would be inevitable that the circumstances under which she committed forgery would be revealed to the public, further perpetuating the martyr/hero image she so desperately wants to fulfill.

Nora’s tarantella dance in the parlor is another excellent example of her resolve to hide conflict and pain from others on an even deeper level. While practicing the tarantella in the parlor, she partakes in a “feverish merriment in order to mask her resolve for suicide” (Archer 231). Nora’s attempt to mask her true situation and her emotions is in part a reaction to the fact that Torvald cannot handle, and chooses not to deal with, things that are unsettling. As explained earlier, Torvald is a manifestation of society, and as a result of embracing his role in the world, has chosen to project those ideals that society holds in high regard onto his environment. Nora is not an exception to the environment upon which Torvald acts out his societal fantasies. She is treated as merely an extension of his status and is expected to appear and act in a certain manner. Thus, Torvald’s reaction to a sudden change of mood or revelation of truth by Nora would not be received in a positive manner.

Ibsen has done a beautiful job of expressing the absurdity of Victorian society and its effects. Likewise, it will not be entirely denied that Ibsen is making a statement on the rights of women in this era. However, this aspect is merely a symptom of an all-encompassing epidemic. Ibsen’s intention is to make a statement on society, and the message in *A Doll's House* is certainly not exclusive to the plight of women in Victorian Society. However, it would have been impossible to avoid the issue on the basis that Nora and her female counterparts symbolize the offspring of a broken society. The feminist ideals that *A Doll's House* has been associated with are merely tools that Ibsen has used to draw attention to a universal issue. Overall, Ibsen’s theme of societal pressure is a consistent one. He illuminates this issue through the characters of Krogstad, Kristine, Torvald, and Nora, showing that society’s stranglehold transcends gender barriers. Although some suffer more than others, society is a dictating force in all classes. Whether one is male,

female, rich, or poor, the norms and morals of the society permeate and eventually begin to control the actions of its inhabitants.

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Evaluation: *Michelle's style is direct and lucid. Her intelligent use of the primary source forcefully drives home her argument.*

The Singer Solution: A Critical Analysis

Carrie Clodfelter
Course: English 101 (Composition)
Instructor: Andrew Wilson

Assignment:

Students were asked to argue with one of the essays we'd read. Carrie elected to take on ethicist Peter Singer and his essay called "The Singer Solution to World Poverty."

In this essay, Singer argues that most Westerners only need (in the hard-core sense of "need") about \$30 thousand per year for food, clothing, etc. Therefore, a family making \$50 thousand should give \$20 thousand to charity. A family making \$70 thousand should give \$40 thousand to charity, etc.

Imagine for a moment a man driving to work one fall morning. He's dressed in an expensive suit and is driving his brand-new company car. He is not extraordinarily wealthy, but he lives comfortably and receives a decent salary. He smiles to himself as he thinks of the major deal he is about to close for his company, earning himself a significant salary increase. As he drives past a small lake, he notices something moving out of the corner of his eye. Slowing down, he realizes that a child is drowning in the icy water. He stops his car and is about to get out to save the child when he remembers that he is wearing a costly suit and is on his way to earn himself a better paycheck. Faced with the decision between saving a child or continuing on with his comfortable life, the man starts his car and drives away, leaving the helpless child to die.

Even though this is a fictional story, according to Peter Singer, author of the article "The Singer Solution to World Poverty," Americans have no right to judge the man for not saving the child. In his opinion we are just as guilty for not giving money to overseas aid as the man is for letting the child drown. Is there a difference between the two? Isn't there some greater moral wrong in allowing a person to die when you have immediate and direct control over their fate?

Peter Singer, a bioethicist, teacher, and writer, was a controversial figure in the late twentieth century, voicing what some considered to be questionable opinions on a variety of subjects. His article "The Singer Solution to World Poverty" was published in *The New York Times Magazine* in 1999. His solution to what he considered to be a lack of charity on the part of United States citizens was basically this: give all the money that you don't need to children overseas, and keep for yourself only enough to cover necessities, donating the rest. By using fictional scenarios and compelling arguments, he presented his case to the world.

Singer first argues the fact that by giving just \$200 in aid to organizations overseas, a person could help a dying 2-year old become a thriving 6-year old. That sounds reasonable, doesn't it? Most people could donate \$200 without it having much effect on their normal lifestyle. However, he continues on in the essay to declare that "whatever money you're spending on luxuries, not necessities, should be given away" (Singer 254). According to the Conference Board, a nonprofit economic research organization, an American household with an annual income of \$50,000 uses only approximately \$30,000 on necessities. Therefore, according to Singer, that household should be able to donate \$20,000 a year to children in need. "So a household making \$100,000 could cut a yearly check for \$70,000" (Singer 254). Is that a reality? What happens in the case of an emergency? What if a family were following Singer's plan but suddenly lost its house in a fire? The money that those family members had so generously donated would have helped greatly in the rebuilding of their home. Admittedly, there are many families who have more than enough money to sustain themselves and still give a portion of their earnings to

charity, but what about a single mother who makes just enough to pay the bills and buy her children Christmas presents? Some would argue that Singer would count her as one of those who are not making enough to give to others; however, he fails to mention this fact in his haste to make his point understood.

Another gray area in Singer's argument is the fact that he never draws the distinction between "necessities" and "luxuries." He declares that a new car is a luxury, but what about a family that owns three cars to accommodate both parents plus their teen-age son? The third car isn't necessarily a necessity, but it is certainly more convenient for the mother who would otherwise have to drive her son to his various activities. Would the third car count as a "luxury?" Would Singer even consider two cars a luxury? Where does he draw the line? How much does a family have to be making in order to donate one third of their salary? These questions are carefully avoided in Singer's essay. Why? Because they are difficult to answer. Different people have different needs. To categorize the monetary needs of every person in America as falling into a \$30,000 budget is a hasty generalization that Singer fails to address.

It would be difficult to argue the points previously mentioned; one must admit that there are many necessities in life. However, what about the "luxuries?" Singer suggests that vacations are an unnecessary indulgence, and although monthly trips to Paris are by no means necessary, vacations can be a good time to relax and take a break from the stress of the outside world. Furthermore, not taking time to relax can result in poor health and exhaustion. In fact, a manager in my own workplace was recently fired as a result of his harsh temper and poor health due to stress. He had consistently avoided taking time off from work, causing him to feel over-worked. By simply taking time to rest, he could have avoided losing his position. Does the vacation need to be a cruise to the Bahamas twice a year? Of course not. But vacations are crucial to the health and well-being of the working, middle, and upper classes—whether they are in the form of a relaxing weekend at a hotel or a road trip to visit a relative.

Are you still not convinced? Do you still think that

Singer could be right, that it really is possible to get by on \$30,000? Consider this: the average cost that a residential student would be paying to attend the University of Illinois is \$22,448 a year. That is still less than \$30,000, correct? Well, take into account the fact that most college students make nowhere near \$50,000 or even \$30,000 a year, and also that not all students have wealthy parents putting them through college, and it's plain to see that just getting through college is a struggle in itself. So what about a single adult with a steady job and no family to support? Surely he or she could get by and still be able to give a generous portion to charity? It's possible, but his or her situation would most likely be a studio apartment coupled with the uncertainty of living paycheck to paycheck. If there are kids dying in Africa, then we should have to sacrifice personal comfort to help them, right? While that is obviously the morally right thing to say, when it comes down to it, the people who earn the money have the right to use it how they wish.

Besides, it's my money, isn't it? I have the right to spend, save, or donate it in whatever way I see fit. Is that a selfish attitude? Maybe, but it's also an honest one. It isn't wrong to feel entitled to the things I have earned. I worked for them, and while it is by no means a child's fault if he is born into poverty, it is also fundamentally not my fault, considering that I have not had any direct influence on that child's situation. In the end, I worked for the money, I earned it, and I have the right to decide how to use it. That doesn't make it okay to blow everything I've earned on slot machines in Las Vegas, but it also doesn't mean that I need to deny myself the practical things that I need or want.

Am I suggesting that we as Americans should ignore the cry of children in need? No. Am I suggesting that we have no logical or moral reason to help them? No. On the contrary, I am very much in favor of giving aid to those living in poverty. But the idea of imposing an almost socialistic plan to battle the need seems impractical and impersonal. Some people do choose to give generously to those in need. Some who cannot give monetarily give through other means. By volunteering their time at a youth center, cooking a meal for a family in need, or driving an elderly neigh-

**The Singer Solution:
A Critical Analysis**

bor to the grocery store, a person can have an impact on someone's life that is just as important as giving out of his or her wallet. Others give their support by traveling to those foreign countries to give aid or deliver food, clothing, and other necessities. Singer's solution may be a noble solution—there certainly is a need in the world, and there certainly are those who have the resources to fill it—but it is not the only solution.

Think again about the man who let the child drown. It is safe to say that it is an absurd scenario considering that only an incredibly pitiless person would refuse to save the child. Therefore, if we think like Singer, it could only be concluded that we are just that pitiless. However, there seems to be a greater moral wrong in letting a child die right in front of you, as opposed to letting someone die thousands of miles away. We don't have a direct effect on the situation of children dying in other countries. Can the need be filled? Yes. Are Americans doing all we can to help? No. We should be doing more to help those in need, but forcing our own citizens to live in near-poverty themselves can hardly be called a solution. Emergencies happen, unforeseen payments and fees need to be paid, and vacations do indeed need to be taken. Monetary help is not the only help that is needed; donating time to help can be just as effective. Giving to others is not just about keeping them healthy; it is a way to impact another person's life, to give them hope, to teach them the skills needed to survive. There is no perfect solution to the problem, but we can continue to work toward bettering the world around us.

Works Cited

Singer, Peter. "The Singer Solution to World Poverty." *Inquiry: Questioning, Reading, Writing*. 2nd ed. Ed. Lynn Z. Bloom et al. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice, 2004. 248-55.

Evaluation: *This is really a superb response to Singer's argument. Carrie writes beautifully, and you, the reader, will notice a certain strength of conviction in her tone—very rare, I think, in a person as young as Ms. Clodfelter.*

Radishes

Margaret Dabkowska
Course: English 101 (Composition)
Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

Assignment:

Write an essay discussing and describing an effect that a past or present environment has had on you.

Everyone in the world has both beautiful and horrible memories from the past. Usually, we want to forget about unpleasant periods of time that we experienced and try to avoid similar situations in our future life. However, some pictures in our minds cannot be erased, and they often affect our personality, behavior, and also attitude to life. I am one of those people whose unforgettable memories from the past shaped their characters for the rest of their lives.

The summer of 1998 has stuck in my mind until today. I was nineteen years old when I had an opportunity to go to work in Germany on vacation. I was delighted to have a chance of living and working there because I wanted to become more independent and earn some money for my further education at the university. I left my country alone, without my friends and relatives. I felt a little desperate, but I was eager to go there and visit new places, meet interesting people, and improve my skills in the German language. When I was riding the bus and passing towns and villages, I tried to imagine my three months of vacation on the farm. I could not wait until I got to that place. It was about sixteen hours of driving that lasted immensely long for me. The camp where I was supposed to live was located near Mannheim, in southwestern Germany. The picturesque scenery of rolling and green fields with various kinds of vegetables, grapevines, and wild meadows made a huge impression on me.

Although I arrived at the camp before midnight, some people of different nationalities were walking back and forth, and their conversations in different languages were incomprehensible to me. Under the cover of night, I was not able to see the whole camp; instead, I saw steel containers lined up tightly. One of those containers with dimensions of 25 feet long and 9 feet wide was my temporary house. The number “8” on the yellow door was a sign by which I would recognize my new home, which I shared with four other women and two men. Inside the container were three bunk beds, and one small plastic table, and there were no windows. I was really lucky to have a whole bed for myself because married couples had to share narrow and uncomfortable beds for each other. Public bathrooms located in a separate old building were also disgusting, with broken mirrors, and black spots of mold on the ceiling and walls. Also, there was one common kitchen where people could prepare meals for themselves. The one interesting thing in the kitchen, catching my attention, was a huge refrigerator that was almost empty. I was told to leave my food in that refrigerator to avoid it going bad, so I did it. The next day, all of my food prepared by my mom — fresh fruits from the orchard, vegetables from my grandparents’ garden and tasty sausages — disappeared. I could not believe what had happened. When I asked some people from my country about the food from the refrigerator, they mocked me, saying: “Welcome to Germany, freshman. It always happens to people who come to the camp the first time. You must learn a lot. Keep your eyes open all the time.” I was disappointed with that tradition at the camp and a little scared of their warnings. I did not know who the people were and why they did those horrible things to each other.

During the season, about three hundred people of different ages came to work. They were from countries such as Poland, Turkey, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Romania, Portugal, and Russia and also from Niger. Our job consisted of picking ripe radishes on the farm from dawn to dusk, approximately fourteen to sixteen hours per day and six days per week. There was one simple rule: the more baskets of radishes you picked, the more money you earned. In one basket, there had to be fifty beautiful

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bunches of radishes, and making those bunches was not as simple as I had thought, when looking at them in the grocery store before arriving in Germany.

I still remember my first day on the job. I woke up at 4:30 a.m. like everybody in my container, got dressed in rainproof overalls, put rubber overshoes on my feet, and without brushing my teeth and with an empty stomach, I went in a hurry with others to take a seat in the bus. It seemed to me a little weird to sit in the bus in the middle of night and wait until 6 a.m., when a bus started transporting people to the radish farm. After a while, I understood the whole routine of taking a place in the bus. The people who were first in the bus got to the farm first, and they were able to pick more baskets of radishes and make more money than people who came to the farm by the last bus. It meant that there was only one bus taking workers from the camp to farms located in different places. Moreover, sometimes it took a couple of hours to transport all of the workers from place to place.

At the farm, people from different countries worked individually, and they were really absorbed with picking radishes and filling as many baskets as they could. Polish people worked alone, and they were not willing to help anybody. As a freshman I was not sure how to make a bunch of radishes, so I asked for help from one Polish woman, about 50 years old, who worked next to me. She glanced at me and said: "First, you should look at other people how they work and then try to do the same. Second, work slowly, and carefully in order to learn a good job." I took her advice, and while sitting on the ground in the middle of the large radish farm, I tried to make my first couple of bunches. At the same time, I had an opportunity to look at working people from another point of view. I was under the impression that I was sitting inside a beehive, because the different languages of all of the people sounded like the buzz of bees, and sometimes I was able to hear hornets — Turkish men yelling and arguing with each other. Their language was the most unpleasant dialect to my ears. When I was working next to them, my head was about to explode, and I could not even concentrate on doing my job. What is more, people were working so fast that all of the radishes at the huge farm were picked in four

or five hours. It looked like one million rabbits were running through the farm and eating all the radishes, so after a while, there was nothing instead of black ground and me with an almost empty basket. The Polish woman who gave me advice took advantage and picked all of the radishes that I was supposed to. It was the second time that I was deceived by people from my country. I got a lesson that I should not trust my fellow countrymen, who in addition did not have a good opinion of different ethnic groups; they were mean, impolite, and unhelpful to anybody, especially to people from Niger.

Although many Poles did not tolerate people from Niger because of the color of their skin, I made friends with them. We communicated to each other in the English language, so nobody was able to understand our conversations. My new friends from Niger, Eddie and Namu, were about 25 years old, and they were students at the University in Mannheim, Germany. They worked on the farm during vacation to earn some money for tuition fees. Their life resembled mostly living according to Jim Crow laws in many ways. First of all, Namu and Eddie did not live in the camp with other people, but in the village, about five kilometers away from the camp. Every day, no matter if it was raining or hot outside, they had to ride on their bikes to the camp and back to their village, where they lived with other African people. Their place to live was also some distance from German people's houses. Second, when they were riding to the radish farm in the bus, they sat in the back, and other people kept their distance from them. It was an established custom that black people sat separately in public places. Also, during the job, on the farm, they had to work alone, far away from white people. When I started to work with Eddie and Namu, Polish people became unpleasant to me, and they were talking about me as a traitor. They relegated African people to the status of second-class citizens mainly because of the different color of their skin. Moreover, they spoke ill of black people and called them "Bamboos," "barbarians," and "people from the bush." I was ashamed of my fellow countrymen, and from the other side, I was powerless to change people's minds about black people. Sometimes, being an impartial per-

son, I tried to interfere in disputes between Africans and Poles, but without remarkable effects. In spite of the fact that Eddie and Namu were really interesting, smart, and tolerant people who always smiled to others and never said a bad word to anybody, the racial issue was the obstacle that segregated and discriminated against them. Furthermore, not only did Polish people not like Africans, but German people also segregated themselves away from them. Once, I was riding in the train with Eddie to Mannheim, and young German boys about 15 years old started to abuse my friend. I remember that we were forced to leave the train in a hurry at the next station and run as fast as we could because they were throwing stones at us.

After three months of working as a slave, practically in 21st century, where Jim Crow laws were brought back into life, I left the camp and returned to Poland, to my family and friends. For a long time, I did not want to tell anybody of my stories from my vacation in Germany. I was afraid of meeting new people and asking someone for help. Because I became more suspicious and distrustful of people, I started to be more independent, count on myself, and keep my eyes open all the time. Moreover, I needed a few months to return to a good condition mentally and physically. My fingers had become numb from picking radishes, so at school I had problems holding a pen, and I could not do basic tasks at home. In addition, I had to learn to trust people and not to treat everybody like my enemy.

In this way, radishes became for me a symbol of hard work in Germany, so until today I try to avoid buying them.

Evaluation: This writer tells an unusual story and takes us to an unusual place, drawing significant insight from the experience. Margaret's sense of the details that make a story interesting for a reader makes this essay particularly unique and interesting.

Free Will and Destruction in Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*

Justin DeVault

Course: Literature 221 (American Literature)

Instructor: Trygve Thoreson

Assignment:

Compose a 9- to 12-page research paper on one or more of the authors studied this semester, using both primary and secondary sources.

[Life's] storms have often left me with no table to write on but the rock on which I have been shipwrecked.

—Chateaubriand's *Mémoires d'outré-tombe*

In that wild high country he'd lie in the cold and the dark and listen to the wind and watch the last few embers of his fire at their dying and the red crazings in the woodcoals where they broke along their unguessed gridlines. As if in the trying of the wood were elicited hidden geometries and their orders which could only stand fully revealed, such is the way of the world, in darkness and ashes.

—Cormac McCarthy's *The Crossing*

His tears fell into the water and disturbed the image. As he saw it depart, he exclaimed, 'Stay, I entreat you! Let me at least gaze up you, if I may not touch you.' With this, and much more of the same kind, [Narcissus] cherished the flame that consumed him...

—*Bulfinch's Mythology*

So fare thee well, poor devil of a Sub-Sub, whose commentator I am. Thou belongest to that hopeless, sallow tribe which no wine of this world will ever warm...

—Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*

Harrison Hayford suggests that, in *Moby Dick*, Ishmael went on a whaling voyage in order to address the novel's most important theme, that "life—the cosmos and everything in it taken as a microcosm—confronts man as a compelling but insoluble mystery" (659). Ishmael's journey is a failed one, assuming that his self-appointed label as an outcast relates to this mystery, for he boarded the *Pequod* an outcast and survived the destruction of the

ship and its crew without ever forming a sense of identity, evinced by his self-description as a wandering "Sub-Sub Librarian" in the extracts that begin the tale, and as an "orphan" at the end of the novel (Melville 427). Why does Ishmael meet this end? A detailed analysis suggests that out of the three influences that affect the "loom" of life—free will, necessity, and chance—Ishmael lacks free will. Necessity ensures he will go on the voyage; by chance, he survives. The absence of free will in Ishmael, when contrasted with the free will found in Ahab, illuminates why Ishmael remains an orphan and fails to understand the mystery of life, for in choosing to die, Ahab reaches the only place where one may discover one's "parentage," or identity.

Ishmael has been on his voyage a while by the time he describes making a sword-mat with Queequeg in chapter forty-seven, titled "The Mat-Maker." Ishmael has the habit of finding meaning in any task aboard the *Pequod*, and making a mat is no exception. He states, "...I say so strange a dreaminess did there then reign all over the ship and all over the sea, only broken by the intermitting dull sound of the sword that it seemed as if this were the Loom of Time, and I myself were a shuttle mechanically weaving and weaving away at the Fates" (179). The threads, the shuttle, and Queequeg's wooden sword acquire the meaning of fate, free will, and chance respectively. Not all three factors carry the same amount of influence, however. Ishmael states:

The straight warp of necessity, not to be swerved from its ultimate course—its every alternating vibration, indeed, only tending to that; free will still free to ply her shuttle between given threads; and chance, though restrained in its play within the right lines of necessity, and sideways in its motions modified by free will, though thus prescribed to by both, chance by turns rules either, and has the last featuring blow at events. (179)

Chance ultimately decides a person's path through life, as we will see at the end of the novel. These three factors provide a guideline for the book and Ishmael's philosophies. Initially, it seems odd that Melville would provide a guideline forty-seven chapters into the novel, but one must remember that Ishmael tells the story after it hap-

pens, and reflects on his experience through the analogy he formed while it occurred. As readers, we may return to chapter one and find Ishmael's understanding of life by the analogy through which he interprets it.

All writers serious about their work carefully consider the title of any chapter they write, and Melville is no exception. But we must also look at the title "Loomings" as Ishmael's choice. "Loom" has multiple definitions, and each is suitable for Ishmael's story. Loom can mean a weaving, a type of tapestry, or even a sword-mat. Loom also has a nautical definition, in which it is "land or ships beyond the horizon, dimly seen by reflection in peculiar weather conditions" (18). Lastly, looming implies possible imminent or impending doom. Not only does this multi-symbolic chapter title exemplify Melville's foreshadowing and encyclopedic style, but also Ishmael's tendency to place significance on life's events. Innumerable writers have interpreted the meaning of the novel's first line, "Call me Ishmael" (18). My thesis does not modify the general consensus that the name implies Ishmael feels he is an outcast. It is important, though, that any study of Ishmael takes into account events prior to and including his voyage on the *Pequod* when he names himself after the alienated biblical figure. Understanding this, the loom of life analogy also affects the name he gives himself. "Loomings" also gives the reader the first evidence that Ishmael lacks free will.

Ishmael first points to the three influences in our lives by the end of the first chapter when he states, "Though I cannot tell why it was exactly that those stage managers, the Fates, put me down for this shabby part of a whaling voyage...I think I can see a little into the springs and motives which set about performing the part I did..." (22). The Fates, otherwise termed as "necessity" in "The Mat-Maker," are what set Ishmael on his whaling voyage. The last paragraph of the first chapter most illustrates Ishmael as a passive receiver. Hayford states, "Ishmael becomes the passive recipient of conceits that 'float' into his 'inmost soul' from some exterior source; he is 'swayed' by them rather than being their active originator" (667). His encounters with various people like Elijah, who warn him about traveling with Ahab, suggest the Fates have a role in ensuring he stays the course, and his failure to consciously make the choice

for himself ensures that Ishmael will agree to take up Ahab's quest.

Ahab does not let his crew know his intention of hunting down Moby Dick until well into the voyage. When Starbuck protests that Ahab's vengeance is "blasphemous," Ahab replies:

"All visible objects, man, are but as pasteboard masks. But in each event—in the living act, the undoubted deed—there, some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the mouldings of its features from behind the unreasoning mask. If man will strike, strike through the mask! How can the prisoner reach outside except by thrusting through the wall? To me, the white whale is that wall, shoved near to me." (140)

Moby Dick is not just the amputating beast to Ahab, but the representative of all that is unknowable in human life. Ahab creates something which he can proactively defy; he also yearns to see beyond the "mask." This alludes to and parallels the myth of Narcissus. Narcissus becomes enamored of his own reflection while drinking out of a fountain. His reflection "fled at the touch but returned again after a moment and renewed the fascination" (Bulfinch 96). The parallel between the mask and Narcissus' reflection connects Ahab's and Ishmael's sentiments, for Ishmael comments upon Narcissistic reflection in "Loomings" when he states, "...that same image, we ourselves see in all rivers and oceans. It is the image of the ungraspable phantom of life; and this is the key to it all" (20). It is not a far stretch to assume Ahab and Ishmael were drawn together by an outside force such as the Fates, when considering that they share similar sentiments regarding the mystery of life. Chapter forty-one opens with the statement:

I, Ishmael, was one of that crew; my shouts had gone up with the rest; my oath had been welded with theirs; and stronger I shouted, and more did I hammer and clinch my oath, because of the dread in my soul. A wild, mystical, sympathetical feeling was in me; Ahab's quenchless feud seemed mine. (152)

Ishmael realizes at this point he must participate literally and conceptually in the pursuit of the white whale. The

threads of their lives became part of the same tapestry. And yet, Ishmael and Ahab do not meet the same end. A close look at "A Bower in the Arsacides," another chapter in which Ishmael references the loom of life, will illuminate Ishmael's feelings toward his own survival.

Ishmael recalls the skeleton of a sperm whale overgrown by plant life in "A Bower in the Arsacides." Feeling that the "weaving" points toward some answer, Ishmael asks, "Oh, busy weaver! unseen weaver!—pause!—one word!—whither flows the fabric?" (345) Not until this point does Ishmael conclude, "The weaver-god, he weaves; and by that weaving is he deafened, that he hears no mortal voice; and by that humming, we, too, who look on the loom are deafened; and only when we escape it shall we hear the thousand voices that speak through it" (345). The loom of life deafens us with its complexity; only by actually dying can a person understand its mysteries. Ishmael understands this fundamental paradox: How can anyone truly understand the whole of something to which he or she belongs? We cannot observe the tapestry from the viewpoint of the thread, the hedge maze from inside its turnings, or the entirety of our planet from its comforting gravitational pull—we need the appropriate corresponding aerial view. Death is the only afforded aerial view for life. By making this philosophical claim, Ishmael directly tells the reader what will happen to the *Pequod* and her crew. The chapter entitled "The Gilder" most brings this revelation to light.

In one of the greatest speeches of the novel, Ahab states, "'Would to God these blessed calms would last. But the mingled, mingling threads of life are woven by warp and woof: calms crossed by storms, a storm for every calm'" (373). Some commentators argue over whether Ahab or Ishmael actually gives this speech (McSweeney). The debate is irrelevant, however, for even if Ahab gave the speech, Ishmael recounts it. The speech ends with a revelation crucial to understanding Ahab's death and Ishmael's lasting sorrow. It states:

"Where lies the final harbor, whence we unmoor no more? In what rapt ether sail the world, of which the weariest will never weary? Where is the foundling's father hidden? Our souls are like those orphans whose unwedded mothers die in bearing them: the secret of our

paternity lies in their grave, and we must there to learn it." (373)

Ishmael does not mean paternity literally, but as the symbol for identity's origins. This passage reaffirms the sentiments expressed in "A Bower in the Arsacides" and suggests something new. Death offers the opportunity to push past the mystery of life and provides a place for rest. Kerry McSweeney, in *Ishmael's Mighty Book*, states something along the same lines: "For both Ahab and Ishmael, the blessed calms are not illusory; but they are transient. What abides is the awareness that in the loom of human life there is at least one storm for every calm and that this repetition can only be broken by the final harbor of the grave" (102). Ahab realizes this again in "The Symphony," when he claims, "'By heaven, man, we are turned round and round in this world, like yonder windlass, and Fate is the handspike...toil we may, we all sleep at last on the field'" (Melville 407). Ahab and Ishmael conclude that sorrow is a fundamental characteristic to living existence.

In "The Try-Works," Ishmael states, "So, therefore, that mortal man who hath more of joy than sorrow in him, that mortal man cannot be true—not true, or undeveloped...The truest of all men was the Man of Sorrows, and the truest of all books is Solomon's" (328). Ishmael refers to *Ecclesiastes*, in which King Solomon, the supposed author, states, "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities, all is vanity" (*Ecc.* 1.2). Ishmael and Ahab share Solomon's sentiments regarding the apparent hopelessness of life, and they also feel the truer man is he who acknowledges this. Ishmael states, "The willful world hath not got hold of unchristian Solomon's wisdom yet. But he who dodges hospitals and jails, and walks fast crossing grave-yards, and would rather talk of operas than hell...not that man is fitted to sit down on tombstones, and break the green damp mould with unfathomably wondrous Solomon" (Melville 328). Solomon states a little further in *Ecclesiastes*, "Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive" (*Ecc.* 4.2). This line from *Ecclesiastes* does not appear in *Moby Dick*; however, escape from life, or the apparent benefits of death, weighed heavily on Ishmael's and Ahab's minds.

There are many passages toward the end of the novel,

including Ahab's own speeches, which suggest Fate ultimately controls him. Ahab states, "'Ahab is for ever Ahab, man. This whole act's immutably decreed. 'Twas rehearsed by thee and me a billion years before this ocean rolled. Fool! I am the Fates' lieutenant; I act under orders. Look thou, underling! that though obeyest mine'" (Melville 418). However, I suggest Ahab uses the concept of the Fates as a tool to show his determination rather than the belief that he does not have control over his actions. Two points bring me to this conclusion. First, the preceding passages that imply death offers respite from, and insight into, life's mysteries. In Ishmael's telling, Ahab understands that death might bring these possibilities. Second, Ishmael specifically tells the reader that the conscious decision to disobey God leads to an end like Ahab's. Ishmael listens to Father Mapple tell a modified story of Jonah in the chapter titled "The Sermon." Mapple feels the story's importance lies in its message. He states:

"As sinful men, it is a lesson to us all, because it is a story of the sin, hard-heart-edness, suddenly awakened fears, the swift punishment, repentance, prayers, and finally the deliverance and joy of Jonah. As with all sinners among men, the sin of this son of Amittai was the willful disobedience of the command of God—never mind now what that command was, or how conveyed—which he found a hard command." (49)

I find no other reason for Ishmael to tell us about this sermon other than because he feels it parallels Ahab's end, the only difference being that Ahab does not survive his encounter with the leviathan. Furthermore, Ishmael does not share Father Mapple's feelings about the ramifications of willfully disobeying God, considering Ishmael's frequent unchristian comments throughout the novel and the benefits he sees in dying. Three aspects of Ishmael's and Ahab's philosophies on life are clearer by looking at the preceding passages:

- 1) Fate, chance, and free will all affect humans' paths through life
- 2) Life's unfathomable mystery leads to suffering and sorrow
- 3) Dying allows us both respite and an opportunity to understand life's mysteries

It is possible to accurately assess Ahab's demise and Ishmael's rescue now that their understanding of death is clearer.

The *Pequod* makes its final encounter with Moby Dick on the third day of the chase. Ahab's last claim exemplifies the conscious defiance and willful attack at the white whale and everything it represents. He states:

"Towards thee I roll, thou all-destroying but unconquering whale; to the last I grapple with thee; from hell's heart I stab at thee; for hate's sake I spit my last breath at thee. Sink all coffins and all hearses to one common pool! and since neither can be mine, let me then tow to pieces, while still chasing thee, though tied to thee, thou damned whale! Thus, I give up the spear!" (426)

Ahab's choice of the words thee, thou, hell, and damned all add religious or biblical tones to his final moments. His choice of the word "spear" as opposed to harpoon also exemplifies his sinful task, for it reminds us of the spear present at Jesus' crucifixion. The rope wraps around Ahab's throat after he throws the harpoon, and Moby Dick pulls him into the sea forever. Ishmael makes clear throughout the novel what awaits him in death, but is there anything to suggest Ahab definitely shares his viewpoint? A few more passages promote this possibility. Facts regarding Ahab's mother are confusing. Ahab states on the third day of the chase, "Oh, Stubb, I hope my poor mother's drawn my part-pay ere this; if not, few coppers will now come to her, for the voyage is up" (425). This must be a figure of speech, for we know his mother died a long time ago from the chapter "The Ship," in which Captain Peleg states, "Captain Ahab did not name himself. 'Twas a foolish, ignorant whim of his crazy, widowed mother, who died when he was only a twelvemonth old" (78). He talks of his mother again while addressing lightning upon the masts in "The Candles." He claims, "...now I do glory in my genealogy...But thou art by my fiery father; my sweet mother, I know not. Oh, cruel! what hast thou done with her? There lies my puzzle; but thine is greater. Thou knowest not how came ye, hence callest thyself unbegotten; certainly knowest not thy beginning, hence callest thyself unbegun" (383). Ahab sees his beginnings through the

scorching fire. Ahab lights the harpoon on the flames—the harpoon with which he will both stab through the wall and kill himself—thus connecting his final task with his beginnings.

Ishmael describes his survival and rescue in the Epilogue. Floating upon Queequeg's unused coffin and surrounded by passive predators, "a sail drew near, nearer, and picked me up at last. It was the devious-cruising *Rachel*, that in her retracing search after her missing children, only found another orphan" (427). Ishmael's choice of the word "devious" alludes to chance's primary role in life and the possibility that Ishmael's rescue secured his label as an orphan. The word means both "Deviating from the straight or direct course," and "Not straightforward; deceitful" (*American Heritage Dictionary* 196). *The Rachel* not only finds Ishmael by chance through her winding route, but also *creates* an orphan by trying to find one of her own lost children. Ishmael does not willingly go with *The Rachel*; she picks him up as if he is a lost child whose passivity lets happen to him what will. Ishmael's philosophical understanding of life and his reflections on his voyage are what make this conclusion logical.

Although the story ends here, we know a long time passes between his telling and the actual events because he states in "Extracts," "It will be seen that this mere painstaking burrower and grub-worm of a poor devil of a Sub-Sub appears to have gone through the long Vatican and street-stalls of the earth, picking up whatever random allusions to whales he could anyways find in any book whatsoever, sacred or profane" (Melville 8). The time the research takes gives Ishmael plenty of opportunity to reflect on his life, his voyage on the *Pequod*, and his current state. This is how he comes up with a world model that explains his fate. He feels himself an orphan before and after his encounter with Moby Dick. Ishmael needs to know why he continues to feel this way, and explains it through his concept of the loom of life. Fate and chance govern his path more than his own conscious decisions. His statements about those "stage managers," the Fates, and his survival resulting from his chance encounter with *The Rachel* exemplify his lack of free will. Ishmael also concludes that life's mysteries and pains can only be silenced through death

itself. Therefore, Ahab finds respite from life's sorrows and meets his paternity or origins under Ishmael's philosophical viewpoint. Being guided by fate and chance only, Ishmael cannot make the willing choice to die while encountering the white whale; he looks back and feels he did not have the opportunity to push past the mask. In searching for an answer after his voyage, Ishmael only increases his feelings about life. For in searching around the world for information on the whale, or that wall that is pushed against us all, he follows the author of *Ecclesiastes*, who claims, "For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow" (*Ecc.* 1.18).

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Evaluation: *Justin has developed a bold and complex (and maybe sometimes too ambitious?) thesis, and he has grounded his argument in specific textual and critical materials.*

'Til Death Do Us Part: An Examination of Kate Chopin's "The Story of An Hour" and William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily"

Lynne Erbach

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Barbara Njus

Assignment:

Develop a thesis and research paper to compare and contrast two items of literature; support the thesis through analysis and discussion of the two literary texts and of at least three relevant critical sources for each. Use MLA format for referencing in the body and on the Works Cited page.

The themes of women's roles in society, a man's strong influence in a woman's life, marriage, dreams for the future, society's traditions and death are successfully intertwined in the short stories, "The Story of an Hour" by Kate Chopin and "A Rose for Emily" by William Faulkner. Louise Mallard of "The Story of an Hour" and Emily Grierson of "A Rose for Emily" could not achieve the lives they envisioned because of their roles in society, the traditions of the late nineteenth century, and the men in their lives. They each react unconven-

tionally to the actions of these forces in order to cope with the changes taking place that are out of their control. The settings in both stories are also important since they complement the changes taking place in the lives of Louise and Emily. "The Story of an Hour" takes place in an afternoon, while Emily's experience occurs throughout her adulthood. Because "A Rose for Emily" takes place over several decades, there is more insight into Emily's life compared to Louise's life. However, Chopin provides enough information to allow the reader to understand Louise's situation. Chopin and Faulkner effectively explore the lives of Louise and Emily in different styles, creating timeless stories. The conclusions are so unexpected that reading the story more than once is necessary.

In "The Story of an Hour," there was a report of an accident and Louise's husband's name, Brently Mallard, was on the list of those who died. Her sister, Josephine, and Brently's friend, Richards, were with Louise when she learned of her husband's death. "She did not hear the story as many women have heard the same, with a paralyzed inability to accept its significance. She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister's arms" (Chopin 352). Louise was completely aware that Brently's death meant she was no longer married. This news begins a monumental change in Louise's life.

"When the storm of grief had spent itself she went away to her room alone. She would have no one follow her" (352). "The storm of grief..." (352) was an emotional catharsis for Louise, and this was the first time in the story Louise acts independently. She needed to be alone to think about the changes taking place. The symbolism of a storm and the spring season also extend to Louise's physical world: "The delicious breath of rain was in the air" (352). The possibility of rain would wash her physical world and allow new growth to take place.

When Louise learned about the death of her husband, she began a new season in her life, a time of hope and possibilities. "She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life. ...The notes of a distant song which some one was singing reached her faintly, and

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countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves" (352). "[The] new spring life" (352), the time of year the story takes place, reflects what is happening in Louise's life. The "...distant song...and countless sparrows...twittering in the eaves" (Chopin 352) were pleasant, exciting and provided an additional dimension to her new life. This could be the first time she heard these sounds. In the past, Louise could have been so absorbed in her own thoughts of what she wanted from life, that she either couldn't or didn't take the time to hear the sounds of life around her.

The description of Louise as she retreats to her room reveals, "She was young, with a fair, calm face, whose lines bespoke repression and even a certain strength. But now there was a dull stare in her eyes, whose gaze was fixed away off yonder on one of those patches of blue sky. It was not a glance of reflection, but rather indicated a suspension of intelligent thought" (353). The "...lines [of] repression..." (353) actually complement Louise's "...fair, calm face..." (353), which indicates the resignation she had for life as a married woman. Louise wasn't depressed, angry or deliriously happy with life; she was neutral. The fact her face showed "...a certain strength" (353) indicates Louise would find a way to take care of herself and survive in any situation either as a married woman or as a widow. After the initial reaction to Brently's death, Louise didn't think only about her loss and her marriage in a sentimental way. Rather, she seriously considered what his death meant to her and how her life would change.

Louise Mallard was in a one-sided marriage. "And yet she had loved him—sometimes. Often she had not" (353). Her husband loved her, and she did not love him with the same intensity. This is an unfortunate situation for both people in the marriage. Brently deserved to spend his life with someone who always loved him. Louise never says she dislikes her husband. Liking someone and loving someone are two different emotions. Both of these emotions are necessary for a good marriage, and they can vary in their intensity throughout a marriage. Louise's initial reaction to her husband's death shows she liked him as a person, just not as a husband. As a husband, Brently was seen as the person keeping Louise from being who she wanted to be.

In Barbara C. Ewell's essay, she discusses Chopin's writing style and the successful effect of drawing the reader into the room with Louise: "Chopin skillfully manipulates the point of view to intensify the final revelation and the shifting perspectives on Louise's life. 'Mrs. Mallard' appears to us at first from a distance; but the focus gradually internalizes, until we are confined within her thoughts, struggling with 'Louise' toward insight" (109). Throughout the story, Chopin's writing style makes it easy to understand and imagine Louise's experiences. Louise went through several physical and emotional reactions during the time spent in her room. The most significant occurs when Louise fully realizes her situation: she is no longer a married woman and can now live her life differently. "When she abandoned herself a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips. She said it over and over under her breath: "free, free, free!" The vacant stare and the look of terror that had followed it went from her eyes. They stayed keen and bright. Her pulses beat fast, and the coursing blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body" (353).

"Her fancy was running riot along those days ahead of her. Spring days, and summer days, and all sort of days that would be her own. She breathed a quick prayer that life might be long. It was only yesterday she had thought with a shudder that life might be long" (354). Louise was obviously thinking about the paths her life could take now that her marriage was over. The use of only the spring and summer seasons indicates an optimistic and naïve view of the future. Louise viewed her future without dark days, rainy days, the fall and winter seasons which would represent struggles and failure. Now she could do whatever she pleased with the "...all sort of days that would be her own" (354) and she really liked this idea since, "She breathed a quick prayer that life might be long" (354). Louise was also countering a thought she had earlier, "It was only yesterday she had thought with a shudder that life might be long" (354). Her religious beliefs and the social values of the time prevented Louise from leaving her husband. Unfortunately, at one time, Louise knew her own death was the only way out of her marriage. For Louise to want to die to escape her marriage is sad and confusing, because her life didn't appear to be completely unbearable.

“She knew that she would weep again when she saw the kind, tender hands folded in death; the face that never looked save with love upon her, fixed and gray and dead. But she saw beyond that bitter moment a long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely. And she opened and spread her arms out to them in welcome” (353). Brently was a kind and loving husband. Even though Louise recognized his kindness and love, she didn’t fully value these or their life together. This made her life difficult and awkward since she was living with someone who prevented her from living the life she wanted. Surely, she resented his kindness since it would be much easier to leave the marriage if her husband was abusive or uncaring. Mary E. Papke recognizes an important realization for Louise while she is thinking about Brently’s funeral: “Louise then immediately recognizes her two selves and comprehends how each will co-exist, the old finally giving way to the one new self. Mrs. Mallard will grieve of the husband who had loved her, but Louise will eventually revel in the ‘monstrous joy’ of self-fulfillment, beyond ideological strictures and the repressive effects of love...” (272). At the beginning of the story, Louise is referred to as Mrs. Mallard, while after the realization that she is free from the confines of marriage, she is referred to as Louise. When Louise married Brently, she surrendered her identity as Louise and became known as Mrs. Mallard. As a widow, she thought she could again be known as Louise and regain her individual identity. There would be a short time when Louise “... knew she would weep again when she saw the kind, tender hands folded in death...” (353) and she would be known as Mrs. Mallard, the widow of Brently Mallard. Louise thought she could tolerate this role for a short time, knowing she would soon be free to pursue the life she wanted to live.

Louise viewed marriage as an unequal arrangement between two people. In her future, “There would be no powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow-creature. A kind intention or a cruel intention made the act seem no less a crime as she looked upon it in that moment of illumination” (353). Louise concluded neither a man

nor a woman, for whatever reason, could choose to impress their “private will” (353) on another person. She considered this type of behavior as a “crime” (353). The transformation Louise experienced in the afternoon created a strong, independent woman. She was ready to build her own identity as Louise Mallard, not Mrs. Mallard, the wife or widow of Brently Mallard. To do this, Louise was going against societal beliefs. At the time the story was written, society did not view women as having equal social status to men. This new confidence showed when she left her room to join Josephine. “There was a feverish triumph in her eyes, and she carried herself unwittingly like a goddess of Victory” (354).

Unfortunately, Louise’s life as “...a goddess of Victory” (354) was short lived. After she left her room, Brently walked through the front door, unaware that people thought he was dead. Louise’s reaction to seeing her husband was her death, and “...they said she had died of heart disease – of joy that kills” (354). In Jennifer Hicks’ essay, two views of Louise’s death are discussed.

Indeed, if we take the last line of the story literally, we would understand that Mrs. Mallard was so enamored of her marriage to her husband that she died from the excitement of knowing he was still alive. Yet, obviously, Chopin is engaging in some heavy handed irony. Mrs. Mallard, the young “repressed” woman who began to look at her widowhood as a rebirth, similar to the “new spring” outside her window, did not die from such excitement. She expired from “a heart problem”—an instantaneous knowledge that her momentary glimpse into a “life she would live for herself,” a “life that might be long,” was not to be. (268)

At the beginning of the story, Louise was introduced as someone “...afflicted with a heart trouble...” (352). After learning about her marriage and what she really wanted in life her “heart trouble” (352) was caused by her marriage. It is reasonable to assume that Louise’s health improved with her situation and knowing her life would change. Louise did not like the idea of someone controlling or depending on her. Louise died from the

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knowledge that she would continue living as Brently's wife, not as the independent woman she wanted to be. Her wish to have a short life was fulfilled; if she couldn't have the life she wanted, then she would rather be dead (354). Brently would never know Louise was looking forward to life without him. He could live thinking Louise loved him and, "...she had died of heart disease – of joy that kills" (354).

Since the themes common to both stories were examined in "The Story of an Hour," the ability to understand their importance in "A Rose for Emily" is much clearer. Emily Grierson in "A Rose for Emily" views life differently than Louise Mallard. William Faulkner provides more insight into Emily's life, which creates a more developed character. Emily Grierson lived her entire life in the same town, Jefferson, and in the same home. Some people find this situation desirable, but in Emily's case she became "...a tradition, a duty, and a care; a sort of hereditary obligation upon the town..." (Faulkner 865). The people of Jefferson always had an opinion of the way Emily lived her life. Society's influence is assumed in Louise's life because of the year the story was written, 1894. However, the townspeople's actions and opinions are evident throughout "A Rose for Emily." Because of Emily's long life, she became well known to several generations of Jefferson's citizens. Not only was she a subject for discussion, but the townspeople would occasionally intercede if Emily was not behaving in what they thought was an acceptable manner. The eventual decay of Emily's home as a reflection of her life is similar to the use of the spring season to symbolize the transformation Louise experiences in her life:

It was a big, squarish frame house that had once been white, decorated with cupolas and spires and scrolled balconies in the heavily lightsome style of the seventies, set on what had once been our most select street. But garages and cotton gins had encroached and obliterated even the august names of that neighborhood; only Miss Emily's house was left, ...an eyesore among eyesores. (865)

There were primarily two men in control of Emily's life and future: her father and the man she wanted to

marry, Homer Barron. Louise's situation was different, since Brently was seen as a "...powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence..." (Chopin 353) in a marriage that kept her from having an identity of her own. Emily wanted to have exactly what Louise wanted to escape—marriage. Mr. Grierson's control of Emily was exhibited by preventing her from developing relationships with men. The narrator states, "None of the young men were quite good enough for Miss Emily and such. We [people of Jefferson] had long thought of them as tableau; Miss Emily a slender figure in white in the background, her father a spraddled silhouette in the foreground, his back to her and clutching a horsewhip, the two of them framed by the back-flung front door" (Faulkner 867). As long as her father was living, Emily was considered a child in her father's house, even though she was an adult. Emily's life continued to be influenced by Mr. Grierson after his death, making it difficult for her to leave the past and live in the present. (Volpe 101) Edmond Volpe explains the long-lasting effects of Mr. Grierson's behavior and how his behavior is opposite what was socially acceptable for the time:

Mr. Grierson's arrogance thwarts Emily's chances for marriage, and economic reality has no bearing upon his demeanor. In the traditional, paternal society into which she is born, marriage is the only acceptable role for women; by chasing away all her suitors as unworthy of a daughter of the Southern aristocracy, Mr. Grierson thwarts his daughter's opportunity to live, to free herself from the parental bonds and exist, support herself on her own. (Volpe 101)

Women's roles in society and societal beliefs had similar effects on Louise and Emily's lives: "...marriage [was] the only acceptable role for women..." (Volpe 101). It was not acceptable for Louise to leave her marriage, while Emily's father prevented her from marriage, making her life as an adult difficult and a constant concern for the people of Jefferson. Emily was not prepared to live without a husband because the women during this time were raised to become wives and mothers. Mr. Grierson should have encouraged relationships, so Emily could marry and continue the life she knew in the traditional

Southern lifestyle of the time. Instead, Emily spent the majority of her adult life cared for by her servant Tobe, a “Negro man” (Faulkner 870). To compound the situation, Mr. Grierson left Emily only the house when he died, as he did not have any money. Ultimately, neither Louise nor Emily could have the life they wanted.

Brently Mallard’s death presented Louise a chance to live a life free from the restrictions of marriage. For Emily, Mr. Grierson’s death allowed her the opportunity to have a relationship that could lead to marriage:

Presently we [townspeople] began to see him [Homer Barron] and Miss Emily on Sunday afternoons driving in the yellow-wheeled buggy and the matched team of bays from the livery stable. At first we were glad that Miss Emily would have an interest, because the ladies all said, “Of course a Grierson would not think seriously of a Northerner, a day laborer.” But there were still others, older people, who said that even grief could not cause a real lady to forget *noblesse oblige*....” (Faulkner 868)

Emily took responsibility for her future when she began her relationship with Homer. While the people of Jefferson were “glad” (868) Emily was involved with Homer, they countered this with their social traditions. She stepped out of her social class and was with a “...Northerner, a day laborer” (868), going against what was considered socially acceptable. The older people were sure Emily would not forget her father’s beliefs or her social status and that she would stop seeing Homer Barron.

Emily continued her relationship with Homer even though the town did not approve. “She carried her head high enough—even when we believed that she was fallen. It was as if she demanded more than ever the recognition of her dignity as the last Grierson; as if it had wanted that touch of earthiness to reaffirm her imperviousness” (869). Emily was the only living Grierson in Jefferson and wanted to be recognized as someone in the upper class. She found a man she wanted to spend time with and eventually marry. Because Emily was acting independently with a plan for her future, she did not allow others’ opinions to influence

her decision to have a relationship with Homer. Emily’s relationship with Homer is equivalent to Louise’s brief transformation to an independent woman free from marriage. Both women experienced life as they wanted it to be, without the intrusions from outside influences.

Despite the town’s continued objections to Emily’s relationship with Homer, they wanted her to marry:

When she had first begun to be seen with Homer Barron, we had said, “She will marry him.” Then we said, “She will persuade him yet,” because Homer himself had remarked... that he was not a marrying man.” Later we said, “Poor Emily,” behind the jalousies as they passed on Sunday afternoon in the glittering buggy, Miss Emily with her head high and Homer Barron with his hat cocked and a cigar in his teeth.... (Faulkner 869)

Louise’s and Emily’s level of emotional involvement did not equal that of their husband/suitor. In Louise’s marriage “...she had loved him—sometimes. Often she had not” (353) while Brently “...never looked save with love upon her...” (353). In Emily’s situation, her long-term goals were different than Homer’s. Homer represented Emily’s last chance for marriage. By society’s standards, Emily was aging, and there were no other men pursuing her. Everyone in the town knew Homer “...was not a marrying man” (869); yet, he wanted to have a relationship with Emily on some level. His actions are seen as they spent “...Sunday afternoons driving in the yellow-wheeled buggy and the matched team of bays from the livery stable” (868). Homer had to rent the buggy, and he would not have gone to this expense if he didn’t have an interest in Emily. With the knowledge that Homer “...was not a marrying man” (869), Emily was taking the chance that Homer would change his mind and marry her.

Emily’s cousins visited Jefferson to discourage Emily from marrying Homer because he was not in their social class. Homer left Jefferson during this time but returned when the cousins’ visit was finished. “A neighbor saw the Negro man [Emily’s housekeeper] admit him [Homer] at the kitchen door at dusk one evening. And that was the last we saw of Homer Barron” (870). The townspeople thought Homer had permanently left

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Jefferson and Miss Emily for good and "...for almost six months she did not appear on the streets. Then we knew that this was to be expected too; as if that quality of her father which had thwarted her woman's life so many times had been too virulent and too furious to die" (870). Becoming a recluse was understandable and socially acceptable when the relationship with Homer appeared to be over (Volpe 101). This situation illustrates the continued influence of her father, society, and Homer's control over Emily's desire for marriage. These three outside forces ended her life in a psychological way. Emily no longer lived in the present, but only in the comfortable days of the past.

"The one time in her life that she dares to let the past become a 'diminishing road,' that is, when she dates Homer, she is ridiculed, ostracized, shamed, and finally jilted. Her response is an effort to actually freeze time..." (Akers 259). Emily "[froze] time" (Akers 259) by dismissing "...city authorities..." (Faulkner 866), when they came to collect her taxes. "'See Colonel Sartoris.'" (Colonel Sartoris had been dead almost ten years.) "'I have no taxes in Jefferson..."' (866). Colonel Sartoris, Jefferson's mayor, decided Emily should never pay taxes after her father's death. After time passed, town leaders disagreed with the arrangement and made several attempts to collect the taxes. This discussion shows an example of when Emily was not living in the present time.

Just as Chopin used a description of Louise's face to illustrate the effects of life, Faulkner used this same technique to describe Emily approximately fifteen years after she became a recluse:

...a small, fat woman in black,...leaning on an ebony cane with a tarnished gold head. Her skeleton was small and spare; perhaps that was why what would have been merely plumpness in another, was obesity in her. She looked bloated, like a body long submerged in motionless water, and of that pallid hue. Her eyes, lost in the fatty ridges of her face, looked like two small pieces of coal pressed into a lump of dough.... (866)

Emily's physical appearance reflects the state of her life and home. The house is slowly decaying, and so is

Emily. While she mentally lives in the past, Emily and her physical surroundings show time passing.

"Now and then we would see her in one of the downstairs windows—she had evidently shut up the top floor of the house—like the carven torso of an idol in a niche, looking or not looking at us, we could never tell which" (870). Emily did not leave her home for forty years. This self-imposed isolation began after Homer was seen for the last time by Emily's neighbor and ended with her death at the age of seventy-four. Homer no longer involved in Emily's life is similar to Brently's death and the impact on Louise's life. Emily could not live the life she wanted without Homer, while Louise could only live the life she wanted without Brently. When marriage was not an option for Emily, she and her surroundings slowly decayed. But for Louise, with the knowledge that she could develop her own identity and not be Mrs. Mallard, she became "...a goddess of Victory" (Chopin 354).

The conclusions for "The Story of an Hour" and "A Rose for Emily" involve a character's death as a result of the actions by Homer and Brently. Because Brently was not involved in the accident and returned home unexpectedly, Louise's transformation ended. For Louise, her death was the only way to avoid the life she didn't want and to have some control in her marriage. Emily's situation is less clear than Louise's. It is known that Homer returned to Emily's home after her cousins left. What actually happened during their last night together can only be imagined from the description of the townspeople's discovery:

For a long while we [townspeople] just stood there, looking down at the profound and fleshless grin. The body [Homer Barron] had apparently once lain in the attitude of an embrace, but now the long sleep that outlasts love, that conquers even the grimace of love, had cuckolded him. What was left of him, rotted beneath what was left of the nightshirt, had become inextricable from the bed in which he lay; and upon him and upon the pillow beside him lay that even coating of the patient and biding dust. (Faulkner 871)

When Homer returned to Emily for the last time, in all likelihood he was going to tell her they would never

marry or Emily assumed the relationship would continue as it was, and there would not be a wedding. Emily had her relationships with men controlled by her father and would not let Homer also destroy her dreams. When it appeared the marriage would not take place, Emily made the decision to make Homer hers forever. Terry Heller defines Emily's actions and the unavoidable emotional reactions evoked when reading the description of Homer:

The scene is first pathetic, expressive of the fulfillment Emily never had, the mausoleum of a girl's hope covered with dust.... Grisly as it is, the scene is one of frustrated tenderness. If we are horrified at what Emily appears to have done, we are at the same time asked to pity the woman for whom this scene represents nearly all the love and companionship she has known for forty years.... (93)

After her father's death, Emily tried to live in the present and move away from the past by having a relationship with Homer with the intention of marriage. Homer's death was the only way for Emily to have the relationship she wanted, but not the life she dreamed. She could finally love someone, and if only in her imagination, he would be her husband.

Chopin and Faulkner use various issues to illustrate the struggles Louise and Emily encounter when their desires cannot be attained. Initially, the women's problems appear relatively insignificant, and their solutions desperate and shocking. To encourage a deeper look into the story's meaning, the authors use images, ideas and emotions in different ways. By doing this, the authors want the reader to avoid dismissing Louise and Emily, and stimulate understanding and compassion. If an author can stimulate the reader to look beyond their initial reaction to a story, as Chopin and Faulkner do, the reader has learned more than they realize.

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Evaluation: *Ms. Lynne Erbach contrasts these stories from a mature perspective on women and marriage, but with an understanding of the limitations from the historical context of each story. After a discussion of Louise Mallard's need for greater freedom outside marriage in Chopin's story, she deftly both discusses and contrasts Emily Grierson's need for a marriage relationship in Faulkner's story.*

Civil Swimming

Emily Fuglestad

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Andrew Wilson

Assignment:

Students were asked to argue with one of the essays we'd read. Emily, in this essay, argues with Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience."

Imagine yourself in a society that has a government. That is easily done. Now tweak the image in your brain to depict that government as one that doesn't govern. "Now wait a minute," you should be thinking, "what's the point of having a government that doesn't govern?" If you were to ponder this statement longer, more questions would probably start bombarding your mind. If the government doesn't govern, then who does? If the government doesn't set down laws, then how does everyone live and thrive without encroaching upon one another at best, and at worst behaving like uncivilized monkeys, wandering around and stealing each other's bananas? "Well," you might reason, "a person could look inside him- or herself, and decide on the moral way to behave, based on his or her own conscience." Would this work? Could this daydream actually be a feasible plan? Henry Thoreau would answer this question with a resounding "yes." In his opinion, the government has overstepped its bounds and restraints and has become a self-serving institution which functions to protect its own rather than others. Is the government flawless? Certainly not. Doesn't it serve some beneficial purpose to us? Yes, it does. While it may not be flawless (and nothing is), without a government we, as a country, would fall apart.

The first argument Thoreau would have against the government is our voting system. The majority rules, and the minority gets lost in the loud voice of the many. He finds this flawed because

After all, the practical reason why, when the power is once in the hands of the people, a majority are permitted, and for a long period continue, to rule is not because they are most likely to be in the right, nor because this seems fairest to the minority, but because they are physically the strongest. (Thoreau 371-372)

He is right, to an extent. Yes, the majority will not always be correct, but does that mean it is composed entirely of people who have no moral backbone? What if people all voted a certain way, or joined a certain side because they believed it was true or the lesser of two evils? Does that mean they are still weak and lack a political backbone? No, this does not mean that in the very least.

Obviously, not everyone who joins a certain political party or votes for a certain leader has looked at all the facts, or even some of them. What is to be done to fix this? What is the better way to elect and form laws? Henry Thoreau's solution would be to have each man follow his own conscience. If we don't, he says, "Why has every man a conscience then?" He forgets one thing. There isn't one universal conscience or inner voice that guides everyone. What makes one person's conscience send red warning flags may not even give another person the smallest twinge of guilt. No person is alike on the outside to another, so can we be expected to have parallel convictions? Let us, once again, imagine that we did do this. There would be widespread chaos throughout the country. What's wrong with chaos? Isn't the preference of peace over chaos just another personal preference? To an extent, chaos is unavoidable. This world will never be a place of utter tranquility, but does that mean that if we already deal with chaos now, we might as well add a little more to the plate? Who is it going to hurt? Looking at a little more chaos with unlimited freedom compared to being governed with more peace but still noticeable chaos, it would seem like the better choice would be every man or woman for him- or herself.

However, if one would just turn his or her thoughts inward to the home, he or she would find the reality of this question to be quite different. Which would be a preferable place to grow up in: one that, when you walk in the door, you are bombarded with chaos? I'm not just referring to spontaneity, but rather a home that is full of disorder and unhappiness. Maybe your parents are arguing and your younger siblings are jumping on you while the dog tugs at your sleeve clamoring for attention and some dog food. People cannot thrive in this kind of situation. Now picture a different atmosphere: when you walk in the door, the smell of freshly baked cookies reaches your nostrils, and you are greeted with a friendly hello accompanied with a tasty delectable dessert. After eating, you perhaps enjoy a quick game of cards before retiring to your welcoming room. Which one of these situations would be preferable? I am confident that people would prefer a warm cookie

to a mangy dog hanging on their sleeve. The same is true about our society. Without some form of decision making based on a concrete set of rules, there would be no way to live and not only live but thrive. Yes, it would be possible to live with the mentality of every man for himself, but there's a difference between truly living and just moving around. In a perfect world, everyone could listen to their consciences and live in harmony with each other, but this is clearly not that perfect world.

This example may be flawed since it's not a direct correlation to our society. That being the case, think for a minute about our nation's speed limits. The basic speed laws are designed to protect us, but sometimes they can seem so inconvenient. If we are running behind schedule, they seem to encroach upon our right to decide how to get somewhere and how fast we will get there. Imagine yourself driving along a country road early in the morning when there are no pedestrians or other motorists present. Also, add in the factor that you have to be at an important business meeting and you are running 20 minutes late. Isn't it all right in cases like this to stretch the speed limit 15 to 20 mph above what the posted sign says? Whom is it going to hurt? Probably no one, unless there is a policeman waiting for a speeding motorist like yourself. Now picture yourself in the exact same situation except now there are other cars on the road. Is it okay to speed now? Shouldn't people be able to determine the right speed for themselves in their own cars? Of course not! The definition of a basic speed law is "a speed that is safe and prudent for ideal conditions." Laws like the speeding law, or even the law of stopping at a red light, are there to make our driving time safer and easier.

How is a person to protest against the government? If you don't like the voting system, but don't want to start a rebellion with firearms and violent protests, what is the way to show that you disagree? Or, as Thoreau puts it, "How does it become a man to behave toward the American Government today? I answer, that he cannot without disgrace be associated with it. I cannot for an instant recognize that political organization as my government which is the slave's government also" (Thoreau 373).

Thoreau believes that we should not associate with the government. We should remove ourselves from its programs and titles. In fact, one way to do this, as Thoreau himself did, is to not pay our taxes. Why fund the evil that is oppressing us? To oppose the Mexican War, which he saw as an attempt to gain more land for slavery, Thoreau did not pay his taxes and as a result spent a night in jail. We can conclude that if we disagree with our government, and we most assuredly should, according to Thoreau, then we should remove ourselves from our government as a way of peaceful protest. If, as a result of our civil disobedience, we spend a night in jail, then it is not a night that is lost. If family members have to be left behind with our protests, then they will learn to be self-sufficient, and there will be no problem. But what if this family left behind is a 5-year-old son or daughter? What if the person who wants to protest is barely getting along with the money she is making? What if it is a single parent struggling to keep her family going? Should she pull their children out of school so they won't be associating with their government? Should she rob their children of education to satisfy their own civil disobedience needs? The biggest flaw with civil disobedience, as Henry Thoreau proposes it, is that he doesn't take into consideration the effect it will have on others. Yes, Thoreau may have answers for these questions, but he does not provide them. It is clear that Thoreau was passionate about civil disobedience; he spent a night in jail! However, the next day he was released because his rich aunt paid his dues. What happens to those who have no rich aunt waiting to bail them out? What happens when the woman who was working as a waitress to put food on her children's plates gets thrown in jail because she didn't pay her taxes? Does she have a rich aunt waiting to whisk her away from the jail house? The answer is most likely no. There are some scenarios when the end will justify the pain it took to get there. Is disagreeing with one's government one of them?

There are some instances where it becomes necessary to protest the actions of the government. Thinking that we should just accept every single thing the government throws at us and just bite the bullet and move on is defective logic. Sometimes it becomes crucial to

stand up for our beliefs no matter what the cost. Rosa Parks' bus boycott was certainly against the law. It greatly affected her own person, family, and the entire culture. It was worth the risk. Racism is wrong. To just sit in your own section of the bus and allow the government to tell you it's wrong to mingle with people of a different race compromises your dignity. Doing so defers to the authority, which says that you are somehow lower than your white counterparts. We must choose our battles wisely. In Thoreau's day, some civil disobedience was required. Even right now in this very time period some protesting may be in order, but we must remember to weigh the pros and cons before we jump headlong into civilly fighting for a cause. We must remember that the things we say and do directly impact those around us. We must not let this stop us from standing up for a cause, however. We must learn to be strong in our convictions, and set our morals, to believe in something, and believe whole-heartedly, believe and throw our whole selves into it. It's like swimming in a river with a strong current. Sometimes we should swim along with the current, but if the current travels in a path that is morally wrong, we must plant our feet on the riverbed and then begin to swim the other way.

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Evaluation: *I love Thoreau, but I love Emily's essay, too. I think she makes some wonderful points here, and there's also something healthy about a seventeen-year-old student debating with a legendary rhetorician.*

Undergoing a True Metamorphosis

Gladys Gonzalez

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Andrew Wilson

Assignment:

Write a literary research paper.

The following is a popular saying in Spanish: “Aunque la mona se vista de seda, mona se queda.” When translated into English, the saying is as follows: “It does not matter how much a monkey dresses up, it will always be a monkey.” Although the quote portrays a monkey attempting to become humanlike by changing her appearance, the quote is intended to allude to human behavior. There are times when individuals attempt to change their identity by simply altering their physicality. Even though these individuals do develop a distinct outer appearance, their mindset remains static. Gregor Samsa of Franz Kafka’s “The Metamorphosis” is an exemplar of a character that undergoes a physical transformation; one morning he wakes up and realizes that he has turned into an insect during his sleep. Even though Gregor undergoes a metamorphosis similar to that undergone by the monkey, his mindset remains static.

Besides experiencing physical metamorphoses, individuals can also experience spiritual metamorphoses. The narrator of Raymond Carver’s “Cathedral” is an example of such an individual. Even though both Gregor and the narrator of “Cathedral,” who remains nameless throughout the story, undergo metamorphoses, the narrator of “Cathedral” undergoes a more noteworthy transformation as a result of drawing a cathedral with his eyes closed. Although it might seem outrageous to claim that a man who becomes an insect changes less than a man who simply draws a cathedral with his eyes closed, it is true due to the fact that unlike Gregor, “Cathedral’s” narrator’s mindset undergoes a dynamic change. As a result of his metamorphosis, the narrator of “Cathedral” is able to gain knowledge about humanity.

Kafka begins “The Metamorphosis” by informing the reader that Gregor had “unquiet dreams” (393) the night that his physical metamorphosis occurs. The fact that Gregor transformed into an insect during his sleep appears to the dumbfounded reader like an extreme change. However, this transformation does not seem so extreme when one focuses on the events that occurred in Gregor’s life before his metamorphosis. The fact that

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Gregor's dreams were unquiet is a "result of an inner unrest" (Spann 201). Thus, one can assume that he already lived a troublesome life before he became an insect. Furthermore, one can also assume that Gregor's metamorphosis originated not when he became an insect, but instead when his father entrusted him with the responsibility to support his family; this event occurred when Gregor's father's business went bankrupt. After selling his business, Mr. Samsa decided to retire from the workforce, leaving young Gregor to become the sole provider for his family. At this time, Gregor's main concern was "to arrange everything so that the family could forget as soon as possible the financial misfortune that had brought them to a state of complete despair. And so he had begun to work with pronounced fervor" (Kafka 406). Gregor was forced to work long hours in an oppressive environment. In addition, his malicious supervisor never treated him with respect. Thus, Gregor's "metamorphosis begins with the psychic deformities demanded by the workplace" (Gavriel 452).

With his hard-earned money, Gregor was able to provide his family with a respectable mode of living. Gregor's salary was decent enough to allow him to rent a large apartment for his family to dwell in and also decent enough to allow him to hire a servant and a cook. Accordingly, his mother and sister did not have to complete any laborious chores. This state of luxury allowed "his mother, who suffered from asthma, for whom even a stroll through the apartment was considerable exertion," to rest all day (407). Likewise, Gregor's sister lived an undemanding life. Her "lifestyle... had consisted of dressing herself neatly, sleeping late... and above all playing the violin" (407). Mr. Samsa had already been out of the workforce five years when Gregor turned into an insect. He basically spent most of his day sitting around and eating; thus, he had "put on a great deal of weight and had become downright sluggish" (407). Even though they were living a luxurious life, Gregor's family did not feel guilty that Gregor was making a sacrifice for them. "They simply got used to it—the family, as well as Gregor" (406). Consequently, Gregor's good deeds remained unnoticed.

One of the reasons why Gregor was making a sacrifice in order to support his family is that he had to endure the "psychic deformities" of being a traveling salesman: "[W]hat a strenuous profession I've chosen—traveling day in, day out!" (394). Being a traveling salesman forced Gregor to be on the road continuously; he was never home. Even when Gregor was not working, he would spend his free time thinking about work. Gregor would constantly find himself reading the train schedules in order to prepare for his next day's trip. Gregor worked non-stop without taking a break for himself. Consequently, Gregor was not able to maintain a healthy social life. He had "no friends or lovers or social life" (Goldfarb 198). Being on the road was especially hard for Gregor because he was always coming and going to different places. This made it impossible for Gregor to make real friends, let alone date someone. The people he did meet remained as acquaintances, nothing more than that. The critic Ben-Ephraim Gavriel states that "Gregor's insecure relationships and compulsive schedule create an insectan life" (453). This furthermore proves that Gregor already led an insect kind of life even before he turned into an insect.

Even though Gregor was aware that his family was not appreciative of his hard work and even though he detested his job, Gregor did not ever truly contemplate quitting his job, not even during the morning he woke up and realized that he had transformed into an insect during his sleep. The only reason why Gregor did not quit his job is that he knew that he had to support and pay off his family's debt: "If it weren't for my parents, I would have given notice long ago.... Once I have the money to pay off my parent's debt... I'll definitely do it" (394). His devotion to his family is the main reason why Gregor is so committed to his profession. Gregor does not think about himself, only about working vigorously to support his family. Consequently, when Gregor wakes up that morning with the physicality of an insect, he is not worried about the physical change that he has gone through. Instead, he worries about getting ready for work: "In the meantime, I have to get up—my train leaves at five" (394). Gavriel believes

that Gregor sacrifices “himself to a familial symbiosis” (455). However, Gavriel disregards the fact that even though Gregor sacrifices himself for his family’s well being, his family never does anything good for him. One would more accurately describe Gregor as being part of a one-sided relationship because, instead of being part of a “familial symbiosis,” the relationship he has with his family is not mutually beneficial.

Evidently, the metamorphosis that Gregor undergoes does not alter his mindset. As previously stated, there is never an instance when Gregor worries about himself or about the horrific transformation he has gone through. Instead, he continues worrying about his family’s well being. Gregor feels guilty that his family has been forced to work in order to support themselves because his insect physicality prevents him from working: “Whenever the conversation turned towards the necessity of earning money, Gregor... burned with shame and sorrow” (407). Instead of burning with shame and sorrow due to the fact that he is a horrendous insect, Gregor burns with shame because he can no longer support his family.

Although the critic Sheldon Goldfarb states that there are “fleeting moments” when Gregor “feels resentment” toward his family, I do not agree with him. Even when his family ignores him and refuses to acknowledge that he is the insect that is living in their home, Gregor’s devotion to his family remains unchanged. The night before his death, Gregor overhears his sister telling her parents that the creature cannot be Gregor and that they must “get rid of it” (419). However, despite his sister’s and parents’ distance, Gregor’s view of them remains unchanged. In fact, “He thought of his family with compassion and love,” even though they all consent that they have to get rid of him (420). It is evident that Gregor’s mindset does not change as a result of the physical metamorphosis he undergoes, because he is unable to get angry with his family even though his family mistreats and disrespects him.

Gregor’s mindset remains unchanged because he does not possess the healthy kind of narcissism entrusted to every human to maintain self-respect and self-

love. Consequently, he is unable to become angry when somebody disrespects or takes advantage of him. However, there is a slight chance that Gregor is not culpable for his static mindset. If one were to blame someone for Gregor’s selfless mindset it would be his father, “the mighty master of the family” (Spann 201). Mr. Samsa is responsible for shaping Gregor into the obedient, selfless individual that he is. One can assume that Mr. Samsa trained Gregor to think that “his father must [always] know best” and to never question his authority (Goldfarb 200). For instance, when Gregor overhears that his father has saved a significant sum of money obtained from selling his business for himself, Gregor becomes “overjoyed at this unexpected foresight and thriftiness” (Kafka 407). He is not angered by the fact that his father had never informed him that he had saved this sum of money. Mr. Samsa could have used this money to pay off the debt he himself had acquired. And although “Gregor had been needlessly enslaved to an oppressive existence... he responds with joy to the knowledge of betrayal” (Gavriel 455).

If anyone undergoes a metamorphosis in this piece of work it is Grete, Gregor’s teenage sister. The reader is able to observe how she transforms from a childish, self-indulgent girl to a mature young woman. The first time that she is presented in the story, Grete is portrayed as a little girl on the verge of weeping; she is distressed that Gregor will not open his door for her:

At the other side of the door, his sister fretted softly: “Gregor? Are you ill? Do you need something?”...Gregor answered, “I’m just about ready to go,”.... His sister whispered: “Gregor, open up, I beg you.” (Kafka 395)

Also, as previously indicated, Grete’s sole obligation is to dress herself up and practice playing the violin. However, in the middle of the story, she is forced to find a job in order to help her father support the family. This deed is very important because it proves that Grete is leaving her childish role behind and becoming more responsible; she has acquired a new sense of devout duty towards her family. Then, the last scene of the story presents the reader with the new, transformed Grete.

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Not only has Grete transformed mentally, she has also transformed physically. Mr. and Mrs. Samsa suddenly notice that Grete is now a beautiful young woman and that their new mission is to find her a suitor.

The narrator of Raymond Carver's "Cathedral" experiences a more dramatic metamorphosis than Gregor's physical metamorphosis; he undergoes a positive awakening. In order to achieve such a transformation, the narrator requires the guidance of Robert, his wife's blind friend. Before he meets Robert, the narrator leads a dull life. Every evening, the narrator usually "smoked dope and stayed up as long as [he] could before [he] feel asleep" (Carver 512). Since the narrator watches television by himself on a daily basis, he becomes secluded from the rest of the world. In a conversation that he has with his wife prior to Robert's arrival, the narrator says the following: "I don't have any blind friends" (507). "You don't have any friends" is his wife's reply to his comment (507). As Mark Facknitz states, the narrator "is numb and isolated, a modern man for whom integration with the human race would be so difficult that it is futile" (294).

Besides isolating the narrator from society, the television also presents the narrator with incorrect information about the human race. From the incongruous information the narrator obtains while watching late-night television shows, he develops a narrow mentality. As the critic Nelson Hathcock states, "The narrator's prejudices and cynicism comprise limitations from which he has been too boorish or lazy to free himself" (37). The narrator's narrow-mindedness is so extensive that he develops a theory that the blind are unable to carry out any ordinary task because they cannot see what they are doing. Likewise, he also creates a stereotype about what blind people are like. The narrator concludes that the blind wear dark sunglasses to cover their deformed eyes, that they do not smoke, and that they do not have a sense of humor. Due to the fact that the narrator possesses a bad perception of the blind, having a blind man in his "house was not something [he] looked forward to" (Carver 506). However, the narrator's predispositions about blind people are proven inaccurate as the story

progresses and he gets to know Robert: "his confrontation with the blind man, has astounding effects on his [the narrator's] own vision" (Hathcock 37).

When the narrator sees his "wife laugh as she park[s] the car" on her way back from picking Robert up from the train station, he is astonished (Carver 508). He thinks that the fact that Robert was able to make his wife laugh is "[j]ust amazing" (508). This feat is inconsistent with the narrator's perception that the blind lack a sense of humor and thus cannot laugh or make someone else laugh. What furthermore astonishes the narrator is the fact that Robert is able to open the car door and get out of the car by himself without being assisted by his wife. Later in the evening, the narrator is astonished by Robert's ingenuity once more. While eating dinner, the narrator notices that Robert is able to make use of a fork and a knife. In fact, the narrator "watche[s] with admiration as he use[s] his knife and fork on the meat" (510). In general, Robert does not fit the narrator's stereotype of what a blind person should be like. Robert's ability to carry out ordinary tasks without assistance initiates a change in the narrator's perception of the blind. As Hathcock explains, up to this point, "The story...has shown that sympathy and admiration for others are novel feelings for this speaker" (Hathcock 38). Because the narrator felt admiration toward Robert, one can already see that the narrator's mindset is changing.

It is after dinner, when the narrator and Robert are watching television, that the narrator of "Cathedral" undergoes the spiritual metamorphosis. The mere fact that the narrator has allowed Robert to join him while watching television is a small step toward his total metamorphosis. He is used to watching television on his own and thus he has made a bubble around himself that in turn isolates him from the outside world. Thus, it is peculiar of the narrator to have another person, especially a blind one, join him in his daily ritual. Instead of dreading Robert's presence like in the beginning of the story, the narrator is "'glad for the company'" (512).

The narrator's appreciation of Robert's company becomes evident when they are watching a late-night

television program about cathedrals. The narrator asks Robert if he has “any idea what a cathedral is” (513). Robert responds that his knowledge about cathedrals encompasses only what he has heard from the television program. Since this is true, Robert asks the narrator to describe what a cathedral looks like. The narrator agrees to help Robert discover what a cathedral looks like but fails at verbally describing a cathedral. He feels disappointed and wants to give up, but Robert encourages him to try something different: “We’ll draw one together. Get us a pen and some heavy paper” (514). Thus, the narrator searches his house for a pen and a piece of paper on which he can draw a cathedral. When he finally finds a pen and a piece of paper, they begin to draw the cathedral.

The fact that Carver chose to have the two characters draw a cathedral is significant. A cathedral is a place where devotees go for spiritual guidance. People are able to communicate with a higher authority and thus achieve enlightenment. Consequently, people are able to rid themselves of prejudices and adopt a mindset that promotes veneration for all men. This is exactly the mindset that the narrator adopts after he draws the cathedral.

While the two characters are drawing the cathedral, Robert “closes his hand” over the narrator’s hand (515). It is as if he were the one guiding the narrator, not the other way around. When they are close to being done with the drawing, Robert asks the narrator to close his eyes and continue drawing the cathedral. The narrator explains that this experience “was like nothing else in his life up to” that point (515). Even when Robert tells the narrator to open his eyes and look at the drawing, the narrator keeps his eyes closed. The narrator chooses not to open his eyes “for he is learning what he has long been incapable of perceiving” (Facknitz 295).

For the first time in his life, the narrator has done something without the assistance of his eyesight. Not only is he able to draw a cathedral with his eyes closed, he is also successful at it. Thus, he realizes that is possible to carry out any ordinary task without the assistance of eyesight. The narrator finally understands that igno-

rance, like the kind of ignorance he possessed before meeting Robert, is what causes a person to be blind and thus prevents a person from carrying out ordinary actions. The narrator is released “from the figurative blindness...which leads him to trivialize human feelings and needs” (Facknitz 293). Since the narrator is finally aware of other’s feelings, it is at this point in the story that the narrator’s metamorphosis is concluded.

When the story began, the narrator was isolated and ignorant of the world around him. But now, he is aware that the blind are able to do ordinary things even though they are not able to employ their eyesight. Consequently, when the narrator keeps his eyes closed and sees the drawing with his fingers, “he learns to feel empathy” (Facknitz 295). For once in his life he felt what it was like to be a blind person; he felt that “it was something [he] ought to do” (515). He felt that it was important for him to experience what blind people endure every day. It is evident that the narrator of “Cathedral” undergoes a spiritual metamorphosis; he is now capable of feeling empathy toward others.

His realization of empathy allows the narrator to connect with humanity: “My eyes were...closed. I was in my house...But I didn’t feel like I was inside anything” (515). As previously stated, the cathedral is symbolic. Facknitz states, “The cathedral...is the space that does not limit...”(295). By drawing the cathedral, the narrator transports himself inside of the cathedral. Since he is emblematically inside of the cathedral and the cathedral “does not limit,” the narrator is no longer restricted by his previous state of mind from observing the world optimistically. Thus, if the narrator is no longer inside of his house, limited by the television and the four walls, he is able to go out into the world and be open-minded with the new people that he meets.

Overall, the narrator is able to get rid of his ignorant and prejudiced mindset; thus, he is able to view each person as a human being and able to connect with him or her because there is nothing, including the television, to hold him back in his previous ignorant state. It can be concluded then that the narrator’s metamorphosis is more significant than Gregor’s metamorphosis.

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Although Gregor's physicality does undergo a significant transformation, his mindset remains static. In both instances, when he possesses a human appearance and when he possesses an insect appearance, Gregor lives in a "hostile universe" and he "cannot stand up to it" (Goldfarb 201). He remains the same weak person, as the monkey, despite his silky clothes, remains a monkey. Thus, one can argue that the critic Meno Spann is incorrect when he says that Gregor "becomes a true human being in spite of his monstrous shape" (Spann 206). Instead of becoming a true human, Gregor becomes a true insect. Ever since he had begun working to support his family, Gregor had led an insect type of life. Thus, the metamorphosis he underwent merely allowed him to take on the body of his true self.

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Evaluation: *This is a model example of an English 102 research essay. Gladys chose to compare Gregor Samsa from Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" to the unnamed narrator of Carver's "Cathedral." On the surface, the former character changes radically while the latter character, Carver's narrator, changes minimally. But true to her character, Gladys wrote way, way past the surface to reveal deeper truths.*

Latin America and CAFTA: An Unfair Agreement

Carson Griffis

Course: History 121 (Latin American History)

Instructor: David Richmond

Assignment:

Research a current social, political, economic, or environmental issue facing Latin America.

Describe the U.S. influence on the issue and whatever solutions you would propose.

The most significant guiding factor in the United States' current involvement in Latin America is the expansion of free trade throughout the region. Both President Bill Clinton and President George W. Bush have pushed to expand the arena of liberalized trade throughout all of Latin America. Beginning with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in the 1990s and the more recent Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and its component the Central American Free Trade Agreement, the United States government has hoped to establish a situation of liberalized trade with Latin America. CAFTA, which was signed by President Bush in August of 2005, aims to eliminate tariffs between the United States and six Latin American nations: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and the Dominican Republic (Lemus and Sanchez, 2005, p. 79).

Through CAFTA, many feel that more liberalized trade and open markets will allow for greater exchange and cooperation, benefiting all of the nations involved (Lemus and Sanchez, 2005, p. 79). It seems logical to

think that with more trade, more jobs and economic stimulation would follow. Through CAFTA, the Latin American nations involved intend to try to alleviate the poverty that plagues many of their nations and to have major growth in their economies.

Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) may seem to promote the economic growth sought by the nations involved with CAFTA; however, they often neglect some of the most essential problems that afflict Latin America today. While FTAs may increase the number of jobs in a country, they often fall short in areas such as labor rights, environmental protection, and working conditions. In fact, the growth that is often caused by FTAs is too often not experienced to its fullest in the poorer nations involved in them. In this case, CAFTA will not benefit the nations of Latin America the way that it is intended to.

In order to examine the problems that CAFTA will have in Latin American nations, it is essential to understand how other FTAs have affected similar nations, specifically the effects of NAFTA on Mexico. According to the North American Congress on Latin America, since NAFTA went into effect in 1994, workers in Mexico have encountered stagnant real wages and a large decline in employment opportunities ("Mexican Workers Since NAFTA," 2005, p. 1). The group that has been hit hardest by NAFTA is Mexican agricultural workers. Mexican farmers have not been able to compete with the \$7 billion federal subsidies given to U.S. farmers, which allows them to undersell Mexican agricultural products and dominate the market (Dellios, 2003, p. 52). This has led to great migrations of Mexican workers both into the urban areas of Mexico and into the United States. In fact, the net migration flow from Mexico to the United States has tripled since NAFTA was implemented ("Mexican Workers Since NAFTA," 2005, p. 1). While Central American nations are different than Mexico, it is not unreasonable to expect similar effects from CAFTA.

The first problem that CAFTA will cause is that of labor rights. Many workers in Central America already face poor working conditions and a lack of labor rights, and CAFTA will only worsen these problems. For example, CAFTA contains a stipulation for the resolu-

tion of disputes similar to that of NAFTA's Chapter 11, which allows corporations to sue governments for regulations that they believe infringe on their rights, which could include stricter labor laws (Engler, 2004, p. 1). Also, CAFTA will diminish the pro-worker safeguards that were established by the Caribbean Basin Trade Partnership Act. While this previous agreement demanded that participating nations upheld internationally recognized labor norms, CAFTA only requires that government enforce their own laws, which are often much weaker (Engler, 2004, p. 2). In fact, CAFTA does not require that the labor laws of participating countries comply with the standards established by the United Nations or with the International Labor Organization; it only encourages nations to make an effort to observe these norms (Plimpton, 2005, p. 1). The only enforcement of labor laws that the agreement establishes is a fine system. However, it is more likely that nations will only remedy violations if it is more cost-effective than simply paying the fine (Plimpton, 2005, p. 1). CAFTA lacks the labor regulations necessary to pull the already impoverished working classes of Central America out of the desperate situations they are in.

Another drawback of CAFTA for Latin American nations is the issue of Intellectual Property protection. By protecting the intellectual property of U.S. corporations, CAFTA could bind Latin American nations into new patent rules that would hurt the work of pharmaceutical companies. In the example of HIV drugs, generic competition has caused an overall decrease in the cost of these drugs. However, by ensuring that U.S. corporations' intellectual property is protected, the development of new drugs is discouraged in Latin America, which will lead to an increase in the cost of potentially life-saving drugs (Engler, 2004, p. 1). The pharmaceutical regulations instituted by CAFTA will raise the price of essential medicines seven hundred percent by limiting access to affordable generic drugs (Lemus and Sanchez, 2005, p. 78). Also, under the TRIPs-plus standard (Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property), private companies within FTA nations can obtain monetary damages for government actions, and attempts by a government to regulate biotechnology products — such as a warning

issued about genetically modified foods — could result in that government being sued by foreign investors (Kuanpoth, 2004, p. 115).

Another problem that faces Latin America with the onset of CAFTA is the lack of environmental regulations within the agreement. In nations such as Guatemala, recent landslides caused by heavy rains led to massive casualties. Part of the reason behind such landslides is the deforestation and overall degradation of hillside terrain, which allows it to be easily swept down into lowland regions. CAFTA would only worsen such environmental issues. One example of this is the investor provision of the agreement that allows corporations to sue foreign governments if they pass any environmental regulation that could threaten their future earnings (White, 2005, p. 1).

Lastly, the overall economic growth of Latin American nations under CAFTA would not be substantial. In the example of Mexico under NAFTA, of all the jobs created between mid-2000 and mid-2004, sixty-five percent came without any sort of benefits and frequency without a written contract (“Mexican Workers Since NAFTA,” 2005, p. 1). Over 1.3 million Mexican farmers lost their livelihoods because of cheap, subsidized agricultural products from the United States pouring in (Lemus and Sanchez, 2005, p. 78). In this case, many of these Mexican farmers sought employment in border factories known as maquiladoras, only to see those jobs shipped to even cheaper labor markets in Asia (Lemus and Sanchez, 2005, p. 78). Central America could face a similar unemployment and migration problem under CAFTA. Also, by creating a situation in which large U.S. corporations can have such influence that they can sue Latin American governments over generic pharmaceutical competition and environmental regulations, small businesses are discouraged from starting up. With a U.S.-dominated market backed by massive subsidies from the federal government, the potential small business owners of Latin America would be unable to compete with the larger American corporations. This creates an environment in which innovation—the very foundation of a capitalist system—is stifled by eliminating smaller competition.

It is obvious that under CAFTA, Central American

nations would face serious problems. In order to correct these issues, it is important for all of the nations involved to create more regulations involving labor rights and environmental standards, and to lessen the control that U.S. corporations would have on Central American governments. One way to correct the problems of CAFTA and still encourage trade between the U.S. and Central America would be through the implementation of a fair trade agreement. An example of the benefit of fair trade policies on the poor can be seen through the use of fair trade coffee. Some brands of coffee, such as Cafédirect, have begun to obtain coffee from sources that meet certain social and environmental standards, as well as purchasing beans at fixed, long-term prices. Even Starbucks agreed to do this in 2002, after years of being lobbied (“What Can We Do?” 2004, p. 22). The use of fair trade coffee has had major benefits for coffee farm workers. According to a Peruvian coffee grower, fair trade practices have had a huge effect: “Our prices have started improving, and this has improved living conditions for the coffee growers’ families. This is our biggest reward and what we most appreciate” (“What Can We Do?” 2004, p. 22). This kind of corporate responsibility and consideration of workers’ rights needs to be a larger part of FTAs, especially CAFTA. Latin American workers already face seemingly insurmountable poverty, part of which could be alleviated through the use of fair trade policies. According to Sherrod Brown, (2005) “Trade policy should benefit also workers and small business, not only our largest corporations. Our trade agreement should protect the environment and food safety. Labor standards should be adopted to respect American workers and lift up workers in poor countries.”

Over the next five years, unless an overhaul of many issues engrained in CAFTA is performed, Latin American nations will see no improvement of their economic situations. While trade may increase between the U.S. and the six Latin American countries, the workers and small businesses of Central America will face more severe poverty. The jobs that will be created through CAFTA will be low-wage manufacturing jobs, causing further migration from rural areas and into the United States. Also, as attempts may be made to

increase labor rights or create stricter environmental restrictions, U.S. corporations may abandon Central America in favor of nations that could not require such costly restrictions such as those in Southeast Asia. Overall, the future for the Central American nations involved with CAFTA seems dim unless U.S. corporations adopt more responsible policies and the problems of labor rights, intellectual property, environmental degradation, and economic stagnation are addressed.

CAFTA is another agreement in the long line of FTAs that have been established by the United States in the past decade. While intending to promote trade and economic growth by eliminating tariffs between the participant countries, FTAs often neglect the poorest sectors of society and hurt the economics of the poorer nations involved. The lack of labor and environmental regulations, the immense power placed in the hands of U.S. corporations involving intellectual property, the creation of low-wage jobs, and the discouragement of small business competition and innovation are all potential drawbacks of CAFTA. Without better consideration of these issues, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Honduras, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and El Salvador will all face serious obstacles in the coming years. A fair trade policy would be better suited for dealing with the problems facing Latin America today. Instead, the United States under George W. Bush’s administration has created an agreement that benefits only certain groups of wealthy people: “CAFTA, as other trade agreements, was negotiated by a select few for a select few” (Brown, 2005, p. 21). What Latin America needs is an agreement that will lift its population out of the desperate situation of poverty, something that the Central American Free Trade Agreement is not.

Annotated List of Works Cited

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Evaluation: *Excellent research and analysis. The author's understanding of the issue and perspective is one that is seldom found in mainstream American media, but is a very popular position in Latin America. Americans should understand both sides of Free Trade Agreements.*

African-American Housing Issues from 1940 to 1960: Their Effect on Lorraine Hansberry

Steve Hafil

Course: English 102 (Composition)
Instructor: Richard Middleton-Kaplan

Assignment:

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

"Son—I come from five generations of people that was slaves and sharecroppers—but ain't nobody in my family never let nobody pay 'em no money that was a way of telling us we wasn't fit to walk the earth. We ain't never been that poor. We ain't never been that—dead inside" (Hansberry 290). This very powerful statement from Mama Younger in Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* reflects the feelings of many African-Americans regarding some of the tactics put in place to keep them from acquiring single-family homes, especially in so-called white only areas. I will examine the issue of segregation as it pertains to housing for African-Americans in the mid-twentieth century. Only then will we understand its effect on Lorraine Hansberry and only then will we understand the force that prompted her to write the words quoted above.

The Thirteenth Amendment states, "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction." Enacted in 1865, these words not only freed the slaves, but also helped start the Great Migration period of 1910 to 1930. This period of time saw the movement of approximately 1.5 million African-Americans northward, not west or south as in the previous four decades (Grossman 19). The movement was caused by a number of factors. The fear of or actual lynchings, beatings, rapes, and "whitecappings" (physically driving blacks from their land) drove blacks from the plantation and sharecropper homes that some of them had known for their entire lives.

The factors above could give people an initial reason to leave an area for another; however, there must be an alternative employment source at the destination to keep the momentum of this exodus going. Blacks in the South were searching for better living conditions and a better wage. Readers of the popular Chicago *Defender* learned that anyone could find a job up North, "if you really wanted it" (Grossman 19). Industrial employment was the option that became available. Better pay and steady work in conjunction with the farming issues encountered in the South at this time proved to be too much of a lure for these folks. With the advent of World War I, European immigration was halted, and the

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steady source of employees that the factories of the North had enjoyed dried up. By 1916, factories were experiencing an increase in orders from both home and abroad due to the war effort. Blacks were not the preferred labor source but had to be used to replace the Europeans. It is here that blacks found that they could earn as much or more in a day than they earned in an entire week in the South (Grossman 13). We can surmise, based upon their implied ages in the play, that these reasons may have been what drove Mama and Big Walter north to Chicago in the first place.

The end of World War I and the Great Depression slowed the movement of blacks to the North for a period of time, and the population of southern-born blacks leveled off. The outbreak of World War II and the economic recovery that began in 1940 saw a new migration period begin for the city of Chicago. During the period of 1930–1940, there was an increase in the black population of 10%. During the next ten years, the population increased an additional 77% to a total of 492,000 (Duncan and Duncan 34). Chicago was not the only major city affected by this migration. Los Angeles and St. Louis experienced 100% and 188% increases, respectively, in their black populations. Harlem had 3,871 people housed in a single city block. To fully understand how critical the overcrowding situation had become, please consider the following: If the population of the United States were concentrated in the same way, all people would be living in an area one-half the size of New York City (Doebele 90). Needless to say, something had to change, and the protests of the black community could not be ignored any longer.

African-Americans living in Chicago were confined to the city's "Black Belt," which comprised the area between Twelfth and Seventy-Ninth Street and Wentworth and Cottage Grove Avenues. The overcrowding and the horrendous living conditions for the city's black population continued to get worse. Confining this ever-increasing number of people into what were already aging and deteriorating houses and apartment units just exacerbated the problems. There was also a shortage of houses in the city, and this problem became worse with the return of the veterans from World War II. People were forced to seek shelter out-

side their traditional neighborhood boundaries. This movement did not signal an end to segregation, but a redrawing of the geographical boundaries between races (Hirsch 5,16).

As African-Americans found suitable housing in areas outside the "Black Belt," they were met with resistance of all kinds. Restrictive covenants, higher housing prices, and property owners' associations are just a few. Lorraine Hansberry was personally affected by them as a child herself, and she addressed them in the play.

Racial restrictive covenants were tools used by property owners in entire sections of white neighborhoods to keep blacks out. These covenants prohibited the signers from renting, selling, or conveying for occupancy property to African-Americans, excepting only janitors, chauffeurs and house servants who lived with their employers. Some covenants required that a certain percentage of owners within a neighborhood had to agree to a covenant prior to its taking effect. Only those that signed were obligated by it (Plotkin 4). A 1927 Supreme Court decision not to rule on covenants made it appear that these were safe tools with which to maintain segregated neighborhoods. Ten years later, it was such a covenant that confronted Carl Hansberry, Lorraine's father, when he moved his family into Washington Park. Upon challenge, both the county and Illinois Supreme Court upheld the restrictive covenant, and they were forced to move out. With the assistance of the NAACP, they took the case to the Supreme Court where a ruling, by technicality, was granted in favor of the Hansberry family. This is not the type of victory they were looking for, but it signaled the beginning of the end for racial restrictive covenants. It would be another 11 years before the U.S. Supreme Court would rule against the constitutionality of covenant enforcement by any court. This last ruling freed African-Americans living in covenanted property from eviction.

Another method of maintaining segregation was the formation of property owners' and planning associations. Made up of "hard-working, honest people who don't really have much but those little homes and a dream of the kind of community they want to raise their children in" (Hansberry 277), these groups were repre-

sented by people like Mr. Lindner, in Hansberry's play. Under the guise of "neighborhood improvement," they bought back property from blacks that moved into their communities, tried to "de-convert" buildings that were occupied by blacks, or obtained structures for demolition and rehab, if necessary. The Clybourne Park Improvement Association could just as easily have been the Southtown Planning Association or the Oakland-Kenwood Property Owners' Association, two such neighborhood "improvement" groups in existence during this time.

Violence was another tactic used by white homeowners to rid their neighborhoods of unwanted residents. Even the mere rumor of a Negro seen coming from a house was enough to start the gathering of a mob. Whites, by the hundreds and sometimes thousands, surrounded black-owned homes (Hirsch 41). These mobs would resort to beating the residents, throwing bricks through their windows, planting bombs, and even arson. An observer to one such incidence of violence reported that, "all the windows of the home were broken and the bricks of the building were scarred and pitted by the numerous bricks thrown against it" (Wright 5). This is exactly the type of violence Mrs. Johnson refers to while visiting the Younger apartment. She predicts the ominous headlines of the paper to read, "NEGROES INVADE CLYBOURNE PARK—BOMBED" (Hansberry 268)! Dr. Percy Julian, Chicagoan of the Year 1949, suffered this fate as well as an arson attack in 1950 and 1951. Lorraine Hansberry herself was almost struck in the head with a brick thrown through the window of their Washington Park home.

A housing boom began on the outer edges of the city and in the suburbs. Lena Younger, when speaking to Ruth, mentions these new areas and tells her "them houses cost twice as much as other houses" (Hansberry 264). These houses are being built specifically for whites, and the high price Lena is quoted is designed to keep her "kind" out. A group of real estate middlemen, called speculators, begin to play a very large role in this new housing market. Wanting to "save face," the white homeowner sells his property at a below market value price to a speculator, who is also white. The speculator

would then advertise these homes to African-Americans looking to buy their own residences. For a low down payment and by signing an installment contract, they could move into a single-family home. The speculators, understanding that African-Americans could not easily get a conventional bank loan and would typically overextend themselves to get a home, retained title and would then evict the family if payments were missed. In some transitional areas, 85% of homes were sold this way. Not only did the speculator raise the sale price of the home originally, they could also make up their initial investment by evicting homeowners and getting multiple down payments (Hirsch 32). We are never told the name of the person with whom Lena Younger contracted to buy the home, nor is there any mention of a mortgage. What does become obvious is that without the insurance money, the chance of paying for this home is in dire straits. Lena speaks of "aiming too high all the time," while Ruth, in her efforts to get Lena to move, talks about, "the notes ain't but a hundred and twenty-five a month. We got four grown people in this house—we can work" (Hansberry 288). This practice became known as "doubling up" and was a means of competing more effectively for housing (*Patterns of Negro Housing in Chicago* 9).

The struggle for decent housing went on for African-Americans throughout Chicago and the United States. After the release of *A Raisin in the Sun*, the housing issues that Lorraine Hansberry depicted in her play finally started to gain some recognition. When Dr. Martin Luther King came to Chicago in 1966 to protest against the maintenance of the slums in Chicago, he stated that, "Chicago typifies the slum conditions that prevail throughout the nation" (qtd in "Dr. King Carries Fight" 102). These very slums and their conditions were a reason people such as the Youngers were looking for a single-family home.

We can tell from the dialogue written by Lorraine Hansberry for *A Raisin in the Sun* that she was deeply troubled by the housing issues encountered not only by her and her immediate family, but also by blacks around the country. It takes a bold act to start a movement or to shed light on something as unpleasant as these housing issues. Lorraine Hansberry sought to,

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and was successful at, uncovering these issues for all to see.

In May 1967, a survey was conducted by Market Facts, Incorporated. The stated goal of the survey was to measure the overall attitudes toward open occupancy. People in all white and integrated neighborhoods were interviewed. Forty percent of those interviewed opposed racial integration of their neighborhood, while 25% had no opinion. The main reasons given were overall appearance of the neighborhood and declining real estate values (*Attitudes Toward Integrated Housing* 6). Fifty-four percent said that the main issue in housing integration was the type of Negro that moves into the neighborhood. Only 6% of the respondents said that this was a completely false statement (*Attitudes Toward Integrated Housing* 11).

Three years after Hansberry's death, Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 prohibited discrimination in the sale, financing or rental of housing because of race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, or national origin. Further Congressional amendments to the Fair Housing Act in 1988 gave larger enforcement rights to the Departments of Justice and Housing and Urban Development. This helped to further alleviate the issues that African Americans and other non-whites found when it came to finding housing.

Progress on this issue moves slowly. I am sure that Lorraine Hansberry would be proud that the movement continues and that she played some part in it.

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Evaluation: *This is an exemplary paper, drawing on historical and social events to shed light on the issues of Hansberry's play.*

Shattered!

Elisabeth Higgins

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Nancy L. Davis

Assignment:

Write a literary research paper.

Can the lives of a Vietnam War-torn American Indian man and a St. Louis girl struggling to make her way in an industrialized society be compared? Although Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* and Louise Erdrich's "Red Convertible" were written in very different times and settings, many parallels between the lives of their characters, Laura and Henry, exist. Both demonstrate the frailty of the human mind through the use of figurative elements—the glass unicorn and the red convertible. These objects, and the people they represent, are too delicate to function in the modern world. Their only hope, and the shield that keeps them from shattering, is provided by intervention.

Throughout the play, insight into Laura Wingfield's character is gained through the study of the glass unicorn which is a representation of her. Glass is a solid, beautiful substance that is usually transparent, and shatters very easily. Laura is flesh and bones, yet she is crippled, and has an upset disposition. Her desire to escape from a world that continually crushes her frail mental state is transparent. She, like the glass unicorn that "loves the light," radiates when the light is shined on her in just the right way (Williams 7.381). The rose-colored light glows from the floor lamp and "gives a soft, becoming light to her [Laura's] face, bringing out the fragile, unearthly prettiness which usually escapes attention" (7.372). "She is like a piece of translucent glass touched by light, given a momentary radiance, not actual, not lasting" (6.364).

Even further than her mere comparison with glass, Laura relates to the unicorn, her favorite of the animals. The Encarta Dictionary defines a unicorn as "a fabled creature symbolic of virginity and usually represented as a horse with a single straight spiraled horn projecting from its forehead." The horn is a peculiarity that sets the unicorn apart. Laura's "horn" is not only the brace on her leg that she feels sets her apart from everyone, but more. Unicorns are mythological creatures. They, most likely, never existed, and that is the world Laura lives in—a land of fantasy and escapism. She's an extinct breed just like her unicorn friend. As Jim said it well, "Unicorns, aren't they extinct in the modern world?...Poor little fellow, he must feel sort of lonesome" (7.381).

Henry Lamartine also has a corresponding object representative of him: the red convertible. It's highly proba-

Shattered!

ble that the Oldsmobile Henry and Lyman purchased was the '61 Starfire. This car is known for its "bargelike feel," strong chassis, and exceptionally solid construction ("Oldsmobile"). Henry, according to Lyman, is also very sturdy. "He was [is] built like a brick outhouse" (Erdrich 408). Another physical similarity between them is the car's red color and the common reference to American Indians' "red" skin color. Convertibles embody a spirit of freedom and spontaneity. They beg to be out on the open road. Henry shares this urge and decides to go off on an unscheduled journey to wherever the wind blows him. He even drives a hitchhiking girl all the way up to her Alaskan home.

Another characteristic of a convertible is its ability to change. Not all days will be sunny and beautiful; they have to be prepared for bad weather as well. Thus, a protective top can be hoisted up to roof passengers. For Henry, "The [the] season was changing. It was getting darker...the cold was even getting just a little mean" (408). After Vietnam, Henry has changed. He has put up the protective shell.

Laura's delicate glass-like frailty causes her to shy away from people. As time progresses, she becomes less and less capable of functioning in everyday life. As one critic puts it,

Whenever she is forced to interact or perform in public, she becomes suddenly ill with nausea and must withdraw. The most extreme example of this syndrome is her brief attendance at Rubicam's Business College where, according to the typing instructor, Laura "broke down completely—was sick at the stomach and almost had to be carried into the wash room." She has a similar reaction after the arrival of Jim at the Wingfield home, and reclines alone on her couch while the others dine in another room. As a result of this withdrawal reflex, Laura has no life outside preoccupation with her own vulnerability. (Levy 405)

Her behavior can be partially explained in terms of her resemblance to her glass collection. As she said, "Oh, be careful—if you breathe, it breaks!" (7.381).

Henry may seem to have a 'metal' exterior, but he's no more immune from being broken than Laura is. Even the beloved Oldsmobile is dented up during the summer trip.

Even before he goes to Vietnam, Henry is never lucky in the real world of finances and jobs. "Ironically, the only reason Henry is able to afford his share of the convertible is through misfortune; he had two checks in his pocket when they saw the car—his weekly paycheck and a week's extra pay for being laid off" (Korb 213). When he returns from Vietnam, he's even worse off. Now he can't even relate to other people. He "was [is] very different, and I'll say this: the change was [is] no good" (406). He is "jumpy and mean" to keep others away (409). He's afraid of the damage that his mind will endure if he honestly expresses what he has experienced. So, he carefully guards his emotions, and people "got to leaving him alone most of the time" (409).

What causes Laura and Henry to become such fragile, incapable people? Laura must bear the burden of having one leg shorter than another, and thus spend her high school years with a brace on her leg that "clumped so loudly" when she walked (7.377). However, "her primary handicap concerns, not the length of her legs, but the negative self-consciousness instilled by her mother" (Beattie 3). Amanda, her mother, "manipulates" her maternal role as a means of boosting her own ego that was broken when her husband abandoned her (Levy 404). Amanda triumphs in Laura's failures, for they give her the desired position of superiority. In the meantime, she's pushing Laura further from reality, and deeper into unreality as Laura nervously tries to shut out the pain her mother is causing her. In one case, upon "Seeing [seeing] her mother's expression Laura touches her lips with a nervous gesture...Laura draws a long breath and gets awkwardly to her feet. She crosses to the victrola and winds it up" (Williams 2.342-3). Laura always winds the victrola when she desires to escape the harsh realities of life. Yet, Amanda chides her for doing this. "Amanda's refusal to recognize Laura's limitations is now what most demeans her daughter" (Beattie 3). "Instead of acknowledging her children as individuals both gifted and flawed, she subconsciously denies them their humanity by insisting on their perfection...Tom and Laura react subconsciously to their mother's demands by avoiding any possibility of success, a stance that ensures their psychological and social defeat" (Beattie 3).

It also takes an outside source to create Henry's psychological defeat. His mind has been broken, shattered.

Henry never tells first hand what happened to him in Vietnam; however, with an understanding of what is happening to his car simultaneously, Henry's story may be concluded. "Most of the time [Henry was in Vietnam] I had it [the car] up on blocks in the yard or half taken apart, because that long trip did a hard job on it under the hood" (409). As Lyman is working on and altering the car, Henry is being changed. He's "up on blocks," or, to be more exact, in the blockade as the enemy has captured him and is altering his psyche in prison. "Unfortunately, Henry loses his natural repose when he is sent to Vietnam" (Sutton 164). The long trip to Vietnam has wreaked havoc under his hood. "It was at least three years before Henry came home. By then I guess the whole war was solved in the government's mind, but for him it would keep on going" (409). His mind is forever changed by his experiences; it is ripped up, bent, and bruised.

The impact of outside sources may have not been so influential on Henry and Laura's lives had they not been born with peculiar characters to begin with. Henry and Laura were both born in periods of time unnatural to their born natures. They may have never had to endure shattered psyches if they hadn't been put under the pressures their circumstances obligated them to confront. Laura's reality is a harsh, fast-paced, unsightly world. Her greatest enemy is industrialization. "The Wingfield apartment is in the rear of the building, one of those vast hive-like conglomerations of cellular living-units that flower as warty growths in overcrowded urban centers of lower middle-class population and are symptomatic of the impulse of this largest and fundamentally enslaved section of American society" (1.336). A reason for the lament of Laura's family is that they weren't always in such a deplorable situation. Amanda constantly refers to the days of security, romance, and grandeur she once possessed on the Southern Plantations. The Wingfields seem to have fallen from their mighty position into squalor. Laura could have grown up in a beautiful, plant-laden society where she was never expected to know technology and everything was done for her (Reynolds 396). However, Amanda's version of the Old South may be highly romanticized.

Henry is at odds with his present-day situation because of the intrusion of Westernization in the lives of

American Indians. Henry has grown up having to live on a reservation, with the feeling of being cheated out of his rightful land. Lyman sarcastically refers to government policies as being full of holes. The harshest interference comes when "Henry is called to fight in the Vietnam War. When he finally returns, he is a different person...Western influence has corrupted Henry and has taken his free American Indian spirit away" (Dutta 119). Flavin notes, "he is less a victim of reservation life than of war that is not of his own making. The Indian brave no longer fights for his own land and food but in a foreign war in which he has no stake" (qtd. in "The Red Convertible" 212). According to Nora Barry and Mary Prescott of *Critique*, Henry embodies the "failure of the warrior tradition." They explain: "Because...the past does not agree with the present reality of an untraditional war, his memories explode and destroy him" (qtd. in "The Red Convertible" 212).

Laura despises the ugly world devoid of nature and beauty, yet is full of endless responsibility and criticism. "The present is avoided and actually repressed as too painful and monstrous to be faced and accepted" (Davis 381). She escapes through the only forms of beauty she can find: the glass menagerie, the Victrola music, visiting the museum, the zoo, and the movies. "Laura withdraws completely from the present, defeated by the world around her; she moves into the no-time of her glass animals" (382). "Quite literally they offer her the only security, intimacy, and permanence she can find in the brutal environment of her St. Louis tenement. Fragile and artistic, these glass figures, like Laura herself, suggest a world other than the one Williams depicts in the play. They symbolize all the artistry and beauty which, to her, and perhaps to Williams, are missing in the secular-urban order of modern era" (Davis 382). According to Cardullo, the Romantics of the early nineteenth century would have understood and sympathized with Laura's temperament, which is a "fragile, almost unearthly ego brutalized by life in the industrialized, depersonalized cities of the Western world" (161). Sadly, Laura is born in a time period that has no sympathy or patience for her disposition. "She is too good for this world, the Romantics might say, and for this reason she could be said to be sadly beautiful

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or bluely roseate [which happens to be what Jim calls her, Blue Roses]" (Cardullo 161).

Henry is also opposed to his world, now Westernized and incomprehensible to him. When he returns, crushed from the war, the TV becomes his escape. "The television set fails to cure his brother [Henry] for the simple reason that a Native American soul needs native healing and not a Western invention" (Dutta 119). The TV ends up being just another harmful, Western intrusion. Only the red car allows Henry and Lyman to avoid the troubles of reservation life and a war shattered mind. Although the car is also a Western symbol, it allows Henry the freedom of a true Native American and the ability to be out in nature (Dutta 119). When Henry and Lyman go to Alaska, they "never wanted to leave... You might doze off, sometimes, but before you know it you're up again, like an animal in nature. You never feel like you have to sleep hard or put away the world" (408). They are happiest in nature with freedom to live from day to day like carefree creatures of nature.

For fear that Laura and Henry are drifting too far from reality into self-destruction; measures are taken by their younger brothers, Tom and Lyman, to save them. Tom brings the long expected gentleman caller. Jim's words and attention boost hope of Laura's catharsis. While they are dancing, her glass unicorn falls to the ground, and the horn breaks off. She seems to have reached a point of transcendence, for she almost seems glad. "Now it is just like all the other horses... It doesn't matter. Maybe it's a blessing in disguise... It's no tragedy, Freckles. Glass breaks so easily. No matter how careful you are... I'll just imagine he had an operation. The horn was removed to make him feel less—freakish! Now he will feel more at home with the other horses, the ones that don't have horns..." (7.383). There is a surge of hope that Laura has finally surpassed her insecurities. She's ready to face the world and be more like everyone else now that Jim has given her the confidence to do so.

Lyman also puts into action the drastic measures he has conceived to heal Henry's bent, broken psyche. "In his efforts to reach his brother, Lyman invests in a belief in a happier past, stating, "I thought the car might bring the old Henry back somehow" (Kryhoski 217). He states,

I took myself a hammer. I went out to the car and I did a number on its underside. I whacked it up. Bent the tail pipe double. Ripped the muffler loose... It just about hurt me, I'll tell you that! I threw dirt in the carburetor and I ripped all the electric tape off the seats. I made it look just as beat up as I could. (410)

He continues, "By the time I was done with the car it looked worse than any typical Indian car that has been driven all its life on reservation roads" (Erdrich 410). His last comment is symbolic of the fact that other Indians, even elderly ones, after living full lives had never been beaten up as badly as Henry has been in the war.

Henry allows himself to be fooled. Lyman believes that his trick may have paid off. After Henry has finished working on the car, he asks Lyman if he wants to go for a drive. "it [It] made me think he could be coming around" (Erdrich 411). At the time, he also thinks it's a good sign that Henry smiles for the camera when their sister takes a picture (Korb 215). Lyman believes Henry to be his old self again. "The car 'hum[s] like a top,' and Henry's face appears to be 'clear, more peaceful'" (Sutton 151-52).

Even though the horn is now gone from the unicorn, it will never be anything more than a unicorn; it can never be a horse even if it appears to be one. It is the same with Laura; she will never be anything more than herself. Although there is a surge of hope, it's trampled. "When Laura realizes that she has misperceived Jim's intentions or that he has unintentionally misled her, 'the holy candles on... [her] face' are 'snuffed out'" (Cardullo 161). Laura then offers the wounded unicorn to Jim. "Since it [the unicorn] is 'just like all the other horses' now it belongs in the world of reality where Jim lives; Laura does not. The unicorn is a painful reminder of what might have been but had better not, something for him to remember and for her to forget: the dream of ever liking some boy or ever having a gentleman caller" (Scheye 387). "all [All] illusions are shattered... Laura [is] completely crushed and 'huddled on the sofa,'" (Davis 384).

Unlike the car, Henry cannot be repaired, and he realizes this: "I know it. I can't help it. It's no use" (qtd. in Kryhoski 217). "Henry has lost the will to live, which Lyman comes to understand when his brother says that

'he wanted to give the car to me for good now.' To lose the red convertible is to lose the ability to experience joy and freedom, but Lyman tries to reject this truth by refusing to take the car. He even tries to beat feelings of hope back into his brother, and the two men fight 'for all we're worth'" (Korb 215). "When Lyman intentionally damaged the car so that Henry would have to fix it, Henry understood what Lyman was trying to do for him. Rather than respond with anger or resentment, he fixed the car so that Lyman would have it" ("The Red Convertible" 208). Lyman won't keep the car, because to him it is synonymous with a happy Henry. Once Henry releases the car, it means that he will also give himself up as incurable. Lyman's determined to not let that happen. He's determined to hang onto Henry until the very end. Thus, when Henry jumps in the river, the only logical thing for Lyman to do is send his counterpart, the red convertible, along with him.

Tom tells his story in order to forget Laura, but it's in vain. Her memory permeates his mind "like bits of a shattered rainbow" (7.388). The fact that he's telling the story proves it. Yet, he's so guilty about abandoning her that he wants "to leave Laura in the past, in the shadows on the other side of the scrim, to plunge her 'into everlasting darkness'" (385). According to Scheye, Tom's purpose for telling the story is "to re-enter the past a final time, to make a play out of his memory, in order to leave memory behind. Once Laura, as a character in the play, can be brought to forgive and forget Tom's running away, he can make good his escape" (386). "The last action of the play is when Laura blows the candles out, as if this will erase her from Tom's memory in a death-like moment" ("*The Glass Menagerie*" 133).

"Lyman's motivation for telling the story is to embrace and preserve his brother's memory" ("The Red Convertible" 208). Yet, he also wants to forget. He talks about the last picture he took with Henry: "I don't know what it was, but his smile had changed, or maybe it was gone. All I know is I couldn't stay in the same room with that picture. I was shaking. We [he and his friend Ray] put the picture in a brown bag, folded the bag over and over tightly, then put it way back in a closet. I still see that picture now, as if it tugs me whenever I pass the closet door" (Erdrich 411). Lyman's memory of Henry is represented

by the headlights of the car just as Tom's memories are represented by the candlelight. "The headlights reach in as they go down, searching, still lighted even after the water swirls over the back end. I wait. The wires short out. It is finally dark" (Erdrich 413). Lyman may wait and think of Henry as he will, but he'll only be left in darkness, for Henry is dead.

The shattered specks of memories for Laura and Henry will be forever embedded in the minds of Tom and Lyman. Try as they will, forgetting isn't a luxury of this life. Thus, they share a similar decision. They must choose to either reconcile with their past, or they will forever be running from it, "going and running and going and running and running" (Erdrich 413).

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Evaluation: *Elisabeth writes sensitively and compassionately in this first-rate research paper of comparative analysis.*

The Portrayal and Hidden Presence of Women in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

Jennifer Johnson

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Teresa Chung

Assignment:

Students were asked to write a literary research paper in which they offered their own analysis of Shelley's novel and took a position with regard to already existing interpretations.

Critics of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* who choose to analyze the novel by paying close attention to the feminine aspects say that the women portrayed in the novel are passive, vulnerable characters without much development. However, it can be argued that the women portrayed in the novel, when actually examined, do show signs of valor, bravery, and innate intelligence throughout the narrative. In Vanessa Dickerson's "The Ghost of Self: Female Identity in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*," she compares the presence of the female to that of a ghost, exaggerating the fact that the female role in *Frankenstein* is virtually non-existent. She writes, "For in this novel, where narcissistic males like Walton and Victor tend to be the scientists, the doers, the literalizers who dominate the story, the selfless, ethereal and unscientific women in the novel are practically transparent if not invisible. Like ghosts, the females in the novel are quintessentially ambiguous figures: present but absent, morally animate angels, but physically and politically inanimate mortals" (79-80). The presence of the female role in *Frankenstein* may seem scarcely there; however, a less obvious perspective on the novel introduces to the reader that it is the *absence* of the woman's role, predominantly with regard to the male characters, that proves such a strong point in the story. It seems as if Shelley is basically revealing how the disregard of women and the lack of a female figure in these characters' lives has merely destroyed them.

Many sources claim that most women in the novel are described, as stated before, as passive and vulnerable. Ashley Cross, in her essay "Indelible Impressions: Gender and Language in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*," states that the novel divides its characters into two different social spheres or "gendered spheres" (Cross 551), "... the scientific, active, masculine sphere represented by Walton and Frankenstein, and the domestic, passive, feminine sphere represented by Elizabeth and Justine" (551). Granted, the female and male characters in the novel are depicted differently, but the female characters don't necessarily follow the conventional feminine sphere. This assertion seems to be refutable when analyzing the first female character mentioned in the novel, Margaret Saville. The sister of the arctic-bound Robert Walton receives his letters narrating his travels, as well

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as Frankenstein's story. Throughout the letters, Walton confides in his sister all his thoughts. It seems he has a certain respect for her and even seems to seek her advice at some points. "There, for with your leave, my sister, I will put some trust in preceding navigations," he writes (Shelley 1). He seems to be asking for her permission, which appears to bestow some sort of authority on her. There are women throughout the novel who also show characteristics of intelligence and bravery.

Victor Frankenstein's mother, Caroline Beaufort, takes it upon herself to care for her dying father. When describing his grandfather's ill and hard times, Frankenstein says, "His daughter attended him with the greatest tenderness...to provide for her father and herself, she procured plain work; she plaited straw and by various means contrived to earn a pittance scarcely sufficient to support life" (18). Caroline's caring and devoted nature is shown through her actions. It is because of Frankenstein's mother that the decision to adopt Elizabeth is introduced. "Their [Frankenstein's parents] benevolent disposition often made them enter the cottages of the poor. This, to my mother, was more than a duty; it was a necessity, a passion—remembering what she had suffered, and how she had been afflicted" (19).

When Frankenstein's monster murders Viktor's younger brother William, the blame is forced upon Justine, a family friend and sort-of servant. After failing to convince the townspeople of her not-guilty plea, she surrenders and admits to the crime, despite her innocence. "I did confess, but I confessed a lie," she admits (69). Justine is executed for the crime, and Frankenstein stands by, aware of the truth but too cowardly to say anything. This shows an exceptional contrast between the two sexes. The female, although argued to be the weaker sex depicted in the novel, appears more brave than the male, who appears afraid to admit to his mistakes. Justine's trial also causes another female character to present her brave and intelligent manner. Elizabeth Lavenza, Frankenstein's close family friend and love of his life, stands up to the jury and boldly attempts to defend her friend. She performs an eloquent speech depicting her intelligent and compassionate nature:

It may therefore be judged indecent in me to come forward on this occasion, but when I see a fellow creature about to perish through the cowardice of her pretended friends, I wish to be allowed to speak... For my own part, I do not hesitate to say that, notwithstanding all the evidence produced against her, I believe and rely on her perfect innocence. She had no temptation for such an action; as to the bauble on which the chief proof rests, if she had earnestly desired it, I should have willingly given to her, so much do I esteem and value her. (67)

Dickerson, in an attempt to further elaborate her claim that women are viewed as passive characters, even by the male figures in the novel, states that Frankenstein does not recognize Elizabeth as an intellectual, compelling person. "Victor's comments about Elizabeth indicate that he does not perceive her thoughts and speeches to be particularly intellectual or substantial but rather soothing and healing, superficial, 'aerial'," (86). However, this can be argued with, since, in the novel, Frankenstein outright refers to Elizabeth's speech as a "powerful appeal" (Shelley 67). Therefore, the bravery and intelligence given to present these women seems to oppose the idea that they are portrayed as weak and passive creatures.

Some sources state that there is one woman who disregards the women as passive argument. Safie, Felix De Lacey's Arabian love interest, represents "Mary Shelley's ideal of the egalitarian family" (Dickerson 90). Safie defied the conformist beliefs of female passivity within *Frankenstein* and overcame the obstacles set before her by her father. She was raised by her mother, a Christian Arab, who "taught her to aspire to higher powers of intellect and an independence of spirit forbidden to the female followers of Muhammad" (Shelley 104-105). After Safie's father was falsely imprisoned, sentenced to death, and later escaped with the help of Felix, he attempted to take Felix from her because he opposed his daughter marrying a Christian. However, Safie took jewels and money with her and secretly left her father while he was away, to find her lover. Not only does Safie prove a strong and com-

elling female through her actions, but she also provides the DeLacey family with a newfound sense of happiness. "Safie...arrives not only as her own powerful person, but also as both a spiritual and financial rescuer" (Dickerson 88). When Frankenstein's creation first observes the small DeLacey residence, he notes how the inhabitants were not "entirely happy" and often saw Agatha and Felix weep (Shelley 91). The arrival of Safie seems to change the overall emotion of the household, as well as relieve the pressure of financial woes. "The presence of Safie diffused happiness among its inhabitants, and I also found that a greater degree of plenty reigned there. Felix and Agatha spent more time in amusement and conversation, and were assisted in their labors by servants" (111).

The idea that women in Frankenstein are passive, weak creatures without much development can be refuted by analysis of the female characters. Their strong will and intelligent, caring nature is visible in the novel, although somewhat hidden. However, there are those who unrelentingly claim the female presence is nearly missing, and in this case, it is interesting to look at how the absence or disregard of a female presence in the male characters' lives has affected them throughout the novel.

Frankenstein leaves for Ingolstadt to attend the university there, shortly after the death of his mother. When he leaves, he leaves behind his family and his only female companion, Elizabeth, who takes the role of mother for his younger siblings with "courage and zeal" (Shelley 29). In Ingolstadt, Frankenstein becomes overwhelmed with knowledge and soon becomes engulfed and infatuated with his work on restoring life. He states, "Two years passed in this manner, during which I paid no visit to Geneva, but was engaged, heart and soul, in the pursuit of some discoveries which I hoped to make... I pursued my undertaking with unremitting ardour. My cheek had grown pale with study, and my person had become emaciated with confinement" (39). Back in Geneva, Frankenstein claims it was Elizabeth who could pull him out of such unhealthy states. "I might have become sullen in my study, rough through the ardour of my nature, but that she was there to subdue me to a semblance of her own

gentleness" (24). Despite the fact that she is described with characteristics related to the feminine sphere, it is partially as a result of her absence that Frankenstein confines himself to his laboratory, since she is usually there to apparently coax him into his senses.

The most noticeable instance of a character being affected by the absence of a female presence is seen in Frankenstein's own creation. The creature's birth or "non birth" (Yousef 198) results in the immediate absence of any sort of parental figure. Frankenstein, upon seeing his creation come alive, hurries away in fear and disgust. "Unable to endure the aspect of the being I had created, I rushed out of the room" (Shelley 42). Frankenstein's monster can easily be compared to a newborn child, in which case, the absence of a female or motherly presence is detrimental to its development. According to the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child,

The initial emotional duet created by mother and baby—with their complimentary interweaving of smiles, gestures, and animated vocalizations in social play—builds and strengthens brain architectures and creates a relationship in which the baby's experiences are affirmed and new abilities nurtured. Children who have healthy relationships with their mothers are more likely to develop insights into other people's feelings, needs, and thoughts, which form a foundation for cooperative interactions with others and an emerging conscience. (1)

The creature questions Frankenstein in his narrative, "But where were my friends and relations? ...no mother had blessed me with smiles and caresses" (Shelley 101). Perhaps it was the lack of a mother figure that assisted the creature in his unwholesome revenge against his creator. Since the mother-child bond helps form an emerging conscience, and the creature experienced none of this, his unhealthy actions are almost explicable. Readers searching for feminine aspects in *Frankenstein* note how the monster asks Frankenstein for a female companion. After studying the DeLacey family for months and seeing the happiness which Safie brings, it is not improbable that the creature would request a female, or more specifically, a mate. It

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is interesting when, in the preface, Shelley says, "...my chief concern has been to exhibit the amiableness of domestic affection and the excellence of universal virtues" (qtd. in Claridge 15). Despite the fact that the preface of Shelley's 1918 adaptation of *Frankenstein* was supposedly written by her husband, Percy Shelley, she more than likely agreed to the text. Therefore, we can perceive this as her personal intention in the novel, which adds to the sense that Shelley was simply trying to express the woman's role with relation to men.

Many claim that the overall female presence in Shelley's *Frankenstein* is generally viewed as passive, weak, and virtually nonexistent. The female characters are often viewed in a feeble, pathetic mindset in which the male characters are the overpowering individuals. Nevertheless, this isn't necessarily the case. Female characters in *Frankenstein* don't always follow the rules and regulations of the feminine sphere and often do outstep their stereotypical boundaries. For those that do believe the female presence is missing, giving *Frankenstein* a "ghost story" feel, "the specters of which are the female characters" (Dickerson 80), this also is not essentially true. The female presence, in its absence, proves strong.

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Evaluation: *Jennifer's thoughtful analysis draws our attention to the often overlooked presence and power of women in Shelley's apparently male-dominated novel.*

Fear and Regret

Chris Joncha

Course: Literature 105 (Poetry)

Instructor: Andrew Wilson

Assignment:

*Write about a poem. Try to maintain a single
overriding thesis, and try to work some of the
elements of poetry—structure, sound,
symbol, etc—into your discussion.*

“The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” by T. S. Eliot can basically be divided into four parts. The first part sets the mood and tone of the poem, and the second part states “This is the way things are. What should I do about it?” The third part is where he has given up and wonders, “Would it have been worth it?” In the last part of the poem, he has reached a deep depression and worries about small unimportant matters.

The first part of the poem sets the mood for the reader. Right away, Eliot uses an unusual simile to describe the night. Prufrock states, “Let us go, then, you and I / When the evening is spread out against the sky / Like a patient etherized upon a table” (1-3). This image suggests a sickliness that needs to be fixed. If a patient is lying etherized on a table, he is probably suffering from an ailment and about to be treated for it. On one hand, we are hopeful that the patient can be cured. On the other hand, however, an etherized patient is helpless and at the will of others. If Prufrock suffers from anti-social feelings, the only “cure” is to give in and become what he is expected to be.

Yellow fog is a prominent image that also helps to set the mood in the first part of the poem. The yellow fog conveys a feeling of sickliness. Although yellow can be a bright and happy color, a yellow fog would be a pale, eerie shade of yellow. This color could also be used to describe pus or mustard gas, both of which are not pleasant images. The fog is also personified as a cat-like creature. Cats can be energetic, playful animals, but once again Prufrock does not take it in that direction. This particular “fog cat” slinks around the house slowly like a predator, making the people around it rather uncomfortable.

Prufrock also uses images that suck the energy and hope out of the poem, such as the vision of an etherized patient and the fog that “curled once about the house and fell asleep” (22). He also describes the town as having “Streets that follow like a tedious argument / Of insidious intent” (8-9). A tedious argument will drain the life from anyone, especially when the other person arguing is doing so in a malicious manner. No one leaves the argument feeling any better, and feelings of depression and despair may follow.

The second part of the poem starts with the line “And indeed there will be time” (23). This is the first positive line in the poem and gives the reader a sense of hope that maybe the poem will change its tone and Prufrock will overcome whatever obstacles may be blocking his path to happiness. We are especially hopeful if we see this line as an allusion to Ecclesiastes, which states “To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven” (Eccles. 3.1). Prufrock, we hope, will have his time as well. Sadly, though, our hopes are quickly subdued as we read on. Prufrock continues, “There will be time / To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet” (26-27). Here, he is letting us know one of the problems he has with these people in high society. Everyone is fake and puts up a false front. He must prepare a persona that is presentable to others rather than being himself. Real people aren’t good enough, and they must be the ideal members of society, even if it is only superficial.

Once hope has been knocked down a few notches, we come to the lines “And time yet for a hundred indecisions, / And for a hundred visions and revisions”

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(32-33). This brings us a little deeper into the psyche of Prufrock. We see that he is afraid. He is afraid to commit to a choice and perhaps, more broadly, afraid of commitment altogether. He fears making the wrong choice and is constantly rethinking his conclusions, thereby creating indecisions and revisions that never allow for a final conclusion. Although he means to make the best decision, all his doubting and rethinking are counterproductive. One cannot be happy with the choices one makes if choices are never made.

In the second part of the poem, the lines "In the room the women come and go / Talking of Michelangelo" (35-36) are repeated a second time. Although Prufrock does not do much, if anything, to explain what he means by this, we can use the rest of the poem to decipher its meaning. Michelangelo is a very famous and respected artist and would therefore be an appropriate topic of discussion among the social elite. Prufrock seems to question whether the women are expressing interest in Michelangelo because they truly find his art remarkable or because it enhances their image. Prufrock believes it is the latter. The reader may also question why Prufrock only focuses on women in these circumstances. Perhaps he is intimidated by the women, or perhaps he has trouble relating to them. This could also be a part of his larger problem with a fear of commitment.

Continuing through the poem, we are hesitant to let our hopes be built up again for fear that they will be dashed against the rocks once more, but the lines "And indeed there will be time / To wonder, 'Do I dare?' and 'Do I dare?'" (37-38) open us once again to the possibility that Prufrock will still try to make a change. At least he has not given up completely and is still thinking of taking a stand. However, the next line serves to bring us right back to where we were: "Time to turn back and descend the stair" (39). True to form, Prufrock is afraid to follow through on his decisions and no doubt will regret it later on. Directly after this, we catch another glimpse of his insecurity. He is self-conscious about a bald spot and imagines everyone talking about it behind his back. At the same time, we see that he has, or at least had at one point, a hint of an optimistic view of himself. He describes his necktie as "rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin" (43).

For a split second, he feels proud of the way he looks and carries himself with an air of contentment. Just as quickly as the confidence appears, however, it goes back into hiding. For after he describes his tie, he fears people will not recognize the positive things about him and will instead go back to criticizing him, this time about "how his arms and legs are thin" (44). The roller-coaster of ups and downs continues with the question, "Do I dare / Disturb the universe?" (45-46)

The trend continues through the next few stanzas, where Prufrock shows us the way things are, and in doing so expresses his discontent with them. He then wrestles with, and almost taunts the reader with, the possibility of doing something drastic. For example, "For I have known them all already, known them all / Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons, / I have measured out my life with coffee spoons" (49-51). The fact that he feels he has "known them all" is rather depressing. To be able to categorize everyone as a specific type means that there is no one original to meet. If people are all the same, then Prufrock falls into one of the categories as well, which means he not only dislikes other people, but also himself. He also measures out his life with coffee spoons, which are small, worthless objects to measure one's entire life by. Using coffee spoons also implies a lot of wasted time spent sitting around (drinking coffee) instead of going out and accomplishing something. He then asks "So how should I presume?" (54), meaning what bold move could he make that would make a change for the better?

Prufrock then goes on to talk about "The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase" (56). If these people are indeed looking at him in this way, they are taking away his sense of humanity and individuality. He says, "when I am formulated..." (57), which implies that he has been shaped and created in a systematic and methodical way, like a piece of machinery. He is a product of assembly line society. He is lost and again asks, "And how should I presume?" (61).

He talks about the "Arms that are braceleted and white and bare / (But in the lamplight downed with light brown hair!)" (63-64). This goes back to the idea that people are hiding behind false images of themselves, such as when people "prepare a face." This time, how-

ever, Prufrock acknowledges that if you look hard enough you can see through these phony idealists. At the end of this stanza, Prufrock has worked himself up into a frenzy, but he is more confused than ever about what to do about it. He asks twice, "And should I then presume? / And how should I begin?" (68-69). He desperately wants to make a change but doesn't know how (or possibly he does know and is simply too afraid).

The poem then begins to transition into the third part, where Prufrock has given up. The time for action has passed (at least in the eyes of Prufrock), and he is now left to wonder, "Would it have been worth it?" (87). He tells us a lot about his current condition with a few simple lines when he says, "Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets, / And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes / Of lonely men in shirtsleeves, leaning out of windows?" (70-72). Although Prufrock is unhappy being outside the norm of society, even those who embrace the lifestyle are unhappy. Basically, people are doomed at birth. The men are also smoking their pipes out of windows. Why can't they smoke inside their own homes? Maybe the wives don't want the smoke inside, and this is another reason for the negative feelings of Prufrock toward these women of high society. He is afraid they will control him.

Lines seventy-three and seventy-four are Prufrock straight out telling us he wishes he had never been given the human consciousness he has. He says, "I should have been a pair of ragged claws / Scuttling across the floors of silent seas" (73-74). He is fed up and tired of living this life. If he were these "claws" on the bottom of the ocean, his mind would not be tormented by all these problems. Ocean creatures do not pretend to be something they are not or judge others. They simply survive.

For the last time, Prufrock asks whether he should do something. "Should I, after tea and cakes and ices, / Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis?" (79-80). The question is a little different this time. He not only questions whether he should, but whether he could. Does he even have the strength and energy to do anything anymore? He believes he does not. "I am no prophet- and here's no great matter / I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker" (83-84). He loses

what little ambition he had left and concludes that he is not important enough to make any attempt at change. He reduces himself to nothing and reintroduces us to his self-consciousness about his appearance, for in parentheses we find another reference to his balding head. He even sees Death laughing at him and outright confesses, "And in short, I was afraid" (86).

The image of Death in the line "And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker" (85) can be taken two ways, but both portray Prufrock as weak and helpless. One interpretation is that Death is holding his coat and kind of saying, "Come on, it's time to go." Prufrock will be taken from this world and is afraid because he fears the end. The other way to interpret this is that Death is holding his coat so that Prufrock cannot leave the world. Death will not take Prufrock away and instead leaves him to suffer on the earth. Death also knows that Prufrock is too cowardly to take his own life and will continue to live a miserable existence. This also scares Prufrock and is why he admits to being afraid.

"Would it have been worth it" is now the overwhelming question for J. Alfred Prufrock. He makes an allusion to Andrew Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress" because he is thinking about how he sat back and let life pass him by. All that remains for him is the grave, which is "a fine and private place / but none, I think, do there embrace" (Marvell 31-32). He has missed all his opportunities to connect with people or, if a connection is not what he desires, to take a stand and ruffle some feathers. He has not squeezed all he could from this life, and now all he is left with is regret.

Prufrock wishes he was like Lazarus and able to say "I am Lazarus, come from the dead, / Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all" (94-95). He wishes he would have awakened himself from his slumber and proclaimed to the people why they are wrong, to let them know he does not approve of their false ways. He knows where they have gone wrong and can lead them to their true selves. But he hasn't, and instead he remains quiet in his fearful sleep. He has been enslaved by the fear of others' reactions, especially the women. He fears the possibility that "If one, settling a pillow by her head, / Should say: 'That is not what I meant at all / That is not

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it, at all” (109-110). Again, he fears rejection, though this time not so much of his physical appearance as of his mind. He cannot relate to other people and will therefore never be able to convey to them his true feelings.

The last section of “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” is where he tries to justify his failings and says it doesn’t really matter anyway. He proclaims, “No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be” (111). It is not in his destiny to become this great man who disturbs the universe. He is simply there to take up space and should be glad people even have him around. He compares himself to the “Fool.” Although the word “fool” is a term that implies stupidity and ignorance, the “Fool” in Shakespeare’s plays is actually quite wise. He is more aware of the human condition than the nobility. No doubt, Prufrock knew this and purposely made this comparison. Others may label him as a fool, but in his heart he knows that he is correct (even if he will not act upon it).

At last he has grown old, and his paranoia and insecurity have grown as well. He now worries about such trivial matters as how to part his hair and whether he should eat a peach or not. The very last scene of the poem is a beautiful description of mermaids that may at first not appear to fit with the rest of the poem, but does so very nicely when looked at more closely. The mermaids could represent all the women out of his reach. They get along great with one another but want nothing to do with him, for he speculates, “I do not think that they will sing to me” (125). The last three lines are perhaps the most powerful. “We have lingered in the chambers of the sea / By seagirls wreathed with seaweed red and brown, / Till human voices wake us, and we drown” (129-131). Prufrock is telling us that we all start life with dreams and ambitions, for he would not linger by the seagirls if he thought they would never even speak to him. But as we go through life, people constantly tell us that we can’t do it or that things have to be done a certain way. Over time, these voices destroy the dreams and “awaken” us to reality. Once the dreams are gone, life is no longer worth living, and we “drown” in the world we live in.

Although Prufrock is too afraid to take action, his poem allows his message to live on. The message may not be a positive one, but it can be used by the reader to make better choices in his or her life. We must not let fear control us. If we truly live our lives, we will all at one time or another “disturb the universe.” We must keep swimming and never inhale the waters of regret.

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Evaluation: *This is a strong, easy-to-follow essay on a difficult poem.*

Please Don't Eat Your Kin

Diane R. Kennedy

Course: Physical Science 111
(Introduction to Physical Science)
Instructor: Janet Landato

Assignment:

*Attend the lecture of Dr. Robert Bakker and write
a summary of his presentation for extra credit.*

The prevailing thought among paleontologists is that dinosaurs were cold-blooded, lizard-like creatures that were on their own from the time they hatched. On March 24, 2005, Dr. Robert Bakker presented evidence for, among other things, his controversial theory that meat-eating dinosaurs actually lived in family units and fed and cared for their young. Dr. Bakker is a well-known paleontologist whose solid academic credentials include an undergraduate degree from Yale and a Ph.D. from Harvard.

Dr. Bakker began his presentation by introducing a variety of dinosaurs to the audience through sketches on an easel, accompanied by a few facts such as where they'd been discovered and what was known about them. There was no reason not to accept these facts at face value.

After several of these sketches were presented, however, I was beginning to fear that Dr. Bakker had no more to offer than a low-tech, factual presentation. Fortunately, those fears were unfounded as he switched it into higher gear, got more animated, and traded the easel for a slide presentation. Now he would attack the meat of the matter. Interspersing his argument with humor and jokes, he was both informative and entertaining.

Dr. Bakker laid the groundwork for his theory by showing slides of sharks and alligators and explaining how they lose and regrow teeth on a continual basis. Then, he showed a slide of a mother alligator carrying her baby on her head. From studying alligators in the wild, it is known that a mother alligator does not feed her babies but will carry them to a food source and protect them while she and the babies eat. Both mother and baby alligators shed teeth while feeding, and their teeth are found together at the feeding sites. It is also known that male alligators congregate together at feeding sites other than where mother and baby alligators feed. Many larger teeth, shed from the larger male alligators, can be found at these male feeding sites.

A nesting site of large, meat-eating dinosaurs called allosaurs was discovered and excavated by paleontologists. Many teeth, from allosaurs that ranged in size from babies of three pounds to large male allosaurs of up to 4,000 pounds, were found together at this site. Bones of preyed-upon animals were also found at this

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nesting site. Teeth or teeth marks from all the representative size allosaurs were found in the prey's bones, indicating that the different-aged and -sized allosaurs all fed together on the same meal. The variety of teeth marks found on the bones provides evidence that mom or dad dinosaur would kill the prey and bring it back to the nesting site for the whole family to eat, much like the bald eagles of today who protect and feed their young from hatchling to adult.

A second piece of evidence to support Bakker's family unit theory came from another set of bones found at the nesting site. This second set of bones was from a large, male allosaur who had been wounded in a fight, most probably with a stegosaurus. The allosaur did not die right away, which could be ascertained by the evidence of infection that was found in many of his bones. Yet, this allosaur had no teeth marks on his bones. It can be reasonably believed that this was a father dinosaur that had come home to die, and that the family bonds among the dinosaurs prevented the other allosaurs from eating him.

The one unanswered question in my mind was whether family bonds or the fact that the meat was rotting had kept the dinosaurs from eating the dad. When I questioned Dr. Bakker, he pointed out that most predators will eat rotting meat, which seems reasonable to me. Therefore, I can accept Dr. Bakker's theory that meat-eating dinosaurs, at least the allosaurs, lived in family groups who raised and cared for their young, and that they had special family bonds.

Furthermore, when my children were young and interested in dinosaurs, I often observed that many dinosaurs resembled birds, although the books said they were reptiles. Coincidentally, another of Dr. Bakker's controversial theories is that dinosaurs are ancestors of both birds and reptiles, and he predicted that some day, dinosaurs with feathers would be found. This has indeed come to pass. In addition, I previously owned a pair of cockatiels. The male would sit docilely on my shoulder and "give a kiss" upon command. Once the pair had mated and laid eggs, however, the male defended his nest against me with his life, attacking me and pecking at any exposed skin when I would come near to change the food and water. The male and

female shared equally in the care and feeding of the chicks once the eggs hatched. Even when the chicks fledged, the male was extremely protective of them. They were very closely bonded.

When all the evidence is considered, I find Dr. Bakker's theory that allosaurs raised and cared for their young and lived in bonded family groups to be very believable. It could very well have been those bonds that prevented the allosaurs from eating one of their own after death. In fact, I must concur with Dr. Bakker's humorous closing statement that to "not eat your kin" was the beginning of family values.

Evaluation: *This was an excellent summary!
The student creatively applied what she learned to
her life experiences.*

Reviving My Childhood

Svetlana Kostigova

Course: Speech 101

(Fundamentals of Speech Communication)

Instructor: Louise J. Perry

Assignment:

*Write a eulogy in which you praise a subject,
animal, object, concept or institution.*

For the past few days, getting ready for my eulogy speech, I have been thinking a lot about my country, which I left more than four years ago. My memories were resurfacing in my mind, and they were making my heart overflow with joy and bleed at the same time. Why overflow with joy? Because nothing can be happier and more vivid than childhood days. Why sad? Because there is no way back to that time and there is no opportunity to repeat my childhood days again.

I remember everything piece by piece, day by day. I grew up in the second biggest city of Latvia—Daugavpils—which translates as the City on the River. Many of my childhood memories have to do with the time I spent in my yard. The yard, surrounded by a few multistory buildings, was my little kingdom. Any single object was able to raise an infinite number of memories and laughs. I could look at anything there and would not be able to stop talking about it or stop laughing. There were not any stones or any birch trees I would not know like the tips of my fingers. Oh yeah, my friends and I were so foolish and so happy. The bench with its missing end seemed like a rat had nibbled at it. I remember

the time when the bench lost its end. We had a game, and for punishment, the loser was supposed to bite off one inch with his teeth. Our fantasies and ideas did not have bounds. Innocent pedestrians who were brave enough to pass through our yard would definitely become a subject of attack. In the best case scenario, they would end up pelted with snowballs. Or in the worst case scenario, their legs could be caught in the nylon fishing line, in a noose which would suddenly tie them up to the nearest tree. Or they could even become a subject of laughter and disappointment when the wallet they luckily found lying on the ground would start mysteriously moving away.

If I continue talking about my childhood long enough, memories of the relationship with my identical twin sister invade my head and push the yard memories out of my mind. We were two girls who bonded together throughout our early childhood. We would fight and argue very often for different small things, such as who could play with the dog first, who was the best teacher in school, or who could finish the last can of Coke. However, if someone would go against us, there would never be a more powerful and stronger team to deal with. Anyone who would try to stop our arguments would instantly become the enemy of two furious, but ready-to-kill-for-each-other teenagers. We played together and worked together, helping build our parents' home. We gathered boulders and carried them to the upper floor so our father could build the walls of our new home. We always were ready to help each other, and even substitute with each other for some exams, if one of us would be better prepared.

Like the lives of many teenagers, ours were full bouquets of responsibility. As time passed by, even the most unpleasant duties became another part of my enjoyable memories. Our house, most would find, was another complicated bureaucracy. Let me explain why. A very sufficient system of splitting our responsibilities was developed. There was a very common three-sentence dialogue in my house. My mother would ask my father, "Gera, somebody knocks! Open the door!" My father would say to my sister, "Luda, open the door!" And she would say, "Sveta, it's your turn!" Someone who had to wash dishes was responsible for cleaning the kitchen

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and feeding the dog, but also had the privilege of answering the phone and being on top of the news. The other person had to clean the house, walk the dogs, take care of the bird, and open the door. The second position was more desirable, because it did not require constant work, like washing the dishes after every single meal. The order would switch at the week. However, the weekly order was very soon changed to a monthly switch. The reason was that after the dish-washing period ended, the other person would definitely find a few dirty pots and pans in the refrigerator or on the stove, with the common excuse that leftovers were still good after the switching. The other person, in revenge, would leave the dirty dishes for another week. And such a game could continue forever, until it would make mother as angry as monster. The system was constantly updating and changing, as soon as my sister and I found the way to skip the rules.

My family was a great example of strong traditions as well. One of my favorite traditions is that every year, right before Christmas, my father would go to the dense forest for the Christmas tree with cones. The cones were very important, if our Christmas tree would have the right to be called our traditional Christmas tree. No one could ever figure out, however, how my father always managed to bring a Christmas tree without any single cone on it. It seemed that he would drag it against the grain. This led to another tradition in our family. Every single year, we would tie the cones to the tree's branches with nearly invisible strings. Another example of our family traditions would be that before any holiday, we would spend time with our grandparents. We would enjoy long evenings reading the cards, crystal-gazing, and learning the proverbs and wisdoms of our grandparents' long and fruitful life. Any holiday spent with the closest members of my family were always seized by emotions and would remain in my memory forever.

Very bright in my memory are days which I spent on the lakes. The lakes became for me a great part of my happy, unforgetful experience. I was lucky to be born in a very small but very beautiful country. Latvia is a country of vast forests and several thousand fresh-water lakes, and it is also known as a Land of Blue Lakes.

Much of my early childhood was spent in or around lake areas, as well as in many vast forests, which make up of half of Latvia's total area. My parents would take my sister and me camping, fishing, and swimming almost every weekend during the warm summer months. One of our favorite lakes was Ezezers, which translates as the Lake of the Hawk. It contained sixty-nine islands as well as beautiful beaches to enjoy. My sister and I were big fans of fishing. We loved to go fishing in the early mornings, when nature was just waking up because the fish were hungry and easy to catch. All the times I spent on the lake with my parents and close friends, either swimming, fishing, or water skiing, will always be cherished lifelong memories.

The famous Greek philosopher Aristotle said that children cannot be happy. He reasoned that one of the requirements for happiness is the completion of life (Adler). However, for me, even though my life is not complete, I believe that the joyful and pleasurable times I had in my childhood have earned a right to be called a happy time. As Elizabeth Lawrence said, "There is a garden in every childhood, an enchanted place where colors are brighter, the air is softer, and the morning more fragrant than never again." Those days of childhood seemed to drag by and would keep us young forever. Simple things pleased us and excited us. Fear and stress did not exist. And our world was small but ever so special! Like many things in life, we do not miss them, until we have lost them. Childhood was the happiest time in my life; unfortunately, I did not realize it until it was gone.

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Evaluation: *The speaker is sharing vivid memories of a childhood past, moments of reflection and happiness. The descriptive images evoke emotion of an enchanted time in one's life, full of unforgettable, life-long memories of purity and innocence.*

“The Case Against Same-Sex Marriage”: A Counterargument

Gina Kuffel

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Josh Sunderbruch

Assignment:

Counter the written argument of another writer.

In the article “The Case Against Same-Sex Marriage,” Tim Leslie presents a complex, multifaceted argument that circumvents the inclusion of sufficient empirical evidence by supplementing his own personal interpretations and convictions, which ultimately compromise the credibility of his provocative argument. His article opens with a historical explanation of the primary purpose of marriage. His argument states “In recent generations, we’ve seen the belief evolve that the overriding purpose of marriage is the spouses’ mutual pleasure...But this deviates from what every culture in history has recognized as the heart of marriage: the begetting and education of children” (Leslie 1). Leslie quickly admits if it were mutual happiness that were under the microscope, then reserving the right to marry for heterosexuals would be discrimination. His argument proposes that happiness is not the foundation of marriage because society clearly has nothing to gain from it. To further stress the paramount importance of family bonds he quotes the Vatican: “Society owes its continued survival to the family, founded on marriage” (qtd. in Leslie 1). Leslie utilizes this publicly recognized statement to support his argument; however, it is the same rationale that effectively defends the legalization of same-sex marriage. Families are, indeed, the building blocks of society.

In 1967, the U.S. Supreme Court recognized the liberty to marry as essential to the orderly pursuit of happiness and one of the basic civil rights of man (Cott 2). Marriage is a public institution that integrates material rewards with obligations. In the U.S., a legal marriage entitles couples to an array of benefits, including but not limited to immigration, citizenship, military service, tax policy, property rules, social security, veterans’ survivor benefits, and jail visitation privileges (Cott 2). In fact, one activist in Hawaii pointed out, “The convicted felons in our state penitentiaries are able to marry and receive all the benefits of marriage, even while they are still in prison” (qtd. in Goldberg-Hiller 6). Even convicts serving life sentences cannot escape American values of liberty and the pursuit of happiness; however, these basic rights are not yet extended to couples of the same sex.

Leslie directly correlates the suspension of inalienable rights and the deprivation of federally protected benefits acquired through legal marriage with the secu-

rity of the general welfare. His argument states, “If the central purpose of government is to promote the general welfare, then the state must promote always what is best for society’s health, security, and long-term viability” (Leslie 2). However, there is considerable evidence that links marriage with healthy physical, emotional, and psychological conditions. As far back as 1858, statisticians have discovered, “Married people are happier, healthier, and live longer” (Rauch 23). Leslie’s argument does not explore the negative impacts of denying the privilege of marriage. Evidence suggests that the longevity and livelihood of the homosexual community will be greatly compromised by denial of the right of marriage.

The argument equates restrictions on same-sex marriage to other existing limitations in place to protect the general well-being of society, such as “Those under 16 may not drive. Those under 21 may not drink. You must possess a high school diploma to join the military. Information about paroled child molesters must be made available so parents can protect their children” (Leslie 2). His argument further rationalizes, “Some label these prudential decisions ‘discrimination,’ but discriminating in such matters promotes the general welfare. The unique affirmation of heterosexual marriage operates under the same principle” (Leslie 2). Leslie’s remedial plan is to exploit the rights of the minority to secure the traditional institution of marriage. His argument does not consider the infringement of these claims upon deserved civil rights. This arbitrary level of thinking is comparable to the same rationalization endured to build the equally discriminative institution of slavery. While slaves were beaten, overworked, and even killed, the elitist majority was able to economically flourish. Just as colonial Americans justified the institution of slavery, Leslie and many others attempt to legitimize the deprivation of basic civil rights.

Throughout American history, many battles have been fought to establish equal rights. From Rosa Parks to *Brown v. the Board of Education*, these historical heroes have set the stage for total equality regardless of race, religion, or sexuality. Author Evan Wolfson speaks of the protections of civil rights: “Protection of choice, and difference—in religion, in opinion, in iden-

tity, in expression, and in intimate association—is the true moral vision of our American Constitution. Diversity and choice help keep us all free” (173). Leslie’s argument fails to consider the ideals of equal rights. His argument undermines the political undertow that sustains the choice of marriage as a matter of equal protection afforded to every citizen in America. Wolfson acknowledges, “No American, no human being, should have to give up her or his difference in order to be treated equally under the law” (173-174). Racial slurs, bigotry, and arguments against women’s rights and same-sex marriage are entities that illustrate the brutal repression that is deemed permissible through the radical interpretations of American government. The choice to not accept same-sex marriage is a choice to establish heterosexual superiority just as laws banning marriages across racial color lines reinforced white supremacy (Goldberg-Hiller 19).

Leslie continues his argument to express the other dangers of the legalization of same-sex marriage: “If gay marriage goes through, it will become the norm. And as that happens, our society will slide with even greater speed down the slope of social chaos” (Leslie 3). Leslie’s argument exhibits common fears from those who lack an understanding of sexuality itself; however, as professional medical opinions validate, there is little virtue to this claim (Cahill 27). According to psychologist David Myers, “Homosexual people often struggle with their sexual orientation. They may at first try to ignore or deny their desires, hoping they will go away. But they don’t. The feelings typically persist, as do those of heterosexual people who are similarly incapable of becoming homosexual” (476). Although homosexuality is not completely explicable through scientific study, this should not lend credibility to the “world is flat” school of thought. Author David Moats addresses the difficulties exaggerated by this general lack of understanding: “Gays and lesbians face additional challenges because for many people, it is not apparent that homosexuality is anything other than a lifestyle choice” (32).

In his essay, Leslie claims prolifically that allowing gay couples to marry will initiate the destruction of the institution of marriage. He states, “By equating homo-

sexual partnerships with marriage, society's attitude toward marriage will be cheapened to an even greater degree" (Leslie 2). His argument further supplements, "If marriage is suddenly fundamentally altered to include people of the same gender, it loses its genuine meaning to the rest of us...marriage will simply be another choice among the many" (Leslie 3). Because same-sex marriage is not yet nationally recognized, there is little evidence to support or refute this claim. However, society must ultimately surrender to the possibility that one day the local barber will have a trophy displayed for each of his nine wives, parents will marry their children, children will marry their pets, pets will petition outside of city hall for voting rights, and anyone who attempts to restore order to this social catastrophe will be hung in the town square. History, however, lends little credibility to these trends; the institution of marriage has survived many renovations in the past, and the sky has not fallen.

Leslie inadvertently identifies one phenomenon; marriage is, and should be, a choice, and not an unimportant one. Heterosexuals have enjoyed this choice since the establishment of the institution. Author Evan Wolfson agrees:

And few if any of us would want to go back to a time when marriage was the way it was before—before couples could divorce, before women could speak for themselves, before marriage was understood as a relationship of consent and equality, before married couples decided for themselves when and whether they would have children, and before the repeal of laws saying you could not marry someone of the "wrong" race because of the "definition" of marriage. And viewed from the distance of time, we can see that society was not hurt by these changes, despite the discomfort, scare tactics, and threats at the time. (71)

The protection of equality is outlined in the Constitution; equality is an affirmation of American freedom. Professor Sean Cahill points out, "Many of the groups leading the fights against gay marriage oppose any form of legal equality for gay people, including nondiscrimination laws, domestic partner benefits and civil unions,

safe-schools initiatives aimed at stopping anti-gay harassment, and hate crime laws. They use language that explicitly promotes intolerance and discrimination against gay people, including gay youth in school" (24).

Leslie's argument infers that homosexuals cannot serve as adequate parents due to the nature of their promiscuous lifestyles. His argument suggests these nontraditional homes are conducive to mental and physical instability. Speaking of these instinctual inadequacies, he states, "And these differences don't produce a healthy environment in which to raise children...So, while same-sex marriage might promote a particular welfare—that of the couple—it would not promote the general welfare, which arises from raising healthy, balanced children who have all the interior resources necessary to become contributing citizens" (Leslie 3-4). However, research confirms that homosexual parents serve as completely capable caregivers. An article reviewing lesbian parenting reveals, "Courts often have assumed that their children are likely to be emotionally harmed, subject to molestation, impaired in gender role development, or themselves homosexual. None of these assumptions are supported by extant research or theory" (Falk qtd. in Cameron and Cameron 2). The article further concludes that there is no existing evidence that proves homosexuals to be unfit parents. Another comparative review of research by Bigner and Bozett found, "There is no evidence of any kind that demonstrates that living with a homosexual parent has any significant negative effects on children...In fact, it appears that gay parents are as effective and may be even more so in some ways than non-gay parents" (qtd. in Cameron and Cameron 2).

Much other evidence designates dual-parenting homes as the better avenue to provide attention, compassion, and financial stability for children. Research exceedingly confirms that it is the quality of the parenting and not the sex of the parents that have the most influential impact on the child (Wolfson 89). A Stanford law professor, Michael Wald, conducted extensive research following children of same-sex couples into their adulthood. He examined psychological, physical, and social aspects. Wald concluded, "These children's lives were not problem-free," but these children, "had

learned to deal with the fact that society considered their family different, just as children living in other minority families...learn to cope with community stigma based on their family’s difference” (qtd. in Wolfson 92).

The legalization of marriage would only further strengthen the existing same-sex family structure. In 2002, the American Academy of Pediatrics released a formal policy supporting gay parents. “Children deserve to know their relationship with both of their parents is stable and legally recognized. This applies to all children, whether their parents are of the same or opposite sex....When two adults participate in parenting a child, they and the child deserve the serenity that comes with legal recognition” (qtd. in Wolfson 93).

There are over 110,000 children anticipating adoption in the United States. Restricting gays from forming legally recognized relationships will in turn drastically diminish the amount of potentially suitable homes (Cahill 33). As Human Rights Director Lisa Bennett has observed, same-sex couples are currently raising children in at least 96 percent of all counties in the nation. Without the protection of a marriage license, the children of these families cannot rely on both of their parents to be permitted to authorize medical treatment in an emergency; support from both parents in the event of their separation; or social security benefits in the event of the death of the parent unable to sustain a legal relationship with the child (Bennett and Gates 7). The denial of same-sex marriage is a deprivation of a wide range of protections to children in nearly every county.

Leslie claims there are studies confirming that nearly 80 percent of legally married males sustain fidelity. His argument testifies, “There is clear evidence that gay men are less likely to have sexually exclusive relationships than other people” (Leslie 4). He fails to include that the comparison presented is not the fidelity of married heterosexual men to married homosexual men. If he were to accurately depict the number of sexual partners of unmarried college age males from all sides of the sexuality spectrum, his evidence might have some argumentative worth. James Q. Wilson, a political scientist, presents a more accurate explanation of male behavior: “Of all institutions through which men may pass—schools, factories, the military—marriage has the

largest effect” (Rauch 20). It is not accurate to compare married males to unmarried males, regardless of their sexuality.

Leslie’s argument does not evaluate the force that legal recognition contributes to the stability of a relationship. During the recent court case in Massachusetts, *Goodridge v. Department of Public Health*, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court deemed, “Civil marriage is at once a deeply personal commitment to another human being and a highly public celebration of the ideals of mutuality, companionship, intimacy, fidelity, and family” (qtd. In Wolfson 1). Author Jonathan Rauch speaks of the disregarded influences of marriage; “No other institution has the power to turn narcissism into partnership, lust into devotion, strangers into kin” (7). In the prying eyes of society, marriage is the highest level of commitment someone can make to another person. The steel framework of marriage brings hope, structure, and stability to any community. Government recognition reinforces the principals of love and monogamy (Rauch 2). Rauch adds, “...marriage is not merely a contract between two people. It is a contract between two people and their community” (32). It is the power and strength of this institution that holds relationships together, provides suitable homes for children, and legally defines a couple’s love as forever. It is not just “saying I do” that provides such a great impact; “...marriage is a great domesticator, but so is the prospect of marriage” (Rauch 21).

The last part of Leslie’s argument serves to assume the actual reason homosexuals are enduring this battle for marriage. Leslie insists, “Many freely admit they want to redefine marriage, not only to include same-sex couples but to change its very scope and meaning” (5). Much of the opposition believes that homosexuals are enduring the battle for marriage only to redefine the entire institution. This radical argument relies on the idea that homosexuals are asking for legal justification to marry everybody they love. This of course is not the case, as author Jonathan Rauch corrects, “Gay people are not asking for the legal right to marry anybody they love or everybody they love...Instead, homosexuals are asking for what all heterosexuals possess already: the legal right to marry *somebody* they love” (125).

The facts remain clear; the institution of marriage legally and publicly sanctions a couple's relationship. The stability that marriage supplements to a relationship makes marriage the most vital institution to the survival of society. Rauch confirms, "Relationships are stabilizing. And marriage stabilizes relationships. Add it to the mix, and you get the binding power of legal entitlements and entanglements, of caterers and in-laws, of the publicly acknowledged fact that the two partners are a couple...abandoning a marriage is much harder than abandoning a relationship" (77).

The institution of marriage is already facing obstacles, and enforcing restrictions on commitment is igniting the popularity of marriage alternatives. Homosexuals are not a population that is going to disappear, and the recognition of their relationships can only benefit society and further perpetuate American values and norms. Stan Baker, an openly gay man, addressed the issue of whether gay marriage would weaken the institution of marriage after he received word regarding the state of Vermont's decision to enact civil union: "We bring to marriage, all of us, passion, commitment, equality, and love. And that's something that will only strengthen marriage. It's just incredible to have this day come. The reason we're involved in this suit is because we would like that love to be realized in marriage the same way it is for opposite-gender couples" (qtd. in Moats 18).

In a matter to preserve the very value and integrity of the U.S. Constitution, to guarantee human equality without separate legal status, and to protect the quality of life for children, it is imperative to legalize same-sex marriage as a federally protected right if not as a moral obligation that all men are created equal. Arguments such as Leslie's must be regarded as nothing more than a brutal misinterpretation that attempts to rationalize inequality without the representation of empirical evidence. Remember the battles fought in history and remember the words of Martin Luther King: "Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed" (qtd. in Moats 92).

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Evaluation: *Gina's approach is solid, and her writing is enjoyable.*

Adolescent Redux

Danielle LaGrippe

Course: English 102 (Composition)
and Literature 105 (Poetry)

Instructors: Kurt Hemmer and Greg Herriges

Assignment:

*Describe a memorable concert
using the voice of a rock journalist.*

Most people would rather die than relive their hellish years of teenage angst, but for a few hours, a bunch of sweaty music fans happily revisit the experience. For the current generation of hormonal rebels, tonight is a chance to express, relate—even celebrate—those growing pains in all their immature, obnoxious glory. And through a trio of average-looking guys in their forties (who could easily blend in with the audience), the fun and frustration of the band’s energy amplifies through speakers, and echoes back to the stage via an enthusiastic crowd, sending rhythmic vibrations out into the darkness of the sticky humid summer.

The Violent Femmes fall into an interesting category of cool, dark, “screw you” high-school rock. As former music critic Elizabeth Wurtzel puts it, “For the frustrated teenage boy in all of us, the first Violent Femmes album rules” (qtd. in Larsen). That just about hits the nail on the head. A terrific reference site (allmusic.com) explains their contradictory handle: “bassist [Brian] Ritchie originated the band’s oxymoronic name, adopt-

ing the word ‘femme’ from the Milwaukee area’s slang for wimps.” The same source describes the Femmes as “the textbook American cult band of the 1980s, [capturing] the essence of teen angst with remarkable precision.” As with any cult band, sales are secondary: “Though never a chart hit, [their self-titled debut album] remained a rite of passage for succeeding generations of teen outsiders.” That in mind, one gets the picture of these young punks from Milwaukee who have penned some seriously infectious music.

Under the dim August twilight, energy freely swims through the tightly packed mob. And after a teasingly long set by a hippie jam-band, those not thoroughly intoxicated are anticipating the moment they have waited the whole day for. Soon the Femmes themselves will take the stage for a truly satisfying experience—a bargain at only ten dollars. Fatigue gets replaced by a second wind. Tired feet lift from the ground; heavy arms raise to the sky.

As usual, those first few notes serve as a wake-up call: “We’re here, we’re loud, shake what you got and make us proud!” Like a gunshot, the first song delivers a shot of adrenaline impossible to ignore. Lead singer Gordon Gano has understandably lost his boyish testosterone edge, gaining a few pounds in the process, but his voice (like an old friend) is unmistakably the same one that can be heard on their 1983 self-titled debut. The thrill of a live performance proves itself once again as a surreal quality floats through the atmosphere.

Once the novelty seems to wear off, the familiar classic “Blister in the Sun” gets everyone moving again—whether they realize it or not. Five notes on the acoustic guitar is all it takes to trigger recognition. Unrestrained spastic flailing ensues, matching the band’s early “melodic folk-punk” style (allmusic.com). Immediately, drunk and sober souls alike launch into a full-out, word-for-word sing-along. With the jittery beat of the snare drum, everyone attempts the same jerky rhythm. Catchy, quirky, enthusiastic—this little anthem is “built around a simple, sing-song acoustic guitar riff...answered by drumbeats resembling hand-claps” with the “bare-bones arrangement” allowing for “the seething tension and frustration” of the tune to be easily discerned (allmusic.com).

By the time the raunchy attitude of “Gimme the Car” hits, the message is clear—teenage angst, lust, and anger bombard the ears of the listener. Gano lays it out with deliciously distasteful clarity: “Come on Dad, gimme the car tonight/Come on Dad, I ain’t no runt/Come on girl, gimme your.../cause I ain’t had much to live for.” With the amateurish xylophone playing of “Gone Daddy Gone,” the moody tone is maintained for the ultimate Femmes’ tune “Add it Up.” Pure, blatant sexual frustration begs for attention with lyrics like “Why can’t I get just one screw/Why can’t I get just one screw/Believe me I’d know what to do.” Like a bad complexion that refuses to be ignored, Gano goes even further. His rhyming complaints turn profane, claiming the reason for his lack of “female affection” “must have somethin’ to do with luck.”

Similar (or maybe the exact opposite) to the phenomenon that listening to the blues creates, the music of the Violent Femmes has a certain influence that can turn a good mood into a bad one and a bad mood into downright dejection. However, this negativity can be enjoyable—even therapeutic—especially with the song “Kiss Off.” As with any effective music, it evokes emotion. The dark, dismal chords, and the bitterness of the chorus serve to kill any high and are sure to conjure images of misery and desperation, glamorizing depression and magnifying the despair through a group chant suggesting indulgent, mind-numbing, self induced drug-abuse: “I take five, five, five for my lonely and six, six, six for my sorrow, and seven, seven, seven for no tomorrow.” By the time it comes to “Ten, ten, ten, ten for everything everything everything everything!” the volume has increased to top-of-the-lungs, out-of-control, power-screaming.

Towards the end of the night, with the lights flashing and young girls dancing wildly, the show has reached a fever pitch. Gordon and his boys play one encore and leave practically everyone still standing wanting more. Knowing the end has come, hundreds slap their hands numb, kill their throats in vain, and eventually leave with wobbly limbs and temporary hearing loss. A quiet stillness sets in as hoards of strangers (some exhausted, some in search of the next thrill) trace their steps back to where they came—

glancing at each other for some indication or validation. The cool, aloof ones walk past the giddy goofballs, pushing and laughing their way down the street.

For those who missed the Femmes the first time around, the night offered a great second chance to see the alternative ’80s rockers. Rock and roll more than served its purpose: to let loose, join the energy of the crowd, and really feel the music—a form of the biological need for social interaction. Without the amazing power and passion of live music and the freeing experience it creates, society would be at a major disadvantage. Without the Violent Femmes, a small (but significant) part of the extension of the blank generation would be just a little less unique, and for many teenagers life would be just a little more lonely.

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Evaluation: *Danielle captures the tone of rock journalism so well that we are tempted to send this piece to Rolling Stone.*

Tale of Conflict and Secrecy

Brian Lanning

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Catherine Restovich

Assignment:

Write a literary research paper.

“‘You must never tell anyone,’ my mother said, ‘what I am about to tell you’” (Kingston 2704). These are the opening lines of Maxine Hong Kingston’s story “No Name Woman.” The secrecy established in those lines affects the rest of the story, and only in telling the story does Kingston break the curse of secrecy. The story is unlike anything else ever written, as is the book that it came from. Nobody has ever been able to pin down just what genre *The Woman Warrior* belongs to: autobiography, memoir, novel, or epic. It is certainly told from Kingston’s point of view, but a question remains as to whether she is the true narrator or whether her mother, *Brave Orchid* is (Ling 443). These ambiguities arise, not from language, but from the meaning that she is trying to convey with her words, the story’s very essence. “There is no magic moment in ‘No Name Woman’ when Maxine finally discovers the truth about her aunt, her aunt’s pregnancy, or the father of the baby” (Petit 483). Instead, the story is fleshed out through various conceptions of what may have happened with her aunt, given what Kingston knows about her societal structure and herself. One thing is certain about “No Name Woman,” and that is that it is a conflict story on many unaligned issues; between what Kingston knows about her aunt and what she does not, between individuality and enforced social demands, between feminism and the misogynistic culture, and between the two cultures she finds herself pulled between.

Maxine Hong was born in Stockton, California on October 27, 1940. Her parents, Tom and Ying Lan Hong, were Chinese immigrants, which left her struggling to come to terms with the conflicting cultural values of Chinese society and American values. Kingston started to address this situation when she began writing creatively at age nine. She studied arts and got her bachelor’s degree from the University of California at Berkeley. After she graduated, she married and had a son, Joseph, with Earl Kingston. She taught high school English before teaching at the Honolulu Business College. It was after this time, though still in Honolulu, now teaching at the Mid-Pacific Institute, that she started publishing her works and wrote *The Woman Warrior*, which contains the story “No Name Woman”

(Brackett sec. 2). It was printed in 1976 and won several awards, including “best nonfiction” from the National Book Critics Circle. She and her husband moved back to California; their son Joseph remained in Hawaii. Her home in Oakland burned down, containing 200 pages of manuscript in 1991. She now teaches at the University of California, Berkeley (Ling 439-440).

The whole story, “No Name Woman,” is held together by the masterful use of strong language by Kingston. Angela Petit states, “Kingston offers an important lesson about language, its powerful ability and equally potent *inability* to fix meaning, in this case to establish the facts of the aunt’s life” (482). Even though Kingston is using very clear and precise language, the meaning and facts still remain hidden. An interesting conflict thus arises, between the “known” and the “unknown.” What is known factually in the story is: Maxine has an aunt on her father’s side, the aunt has an out of wedlock pregnancy, her home is attacked by her fellow villagers, she gives birth to the baby, both the aunt and the child are found in a well dead, and the aunt has been forgotten as punishment for her sins (Petit 487). Kingston learns all of these facts through her mother, who is telling her this story because Kingston has begun to menstruate. The sole purpose of the mother telling Kingston this story is to warn her about extravagance and the proper role of women within traditional Chinese society. However, Amy Ling and Patricia P. Chu say, “Instead of receiving the story of the No Name aunt as a warning, as her mother, speaking for the patriarchy, intended, Kingston seeks in this rejected aunt a model for her own rebellious nature” (444).

However, what is not known makes up the bulk and importance of the story: the identity of the baby’s father, how the affair was handled, and what drove the mother to kill the baby along with herself (Petit 487). Almost the entire narrative deals with what Kingston does not know, and that is where the real value of the story lies. She does not know anything about her aunt, so Kingston creates her aunt as she sees most plausible. In all of the retellings of her aunt’s possible life, Kingston draws on her own life to create her aunt and fill in the gaps of what her aunt’s ordeal must have been like. She draws on her own experience with boys her

age, her culture and how such an affair could possibly have happened, and what motivates herself in all of her actions. In creating her aunt, she is in fact exploring herself, and the “unknown” within.

Even the aunt’s name is unknown. Kingston’s mother did not tell her the name of the aunt, in order to continue the punishment of forgetting that the aunt even existed. Her mother did not tell Kingston anything other than the story of the aunt’s adultery and the consequences that ensued. Kingston, in exploring the story of her aunt, creates a euphemistic name for her, “No Name Woman.” Shirley Geok-Lin Lim mentions that, “No Name Woman’s name is itself an oxymoron. She has no name, but the narrator in naming her No Name Woman has given her a name. No Name Woman’s identity is that of lack, her presence inscribed in her absence” (46). The conflict between presence and absence is the tale of No Name Woman’s whole existence. Her importance to Kingston, and all of the lessons Kingston learns from her, come from that absence. The mother intends the absence of existence to be the very message about adultery; however, Kingston sees this lack as something greater: the aunt’s life-struggle to be discovered and Kingston’s own struggle against her cultural makeup.

In doing nothing more than telling the story that her mother has forbidden her to repeat, Kingston’s struggle and rebellion are evident. It is the story of her aunt having been disgraced by her fellow villagers for having a child out of wedlock. They storm her house, kill her livestock, and leave her home in shambles. The aunt ends up giving birth to the child and immediately kills herself by throwing herself, with the baby in her arms, down a well. “In dignifying this aunt by telling her story, Kingston breaks a ban and at the same time releases her own individual voice” (Adelstein sec. 2 par. 2). Kingston is taking on her own voice through telling various possibilities about what her aunt went through, and the type of man that she had the child by. The retellings are not so much about the aunt and what she feels; they are about what Kingston is going through, and what she feels about it: “Unless I see her life branching into mine, she gives me no ancestral help” (2707).

One thing that she explores in these retellings is the gender inequality of her parents’ culture and the crip-

pling effect it has on not just the females within that culture, but the men as well. As Carol Franks puts it, "In these retellings, she explores gender inequality in her speculations about the lives of the men who have left their wives behind and the life of the man who fathered her aunt's child" (par. 5). The women were left behind to tend to the society, but the men had to go to faraway lands and struggle to come to terms with the new world as well as support their culture back home. However, the male struggle is not the main theme that Kingston explores about gender inequality. It is mostly about the demands put on the women, and the difficulty of living up to such standards. The patriarchal structure demeans women and classifies them as worthless creatures. All of her speculations about her aunt's motives involve trying to come to terms with what was demanded of a woman, and either accepting them or rebelling against these harsh demands.

This exploration leads to the end of the aunt's perpetual punishment; Kingston is exerting her aunt's existence. In her essay on Kingston, Virginia Brackett says, "The story supports the theme of cultural conflict made apparent in the narrator's thought that her aunt's true punishment was not death, 'but the family's deliberately forgetting her'" (sec. 4 par. 2). The outcast table mentioned in the middle of Kingston's story also holds a subtle allusion to exiling someone as punishment, and never forgetting that you are exiling them. The outcast table is a literal table completely isolated from where the rest of the family eats at dinner. It is for people who have shamed the family, and will never have hopes of making amends; they are forever banished to that table for their misdeeds and are never spoken to by any member of the family. The aunt's punishment is similar, but on a much larger scale. She is never to be spoken of again; she is to be completely forgotten by the family, her existence erased. But Kingston tells her aunt's story and reasserts her actuality, and in doing so, both liberates the aunt from the punishment and herself from having to act as one of the punishers. "Kingston acknowledges her guilt for participating in the punishment of the aunt for twenty years. She says that she still does not know her aunt's name, but at least she has broken the silence, an act that ends her participation" (Franks par. 6).

The first conjectured retelling of her aunt's story involves a man ordering Kingston's aunt to sleep with him, as Kingston writes: "Women in the old China did not choose. Some man had commanded her to lie with him and be his secret evil...His demand must have surprised, then terrified her. She obeyed him; she always did as she was told" (2706). This telling of the tale clearly makes the case that women did not get to choose even to be *able* to follow the standards of society. He ordered her to sleep with him, so she did. If she did not, she would be threatening the misogynistic makeup of the culture. However, by obeying him, she endangers the family network. Such a position is clearly unfair, but she must do as she is commanded, according to this standard, and still be blamed for the outcome. Kingston holds absolute contempt for this societal structure. She shows so much sympathy toward her aunt in this telling of the story, and about the terror that her aunt must have felt. "But women at sex hazarded birth and hence lifetimes. The fear did not stop but permeated everywhere" (Kingston 2707). This rape hazarded the possibility of her being impregnated, and that would endanger her whole life. So, the aunt could not escape from the fear, both from the actual violent rape and the consequences that would ensue.

An opposite effect of the terror of the first retelling is dealt in another retelling, where the aunt not only participates in the affair, but seduces the man herself. She sits in front of a mirror, changing clothes with different colors, "Changing them frequently in order to hit on the right combination. She wanted him to look back" (Kingston 2707). The condemned love affair is all her will. She owns the male, not the male her. However, she still must do this all within the misogynist structure of her society. Her vanity cannot exceed acceptable norms, or else she will receive a vicious reputation. However, Kingston's whole second speculation of her aunt's life has her aunt completely in control. The aunt knows her goal, her obstacles, and how to achieve her end in spite of strict societal controls. However, this short-lived independence soon leads to devastation as the aunt's home is sacked by her fellow villagers, which leads to her suicide, and her being forever punished by being actively and sinisterly forgotten. As Amy Adelstein

writes: “Kingston explores the triumphs and terrors of sexuality in her aunt’s assertion of individual desire” (sec. 2 par. 3).

A third and most ambiguous retelling involves family members, “but intercourse with a man outside the family would have been no less abhorrent” (Kingston 2709). This unsettling statement is intended to show just how interwoven are the people in the culture in which her aunt is growing up. The villagers would shout out titles of kinship to their friends, and loudly so that the whole village could never forget their kinship ties to one another. Everyone in the whole society was a brother or a sister, and Kingston herself would “hex” boys as brothers so that they were less intimidating. A lot of thought went into arranging marriages so that no accidental incestual progeny would result. However, what happens in these marriages is that the communal tie between all of the villagers only strengthens the family network of the culture. Kingston points out, “Marriages promise to turn strangers into friendly relatives—a nation of siblings” (2709).

Another shocking subject that Kingston explores is why the aunt killed the baby along with herself. Kingston certifiably asserts that the reason is, “A child with no descent line would not soften her life but only trail after her ghostlike, begging her to give it purpose” (2711). The aunt did not and would not, according to Kingston, reveal the name of the inseminator (2709). The aunt could not continue living, having been disgraced as she was. She would not name the father, who may have even been with the mob who sacked her home and killed her livestock. She did not want the man to suffer the same fate that she had to. The baby would certainly have been cared for by the community, but it would have no family network to rear it properly. The child would forever wander about as a ghost, even though it was alive; so the aunt’s last, and only, act as a mother was to bring the child with her into the well, into death.

This perpetual wandering without a firm support base is mirrored perfectly by Kingston’s own life as a first-born American from immigrant parents. Kingston cunningly uses emigrants instead of immigrants to show that their primary culture, and her own, is Chinese and

not American. But the firm roots of Chinese ethnicity have been ripped out by the emigration. In trying to separate the myths that her mother is telling her from what is actual Chinese history, “Chinese-Americans, when you try to understand what things in you are Chinese, how do you separate what is peculiar to childhood, to poverty, insanities, one family, your mother who marked your growing up with stories, from what is Chinese? What is Chinese tradition and what is the movies?” (Kingston 2706). Her mother is trying to enforce upon her the Chinese societal demands in a new Western culture which has its own demands. Kingston must come to terms with both of these demands, and in doing so, she loses the very roots that hold both cultural norms together. If she fully embraces her Chinese ethnicity, she will forever be a ghost in a strange land. If she denies it completely, she’ll have no concept of where she came from. Instead, she chases after her own heritage, much like she supposes the child would, if the child had no cultural descent line.

The Woman Warrior itself was received differently by almost every group in both cultures, as well as by first-generation Chinese emigrants in the same position as Maxine Hong Kingston. Feminists such as Sara Blackburn and Diane Johnson claimed that the work was strictly telling the struggle of a woman against male society. Jeffrey Paul Chen and Ben Tong both attacked the work, probably as a reaction against white feminist approval, as an emigrant distorting Chinese myth in order to gain white approval. Some white American males didn’t even want to deal with the work, so they tagged on it the familiar labels of “exotic,” “Eastern,” and “oriental.” By using these labels, they are implying that the West will never fathom the East. This is a dangerous conception that, “implies that he or she is in essence inexplicable, and one excuses oneself from recognizing the full complexity and humanity of that person. Hence, reviewers who praised the text as exotic or criticized it as not so, were insisting that it conform to a belittling orientalist stereotype” (Ling 440). What the feminists failed to grasp is that the struggle between woman and the patriarchal misogynistic society and a woman’s independence is only an aspect of the memoir. Coming to terms with individuality in a repressively

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communal society is just as large an aspect, as is trying to create her own roots in a small population of first-generation Chinese-Americans. To ignore any of these aspects, or even give precedence to one more than the others, is to, in effect, marginalize Kingston's amazing work. What Chan and Tong both failed to grasp is that by creating her stories using Chinese myth, and then transforming them and adapting them to suit her own life and message, she is creating her own subculture of Chinese-American.

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Evaluation: *Brian flawlessly balances critical sources and his own analysis, which makes for both an important and beautiful thesis.*

Landscape Architect or Landscape Designer?

Ann Libner

Course: Park and Golf Maintenance 100
(Horticulture Careers)
Instructor: Joyce Grattoni

Assignment:

*Explore a career in the green industry,
and write an informative paper about it.*

For years I worked as a paralegal. I have worked in beautiful corporate settings for Allstate, A.J. Gallagher, and Motorola, to name a few. These companies have lush, rolling grounds that I found welcoming and soothing. When I was working for a law firm, I often visited with clients on their rolling corporate campuses. No matter where I worked, during breaks from tedious, stressful meetings, I always sought refuge in beautifully landscaped courtyards or refreshed myself on manicured walking paths. When I worked in the Chicago Loop, it was the ornamental trees and planters that lined the streets that gave me the most joy on my daily route to and from the train. I would often lunch in lush interiorscaped restaurants or retreat to the “landscaped” lobbies of the buildings to enjoy the “green” space. One day it dawned on me that someone planned all of these beautiful spaces that gave me so much joy and a sense of tranquility. None of these places were random acts of nature or happenstance.

Landscape architects or landscape designers envision and create these sorts of green spaces, and there are differences between the two, in terms of the training and types of projects each undertakes. Both professions are charged with analyzing, planning, designing, and creating exterior spaces using plant materials and appropriate hardscape elements. To be successful in both professions, one should be creative. One should have good communication and interpersonal relationship skills because of the high level of interaction necessary between the architect/designer, the client, and the construction crew. A knowledge of horticulture

is also important. Being artistic is another integral element, because the architect/designer must convey his or her ideas through a series of drawings, blueprints, and renderings.

The main difference between the two professions is the educational requirements. Landscape architects hold bachelor’s or master’s degrees. In the midwest, the University of Illinois in Urbana, Illinois; University of Wisconsin in Madison, Wisconsin; Purdue University in Lafayette, Indiana; and the other Big Ten Universities offer the degree programs on their main campuses. Most landscape architects are also licensed by their states. Forty-seven states require that practicing landscape architects be licensed. To obtain a license, the landscape architect must pass a licensing exam, the Landscape Architect Registration Examination (LARE), which is administered by the Council of Landscape Architectural Registration Board. Some states have additional requirements beyond the LARE, including an examination that covers state and local laws and regulations. Landscape architects who have passed the LARE and have become licensed may place the designation “L.A.” after their name.

Landscape architects can also receive Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) accreditation. Approximately 19,000 design professionals have become LEED-accredited. The U.S. Green Building Council gives training workshops in preparation for the LEED exam. LEED projects implement specific strategies for site development, water savings, energy efficiency, and waste production. The designs are considered “green designs” and are used in public and private projects. The LEED guidelines “are not a cookbook and are not intended to replace good creative thinking” (Flynn 60); instead, “It is a codification of [our] understanding of sound environmental principles” (Flynn 54). The LEED accreditation is an additional credential for landscape architects.

Besides being concerned with the environmental impact and the best use of the land, landscape architects have to be knowledgeable in plant and soil sciences, geology, topography, and climate, as well as surveying and construction techniques. Landscape architects often work with land planners, engineers, or architects in the development of urban, suburban, state and national parks and forests, or other large scale planning.

Landscape Architect or Landscape Designer?

The American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) defines their role as:

Landscape architecture encompasses the analysis, planning, design, management, and stewardship of the natural and built environments. Types of projects include: residential; parks and recreation; monuments; urban design; streetscapes and public spaces; transportation corridors and facilities; gardens and arboreta; security design; hospitality and resorts; institutional; academic campuses; therapeutic gardens; historic preservation and restoration; reclamation; conservation; corporate and commercial; landscape art and earth sculpture; interior landscapes; and more. (American Society of Landscape Architects, www.asla.org)

As with every profession, salary is commensurate with experience. According to the 2004 ASLA National Salary Survey, which is posted on their website, the average salary for landscape architecture positions is \$74,644. Most of the respondents had 21 to 25 years of experience, with an average salary of \$80,273. The average salary for respondents with 0 to 5 years of experience was \$41,803. Those respondents with 36 to 40 years of experience earn the highest average salary, at \$97,564. ASLA received responses from 2,499 firms. The website posting of the salary survey results does not mention how many individuals this survey included, nor does it state how many surveys were sent out. ASLA reports that the results of the survey show a 23.4% increase in the average salary since the 1998 salary survey.

The U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics has the mean annual wage for landscape architects at \$57,680 annually. The median wage was \$53,120. The median wage breakdown by percentage from the BLA is as follows:

Percentile	10%	25%	50% (Median)	75%	90%
Hourly Wage	\$15.57	\$19.68	\$25.54	\$33.85	\$43.68
Annual Wage	\$32,390	\$40,930	\$53,120	\$70,400	\$90,850

The BLA’s statistics do not include self-employed landscape architects.

The job description for a landscape designer is similar to that of a landscape architect. Landscape design-

ers do not have to be licensed. An associate’s degree or certificate program in landscape design is sufficient education. The Association of Professional Landscape Designers (APLD) has established professional standards and continuing education programs. The APLD also offers certifications for landscape designers. The criteria for the certificate is outlined on their website at www.apld.org. The basic requirements are a minimum of two years in the field doing landscape design work and a minimum of 12 credit hours of coursework in landscape design.

The concerns of landscape architects are the same for landscape designers. Both professions share many of the same job requirements and duties. The general difference is that landscape designers often work on projects on a smaller scale than those of landscape architects. Landscape designers need to have a strong knowledge of horticulture. They need to be knowledgeable about plants, soils, plant diseases, and how various plants perform in different environments. The Association of Professional Landscape Designers states “landscape design involves analysis, planning, design and creation of exterior spaces using plant material and appropriate hardscape elements” (www.apld.org).

The Bureau of Labor Statistics does not have a specific breakdown in salary for landscape designers. It is generally suggested in the literature that landscape designers usually earn less than landscape architects. In a profile of a landscape designer in *Vocational Biographies*, the journal states that the salary for a landscape designer can reach to \$100,000 per year. It is a very broad range, as is the job description for a landscape designer.

Landscape designers do have a more broad and more loose job description than do landscape architects. They do similar work, but often on a smaller or more intimate scale. Many designers come from horticulture, botany, or soil science backgrounds. They select the plant materials for the specific site and site conditions. They are less concerned with the engineering issues of the design and concentrate on the specific plant materials used in the project. Landscape architects often rely on landscape designers for the final plant choices and to fill in the details.

Landscape designers are a very diverse lot. They often have specialty areas in which they concentrate

their design efforts. *Vocational Biographies* profiled a landscape designer who specialized in Japanese garden designs. Other designers specialize in perennial gardens. Yet others specialize in landscaping native plants, while others only design water gardens. Landscape designers are very likely to have small niche specialties.

Both professions, landscape architecture and landscape design, require a sense of design and a measure of artistry. R. Thomas Selinger, L.A., believes that the landscape architect or designer's sense of design and artistic expression is the most important determiner of success in the field. Tom received his Bachelor of Landscape Architecture from Michigan State University in 1976. He is currently a landscape architect for Rocco Fiore and Sons in Libertyville, Illinois. Tom also teaches landscape graphics and color rendering for landscape plans at the Chicago Botanical Gardens in Glencoe, Illinois. Tom feels that design principles can be taught to anyone, but unless the student has an internal sense of design, their work will be good but not necessarily great. That extra measure comes from within and is often intangible.

In Tom's experience with "selling" residential designs to clients, he has found that the better the drawings and the renderings are, the easier it is to sell the design. He says that the most basic design is infinitely enhanced by a good presentation. He feels that if a designer or architect can communicate the plan to the client, the client is more likely to commission the project. Prospective clients light up when they see color renderings of their properties. Tom has found that many clients do not care about the details of the plan such as plant materials. Many clients are willing to leave these kinds of details up to the architect or designer. The one request that he hears from prospective clients is that the landscaping plan should be "low maintenance."

Tom loves the graphic, artistic side of his job as a landscape architect. He willingly shares his portfolio of work, particularly his color work. When the "engineering" aspects of landscape designing are mentioned, he shrugs. He leaves the specifics of the plant materials to the sales department. He loves producing beautifully rendered plans. It is the best part of his job.

The hours that a landscape architect or landscape designer works were not specifically expressed in any of the literature. Tom Selinger said that they vary as to the progress and stage of a project. There are longer hours as deadlines get closer and need to be met. As with any pro-

fession, to be successful, one generally needs to put in more hours rather than less. A successful architect or designer needs to be flexible and available when it comes to client meetings, particularly on residential projects. The homeowners are mostly likely to be available evenings or weekends to discuss the project.

I am more convinced than ever that I want to pursue a career in creating beautiful landscapes. Some day, I may go on to get a degree in landscape architecture. However, at this point, because there are no schools in the Chicagoland area that offer the degree, I will start with a degree in landscape design. In pursuing a landscape design degree, I will concentrate on the design elements, the plant materials and the rendering aspects of the profession. I definitely want to create beautiful, tranquil green spaces for people to enjoy with plants while being a good steward to the earth.

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Evaluation: *This student has written a great comparison between the two career choices and draws her own conclusions about them.*

Interpretations of Eden

Kevin Merkelz

Course: Literature 112 (Literature and Film)

Instructor: Kurt Hemmer

Assignment:

Is the major theme of Elia Kazan's movie East of Eden similar to or different than the major theme in John Steinbeck's East of Eden? Why or why not?

Film adaptations of literature have always been tricky business. They are required to condense a several-hundred-page novel, transfer it to the real world, add all the complexities of a multitrack medium, and still maintain the spirit of the original work. With so many differences, how do film adaptations remain faithful to the overarching themes and motifs presented in a novel? Quite often, they do not. The common restraints and requirements of cinema, such as a three-act plot structure, third-person narration, and a two-hour time limit, naturally produce works with a different message than that of the original novel. The expectations of the audience also come into play: patrons of literature expect different things from books than the general moviegoing public does of motion pictures, such as a requisite happy ending and attractive, likeable characters. Thus, many adaptations of literature often result in films with very different, but not necessarily better or worse, themes than those of the original book. Director Elia Kazan's film adaptation of *East of Eden* is certainly no exception. In Kazan's film *East of Eden*, the theme of a son's competition for his father's love differs from the theme of free will in John Steinbeck's novel *East of Eden*.

In the early chapters of the book *East of Eden*, the theme of man's free will is first hinted at with the author's description of Cathy Ames. She is characterized as a monster who was "born with the tendencies, or lack of them, which drove and forced her all her life" (Steinbeck 72). Here, Steinbeck subtly broaches the topic of free will, not with dialogue or discussion between characters, but by suggesting that Cathy was born with an evil heart, not free to determine her own path. As the book progresses, her actions suggest this to be true. She burns down her house, murders her parents, sleeps with her husband's brother on their wedding night, attempts to murder her own children, and murders her boss. Although Cathy's predetermined evil heart appears to contradict the concept of free will, it in fact offers an interesting introduction and counterpoint to the theme which Steinbeck more fully develops later in the book. It makes the reader question: if someone can be born with an evil heart, can anyone be born with free will? As the novel progresses, character discussions and wisdom from the Bible will demonstrate that

man does in fact have the freedom to choose his own path. It becomes apparent that Cathy did have free will in her life; she simply chose to do evil.

Later, near the middle of the book, Steinbeck at last formally lays out the theme of free will with a lengthy discussion between Lee, Adam Trask, and Samuel Hamilton. The thrust of their discussion comes when Lee shares information that he found researching different Bible translations of the Cain and Abel story. In the King James Version, Lee found that God told Cain “thou shalt” rule over sin. In the American Standard translation, Lee found that God told Cain “do thou” rule over sin. But when he went back to the original Hebrew text, Lee found that the actual Hebrew word used was “*timshel*,” meaning “thou mayest.” When Samuel questions the importance of fretting over such seemingly minor variations in the text, Lee lays out the essence of the novel’s theme of people’s free will: “Don’t you see?” he cried. “The American Standard translation *orders* men to triumph over sin....The King James translation makes a promise in ‘Thou shalt,’ meaning that men will surely triumph over sin. But the Hebrew word, the word *timshel*...gives a choice. It might be the most important word in the world” (303). For Steinbeck, it becomes the most important word in the novel.

If the subject of *timshel* had ended with mere discussion by Lee, Adam, and Samuel, the theme of free will might have remained undeveloped and insignificant. Shortly thereafter, however, the characters begin to apply this wisdom to their lives. For example, Samuel takes a risk and chooses to disclose to Adam the whereabouts of his wife Cathy. The information devastates Adam. When Lee confronts Samuel as to why he revealed the information, Samuel replies, “Do you see now why I told Adam tonight? I exercised the choice” (309). In another example, at the end of the novel, it is Adam who finally grasps the concept of free will and applies it to his life. On his deathbed, with his last ounce of energy, Adam blesses his son Cal and breathes, “*Timshel!*” (602). With this final exclamation, Adam chooses to make up for the years of hurt he caused Cal by showing preference to Aron. He exercised free will and chose to take Cal’s blessing into his

own hands. Adam’s small action crowns six hundred pages of narration, and his closing line sums up the entire novel in a single word—*timshel*. With the theme’s weighty position as the final line in the book, Steinbeck clearly intends for his readers to walk away with one important point: humankind has free will.

In contrast to Steinbeck’s book, the theme of Kazan’s film *East of Eden* deals with a son’s competition for his father’s love. The theme is introduced during an encounter in the family dining room between Adam (Raymond Massey) and his son Cal (James Dean). As a method of discipline for Cal’s earlier disobedience, Adam reads aloud from the Bible, hoping to persuade Cal to repent for his actions. Seeing no results, Adam passes the Bible to Cal and orders him to read aloud. Cal senses his father’s growing disapproval and uses the opportunity to antagonize him. Finally, Adam exclaims, “You have no repentance! You’re bad. Through and through— bad.” Glumly, Cal responds, “You’re right. I’m bad. I’ve known that for a long time.... Aron’s the good one.” This short scene sets up the conflict between father and son seen throughout the film: Adam’s frustration and disapproval of Cal, and Cal’s competition with his brother Aron (Richard Davalos) to earn his father’s love. Kazan highlights this tension in the dining room scene with clever camera-work. By framing Adam and Aron in the same shot, and Cal all alone, he suggests that Adam and Aron maintain a close, intimate relationship, while Cal is quite distant from his father. Kazan also uses canted framing throughout the scene to subtly hint at the off-kilter father-son relationship. This canted framing will continue to signal scenes of conflict between father and son throughout the film.

Later in the movie, the theme makes another appearance. On Adam’s birthday, Cal plans to give his father a surprise gift and organizes a small celebration. Before Cal is able to present his gift to Adam, however, Aron interrupts to announce his engagement to his fiancé, Abra (Julie Harris). Adam is delighted with Aron’s gift, and declares, “I couldn’t have wished for anything nicer.” However, when Cal presents his father with a generous gift of \$5,000 cash to replace his father’s business loss, the reaction is not what he expects. Instead of

Interpretations of Eden

an outpouring of gratitude and approval from his father, Cal is chastised, and his gift is rejected. Adam laments, "I'd be happy if you'd give me something, like, well, like your brother's given me: something honest and human and good." When his father accepts Aron's gift but rejects his, Cal feels that his father has once again shown love and approval to Aron, but withheld them from him. As Cal breaks down and runs from the room, Kazan employs another canted framing, visually reinforcing the imbalanced love between Adam and Cal.

The canted framing returns one final time in a scene later that evening on the porch. This time, the framing pitches about in a dizzying manner, mirroring Cal's relationship with his father. Instead of static, subtly canted shots, the camera now swings noticeably from side to side, emphasizing a relationship listing out of control. With his gift rejected by his father, Cal despairs. He exacts revenge on Aron for out-earning his father's love and approval. The scene begins as Cal returns home to confront his father and vent years of pent up emotions. He cries, "I've been jealous all my life. So jealous I couldn't even stand it. Tonight, I even tried to buy your love. But I don't want it anymore. I can't use it anymore." By this point, Cal recognizes the futility of competing with Aron for his father's love. Cal's hopeless response is revenge, spite, and finally detachment. The childish competition for a father's love introduced in the beginning of the film has progressed to full-blown rivalry between brothers and finally resulted in a tragic dissolution of family ties.

Through the different themes of the novel and its film adaptation, Steinbeck and Kazan have clearly chosen to explore different questions relating to human struggles. Steinbeck analyzes a larger quandary of all humankind—man's free will—while Kazan narrows the focus to a single family dynamic—sibling rivalry for a father's love. Which theme is more important? Which theme grabs hold of the audience and lingers long after the story has ended? While it may be easier to relate to the movie's theme of contention for a father's love, it is the book's profound, nagging questions that keep one awake at night: Do people have free will? May we choose our own destiny or is it predetermined? After all, if free will does exist, then people are

accountable for their actions. No excuses. But if people's actions are predetermined, then they are reduced to a mere character in a story already written. No freedom. In the novel *East of Eden*, Lee spends years searching for the answers to these questions. Finally, after nearly a decade of research, discussion, and debate, he concludes, "It is easy out of laziness, out of weakness, to throw oneself into the lap of deity, saying, 'I couldn't help it; the way was set.' But think of the glory of choice! That makes a man a man" (304).

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Evaluation: *Kevin does a remarkable job explaining the differences between the major themes of Steinbeck's novel and Kazan's adaptation, and convincingly explains how paying attention to the technical aspects of Kazan's film is rewarded with a deeper appreciation of how Kazan wants to influence his audience.*

From Clay Williams to Everett Leroy Jones to Imamu Amiri Baraka

Karen L. Murphy

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Catherine Restovich

Assignment:

Write a literary research paper concerning one or more of the short stories or the play read as part of the class.

Poet, dramatist, and political writer Amiri Baraka's *Dutchman*, a play first presented in March 1964 at the Cherry Lane Theater in New York, portrays the interaction between two characters, Lula and Clay. In many ways, Clay represents the author, and the play is autobiographical. Baraka's name change from Everett Leroy Jones to Imamu Amiri Baraka parallels the transformation of Clay from buttoned-down sophisticate embracing the white-man's world to angry Black Nationalist. Everett "Leroy" Jones, born in 1934 in Clay's home state of New Jersey, came from a lower-middle-class family. Upon entering his mostly white junior high school, he was, for the first time, confronted with black-white issues, which confused him. High school, where he nevertheless excelled, was more of the same, as was college. The renowned black institution, Howard University in Washington, D.C. seemed to him just a place that taught hopeful middle-class blacks assimilation into the white world, in working for powerful whites. Baraka has said that Howard fostered the "Negro sickness," a deep-rooted feeling of inferiority to the white man (Bernotas 32). His frustration there contributed to his flunking out of that school.

Jones' first change of name occurred in 1953 while at Howard University, before his junior year: Everett "Leroy" became Everett "LeRoi." Offering various reasons for this over the years, he admits that, most likely,

it was the influence of black author Roi Ottley's book, *New World A-Comin'* (Bernotas 32). Jones' 1957 move into New York's Greenwich Village, his 1958 marriage to white Jewish woman Hettie Cohen, and his acceptance by New York City's white avant-garde, completed his initial assimilation into the white man's world. In July of 1959, he toured Castro's Cuba with a group of black intellectuals, meeting writers and artists from third-world countries.

This experience sparked his perception of the United States as a corrupt bourgeois society and seems particularly significant in relation to his subsequent socialist stance. Jones' growing political interest influenced his first produced plays, including the Obie-Award-winning *Dutchman*, which anticipated the first major transformation of Jones's life (Werner 5).

Dutchman was written at the end of Jones' pre-revolutionary period and serves to mark his impending exit from white society and into Black Nationalism. As already stated, the main character, Clay, is a reflection of the author, and the play is autobiographical. "Widely recognized as Baraka's greatest work in any genre, *Dutchman* combines the irony of his avant-garde period with the emotional power and social insight of his later work" (7). Its themes and underlying emotions come straight from Jones' heart. About the play's writing, Baraka remembers in an interview, "I came in one night about twelve and wrote until about six in the morning and went to sleep without even knowing what I had written. I woke up the next morning and there it was. I had written it straight out, no revisions" (qtd. in ya Salaam 4). Though the play was controversial, black and white audiences alike received *Dutchman* as a success, and Jones suddenly found he was very popular with members of the media and others. He recalls, "What the 'fame' *Dutchman* brought me and raised up in me was this absolutely authentic and heartfelt desire to speak what should be spoken for all of us" (Baraka, *The Autobiography of LeRoi Jones*, 189). He decided to use this fame as a door through which to introduce his growing beliefs concerning Black Nationalism.

Immediately following the success of *Dutchman* in 1964, and shaken to the core by the murder of Black

Muslim leader Malcolm X in 1965, Jones moved to Harlem, divorced his white wife, and he and his work became more aggressively radical. "In 1966 Baraka moved back to Newark, New Jersey, and a year later changed his name to the Bantuized Muslim appellation Imamu ('spiritual leader,' later dropped) Ameer (later Amiri, 'blessed') Baraka ('prince')" ("Amiri Baraka: 1934-" 13).

Looking back, it is clear that *Dutchman* appeared on the eve of a major shift, both in American society and in the life of the playwright.... LeRoi Jones, for whom the creation of Clay seems to have acted in part as a kind of exorcism of an earlier, accommodationist self, was on his way to becoming Amiri Baraka, a name he chose in preference to his "slave name," an artist identified with black-nationalism. (Kenney 4)

Clay, the character in Baraka's play, is very much like his creator. Clay represents a stereotype, as the entire play explores the racial and sexual stereotypes in America. Just as Jones initially adjusted to the black intellectual stereotype in Greenwich Village, Clay, the gentleman, has adjusted, as evidenced by his college education, his buttoned-down clothing, and his sophisticated manner. Clay, just as Baraka initially did, is living a sort of double life, feeling the frustration and oppression concerning his blackness, yet outwardly embracing the white man's world. Clay is Baraka, and just as Baraka had to break out of the stereotype at some point, Clay certainly did, in his violent monologue at the end of the play. Critic Carl Brucker observes that the play "suggests that black Americans' efforts to adjust to the double lives that are forced upon them, rather than allowing them to join together in social action, often make them accomplices in their own cultural, economic and physical annihilation" (2). Clay was certainly annihilated by the character Lula, first emotionally and then physically. Blacks' assimilation into the white world comes at a price. "*Dutchman* suggests that the road to assimilation is the road to individual and collective destruction" (Carson 4).

Clay is "a black intellectual caught up in a conflict between his cerebral attraction to the traditions of white

culture and his deeper, racial connection to black ethnic culture" (Brucker 3). From the beginning of the play, Clay is attracted to Lula, who represents white culture. He has embraced white ideas, at least outwardly, and thus embraces Lula, who, he guesses at one point, is Jewish. This makes sense if the reader is aware that during the author's strongest period of white assimilation, his wife was a white Jewish female. Knowledge of the author's past would supply many hints of foreshadowing, such as Clay's necessity in breaking away from Lula to speak his own truth, just as Baraka needed to break away from wife Hettie to go his own way. In order to gain acceptance by Lula, Clay needed to play his part as the "well-known type." When he stopped playing the part, it became time for her to dispose of him. Baraka found that his white admirers became disillusioned as he became more militant in speaking up for the black cause.

While listing the "hopeless colored names creeping out of New Jersey" (Baraka, *Dutchman* 2510), Lula guesses "Everett," causing Clay to gag. Of course, that was Baraka's first name, at the time. This shows that even then, he is questioning his identity, or possibly, he just does not like the name, as he went by Leroy at the time. It is interesting, that the name chosen for the character is "Clay." Clay, the modeling compound, is adaptable, bendable, compliant, and malleable. When Lula calls Clay pretentious, he answers in black lingo, "Thass right" (2511). Agreeing to this, using black lingo, is a definite agreement, as Clay is admitting that what he really is, is just a common black man, putting on airs in pretending to be "white." Lula tells him the exact words that she wants him to use in inviting her to the party, and he changes the wording, somewhat. Insistent, she tells him again the exact words she wants to hear, and he parrots them back word for word. Clay, also, is adaptable, bendable, compliant, and malleable.

In her ploy to force Clay to drop his affected pose of educated, intellectual darker-colored white man, Lula says to Clay, "Your grandfather was a slave, he didn't go to Harvard," and Clay answers, "My grandfather was a night watchman" (2512). Baraka felt tremendous anger concerning white society's treatment of his grandfather, Thomas Everett Russ, who did not fit in

any way the stereotype that Lula was envisioning for him. Baraka says of his grandfather in an interview, "He was the one who owned a grocery store and a funeral parlor, and the Klan ran him out of there. Then he got hit in the head by a streetlight. That's what they said when they carried him in, and he spent the rest of his life in a wheelchair spitting in a can" (qtd. in ya Salaam 2). Lula guesses that Clay went to a colored college. This, of course, is a reference to Baraka's time spent at Howard University.

During Lula's ranting, she hits Clay with one racial slur after another. Twice, she calls him a nigger. "Clay plays along with Lula's mockery because he sees her humor as flirtation, but her scorn for his assimilationist behavior and her knifelike cynicism become increasingly obvious" (Brucker 2). Seemingly unsure whether to react to her words as a black man or as a white man, he is determined not to acknowledge his beliefs, but to play along, in appearing as flippant as Lula does. "His appearance, his manner, and his self-definition in terms of European models make clear his confusion about his identity" (Kenney 3). As Lula's words become more emotionally grating, the intensity of Clay's gut reactions is building, but he is desperately repressing his black identity to gain acceptance from Lula and from white society in general.

Clay notices that the train coach's passengers are becoming more numerous, and Lula asks him if the people frighten him. Certainly, they are not helping him to calm Lula, and they do not help him at any time during the play, even when she is at her most disruptive. He appears to be all alone against Lula, even in the mass of humanity on the train. "Clay's disguised existence alienates him from both white and black...isolated, he is doomed..." (Brucker 3). Lula jumps up, dancing wildly and yelling, and the passengers do not react to control her. Finally, her insults and gyrations succeed in pushing him over the emotional edge. Slapping her, he angrily tells her to shut up and let him talk. He is finally ready to acknowledge his feelings, which are now under such pressure that they explode from him violently.

Clay says to Lula, "If I'm a middle-class fake white man...let me be. And let me be in the way I want" (Baraka, *Dutchman* 2522). A fake white man is exactly

what Baraka's assimilation had forced him to become, as he has said in interviews. Clay also 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. You don't ever know that" (2522). Disguising his frustration and any feelings of oppression or potential violence, Clay presents a calm, sophisticated face to the world, but inside he is seething, in his struggle for acceptance into the white man's world. "Admitting his hatred for whites, Clay claims a deep affinity with the explosive anger lying beneath the humorous surface of the work of the great black musicians Bessie Smith and Charlie Parker" (Werner 8). Of whites who profess to enjoy the black music, he says, "They say, 'I love Bessie Smith.' And don't even understand that Bessie Smith is saying, 'Kiss my ass...'" And, "Charlie Parker. All the hip white boys scream for Bird. And Bird saying, 'Up your ass...'" (Baraka, *Dutchman* 2522).

"The black artist's role, [Baraka] wrote in *Home: Social Essays*, is to 'aid in the destruction of America as he knows it'" ("Amiri Baraka: 1934-" 13). Clay states, "Bird would've played not a note of music if he just walked up to East Sixty-seventh Street and killed the first ten white people he saw" (Baraka, *Dutchman* 2522). Clay says that he is a poet (as Baraka was and is) but if he could kill white people, he would not need to write poetry: "Just let me bleed you, you loud whore, and one poem vanished" (2523). One day, he says, the black people will rise up and be powerful, and then they will murder the whites. "They'll cut out your throats, and drag you to the edge of your cities so the flesh can fall away from your bones, in sanitary isolation" (2523).

"Throughout his career Baraka has stirred controversy, some praising him for speaking out against oppression and others arguing that he fosters hate" ("Amiri Baraka: 1934-" 9). There is definitely hatred for whites in Clay's speech, and violence. His words, and Baraka's words, are very different from those of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, for example. Baraka saw Dr. King as too peaceful: rather than incite the blacks to action, Dr. King preached equality and getting along with one's fellow man. Baraka was for inciting action. "Seen from Baraka's viewpoint, the heightened racial awareness of Clay's final speech is simply an illusion, worthless if

divorced from action” (Werner 8). Even after Clay explodes at Lula and lets his feelings out, he says, “But who needs it? I’d rather be a fool” (Baraka, *Dutchman* 2523). There will be no action here, on Clay’s part, only words. Little does he know that he will not make it off the train, alive.

After Lula stabs Clay, killing him, the other passengers throw him off the train. He has alienated them all with his words, making himself the enemy. Neither white nor, in his assimilation, fully black, he is no longer part of either world, and the passengers feel no compunction in disposing of him. This can be compared to the reactions of blacks and whites alike when Baraka was at his most radical. He hated the whites, letting his feelings be known to all. Likewise, he hated the blacks who assimilated, not joining him in his revolution.

One may wonder if, after angrily venting his bitter anguish and resentment on the train, Clay would have been able to just disembark and go on his merry way, if Lula had not ended his life. It would most likely have been difficult to rebury those feelings and go on with life, appearing cheerful and carefree at the party to which he had been traveling. Would Lula’s actions in forcing him to publicly face his inner demons have caused him to begin withdrawing from the white man’s world, becoming an active Black Nationalist? When one looks at Baraka’s life in 1964, it is clear that *Dutchman*’s fame, and his seizing of that opportunity to put across his ideas to the masses, was the end of Baraka’s assimilation into the world of the white man. “The plays and poems following *Dutchman* expressed Baraka’s increasing disappointment with white America and his growing need to separate from it” (“Amiri Baraka: 1934-” 11).

Perhaps, if Clay had presented his ideas in a more palatable way, with much less violence and angst, Lula would not have killed him. Perhaps the passengers might have helped him calm Lula, from the start, if he had stayed more composed and watched his words, careful not to offend. After a period of ardently embracing Black Nationalism, Baraka found that its doctrines were too violent, and that alienating the white man was not the answer. Rather, he found that blacks and whites alike needed to work together to affect a change in society. He fell instead into Marxism, enthusiastically supporting

that school of thought as fervently as he had Black Nationalism. However, he found that his violent and controversial views had already managed to alienate both the whites and many blacks, and his poems and other artistic works were not as well received as they once were. Approximately seventy years old, at this point, Baraka has never regained the fame that he enjoyed immediately after *Dutchman*’s publication, and this play continues to be seen as Baraka’s most important work.

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Evaluation: *Karen does a great job connecting Baraka’s life—his lived philosophy—to his controversial play Dutchman.*

The Fountain and the Caves: An Exploration of “Kubla Khan”

Nicholas Nusret

Course: Literature 105 (Poetry)

Instructor: Andrew Wilson

Assignment:

*Write a critical analysis of one poem
(or a few poems). In your essay, see if you
can work in discussions of things like symbol,
structure, etc — the “tools” of the trade.*

The work of Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), an English poet of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, has done much to shape the literary landscape. Setting aside the considerable body of work the man himself created, Coleridge made a notable contribution to the written word by influencing his longtime friend, William Wordsworth. Coleridge’s own poems, whether loved or despised by the reader, will likely have an influence on the structure, tone, and meter of any original works that the reader might create. This influence might shift the reader toward the Romantic style Coleridge emerged from, or push the reader to write poems that run contrary to what he or she believes Coleridge, a notorious womanizer and drunk, might have preferred. Coleridge himself would often mock and defy the rules and conventions of classic literature, and while “Kubla Khan,” the subject of this essay, fits somewhat neatly into romantic period guidelines for rhyme scheme and tone, the format of the poem is curious, and the poem is a unique entity all his own.

In 1790, Coleridge was in his teens when an illness ravaged his family, eventually killing his brother Luke and only sister, Ann. While Samuel himself survived, he became addicted to opium as a result of his being treated with a tincture of morphine and alcohol known as laudanum. “Kubla Khan” was written in 1798, when Coleridge was twenty-six, and had been abusing the drug for some time. He claimed that the poem was inspired by an opium-induced dream, but such hallucinations are rarely remembered. The late eighteenth century was an age when the Western concept of Asian cultures, like the Mongols under Khan, was bent by bias and obfuscated by mythology. Distortions like addiction and disinformation help to explain why Coleridge credited the construction of his idyllic and green city, Xanadu, to the Mongols, a warlike confederation of nomadic tribes that lived on rocky and barren steppes north of China and built very little that could not be packed onto horseback. Once disbelief is suspended, the transcription of the stuporous hallucination that is Coleridge’s “Kubla Khan” can lead the reader to a greater understanding of who the author was, and why he allowed his more base instincts to drive him.

**The Fountain and the Caves:
An Exploration of “Kubla Kahn”**

While many poets of the pre-romantic period felt compelled to write poetry within the confines of a strict rhyme scheme and metered structure, it was Coleridge and his contemporaries who moved away from the rigid rules of the colder and more analytic Enlightenment period and in a more emotional and feeling direction. “Kubla Khan” takes its form from several different types of poems, including the quatrain, the couplet, the limerick, and a free verse that at times resembles the sonnet. Although Coleridge draws from a pool of many poetic templates, his work adheres to the conventions of none. He uses all the tools at his disposal in the creation of this work, clearly hinting at his influences but creating something unique. The net result is a collage comprised of very deliberate lyrical swaths, telling a wild and disturbing tale.

The introduction to the poem is an excellent example of Coleridge cobbling influential styles together. A stanza of five lines is used to begin the poem, implying the limerick. The rhyme scheme, however, is not the *aabba* of a typical limerick. He uses an *abaab* scheme for the stanza that hints at a partial sonnet, but that form rarely uses a five-line stanza. Guidelines for the metric foot scheme of a limerick or sonnet are also overlooked. The poem flows from one form to the next with ease, shifting from a sonnet-like style for lines 25-30 into a quatrain for the next four. Returning to convention, perhaps only as a change of pace, a simple *abab* is the rhyme scheme for lines 31-34. A similarly conforming *aa* scheme is used for the smallest stanza in the poem, a couplet at lines 35-36. Sometimes making a fine distinction, Coleridge manages to impart the poem with enough of each style to make the reader aware of the homage, but not so much that the reader suspects the borrowing of words and ideas or ceases to hear Coleridge’s own voice.

Rather than adhere to restrictive rules and schemes to format the body of his works, Coleridge prefers to use an emotional foot as the primary building blocks of this poem. That is to say, while the shape of this work defies categorization, nearly every line is a complete idea, a cogent image by itself. Each of these ideas is intended to elicit an emotional response in the reader. The layering of these ideas is used to develop the

imagery of the poem line by line, with rhymes grafted somewhat gracefully to the end of the lines with little regard for the accent of a foot or number of syllables. These emotional feet, in spite of their disregard for traditional form, give the poem a very natural flow.

The Romantic era does not only represent the admonishing of the heartless science many artists believed the Enlightenment represented, but also a challenge to reexamine long-held beliefs and other social norms. Puritans and others of their repressive ilk would disguise the curvaceous leg of a table, let alone that of a woman. As one might expect, the absurdly strong pressures to adhere to the Calvinistic notions of chastity and modesty were often at odds with the sex drive of a young male artist. Lashing out at the moral majority, Coleridge undoubtedly offended the prudent sensibilities of many with the decidedly sexual tone of “Kubla Khan.”

Coleridge writes to indulge himself, hoping to recapture the emotions and sensations he felt in his opium haze. Criticisms of his chemical dependency and way of life aside, Coleridge is clearly attempting to push the boundaries of eighteenth-century decency and morality with his work. Laying the groundwork for such primal thoughts, Coleridge describes his Xanadu as a “pleasure dome,” an ancient paradise. Sexual gratification would likely be the ancient pleasure most coveted by a man in his twenties, as Coleridge was. Of note is the course of the river Alph, flowing luridly into a mysterious cavern of this pleasure-dome paradise. The second stanza of the poem contains several words that can be used suggestively, such as “fertile,” “girdled,” and “sinuous.”

On the surface, these words are not employed in their most genitive sense, but in the context of a poem, words are often chosen for the multiple meanings they can assume. It is unlikely that Coleridge was unaware of the duality of the metaphoric copulation of the river Alph running through the caverns “measureless to man” in lines three and four, or of the language he selected throughout. There is a blatant erotic imagery in line twelve’s “deep romantic chasm,” particularly when he goes on to describe it as “A savage place, holy and enchanted” in line thirteen. Coleridge then goes on

to explicitly describe the chasm as a woman, presumably in the heat of the moment, “wailing for her demon lover.” Signifying the contempt held by many for the perceived impurity of premarital intercourse, he refers to her lover, the river Alph, as a demon, whose influence corrupts the chasm. Promiscuity was a terrible thing to charge an unmarried woman with in the eighteenth century, often ruining her reputation and damning her to a poor lot in life. As the necessary procreative complement to the symbolically female chasm, the symbolically male Alph River flows into that chasm.

Using phrases like “ceaseless turmoil seething” and “this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,” the author builds up tension for the ecstatic consummation found in lines 19-21: “A mighty fountain was forced / Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst / huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail.” The choice of diction in following lines such as the “dancing rocks” delivers a similar effect. The fountain of water and rocks are described as “chaffy grain,” relating the fragments to the figurative seed that the river is spewing out. His use of such overt carnality and obvious sexual metaphors simultaneously expresses the urgency of his sexual appetite and vents his frustrations with the institutionalized repression of what he rightfully considered normal behavior.

No longer preoccupied with the desire to indulge his primal urges, Coleridge begins looking beyond the wanton physicality of his earlier theme. Just as the mind cannot dream in early sleep phases, still occupied with the clerical duties of a new day’s experience and memories, the author needed to resolve the issues of his consciousness before delving into his subconscious mind. As many young men are, Coleridge was eager to demonstrate his virility to as many women as he could. Deep within the chasm, the river finds a “lifeless ocean” beyond the fountain, representative of the author’s emptiness and continued desire. This is consistent with his well-known habit of womanizing. The “Ancestral voices prophesying war” that echo from that ocean fairly directly portend some manner of conflict, possibly an awkward transition between lovers in his personal life.

Despite losing some of his family early in his life and later succumbing to opium addiction, Samuel Taylor Coleridge created many beloved poems. “Kubla Khan” is a prized example of his work, and from a certain perspective, it is a window into the deeper recesses of his mind. One of the greatest strengths of poetry as a genre is its considerable subjectivity, the diverse variety of interpretations a single poem can have. Some read “Kubla Khan” and infer a praise of man’s creativity. Others enjoy the landscape at face value, and some reject Coleridge as a bohemian, or an adulterous drunkard. Exploration of artists like Coleridge will help promulgate further art while keeping masters like him fresh in the collective mind of modern literature.

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Evaluation: *Nicholas writes like a graduate student in the Humanities, and his in-class participation had this character, too. This paper is a fast-moving, intelligent response to literature.*

The Mysterious House of Usher

April Oertel

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Barbara Butler

Assignment:

Write a literary research paper.

What is it that defines us? Is it we that create our surroundings? Or is it our surroundings that create us? Do the inanimate objects we see every day have the ability to alter our perception? It is the decisions we make that form the blueprints for our future. What we choose to do, or not to do, each day has a direct effect on the events to come. But what if we no longer possessed that rational part of our minds? Would we trust ourselves then? It is these questions and many more that Edgar Allan Poe inspires in "The Fall of the House of Usher." The characters and setting are very influential; however, Poe's use of symbolism is what dominates throughout the story.

The personality traits and the existence of each character are essential to the growth and outcome of "The Fall of the House of Usher." The most emphasis is placed upon Roderick Usher. This story presents the series of events that bring his tragic life to an end. From the very beginning, he is portrayed as delusional and mentally unstable. It is stated in the story that he suffers from a mental illness that creates an "acuteness of the senses" (395). This illness allows him to only be able to

tolerate certain fabrics, bland foods, and a minimal amount of light. It is because of this very illness that he found his horrifying fate. Roderick Usher is the only remaining male in the Usher family. All the other males in his family suffered the same illness, and he is left alone to follow in their footsteps. Darrel Abel states that "Roderick Usher is himself a symbol of isolation, and a concentration of vitality so introverted that it utterly destroys itself" (26). He isolates himself because of the terror he feels of what will come to be. He tells the narrator, "I dread the events of the future, not in themselves, but in their results" (395). Roderick's depression and intuition tell him that something terrible will happen. In turn, this makes him unable to leave the house. It is this very act that aggravates his condition and ironically leads to the end he's so dreadfully terrified of.

Madeline Usher also presides in the mysterious House of Usher. She is Roderick's sister and only remaining family member. She, like her brother, suffers from an unexplainable illness which has no cure. It is this fact that encourages the reader to guess whether an illness exists at all, or if their state is but a condition caused by their environment. Madeline and Roderick Usher are twins; therefore, they share a sense of oneness with each other. Upon putting her in the vault, the narrator learns that "sympathies of a scarcely intelligible nature had always existed between them" (408). They share a kind of psychic connection with one another which cannot be broken or replicated by anyone else. According to Darrel Abel, it is because of this connection, and the fact they are so similar, that Madeline increases Roderick's feelings of isolation (27). They share so many traits it makes Roderick feel as though he's not in the company of someone else, but by himself. Madeline's death means that a piece of Roderick will die along with her. Ironically by burying her alive, he is ultimately killing himself.

This story is told solely by the narrator. He is recalling the sequence of events that led to the downfall of the House of Usher. Using this point of view has a considerable influence on the way the events are perceived. If the story had been told from Roderick's perspective, what is truly happening or what is being imagined would not be as clear. If told from an omniscient stand-

point, we would know key details, such as Madeline being buried alive, that would relinquish some of the mystery in “The Fall of the House of Usher.”

Roderick and the narrator were “boon companions in boyhood” (392). Despite their time apart, the narrator attempts to be understanding and supportive. He stays at the house to listen as Roderick explains his sorrow, as well as to watch him paint and make music to relieve these emotions. The narrator even helps Roderick bury Madeline when he believes she has died. It is because he receives a letter that “admitted of no other than a personal reply” that the narrator feels so inclined to begin his journey (392).

The setting has a very important impact on the outcome of the story. All the events take place at the House of Usher. The narrator stays at the house for an extended period of time. Having no outside contact allows him to get absorbed into Roderick’s way of thinking and mind frame. Over time, in the same depressive surroundings, Roderick’s irrational conclusions begin to seem sensible to the narrator. The very house and the surrounding property have a sense of dread about them. Upon arriving, the narrator tells us that “with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit” (391). This aura around the house can be held responsible for Roderick’s mental condition. Roderick feeds into the dark aura, which allows him to fall deeper and more severely into his sickened state of mind. The house and the tarn, Maurice Beebe believes, have an influence over Roderick because his superstitious beliefs allow it to happen (126). It is his state of mind, and strong beliefs, that do not permit him to leave the house. Since Roderick doesn’t leave, his condition continues to worsen, thus making his house his prison.

The symbolism Poe uses in “The Fall of the House of Usher” is the foundation upon which the story is built. The House of Usher is the strongest symbol depicted in the story. It is so important that Poe even mentions it in the title. There are several implied symbols for the house which stand out upon interpretation. The house represents the Usher family and what is occurring with its members. Since it is passed down from generation to generation, the house, as described

by the narrator, is “an appellation which seemed to include, in the minds of the peasantry who used it, both the family and the family mansion” (392). Because of this, Roderick feels that his family, and his family alone, are the only ones who can exist in the house. It is Edward Davidson’s opinion that the House of Usher is a single, complex human being represented by the Usher family. Roderick symbolizes the mind, while Madeline symbolizes the physical side. The house itself is composed of both of these parts, conflicting within itself (197-98). At the end of “The Fall of the House of Usher,” when both Roderick and Madeline die, the house collapses into the tarn. The person symbolized can no longer exist with the death of both parts inside. This represents the end to the Usher family and the name by which they proudly live.

The House of Usher may symbolize the entire Usher family, but it is more intricately a description of Roderick himself. Upon arriving at the house, the narrator mentions the “vacant eyelike windows,” which give the house human characteristics from the very beginning (391). Throughout the story, Poe continues to make reference to Roderick’s eyes. He explains the changes that occur in them as Roderick’s madness worsens, as well as comparing them to windows in “The Haunted Palace.” Georges Zayed points out that The House of Usher in its state of decay, with dark winding halls, as well as the dark dreary surroundings, represent Roderick’s depression and the loss of mental stability (85). The halls represent the way his thoughts travel through his mind, circling continuously, running into, and mixing with each other. According to Maurice Beebe, since the house belongs to them both, the crack in it symbolizes the separation between Madeline and Roderick (125). With relentless perseverance, Madeline escapes from her early tomb. Then, with the last of her remaining strength, she seeks after Roderick and “bore him to the floor, a corpse, and a victim of the terrors he anticipated” (404). When this happens, and their separation from one another is complete, the crack in the house grows and forces it to collapse upon itself.

Like the House of Usher, there are also several interpretations for the painting Roderick creates after Madeline’s burial. He paints a “rectangular vault or

The Mysterious House of Usher

tunnel” in an attempt to escape the overwhelming guilt of his actions (396). These feelings of guilt and reverence are what inspire Roderick’s artwork. “It is as though her dying,” Daniel Hoffman states, “is a precondition for the exercise of his creative impulse” (174). It is through this painting that Roderick confesses to everything he has done. The unexplained light, that despite the lack of any source, created “a flood of intense rays that rolled throughout, and bathed the whole in a ghastly and inappropriate splendor,” signifies Madeline’s soul being trapped in her tomb (396). The swirling void in the center of the painting represents the vault which contains her soul. When interpreted in this fashion, Roderick’s painting then becomes his confession.

On the other hand, the painting may also be used to represent what is occurring within Roderick. Roderick is releasing and expressing the extent of his mental condition. As time continues to go on, and Roderick indulges in his irrational thoughts, his sickness continues to worsen. It is G.R. Thompson’s belief that the painting created by Roderick symbolizes the part of himself that no longer has a grasp of reality (144-45). The rays of swirling light represent his conscience and the logical portion of his mind. These aspects of himself are trapped and are being suffocated by his intensely increasing illness. The tunnel represents the emptiness within. The emptiness is caused by the loss of Madeline, and it continues to grow because of his severe mental condition. The fact that the void swirls incessantly and never comes to an end symbolizes that he’s drowning in and being consumed by his own madness.

“The Haunted Palace” is the poem written by Roderick Usher after he buries Madeline alive. This, like the painting, was another way for him to subdue the feeling of guilt and fear within. The house Roderick depicts in this poem closely resembles the House of Usher. “The Haunted Palace” goes into great depth about the beauty and magnificence of the palace, which before time had taken its toll, could have easily been the large extravagant house he finds himself a captive of. Richard Wilbur explains that the parts of the house the poem describes may also be used to describe a man’s characteristics:

The yellow banners on the roof resemble blond hair on the man’s head...while the luminous windows underneath are his eyes, clear and sparkling. Usher then writes about a “ruby and pearl” door which symbolizes the man’s lips and teeth. In the second half of the poem, the windows then become “red-litten” and the door also becomes pale. These changes in the man throughout the poem show madness, and a decline in his mental or physical state. (56-58)

More specifically, the man the poem describes is Roderick. The narrator states that Roderick had “an eye, large, liquid and luminous beyond comparison,” and “lips thin but very pallid” in his earlier years (394). Upon seeing him in present time, the narrator notices that Roderick now has a “ghastly pallor of the skin” and a “miraculous luster of the eye” (394). These descriptions coincide with those found in “The Haunted Palace.” Therefore, the change in the condition of the Palace is Roderick’s drastically decreasing mental condition.

The narrator reads the “Mad Trist” to Roderick to help calm his nerves from what he presumes is the violent storm. The very title of the story symbolizes what will happen in the near future. Not only does it make reference to Roderick’s state of mind, by which he can be held responsible for the events that take place; but the title also refers to the meeting between Madeline and Roderick. Then, while the story is read, the sounds it describes closely correspond with what is occurring in the House of Usher at that moment. When Ethelred breaks down the door to save the woman, the narrator and Roderick hear Madeline breaking out of her coffin. Then, Ethelred hits the dragon in the head with a mace, making it scream, and again, they can hear Madeline screaming downstairs. When grabbing the sword off the wall, Ethelred drops it, and at that moment, the narrator and Roderick hear Madeline pushing the heavy metal door. Not only does the title foreshadow what is about to happen, but it actually describes the events as they happen. Ethelred enters the house to save a beautiful woman while Madeline is coming to save Roderick from himself.

The night that Madeline escapes from the vault, there is a terrible storm around the house. Just as the

storm begins, the narrator is in bed and cannot sleep because he senses that something terrible is about to occur. It is because of his fear of the storm that Roderick enters the narrator's room. To ease the feelings of nervousness, and fear of impending doom, the narrator describes it as "an electrical phenomenon" (401). He goes on to explain that this is a very common and natural occurrence. With this statement he isn't only trying to convince Roderick, but trying to convince himself as well. Storms are often used in stories to represent that something unsettling is approaching. During storms, the clouds are constantly moving, which symbolizes the turmoil in the House of Usher. Lightning and thunder are caused by friction, quite similar to the friction between Madeline and Roderick. After their interaction, and after the storm is over, all is washed away.

When we leave our surroundings, who we are does not change, nor do the surroundings when we are no longer there. Though, as the narrator states, "there are combinations of very simple natural objects which have the power thus affecting us" (391). When these combinations of objects are just so, they have the ability to change a person's mood. When our moods are changed drastically, does it not change the way we view the things around us, or even our concept of reality? We are all products of our environment, yet our environment does not define us. Roderick, Madeline, and the Usher family are perfect examples of what can happen when our environment warps our perception. Though the characters and setting, if any different, would change the context of the story, the very symbolism they each represent is what's most important.

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Evaluation: *April writes an impressive analysis of character, setting, and symbolism in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher." Her research paper is lucid; its style, sophisticated.*

A Letter from a Woman to Her Husband

Jennah Orchell

Course: Literature 115 (Fiction)

Instructor: Andrew Wilson

Assignment:

Write a letter to a character we've studied.

If you like, be yourself as you write.

If you wish, please feel free to write to character X from the perspective of character Y.

My dearest John,

I am writing to you because this is easiest. We do not talk, and if we did, you would not let me speak. So I write to you in my journal that I may allow my feelings to escape. I think this is safest, don't you? Well of course you don't. You do not think I should be writing. But *I* think it good for me, so I continue to when you are not looking.

I woke up today feeling a bit worse than I had yesterday. Darling, I think I may be ill, but not in my head like you think. I feel right there. I think a good walk on those paths may do me good. I look out this window, through the thick iron bars, at the beautiful paths and flowers lying just out of my grasp. I like to look at it well enough, but I think I might like to walk through the garden. I want to breathe some light fresh air; it is rather heavy breathing in here. And if you think it best I do not walk outside, then I think I would like to paint. Painting those flowers and birds may make me quite happy. Or if I may not paint, then let me write, or speak even. That may help me quite a bit. I think if I could just get out the little feeling I have inside my stomach I will feel a great deal better.

I think I should like to tell you that I do not agree with you and your doctor friend. I do not wish to stay cooped up in this room all day like you say. You should know that I think the room is a bit annoying. Between the bars on the windows, those hideous rings on the walls, and the ridiculous wallpaper, I find it very hard to rest. I do not wish to stay in this room any longer. I had asked you if we could relocate our bedroom to the bottom floor, that there is a nice window without any bars, and you denied me that. Oh how I wish you would let me breathe in that fresh air!

John, dear, I would like to let you in on a little secret. There is a woman trapped inside the walls! The honest truth, there is! I know that you would laugh at this—not that you should ever receive this fanciful letter, as you might call it. I did not see her in the beginning. But I see her now. This may only be a whim, I thought to myself. But after a while I can see her more often. This room, John! I wish I could get out of here. I do not like to look at her anymore. If only I could get out of here, just for an afternoon, I believe that she might disappear.

It has been weeks now, John. I can't seem to escape that dreadful woman anymore. I see her all the time! I now find myself looking for her, calling to her. Especially at night! I can see her moving and shaking the walls. Oh how I wish you would believe me. We could tear down this wallpaper together and then go for a nice long walk. That would be quite fun, wouldn't it?

John, many more weeks have passed now, and I do not think I can stand her anymore. She's always there, watching me. I think she is trying to escape from the walls! But who could blame her? What hideous wallpaper to be stuck in! I should prefer more of a light-pink wallpaper, with some flowers to trim the top and bottom. That would do nicely for me. Sometimes I think I would like to switch places with her. Then, I wouldn't be stuck in this room anymore. And I wouldn't have to look at those unsightly walls any longer. Then, I could walk around the flowers anytime I please. How nice it would be to be stuck inside the flowers! John, I think I might just switch places with her inside those walls!

Today I felt the most free I have ever felt, John! I can finally smell those flowers inside my room today. I felt the sunshine on my face. I have sunshine all over my shoulder now. I think it came out of the wallpaper. You fell upon my floor and I just kept crawling, crawling right over you again and again and again along the walls. That is how I got sunshine on my shoulder, I think. I want to wake you up, but I would rather you get your rest. I think you should lie in my bed here and look at the wallpaper for a while. I think it would be good for you. I believe I lost something today, although I do not know exactly what. But it feels quite nice. You fell ill about an hour ago, fainting on the floor, and I think you could benefit from some rest in this room. So while you are lying on my floor, I believe I will take the key and lock you up inside this room. You will get all of your rest and feel so wonderful and happy and free like me! I only want you to feel better, my young love. So I will take as good care of you as you did me.

Sincerely,

Your loving wife

Evaluation: *Jennah's letter—from Gilman's famous narrator to her infamous husband, Doctor John—shows a tremendous depth of knowledge and understanding of the story. It's a great response to the assignment.*

The Aim and Execution of Douglass' *Narrative*

Sean Rafferty

Course: Literature 221 (American Literature)

Instructor: Trygve Thoreson

Assignment:

Compose a 9- to 12-page research paper on one or more of the authors studied this semester, using both primary and secondary sources.

In the American South, amid the stifling and brutal environment of slavery, Frederick Douglass was born and reared. The family structure of slave families tended to be precarious due to family members being sold off and separated. Douglass's encounters with his mother were few and far between. She stole away into the night on a few occasions to visit him, but, years later, upon hearing of her death, he remarked that he felt no different than he would have felt upon hearing of the death of a stranger. He was alone, bound to no one and nothing except the institution that enslaved him. At an early age, he found himself in the care of Mrs. Auld, a caring woman who had never owned a slave before. Out of her desire to bestow upon him a fitting education, she began to teach him how to read. The lessons ended abruptly due to the condemnation of Mr. Auld, and Mrs. Auld's sunny disposition withered away, leaving an ornery husk, but Frederick had already tasted the fruit of knowledge and was desperate to further satiate himself. Equipped only with a rudimentary knowledge of arithmetic, he enlisted the aid of young white children, street urchins, who furthered his lessons in exchange for food.

By and by, his skills skyrocketed, and he was able to tackle the endeavor of reading books. One book in particular, *The Columbian Orator*, left an indelible impression on him. In the book, a slave and slave master debate the merit of the practice of slavery. The slave's rhetoric bests that of his master. Douglass, now equipped with the knowledge that there did indeed exist a moral opposition to his abhorrent lot in life, began to vehemently question the practice, later writing that,

The more I read, the more I was led to abhor and detest my enslavers. I could regard them in no other light than a band of successful robbers, who had left their homes, and gone to Africa, and stolen us from our homes, and in a strange land reduced us to slavery. I loathed them as being the meanest as well as the most wicked of men. (qtd. in Baym 949)

Armed with his newfound enlightenment, he continued on much as usual, though, inwardly, he struggled with his shackles. Then, after being pushed over the edge by a sadistically violent overseer infamous for his ability to "break in" slaves who had proven to be troublesome to their owners, he fought back. Upon thwarting the attempts of this maniacal man to subjugate and beat him, Douglass gained metaphorical independence, calling it "a glorious resurrection, from the tomb of slavery, to the heaven of freedom" (qtd. in Baym 961). *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself*, though concentrating on his ordeals encountered during the years in which he existed as human chattel, reflected this sense of freedom. With calculated skill, he articulated his past grievances, evoking sympathy and outrage, all the while focusing on the singular goal of converting throngs of fence-sitters to understand the plight of slaves. *The Narrative* existed as a propagandistic piece of literature whose intent was to further the abolitionist cause; Douglass sought to achieve this and make his work accessible and credible by focusing on offering up factual, personalized prose that reveled in simplicity and rarely stooped to overemotional fodder.

Unlike American authors prior to him, Douglass was not afforded the leisure to write of frivolous ideas. Where others sought to entertain or engage in navel-gazing diatribes devoted to nature and intangible rheto-

ric, Douglass was confronted with the bleak reality that there existed no niche for him in his own country so long as slavery was protected by law. Every word he spoke, every ounce of creative energy, was devoted to the defeat of slavery.

The Narrative...can be distinguished from the works of white American spiritual autobiographers because its essential goal is physical freedom. The narrator is not seeking to become one among the divine elect, nor is he attempting to forge a private, moralizing self as a foil to an intensely practical and political age that stressed the virtues of the public man. He seeks to move, by any means necessary, from a cruel physical bondage to freedom. (Baker 99)

The Narrative is often compared to Benjamin Franklin's autobiography, stylistically and in regard to content, expressing the idea of a man making something of himself by pulling himself up by his own bootstraps. This comparison is an erroneous one. Whereas Franklin dwelled on his own self-importance, stroking his own ego time and again in every episodic adventure and attempt to attain moral righteousness over his fellow man, Douglass concerned himself with the plight of an entire race, only using himself in his prose as an example to illuminate and lend a voice to the suffering of others. Franklin's struggles were principally concerned with the attainment of wealth and stature; Douglass's were concerned with the right to a life without the lash and threat of malnourishment, or even death.

Southerners, as a group of people who were dependent on slave labor for their livelihood, were obviously not receptive to the idea of emancipation. The key was to strike a nerve with liberal-minded Northerners. However, even among Northerners, there existed a foreboding feeling of superiority. Those who sought to free the blacks did not necessarily promote equality. A sense of self-righteous benevolence permeated their mindset, much like someone who fancies himself charitable for throwing rotten scraps of food to a mangy dog. Douglass's writing, therefore, had to walk a difficult tightrope, convincing whites of the humanity and intelligence inherent in all blacks, while at the same time straying from any rhetoric that could be construed as

"uppity" or overly self-important. "Only the white majority had the numbers and power to make a difference on the issue of slavery. Douglass therefore had to avoid affronts to the values and prejudices of pious white Northerners" (Matlack 103). While some whites, Covey especially, were demonized in his work, Douglass went out of his way to effusively extol his respect for other whites, notably, the initial incarnation of Mrs. Auld. He spoke of her as "a woman of the kindest heart and finest feelings...her face was made of heavenly smiles, and her voice of tranquil music" (qtd. in Baym 945). The intent of these forays into sappy, sentimental territory was to counteract the seething rage he later felt for slaveholding whites. If he would have portrayed all whites as ignorant, barbaric wretches, he would have run the risk of alienating his white readership. Similarly, in order to temper his harsh words against religion and the role it played in validating slaveholders' feelings of superiority and correctness, Douglass was forced to explain himself in the appendix in order to not incur the scorn of the Christian majority who would read the book, especially since Christianity and abolitionism tended to go hand in hand. Douglass pointed out,

What I have said respecting and against religion I mean strictly to apply to the slaveholding region of this land, and with no possible reference to Christianity proper; for, between the Christianity of this land and the Christianity of Christ, I recognize the widest possible difference—so wide that to receive the one as good, pure, and holy is of necessity to reject the other as bad, corrupt, and wicked. (qtd. in Couser 141)

Slave narratives were extremely popular with white Northerners at the time when Douglass published his own. The tales, steeped in melodrama and intrigue, delighted audiences, even if the message failed to clearly resonate with them. Formulaic in organization and rhetoric, there was a basic template that tended to be adhered to. Harriet Jacobs, and others who wrote prominent pieces in this genre, followed the time-tested conventions with resolute fervor, convinced that it was the most effective way to relay their tales. Dramatics were applauded; sparse documentation had yet to be con-

ceived. Douglass changed that. "In utter contrast to the tortured style of most of the slave biographies, Douglass's style is calm and modest" (Redding 130). His verbiage did not strive to transcend his experiences. On the contrary, his writing, so sparse and streamlined, succeeded in clearly interpreting the events of his slave life rather than muddling everything up with over-the-top theatrics and contrived hyperbolic passages. "He relies upon masterful and convincing literary presentation rather than fiery rhetoric" (Baker 99).

The conveyance of Douglass's experience did not become ensnared in a tendency to exaggerate or incorporate outright fantasy in the name of justifying the means with a noble end. By all accounts, the persons and events referred to were firmly rooted in his personal history. Doing otherwise would have invalidated the work. Fantasy was easy to come by; hard facts, concrete examples, were not. Wendell Phillips, in a letter directed to Douglass that became part of the introduction to *The Narrative*, wrote that "every one who reads your book will feel persuaded that you give them a fair specimen of the whole truth. No one-sided portrait,—no wholesale complaints,—but strict justice done..." (121). This was of the utmost importance, to immerse the reader in slave life as it *really* was, as opposed to how the reader might *imagine* it to be. The abolitionist argument would have been a flaccid one if it was predicated on lies and fabrications. Douglass could have easily stooped to sensationalistic passages. For example, when reflecting back on his fight with Covey, rather than trumping up his victory and claiming to have pummeled him and beaten him into submission, he merely concedes that he fought Covey to a standstill, nothing more, nothing less. It would have been easy to present himself as a black hero, an oppressed warrior, a harbinger of freedom with righteous fists who struck a blow for the entire black race by rearranging the face of a notoriously vicious white man who represented everything that was backwards and wrong with the South. Instead, it was presented as a personal struggle with the sole intent of eluding a beating. Likewise, his conclusions drawn from the fight were personal, not conflated to represent the struggles of his fellow blacks. He wrote, "My long-crushed spirit rose, cowardice departed, bold defiance took its place; and I now

resolved that, however long I might remain a slave in form, the day had passed forever when I could be a slave in fact" (qtd. in Baym 961). Failing to project this personal victory onto the rest of his brethren as a victory of black versus white was a way of conceding that others had to win their own fights, and that there was much more fighting to be done. Douglass himself had much more fighting to do. Though he was free and independent in that he had resolved to no longer wallow in resignation or allow the physical shackles imposed upon him to likewise choke the hope and dignity from his mind, the fact remained that he was still a slave. The attainment of dignity seemed a cold comfort when one still had to climb out of bed each morning to perform backbreaking labor, labor performed without the benefit of ever reaping the profits for oneself. But this acknowledgement did not detract from the power of Douglass's realization that no slaveholder could ever subvert his mind or his will ever again. Gibson states that "his psychological sense of being free is more meaningful than his actual escape North. The point is that once he is psychologically free, the escape itself is a matter of course" (111).

In addition to the stark, no-nonsense prose, Douglass augmented his work by implementing humor and metaphors. Baker states that "Douglass's humor is valuable not simply because it gives us relief from the grueling details of slavery. It brings us close to the essential humanity of the situation, and more important, it leads us to a balanced realistic point of view, for if it is a humor of detached irony, it is also...one of loving kindness" (97). While his narrative could have certainly existed without humor, and have been effective without it, the employment of it was wise. Allowing himself to get too bogged down in the descriptions of suffering and mental anguish could have backfired; it could have overwhelmed readers, making the abolitionist cause seem hopeless. Treating readers to quips and ironic observations dually served as entertainment, and a respite between some of the more demoralizing passages. He even managed to inject bits of humor into observations about slavery. Conflating on the idea of dubious biblical justification, coupled with the implication that more and more slaves were products of master-slave sexual rendezvous, in a somber yet unmistakably

ironical tone, he wrote that the proliferation of the new class of mulatto slaves would help to

do away the force of the argument, that God cursed Ham, and therefore American slavery is right. If the lineal descendents of Ham are alone to be scripturally enslaved, it is certain that slavery at the south must soon become unscriptural; for thousands are ushered into the world, annually, who, like myself, owe their existence to white fathers, and those fathers most frequently their own masters. (qtd. in Baym 943-44)

This type of dry humor is interspersed throughout the work. While not prone to leave the reader in raucous fits of laughter, it creates mild shifts in tonality and is infused with observational elements, allowing the employment of humor to serve as a sort of mini-parable.

In regard to the usage of metaphors, Douglass played on the fact that slaves were not necessarily considered to be human. They were property, the equivalent of three-fifths of a human, to be exact. It stood to reason, therefore, that Douglass compared slaves and slavery to animals and animalistic tendencies. His intent was not to debase or dehumanize the slave population; his intent was to portray the barbarity of slavery. By drawing these parallels to the animal world, he evoked a sense of what it would be like to exist as a beast of burden, a piece of property valued only for its ability to physically exert itself. Just as no consideration is given to a horse's mind, no consideration was given to a slave's mind. Lamenting his condition, he wrote that, "In moments of agony, I envied my fellow-slaves for their stupidity. I have often wished myself a beast. I preferred the condition of the meanest reptile" (qtd. in Baker 97). The readership of Douglass's narrative was forced to see the juxtaposition between the myth and the reality: slaves were treated as animals, yet the author of this eloquent, incendiary piece of literature had been a slave. Surely someone with such a lively mind, such an ability to articulate and encapsulate these vast injustices, did not exist within the same realm as animals or animalistic tendencies. It was an effective way of rooting out any lingering predisposition to equate slaves to animals, and yet also served to remind people that the institution of slavery did exactly that: demoralized human beings into an existence devoid of

hope and nobility, an existence of labor and subjugation; the existence of an animal (Baker 97).

As mentioned before, Douglass presented his argument against slavery in his personal tale, rather than extrapolating on his experiences in order to write a political rant, a manifesto. This personalization made the struggles of slaves more palpable than anonymous deviations would have. "Douglass prefers the personal and seldom goes out of his way to dramatize situations which his readers are expecting but which are not actually part of his own remembered past" (Stone 135). This lent an air of total clarity to the proceedings. The characters, the actions, the motivations were all genuine. It was not a morality play, but a real-life struggle that had morality engrained in it. That being said, Douglass did interweave generalizations into his prose. His aim was not to make shortcuts in summing up his experiences, or to pander to the masses. It was done in order to "sustain balance between the public and private focus" (Gibson 110). After all, one must keep in mind that the goal of *The Narrative* was propagandistic in nature. Generalizations aided in painting an overall picture of the debacle, but Douglass's personal experiences, ideas, revelations, were used, as Gibson said, "to ground abstractions about the evils of slavery in the specific, concrete experience of one person, thus rendering the argument more vivid and more convincing than abstract discourse alone would likely make it" (110).

The stark, precise prose of Douglass, though lauded time and again, did occasionally falter and fall into the previous conventions of melodrama. One passage in particular, the soliloquy that takes place as Douglass gazed out onto the Chesapeake and lamented his condition of enslavement in comparison to the freedom of the unencumbered boats, was guilty of this (957). The scene was "intended to draw tears, just as in sob-fiction of the period, but the rhetorical strategy...fails on the modern reader" (Matlack 104). Though this could be considered pandering, and is often dismissed as such by modern scholars, the fact remains that it was written at a time when this was commonplace and effective. Again, it is important to remember that the goal was to win people over to the cause of abolition. Perhaps these emotional pleas were thrown in for good measure as insurance intended for those who were not swayed by

his solid, methodical, simplistic passages. Indeed, at the time of its publication, he was praised for these overly sentimental, hokey passages. His friend and mentor, William Lloyd Garrison, when speaking of this passage, wrote, "Who can read that passage, and be insensible to its pathos and sublimity? Compressed into it is a whole Alexandrian library of thought, feeling, and sentiment" (121). And, despite its seeming laboriousness and awkwardness, perhaps there was a trace of calculated precision embedded in the passage. Stone asserts that associating the boats with the color white and the word angel was an intentional literary undertaking, done to make an allusion to Mrs. Auld, who "started him on the voyage to a free self and then betrayed him" (136). To his credit, these clumsy, overly melodramatic passages written by Douglass were few and far between. More often than not, he presented situations neutrally and put the burden of assigning emotions to them on the reader. A good example of this is the first time he was beaten by Covey. Gibson asserts that, "The omission of reference to his emotional response, to description of the pain, or even to what Douglass was doing or thinking during the beating has the effect of objectivity and understatement. The reader is thus invited to supply from the resources of his own imagination the missing currents of thought and feeling" (114).

Frederick Douglass, in his slave narrative, effectively furthered the abolitionist cause by presenting readers with factual information that dwelled on personal actions and thoughts and rarely slipped into the prior convention of melodramatic hyperbole. Ironically, his later work was derided for jettisoning the simplistic prose that had made him famous in favor of wordier, more implicitly emotional writing. However, *The Narrative* was a uniformly championed work integral to the abolitionist cause of the time. Furthermore, due to its sensible execution and plainly described events of slave life, it is still critically heralded to this day as a historical document and work of art.

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Evaluation: *Sean has composed a thoughtful and thorough consideration of Douglass's Narrative, with original perspectives on how Douglass uses humor and sentimentality as rhetorical tools.*

Going Against the Grain: Sammy Challenges Social Norms

Joe Saldana

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Richard Middleton-Kaplan

Assignment:

Write a seven- to ten-page literary research paper exploring the costs of conformity and non-conformity in John Updike's "A & P."

As John Updike's "A&P" progresses, Sammy sees exactly what is in store for him if he conforms to what he sees as society's expectations and commonly held values. He makes a distinct decision to quit his job at the A&P in order to impress the character Queenie, but his reasons go much deeper than his feeble attempt at winning her over. In fact, this coming-of-age story is primarily about challenging commonly accepted social norms; in the end, Sammy is successful in accomplishing this task even though it is not what he believes he initially set out to do.

At the beginning of the story, Sammy is fully within his place in society as a whole: he is a typical teenager with an average job and a not-so-bright future. This fact is pointed out time and again, such as in his comparison to his coworker: "Stokesie's married, with two babies chalked up on his fuselage already, but as far as I can tell that's the only difference. He's twenty-two, and I was

nineteen in April" (Updike 269). The fact that Stokesie is three years older than Sammy and still acts childishly contributes later in the story to Sammy's idea of what he does not want to be. It is so blatantly obvious to Sammy that Lengel started out in a similar fashion to him and Stokesie. Stokesie's wish to one day become manager only serves to further the notion that there is very little future for Sammy if he stays with the A&P as he is expected to do. To do otherwise would be out of the question according to Lengel, who represents not only a model citizen in society, but also a mentor for the younger people (such as Sammy and Stokesie) who may be having difficulty doing the right thing. As M. Gilbert Porter put it in his critique of "A&P": "In short, Lengel represents the Voice of The Establishment" (1157). However, Lengel is not the only adult role model, and the actions of the other (the butcher McMahon)—the way he undresses the girls with his eyes—make Sammy sick to his stomach. "Sammy is angelic in his rejection of both his manager's public policy, which ostensibly works for the common good, and the butcher's lechery, which works against it" (Saldivar 223).

In contrast to Sammy's everyday ordinariness, Queenie and company represent everything that is not socially acceptable. The three of them enter the store scantily clad and barefoot, unlike the rest of the "sheep" and "houseslaves" who would continue shopping and checking off their lists even if dynamite were set off in the store (Updike 269); the three of them make a point to stand out. The fact that they walk up an aisle against traffic is a metaphor for their intent to approach the rest of society head-on, somewhat of an in-your-face challenge to everybody else. And what about everybody else? "Sammy is repulsed by their insensitivity, their loss of individuality, and by the joyless, wooden nature of their existence" (1156). Sammy begins to realize that he is caught up in and in fact *is* an active, participating member of a social convention that he has no desire to be a part of as he follows the girls through the store from his cash-register perch. In his retelling of the story, Sammy seems to recognize the fact that his remaining stuck at the register symbolizes how he will remain tied down for the rest of his life if he remains in his current position with the A&P.

Going Against the Grain: Sammy Challenges Social Norms

Social class structures play a significant role in this story and can be viewed as one of the norms that Sammy is rebelling against. As stated by Lawrence Jay Dessner, “He is entranced and made enviously defensive by his notion that the under-clad younger shoppers inhabit a higher social station than his own” (316). Sammy’s vision of what it would be like to attend a party in Queenie’s living room is very formal and in his mind high class. In stark contrast to this fantasy is his description of what is served when his parents have somebody over, which is described as “lemonade and if it’s a real racy affair, Schlitz in tall glasses with ‘They’ll Do It Every Time’ cartoons stenciled on” (Updike 271). And it seems that he is destined to serve the same lowly refreshments years down the road if he maintains his current status in society, which is all the more reason to go against commonly accepted beliefs.

When Lengel makes it his business to reprove Queenie and the other girls, she maintains her steadfast demeanor and explains that she is only here at the request of her mother, who (apparently) holds a higher place in society than he. As such, there is an implication that she should be allowed to continue her minimal shopping without being hassled. In response to this, Lengel takes his scolding a step further by first repeating himself (if for no other reason than to assure himself that he had made his point the first time) and then explaining to the girls, “We want you decently dressed when you come in here” (Updike 271). Of course, *we* here is indicative of not only Lengel, but also his interpretation of the ideal person in society: God-fearing, church-going people who know their place and dare not go against convention. It is at this point in the story that Queenie loses her bearing for the first time. “Sammy’s response to this...forshadows that his decision to defy Lengel and ‘policy’ will be signified by his baring his own shoulders, and that is precisely what occurs” (Petry 9). Alice Hall Petry states that this takes place later in the story when Sammy removes his apron (9). Naturally, Petry builds up to this by mentioning how Queenie’s shoulders had been bared by her bathing suit.

Sammy takes a great deal of offense to the criticism Lengel dishes out to the girls. At Lengel’s prompt, he continues to ring up Queenie’s purchase, “all the time

thinking” (Updike 271). And it soon becomes obvious that what he is thinking is this: he wants no part of what he just saw happen. He doesn’t want to end up like Lengel (or Stokesie or McMahon, for that matter), and he has no desire to become one of the “sheep” that he desparingly describes in the story. Corey Evan Thompson writes, “he has begun to realize that the incident offers him the perfect opportunity to free himself from his dead-end job” (216). He now sees that to stay here at the A&P would mean that he accepts not only Lengel’s unfair reprimand of the girls but also the indifference of society as a whole (because nobody else stands up for them). This understanding immediately sets in, and he knows that he can do nothing except quit his job in order to make his point absolutely clear in public view of everybody at the store, but most importantly Lengel and Queenie. “His Queenie has been wronged, and he will stand beside her; in an age when the supermarket has replaced the church as the community’s central institution” (Wells 132). Here he is rebelling against Lengel and everything that he stands for, to include social conformity and remaining in the cookie-cutter prison that society has created for him. The fact that he might impress Queenie by doing something that could be considered standing up for her is actually an Easter egg—an unexpected bonus. Sammy is clearly hoping that his actions will speak louder than his words in the eyes of Queenie.

As it turns out, Queenie and her friends do not view Sammy as a hero. He originally had hoped that Queenie would find his actions romantic and exciting, possibly opening up an opportunity to get to know her better. But she and her friends leave the store quickly, never looking back. And it is here where we see that impressing the girls, while seeming to be a good intention, was not the driving force behind Sammy quitting his job. In fact, it was somewhat of an excuse. Sammy is given the opportunity by Lengel to take back what he said; to which Sammy simply replies, “I said I quit” (Updike 271). The fact that Sammy will no longer fill the role that society deems he must is emphasized by the fact that he doesn’t quit until after the girls have left, which signifies that they weren’t a factor in the choice he made. “Sammy, in fact, achieves a certain degree of

heroism not so much by his gesture, which initially appears to be selfishly motivated rather than a defense of principle, but by his insistence upon going through with it even after the girls have left" (McFarland 99).

While Sammy's actions were spur-of-the-moment, it is obvious that he had considered quitting prior to this moment. This can be seen by his statement, "One advantage to this scene taking place in the summer, I can follow this up with a clean exit, there's no fumbling around getting your coat and galoshes..." (Updike 272). One might wonder how long he had been thinking about taking this action. At the very least, it would have been the past winter, but I think that it was much longer than that. This moment has been building up in Sammy for some time, this defining moment as boy becomes man. Of significance is the fact that Sammy consciously makes the choice, whereas many are forced into adulthood by circumstances beyond their control. Oftentimes, these circumstances are the forces of our society pressuring people to follow convention. Also important is the fact that Lengel is a friend of the family and will surely inform Sammy's parents of the events that took place. It would seem that Sammy wants and perhaps needs this to happen as a confirmation of him moving into adulthood from the perspective of his parents.

Standing by his decision, Sammy returns what rightfully belongs to the store and marches right out the door. He looks briefly for the girls, but they are gone. However, he actually expected them to be gone, much like Lengel expected him to stay and keep working at the A&P. "His attitude undergoes a change. To follow this process as Sammy tells his story is to appreciate Updike's skill at demonstrating in a short narrative how human perceptions may widen: to see Sammy, at nineteen, take a step forward in his moral development" (Goss 8). Sammy now realizes that there will always be parts of the system that can't be beaten. For today, however, he is victorious. He defeated that part which he needs to, and this has given him not only a new outlook on life and a fresh start in living it, but also opened his eyes to the idea that he has a choice. There will always be a choice. And the choices made, while they may be hard to live with, are his alone to make. Sammy realizes that this is powerful knowledge, and it is at this point

that the story is seen as a coming-of-age: Sammy is now a man. And as a man, he is happy with the decision just made, as can be seen by the sentence "Now here comes the sad part of the story, at least my family says it's sad, but I don't think it's sad myself" (Updike 270).

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Evaluation: *Saldana takes a conclusion that seems ambiguous and murky, and he develops a distinct, clear and persuasive argument about it.*

Faith in Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*

Steven Schultz

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Nancy L. Davis

Assignment:

Write a literary research paper.

The presence of biblical references in conjunction with the allegorical nature of Ernest Hemingway's "The Old Man and the Sea" neither portrays a single meaning nor identifies a single theme. Many have characterized this novella as a "parable," a story which "expresses or implies a moral or religious principle" (Shaw 16). Within this text, there are both references to the divine and to the struggles and limits of humanity, which when combined evoke the sense that it is possible to find meaning in the universe. Hemingway uses references to Christianity as a tool to convey his tragic view on humankind while still expressing faith in humanity's ability to find a purpose.

The presence of biblical references and images in "The Old Man and the Sea" is very apparent. First of all, Santiago is Spanish for St. James, who was both a fisherman and a martyr (Backman 256). Fishing itself also has biblical connotations through how Jesus Christ has been described as a fisher of men. Williams notes that fishing itself is like a spiritual ritual:

When he wakes and prepares to go to sea, he follows a ritual that is his private order; he joins the larger order of community in carrying his mast to the harbor in the progress of all the fishermen, then rowing to sea to the accompaniment of the oars of his fellows. Now he is entering the largest order, the order of the sea and of the universe, and the novel clearly advances it as divine order. (Williams 72)

Fishing, as faith, can be seen as something that is both very individualized but also differs when looked at in the context of different communities. This is shown through how Santiago's daily "ritual" is both an individual and a social ritual. This image of fishing presents a "ritual" that combines the naturalness of the fish and the sea to a "divine order" (Williams 72). The "ritual" then becomes not only one between God and man but between God and every creature on earth. The ritualistic and naturalistic qualities of fishing form the basis for other religious references in this text, such as the ones that emerge from numerology.

Many of the numbers used in this text have biblical connotations. At the very beginning, it is said that the boys' parents make him go to another boat after the old man has gone forty days without catching a fish

(Hemingway 9). Forty is an important number in the Bible because it is the number of days and nights that Noah spent on the ark, as well as being the years that the Jews wandered in the desert. However, the mention of forty days in this text most probably is referring to the forty days that Christ fasted in the wilderness (Wilson 369). Wilson suggests that “the eighty-seven days followed by the three fruitful weeks, suggests the liturgical Mystery of the Incarnation” (370). If we continue with this analogy, the three bountiful weeks are not only a possible “miracle,” which serves as the basis for the boy’s faith in the old man, but also “may be alluding to the three years of Christ’s public ministry during which he was both a fisher of men himself and an instructor to his disciples in how to be fisher of men” (Wilson 370). The bounty, however, is then repeated by the “eighty-four days” without a fish and then the three days of the novella which may “suggest the Mystery of the Redemption” and refer to the time between Ash Wednesday and Ascension Thursday (Wilson 371). The three days where the old man struggles with the fish could represent the days of Christ’s passion; both of them seem to meet their ultimate test during these three-day periods. The way in which the old man’s successes and challenges are numerically related to Christ’s life is one of the various techniques by which the novella compares the old man and Christ.

Santiago is also compared to Christ through how he is shown to have a compassionate nature, both toward fellow humans and toward all living things. For instance “the old man feels friendship and love” for “the bird who rests on his line and for other creatures who share with him” (Burhans 261). Another instance of the old man’s feeling of connection with everything living is when he considers that “perhaps it was a sin to kill a fish...I suppose it was even though I did it to keep me alive and feed many people. But then everything is a sin” (105). This is an allusion to when Jesus fed many with a limited quantity of fish, but it also shows the old man’s deep respect for life and therefore for the creator of life. The feeling that the old man has toward the fish and his apology of “I’m sorry about it fish” substitutes for how one might thank God with providing food

through the saying of Grace (110). Santiago’s empathy is shown again through how he also apologizes to the Virgin Mary for killing the fish. Santiago also seems to have a connection with the sea lions and the birds, and he even respects the great Mako shark by saying that it is “beautiful and noble” (117). The old man also shows his understanding nature when he tells the boy that he knows that he didn’t lose faith in him, and reassures him that he does not blame him for changing boats. (10-11). All of these examples of Santiago’s compassion relate him to Christ.

Images of the crucifix and of suffering are other facets through which Santiago is associated with Christ. There are a series of descriptions of the old man that are analogous to descriptions of Christ carrying the cross, being nailed to it, and suffering on it. The first image is a description that recalls how Christ carries the crucifix: “the old man carried the mast with the furled sail on his shoulder” (26). Hemingway also parallels Santiago’s suffering to that of Christ by stating that “he settled ... against the wood and took his suffering as it came.” Even more profound is the description of Santiago’s response when he saw the sharks and made “just a noise such a man might make, involuntarily feeling the nail go through his hands and into the wood” (107). The old man also gets his hands bloody and scarred as a result of the fishing lines, which seem to refer to the whips that were used on Jesus. Once back on land, the old man carries back his mast on his shoulders and falls as Jesus did. The text reads,

He started to climb again at the top he fell and lay for some time with the mast across his shoulder. He tried to get up. But it was too difficult and he sat there with mast on his shoulder and looked at the end of the road. A cat passed on the far side going about its business and the old man watched it. The he just watched the road. Finally he put the mast down and stood up. He picked the mast up and put it on his shoulder and started up the road. He sat down five times before he reached his shack. (121)

Here, the repetitive falling under the weight of "the mast...on his shoulder" has the same feeling of Christ carrying the cross. This is even more emphasized by the way that the old man soon after "slept face down on the newspapers with his arms out straight and the palms of his hands up" (122). Some critics believe that Santiago is near death when we see him last (Wilson 372). If this is the case, it is as if Santiago has found his purpose and is now leaving his palms open in order to let fate take care of him. For many critics, such as Backman, "Suffering and gentle and wood blend magically into an image of Christ on the cross" (256). Santiago may not be an actual symbol of Christ, but the repeated references are striking in how they keep Santiago tied down to very earthly sensations but at the same time connect him to connotations of the divine.

Santiago is also compared with Christ in their similar connections to people. While most people misjudge Santiago, he teaches the boy as if he were his disciple. Santiago is ridiculed and made fun of by many people on the terrace, much in the same way that Christ was mocked. Grebstein observes that

On land the other fishermen mock or pity Santiago and judge him a failure, with the result that the boy's father forbids him to accompany Santiago....The old man returns with his skeleton-fish, to be misunderstood by ignorant tourists. (22)

It is important to note here that Santiago is "misunderstood," just as Christ was misunderstood by many people. Santiago, however, does have a type of audience, as represented when he teaches the boy lessons about faith through comments about baseball. This can be seen when Santiago says "Have faith in the Yankees my son....Think of the Great DiMaggio" (Hemingway 17). Shaw further suggests that, Jesus also "usually delivered his moral preachments in the form of parables, stripped of all elaboration" (Shaw 116). As Plath shows, Santiago uses references to the World Series to teach the boy that he must believe in the Yankees or else he will become filled with fears (66). The old man tells the boy "Be careful or you will fear even the Reds of Cincinnati and the White Sox of Chicago" (Hemingway 17). Santiago tells

the boy this is not mindless banter, but in order to teach the boy on a level that is common to both of them, much as it was easier for Jesus and the people who he talked with to learn through parables. The religious references in this text continue beyond the comparisons between Santiago and Jesus.

In "The Old Man and the Sea," the natural and the spiritual world are heavily connected. As Shaw writes, Hemingway both conveys "the presence of evil" and "pays homage to the raw energy of the universe and the fundamental partnership between man and nature" (115). There is a great naturalness in the relationship between the old man and the fish. When the old man talks, "he makes clear that he and the fish are incarnations of different states of being, that each is noble, and that each is dominated by a single imperative of existence" (Williams 73). There is truly a sense that "he was born to be a fisherman and the fish was born to be a fish" (Backman 256). Rovit notes that the old man "can fish the interior depths of himself of his 'brother'" fish, who along with all other creatures is connected to Santiago's "inner consciousness" (77). It is through this connection to this fish that Santiago sees himself and "recognizes himself as erring, sinful, and finally helpless" (Grebstein 23). The naturalness of the sea relates to the true and absoluteness of man's and other creature's places in the order of things. There is a certain sense that the old man can be nothing else, can do nothing else; it seems that fishing is his fate, and fish his natural enemy and natural friend both at once. It is through realizing that it is the fate of the fish to die that the old man realizes that it is also his fate to die, and that there are certain borders that humankind cannot cross. The text conveys how the old man fights against an "unconquerable element," while at the same time showing "absolute reverence for the Creator of such earthly wonders as the sea" because in the end he knows that he too is subject to this Creator (Hotchner 67). Much of the religious nature of this text comes from how it is so closely intertwined with the natural and original nature of mankind.

One person who wrote about the religious nature of "The Old Man and the Sea" was the great American

writer William Faulkner. In a famous review, Faulkner wrote that

This time, he [Hemingway] discovered God, a Creator. Until now, his men and women had made themselves; shaped themselves out of their own clay; their victories and defeats were at the hands of each other, just to prove to themselves or one another how tough they could be. But this time, he wrote about pity: about something somewhere that made them all: the old man who had to catch the fish and then love it, the fish that had to be caught and then lost, the sharks which had to rob the old man of his fish; made them all and loved them all and pitied them all. (qtd. in Bradford 159)

The “pity” that Faulkner mentions is referred to by Bradford as “an inner grace,” where man accepts his place in a world created by a divine being (162). Faulkner sees this text as a departure from fatalism for Hemingway; he seems to sense that Hemingway has found hope that mankind does have a meaning, through this novella (Bradford 160). Faulkner believes that Hemingway has put together in this work “his view of man’s place as a contingency among contingencies, a small component in the frame of things which he must recognize and confront if he is to be complete—and the Doctrine of Nature” (qtd. in Bradford 159). In this way it seems that Hemingway himself is accepting, as the old man accepts, that man has some type of place within the universal nature of things.

The old man finds his place in the natural and divine order by knowingly pushing the limits of humanity and feeling his constraints. Williams writes that Hemingway knows of the location of the fish because he follows the “order in which he lives,” but that “he is always aware, in his reflections, that he is “far out,” that he is pushing the margins of that order” (Williams 73). Williams also reads the old man’s “unspoken decision not to cut the line” as “the choice that sets the tragic action in motion” (Williams 73). It is as if the old man knows that he will not be able to succeed, but wants to persevere and test his boundaries. The old man must in the end realize what he already knows, which is that he cannot go

beyond the constraints of humanity. We can see this in the old man’s soliloquy, when he thinks “It is easy when you are beaten....I never knew how easy it was. And what beat you....” He then replies to himself, “Nothing...I went out to far” (120). It is truly “Nothing” that beat him, because the old man’s defeat comes in the form of him deciding to go “out too far,” to go where he knew he couldn’t succeed, and attempt what he himself felt was impossible (120). Burhans writes that by going out too far, the old man “learns the sin into which men inevitably fall by going far out...beyond their true place in life” (260). Through the sin of exploring beyond his own boundaries, Santiago recognizes those boundaries. Part of the tragic nature of this story involves the interpretation of this text that suggests that Santiago knows that he is pushing the limits of humanity, but does so anyway. The dignity that he maintains, however, shows the possibility of faith even in those situations when it seems that there is no use for faith.

The old man’s courage is an important part of the tragic elements of this text because the old man faces up to tragedy in a dignified way. Williams says that while the old man faces “cosmic hostility,”

...his sea-blue eyes are “cheerful and undefeated”; he maintains a ritual of dignity against poverty and hunger; he insists he is still strong enough for a huge fish. When the old man says with prophetic confidence that the greatest fish come in September, he is forecasting both magnitude (the size of the fish) and order (September; life’s autumn: a time of harvest). (Williams 72)

At times, Santiago seems even prideful, as he ““hopes that no fish will be strong enough” to defeat him and says “I may not be as strong as I think....But I know many tricks and I have resolution” (Wittkowski 4, Hemingway 25). Wittkowski, along with other critics, agree that that “This he proves throughout the story” (4). One other example of this is when Santiago declares “Fight them...I’ll fight them until I die” (115). The old man continues his sense of moderate pride even while acknowledging defeat. After the old man admits defeat three times, he still refutes defeat, and adds “The

wind is our friend, anyway, he thought...sometimes" (Hemingway 120). In this comment, he maintains his hope that the natural order of things is still "sometimes" on his side. Santiago has determination and even some sense of self-righteousness, but at the same time "he took his suffering" (71). This suffering is linked with fate and inherently connected with the natural order of everything, and for this reason there is "no fear...no resentment" (Bradford 162). Hemingway's sense of tragedy comes out in this text, where determination is matched by the feeling of inevitable defeat.

Backman refers to the text in the terms of "the matador," which "represents a great force held in check, releasing itself proudly in a controlled yet violent administering of death" and the "crucified," which "stands for the taking of pain, even unto death, with all of one's courage and endurance so that it becomes a thing of poignancy and nobility" (Backman 245). Hemingway shows "killing cleanly with honor, pride, and humility...as a spiritual experience" (Backman 250). Backman believes that to Hemingway, "experiences" particularly of "love and death" are "the only sacred subjects left" (250). In this, the experiences of humans are connected to the divine; the divine is taken to the human level. Wittkowski has a similar view, saying that "The central image of the killer stands along side that of the sufferer, and Hemingway's Catholicism and ethical thought lack the dimension of transcendence" (Wittkowski 2). While critics would debate whether Hemingway actually shows a deficiency of "transcendence," it could be connected to Backman's comments to exhibit how Hemingway uses divine references but keeps the plot very much centralized in the magnificent natural world and in a man whose limits are real and painful.

Wittkowski interprets the text in such a way that he welds together a religious interpretation and an interpretation based on sports and competition. Wittkowski argues that Santiago's awareness of the baseball games shows that "confrontation and victory in competitive sport serve here as the model, the ideal, and ultimately the metaphor" (4). There are also many alternatives to

religious readings of *The Old Man and the Sea*; for example, Plath argues for a more secular reading, saying that the old man has "hollow faith" as shown by how he emptily promises to say prayers if he catches the fish (70). Although Plath acknowledges that there is some sort of "faith" present in the book, he says that it "is nonetheless rooted in practicality—it must be founded on relatively solid ground, have some logical base" (72). Plath believes that Santiago would rather "put his faith in winners whose power can be verified in the daily papers," and that the references to the number three are references to the importance of that number in baseball (75-76). Although Plath does not choose to put emphasis on the religious aspects of the novella, the themes of struggling and fate are still evident in Plath's reading of the text. Plath believes that baseball is a representation of "individual struggles and performances within the broader content of a team's winning or losing" (Plath 70). Also minimizing the influence of the Christian symbolism, Brenner points out that Christ has "a divine mission" while Santiago has a secular one, that "Christ is a martyr" while "Santiago is a persevering champion who is willing to die only to win a battle with a fish," and that Christ's teaching is much different from Santiago's (38). Despite the skepticism, we can still see that the Christian imagery serves the purpose of commenting on the nature of man's position within the universe.

Even though the old man loses the fish, he is not defeated. This is because he "like Christ, achieves a triumph in apparent defeat," since the dentuso and galano "cannot diminish the heroism that has led to the union of man and nature" (Wilson 371). This is because the dentuso and galano cannot take away the old man's experience of courageously finding his place within the universe. Santiago's character is still heroic in the text, as shown by the comment "But man is not made for defeat" (103). This is shown through Christian symbolism, which is "the basic technique by which Hemingway presents his view of man as a coherent and intrinsically important part of the cosmos in which he must find value" (Wilson 372). The Christian references

are a way that Hemingway can show “Man’s struggle for dignified survival in a non-human universe” (Rovit 76). Hemingway’s old man achieves this through finding his “final symbolic but meaningful triumph in the face of literal disaster” through “unity with nature” and this success “carries a redemptive message for all who share the human condition” (Wilson 373). This type of struggle, triumph, and redemption is all echoed by the comparison between Santiago and Christ.

Even though Santiago loses the fish, he still is shown to be victorious through his portrayal as a Christ figure. Ultimately, Hemingway allows us to see through his use of Christian imagery the weakness of humanity, and how by going too far out, man realizes his limits. Although Santiago seems to fail, this apparent failure is not an end, but merely a resolution to understanding the limits of humanity. Hemingway displays that there is some divine order in the universe through using a combination of natural and religious imagery. There is the possibility for a valuable life, and despite all of his hardships, Santiago comes to recognize this in the latter part of the novella. Hemingway shows through such tools as religious imagery that the apparently tragic nature of life can be reconciled through finding one’s connection with and place within the universe.

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Evaluation: *Steven writes about Hemingway’s hero with passion, conviction and grace. His research and analysis illustrate a keen understanding of Santiago’s tortuous journey.*

Master Behind the Music

Amie Shadlu

Course: Speech 101

(Fundamentals of Speech Communication)

Instructor: Louise J. Perry

Assignment:

*The assignment was to write a eulogy, a speech
of praise for a person, a place, or a time.*

It used to be only angry music that tore through my head. Black Flag. Minor Threat. Suicidal Tendencies. It is no wonder that I had so much internal rage...rage that constantly coursed through my veins like magma through the earth. Then, I heard an unspeakable sound that changed everything. A sound that expanded my capacity for music. Something so deeply moving that the instant it fell upon my ears, everything else around me became silent. What I heard was more than just a sound; more than just noise; more than just music...it was Mozart.

Countless musical experts have considered Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart to be the greatest composer ever to live. He wrote his first concerto at the mere age of four. His first symphony at seven. His first full-scale opera at twelve. Is it no wonder that this beaming sensation has astounded audiences for centuries with his extraordinary abilities?

The world welcomed this phenomenon on January 27, 1756 in Salzburg, Austria. He was already experi-

menting with chords and intervals at the clavier when he was just three years old. His father, Leopold Mozart, took pride in the boy's miraculous talent, and arranged for him to play before numerous royalties such as the Austrian empress at the age of six. By the time he was eight, his music was being published. Clearly, Mozart's flair burned brightly from the beginning.

As a young adult, Mozart worked at the Prince Archbishop's court as Konzertmeister in Salzburg. During this time, he produced countless masterpieces, including several symphonies, masses, and piano sonatas. This remarkable genius seemed to have something that rocketed him far above other composers: he did not require the need for keyboards, nor pen and paper to write his music. His first drafts were written down flawlessly, like pages fresh off a press. According to Julia Davids, Director of Music at Trinity United Methodist Church in Mount Prospect, Illinois, "...the music apparently came to him completely, many say directly from God."

Mozart was eventually released by the Archbishop after a series of conflicts in Vienna, to where they had traveled to welcome the new emperor, Joseph II. The Archbishop treated Mozart no better than a servant, making this a most melancholy time for him. Upon putting this discouraging spell to rest, Mozart looked to Vienna, "City of Musicians," for a flicker of hope. Vienna, to him, was freedom. It was a glistening oasis where he was confident his music would be undeniably appreciated.

Unfortunately, not everyone understood the complexity of Mozart's work. Much of his music, in fact, was so elaborately adorned with intricate scales and phrases, that Emperor Joseph II stated that it had "too many notes." Nonetheless, the prominent complexity of Mozart's music fed into its indescribable beauty. As expressed in the movie *Amadeus*, "Displace one note, and there would be diminishment. Displace one phrase, and the structure would fall."

Many fantastic productions came from Mozart during his years in Vienna, such as the German opera, *The Abduction from the Seraglio*. His work was an instant success with those who recognized his gift; however, he was disgustingly underpaid. Amazingly, this did not

extinguish Mozart's flame. He went on to write several other breathtaking operas, such as *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, and *The Magic Flute*. With the interest of all social classes at heart, his work allowed him to portray social and sexual strains as being simply human. This proficiency to surpass social barriers attracted audiences having a multitude of different ranks.

Although our beloved Mozart lived courageously, his death was mysterious and far too soon. During a bout of illness and his ongoing financial hardship, a stranger known as the "Grey Messenger" came knocking on Mozart's door. He offered Mozart a reasonable fee to compose a Requiem Mass for the dead. It was later discovered that the man behind the proposal was Count Walsegg, who planned to take the Requiem, recopy it, and claim it as his own work. Mozart perished in the midst of writing this death mass. Just as he was practically born writing music, he died writing music. He was only thirty-five years old.

The skies were gray and stormy the day Mozart passed away. His burial service in no way lived up to his accomplishments, as he was lowered into a common grave with no friends or family there to witness it. As Manuel Komroff best describes in his biography on Mozart's life, "His monument is his music" (166).

To this day, Mozart continues to impact our lives with much the same force as waves crashing into the shore. According to researchers at the University of California, a study in 1993 demonstrated the possibility that the exposure to Mozart's music may increase one's I.Q. by up to nine points. It was termed, "the Mozart effect" (Jones). Can Mozart's music actually make us smarter? No one knows for sure. What it will do, however, is open our minds and empower us. As we listen, we will feel as if we could reach up to the sky and gather all of the stars in the palms of our hands. The music will envelop us with vitality, the same vitality that allowed this man to rise far above a life of poverty and under appreciation. We will be inspired to create, we will be inspired to pursue, and passionate we will be. We may not have the ability to be prodigies, but we do have the ability to be passionate. As Mozart himself once said, "Love, love, love, that is the soul of genius."

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Evaluation: *This speech is a witness to the evolution of a genius. The speaker describes the vigor of a man through his passion for music, which includes countless masterpieces, extraordinary abilities, and his impact on our lives.*

Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*: Problematic... or Satisfactory?

Sandra Siniscalchi

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Anthony Wisniewski

Assignment:

Write a research paper on Shakespeare's
Measure for Measure, using at least
five secondary sources within the paper.

Considered by many to be a problem play, Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* is problematic in more than a few aspects. Perhaps the most glaring problem to critics is the difficulty that arises when trying to classify this play as either comedy or tragedy, but to the common observer or reader, problems arise in issues dealing with justice, forgiveness, love, and hypocrisy. By exploring these problematic aspects of *Measure for Measure*, perhaps it can be understood why some audiences or readers may feel at a loss for words regarding the outcome of this play.

Measure for Measure is filled throughout with crude innuendoes and double meanings that seem to give the

play a light theme while at the same time including issues of heavier significance. Humorous characters such as Elbow, the incompetent law enforcer; Pompey, whose name sounds like the pimp that he is; and Mistress Overdone, the successful lady of a brothel, all seem to tell the audience not to relate this play to anything serious. However, such serious issues as rape and death run throughout the play, so that difficulty arises in balancing the serious with the entertaining. Geckle makes the following point in an attempt to explain why *Measure for Measure* has been termed a problem play: "Because of its realistic setting and profound concern with ethical problems that at the close do not seem to be solved in a properly serious way, E.M.W. Tillyard, for instance, feels that it lacks internal harmony" (10). The question of whether this play is a tragedy or comedy seems to build pressure until the last act, in which it is expected to clearly point in one direction or another. Unfortunately, according to some, the ending only complicates things, as it gives a happy, unrealistic ending to issues that seem to beg for more wisdom and realism to which people can actually relate. On the other hand, to some, the happy ending may seem to alleviate the strain of a possibly miserable conclusion. Charney comes closer to the latter position: "We are pleased with the happy ending, even though it does not seem fully plausible" (112).

Perhaps one of the most problematic, yet also one of the most important, themes within *Measure for Measure* is justice. In the opening of the play, Duke Vincentio presents the problem of justice by addressing his failure to exact justice over the people of Vienna for the past fourteen years. The Duke's goal is to have justice fulfilled, and for personal reasons, he appoints Angelo to awaken punishments that have long been dormant, though not extinct. Angelo immediately begins to suffocate crime out of Vienna by attempting to suffocate life out of the first guilty person brought before him. What follows is a series of crimes revealed not only to the audience or reader, but also to the imaginatively real public of Vienna. However, what started out as a play seeking to put an end to crimes of immorality through justice actually turns out to be a play in which the crime of immorality is diverted and put to the better social use of marriage. Though this may appear to be a wise solu-

tion to the problems of immorality, it does not explain why murder in the case of Barnardine is not followed by severe punishment. It also fails to explain why slander in the case of Lucio is not followed by a punishment harsher than marriage to a prostitute. These cases may seem unsatisfactory to some if the strict letter of the law is all that is considered. The conclusion, in which some crimes are completely pardoned and other crimes are resolved with weaker punishments than deserved, may seem to beg a plausible explanation to the cause of what may appear to be leniency. However, perhaps Shakespeare's message could have been one in which justice may vary from the strict letter of the law when individual situations are considered. Perhaps more important to justice is forgiveness. Perhaps greater injustices would have been done if the letter of the law had been executed. These considerations may help some people balance their opinions concerning the use of justice within this play.

Muir brings out another central theme within this play: "the play is about forgiveness" (133). To some, it may be hard to accept that forgiveness can be greater than justice, especially when the title of the play is considered. "The title *Measure for Measure* recalls a verse in the Sermon on the Mount which had become proverbial: 'With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again'" (Lever 1xiii). Some may wonder why Angelo does not receive this application of justice that he not only deserves but even pronounces upon himself in act 2 scene 1, in case he were to do as Claudio did. This aspect brings up part of the problem people might have with this play. It seems almost inconsistent with its own title in which one is led to think that strict judgment will be the theme; yet, by the end of the play, forgiveness earns the title.

Another problematic theme within *Measure for Measure* is love. The first instance in which love may seem problematic is in Isabella's handling of Claudio. Isabella is a strict nun-to-be who condemns immorality not only as a crime in relation to civil law but also as a sin in relation to spiritual law. She condemns the sin for which Claudio is sentenced to die, yet her love for her brother Claudio allows her to plead for his mercy. This may seem to cause an inconsistency within Isabella's character, and love seems to be the cause for this incon-

sistency. Another instance in which love may play a role in complicating this play is in the relationship between Angelo and Mariana. By both leaving Mariana on account of her lost dowry and publicly slandering Mariana's character, Angelo has shown no trace of love for Mariana; yet, she still desires to marry him and sees the potential good in him. To some this may appear to be another case of ambiguous forgiveness; yet it could just be the role of love, specifically Mariana's love for Angelo, in causing another potentially unsatisfactory outcome.

Involving love, the final words in the play pose an even greater disturbance to the overall problems of the play. The Duke extends a marriage proposal to Isabella, but Shakespeare does not report Isabella's response. Depending on how the director runs this last part or how a reader imagines it, the entire play could be ended on a bitter note. The question always remains to be answered if Isabella accepts or refuses the Duke's offer. The answer could be found in the interpretation of love's involvement. According to some, the Duke may be seriously in love with Isabella. He declares the following to her: "The hand that hath made you fair hath / made you good: the goodness that is cheap in beauty / makes beauty brief in goodness; but grace, being the / soul of your complexion, shall keep the body of it ever / fair" (3. 1. 178-182). The Duke clearly thinks that Isabella is both physically attractive and morally upright (Geckle 8). If it is accepted that the Duke is truly in love with Isabella, it could increase the possibility of her actually accepting his marriage proposal, thus putting a happier ending to the play. However, some may think that Isabella's chances of accepting the Duke's proposal are near impossible because he does not appear to really love her. "The Duke's 'What's mine is yours, and what is yours is mine' (5.1.540) sounds less like a love plea to his intended than the motto of a community property state" (Charney 108). For those who take this approach, the ending may very well be a disappointment that could have ultimately been avoided if love were interpreted differently.

The apparent hypocrisy within *Measure for Measure* may also challenge the observer or reader. The characters of Isabella, Angelo, Lucio, and the Duke seem to

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hold aspects of this trait, though some less obviously than others. Lucio repeatedly slanders the Duke for what he himself has repeatedly committed. He eventually receives his public shame for this, and his character seems much in line with this act. Angelo begins with an apparent rigid morality and later falls into the same crime for which he has spoken ill of; but perhaps the most disturbing possibility of hypocrisy may be found within the Duke and Isabella. Throughout the play, the Duke acts as one who is secretly in control of the major issues at hand. He can be seen as one who is wise in his solutions for solving the current problems in Vienna. However, how can one who supposedly makes sure that justice is enforced be the mastermind behind multiple deceptions and trickeries? The situation calls for the idea of the end justifying the means, yet the Duke may still be perceived as a hypocrite for using a bad act to bring justice to crimes. However, the point may also arise that deception is a lesser evil than immorality. Finally, Isabella remains to be either approved as a consistent puritanical character or reproved as a hypocrite. The question arises why, if Isabella has previously rejected Angelo's offer on moral grounds, Isabella would take part in a ruse that requires deception. Isabella herself states, "I have spirit to do any / thing that appears not foul in the truth of my spirit" (3. 1. 202-203). Is her participation in deception consistent with her apparently moral character? To some, her character may seem disturbingly dynamic and compromising; yet to others, what she has done is justified by the greater good and justice brought about by some deception. "For Isabel is no hypocrite, nor is there anything ugly about her Puritanism" (Schanzer 110). Once again, the potential existence of hypocrisy needs to be analyzed, creating another possible point of varying—and some problematic—interpretations of *Measure for Measure*.

As the title itself of *Measure for Measure* seems to imply a judgment, so also the play itself begs for judgment. This play has had a history of both criticism and appeal. Muir comments, "Until the present century, *Measure for Measure* had few admirers" (133). There could be several reasons for this past dislike, but the recurring heavily problematic, and in some ways clashing, elements of comedy, tragedy, justice, forgiveness,

love, and hypocrisy perhaps contribute to this apparently historical dislike. Charney concludes, "The mixture of all these disparate ingredients does not make for a very satisfying play" (112). On a more positive note, Muir refers to *Measure for Measure* as "what may be regarded as the profoundest of Shakespeare's comedies. It is hardly too much to say that what used to be regarded as defects are the means by which Shakespeare achieves his effects" (145). Perhaps Schanzer is right in saying that "uncertain and divided responses to it in the minds of the audience are possible or even probable" (111). This seems to be rightly said, for the many complications within this play certainly trigger not only the minds but the hearts of those drawn into the problematic world of Shakespeare's Vienna. By what measure *Measure for Measure* is judged, then, should be determined entirely by each observer or reader.

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Evaluation: *Sandra's essay nicely explores possible interpretations of Shakespeare's play, and is the stronger, I think, for not positing a single understanding. Her argument for uncertainty corresponds to the play's central paradox: While the play's title implies sureness in judgment, the ending leaves Isabella's acceptance of the Duke's proposal indeterminate.*

Uncovering Motives for Murder

Brittany Steffens

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Barbara Butler

Assignment:

Write a literary research paper.

In “The Black Cat,” Edgar Allan Poe paints a picture of how the criminal mind thinks and comes to rationalize his crimes, through detailed description of the events that occur. The story does not take place at a particular time or place, and both the narrator and his wife are unnamed. Instead, the focus of the story is on the inner world of the narrator, and the psychology of why a crime is committed is the central key to understanding the story. “The Black Cat” is told from the first-person point of view of the narrator himself. The narrator in this story is unreliable because he attempts to manipulate the reader into seeing everything from his point of view. He tries to win over the reader’s sympathy by deliberately constructing his text—alternating between narrative time and story time—in order to add judgments and rationalizations for his actions. The reader must therefore determine, on his own, when the narrator is lying and what his true motives for murder are. Throughout “The Black Cat,” the narrator attempts to justify his actions, while at the same time subconsciously exposing his real motives, which are psychologically based.

The narrator of the story is condemned to death for murdering his wife. He is currently in jail awaiting his execution. He claims to be sane, even though he realizes that others may perceive him to be mad because of what he has done. The critic Richard Badenhause observes that the narrator does not use his time in jail to reflect upon the crime. Instead, he chooses to tell the reader his account of what happened by justifying his actions (Badenhause). The narrator claims that the murder is not unusual and that it does not differ from day-to-day activities (Badenhause). He will tell the reader how he ends up in jail by “[...placing] before the world, plainly, succinctly, and without comment, a series of mere household events” (Poe 161). He believes that a sequence of various causes and events is the reason for the murder. The narrator’s motive for murder is not so apparent in the beginning of the story, but the cause becomes more evident as the story progresses.

Events in the narrator’s childhood lead him to reject people. As a child, the narrator is extremely loving and kind, especially toward animals, and his parents endow him with a wide variety of pets. James Gargano notes that his classmates often taunt him because he has such a tender heart (88). Because his peers constantly ridicule him, he is unable to make any friends. He therefore spends a great deal of time with his animals. “[...The narrator’s] sentimental excess, his extreme happiness in feeding and caressing his pets [...] suggests an unhealthy overdevelopment of the voluptuary side of his nature” (Gargano 88). The critic Ed Piacentio believes that the narrator substitutes this manner of behavior for relationships with people. The narrator prefers the love of animals to the love of people because people have the ability to hurt and humiliate him. He displaces his feelings onto animals, who are less threatening. He carries his feelings toward people and animals into his adulthood.

At first, the narrator loves the cat that he owns with his wife but soon begins to loathe it, blaming his change in attitude on alcohol. The narrator marries his wife, who also shares his love of animals, at an early age. They come to own a wide variety of pets, including a large black cat. The cat’s name is Pluto, which is an allusion to the Greek god Pluto—god of the underworld.

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Pluto's name foreshadows that unfavorable or evil events might possibly occur in the future. Pluto becomes the narrator's favorite pet, following him wherever he goes. Critic Daniel Hoffman comments that the narrator becomes moody and irritable as soon as he starts to drink alcohol. He even physically abuses his wife (Hoffman 231). The narrator spares only Pluto from his violent temper. He blames his actions and new attitudes solely on the alcohol: "Our friendship lasted [...] for several years, during which my general temperament and character—through the instrumentality of the Fiend Intemperance—[...] had experienced a radical alteration for the worse" (162). However, Joseph Stark notes that this is not the origin for his new feelings and mind-set. He does not even mention what drives him to drink in the first place (Stark). This suggests that the true reason goes deeper than just the liquor.

The narrator's new feelings toward Pluto can actually be linked to his wife. She constantly makes allusions to the superstition about black cats—that they are actually witches in disguise. Even though she is never really serious when she mentions this, it still seems to upset and irritate the narrator. He feels this way because Pluto is his favorite pet. The narrator is also jealous of his wife because she too has the same sensitive and caring nature that the narrator used to have toward animals (Piacentino). He feels as if she is a competitor in his love for animals, especially cats (Piacentino). The narrator is unable to express his feelings to his wife. Instead, he displaces his feelings of jealousy and irritation onto Pluto. The narrator's inability to adequately articulate his emotions toward the source, not the alcohol, is the cause of the hatred he now has for Pluto.

The narrator blames his physical abuse of Pluto on alcohol and his perverseness. One night, he comes home drunk from a tavern and becomes angry when Pluto avoids him. He grows to be even more enraged when the cat bites him when he tries to pick it up. At this point, the narrator no longer feels like himself. He feels as if "[...] his original soul seemed to at once take flight from [his] body; and a more than fiendish malevolence, gin-nurtured, thrilled every fiber of [his] frame" (163). The narrator takes a penknife out of his pocket and cuts out one of Pluto's eyes. Upon waking up the next morn-

ing, he hardly feels any remorse for his horrible deed (Hoffman). Pluto continues to avoid the narrator, which saddens him at first. Soon, he becomes angry and irritated again and feels "[...] a spirit of perverseness" inside of him. This drives him to hang Pluto from the limb of a tree the following morning. The narrator attempts to justify his crime. He blames the hanging of Pluto on his spirit of perverseness (Gargano 89). His use of perverseness to justify his crime can be compared to the medical defense of temporary insanity (Stark). This suggests that, contrary to what the narrator claims, he may actually be insane. However, his perverseness or "temporary insanity" is not a sufficient explanation of his motive.

His violent actions are in fact caused by repressed memories from his childhood. Repression, which is a defense mechanism, causes certain traumatic events, memories, or emotions to be excluded from a person's awareness. Instead, they are hidden in the person's subconscious. Pluto's avoidance of the narrator evokes emotions in him from his youth, which reminds him of when he was made fun of and rejected by his peers. The narrator fails to express these repressed feelings of pain, sadness, and rejection. Instead, he uses the defense mechanism of suppression by trying to hide the feelings that he is aware of. He articulates his emotions through violence and aggression—by cutting out Pluto's eye and then hanging him. Pluto is also a constant reminder of the tender heart the narrator used to possess as a child, which is now lost because of his ill temper (Magistrale 88). This can also be a motive for killing Pluto.

The narrator tries to rationalize the event of his house burning down, rejecting anything that may suggest superstition. His home catches on fire the night after he kills Pluto. The narrator is unable to account for what causes the fire. He is unable to see the connection between the horrible crime he committed against Pluto and the catastrophe that destroyed his house. The burning of his house might be a retribution for killing his cat. The only object that remains standing among the ruins is the wall that his bed used to rest against. The next day when he visits the remains, he notices the image of Pluto being hanged engraved on the wall. Once again, the narrator tries to offer a logical explanation for this

occurrence. He believes that someone found the dead cat's body and threw it against the house to wake up the narrator. He claims that mixture of the fire, the falling of the walls, and the ammonia from the carcass formed the image on the wall.

The narrator replaces Pluto with a new cat that he finds at a tavern, and his feelings toward it mimic those he had for Pluto. This cat is identical to Pluto except for the fact that it has a white patch of hair on its chest (Badenhausen). The narrator soon takes a liking to the cat, displaying the same affection he had toward Pluto. Just as with Pluto, he begins to dislike the cat. He avoids its presence to ensure that he does not physically harm it. He begins to hate the cat even more when he discovers that it is missing one eye, just like Pluto. Ironically, the more he becomes disgusted by the cat, the more it follows him around. He soon begins to have a feeling of "[...] absolute dread of the beast" (167). The narrator is further tormented by the fact that the white patch of hair on the cat now looks like the image of Pluto being hanged. The narrator describes his reaction to this in vivid detail: "It was now the representation of an object that I shudder to name—and for this, above all, I loathed and dreaded, and would have rid myself of the monster *had I dared*—it was not, I say, the image of a hideous—of a ghastly thing—of the GALLOWS! —oh, mournful and terrible engine of Horror and of Crime—of Agony and of Death" (168). He is unable to get the hideous image out of his head and cannot sleep because the cat and the image will not leave him alone. He becomes possessed by evil thoughts, and now he has "hatred of all things and of all mankind" (168-69). The narrator justifies his new loathing of the cat by the fact that it reminds him of Pluto and the crime he committed. This causes feelings of guilt to surface in him. He even goes as far as turning his fury to his wife, who is part of the cause of his transformed outlook.

The narrator's new feelings toward the new cat can be attributed to his wife and his repressed feelings from childhood. His wife loves the new cat, even though the narrator hates it (Piacentino). She shows the cat the same love and affection that the narrator used to have toward animals (Piacentino). The narrator is apparently bothered by his wife's humanity of feelings. These feelings were

once his distinguishing trait—feelings that resulted in a negative experience for him. They caused him to reject human society. The new cat and his wife become a constant reminder of his old self, which he has come to hate. The narrator is irritated with his wife's constant reminder of the mark on the cat's chest.

Repressed memories from the narrator's youth arise again, causing him to murder his wife, even though he blames the crime on something else. One day, when the cat follows him into the cellar, the narrator is driven to madness when the cat almost makes him fall down the stairs. He attempts to kill the cat with an axe but is intercepted by his wife. He then proceeds to drive the axe into her head, killing her instantly. The narrator attempts to justify his crime one last time. He claims to have killed his wife because she prevents him from killing the cat that he loathes. His real motive is subconscious and more complicated than his simple explanation. Throughout the story, the narrator projects his feelings for his wife onto Pluto and the new cat. His wife was always the intended victim—the original and only victim. His wife's effort to save the cat evokes repressed memories and trauma from his childhood (Piacentino). This reenactment is more serious than when it happened the first time, which caused him to murder Pluto. This time, it causes him to kill his wife. Murdering his wife can also be an act of rejection, avenging what he had suffered as a child, which he has been carrying with him since that time.

The narrator spends a great deal of time deliberating about where to hide his wife's body, and he blames the cat when the police eventually find her corpse. He decides to hide her body in the cellar wall and goes to great lengths to conceal her body and his crime. Afterwards, he searches for the cat but is unsuccessful. That night, for the first time since the cat appeared he "[...] soundly and tranquilly slept [...] even with the burden of murder upon [his] soul" (169). There is irony in the fact that he is able to sleep, and that the fact that he murdered his wife is not tormenting him and keeping him up all night. He does not seem to show any remorse over the loss of his wife. Three days pass, and he is still unable to locate the cat. He is so happy about this that the crime hardly bothers him at all. On the fourth day, the police come to investigate the house, and he is so sure

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that he did such a good job hiding his wife's body that he taps on the cellar wall. This proves to be a mistake because he is "[...] answered by a voice from within the tomb" (171). This causes the police to tear down the wall and find the dead body. To the narrator's utter surprise, the cat "[...] with red extended mouth and solitary eye of fire [...]" is sitting on the corpse's head (172). The cat's mouth and eyes are suggestive of an infernal and evil presence. The narrator deems that the cat is responsible for his wife's body being found. His felony being revealed, like the burning down of his house, is retribution for killing his wife.

Even though the narrator attempts to justify his actions, he subconsciously reveals his true motives as the story evolves. A series of causes and effects, as the narrator explains in the beginning of the story, does cause him to murder his wife. He is mad at his cat for avoiding him, thus he cuts its eye out. He feels guilty about this action, so he hangs Pluto. Because the new cat reminds him of Pluto, he tries to kill it, murdering his wife instead. However, he oversimplifies the reasons for his actions and feelings. His use of defense mechanisms, instead of expressing his emotions in a healthy manner, is the source of his problem. From the narrator's very first paragraph, he warns the reader of his untrustworthiness and proposes that his story has a logical and rational explanation. Throughout the story, he drops hints of his true motives, which he tries to conceal. He can blame his crimes on alcohol, his wife, his cat, or perverseness; however, it is apparent that his motives are psychologically based. In "The Black Cat," Poe takes the reader through an exploration of the psychology of crime and punishment, while at the same time creating a top-notch detective story.

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Evaluation: *Brittany analyzes Edgar Allen Poe's story as "an exploration of the psychology of crime and punishment, while at the same time creating a top-notch" research paper.*

Islamic Extremism and the Western World: The Growing Rift

Jarek Stelmaszuk

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

Assignment:

*Write a literary research paper,
using at least seven secondary sources.*

The terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001, which not only caused an unprecedented carnage in the recent history of the United States but also produced a tremendous distress both here, and in many other parts of the globe, have generated amongst many persons living in the West a new, or toughened perception that the world's Muslim community fosters a collective, bitter hatred towards Christianity and the Western civilization, to the point that the followers of Islam will condone and use terrorist tactics to inflict suffering and destruction on those whose norms and values are not in line with the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. Such view, which, since then, has become widespread among large numbers of Westerners, was reinforced primarily by the fact that all of the individuals involved in the September 11th attacks came from predominantly Muslim countries and were recruits of Al-Qaeda, one of the Islamic mili-

tant groups. The majority of so-called analysts in the West, claiming to be experts on the subject, have hastily concluded that those attacks were nothing more but a clear manifestation of the true face of Islam, which was allegedly fanatically hostile to the Western/ Christian world and everything it stood for. Those pundits failed to present to the confused, often misinformed Western public, a more objective, realistic analysis of the most probable causes that led to the tragedy that took place on that fateful autumn morning. A much smaller number of researchers, however, were able to express a more scrupulous viewpoint, which was based on their in-depth examination of the supposed Muslim antipathy toward Western civilization.

One of those individuals, Samuel Huntington, who refers to the problem as a "clash of civilizations," infers that Muslims resent the West not because of its Christian heritage, but due to modern Western culture, which they perceive as materialistic, corrupt, decadent, and immoral. He thus claims that, "In Muslim eyes, Western secularism, lack of religiosity, and hence immorality are worse evils than the Western Christianity that produced them" (213-14). A Russian researcher, Georgii I. Mirskii, goes even further, when he states, "Fanatical terrorists are least concerned about the 'purification of Islam,' the roots of their hatred for the West, especially the United States, are not religious but cultural-civilizational, psychological, and geopolitical in nature" (64). Whatever the reasons, what became quite obvious to those persons and many others in the West was the painful awareness that the 9/11 disaster, despite its atrocious character, was nevertheless a somber demonstration of the negligence, both of the Western world and the Muslim countries, to recognize and effectively deal with the underlying causes of growing antagonisms between the West and the World of Islam. That inability, or rather reluctance, to address certain issues that have to a large extent contributed to the rise of militant Islam and its resort to mass violence against innocent civilians in the West, can only be seen as a shared failure to resolve the long-existing obstacles to peaceful coexistence and cooperation between the communities that hold two different sets of beliefs and principles. The same tragic scenario is clearly suggested, although on a much smaller scale, in a fic-

tional short story "My Son the Fanatic," written by a contemporary British novelist, Hanif Kureishi. In this story, the dramatic mood is expressed by depicting a developing rift between Parvez, a Pakistani taxi driver, who has enjoyed his Westernized lifestyle in England for many years now, and his young son Ali, who, despite being born and raised in London, had decided, to the surprise and dismay of his father, to throw away the Western norms and become a fervent, radical Muslim. As the father and his son struggle, through their unsuccessful attempts, to reconcile their conflicting attitudes, their relationship is put on a collision course, which culminates in Parvez beating up Ali in the last scene of the story. The insistence of these two main characters to staunchly adhere to and remain one-sided in their opposing perceptions dooms their efforts to embrace each other's beliefs and inevitably leads to the rupture between those two individuals. "My Son the Fanatic," which was first published in 1994, holds a powerful, although tragic message, because it bears a remarkable analogy to the violent rupture between the West and the Muslim world, that so tragically manifested itself through the terrorist attacks in New York City seven years later. Both Parvez's blind, unjustified violence toward his son in their London home and the horrible, destructive violence of the terrorist actions in the U.S. in 2001 can also be seen as a testimony to the disastrous consequences of peoples' intentional reluctance to acknowledge and embrace other humans' personal beliefs and attitudes. It is this evident parallel that should compel the average Western reader to wonder what drove both the 9/11 perpetrators as well as Parvez's son to adopt their extremist outlooks, which stand in such sharp contrast to the Western general norms.

To address the issues concerned with the radical Muslim attitudes, it is necessary to have a basic knowledge of Islam as a religion. Gamal Abou El Azayem and Zari Hedayat-Diba state that beside Judaism and Christianity, "Islam is the third monotheistic religion revealed to man" (41). What many people in the West are unaware of is the fact that, "There are currently more than one billion Muslims in the world and they are found in every part of the globe" (Kaltner 3). This stems from the fact that "Like Christianity, Islam is expan-

sionist by nature as it seeks to attract and invite new members into its ranks. Consequently, people from many different backgrounds and cultures have joined the faith since its inception" (Kaltner 9). El Azayem and Hedayat-Diba inform us that, "The most fundamental doctrine of Islamic faith is the 'Shahada': There is no god but God, and Muhammad is His Apostle" (42). As strict as this tenet may sound to an average non-Muslim, we should remember that, "It would be a serious error to assume that Muslims are taught to hate Jews and Christians and that they perceive these groups to be their enemies" (Kaltner 70). Kaltner firmly asserts that, "There is no ingrained animosity toward Judaism and Christianity imbedded in Islam" (70). This claim may be reinforced by the fact that, "Muslims, like Jews and Christians before them, believe that Abraham was the father of their faith. Muslims also respect Jesus and the Old Testament Prophets as the predecessors of Muhammad..." (El Azayem and Hedayat-Diba 43). The Koran, which is the holy book of Islam, is a scripture that was revealed to Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, and it "contains all the principles of Islam for the community of believers to follow..." (El Azayem and Hedayat-Diba 42). This religion is based on five so-called pillars of the faith: ablution, praying five times a day, fasting during the month of Ramadan, alms giving, and a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in one's lifetime. In addition, "The rites of Islam ... are usually, but not necessarily, performed in group meetings with the mosque as the center of these activities" (El Azayem and Hedayat-Diba 44). Finally, it is useful to know that, "Muslims comprise one community (*ummah*) that is united in its faith, and no distinction is to be made among the membership on any basis" (Kaltner 75). At the beginning of the story, when Parvez becomes aware of the mysterious change in his son's behavior and tries to figure out the cause of it, he, after dismissing an initial theory that Ali became a drug addict, oversees his boy praying in his room. This observation, along with the fact that Ali has given away almost all of his personal possessions, makes Parvez realize that his son had begun practicing Islam. Ali's prayers and charitable gestures clearly prove that the young man is committed to fulfilling the fundamental obligations of a true Muslim.

Toward the middle of the story, Parvez takes Ali out to a restaurant because he wants to find out more about his boy's newly discovered faith. In the course of their conversation in the restaurant, however, the father is confronted with another puzzling reality: his son holds very extreme views pertaining to Islam and the society they both live in; views which for Parvez, even though he comes from Pakistan, are impossible to accept. Undoubtedly, Ali's radical statements bring another dimension to the reader's reception of the whole story. The narrator writes, "In a low monotonous voice the boy explained that Parvez had not, in fact, lived a good life. He had broken countless rules of the Koran"(642). Ali clearly refers here to the fact that Parvez, whom the reader realizes by now is considered to be a sinner by Ali, drinks alcohol and eats pork. This is in direct violation of the Muslim central principles. When Ali turns to his father and bluntly states, "You are too implicated in Western civilization" (643), it becomes obvious that the boy's criticism of Parvez comes from a specific interpretation of Islam and its tenets. An uninformed reader may misinterpret Ali's attitude as religious fanaticism. What the young man thinks and says unmistakably points out to the fact that he has embraced a form of Muslim faith that is correctly referred to as Islamic fundamentalism. Ali's condemnation of his father's lifestyle and his implication in the Western civilization stems from the notion that, "... religious fundamentalists denounce cultural modernity as a virus that has befallen Islam and contributed to the weakening of Islamic civilization" (Tibi 73). This is why "The followers of Muslim fundamentalism ... are likewise striving to return to the origins of their religion and to purify Islam from obscure later distortions added by unholy rulers and elites wallowing in luxury and depravity" (Mirskii 64). Hital Khashan maintains, "The Muslim fundamentalist cannot accept the rule by any system of government which is not based on Shari'a" (par.17). As radical as these statements may sound, the fundamentalist assertions do not, contrary to a common belief in the West, instigate hostility or violence toward non-Muslims. Tibi defends this perception when he states that reducing the meaning of *usuliyya*/fundamentalism to *al-tatarruf*/extremism would be a huge mistake (53).

This argument is also supported by Mirskii, who says that fundamentalism cannot be always equated with political radicalism and extremism (64). The curious fact should be noted that Islam is not an exception with regard to religious fundamentalism. Many Westerners would probably be quite surprised to learn that "... the term [fundamentalism] originated in the United States in 1919, when a group of Presbyterian, Baptist, and Methodist pastors created the World Christian Fundamentalist Association to defend what they called fundamental tenets of faith..." (Mirskii 64). Similarly to the founders of the WCFA, "Islamic ideologists worry about the fate of their religion, which, although in their eyes the only true and correct religion, is increasingly under assault from a foreign 'unholy,' 'godless,' materialistic, corrupting culture" (Mirskii 69). Hence it is easy for anybody to see, after referring back to the above assertions, that, logically, Muslim fundamentalism, so gravely feared and so frequently misunderstood by the majority of people in Western society, does not pose any real threat to the safety of that society. Ali's harsh censure of his father's "improper" conduct only reflects the boy's profound convictions pertaining to the fulfillment of all the obligations of his legitimate religious beliefs.

Nonetheless, further into an uneasy talk with his father while at the restaurant, Ali exposes yet another, much more radical level of his religious attitude. While Parvez is still bewildered about his son's initial reprimands, Ali tells him, "The Western materialists hate us" (643). This strong, but somewhat neutral remark is quickly eclipsed, though, by what Ali subsequently declares: "The Law of Islam would rule the world; the skin of the infidel would burn off again and again; the Jews and Christers would be routed. The West was a sink of hypocrites, adulterers, homosexuals, drug takers and prostitutes" (643). These drastic comments would rightly astound not only a typical individual from a Western country, but a member of any other non-Muslim community. The extremely hostile contention expressed by Ali can bring the reader only to one, evident conclusion that Parvez's son not only holds fundamentalist views, but he also willingly and perhaps quite eagerly adopted the most extreme interpretation of Islamic tenets. This particular interpretation is characteristic of the Islamic

movement generally referred to as political or militant Islam. From Georgii I. Mirskii, we learn that “The radicals interpret *jihad* as the need to fight (including through armed struggle) against the Christian Western world, which is in their eyes godless and materialistic” (65). While according to Tibi “... spreading the true religion of peace all over the world, is called *jihad*, which literally means ‘exertion,’ in contrast to the usual translation into Western languages as ‘holy war’(54), Mirskii states that, “To militant Islamists, *jihad* means fighting the West as an enemy of Islam”(64). The idea of the Law of Islam that Ali mentions is distinctly reflected in the ideology of Islamic radicalism. Bassam Tibi states that the Islamic militants wouldn’t just limit their goals to the present reach of the World of Islam, but instead would strive to impose their radical views on the entire world (28). Their radical interpretation of the Muslim tenets serves as their justification for armed activities against any perceived, real or imagined, enemy to their cause. Hilal Khashan reports that, “They [Radical Muslims] argue that Jihad is sanctioned by God, and consider it as the only means to resurrect the Islamic state” (par. 18). The main rationale behind that movement’s reasoning is concerned with a deep conviction that the Western states and their people are intent on purposely persecuting Muslim people in order to execute world domination and supremacy. This logic is magnified by their claim that “... Westerners are constitutionally incapable of being friendly toward Muslims. Hence, combating them is not just to be tolerated, but to be urged as well” (Khashan par. 11). The Muslim extremists’ enmity, however, is not channeled exclusively toward the West. Those individuals perceive and treat the secular or semi-secular regimes in predominantly Muslim countries with the same amount of hostility and resentment. As a result, “Radical Muslims view militancy as a means to topple their countries’ corrupt and illegitimate regimes, which they also conceive as Western lackeys” (Khashan par.18). As can be easily deduced from the above statements, the specter of the militant Islam and its vicious stipulations, contrary to the Islamic fundamentalism, has created a real and imminent threat to the stability of the world’s current state of affairs. The intensity of Muslim radicals’ convictions and their staunch resolve to carry out their plans

with the use of even the most deadly tactics (eg, terrorist plots designed to kill a large number of innocent civilians) have puzzled not only most of the citizens in the West, but many world leaders and important personalities responsible for their countries’ national security. What was part of the overall incompetence by those individuals to even begin to address this urgent issue was their only cursory understanding of major factors that gave rise to political Islam.

In analyzing the origins of Islamic militancy, one cannot bypass the need to analyze the roots of so-called Muslim rage. This term is clearly associated with the constant and bitter resentment of many Muslims toward non-Muslim civilization, the Western civilization in particular. Although Mohammed Ayoob maintains that the roots of political Islam as a modern phenomenon span back to the sociopolitical conditions of Muslim countries in the 19th and 20th centuries (2), John L. Esposito points to fairly recent episodes that were catalysts for political Islam. Among the most significant events that served as such catalysts were: the Arab-Israeli war or Six Day War, the Pakistan-Bangladesh civil war, the Lebanese civil war, the Iranian revolution, and the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict (par. 4). Another important event of the late 20th century that considerably radicalized the attitudes of many Muslims throughout the globe was the first Persian Gulf War. As Khashan declares that, “Many Arabs believe the Gulf conflict was engineered by the United States who wanted to control Arab oil fields in the Gulf region (par. 12), Bassam Tibi claims also that “Few in the West are aware that most Muslims outside the West view the Gulf War as a clash between their own civilization and that of the West” (16). That event alongside conflicts in places like Chechnya or Bosnia have convinced a large number of common believers of Islam that The West and its policies were aimed at maintaining the world hegemony at the expense of innocent Muslims’ misery and humiliation.

This notion of alleged widespread Muslim suffering at the hands of the brutal West is also the root of Ali’s strong determination in his radical points of view. While sitting opposite his father in the restaurant he vehemently argues, “My people have taken enough. If the persecution doesn’t stop, there will be *jihad*. I, and

millions of others, will gladly give our lives for the cause “(643). The “persecution” that Ali refers to is the prevalent conviction of a multitude of Muslims, not only those involved with the militant branch, that, “...the West has deprived Islam of its core function, that is, to lead humanity” (Tibi 15). In Tibi’s opinion, Muslims experienced humiliation when they encountered the militarily superior West and this in turn shattered their image of a religious community superior to all others (70). Tibi argues that because this encounter was followed by the economic and political penetration of the World of Islam by European powers, the process has brought about a pattern of hardships, ranging from disruption and disorientation to dislocation (70). John L. Esposito observes also the obvious fact that many regimes in Muslim countries use the danger of radicalism to justify their suppression of Islamic movements (Esposito par. 26). Finally, Mohammed Ayoob contends that the majority of the Muslims harbor hatred toward America not because of American values, but because they oppose certain aspects of American foreign policy, especially toward the Middle East (Ayoob 11). This is quite evident in view of recent American involvement in the invasion of Saddam Hussein’s playground, Iraq. The second Gulf War and the subsequent occupation of Iraq by mainly American troops “has further fueled Muslim anger against the U.S. since it is seen as a ploy both to control the oil wealth of the Middle East and to consolidate Israeli hegemony in the region” (Ayoob 11). Going back to the characters from Kureishi’s short story, we now are able to better understand Ali’s antagonism and his justification behind it. However, another interesting angle to understanding Ali’s mindset would be a brief look at the Muslim youths in Britain, or in Europe in general.

Alison Shaw reports that the vast majority of Muslims living in the U.K. emigrated from South Asia. Most newcomers from that group came directly from the three main regions: the Punjab province of Pakistan, Pakistan-controlled Kashmir, and from the Sylhet district of Bangladesh. According to Shaw, this immigration occurred in the 1950s and 1960s and was triggered mainly due to labor shortages in Britain (Shaw 6). As stated by John Rex, the majority of British

Muslims is comprised of poor people who support themselves through lower working-class jobs (par.14). This is not exactly the case with Parvez’s social status. Although he is only a taxi driver, his earnings allow him not only to support his family and ensure a decent standard of living for a blue-collar, but this Pakistani immigrant is able to invest much of his pay into his son’s prestigious education. Although there are certain sacrifices, the family leads a fairly comfortable life. The case of Ali nicely corroborates the claim by Oliver Roy, who argues that the majority of radical Muslim youths in Europe have Western education and that only a few would come from traditional madrassa (Roy par. 6). He also states that most of those radical young Muslims briefly go through a period of completely Westernized life, accompanied by alcohol drinking and having girlfriends, only to rediscover Islam in European mosques or jails (Roy par 6). Although Ali’s previous alcohol consumption cannot positively be testified in the story, Parvez’s son did experience this same pattern of typical Western teen age mentioned by Oliver Roy, for the boy used to have a British girlfriend and was studying to be an accountant. Parvez’s initial decision to throw the boy out of the house, triggered by his learning that his son had quit school and abandoned his plans toward the professional career, is later replaced by the father’s last-ditch effort to rescue their relationship from total breakdown. Even the father’s attempt to appeal to his son’s tender side fails to rescue their quickly deteriorating rapport, because the boy’s religious fervor and the intensity of his fundamental beliefs thwart his ability to think objectively. Consequently, the father’s sense of panic and feeling of betrayal as well as the son’s religious radicalism and self-righteousness contribute in the end to the collapse of their communication and mutual trust. In the last scene of the story, after witnessing the rude behavior of Ali toward Bettina, a close friend (who works as a prostitute) of the boy’s father, Parvez’s anger and frustration cause him to beat up Ali in a fit of fury in the boy’s own room, only to hear afterwards the boy calmly ask, “So who’s the fanatic now?”(646). This dramatic episode not only depicts the irreversible rift between the distressed father and his self-determined son, but can also

symbolize the violence that materialized on September 11th, 2001 in New York City due to the terrorist attacks by Muslim radicals.

Through the careful, objective, and thorough study of the background, and often not-so-obvious aspects that pertain both to the scenario presented in the short story "My Son the Fanatic" as well as the tragedy of 9/11 calamity, one has a better chance to understand the motivation and the attitudes as well as factors that have driven both Parvez and his son Ali as well as the instigators of the terrorist acts that occurred in the U.S. almost four years ago. Both Ali's and Parvez's inability to reconcile their different attitudes due to their sense of self-righteousness and their refusal to accept each other's views project a powerful parallel in regards to the widening gap between the West and the Muslim world, with all of its implications and potential threats.

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Evaluation: *In this paper, Mr. Stelmaszuk carefully explores the sociopolitical roots of the conflict evident in Hanif Kureishi's "My Son the Fanatic." The thorough and critical use of research, as well as the writing style, makes this paper particularly mature and insightful.*

A Reading of Randall Jarrell's "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner"

Monica Stopa

Course: Literature 105 (Poetry)

Instructor: Andrew Wilson

Assignment:

Write a good essay on a poem.

Please do your best to discuss, somewhere along the way, things like form, symbol, sound, and tone, etc. You don't have to address every element of poetry, but bringing such elements into your analysis will surely enrich your essay.

What is known as the largest and deadliest war in human history began its six-year duration in 1939. The second World War was a mid-20th-century conflict that engulfed a significant portion of the globe and took with it sixty million lives. In Randall Jarrell's "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner," the speaker finds himself amidst the chaos of this war. The speaker is not Randall Jarrell but the gunner himself, which makes the poem even more powerful in its delivery because the words come from the person whose eyes have seen it all. He takes the reader into its reality only to reveal that words such as patriotism, justice and freedom (shouted by a government that sits idly by watching the horror from the comfort of its home) have no color, smell or taste within combat. The poem, written in free verse, in a mere five lines and fifty two words, brings the harshness

of war to light and leaves the reader questioning its purpose and existence.

The title "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner" not only creates the setting of the poem but also reveals the fate of the speaker. At the same time, it gives the reader a glimpse of the circumstances under which he dies by placing the speaker in the middle of warfare and in a very dangerous position on an aircraft. However, what is most important in the title of the poem is the lack of identity given to the gunner. The speaker of the poem was never provided with a name: he was only known as the "ball turret gunner." He was just another nameless, faceless life quickly lost in a crusade for supremacy and even more quickly forgotten. This plays a significant role in aiding to uncover the overall theme of the poem. On its glorified surface, war may appear necessary and patriotic. But beyond this, it's as cruel and unjust as the government that organizes it.

The first line of the poem reveals the fall from the innocence of a mother's sleep into the heart of a dark cold war: the gunner states, "From my mother's sleep I fell into State"(72). The speaker tells of his transition from something safe and familiar into a world of turmoil. The "mother's sleep" not only symbolizes the familiar haven from which he fell, but it also represents a sedated state of a mother giving birth, which may reveal that the speaker was very young when he went into war. Not too long after he was a little boy in his mother's arms, he was called into combat, and the time in between seemed like an instant. The mother sleeping may also represent the opportunity for the government to swoop in like a predator and steal her child. After awakening, the mother realizes how quickly the powerful claws of a hungry State can seize their prey.

The speaker's "fall" suggests an involuntary, sudden displacement and the loss of his innocence. A mother is a symbol of love, comfort and protection that only a child truly knows. In the absence of that purity and familiarity and the speaker's fall into a "State" that represents everything to the contrary, innocence is lost, and he finds himself in the tainted hands of government. While the fall into the "State" may be taken literally and be seen as falling into a condition or situation, the capital *S* gives an indication that the gunner is speaking of

**A Reading of Randall Jarrell's
"The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner"**

the government; the speaker is falling from the safety of his mother's hands into the hands of a government. This ambiguous use of the word "State" gives the reader an uneasy feeling about the government and the war it controls.

In the second line, the speaker finds himself in the ball turret of a B-17 combat plane, cramped in the glass sphere that is buttoned to the underside of the bomber: "And I hunched in its belly till my wet fur froze." The gunner is hunching in the "belly" of the bomber in a position that is similar to that of a fetus in a mother's womb. The "wet fur" of his flight jacket in the same way represents the "wet fur" of a newborn. The image of a fetus in a womb is a beautiful representation of life. The womb or "belly" is a warm place where life is created; however, that image is quickly shattered by the realization that life in this belly will be destroyed. The gunner, no longer residing in the womb of his mother, resides in the womb of the State, where he is not protected or nurtured. Instead, the "belly" of the state is neither safe nor warm; it does not give birth to life but rather to death.

The gunner hunching in the belly of the state also leads to another, more disturbing image of an animal with "wet fur" hunching in the belly of the beast that swallowed it. The "State" has consumed the gunner, and all he can do is hunch like the animal that they've made him into and wait to strike just as they have taught him. This image is frightening because it is nothing less than a true portrait of war and its effect on the human condition. The soldiers leave home feeling human, but the "State" quickly swallows and exposes them to the savagery of war and turns them into animals.

In the third line of the poem, the speaker describes the distance that separates him from earth: "Six miles from earth, loosed from its dream of life." He is flying in a plane that is obviously very high off the ground, but the idea of him being "six miles from earth" gives the reader the true sense of the danger that he is in and the unimaginable distance that lies between him and life on earth. The speaker is not just six miles from the ground, but he is also six million miles from a life he can only dream about. The distance from earth isn't merely physical, but psychological and emotional as well. As a

soldier in combat, he probably feels emotionally detached from his life and family on earth. He lives a completely different life and can't begin to understand what goes on beyond the walls of combat. He literally feels miles from home because he can't imagine life on earth just as those on earth can't imagine his life in combat. The emotional detachment and misunderstanding could seem like miles worth of distance.

The gunner's psychological distance from earth is probably even further than any physical one he can imagine. He is "hunched" like an animal, "wet fur" frozen, and waiting to strike his next prey. In the center of all the death and destruction, the gunner finds himself further and further away from humanity. War can take a man and easily turn him into a soldier, but afterwards, the soldier struggles to become a man again. He was taught to forget all that was pure, civil, and human in him, and he had no choice but to become what they made him: an animal loyal to the nightmare of war.

"Loosed from its dream of life," the gunner hunches in the ball turret that rotates three hundred and sixty degrees, "six miles" from the ground. He is not fastened in a secure position but rather wobbly and loose, daydreaming of life on earth. He dreams of his childhood and the comfort that the arms of his mother brought him. He dreams of the life that lies below him, the one that he cannot touch because it is too far. He can only dream about those happy moments in life that exist outside the dark cloud of smoke, created by war, that suffocates his existence.

The gunner is awakened from his dream and finds himself in the violent world of combat: "I woke to black flak and the nightmare fighters." This gives the reader some insight into the terrifying life of a soldier at war. The "black flak" and "nightmare fighters" that surround him are merely a glimpse into his nightmare filled with chaos and destruction. Instead of waking from a nightmare into life, he wakes from life into a nightmare and dies instantly. The shots that woke him from his dream of life and brought him back into his nightmare also killed him.

Even though the fate of the speaker is revealed in the poem's title, it is simply not enough to prepare the reader for the final line of the poem that echos in the mind

long after its words are read: “When I died they washed me out of the turret with a hose.” The words dance beautifully to the somber melody of the poem, and in their delicateness lies a powerful and unsettling truth: the gunner is just one of the many lives washed away by the tide of war.

The cruelty and injustice of war and those that govern it is brought to light in the final line of the poem. The washing away of the dead soldiers reveals the complete disregard for human life and uncovers a truth the “State” tries so desperately to conceal. The barbaric ritual of washing away a human life to make room for another, like the washing of a cage after an animal has died in it, paints a true picture of war and the government that executes it. The passing of life wasn’t acknowledged, and there were no words given or a moment of remembrance taken; there was just a hose that simply erased any sign of existence. The gunner knew he was just another soldier, another number in the military, and he accepted his fate with no reservations. Outside the turmoil, televisions and newspapers glorify the war and speak words like “patriotism” and “freedom.” Presidents stand in front of millions, justifying their actions and reiterating to mourning families that the soldiers died bravely and with honor and for the good of a nation. But in the depths of the darkness, in the heart of a cold cruel war, compassion and truth are washed away with another soldier that lost his life.

Randall Jarrell’s “The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner” is as beautiful in its simplicity as it is powerful in its message. The poem brings war to light and reveals an unsettling truth: on its glorified surface, war may appear necessary and patriotic, but beyond its walls, it’s as cruel and unjust as the Government that organizes it. The soldiers that live within the walls of combat, those that wake to “black flak” and “nightmare fighters,” know that even the nicest parts of their hell lack pride and glory. In their world, they are nothing less than animals thrown in cages and trained to kill, and the “State” is their ringleader. Those that govern these terrifying events that fill our history books, reminding us of the evil that exists in the world, should remember that war takes not only lives but also compassion and humanity. In Jarrell’s poem, the gunner takes the reader into the

bitter reality of war and the events that ultimately lead to his death. However, through it all, he fails to answer one underlying question: Was it worth it all? This leaves the reader wondering if the poem is trying to convey the message that war is unjustifiable and unnecessary, or if it’s something we should learn from in order to prevent the same mistakes from happening again.

Works Cited

Jarrell, Randall. “The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner.” *Poetry: An Introduction*. 4th ed. Ed. Michael Meyer. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2004. 72.

Evaluation: *This essay reminds me a little of the poem (“The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner”) itself. Like the poem, Monica’s analysis is economical and powerful. It’s an excellent essay that features intelligence and passion.*

James Dean and Cal Trask

Igor Studenkov

Course: Literature 112 (Literature and Film)

Instructor: Kurt Hemmer

Assignment:

Does James Dean's portrayal of Cal Trask in Elia Kazan's movie East of Eden capture the spirit of John Steinbeck's Cal Trask in the movie East of Eden?

East of Eden, a movie based on the best-selling book by John Steinbeck, will probably be forever known as the movie that introduced James Dean to the world. With his innovative acting style, good looks, and powerful presence, the young method actor made Caleb "Cal" Trask an unforgettable character that continues to inspire fascination, admiration, and unhealthy obsession to this day. Yet, with all the acclaim surrounding the movie, one cannot help but wonder if Dean actually succeeded in capturing the essence of the original Cal. After all, books do not usually make it to the movie screens intact. The answer to this question is rather complex. For the most part, Dean succeeded in bringing Cal to the big screen. At the same time, there were a couple of small, but significant details that differed between the book and the film versions. The way the material was approached gave the audience a different perspective on the character, which, in turn, changed the movie Cal in an important way without affecting the essential elements of his personality.

In many ways, the film version and the book version of Cal were fairly similar. They were both impulsive, moody young men who sought thrills and danger. Both craved the attention and love of their fathers. Both felt overshadowed by their brothers. Yet, in spite of that, both loved their brothers and sought to protect them. Both felt that their dark impulses and their fascination with the forbidden were part of their nature, that they could not help but be "bad." At the same time, both tried to be good, even if they were not sure how they could accomplish it. James Dean did a superb job of conveying all those facets of Cal's character, especially his struggle between his dark "nature" and his desire to do the right thing. But there were a couple of traits that the movie version and the book version did not share.

In the book, Cal was a natural-born manipulator. At the age of ten, he could already read people. He could understand the essence of their personalities, the impulses that make people tick. He could anticipate peoples' reactions, read their emotions, and use that knowledge to his advantage. He used Abra's fears and his knowledge of Aron's personality and behavior patterns to manipulate Abra into throwing away Aron's present (Steinbeck 348-50). He devised a clever tactic to ensure that the teacher at the new school didn't call on

him and Aron too often (Steinbeck 421). He even managed to earn the respect of his new classmates, which was hard to do when one was a newcomer (Steinbeck 421-22). The book version of Cal never said or did anything by accident. There was always some hidden agenda, some purpose, some way to advance his interests. In contrast, the movie version of Cal seemed much more hotheaded. In the beginning of the movie, he pushed several blocks of ice out of storage. There was no reason for him to do it, no plan, no way he could have benefited from it. Cal was angry, pure and simple. It was not until his father seemingly rejected him that the book version of Cal abandoned his more calculating *modus apparatus* and did something completely irrational and impulsive (namely, take Aron to see their mother). Dean's version of Cal seems far more inclined to do things simply because he felt like it, without truly considering the consequences of his actions.

Also, the book version of Cal seemed considerably more self-aware than the movie version. When Cal tries to talk Will Hamilton into helping him earn the money he wanted to give to his father to make up for the money he lost during the frozen lettuce debacle, Will asked if Cal wanted to buy his father's love. Much to Will's surprise, Cal answered "yes" (481). That admission required a level of cynicism and critical self-reflection that most young people, let alone adults, simply do not possess. The movie version of Cal, on the other hand, seemed as confused about his feelings as everyone who knew him. When asked about the rationale behind his actions, Cal either insisted that he did not know or blamed it on the fact that he was "bad." Those differences may not seem that significant, but they illuminate an aspect of Cal's character that the Dean version of Cal does not have. The book version of Cal exhibited a near-instinctual knowledge of the human psyche, an ability to plan long-term, and a degree of self-awareness. This suggested that he had an ability to reflect, to evaluate his life, and perhaps, change for the better. The movie version did not have any of those things, which ensured that he would remain a prisoner of his darker impulses for the duration of the movie.

In addition to personality traits, there was another factor that ensured that the book version of Cal and the

movie version of Cal were not quite the same—the presence of Lee. In the book, Lee was an important character who, in many ways, was more of a father to Cal than was Adam, his biological father. Lee was someone Cal could turn to, no matter what. Lee helped him, gave him advice, and offered him a shoulder to lean on. When Cal wound up wallowing in self-pity, Lee was not afraid to tell him things he did not want to hear, knowing that it was the only way to set him straight (Steinbeck 570). The movie version of Cal did not have any of that. He had no one to talk to, no one to share his burdens with, so he was forced to keep his pain inside, occasionally releasing it in malevolent, seemingly random outbursts. As a character, the Dean version of Cal was already more volatile and angry than his book counterpart. The absence of Lee made his pain even worse. The movie Cal was truly alone in the world, which made him all the more tragic.

Ultimately, one cannot help but get the impression that Steinbeck and Kazan wanted to take *East of Eden* in slightly different directions. As a result, the book and the movie featured two different takes on Cal. Certainly, struggle between good and evil and the cross-generational divide played a role in both the movie and the book. But while Steinbeck chose to emphasize the struggle, Kazan chose to emphasize the generational divide. In the book, Cal was a confused teenager who was struggling to transcend his dark impulses. In the movie, he struggled to connect with his father. Kazan put a lot more emphasis on how different Cal was from his father than Steinbeck. In the movie, Cal's "meanness" was just a part of his nature, an aspect of his character that could not really be altered. It was one of the things that made him a sympathetic, tragic figure. In the book, Cal did not get off the hook so easily. In a memorable line, Lee told Cal that he's full of himself and that he should not try to "attract dignity and tragedy" to himself, affectively shattering Cal's delusion that he was somehow special, that he could not help but be dark because he was so "bad." Lee insisted that Cal was going through the kind of thing most other teenagers went through while growing up (Steinbeck 570). The lack of communication between Cal and his father did not bother the book version of Cal quite as much as the

movie version, because he already had a father figure—Lee. The movie and the book both end with a similar scene, yet the book and the movie versions of Cal got something different from it. The book version yearned to find hope that he could be redeemed, and he got it. The movie version wanted acceptance and forgiveness from his father, and he got it. In their own ways, each character achieved closure, but the way they achieved it made all the difference.

In the movie *East of Eden*, Dean gave a powerful performance, capturing many of Cal's facets—his moodiness, his dark impulses, his fascination with the forbidden, and his desire to be loved by his kin. However, by taking away Cal's instinctive knowledge of the human psyche, his ability to plan ahead and his astonishingly astute self-awareness, by removing Lee, the only person whom Cal could confide in and share his troubles with, the masterminds behind the movie made Cal's darker impulses an inseparable part of his nature, something he could not get past. This made Cal's story far more tragic and hopeless. For as long as the movie version of *East of Eden* is remembered, Dean's Cal will be regarded as one of the harbingers of teenage rebellion that began to manifest in the 1950's, an incarnation of adolescent angst. The original version of Cal was never meant to symbolize any of that. The book's theme was the struggle between good and evil and how mankind has the power to overcome it, should it choose to. Cal's struggle in the book was the perfect illustration of that theme. While keeping the *essence* of the character fairly close to the original, the masterminds behind the movie redefined his *nature*. In the end, one cannot help but wonder which one is more important. As both incarnations of *East of Eden* illustrate, while one's essence forms the basic foundation of every person, it is one's nature that leaves the lasting impression.

Evaluation: *Igor does a wonderful job of analyzing Dean's portrayal of Cal Trask while astutely comparing and contrasting this performance with Steinbeck's equally complex portrait of Cal in East of Eden.*

Simple as SLUPPP KRRRTZ: Dissecting the Symbolism in Haruki Murakami's "TV People"

Beth Townsend

Course: Literature 208 (non-Western Literature)

Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

Assignment:

*Write an analysis of one of the literary works
we've read during the second half of the semester.*

Haruki Murakami has readers perplexed over how sane or not his lead character is from the first couple pages of his creepy short story, "TV People." Initially published in 1989, written in Murakami's native language of Japanese, the audience follows a nameless narrator over the course of an eventful day, gaining insight into his temperament and daily life, which is suddenly disrupted by the appearance of mysterious, "reduced"-sized men with a Sony television. The author also manages to weave in very specific, telling details about this man's likes, dislikes, fears, work ethic, habits, and marital stability. But is there a larger, all-encompassing message beneath the enigmatic and sometimes repetitive imagery? Murakami presents the most compelling questions about the meaning behind this tale himself when his protagonist ponders, "What the hell was the meaning of that TV set?" and "Who or what, then, are the TV

People?" If there is a point to "TV People," albeit hidden behind a Twilight Zone-esque series of events, I believe that it is meant as a commentary on the struggle to preserve humanity and morals in a modern, electronically preoccupied society. Many different settings, characters, events, and symbolic objects help to elevate this main character to a representation of an entire civilization awash in the more negative aspects of technology and, subsequently, a precariously easier way of life.

Opening on a Sunday evening and ending the next Monday night, the first description provided in the story sets up the mood and surroundings, when the storyteller states that it may or may not be spring. This is already an important detail because the seasons, once so crucial to Japanese culture, as seen in haiku for example, are "not so important" anymore. The narrator is alone at home, laid out on his sofa, not being especially productive. He claims to hear things, "not sounds, but thick slabs of silence being dragged through the dark" (5), followed by recurring, emphasized onomatopoeia. Apparently, these days, prolonged quiet is more unusual and disquieting than constant noise. Here, Sunday twilight is also grouped together with other unfavorable circumstances. Besides the stillness, which is later interrupted by the perceived exaggerated sound of neighbors' footsteps anyway, the narrator claims he is plagued by a kind of headache, "like long needles probing anesthetized areas" (5), followed by blurred vision, around this same time every weekend. This is also when the TV People choose to make their entrance.

The TV People, as explained by the main character, are "slightly smaller. About, say, twenty or thirty percent. Every part of their bodies is uniformly smaller...the more terminologically correct expression might be 'reduced'" (6). If it is presumed that the average television monitor is approximately 27 inches, then the people onscreen, if measured when the camera has zoomed in far enough to catch a person from the waist upwards, would certainly be about those same proportions. This description is analogous to children who, being too young to fully understand the complex processes involved in TV projection, initially think that there are actually little people living behind the glass, perhaps illustrating the narrator's own naiveté about the

lure of technology. After simply walking through the front door without any warning, they proceed to completely disrupt the household layout to make room for a television set. Although they conveniently keep showing up within his vicinity, they never acknowledge the speaker directly until the end, after they seem to have satisfactorily sucked him in. Yet, despite how real they seem, the TV People's appearance and movements ring hollow as they are described with the most mechanical, mathematical adjectives, suggesting that their presence truly is an illusion.

But besides these fictitious-sounding antagonists, the most obvious vessel through which Murakami represents society as a whole is the narrator himself. Although he has resisted popular technological possessions, as evidenced when he states that his coworkers have teased him for owning neither a TV nor VCR, the speaker is nevertheless the epitome of a contemporary civilian whose life has been encroached upon and permanently altered by the electronic age. This manifests itself in a number of ways, but mainly in the way it has pervaded his personality. He has become apathetic toward normal household chores, reading, and other responsibilities or relationships. Despite the pep talks he attempts to give himself, the results are predictable: "I think, Today I'll read this book, listen to these records, answer these letters...clean out my desk drawers, run errands, wash the car once. But...gradually dusk comes on, and all my plans are blown. I haven't done a thing; I've been lying around the whole day on the sofa, same as always" (8). Similarly, when he is presented with a situation where he knows he should say something, especially during the intrusions of the TV People into his home, he still chooses silence. He doesn't even bother to move the displaced clock, despite spending a fair amount of time contemplating the likelihood that he'll stub his toe on it while walking around in the middle of the night! Not surprisingly, this attitude is carried over to his job and, unbeknownst to him until the very end, takes a serious toll on his marriage. Above all else, he has become very ineffectual and thoughtless, preoccupied with his own thoughts and needs. This suggests that Murakami believes the public, softened and spoiled by more comfortable, lazy lifestyles, are also becoming oblivious, self-absorbed, and cowardly.

What little the audience knows of the wife is given mainly through her husband's opinion of her when she isn't even around, and it isn't pretty. In his mind, she first comes off as a neat freak, always nagging him about something. "That's her ascendancy. She knits her brows, then gets things back the way they were. Not me....This is her problem; I'd wear myself out living like her" (12). Yet not only does she not make a single comment when she comes home to the supposed mess, her primary priority is to make sure her husband has eaten, and she even cooks for him. Their big dilemma just seems to be that they do not understand each other, nor do they communicate these misunderstandings. The narrator even considers calling her from work one day, but hangs up because "I have no reason to be calling her. My world may be crumbling, out of balance, but is that a reason to ring up her office?" Normally, one would think that a spouse should be the first person to turn to in a crisis. Sadly, this just turns out to be another way in which he fails to show her any support, and it is likely that she is completely unaware that he even still thinks about her at all. They have been married for four years, and already the narrator says that, because of their jobs, it isn't abnormal to "go three days without a word to each other" (21). By the last page, the audience learns that she might have left him, but while it should have been obvious, he has been too busy shuffling between his job and the sofa, filled with ennui and concerned only with his own problems, to notice they may have drifted too far apart to repair.

The most vivid recollections the main character actually has about his job, when he isn't simply faking his way through another tedious working day, are when he is most uncomfortable. He knows the routine so well he becomes easily preoccupied, all without missing a beat. The only facet he still finds noteworthy is the behavior of the Section Chief, whom he clearly states he does not like. Not because there is anything wrong with the guy, but basically just because he's too personable, always touching people he converses with at some point. "Not in any suggestive way, mind you. No, his manner is brisk, his bearing perfectly casual. I wouldn't be surprised if some people don't even notice" (17). Here is an example of how individuals have become so isolated that even completely harmless bodily contact becomes

irritating. Between this colleague and his wife, it is clear that the narrator feels detached from every person around him. In an interesting twist, the TV People even barge into his company's boardroom and attempt to place a television there. Not finding a suitable space, they leave with it again, foreshadowing of what Murakami saw as the threat of technology overrunning the workplace, as well. These points are further driven home during the storyteller's nightmare, in which he feels the need to keep up the façade of talking for the sake of talking. But the coworkers who taunted his electronic deficit have already turned to stone. When the TV People enter with another Sony and he begins to watch the screen, he starts to become stone, as well. Because of the prolific amount of personal computers, laptops, PDAs, and video conferencing in businesses today, this prediction has obviously come true.

In what may be another social problem Murakami feels the need to highlight—again resulting from a population that has more free time and less compulsion to do something productive—the couple very subtly fills the silence in their marriage with an unusual amount of alcohol, though the husband consumes most of it. He has two beers with the dinner his wife prepares, while she has one of her own, and they don't seem to talk at all for the rest of the night. When he wakes up very early the next morning, he drinks a double brandy from a mug instead of coffee. He has at least two more beers before the story is over. One he sips as he is watching an airplane being built, on TV, in spite of thinking, "I don't really want to drink a beer at the moment; I just need to do something" (22). When this behavior becomes a habit, especially as a substitute for human interaction or to ease boredom, it is usually considered an addiction. If a reader were to take "TV People" literally, an argument could be made in favor of the narrator being an alcoholic, perhaps too mentally impaired to know actual people from those on the television.

One last apparent theme that deserves mention is the sway television, and therefore the media, has over much of the public. Just as the whole planet seems flooded with media propaganda, the narrator's house is littered with his wife's various magazines, prompting him to assert that he "wouldn't mind if every last magazine in

the world went out of business" (8). For the last half of the story, the TV People are working (on TV) on what looks like "an upright cylinder except that it narrows toward the top, with streamlined protrusions along its surface" (23), vaguely resembling either a bomb or a UFO (possibly another metaphor), though they call it an airplane. One of the TV people insists that it doesn't look right simply because the color is wrong. Nowadays, most sellers are more concerned with packaging and how to market a product over the quality of the object itself. Dazzling consumers with flashy designs is common, and even the TV People confuse the narrator to the point that he actually does believe that changing the color will transform this so-called airplane.

As shown, the line between fantasy and reality in this age is continually blurring as information becomes more readily available, the media continues to persuade, and people spend more time in front of computer monitors or television screens and put less energy into being sociable and proactive. Murakami has outlined both the cause and effect of all these problems in profound detail through his recounting of an emotionally secluded man plagued by the pitfalls of current technology. In spite of the borderline schizophrenic delivery adding a sense of surrealism to the entire tale, "TV People" addresses very real issues that are still relevant today.

Works Cited

Murakami, Haruki. "TV People." *Monkey Brain Sushi: New Tastes in Japanese Fiction*. Ed. Alfred Birnbaum. Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1991.

Evaluation: *This is a nicely detailed and perceptive analysis of a story that is obscure and pretty confusing for most readers. Beth does a good job organizing its various aspects into some sensible meaning.*

Trained Killers

Jeremy Wallace

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Greg Herriges

Assignment:

Write an essay that meaningfully uses a description of a process to make a point.

It takes the United States government six and a half expeditious weeks to turn a boy into a man, a citizen into a soldier, and a serene human being into a malignant killer. However, the government has not quite conquered the task of introducing their now brainwashed pawn back into society. To be able to understand how something like this, something that happens nearly every day, occurs, we must first explore some of the methods the military uses to implant such ideas that desensitize people to death and/or being responsible for one's death. Then we must ask ourselves, "How do you erase from the mind of a soldier the training used that prepares him or her to kill?"

First, they push you, pull you and drag you through the mud in what is commonly referred to as boot camp. The proper term for boot camp is Basic Military Training (BMT). The first three days (or the first half-week) is known as zero week. This is where they separate, as my drill instructor would say, the men from the ladies. Drill instructors are inches from your face screaming and calling you every name in the book in such a tone that seems to be challenging you to hit *them* square in the face. Although the temptation to do so may be extremely inviting, I would not recommend that sort of reaction.

Then, they begin to strip you of your personality as if it were old junk parts from a rusty broke-down truck. It is drilled into your head that you cannot accomplish any task, no matter how subaltern, by yourself. Ultimately, Uncle Sam's goal is to make you completely dependent upon him. Next, it's time to ditch the clothes you showed up in and get fitted for the company's business suit (Battle Dress Uniform). After that, they line you up in a cattle line so you can walk through a series of eight different types of vaccinations stuck in your arm within a matter of 20 seconds. From there, they take the very last thing that separates you from the rest of the members in your flight (a "flight" refers to the group of people you are training with in the Air Force). In just a few seconds, your head is shaved to the skin, and you don't even recognize the guy you were just talking to moments before your hair was robbed of its natural resting place. As a matter of fact, it's nearly impossible to recognize anybody at all, including yourself.

So now that they have your identity bottled up and never to be used again, it's time to deprive you of everyday survival needs. After scrubbing your dormitory floor and toilets with a toothbrush for three hours, it's time to go to bed. The only problem is that it is 0200 hours (2 am) and you have to get up at 0445 hours (4:45 am). Sleep deprivation is a successful way to break down a human being both mentally and physically. But they don't stop there. When it comes time to eat breakfast, lunch and dinner, you have between 30 to 60 seconds from the time you sit down to eat as much as you can, as fast as you can *and* drink the mandatory three 10-ounce glasses of Gatorade. Showers are no picnic either. There are four nozzles on two walls in the eight foot by six foot shower. All 60 people in your flight are lined up, waiting for their turn to shower. Once the first person gets under the first nozzle, everyone starts counting out loud. "One, two, three, four, five, switch." After five seconds, you must move over to the next nozzle while one more person goes under the nozzle which you were just under. Everybody counts, and the process keeps repeating itself until everyone has showered. In case you weren't counting, that was a 40-second shower between eight nozzles with 59 witnesses. Embarrassing, you ask? Not so much for me as I'm sure it was for others.

Now it is time to learn basic combat maneuvering skills. This is when it starts to get real. Like thousands of others, when I signed up to join the armed forces, I did not anticipate ever going to war. However, with terrorism on the rise, I took every single training session as seriously as one could take it. After a few months of training, basic combat maneuvering became second nature. We studied death, we ate death, we slept death, we breathed death, we prepared for death, and we were trained to create death at a moment's notice. We were given the tools: an M16 (semi-automatic machine gun) and an M9 (a hand gun that holds 19 hollow-point bullets) and our bare hands to do the job, and we were taught how to mentally cope with the hardships of war. We are just starting to find out now that we were not properly trained to handle the mental anguish that would soon be a part of our everyday life.

Although most soldiers were able to overcome the perils of combat, there are still thousands who have not. Post-traumatic stress has caused a wide variety of unusual behavior from such well-trained and disciplined individuals. Soldiers who come home on leave halfway through their tour are looking for ways to keep them from having to go back. It is so bad for some soldiers that they break down and commit the most heinous of crimes or worse, suicide or suicide by cop (suicide by cop is the act of committing some type of crime, and when the police show they are forced into a position to where they have to kill you).

I believe all these problems that soldiers face once they return home are completely the government's fault. The U.S. government treats you well enough to keep you wanting to work for them, but once you separate, they feel they have the right to drop all responsibility for your actions and killer instincts. It's a shame that no consideration is given to a soldier who has faced these trying times when it comes to punishing him for an act that is likely 99.999% their fault. I cannot imagine one person in Washington D.C making it through the pearly white gates of heaven, and if they do, I'm not too sure that I would want to.

Although I have offered no solution or problem-solving techniques to make a step in the right direction toward correction of this problem, neither has your United States government.

Evaluation: *This is obviously a dramatic essay, brimming with honesty. It is a cold look at what is done to human beings in the name of us all. Jeremy demonstrates a caring attitude for those whose lives have been disrupted, and his essay pricks our collective conscience as a nation.*

The Death of the American Dream

Laurel Waller

Course: English 102 (Honors Composition)

Instructor: Kurt Hemmer

Assignment:

Analyze the major theme of a Beat Generation text.

What does Hunter S. Thompson have in common with the Beat Generation? The Beats were a group of writers throughout the late 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s whose body of written work was controversial for its advocacy of non-conformity and non-materialism. Major figures in this group included such famous writers as Allen Ginsberg, William S. Burroughs, and Jack Kerouac. Not only were his writings also controversial, but Thompson's writings reflected the Beat Generation. In Thompson's first book, *Hell's Angels*, he describes a party at Ken Kesey's house where the Hell's Angels were introduced to Kesey's group the Merry Pranksters. Ginsberg was at this meeting, and he wrote a poem about this night, which Thompson included in *Hell's Angels*. Besides writing with dark humor comparable to that of Burroughs, Thompson also depicts illegal substance use in his works. Using a similar prose style to Burroughs and Kerouac, Thompson seemed to have shared the same dream as Kerouac—the American

Dream. Thompson's book *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas: A Savage Journey to the Heart of the American Dream* and Kerouac's novel *On The Road* are quite comparable. These were the second books for both writers, and the ones for which they became famous. Also, both books were biographical. Ann Charters writes, "*On The Road* can be read as a quest taken by Sal Paradise, who sets out to test the American dream... Sal chases the dream back and forth on the highways between the East and West coasts, and finds that the dream has little staying power" (xxi). Similarly, Thompson's main character and alter ego Raoul Duke goes on the road in search of the American Dream, and both characters come to the same conclusion. However, the main difference between Thompson and the Beats is that Thompson decided to take what the Beats had already done a step further. Thompson took Kerouac's prose style and created what he called "gonzo journalism." Instead of classic journalism, which concentrates on the event itself, gonzo concentrates on the people and activities going on around the event and makes the author the main character. Gonzo was similar to Kerouac's spontaneous prose in that it was intended to be written impulsively without editing. Due to this new style, Thompson was put into his own generation group of writers called New Journalism. As a result of this, Thompson made a name for himself and rose to a popularity in his time that was comparable to that of the Beat writers. Peter O. Whitmer, who went on to write a very unauthorized biography on Thompson, writes in the *Saturday Review*, "He [Thompson] became a cult figure. The outlaw who could drink excessively, drug indulgently, shout abusively, and write insightfully" ("Hunter S[tockton] Thompson"). Just as Thompson was excessive with his behavior, he was extreme in his interpretation of American ideals like the American Dream. In the novel *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas: A Savage Journey to the Heart of the American Dream*, Thompson uses Las Vegas to demonstrate the addictive and sinful nature of the American Dream.

So where does this idea of the American Dream come from? Defining the American Dream can be quite difficult, since defining success can vary for each individual. However, the American Dream on the whole is

the belief that through hard work, morals, bravery, honesty, and determination, one can achieve material prosperity and success. The concept of the American Dream began in the mid-1800s during the Gold Rush, when prospectors headed West in search of gold and wealth. This initiative and motivation continued into the early 1900s during the Industrial Revolution, when immigrants believed that America's streets were paved with gold and came here to achieve their dreams of success and security. When the World Wars and The Great Depression hit, many people pushed their high aspirations to the side in order to concentrate on surviving. After WWII, people thought once again, as they had in the past, that obtaining this dream was not so far-fetched. The 1950s is when the search for the American Dream was at its peak. As the economy began to boom, Terry H. Anderson informs us, "So did prosperity. Americans were busy buying a record number of homes in the suburbs, and most of these buyers were first-time home owners—they were obtaining the American Dream" (9). The idea that things could be changed seemed possible, and this optimism expanded into the early 1960s with the hope of making social changes. In 1963, Martin Luther King Jr., the encouraging and peaceful leader of the civil rights movement, gave his famous "I Have a Dream" speech and said, "I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American Dream" (King Jr.). Yet, the peacefulness of King's civil rights movement as well as other movements took a strong turn when change was no longer possible. Optimism soon turned to pessimism with the violence of the war and other events of the 1960s. Malcolm X, the leader of the Black Panthers, who sought many of the same goals as King, yet believed violence was sometimes necessary says, "I don't see an American Dream. I see an American Nightmare" (Malcolm X). Both of these great leaders, King and Malcolm X, were assassinated, as were other powerful leaders during this time period. These events immobilized the American Dream, similar to its downfall during the Great Depression and WWII. In fact, these events of the decade woke up the country to the American Nightmare.

So knowing all of this, why would Thompson search for this dream in 1971 when it did not exist? Thompson

is being sarcastic by saying he is looking for this dream. Even in the title of the novel, one can see his sardonic humor. Thompson does not call it bliss and thrilling in Las Vegas; it is *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. Also, it is a savage journey to the American Dream, not something a person who is ethical, honest, and moral wants to face to obtain any dream. Louis Menand reveals, "That book [*Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*] was supposed to be called the 'Death of the American Dream'" (Menand). Duke, Thompson's persona, begins the book telling the reader, "I want you to know that we're on our way to Las Vegas to find the American Dream" (6). Duke defines that the American Dream "was a classic affirmation of everything right and true and decent in the national character" (18). Historically, the original voyage to find the American Dream was to head West for the Gold Rush. On the other hand, Duke moves east to Vegas, leaving the reader to question the seriousness of his journey. Near the end of the novel, Duke tells a friend that he has found the American Dream in a place called Circus-Circus. It is very unlikely that he would find such a prestigious dream in a bar/casino. Duke goes on to tell his friend that the owner of Circus-Circus always wanted to run away and join the circus when he was a kid. His friend replies, "Now the bastard has his own circus, and a license to steal, too" (191). Duke answers cynically, "Absolutely. It's pure Horatio Alger, all the way down to his attitude" (191). Once again, Thompson is being sarcastic, saying that running away and joining the circus is an American Dream. Here, one can see why Thompson would have wanted to call the novel "The Death of the American Dream," because he sees how people have tried to obtain their dreams through crooked methods. Furthermore, throughout the novel, Duke mentions the writer Horatio Alger, who wrote stories of young men moving from rags to riches to achieve the American Dream. However, Alger would not tell a story about obtaining a dream that is morally corrupt by making money off of other people's entertainment and addictions. It is comic irony how Thompson chooses to mention Alger, considering that there was speculation Alger was a pedophile who molested the same young boys he wrote about in his stories. That being the case, Alger is certainly not the per-

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fect model to follow for the American Dream. Once again, this is more evidence of Thompson being sarcastic about finding the American Dream in Vegas.

Thompson discovers that the American Dream often comes from dishonest and illegal means. Moreover, these means are imbedded within addiction. Simply, an addiction is the condition of being habitually or compulsively dependent on a habit or pursuit. Addiction can become harmful for many reasons; it takes away from a person's life, his or her finances, time, relationships, and health. The beginning of most addictions starts with some form of gratification, and one feels the overpowering need to obtain the gratification again and again. In the case of Thompson, the gratification for achievement of the American Dream is the addiction. Since there is no clear-cut definition to the American Dream, knowing when one has achieved its success is complicated. If one has a house, family, and job, do they have the American Dream? Once a person has these things, is she satisfied? This person may feel more fulfilled with two cars, or two houses or more. So when does it ever end? How much success does one need to acquire the American Dream? Therefore, the American Dream becomes an addiction. In order to fulfill this addiction, one must step over the boundaries of the Seven Deadly Sins to satisfy one's habit. Originating in the Catholic faith, The Seven Deadly Sins can lead a person to addiction or be used in order to satisfy the addiction. The first deadly sin is pride, which is to be over self-confident and arrogant when comparing one's life to another. The American Dream promotes pride and to strive to make one's life better than the next through competition. This pride can also lead to envy, which is the second deadly sin, such as the saying, "The grass is always greener on the other side." Wanting what one's neighbor has requires struggling in a perpetually unsatisfying cycle which never ends. Within itself, the American Dream of continually wanting more can turn someone to greed, the fifth deadly sin.

These Seven Deadly Sins are intensified and exaggerated in the place also known as "Sin City" or Las Vegas. Las Vegas has the reputation as the most immoral place in the country. No other place in America allows people to live in the good company of Dionysus. Full of strippers as well as other adult entertainment, legalized

prostitution and gambling, and liquor which is readily available at any time of day and night, Las Vegas defeats any purpose for ethical and honest fulfillment. Addiction can also be an uncontrollable need to repeat a behavior regardless of the negative consequences. Being a place that encourages and rewards corrupt behavior, Las Vegas pampers and caters to people's addictions. Las Vegas condones addictive and lewd behavior with the current famous saying, "What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas." This implies that no matter how honest and decent a person is outside of Vegas, when they are there, they are justified to lose all of their values and indulge in each of the Seven Deadly Sins. When they go back home, they are the same person as before, and their dirty deeds leave them no shame, guilt, or "no strings attached." This goes back to addiction, in which a person's repeat of sinful behavior is permitted in Las Vegas regardless of the negative consequences. Therefore, Vegas is an automatic confessional where a person is cleansed of his sins no matter the degree of them.

Likewise, Duke seems to have no remorse for indulging in some of his own sins while in Vegas and takes advantage of the opportunity. Since the book only takes place over a four-day period, it is hard to tell whether or not Duke is an addict. However, Duke's tolerance to the drugs and liquor is not common for an occasional user, and he portrays addictive behavior. Duke's wild behavior is summarized well in the epigraph by Dr. Johnson: "He who makes a beast of himself gets rid of the pain of being a man." Not only can this quote describe the way Thompson chooses to live his life, but it goes right along with the idea of being an animal in Las Vegas and shedding oneself of the respectable duties of the real world. Before Duke and his attorney (Dr. Gonzo, Oscar Zeta Acosta's persona) leave Los Angeles, they speed around to pick up a few necessities: "We had two bags of grass, seventy-five pellets of mescaline, five sheets of high-powered blotter acid, a salt shaker half full of cocaine, and a whole galaxy of multi-colored uppers, downers, screamers, laughers...and also a quart of tequila, a quart of rum, a case of Budweiser, a pint of raw ether and two dozen amyls" (4). For Thompson and his attorney, this suitcase full of drugs lasts them about four days. Duke is not

necessarily a drug addict, but more of a drug connoisseur when he confesses: “Not that we needed all that for the trip, but once you get locked into a serious drug collection, the tendency is to push it as far as you can” (4). Pushing things as far as possible is a common theme in Vegas. The lyrics of the song “One Toke Over the Line,” by Brewer and Shipley, is a theme throughout the novel. The lyrics are on the topic of crossing over the line, which the two men do throughout the whole trip. Duke’s and Dr. Gonzo’s excessiveness of drugs, liquor, and room service are quite tame compared to the rest of the town. Duke observes, “In a town full of bedrock crazies, nobody even notices an acid freak” (24). Yet, signs of abuse and possible addiction are shown in Duke’s behavior when he partakes in three of the Seven Deadly Sins: gluttony, sloth, and anger. One can already see his gluttony in drugs and liquor. As a result of this preoccupation, Duke never writes his stories for the magazine, which leads him into the fourth deadly sin—sloth. Duke demonstrates the third deadly sin, anger, to show his loathing for Las Vegas. His combination of sinful and extreme behavior can very well lead him closer to addiction and further away from the American Dream.

Las Vegas can epitomize a type of American Dream. It is one of the few places in America where people can become rich fast, without hard work or morals. At the time of writing this novel, Nevada was the only legal place in America where one could gamble (Sickels). With its bright neon lights, fancy hotels, and extravagant shows, Las Vegas lures its customers in with the hope of winning it big in its great casinos. Duke tells how people are, “Still humping the American Dream, that vision of the Big Winner somehow emerging from the last-minute pre-dawn chaos of a stale Vegas casino” (57). Here, people manipulate the ideal of the American Dream to make money for themselves, the casino owners, and the state. Vegas is full of very strange possibilities for the American Dream. One who has somehow obtained their version of the American Dream can go to Vegas and lose it all in one roll of the dice. On the other hand, someone who is still attempting to obtain the dream can win it all in one night; and yet the same person can become greedy for more and just as well lose it all in the same night. In Vegas, the American Dream is

not about how hard-working and moral someone is to obtain success. On the contrary, it is how much one can accumulate. Once again, crossing over the line is the allure and attraction of Vegas. Las Vegas is the embodiment of the last deadly sin—lust. Lust is the self-destructive desire for pleasure. Each year, Las Vegas feeds off of people’s lust and addictions to make millions. This city is full of addictive elements, such as sex, drugs, alcohol, and gambling. The gratification one can achieve in this “Sin City” can lead to many illusions that these activities will help one achieve success and possibly an American Dream. In reality, these acts can lead one to sins and addictions, which only pushes one further away from the American Dream. At the end of the book, Duke realizes, “I felt like a monster reincarnation of Horatio Alger” (204). Duke says this once he recognizes the corruption and failure of the American Dream.

On February 20, 2005, Thompson committed what many religious people would consider the most evil of all sins. He was found that morning in his home in Colorado with a self-inflicted gunshot wound. When Whitmer’s biography on Thompson was published in 1993, a very interesting quote was given by Thompson’s long time editor: “Alan Rinzler, midwife to so much of Thompson’s creative productivity, feels the author [Thompson] has untapped talent. ‘It puzzles me as to why somebody so talented, so famous would want to kill themselves’” (297). Something no one else has ever said directly, this statement implies that Thompson had suicidal tendencies. However, Thompson’s excessive behavior with dangerous things was perhaps his way of flirting with death. And yet, earlier on in the biography, Thompson had an interview with the famous George Plimpton, who had been collecting a series of death wishes of famous people. Plimpton seems to believe that “Death wishes often tell more about the living person than anything they can articulate in an autobiographical way” (Whitmer 229). When Plimpton asked Thompson about his own death-wish:

Thompson responded to Plimpton’s death-wish query with a startling change in his behavior....It seemed that what he had to say was well thought out, and as thoroughly rehearsed as a death wish can get and

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still remain a wish....“I had a premonition. I had a pretty firm conviction that I was not going to live past the age of twenty-seven”.... Thompson found it puzzling to live past the date of his expected death, referring to the experience as similar to budgeting a million dollars, all to be spent by Christmas, then suddenly finding yourself after the holiday with money to burn. (227-230)

Thompson killed himself exactly forty years after the time he was expecting himself to live. Repeating the risks, Thompson was rolling the dice of life. Knowing that his behaviors could have led to an earlier death would be one reason why he partook in them. In an interview with salon.com, Thompson was asked whether he was the living embodiment of the classic American Dream: “He answered the question by first screaming a string of frustrated obscenities and then admitting that, in actuality, he probably was” (“Hunter S. Thompson”). It is interesting that after all this time of searching for the American Dream, Thompson really believed he was the incarnation of it all along. So would someone who is the perfect example of the American Dream commit suicide? Once again, the idea of “The Death of the American Dream” comes into Thompson’s life.

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Evaluation: *Laurel does an excellent job of placing Hunter S. Thompson’s Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas: A Savage Journey to the Heart of the American Dream in a historical context that allows for a richer interpretation of the text.*

Identification and Treatment of Landscaping Problems in Residential New Construction

Louisa Walsh

Course: Plant Science Technology 110 (Soil Science)

Instructor: Chet Ryndak

Assignment:

Students were to compose a year-end project report of information gathered relevant to a soil science issue or problem.

I decided to research this subject, because as a new homeowner, I felt that we were running into various landscape problems that we didn't have in previous homes. After observing these problems for four growing seasons, I've come to realize these problems are due to construction practices and lack of post-construction soil preparation. Some of these problems are soil compaction, lack of organic matter, clay panning, construction fill panning, lack of soil, pH level, debris in the soil, and impeded water and nutrition uptake. Some of these conditions and problems were immediately known when we bought the home. Others became apparent over seasons as we tried to enhance our property with trees, shrubs, and plantings.

Our home site was last known as a family horse farm and pasture. Before that, it was likely never developed.

It had naturally hilly topography that was fairly wooded. When the developer bought this property, they planned for 110 homes. The land was stripped of all vegetation, except for a token, mature tree near a horse pond in the middle of the planned development.

The developers have requirements to establish retention areas for drainage, which also allow them to change the topography and slope of the land and allow for more walk-out home sites, which the builder can sell for a premium. The homes also require a strong foundation to be built into. The builder brought in bulldozers and graders to strip the land of all vegetation and remove all topsoil, which they placed in two hills, and they reshaped the land to form two large retention ponds on the west side, bordering Poplar Creek. This rich, black, fertile topsoil was hauled away in trucks over a two-day period. Then, construction fill was brought in over the entire area to a depth of many feet. I'd estimate the depth to be between one and four feet at the start of construction.

After these changes to the landscape, the homes were built. A village requirement is that of a minimum of six inches of topsoil is required, but the builder sods the properties, with no guarantee, and to his advantage, masks the condition of the soil underneath. There is no measurement done, but a truckload or so is brought out for every few home sites. Also of note is the fact that the soil that is brought in can be a very poor Grade B soil with a lot of debris in it. From my prior employment with a nursery and landscape supplier, Prestige Nursery, I was familiar with the soil that was brought in. It was truly a very poor grade that the builder might have gotten for free from another construction site. In our case, we arrived at the home site before the sod was laid and removed an eight-foot hill of boulders, rocks, lumber, and debris from the property. As it was, there were numerous boulders of one to two feet in diameter left at the site. We were continuously not able to grow grass or small shrubs, only to dig them out and find that they were placed over deep-set boulders.

Another problem with new construction soil can be soil compaction. Our property was the parking site for graders, bulldozers, and other equipment for many months. The soil is so compacted, attempts to plant are difficult. At certain spots, the soil is so compacted, it is

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impossible to get a shovel deep into the ground. If planted, the plants tend to stay small and not seem to “take.” This also exposes the lack of soil added back into the site. It’s not surprising to almost immediately hit construction fill before even hitting the soil layer.

Soil compaction also leads to clay panning. This seems to be obvious when watering, when the ground seems to float under your feet and water either runs off too quickly or acts like a little pool underneath the grass layer. The sod never seems to adhere to the ground underneath. The sod layer is also easily picked up even years after being laid.

According to the Canadian Natural Resources Council’s website, the construction fill also acts as a barrier to air, water, and nutrition to the underlying soil. It can cause a buildup of gases if organic matter is not removed before the construction fill is added and also cause the death of trees left on site, by smothering their roots. It can also cause harm to newly planted trees as their roots try to expand into the surrounding soil and not have an adequate oxygen source. This can be avoided during construction by putting a barrier of at least 3 feet around the base of an existing tree, where this area is left untouched, and also by adding vertically placed plastic tubes that act as air vents around the base of newly planted trees as they are planted.

An awareness and knowledge of ground slope should be considered when planting any trees and shrubs. To be aware of the slope of the land, the type of soil, the amount of soil, the flow of the water, and water requirements should all be taken into consideration when agreeing to plantings and landscaping packages. We’ve planted over 30 trees and 40 shrubs from a perspective of the existing soil, water, wind, and light conditions in the various areas of the property. This has helped the plants thrive in their new home. After coming from a property that was also a previous animal pasture, but one that hadn’t been topsoil-stripped, it’s been a noticeable difference in the seasons it has taken for the plants to actually begin to thrive. The old saying about seasons, that newly planted plants will sleep, then creep, then leap in three growing seasons, has actually taken one or more seasons longer than that.

Soil should ideally be between four to six inches

deep for grass to root deeply. The apparent lack of soil is obvious when trying to water, and the water immediately drains away without seeming to enter the soil. This is due to soil compaction, clay panning, and construction fill panning.

When watering, a very slow, gentle application of water is needed to soak into the soil. Any intermediate or faster flow will just wash away, without soaking at all. Also, more frequent waterings are needed.

Aerating the soil with lawn aeration, several times a growing season, can amend this compaction. In extreme conditions, it might be wise to use a tree auger or a deep drill to bore deep holes into the ground. These can be filled with a sandy clay loam soil or left alone.

Lack of organic matter can be improved by leaving mulched grass clippings on the soil, mowing the fallen leaves and mulching them into the soil and around the bases of any trees and shrubs. Using organic fertilizers and lawn conditioners can add organic matter to soil by improving the soil condition that increases microorganism action. Also, earthworms can be added to the soil.

Lack of soil can also be amended by raking in a light top dressing of a garden mix or even a topsoil during the growing year, just enough to cover the ground, but not so deep as to smother what is growing. This will aid deep rooting of grass that will help keep the grass from becoming drought-stressed when there is a slight lack of moisture. One of the ways that I can tell where there is a lack of soil depth is by noting where the grass seems to be discoloring toward going dormant, with only a slight lack of moisture. This slight discoloration is an indicator of a lack of good soil depth.

Soil testing for pH levels at various areas on the property will determine the pH level. Our soils tend to be alkaline, and the addition of sulfur to the ground can lower the pH to 6.0 to 6.5 and increase the growing conditions for the trees, shrubs, and grass. Even slightly lowering the pH can be beneficial. According to Schwarz Nursery in Addison, sulfur can be added under trees by boring eight-inch-deep holes, two inches apart around the tree from about three feet out from the base to about two feet beyond the drip line, using a tree auger or drill bit. To increase the acidity tenfold, a dry granular sulfur at the rate of one pound per 25 feet can

be added every two years. However, a soil test should really be done first.

An autumn addition of seed should be done just to build up the lawn. Allowing the lawn to go to seed occasionally during the growing season and then mulch-cutting it will also add seed and grass mulch to the lawn. Allowing dead vegetation to winter over and be worked into the ground the following spring is also a good way to add organic matter to the soil. This wintering over also adds cover and food for birds. Also, some bugs lay eggs on certain plants, and allowing the plants to remain after dying back allows these eggs to hatch. An adjustment in attitude away from a very manicured landscape can improve the soil condition, by allowing more material to decay and become organic matter.

If the subdivision has bylaws which prohibit composting, as does ours, an easy alternative is to have a garden area where you can put your composted leaves and grass clippings and get away with it. The materials can be allowed to decompose there and later can be added to other areas of the yard to improve the soil quality.

Knowledge of trees and plantings that are tolerant of hard, clay soils and tolerant of poor soil and water conditions can keep a homeowner from experiencing disappointing growing results. Many landscaping companies distribute landscape packages that are sold without consideration of existing soil conditions. A check of the specifics of the plants that are offered in reference to the existing soil conditions can determine if a predesigned plan is the best for the property, or if maples, willows and birches are good for the low clay areas and spruce and pines are better for high and sloped areas.

Most homeowners use landscapers and lawn maintenance companies to take care of their landscapes. It is better to switch to an all-natural organic lawn service company such as Responsibly Green. This company will do individual soil testing of the property and apply organic materials to condition the soil as needed. This will help build organic matter and increase the soil level in the lawn over time.

In general, I believe that most homeowners are unaware of the underlying soil conditions and are content to pay for expensive continuous lawn and landscape services. When these fail, they just replace the trees,

shrubs or lawn and sometimes blame their service. I think an awareness of underlying soil conditions and soil amendments can lead to a long-term solution for a naturally healthy, vibrant landscape.

In conclusion, there are many steps a new construction homeowner can take to improve soil quality. Beginning with watching the changes that are taking place at the building site as the property is being readied, and noting the condition of the property at delivery, to noting the conditions over time, a homeowner can gain knowledge of how to improve the soil conditions. Observation and action can turn a high-maintenance, poor-quality soil into a low-maintenance, high-quality soil very beneficial to a healthy lawn and landscape.

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Evaluation: Ms. Walsh has written an exemplary and informative report.

Write a Report? Why Me?

A Naturalist's Take on the Importance of Good Writing

Chet Ryndak

“Through effective communication, the world can—and does—become a better place.”

[Editor's Note: Chet Ryndak has taught Soil Science, Woody Plants, and Plant Pathology at Harper College in an adjunct capacity for the past 28 years, and he has submitted many papers to *The Harper Anthology* during this time. His students' papers have been an inspiration to me, as they have always been very specifically focused on an environmental issue, and they have always been very well written. His education includes B.S. and M.A. degrees earned at Northern Illinois University and Northeastern Illinois University, respectively, and through his career as a naturalist (and artist!), he has been the Director of the River Trails Nature Center, in Des Plaines, Illinois, and Superintendent of the Conservation Department of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County. He also has been an adjunct professor at Northeastern Illinois University, Field Museum of Natural History, and College of DuPage. This Afterword provides an interesting perspective on the role of writing and reading in the career of a naturalist involved in educating the public or shaping public or private policies.]

I have been asked silently at times, through questioning eyes, why I assign a writing project in a science class. The answer is quite simple: young scientists must be prepared to write, so they can effectively inform and inspire the public, gain support for and direct government projects, and research and document conditions in the surrounding environment.

Public Education: The Importance of Communication

As a professional naturalist and the head of the Conservation Department of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, writing became an effective tool for me and my staff to educate the public about the natural environment and the many organisms that are part of it. Information related to ecology, wildlife management, fisheries management, animal rehabilitation, and natural restoration of woods, oak savannas, prairies, and wetlands are a few examples of what we needed to com-

municate to the public. Our communications efforts at the Forest Preserve District were intended to help the public become aware of the natural world around them and the interplay of organisms with one another. Through our communications work, the public could develop a deeper understanding of man's effect on the environment and the rationale for implementation of many ecological goals. Also through these efforts, we attempted to help the public become more apt to take action on environmental issues.

Brochures, press releases, displays at nature centers, and discussion groups with the public were all orchestrated to provide education and gain public trust and support to accomplish natural restoration or management goals. One example is the cooperative effort of the Skokie Lagoons restoration project, part of the North Branch of the Chicago River, which involved the eradication of rough fish such as common carp and the removal by hydraulic vacuuming of tons upon tons of organic sediment that had accumulated over the latter half of the last century, from insufficient waste treatment, high phosphates, other pollutants, and erosion. The low oxygen concentration and low visibility, and thus low sunlight penetration in the lagoons, had reduced the diversity of animal and plant life. The common carp consistently roiled the bottom sediment to the surface, never giving the lagoons a chance to recover. The lagoons now have clarity up to nine feet (up from only a few inches), and native game fish have been reintroduced for biodiversity and recreation. In order to justify the millions of tax dollars it took to restore the lagoons, it was imperative to educate the public about the problem at hand and the consequences of taking no action. Group discussions, tours of the lagoons, and interviews with ecologists were some of the education methods used.

Another example where effective communication has been imperative to public education related to the

Forest Preserve District's deer management program. As deer overpopulated (and continue to do so in many areas) due to lack of predation, measures were needed to reduce and maintain lower levels of white-tailed deer herds. The herds were so extremely large, for example, at Busse Woods, that the diversity of plant life was being reduced to a monoculture of common buckthorn, *Rhamnus cathartica*, an invasive plant that the deer usually refrain from eating. A four-foot browse line, the highest point on vegetation that the deer can reach, was showing up at Busse. The woodland floor was being denuded, essentially causing soil erosion, water pollution, and a reduction in plant and animal diversity. Gaining public support for a deer management program was imperative. The public first needed to be educated as to why the deer population, which looks so majestic and harmless, especially against white-capped trees in the winter, needed to be reduced. This became a highly emotional issue for some. Public education as to the need to reduce the deer population and effective reduction methods took a lot of time—discussion after discussion, expert testimony from various sources, and many radio interviews. Gaining approval of the Cook County Board and State of Illinois through various resolutions to implement a program of deer removal and subsequent use of the deer meat to feed the indigent was also imperative. Busse Woods is now returning to a more diverse natural community.

Public education also takes place through composition of longer, more formal works, and these works leave a particularly lasting impression and record of the natural world, and inspire motivation to protect it. Several colleagues of mine have written works that help give us “Chicagoans” a better understanding of our natural community. The late Jerry Sullivan composed the treatise *Chicago Wilderness: An Atlas of Biodiversity* (the title seems like an oxymoron), in which a thorough description of the geology, soils, natural communities, and wildlife of the Chicago area are detailed. This report, a joint effort of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, the Federal and State governments, and many other organizations, including the zoos, Chicago Botanic Gardens, museums, the City of Chicago, and various volunteer and non-for-profit conservation groups, provides

insight into the beauty and diversity of natural communities in our area and also reminds us to take action to protect and restore them. My good friend, Libby Hill, has given us an historical and ecological look at the river that passes through our urban area entitled, *The Chicago River, A Natural and Unnatural History*. Mrs. Hill reports that over the past 40 years, the condition of the river has been improving. She discusses various written accounts of support and partnering of government and volunteer efforts to restore this river and its watershed. Such projects as the Skokie Lagoons Rehabilitation effort, as mentioned, and the North Branch Restoration Project, which involved the removal of invasive buckthorn that shades out the native understory, and in the process is responsible for the soil erosion of the watershed and silting of the river, is covered in her book and makes for interesting discussion in our Soil Science class here at Harper. Through buckthorn removal and the planting of native species—and effective public communications—the restoration of the North Branch watershed of the Chicago River is slowly being accomplished.

Reading and Writing for Knowledge and Inspiration

To those questioning eyes asking, “why should I write a report,” I could also answer, “so that others may read and be inspired.” When I read my students’ writings on subjects they are passionate about, I get just as inspired to delve more deeply into the subject as I do when I read books by my favorite authors. Some of my students’ writings have actually influenced my class curriculum. Exposure to new perceptions is critical for a naturalist (and for anyone involved in scholarship) to continue to be inspired, to learn, and to teach. I have incorporated many books that have inspired me into my teaching, such as Yale University’s E. C. Pilou’s books *The World of Northern Evergreens* and *After the Ice Age*, which emphasizes ecology, plant and animal distribution, and global climatic changes. The historical fiction of Maura D. Shaw, *The Keeners*, (wailers for the dead), presents the socioeconomic troubled times of Ireland and the potato famine associated with the late blight disease. In the Plant Pathology class at Harper, this famine is discussed as an example of a monocul-

ture, a poorly resistant crop, overdependency on one crop, and the devastation that can occur with such a situation, especially when linked with political and socioeconomic pressures such as the British suppression of the citizens of Ireland, which was a tax-suppressed condition, almost like a serfdom.

Another extraordinary book is the phenomenal biogeographical masterpiece of David Quammen, *The Song of the Dodo*, where he examines the mysteries of evolution and extinction as they have been “illuminated in the study of islands.” Mr. Quammen creates a thrilling science adventure. The writing in this book transports the reader in time and place to some of the most significant discoveries in biology – discoveries at a time when one feared to publish. Quammen’s book is a modern piece, but recalls in depth the explorations, interplay, and little known insight and facts of earlier scientists such as Carl Linnaeus, Charles Darwin, Joseph Banks, Hooker, T.H. Huxley, and in particular, Alfred Russel Wallace, “the man who knew islands, a great pioneer of evolutionary biology, who gathered his best insights in field work on remote islands.’ He discovered that time, size, and isolation yields divergence. Wallace explored, collected, and studied in the rainforests of the Amazon and in the remote islands of the Malay Archipelago. It is through his findings and reports that ecosystem decay, a modern term, and extinction, come to light. As we fragment natural communities into “islands,” both oceanic and land-based, they become “steadily diminutive, more diminished, more leached of its biological richness, they become simplified.’ My approach in class is to emphasize that we need to preserve macrosites, large natural bodies of flora and fauna, with wildlife corridors that can harbor and allow a wide diversity of life.

Formal and Informal Writing: Crucial Skills for Creating Knowledge in the Professions

Scholarship and writing are critical in the professional life of a naturalist, as they are in any field involving history, data, debatable issues, private interests, public opinion, and wise decision making. In the government setting, laws, regulations and resolutions must be

prepared in order to implement ecological projects. For example, in order to support the purchase and subsequent natural restoration of land, which is the Cook County Forest Preserve’s mandate, resolutions must be written in an understandable manner and presented to the Board for approval. This type of writing, in fact, leads the way to fulfilling the Forest Preserve’s mandate, which is “to acquire land for the purpose of protecting and preserving the flora and fauna, and scenic beauties and to restore, restock, protect, and preserve the natural forests and such lands for the purpose of education, pleasure, and recreation of the public.”

Skill with more informal types of writing, as is the case in other fields, is also critical to the success and life of a professional naturalist. Documentation of animal and plant life, through journals, notes, and drawings, is important to gain knowledge of the diversity, the commonality, the invasive status, or the rarity of an organism or environment. In the case of an invasive plant such as purple loosestrife, researchers identified the fact that this plant was invading and creating a monoculture in which only this plant would exist, to the exclusion of every other native species. Through the writing of European naturalists, American naturalists learned that certain types of beetles could control the proliferation of purple loosestrife. Naturalists, through their research projects and reports, gained approval from the U.S. Federal Drug Administration to use these beetles to prevent an ecological malady.

By writing on topics of interest and significance in the science courses, science students in plant pathology and soil science, for example, glean a greater knowledge in the subject and share their newly found information with the rest of the class. This creates greater participation and further achievement in the classroom. It also stimulates the student to dig deeper into a subject than they ever thought they could or should. Students’ future career achievements surely are enhanced by practice in report writing. We all share in a greater knowledge of our world by written communication of our ideas and discoveries. Through effective communication, the world can—and does—become a better place.

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Contributing Faculty

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Teresa Chung

Nancy Davis

Joyce Grattoni

Kurt Hemmer

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Meera Kanaan

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Richard Middleton-Kaplan

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