

THE HARPER ANTHOLOGY

VOLUME XVII

Sunday

Monday

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

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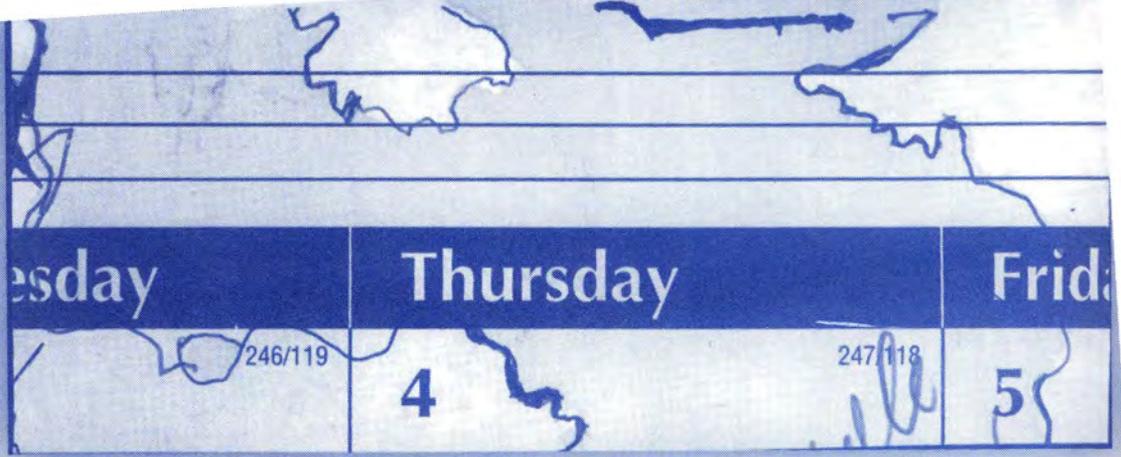
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STUDENT WRITERS

Peter Andreou
 Linda Bennett
 Laura Brennan
 Margaret Bringham
 Nathan Chiou
 E Darms
 Lyn DeRose
 Matt Gebhardt
 Lina Gil-Darlak
 Gary Greener
 Ilie Haberl
 Jenn Heineman
 Kate Hendrickson
 Mindy Hurley
 Miriam Hymes
 Michael Kereluk

Anka Koprivec
 Konstantin Kostov
 Dan Kugler
 Danielle LaGrippe
 Mirja Lorenz
 Nik MacTavish
 Jessica Crow Mermel
 Brian Mullen
 Amanda Nielsen
 Marnina Patrick
 Vince Payne
 Kurt Reynolds
 Christine Rhim
 Meghan Riley
 Heather Salus
 Ronny Serio

Amie Shadlu
 Mike Shell
 Kiyoko Shindo
 Cara Spagnolo
 Monika Staszal
 Brianna Stoll
 Dan Thomas
 Matthew Thomas
 John Tiesch
 Kyle Tobin
 Gloria Ufheil
 Laurel Waller
 Pete Whyte
 Kaylyne Wisser
 Sh... Zeiken



THE HARPER ANTHOLOGY

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

VOLUME XVII
2005

WILLIAM RAINEY HARPER COLLEGE

Submission Information

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To Submit a Student's Manuscript:

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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 send materials by e-mail: 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.

Table of Contents

Peter Andreou

What the Secret Sharer Shares
(Literature 115) 1

Linda Bennett

Family Day at the Racetrack
(English 200) 4

Laura Brennan

Modern Life in Rome
(English 200) 7

Margaret Brigham

An Addict's Tale: Source and Cycle
(English 102) 9

Jonathan Chiou

I Rode the Rails to School and Back
(English 101) 11

Julie Darms

Incomprehensible Love
(English 102) 13

Jaclyn DeRose

Meanings and Connections
in the Responses to
The Hours and Mrs. Dalloway
(English 102) 17

Matt Gebhardt

Sane Until Proven Otherwise
(English 102) 23

Mary Greener

Global E-Commerce: Are You Ready?
(CIS 218) 31

Ellie Haberl

Madness as Divine Sense in
William Luce's *The Belle of Amherst*
(Literature 224) 39

Jenn Heineman

Submission or Transformation in Unbalanced
Families: Kafka's Gregor Samsa
And Faulkner's Sarty Snopes
(English 102/Philosophy 115) 41

Kate Hendrickson

Caroline's Comeuppance
(Literature 115) 45

Mindy Hurley

Home Schooling
(English 101) 48

Miriam Hymes

The Otherness
(English 101) 52

Michael Kereluk

A Dope Fiend's Guide to Drugstores
(Literature 112) 55

Anka Koprivee

Autism and Parents
(ESL 074) 57

Konstantin Kostov

Simply Unforgettable
(ESL 074) 59

Dan Kugler

My Grandfather's Radio
(Mass Communication 234) 61

Danielle LaGrippe

Filling the Void: Viktor Frankl
(English 101/Philosophy 105) 63

Mirja Lorenz

Growing Up
(English 102/Philosophy 115) 67

Nik MacTavish

Marriage Was a Wretched Institution
(English 101) 74

Jessica Crow Mermel

Breaking the Mold:
Women of the Beat Generation
(English 102) 76

Brian Mullen

The Land of the Equal
(English 102) 81

Amanda Nielsen

Towering Above
(English 101) 85

Marnina Patrick

Transformation of the Soul
(English 102) 87

Vince Payne

Fact or Fiction:
The Things They Carried Is Both
(English 102) 91

Kurt Reynolds

From Garbage to Golf
(Plant Science Technology 110) 95

Christine Rhim

Mozart and Salieri: A Myth Better
Than History
(English 102) 99

Meghan Riley

Best Friends
(English 100) 104

Table of Contents

Heather Salus

On Embracing Rain
(English 220) 106

Ronny Serio

Does Religion Do More Harm Than Good?
(Philosophy 120) 109

Amie Shadlu

Masculinity and Violence in Rita Dove's
The Darker Face of the Earth
(English 102) 113

Mike Shell

Obedient Extermination and the
Obligatory Mind
(English 102) 118

Kiyoko Shindo

Grocery Stores Reflect Our Lives
(ESL 074) 123

Cara Spagnolo

Nanny's Suocco
(Speech 101) 125

Monika Staszal

Hedda's Suicide Note
(Literature 207) 127

Brianna Stoll

Hyde in the Shadows
(English 102) 129

Dan Thomas

A Determined Paper
(Philosophy 120) 133

Matthew Thomas

Does Platonic Love Support
the Ideal Love of Today?
(Humanities 105) 139

John Tiesch

Life Is Not Always a Walk
in the Park
(English 102) 142

Kyle Tobin

The United Nations and the World
(Political Science 270) 145

Gloria Ufheil

Fighting With Words
(Literature 115) 147

Laurel Waller

On the Buses: The Merry Pranksters
and the Family
(Literature 217) 151

Pete Whyte

Drummer and Thumbs
(Speech 101) 156

Kaylyne Wisler

Trade Organizations and Agreements:
Globalization?
(Political Science 270) 158

Shelly Zeiger

The Influence of Religious Imagery
Within Mass Media
(English 102) 161

Kris Piepenburg

Afterword: Harry Potter and the
Yard Sale Spell 165

Submission Forms 167

Alternate Table of Contents 170

Foreword: Harper Students on Writing

Linda Bennett

Writing is something that I have always enjoyed ever since I was a child. What intrigues me most about writing is the potential that it allows. A successful writer reaches his or her audience and makes its members take notice. Through the writer's words, he or she has the potential to touch the minds and hearts of the readers, to raise societal awareness, to bring light to subjects often ignored, and even to influence and shape public policy. To think that it all starts with just one person with a pen and tablet of paper or the keyboard of a computer is something that I just find fascinating.

Just as I have struggled with writing this statement, I too often struggle with my writing – trying to find just the right words – trying to take hold of the thoughts that are floating through my mind and transform them into a well-written piece of art. To me that is what writing is – a unique art. It is a sharing of one's self and a peek inside one's soul. In a society that has become so standardized in so many ways, writing, like any other art, cannot be standardized. Every writer is unique in his or her writing. No computer can do it for the writer. No standard methods can simply be replicated. Writing is a form of self-reflection – a calling to speak out and a willingness to share. As a writer, it can take you deep within the very essence of your soul—which when you write, you lay before your readers—willing to take that risk, willing to be vulnerable, and willing to allow others to see inside your soul.

When I wrote "Family Day at the Racetrack" I did just that. I reached within the recess of my mind, my memories, and my feelings, and I placed myself back in time to the day of that event. Every description and word was written through my eyes as a child, with myself as an adult guiding the words into sentences and paragraphs. Although it was difficult to do at times, I never allowed the adult in me to interfere with the words, thoughts, and feelings of the child. Placing myself back into that space was painful at times, but I never allowed that to censor my words or to interfere with my thoughts. It was a challenge to write a narrative that indirectly conveys a deeper message, but once I started it seemed to come naturally. The key was to go back in time and feel, think, and see through the eyes of the child that I was.

I have had people who are close to me read my story and find it difficult to complete because it evoked strong feelings of sadness and/or anger in them. While I feel bad to make anyone feel sad or upset, I also realize that I must have achieved the goal of the narrative, which was to elicit a response from my readers, not by telling them how to feel, but simply by telling my story. It is my hope that anyone who reads this story can also move beyond the feelings it may provoke, much in the same way that I did, so that the message of the story comes through.

Jaclyn DeRose

I'm a firm believer that writers write best when they write what they know. Whether it is a personal essay or an academic paper, writing is essentially a performance of self. I've always found that my very best writing, no matter what the assignment, includes elements of myself.

I've been writing for years. To me, it is the ultimate outlet for self-expression and one that has played a vital role in who I am and who I want to be. Just as a person is ever-evolving, I think it's important for writers to remember that the first draft is written on paper, not in stone. I've recently learned the value of the drafting and revision process and discovered that time away from a piece is as vital as time with it—you have the benefit of a clearer mind and perspective.

I am currently studying to be a high school English teacher and have spent a lot of time thinking about approaches to teaching writing. Other than knowing the mechanics, I've decided the best writing is the product of a creative process all one's own.

Miriam Hymes

In my own personal experience, writing isn't about flowery expressions and fancy vocabulary; it's about simple and honest expression of thoughts and emotions. Words have never come easier than when I'm writing a friend or making quirky observations on ordinary life. Yet, I also enjoy academic writing. Nothing is more rewarding than a well-written work that conveys just the right message or feeling, a work that opens minds, shares information, or persuades. When we write we are able to express ourselves in more depth, detail, purity and permanence than simple spoken words. Writing is an art we are all capable of, if we only take the time to stop and think.

Kiyoko Shindo

Since English is not my native language, writing in English is a struggle. Writing correct grammar is the starting point to writing an essay; however, grammar is tricky. It seems like there is no firm rule in grammar. Of course, I understand that language is ambiguous and changing with time. In my native language, I love the ambiguity and have the scope to enjoy it. But in English, it just brings me confusion. Also, choosing words is a hard task. There are several English equivalents for a word, and the meanings of a word vary according to the context. I have to be very careful to choose words, or I fail to express my thoughts. However,

Foreword: Harper Students on Writing

to write a clear, grammatically correct essay is not my only goal. Instead, I am grasping; I want my writing to have my voice. I want the readers to see my personality through my writing. To achieve this task, I have to use my imagination. I always imagine how my sentences sound to native English speakers, and how they feel about them. It is frustrating that I can never read my writing as the native speakers do. There may be a gap between my feelings and my English writing. To bridge this gap is my next task of writing.

Kris Piepenburg: Editor's Comment

It is extremely heartening to read these commentaries from these four writers, as I had begun, recently, to doubt the efficiency and effectiveness of writing as a communications medium, and to question the value of the act of writing itself. Part of this doubt stems from the fact that *so much* writing is produced by the human community, and seemingly, so little of it is read and so little of it has any impact. There are hundreds of thousands of authors, easily, being published in this country alone, yet I imagine that many of these authors have actual reading publics of fewer than 100 souls.

That, however, as these four writers point out, should not turn us away from writing, or from reading. The sincerity and seriousness with which these writers discuss their ideas about writing have convinced me again that this art is indeed a most important aspect of humanity. To reach an audience, to touch a mind or a heart—this is common to all of the arts and much of everyday interaction, and I can't think what might be more important in the human experience, with the possible exception of the serious aims of raising societal awareness or influencing public policy. This is *not* common to all of the arts and it is *not* the goal of much everyday interaction, yet these important efforts happen often through the unique art of writing—for a good example of this, see Amanda Nielsen's paper about the plans for the World Trade Center site on page 85 of this volume. (Thank you, Kurt Neumann, for describing the assignment so beautifully: "Write a 750- to 1,000-word essay that is *relevant and significant*.")

Writing, as all four of these students point out, is a performance of self, involving self-reflection and struggle with issues such as accuracy of expression and maintenance of personal voice. I would add that this performance of self, the organization of thought into language for others to think about, is a demanding but also exhilarating experience, as I have discovered again in my chaotic composing and editing of this response. The search for the clear expression of meaning in writing, or especially, the discovery of meaning as the writing progresses, can be as rewarding as climbing an

unfamiliar mountain or walking a lost, unfamiliar trail, to a natural end, and then back again. The unexpected surprises add the most enjoyment to all of these endeavors, and for the reader of writing, these surprises happen, as well. As student Miriam Hymes puts it on the previous page, "Nothing is more rewarding than a well written work that conveys just the right message or feeling, a work that opens minds. . . ."

Yet, we have to have *time*, to be able to write and to read. This might be where my general malaise about the value of writing in the world began. I have not had or made time, to read or write significantly, for quite a while—I have been too busy working and living. So, I am very glad that I have had the time to actually read and think about the comments of these students, and all of the papers included in this volume, and I am extremely glad to have had the opportunity to write these comments. When I read something significant, my spirit expands. When I think and write, I feel my spirit returning to me, as a musician's spirit returns in the act of performance. I believe that the readers of this volume, however few there might be, will be moved in similar directions.

Acknowledgments

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JoEllen Freeding, Matthew Nelson,
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What the Secret Sharer Shares

Peter Andreou

Course: Literature 115 (Fiction)

Instructor: Kurt Neumann

Assignment:

Write a short research essay relevant to one or two of the stories we have read.

Consult a minimum of five secondary sources.

More often than not, in order for a story to be successful in connecting with an audience, it must also have a main character for that audience to identify with. In some stories, this character might be self-righteous and all-knowing, a man or woman overflowing with confidence and a strong sense of self: the traditional hero. However, other stories may employ a distinctly different character, no less identifiable, who connects with another part of the human psyche; in essence, this character portrays the more realistic part of humanity. This technique employs a more conflicted character, unsure of him- or herself and even more unsure of others. With such a character, more analysis is needed in order to bring about an understanding of the thoughts, motives, and feelings of this character. To better examine all of these, a psychological approach is necessary to fully explore the inner workings of a complex character. If we are attempting to grasp the full significance of the captain from "The Secret Sharer," we must analyze him psychologically. We must take what he says and what he does and try to assess the captain and explore possible reasons for his creating an alter ego, played by the mysterious Legatt. According to Owen Knowles in *The Oxford Companion to Conrad*, "As a story involving covert doubles, it ["The Secret Sharer"] has proved particularly amenable to psychological approaches" (337).

I will investigate with this approach by "asking the basic question, 'why has this behavior occurred' and try[ing] to get at the root conflict or confusion the character might have" (*Short Fiction: Classic and Contemporary* 1333). This is the psychological approach in a nutshell, and it will be used not as an end unto itself, because it is simply too open-ended for a short essay, but instead it will be used as an aid to support a focused main idea. I will pursue this point by first observing the captain's psyche and emotions, then I will provide evidence that Legatt, the captain's other self aboard the ship, could be either a real person who has a profound effect on the captain's personality, or more likely that he is an imaginary self that the captain creates in order to deal with his new surroundings; lastly, I will focus on what Legatt represents as a part of the captain. By taking these steps, we can attempt to understand that there is a transformation in the captain by the end of the story, specifically that his ego has experienced a journey to fullness and self-sufficiency.

Before figuring out who or what Legatt is, we should first examine the captain from the psychological point of view, because the key to gaining an understanding of the story is through the journey of the humble captain. What is it exactly that causes the captain to have such a need for an alter ego? From the moment he steps aboard his new command, a ship called *The Sephora*, he is plagued by insecurities. This is understandable because he "had been appointed to the command only a fortnight before. Neither did (he) know much of the hands forward. All these people had been together for eighteen months or so and (his) position was that of the only stranger on board" (Conrad 250). This is a hard situation for anyone to have to go through, especially hard for someone as sensitive as the captain. People are by nature lovers of familiarity, and have a tendency in their loneliness to feel alone in a gigantic sea. In a sour twist, the captain is really alone at sea, which only compounds his feelings of loneliness. The captain himself goes on to say, "I mention this because it has some bearing on what is to follow" (250). This foreshadowing lays a foundation for the main conflict within the captain and displays his motivation for creating an alter ego. Aside from being alone, he is also thrown in with a completely unfamiliar group of people. Truly, this was

the greatest obstacle for the captain's psyche, for he says "but what I felt most was my being a stranger to the ship; and if truth be told, I was somewhat a stranger to myself" (250). John Graver, in *Conrad's Short Fiction* comments, "A stranger both to his ship and himself, the narrator wonders whether he will measure up to the ideal conception of one's own personality every man sets up for himself" (153). So we see that the captain is a stranger in two ways, both on the social level and the personal level. The former exacerbates the latter, which is of the most importance. He is confronted with the problem of attempting to gain others' confidence when he has no confidence in himself. He needs support somehow from somewhere. By creating an alter ego, he can share and discuss things he would otherwise be unable to, thereby strengthening him for the voyage he must make, both figuratively and literally. There is a line early on in the story in which the captain remarks, "While I lingered yet, my hand resting lightly on my ship's rail as if on the shoulder of a trusted friend" (250). In essence, the captain is in need of a companion, real or imagined, to see him through stormy weather. This is why, when a stranger is in hiding from the law after a charge of murder and he desperately needs asylum, the captain is more than willing to oblige.

Enter Legatt. What is he? Is he an apparition or a flesh and blood man? Is he a figment of the captain's strained imagination, or a kindred spirit, or is he all of the above? It is hard to be sure because we only receive information about him from one source: the captain, who narrates his own story. This complicates the story because the reader cannot altogether trust the captain's account of events as they could with an omniscient narrator. According to Owen Knowles, "The story is told by the Captain in the first person, and some critics have deemed his account unreliable, and consider Legatt a projection of his own madness" (337). Looking upon the state that the captain is in, this is a very plausible explanation. If the captain is in a fragile emotional state, then he might be imagining the existence of Legatt. Resting on this assumption, we need to ask what role Legatt plays in this story. Why is he important to the captain's psychological make-up? To answer this, we need to investigate the character of Legatt more

closely. The way Legatt came to speak to the captain in the first place is important. According to R.W Stallman in *The Art of Joseph Conrad*, "what impelled Legatt to swim out to the ship was his loneliness ["I wanted to be seen, to talk with somebody before I went out"], and the same impulse motivates the captain and prompts him to greet the newcomer hospitably" (279). The captain, in his loneliness, is projecting that feeling onto another being created by his own psychosis. He is desperate to share a common thought or feeling with someone, and since no one on the ship can oblige, he will create someone to share with: a secret sharer. The eager captain receives Legatt in earnest, never once questioning the stranger's motives. Right away, the captain takes Legatt in and treats him as a friend. The captain says, "He appealed to me as if our experiences had been as identical as our clothes" (Conrad 254). That is a strange thing for the captain to have said about someone he had just met. Stallman accounts for these actions by observing that "Each feels that he is the only stranger on board, and each feels that he, as it were, has something to swim for" (279). If Legatt is imaginary, then he is a stranger because the captain wants him to be, like the captain himself, a stranger. Now that the captain has found someone to share with, he has something to swim for also. Both the captain and Legatt are symbols of hope to each other, a bright lighthouse to swim for in an empty sea. Legatt is hopeful because the captain is hopeful. Legatt was originally lonely because the captain was lonely. These examples reinforce the aforementioned point made that they are both part of the same psyche. So once we see Legatt as an extension of the captain, the next question we must confront is the one that can create the most confusion: what effect does Legatt have on the captain, once Legatt has been created?

While Legatt may feel the same as the captain, and be connected on a psychological level, Legatt is definitely different in some ways. This does not detract from the argument that Legatt is part of the captain's subconscious psyche; it simply adds another dimension to this argument. Not only has the captain created Legatt to be similar to him, he has created Legatt to exhibit all the characteristics that he doesn't have but simultaneously desires. The captain shows fear when he is in the act of hiding Legatt, and this is a trait that

bothers the captain in a painful way. According to Graver,

Unable to forget Legatt or the suspicions of his crew, he (the captain) admits that he requires deliberation to perform acts that for a confident commander would be instinctive. At each new threat of exposure he becomes increasingly apprehensive, while Legatt continues "perfectly self-controlled, more than calm—almost invulnerable." When the steward opens the door of the bathroom in which Legatt is hiding, the captain nearly swoons with terror, and before he learns of Legatt's safety, he automatically stresses the inexplicable, nightmarish quality of the events. But once again, when he learns the mundane truth, he marvels at "something unyielding in Legatt's character," "which was carrying him through so finely" (156).

By creating Legatt as an alter ego, the captain has in essence created a hero from whom he can learn and eventually become. He knows what he should be doing, and that behavior is projected onto Legatt, who is a kind of hero in the captain's eyes; this is essentially what he needs to be in order to successfully lead his crew. Stallman presents it in these terms: "Legatt, this other self, becomes the psychological embodiment of reality, the destiny, the ideal selfhood which the captain must measure up to" (284). Legatt is capable of such things in part because he is a man of action, and not altogether rational. He is a somewhat wild and dangerous character. This is in contrast to the captain's extreme rationality but inability to take needed action. According to John Palmer in *Conrad's Short Fiction*,

To subdue Legatt would be a mistake, the narrator must instead fuse Legatt's subrational personality with his own rational and civilized one, to emerge as a conceptually imperfect but pragmatically effective and healthy moral agent. It is not that the captain cannot be commander of his ship until Legatt has left it, but rather that until he has made his full and active practical commitment to Legatt—he risked everything to guarantee Legatt's freedom and survival, instead of his repression—he cannot feel the self-assurance and practical force necessary to command either himself or his ship (225).

This shows that the character Legatt may not be a perfect being in himself, but is just made up of those qualities that the captain lacks, so when the two are fused together, an ideal man is created from the symbiosis of the two. It is exactly this merging of the two personalities that allows the captain to save the day at the end of the story by taking action and steering the ship away from the land it is about to hit.

The end result of "The Secret Sharer" is the captain's release of Legatt, onto whom he has held so tightly. His alter ego may have gone away, but it is not an ending characterized by loss; rather, it is an ending characterized by completeness. The captain has absorbed and inculcated the qualities of Legatt. As Stallman puts it, "He is a success in saving his ship... and Legatt is a success too, in saving the captain, by serving as a model in being simultaneously his double and his opposite" (285). The captain is now psychologically complete; he no longer needs the alter ego Legatt because he is now whole. The captain, after being trapped in a cocoon, gains from Legatt the courage and resoluteness he needs to break free, and in the end emerges as a butterfly, confident in his ability to fly.

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Evaluation: *This is a fine piece of writing responding to a somewhat neglected piece of Joseph Conrad's work.*

Family Day at the Racetrack

Linda Bennett

Course: English 200

(Professional Writing: Grammar & Style)

Instructor: Trygve Thoreson

Assignment:

Compose a narrative essay of a kind that would merit publication in a popular mass-market magazine.

The e-mail message popped up on the computer screen: an invitation to enjoy “Family Day at the Racetrack.” All that I could think was, “So now it actually has a name.” I stared at the screen, reading the promises of a “fun-filled day for the entire family,” complete with pony rides and coloring book contests for the children. I felt my stomach begin to knot. I wanted to hit the delete key, but instead I sat staring at the computer.

We made our way through the aisles to take our seats. It was a hot and sticky summer day. I opened my box of Cracker Jacks that my father had always bought my sisters and my brother and I when we went to the racetrack, and I wondered what little prize would be inside this time. My father stared at the racing form, circling his choices. My mother asked if we wanted to choose a horse to bet on. It was a tradition when we went to the racetrack—each of us kids would pick out a horse whose name we liked. My father would then place

a one-dollar bet on those horses for us when he placed his own larger bets. When my father came back, he would proudly hand us our tickets, reminding us that they were “our very own.” I stared down again at my Cracker Jacks as I ate them, still trying to get to the little prize inside the box.

I looked around me at all the people in the stands. The adults looked so happy as they looked expectantly at the track and they sipped the foamy drinks from the Budweiser plastic cups. They kind of reminded me of kids at an amusement park, eager to see their favorite characters or to go on their favorite rides. The familiar smell of beer and cigarette smoke engulfed the stands. It was as if the blazing sun had burnt the smell into the air. The man behind me accidentally banged into my chair again, this time knocking over his beer. I moved my feet just in time to save my favorite pink sandals as the beer spilled under my chair, but it still bothered me because the beer made the ground sticky. I pulled my legs up to sit, as people back then called it, “Indian-style,” until the beer dried, and I stared down again at the Cracker Jacks as I ate more of them, and, finally, I found the little prize. It was a tiny little notebook pad—so small that it looked as if it was meant for a doll. I was excited because I decided that I could write a story or a poem in it. I borrowed a pen from my mother and began my writing. After a few minutes I ran out of paper, so I continued my writing on napkins that my mother had handed to me.

“And they’re off!” the loud voice suddenly bellowed through the stands, and the adults jumped up from their seats: yelling, cheering, and screaming to the horses who were barreling out of the gates. With each strike of the jockeys’ whips, the crowd’s roars erupted louder and the horses ran faster, their hoofs rumbling down on the ground. I wondered if the whipping hurt the horses. I wondered why the adults were so excited. The yells and shouts echoed through the stands as the horses approached the finish line, and I wondered if the adults really thought that the horses could even hear them above all the noise. The jockeys’ whips fiercely cracked the horses’ sides in rapid succession, and the crowd yelled out even louder. My ears began to ring. And then it was over, except for the brief cheering, booing, and swearing that filled the stands and the thumping of the

rolled-up racing forms that were slammed against the rails. Many of the adults settled back into their seats, while others left to place more bets or to buy food. It was over, until the next race began.

After a few more races had passed and I had finished my Cracker Jacks and my writing, I felt restless, and so I gained my mother's permission to walk down by the fence to see the horses more closely, provided that I always stayed within her view. I walked carefully down the steps, trying to avoid all the spilled beer, cigarette butts, empty cups, food wrappers, and torn-up tickets. The smell of beer and cigarette smoke hung much thicker in the air now, like fog during a hazy night. When I reached the fence I walked along outside it, trying to walk straight like I did in gym class on the balance beam. I looked up at the people in the stands, and they began to look the same. As I surveyed my surroundings more closely, I noticed that there were not many other kids at the racetrack. I looked through the fence at the horses, and I decided that they did not look happy, like the horses I saw running free in the movies. They looked sadly burdened down with their heavy saddles and their tight harnesses.

"And they're off!" the now familiar voice belted out again. Suddenly there were adults all around me—standing, leaning, and hitting on the fence as they yelled out to the horses. The horses' hooves pounded the ground as they ran ever so fast; the jockeys' whips cracked fiercely and repeatedly along the horses' sides. The yelling, the cheering, the pounding, the rumbling, and the cracking amplified throughout the entire grounds. It was deafening and my ears were sore, and then, finally, it was over again. The people left the fences, leaving me there alone with my ears still ringing and my mind made up that the horses must feel the pain of the whips, despite my mother having told me otherwise. I looked up at the stands and saw my mother motioning for me to come back up to the seats, and so I did.

My parents said it was time to get something to eat and to use the restrooms. We all piled out of our seats, and, along with the rest of the crowd, we walked up the stairs to the building inside. My father went to stand in the long ticket line while the rest of us headed towards the restrooms. Knowing that the line for the women's

restroom was always long, my mother told my brother that we would meet him at the concession stand. After we left the women's restroom we began walking back to the concession stand to meet my brother. The day was just like all of our past visits to the racetrack.

But then someone yelled loudly, "He has a gun!" and all of a sudden, the people in the huge crowd were screaming, pushing, and running. The screams of "Run! Run!" filled the air, along with the hard stamping of feet. I was about to run, too, but my mother, thank God, grabbed my sisters and me, pulled us against the wall, and held us there. She began yelling out my brother's name, her head darting back and forth as she desperately looked for him, all the while maintaining a tight grip on us girls. She told us to stay standing close against the wall, or else we could get trampled by the stampede. I began to cry. I was afraid that the man with the gun would find us and shoot us. I was also afraid of the stampede of people. I was most afraid because we did not know where my brother or my father was. We stood with our backs tightly hugging the wall until the running was finally over, all the while my mother yelling out for my brother and my father as she held onto my sisters and me. My crying had turned into hyperventilating-like gasps by this point and my oldest sister, Mary, tried her best to comfort me.

Finally, my father found us, and I was so happy to see him. I know my mother was too, but she immediately started shouting to him that my brother was missing. Although he tried to hide his emotions for our sakes, my father looked frightened, too, as he instructed my mother to stay with us girls and he headed out to look for my brother. I started to cry again, convinced that something had happened to my brother, when suddenly we saw my brother walking towards us from a distance. My mother yelled out to my father, and we all dashed quickly to my brother. The back of my brother's shirt was torn, and he looked afraid and dazed. As we ran up to hug him, he told us that when the people in the crowd yelled, "Run!" that he ran with them. He told us of getting pushed by the crowd and almost knocked to the ground, regaining his footing, and running as fast as he could to keep up with the pushing crowd. My mother began to cry at this point, and she yelled at my father

Family Day at the Racetrack

that we would never come back there again. My father said that we should all leave right away, and when I asked about the man with the gun, my parents told me that they didn't know why someone yelled that.

As we walked down the stairs, we saw police cars outside the building and we heard the sirens of ambulances and fire trucks as they approached the scene. Suddenly, my mother gasped and tried to turn my head away. But it was too late. I saw her—the pregnant lady lying on her back on the grass by the policemen, her swollen stomach high in the air revealing that she was probably about eight or nine months pregnant, her body completely still. People were gathered on the sidewalk, looking at her. My father walked over by the crowd, spoke to a few of the people, and then returned to us. He whispered something quietly to my mother, and then we all walked slowly away back to our car. I kept looking back at the lady, while my mother kept trying to guide my head in the other direction. Finally, my mother answered my question, which she had been trying hard to avoid. “Yes,” she replied, “the lady and her baby are dead.”

I hit the delete key on my computer with enough force to wipe the message away from everyone's computer.

Evaluation: *The framing device here (the delete key) helps Linda make a powerful point.*

Modern Life in Rome

Laura Brennan

Course: English 200

(Professional Writing: Grammar & Style)

Instructor: Trygve Thoreson

Assignment:

Compose a narrative essay of a kind that would merit publication in a popular mass-market magazine.

At nineteen, inquisitive yet naïve, I boarded a late afternoon flight bound for Rome, Italy. With a smile on my face and several large suitcases in tow, I ventured to the Eternal City to spend my sophomore year of college studying abroad. All at once, the Alitalia jet sped down the runway and the powerful engines pushed us up into the blue clouds of the afternoon sky. After having pored over maps and guidebooks during my recklessly long summer, I now sat on the plane and dreamed of the Roman history, art, and ancient ruins I was about to explore. I would soon discover that the modern city of Rome held secrets that would certainly perplex the ancient Romans.

When I arrived in Rome, I was met with a flurry of activity in the busy airport. The airport was crawling with people of all nationalities. Rowdy tour groups crowded together as polished executives dressed in black rushed to their first class seats. The loud chatter of the Italian language blended with perhaps a dozen other European dialects as I made my way through the masses of people. My anticipation to see Rome grew as

our bus traveled out of the airport grounds toward the city center. All along the way, the green pastures and multicolored flowers shone in the afternoon sun. Despite the beauty of this scene, the seven-hour time difference between Chicago and Rome weighed on my heavy eyelids. Though I could barely keep my sleepy eyes open, I watched as the bus suddenly passed through the ancient brick walls on the outskirts of the city and made its way toward the center of Rome.

The Eternal City is an enigma. She holds well-preserved ancient treasures to delight the eyes of modern men, yet also offers countless conveniences never imagined by the ancient Roman people. A first glimpse of Rome revealed graffiti mixed with Bernini's masterpieces. Small motorbikes and cars fought bumper across the uneven cobblestone streets. Outdoor fountains still contained fresh water pumped into the city center via aqueducts, though everyone walked around with bottles of designer water. Noontime reminded me I was in Italy when bells from hundreds of beautiful churches and basilicas informed visitors and locals alike that Rome is the center of Catholicism. There were no skyscrapers or glass-paned buildings, but rather, row after row of earth-toned yellow and orange structures with old, brown roofs and large, imposing windows.

Despite the antiquated facade of the city, it was easy to see the influence of modern mass culture. I quickly realized the remains of the magnificent Coliseum loomed on one side of the street, while movie theaters and supermarkets attracted crowds across the swarming lanes of traffic. It was disappointing to leave a church or museum after viewing exquisite frescoes and immediately see locals chatting away on their cell phones. Preferring to travel to the Vatican on foot, I constantly fought traffic and dozens of loud, obnoxious buses. I imagined Michelangelo never dodged buses on his way to paint the ceiling of the Sistine chapel. The mix of modern life interspersed with treasures of the past made Rome an eclectic destination to explore.

One day as the fiery late afternoon sun lit up rooftops and soaring swallows, I watched a group of tourists enter a Roman piazza as they danced along its cobblestone paving. Before them stood the most perfectly preserved monument of Ancient Rome, the Pantheon.

Modern Life in Rome

Beyond its Grecian columns was one of the architectural wonders of the world. Built in the second century AD, the perfectly circular dome atop the Pantheon measures 143 feet in diameter and is unsupported by reinforcement or beams. An awe-inspiring sight constructed of aged, marble-faced brick, the beauty of the Pantheon commanded my attention. Each day, I wandered to this site to admire the splendor and mystery of this ancient masterpiece. I sat quietly and imagined all the people that had once strolled through the piazza.

On one particular day, I basked in the early spring sunshine and watched as the tourists hurried toward this striking monument known as the Pantheon. Suddenly, I saw the crowd swerve past the entrance. The group was bound for a different dome—the golden arches of McDonald's. I struggled to understand who approved a restaurant location directly across from an astonishing artifact of Ancient Rome. Shocked that the tourists were choosing McDonald's over viewing the architectural wonders of the Pantheon, I followed the elated crowd across the piazza to investigate this intrusive piece of Americana. Inside the *Piazza del Pantheon* McDonald's, I saw Americans ordering value meals while Italian children delighted in Happy Meal toys. Disappointed that this piece of American mass culture had invaded the striking city of Rome, I left the restaurant and slowly walked home. As the sun began its descent from the azure sky and the late afternoon rays cast a marvelous spotlight on the Pantheon, I smiled, realizing that the beauty of the ancient treasures of Rome could somehow find a way to coexist with the conveniences of the modern world.

Evaluation: *Laura's detailed impressions lead to a nuanced and thoughtful conclusion.*

An Addict's Tale: Source and Cycle

Margaret Brigham

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Kurt Hemmer

Assignment:

Write an analysis of William S. Burroughs' novel Junky that defends a personal interpretation of the novel's value.

William Burroughs writes, "You become a narcotics addict because you do not have strong motivations in any other direction. Junk wins by default" (xxxviii). This statement from Burroughs' novel *Junky* gives a strong insight to the motivations of an addict. Oftentimes, the motivating force is drawn directly from a lack of purpose and a boredom with life and reality that causes the addict to search for a way to make himself numb to negative feelings he may not want to experience. Many people find this to be a reaction to stress, but at times boredom itself can become such a stressor for a person, making them feel a need to escape from themselves and turn to drugs for this escape. Burroughs' book illustrated this struggle beautifully. Throughout the book, Burroughs' main character, William Lee, struggled with lack of direction and boredom, which led him to believe that "[Junk] is a way of life" (xxxix).

Burroughs' persona, William Lee, is a man who grew up in early 1920s suburbia. His parents were well off, so he had very little need for money, and he was disgusted with the people around him that seemed quite phony. Lee stated in the prologue, "My parents decided to move away to the suburbs 'to get away from the people'" (xxxvi). One can wonder from reading this and other details in the prologue about his childhood if his lack of direction may in fact have stemmed from his parents' lack of interest in him. Or, even if that wasn't the actual case, it was still the way the character perceived his parents' attitude toward him, affecting his self-confidence. By believing that he was unworthy of his parents' attention or unworthy of focusing attention on himself, his poor self-esteem led him to a life of boredom and drug abuse.

Initially, the concept of boredom may seem to be a basic excuse. However, one can see that rather than being a mere defense, Lee's free time actually becomes a driving force toward his addiction. Boredom and junk become a repetitive cycle throughout the book as Lee bounces from place to place and lives from habit to habit. This monotony is even characteristic in Lee's first experience with junk. He states, "At that time I had never used any junk and it did not occur to me to try it" (2). "A few nights after meeting Roy and Herman, I used one of the syrettes," (6) claims Lee nonchalantly.

His next habit follows the same pattern after his suspended sentence. Lee explains, "After I gave up lush-working, I decided to push junk" (34). He states most of these things with the same amount of effort as saying he had nothing to do so he went to the park.

The lack of remorse he shows not only illustrates why *Junky* is such a controversial book, but also denotes his overall attitude toward life and addiction. As heroin affects a person psychologically and numbs him from life's realities, it begins to present itself in the addict's personality. This paints a bleak, realistic picture to the reader of the effects the drug has. Once the addict's view of life has become this distorted, and they continue to run from the law in fear, the cycle of running and using continues and perpetuates itself. Lee shows this as he runs from New York to Texas to New Orleans (where he again finds nothing more to do and begins using again). Upon being caught and on the verge of being prosecuted, Lee runs again to the Rio Grande Valley and finally to Mexico City. The desperation of his situation is evident as he shows a willingness to go anywhere he needs to in order to hide from the law and be able to live a free life to use junk as he wishes to. It is within this cycle that he subtly identifies to the reader that he has no true freedom since he is still prisoner to the lifestyle junk generates. "When you give up junk, you give up a way of life," (127) is the phrase that he uses to describe this phenomenon.

Burroughs seems to have some very strong theories to why junk addiction overcomes a person as strongly as it does. He uses the fictitious character of Lee to present these concepts as perceived fact. The theory is most clearly described when Lee states matter-of-factly, "Junk turns the user into a plant" (138). Of course, he isn't stating that a human is going to spontaneously sprout branches, root into the ground, and become a tree. However, he is also not quite speaking metaphorically, either. Instead, he is simply stating that by injecting a drug that is originally derived from a plant into one's bloodstream, a person begins to need the substance in the same manner that a plant needs water and soil for food in order to survive. Thus, by using junk, a person is introducing to their body an additional substance that becomes necessary to their survival, making junk fuel for life.

These concepts can be quite terrifying and abstract to a person who has had no experience with drug use, and they can be even more so to a person who never used junk herself, but has experienced a relationship with a junky. In a situation of that nature, it may seem a book of this sort would answer questions and explain behaviors that were previously impossible to understand. Instead, it merely opens up deeper, more disturbing questions. The strongest of these is generated from the addict's indifferent attitude. If junk addiction can consume a person so completely—despite all efforts a person may make to recover—does that make relapse an inevitable reality?

Works Cited

- Burroughs, William S. *Junky: 50th Anniversary Definitive Edition*. 1953. Ed. Oliver Harris. New York: Penguin, 2003.

Evaluation: *Margaret's argument is an intelligent elucidation of why reading a subversive Beat text can be simultaneously disturbing and enlightening.*

I Rode the Rails to School and Back

Jonathan Chiou

Course: English 200

(Professional Writing: Grammar & Style)

Instructor: Trygve Thoreson

Assignment:

Compose a narrative essay concerning one or more experiences you have had at a college you've attended. Your essay should include precise, concrete details that contribute to a guiding central point you wish to make about your college or about college life.

I could *not wait* to get out of high school. It wasn't that most of my peers were not to my liking, or that the rules the administration (sometimes) enforced were insane, or anything else that students usually associate when they think back to their high school years with some dread growing deep in their stomach at the remembrance of such chaotic times. It was about freedom and leaving home.

Now, I was never the best student in high school despite what my ACT scores or history in the "gifted" and "honors" programs may lead anyone to believe. In fact, I think I graduated with a three-point-two GPA out of a five point scale; and had my honors classes not counted for more points than regular courses, I'm sure it would have been much lower. But college was about change! I was excited to go away and really dedicate myself to learning about something that I wanted to do for a living because I tend to do much better in classes

where I find the material engaging and worth my time.

I had done only a few college visits, for three reasons: I had no idea what I wanted to study or even do for a living; I thought I wouldn't be able to make it into many of the colleges I wanted to go to, and once I visited the University of Illinois at Chicago campus, I knew I would be a student there in the fall of 2003. Eventually I got accepted into UIC, and I say "eventually" because the office of admissions there mixed up my paperwork, filing my test scores under "Chiov," and my high school transcript under "Chiou." I felt that there was no real foul on their part as I tend to have sloppy handwriting. Instead, I should have realized that this was a sign of things to expect from the administration at that school.

Originally, I wanted to live on campus because it is right in the heart of Chicago, and I had lived in the northwest suburbs for all of the fourteen years I've lived in Illinois. I loved going down to "the city" for concerts and shopping, and living there would make things easier, not just for entertainment and diversions (which we all know are very important to college students), but because I wanted the experience of sharing a dorm with someone and meeting people on campus. However, UIC is largely a commuter school, and since my parents had just remodeled the downstairs of our house where my new room would be, I felt it would be wrong and somewhat selfish to ask them if I could live downtown. So I commuted, and while I liked it at first, I soon came to hate it and wished that my parents had not remodeled and that I could have lived on the UIC campus.

From my house, the city is about an hour away by train and about the same by car, depending on traffic. I knew I wouldn't want to deal with the traffic, so I got a parking permit for the train station and monthly passes for the train ride. The length of the train ride proved to be somewhat beneficial to study or finish homework. Unfortunately, that wasn't the case most of the time as I was often exhausted from work, school, and, ironically enough, the long commute. So I actually spent most of my time sleeping next to strangers or by myself on the way to school and sometimes on the way home. But that was a rare luxury, as I would learn from experience that one can't always wake up in time for his stop.

I Rode the Rails to School and Back

Each ride on the train was fairly interesting, for the most part. There were the regular people you saw every day at the stations, who would come and go, but every now and then there would be someone new and peculiar. I remember one time I was sitting in a car almost entirely by myself. I was going home and had found myself a nice place to sit and was waiting for more people to rush in and fill the seats and for the train to crawl forward, as if awakening from a great slumber to carry us to our destinations. I was reading when I heard a voice, and the voice sounded quite out of place. It took me a minute or so until I realized it was speaking German, at which point I noticed that there was not one, but many voices clamoring in German. Apparently, a student exchange group of some sort was visiting Chicago, and here I was sitting in a train just reading a book. It made me think about what other people must feel like when tourists come to *their* towns. Because let's face it, residents generally don't care for tourists unless they are making money off of them.

Another time, I started to converse with a middle-aged man who had a guitar and an amplifier with him. We argued Gibsons over Fenders, tube amps over solid states, and who we each thought to be the greatest bands and musicians. Across from us was a middle-aged woman who would chime into our conversation, often without any idea what we were talking about, and perhaps, without any idea what was going on at all. The lady had raven hair with a streak of gray to the left of her forehead and talked slowly, her eyes fixed into a stare that gave off the impression that she felt superior to you as well as feared you. At one point, the middle-aged man had started to eat his Subway dinner when the woman said, "I'm hungry. Can I have some of that?" as she pointed to his submarine sandwich. The man and I glanced at her and then at each other, and with a slight hesitation he replied, "Uh, well, a. you can have my bag of chips." The man and I simultaneously came to the conclusion that this woman was definitely off her rocker. She even accused me of lying when I said I played bass, saying "Show me. Take out your bass and play," which was impossible as I clearly did not have a bass of any sort with me. She eventually believed me when I dis-

played to her my calloused fingers, which the man told her was a good indication that I was, indeed, a bassist.

But what do train rides have to do with college? When I started writing this paper, I had a completely different subject in mind; I was going to write about how college can be hard because it's the first time that many young adults are on their own and responsible for themselves. But when I started to write about the train, I just had so many memories that I felt it was an even better topic, so I switched over to it. I thought about going back and deleting some of the paragraphs at the beginning, but I think keeping them will prove my point about college.

And it's my entire experience on the trains that reminds me of college; it's a time and a place where, sometimes, things will suddenly make some sense (why people hate tourists) or none at all (batty old women on the train). It's a journey that may seem routine to an average person, but those who truly experience it notice all the quirks and foibles that exist during that ride. Sometimes there are cancellations, sometimes you're late, and sometimes you miss your stop and have to find a way to get back to where you are supposed to be. They are all valuable experiences because they teach you the things you can't always learn from a lecture, the things you need to learn to grow as a person.

I loved riding the train in the beginning and hated it toward the end of my first and only semester at UIC, but reflecting on those times makes me realize how much I really miss it and why I loved it so much. And thinking about college in terms of those train rides has given me a better outlook on things; now, I feel like I can get back on track with my life. I'm not entirely sure of my next destination at the moment, but I do know that it has a dorm room, and I will get there soon.

Evaluation: *Jonathan's in-class essay offers a classic instance of a writer discovering a topic as he writes. His subject seems to go "off track" midway through, but Jonathan then senses a crucial connection and triumphantly brings the reader back to his guiding thesis in a memorable concluding paragraph.*

Incomprehensible Love

Julie Darms

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Kris Piepenburg

Assignment:

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

“‘What do any of us really know about love?’ Mel said. ‘It seems to me we’re just beginners at love’” (Carver 980). This quote is from Raymond Carver’s short story, “What We Talk About When We Talk About Love.” Mel is having a chat with his second wife and his two friends, a married couple. The topic of love has been brought up, and Mel can’t seem to let it go. This quote appears in the middle of the story, right after Mel says he has an example of what real love is, but then he leaves the group hanging while he rants about love. At this point, the conversation has grown more serious. It has turned more philosophical. Mel expresses his feelings of ineptness and the sheer complexity of the subject matter. This quote shows the major theme in this honest short story. After reading this story, it is hard to firmly say that anyone can fully understand love.

Raymond Carver is known for his minimalist style of writing. Using as little extravagance as possible, Carver gets at the heart of common, everyday life yet reveals the outstanding within it. Critic Joe Nordgren claims that, “ordinary life is the antagonist throughout [Carver’s stories and poems]...” (par. 2). Carver’s personal life may have affected his writing, as Charles E. May suggests. When Carver made a pledge that, “he would stop drinking forever [it] had a significant effect on his writing style and career” (par. 3).

The story starts out with Nick narrating while he and his wife Laura have joined Mel and Mel’s wife Terri in sitting around the kitchen table in the middle of the afternoon, drinking. The subject of love is brought up, and according to critic Adam Meyer, “Carver is able to turn the question of love in several different directions” (309). When Terri discusses her lover who almost killed her, yet she still believed they were in love, Mel takes off on the topic. He makes it clear how drunk he is, yet may be more honest about his fears than ever before. As Mel talks about his fantasies of being a knight, gives examples of true love, and shares his disenchantment over loving then hating his first wife, it is clear that, “Mel...has bested no one and has not successfully defended his ideas about love” (Maggi, par. 9). The current relationships between Mel and Terri, and Nick and Laura also become apparent. As “What We Talk About When We Talk About Love” unfolds, the reader is

likely to become uncomfortable in their own lack of knowledge about love. Most of us think we know what love is, but as this story suggests, we haven't even begun to explore all of love's aspects. We may even be too simple to comprehend it. As Meyer suggests, "The only resolution reached [at the end of the story] is that we really have no idea 'What We Talk About When We Talk About Love'" (308).

The story also begs us to not judge other people's versions of love. Terri had a completely different view of love than the rest of the people at the table. Terri was convinced that her old lover, Ed, loved her even though he had tried to kill her, and finally killed himself because he "missed" her. Even if the love between Terri and Ed could be classified as love, it definitely wasn't healthy. Terri may have had a twisted view of reality, as Nathaniel Branden suggests in his essay entitled, "Immature Love." Branden says, "On one level, it is true enough to say that a characteristic of immature love is that the man or woman does not perceive his or her partner realistically; fantasies and projections take the place of clear vision" (967). Terri probably saw what she wanted to see because she was so desperate to believe she was loved.

While Terri and Ed's "love" might seem ridiculous, it is a reality for many men and women. Abused women often stay in bad relationships because they believe they're in love. They make excuses for their partner. Many don't see the seriousness of the situation. In fact, as Dawn Bradley Berry points out in her book, *Domestic Violence Sourcebook*, "Many women believe on some level that if only they love a man enough, they can 'save' him and he will change" (41). Terri seemed to blame herself for Ed's personal life falling apart and wanted to be there for him so she could make everything better. Terri wanted to believe that Ed loved her even if it was not accurate. In regard to these kinds of women, Berry says, "She sees what appears to be an ideal and loving partnership. Her dreams are fulfilled and she wants to believe it can work" (32).

Mel vehemently denies Terri's views on love when he says, "'My God, don't be silly. That's not love, and you know it,' ... 'I don't know what you'd call it, but I sure know you wouldn't call it love'" (977). Mel is hor-

rified by the thought that what Ed had for Terri could have been love. According to Ewing Campbell, "If [Mel] sees that Ed's passion hardly qualifies as love, he need not feel quite as emotionally threatened by the dead lover" (310). Mel is sure at this point that he knows what love isn't. He was very judgmental and alienated Terri with his comments. Terri wants her feelings validated even though they are different. When Terri told Mel not to act like he was drunk, Mel responded, "Just shut up for once in your life" (981). It's obvious that Terri and Mel have problems. It would be one thing to say "Shut up!" but to say "for once in your life" shows there are a lot of unresolved issues and resentment between them. They don't seem to be meeting each other's needs; however, they seem satisfied to stay in the marriage because it is much better than their previous relationships.

Frighteningly, Berry informs us that, "Abuse usually starts with degrading behavior, insults, put-downs" (28). While reading this book, the links to Mel's treatment of Terri, not just Ed's, was startling. In Berry's book, she lists ten risk factors for becoming an abuser but says, "The single most important factor...is one partner's need to feel he or she absolutely controls the other" (27). The way in which Mel talks to Terri and how he is insistent on finding answers shows that he has this kind of personality. It is obvious that Mel's longings are not being fulfilled by Terri, and according to David Celani, author of *The Illusion of Love*, "The first stage of the battering cycle occurs when the infantile abuser feels that his needs are not being met" (177).

Laura and Nick believe they are the perfect couple and don't think anything bad could happen to their relationship. Following some of Mel's outbursts, Laura says, "'Well, Nick and I know what love is...For us, I mean...'" (979). Laura is the peacekeeper of the group because she doesn't try to push her views on others by saying love is an absolute. Laura is confident that she and Nick are in love because they are happy. By joking that romantic love does not last long, Terri reveals that she believes Nick and Laura, "...are still in the first throes of love, whereas [Terri's] marriage to Mel seems to have become stale" (Meyer 309). After proclaiming her love is on the right track, Laura bumped Nick's knee

and said, "You're supposed to say something now" (979). She may be happy with Nick, but she still has disappointments when he doesn't respond in the way she expects. This shows that sometimes we're so wrapped up in our expectations that we can't see reality.

Mel talks the most during the story. Mel's ramblings give the reader a glimpse of what is going on in his head. Seemingly out of the blue, Mel blurts:

If I could come back again in a different life, a different time and all, you know what? I'd like to come back as a knight. You were pretty safe wearing all that armor. It was all right being a knight until gunpowder and muskets and pistols came along (982).

Mel is afraid of love and the hurt it brings. He shows his desire to hide behind anything that will protect him. Maybe he would rather just sit on the sidelines and never love than run the risk of that love failing. However, Liz Brent points out that this protection from hurt, "can be the very cause of his suffering" (306).

Believing he had a great example of true love, Mel told the story about an old couple who got in a serious accident. Mel retold his interaction with the old man by saying:

Well, the husband was very depressed for the longest while. Even after he found out that his wife was going to pull through, he was still very depressed. Not about the accident, though. I mean, the accident was one thing, but it wasn't everything. I'd get up to his mouth-hole, you know, and he'd say no, it wasn't the accident exactly but it was because he couldn't see her through his eye-holes. He said that was what was making him feel so bad. Can you imagine? (983-984).

By giving this example, Mel shows that he can't imagine a love like that. Though Mel seems to laugh at this kind of love, the reader can tell he really longs for a love like the old couple's. Mel probably doesn't feel this for Terri, and it scares him. He wants a love that is more than physical but doesn't know how to go about it. Meyer states that, "this old couple symbolizes for Mel... a sign of stable and long-lasting love" (308). Mel

has never experienced this kind of love, since all his relationships have collapsed.

Much of Mel's fears about love stem from his failed first marriage to Marjorie. While reflecting back, Mel says, "There was a time when I thought I loved my first wife more than life itself. But now I hate her guts. I do. How do you explain that? What happened to that love? What happened to it, is what I'd like to know. I wish someone could tell me" (980). Mel articulates his fear of the unpredictability of love. He thinks love is a feeling, and feelings change quickly. I believe he also addresses this question because he's afraid it could happen again to him and Terri. Brent brings up an alarming idea when she says, "Mel's hatred for his ex-wife and his wish that she would die is used as a thinly veiled expression of similar hatred for Terri" (307).

Mel is well aware that love is fleeting. When talking about what might happen after the death of a spouse, Mel muses, "All this, all of this love we're talking about, it would just be a memory. Maybe not even a memory" (980). Mel believes that life will always go on and love isn't central to life. He suggests that love is just an experience. His beliefs are shared by Edna St. Vincent Millay. In her poem "Love Is Not All," Millay confesses:

Pinned down by pain and moaning for release,
Or nagged by want past resolution's power,
I might be driven to sell your love for peace,
Or trade the memory of this night for food.
It well may be. I do not think I would. (818-819)

Both Millay and Mel seem to understand that love is not as important as life and does not meet every need, yet they would rather have love and suffer the consequences. Their minds are aware that they can survive without love, yet they can't deny the longing in their souls for this feeling that sometimes seems useless.

Many people fall into love to meet their own needs. In another section of "Immature Love" Branden says,

...their whole lives may be organized around the desire to please, to be taken care of, or, alternatively, to control and dominate, to manipulate and *coerce* the satisfaction of their needs and wants, because they don't

Incomprehensible Love

trust the authenticity of anyone's love or caring. They have no confidence that what they are, without their facades and manipulations, is *enough* (965).

This quote can give light to all the relationships in this story. Most of the problems between the couples resulted from individual incompetence rather than a poor match of two people. Instead of two complete individuals coming together to serve the other, two greedy individuals become even more impoverished because of their partner's use of emotional resources. Mel and Terri are clearly at this point. They are constantly having to do a quick patch job by saying "I love you" after they insult each other. Nick and Laura seem to be falling into the trap as well, since Laura is trying to get Nick to fulfill her romantic fantasies. Of course, no relationship is perfect. Yet these couples don't seem to realize that.

As the story closes, much has been said, but nothing has been decided. Nick explains that at the end of the conversation, there was silence so immense that he "could hear the human noise we sat there making..." (985). Brent interprets the scene by saying, "It is as if the excess of human emotion aroused by the discussion of true love hums about the room without the hope of articulate expression between the two couples" (307). A topic so deep is rare, and after all the talking is done, people usually need to be alone with their thoughts. Words can't express a mystery like this; "it is too extraordinary to explain and all attempts to do so are destined to fail" (Nordgren, par. 4). Seeing the impoverished human craving for love indicates that this is the most elaborate emotional expedition that any one human can make with another.

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Evaluation: *This paper uses secondary research very intelligently in presenting an analysis of this short story, and some of the sources used are out of the usual "literary criticism" realm, which makes this paper a bit more unique than the standard English 102 research paper. The writing, also, is confident and mature.*

Meanings and Connections in the Responses to *The Hours* and *Mrs. Dalloway*

Jaelyn DeRose

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Joshua Sunderbruch

Assignment:

*Create a thorough analysis of a literary work,
applying at least one critical approach.*

...we struggle to write books that do not change the world, despite our gifts and our unstinting efforts, our most extravagant hopes. We live our lives, do whatever we do, and then we sleep—it's as simple and ordinary as that (Cunningham 225).

In Michael Cunningham's interpretation of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, essentially a reader's response, Cunningham plays with characters, symbols, motifs, time, and plot to tell a story of his own. Through his character Clarissa Vaughn, the modern day equivalent to Woolf's Clarissa Dalloway, Cunningham assesses that essentially, the power of literature is nonexistent. All that one believes he or she could accomplish or provoke is up for interpretation. The reader is in control of writing. It is he or she who creates meaning, not the author. Despite the eloquent thoughts; beautiful, vivid imagery prevalent in her writing; a large number of friends; a successful writing career; and a loving husband—Virginia Woolf was a deeply depressed woman who eventually took her own life. *Mrs. Dalloway* is often seen as a semi-autobiographical tale.

Though the various assets of the novel would elicit some type of response from a reader, it is impractical to state that any given reader is reading, understanding, and interpreting the novel as Woolf either wrote or intended its interpretation. It is natural for a reader to form connections with certain characters or events based upon his or her own personality and/or life experiences. Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* explores the alter egos of housewife Clarissa Dalloway and shell-shocked soldier Septimus Smith. Michael Cunningham explores the quiet, desperate lives of three women in three different eras, all inextricably influenced by *Mrs. Dalloway*. Using *Mrs. Dalloway*, we will explore the reader-response criticism that is essentially Cunningham's novel and analyze the symbolism and imagery prevalent in the works and how one would examine and use them in accordance to their own interpretation of the work.

Reader-response criticism can be seen as the most open form of literary criticism. It seems to be guided by the least amount and most open of rules, because to guide the reader towards a response is forcing a "meaning" upon the reader.

Reader-response critics contend that a text does not (cannot) convey meaning. They confront the intentionalist view that a text inscribes its author's purpose, as well as the formalist view that meaning lies in a text's structural signification. Reader-response critics put forth two principal arguments in behalf of this notion of semantic indeterminacy: (1) an intentionalist understanding of "meaning" is inadequate for a description of the reading process, and (2) the ultimate impossibility of an objective viewpoint privileges the reader. (Porier par. 1)

Symbols cannot be symbolic without some sort of meaning attached. Using the word "meaning" in the context of the reader-response theory is contending that meaning is not conveyed by an author or text, but by the reader who responds to it. A reader who responds to the many interlaying symbols of *Mrs. Dalloway* and to the idea of an exploration of the novel in *The Hours* will undoubtedly attach meaning and expand the stories with these motifs. These are what are considered informed or competent readers, and they make up the group with which reader-response theorists are primarily concerned.

"Informed or competent readers are familiar with the conventions of literature...a There will still, of course, be plenty of room for differences of interpretation...a In short, we can say that a writer works against a backdrop that is shared by readers...aAs readers, we are familiar with various kinds of literature. Knowing (to a large degree) how we ought to respond, our responses thus are not merely private" (Barnet et al 1608). Barnet sees the world of reader response from the perspective of the educated/knowledgeable reader as one that cannot be purely genuine. Besides relating personal life experiences, the reader would undoubtedly feed off of his or her educational background and influences of other works, teachers, theories that will guide them to a predisposed interpretation—what a reader thinks he or she should get out of a given work.

"In reading a novel, one can sometimes extrapolate from it an implied reader, a figure whom the text seems to be addressing and who occasionally functions as a character in the work" (Leitch et al 18). Reading *Mrs.*

Dalloway, a reader often feels a sense of Woolf's presence in the work as though she is there as an observer of the observer, someone to watch over the reader and guide them toward reacting to the work. This is not to imply that authors wish for their readers to have a similar reaction to their work. On the contrary, most authors merely wish to supply material to press the reader toward his or her own enlightenment. But it is not to say that all authors write with an idea of the general public in mind. This would be an impossible task. *Mrs. Dalloway* may most likely make the grandest effects upon other women, but not all women. Women who, like Clarissa, wonder about the what-ifs in life, the people that surround her, the inevitable jealousies—these seem to be Woolf's target audience. Not that other readers wouldn't appreciate Woolf's work, but a reader who is not only an informed reader, but a responsive reader, is likely to get the most from the novel.

Among the various types of readers are those who are educated to appreciate the academic, historical, social, and political aspects of a piece of writing. Leitch sees these readers as fixated upon their educational beliefs and often oppose and interrogate these texts on no real basis other than their engrained beliefs. The truly intriguing readers are those whose minds may be considered slightly less sculpted, but nevertheless, are open and more receptive to various perspectives and ideas. "Real readers are people whose actual responses to plays, poems, and other texts have been recorded by theorists and, in some cases, analyzed for their individual styles and for the personal psychological quirks they reveal" (Leitch et al 18).

For the more average reader, however, there exist elements of psychology that affect the reacting experience. Since the average reader is not predisposed to identify with any particular elements of a given text, psychologists are often interested in the various elements a reader picks up and how they interpret them. In effect, the psychologist is given a glimpse into the life and background of the reader through their interpretation of what on the surface seems to be an unrelated topic.

Woolf makes it clear from the start that the lives of Septimus Smith and Clarissa Dalloway would run as parallel opposites throughout the course of the novel.

Both respond to the world around them in different ways, and the world responds to them differently as well. Though neither of these characters ever comes into direct contact with one another, the reader places a strong sense of connection between the two characters. Clarissa is life, Septimus is death. Clarissa is sane, Septimus is not. On the surface, there appears to be almost no reason to parallel Clarissa's tale with the seemingly pointless one of Septimus Smith if the characters' lives are never to intertwine. Woolf is essentially modeling Septimus as a means to better explore the character of Clarissa.

Since the book's title is *Mrs. Dalloway* there is never any question that the story's goal is to remain centered upon Clarissa. "But, possibly the deepest root of difference between them is the fact that Clarissa is able to lose herself, and Septimus holds tightly to the control of his own ego. Neither one begins with an interior balance, if you will, between their souls and their egos, but Clarissa, because she lets go of the boundaries around her own ego, comes to a moment of fulfillment, a moment of balance that Septimus has little hope of ever achieving" (Kuhlmann 30). It is through this contrast that the reader can grasp a greater understanding of the character development and what she believes is being conveyed about this woman. Woolf does not come out and say, this is who Clarissa Dalloway is. She uses symbols and contrasts to create a wall off which the reader bounces her own opinions, ideas, and interpretations.

This is why *Mrs. Dalloway* is considered to be a novel of such great stature. It does not fit the standard plot formula of introduction, rising action, climax, dénouement, and conclusion, nor does it ever try to. The standard plot formula is too decisive for further exploration. The novel takes place in less than a day time-wise, essentially an afternoon. The involved reader is never curious what is to happen next or how the day would end. It is about development; development of characters and their thoughts, perspectives, ideas, interactions, and pasts. The meaning a reader extracts from the novel is dependant upon preexisting social codes and learned protocols of interpretation. Each "community" that interprets a text enlists the interpretive strategies of his or her own field (Leitch 19). These

strategies then form the shape of the way in which a reader would interpret a text. For the reader of *Mrs. Dalloway*, it is about learning and understanding, not how the party she is preparing for will turn out.

Woolf succeeds in writing a great novel in that there are no answers in this novel, only opportunities for great questions. Why is Clarissa unhappy? Do she and Richard really love one another? Should she and Peter be together? What caused the rift between her and her daughter? Is there an inappropriate relationship between her daughter and her tutor, Mrs. Kilman? Why is Clarissa so jealous of Mrs. Kilman? What is the story of Sally and Clarissa's relationship?

To probe these questions and responses, there are motifs and symbolism throughout the story: flowers, Big Ben, automobiles, airplanes, and the various members and classes of people. The bells in *Mrs. Dalloway* signal the inevitability of change: "Big Ben strikes. There! Out it boomed. First a warning, musical; then the hour, irrevocable. The leaden circles dissolved in the air" (Woolf 4). "The central image of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* appears in the bells that ring emphatically at crucial junctures and resonate metaphorically throughout the novel" (Harrington par. 1). It is almost as if Woolf uses the bells to state, "Take notice! Think." The bells and Big Ben seem to symbolize parts where some sort of change or idea is taking place. Woolf never wishes to state what is exactly happening at these points in the story but attempts to evoke a response in the reader by drawing attention to a given scene. The church bells ring forward changes in the story, often calling into question the voice of masculine authority. According to the preface of an early edition of *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf had originally intended to have Clarissa commit suicide before creating the character of Septimus to do it for her (Rosenfeld 153).

The inclusion of the character of Septimus Warren Smith has long been a source of interest among readers and critics alike who wonder what purpose Woolf intended this alter ego of Clarissa to serve. Readers cannot help but to associate the distinction between Clarissa and Septimus as one influenced by the realm of gender criticism. It seems as though Septimus' quality of life was betrayed by his own masculinity. The

premise of the shell-shocked soldier is not created as an outlet to blame for Septimus' problems. Woolf instead links Septimus' problems to his own male ego. The source of his own madness exists in the depths of this ego. His lack of feeling consequently destroys his insight, empathy with others, and imagination, and his artistic capabilities are destroyed as well. His suicide stems from his refusal to face whatever it is that frightens him in his consciousness, most likely stemming from the war (Kuhlmann 31). It is as though Woolf views art as life and the act of living it and the refusal of Septimus to come to terms and open up his feelings destroys the artistic vision that is life, ultimately causing Septimus to destroy himself.

The reader as well perceives the inclination for Clarissa to retreat into a world similar to that of Septimus Smith. However, it is in the expansions of her thoughts and perspective that she withdraws from this (Septimus, though full of thought, wallows in ideas of loneliness). She reflects on successes and failures, disappointment and envy, and "the complexities these emotions bring to her awareness" (Kuhlmann 31). Clarissa is a character defined by balance, whereas Septimus is all extreme. She wishes to expand her world, but never sacrifices her soul or her ego.

But why Clarissa? Kuhlmann cites Woolf's female character as "an artist of life, a character whose feminine qualities are the root of her creativity" (31). Essentially, *Mrs. Dalloway* is Woolf's promotion of the feminine qualities she seems to think better mankind. Perhaps this may be the reason Cunningham's interpretation focuses on three women, three people most likely to enlighten and be enlightened by the novel.

In Cunningham's novel, three women tell three separate stories of three separate lives all interconnected by the novel *Mrs. Dalloway*. There is a depressed Virginia Woolf, the author, beginning to write the novel in 1923; an unhappy fifties housewife named Laura Brown, whose perspective of her world is being changed through her reading of Woolf's novel; and modern day book editor Clarissa Vaughn, nicknamed Mrs. Dalloway, a woman who is essentially a twist on Woolf's character, buying the flowers and preparing for a party as was Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway.

The characters of *Mrs. Dalloway* are not perfect illustrations either of virtue or of vice (Woolf is too rich a writer to create characters that are caricatures). But understanding what Woolf says of them, and assessing both how they are deficient and how they succeed, brings us closer to Woolf's own views on character. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Clarissa Dalloway is both the central figure and the moral center of the novel; viewing her through the eyes of others, and being privy to her thoughts about both herself and others we see Woolf's character evaluation at work. (Curd par. 6)

Woolf's novel is an analysis of human nature, of the little idiosyncrasies that make us are who we are. Woolf never intends to define human nature, but to merely open it up for reader commentary. The readers then can analyze the various facets of the lives of Septimus Smith and Clarissa Dalloway with respect to the symbols, information, and interactions that are supplied by Woolf's writing. "Clarissa Dalloway is in the process of developing a genuinely good character. Her actions and emotions have become a true part of herself, and are not the result of calculation; she has the capacity to judge character and to manage her emotions in a praiseworthy way" (Curd par. 39). This is why she succeeds as a character where Septimus fails. She allows the reader to enter her world, faults and all, to understand what makes her tick and how she responds to the world around her. The closed doors that make up the life of Septimus Smith prevent any readers from fully understanding or sympathizing with him. The ability to communicate is the missing link of Septimus Warren Smith. It is where the parallel between Septimus and Clarissa is terminated. It is the reason why the story roots for Mrs. Dalloway and ends Septimus' life in end.

Along with the paralleled lives of Septimus and Clarissa, another noticeable facet to the readers is the inclusion of ideas of class division and distinction in the England of this era. It also serves to comment on the materialism and self-involvement that was becoming predominant for many Britons. In the opening scenes of the novel *Mrs. Dalloway*, Clarissa's journey through the city to get the flowers is full of imagery, some of which are Woolf's particular favorites: the airplane and the

automobile. She subtly mocks the importance the townspeople place upon analyzing the plane's skywriting and of the identity of a person in a fancy, dark automobile (could it be royalty?). But amongst all this imagery of horizontal motion, Woolf adds vehicles that have stalled, blocked crosswalks, and Septimus "unable to pass" (Woolf 14). It is in these mocking assessments of horizontal motion that Woolf is portraying her true emotions on the desire for people to obtain vertical motion (personal and financial mobility) in an increasingly materialistic society (Rosenfeld 140-141). The members of the increasingly expanding middle class, look longingly into the windows of the motor car and the windows of expensive shops, with the difference between the middle and upper classes shown as shock and awe versus appreciation and acceptance of good things.

Windows play a role in the view of various classes. It is through a window that Clarissa views the ambulance that is going to take Septimus's body. She sees that something is going on, but she is not connected with it. The window provides her with a protection of her life of privilege (Rosenfeld 141). Septimus's plunge through a window shows his resistance toward a life he felt trapped in and the doctor who couldn't help him. So what did Woolf hope to convey with the death of Septimus Warren Smith? "Death was defiance... There was an embrace in death" (Guth par. 5). Septimus's death was his last and final attempt to communicate all he could not and all they (his wife and doctors) would not listen to.

Ironically, Septimus's final thoughts before he plunges to his death are among the most controversial and hypocritical in the novel. "He did not want to die. Life was good. The sun hot. Only human beings—what did they want? 'I'll give it to you!' he cried" (Woolf 149). Readers gain a sense of betrayal by those who were enlisted to help Septimus, though it was, according to Dr. Holmes, "a sudden impulse, no one was in the least to blame" (Woolf 150). It is as though Septimus had felt the world long ago give up on him and eventually decided to give up on himself. Again, though, it portrays Septimus's strong connection to his male ego, and his use of the words "I'll give it to *you*" and what "*they* want" demonstrate selfishness, the

readiness to place blame upon others, and the fact that Septimus's inner self was doomed from the start—that his death was, in fact, meant to be.

Above all, readers relate to the style of *Mrs. Dalloway* and are not fixated upon any general ideas of plot development. The stream-of-consciousness style connects the minds of various people within one day in England—people who, for the most part, aren't necessarily important in the lives of the main characters, but nevertheless provide valuable insight on the inner workings of these characters and their own personal ideals, judgments, values, and opinions, et cetera.

Cunningham's *The Hours* operates in roughly the same way. Instead of a variety of people all interconnected in the same place, it joins three different eras inextricably connected through the story and ideals presented in Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*. Following the reasoning of Woolf's portrayal of Septimus Warren Smith, Cunningham includes another ill-fated male character, a gay author named Richard. It is in the modern era that Cunningham most vastly plays with the characters found in *Mrs. Dalloway* and some of the ubiquitous themes and ideas many readers and critics have picked up on. Stories and recollections of youthful banter between a young Clarissa, Richard, and Sally are often seen for their subtle, but nevertheless present, homosexual insinuations. Cunningham turned Clarissa and Sally into lovers and partners. Richard is now a celebrated author who is dying of AIDS, but the hint of a past love and a strong connection still exist between Clarissa and Richard. Richard Brown decides to follow Septimus's example by taking his own life, again by leaping out of a window. Then there are the men and women who cared about Richard and try to interpret his suicide by viewing it as an attempt to retain a semblance of personal dignity before all was lost (Lane par. 14).

This is not to say that Cunningham is fixated on homosexual relationships—he explores human relationships. What sex each character is that is involved with another is not an apparent concern or direct focus. Instead, Cunningham focuses on the bonds that exist because of who the characters are, and any and all connections between them are based upon a love for the person, not a gender. Thus, the resounding theme in

The Hours is human connection, and occasionally the lack thereof.

There are essentially three facets to the character of Mrs. Dalloway that Cunningham creates and molds in his novel: The woman behind Mrs. Dalloway, Virginia Woolf, who like most authors, whether intentionally or not, places a bit of herself into the character; Laura Brown, the part of Clarissa that wishes to give up; and Clarissa Vaughn, the modern day Mrs. Dalloway whose life has become a twist of the one Dalloway often reflected on. "Its female characters give us three distinct reactions to feeling 'lost' when society seems meaningless, two of which are withdrawing temporarily into fiction and going about one's affairs with all the happiness one can muster" (Lane par. 14). Ironically, it seems fated that Laura Brown, a sad, desperate housewife, is likely to take her own life. Cunningham instead chooses to follow Woolf's lead and with a twist in the end, brings an elder Laura Brown into the present day scene, following the suicide of her son Richard, whom she ran out on shortly following the events in her section of the novel. She is the woman behind Richard's celebrated poetry, "the woman who tried to die and failed at it, the woman who fled her family" (Cunningham 222). Never far from her mind is the ultimate end of the woman who wrote the book she is holding; "How, Laura wonders, could someone who was able to write a sentence like that—who was able to feel everything contained in a sentence like that—come to kill herself? What in the world is wrong with people?" (Cunningham 41). Perhaps there is no clear cut definition of those who are sane and insane. How, then, could Woolf pass judgment on the male ego in the suicide of Septimus but terminate her own life? Cunningham addresses it in the statement made by Laura Brown. There are facets to every personality—no one is decidedly successful or doomed. Life is a measure of our interactions with others and how they affect us; everyone views matters of their lives differently from how an outsider would view them. Essentially, both literature and life itself are up for interpretation.

E.M. Forster wrote, "people in a novel can be understood completely by the reader, if the novelist wishes; their inner as well as their outer life can be exposed. And this is why they often seem more definite than

characters in history, or even our own friends; we have been told all about them that can be told; even if they are imperfect or unreal they do not contain any secrets, whereas our friends do and must, mutual secrecy being one of the conditions of life upon this globe" (Dee par. 9). The legacy of *Mrs. Dalloway* is not one merely imparted on Woolf, but on all the readers who feel so strongly about something they read—strong enough to write an entire novel in response to it. As readers, the opportunity to be immersed into a life that unfolds before them can be the ultimate exploration of both self and a work of literature, especially in the context of the reader-response theory.

Works Cited

As this issue of *The Harper Anthology* went to press, the works cited list for this paper was unavailable. Proper use and citation of sources, however, was verified by the student's instructor at the time the paper was submitted.

Evaluation: *Jaelyn has written an exceptional paper more on par with the work of an advanced student of literature. Her writing is clear, and her analysis is insightful.*

Sane Until Proven Otherwise

Matt Gebhardt

Course: English 102 (Composition)

Instructor: Nancy L. Davis

Assignment:

Write a literary research paper.

Edgar Allan Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado" is a story of revenge and murder, but it is also a story of underlying themes and ideas. Many people believe that the protagonist, Montresor, is mentally unstable, in view of the extreme nature of the crime he commits. However, if the best way to avenge being hit by a pitch in baseball is to hit a home run off that pitcher, then leading Fortunato down into the catacombs under a false premise is the ultimate grand slam. The murder is committed because Fortunato insults Montresor one too many times. "The thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as I best could, but when he ventured upon insult I vowed revenge... I must not only punish but punish with impunity... a It is equally unredressed when the avenger fails to make himself felt as such to him who has done the wrong" (Poe 173). To the unaided eye, this would seem to be an open and shut insanity case; however, by plunging deeper into the symbolism, it seems as if Montresor is thinking clearly. Perchance the use of the catacombs is only the tip of the iceberg, and there is a lot more to this story than meets the eye. "All this underground vault business in Poe only symbolizes that which takes place beneath the conscious. On top, all is fair-spoken. Beneath, there is the awful murderous extremity of burying alive" (Lawrence 8). Even though insanity is perhaps the simplest explanation for Montresor's crime, it becomes apparent through symbolism that Montresor acts in a chillingly calculated and rational fashion.

Understanding Montresor's sanity requires insight into the realm of Edgar Allan Poe. Many people believed that Poe himself was insane, and rightfully so; however, Poe's work is a direct product of the cleverness and logic that he possessed. "Most of [Poe's] heroes, even at their most 'mad,' have all the cold logic and lucidity of the sane: no one is more horrifyingly calm than Montresor" (Graham 332). Poe definitely wrote stories influenced from his own experiences. The stories that he wrote were a reflection of his own thoughts, and were not representative of his insane nature. They echoed the cold, calm, and clear nature of Poe. Montresor is a result of Edgar Allan Poe's sanity and wit, not his demise.

The character of Montresor in "The Cask of Amontillado" has a mental process that is often debated. Some suggest that near the end of the story when

Montresor shows a kind of pity on Fortunato, it displays Montresor's feelings and thus his sanity. "There came forth in return only a jingling of the bells. My heart grew sick; it was the dampness of the catacombs that made it so" (Poe 177). It is true that Montresor shows a weak, softer side, but not because he feels sorry for Fortunato. Montresor wants Fortunato to fully understand his reasons for burying him alive, and when Fortunato screams in anguish, it reveals insanity in the mind of Fortunato, not Montresor. Montresor was thinking clearly enough to know exactly how his crime is supposed to be carried out; it is only when Fortunato demonstrates signs of insanity, rage, and fear that there are signs of a mentally unstable person in this story (Henninger 323). The ending of the story is not astonishing; it is the finale to the instruction of the greatest crime ever committed. "There is no surprise in store here. This is to be a study of the calculated creation of that masterwork of criminal art, the perfect crime" (Henninger 322).

The beginnings of Montresor's masterful plan are in the family motto he describes to Fortunato: "Nemo me impune lacessit." Montresor's family motto has been translated, 'No one attacks me with impunity.' But it can be translated, 'No one bothers me in the slightest with impunity'" (White 551-2). No matter how insignificant the insult is that Fortunato projects onto Montresor, Montresor has to avenge it. The family motto is also accompanied by an emblem or family coat of arms. The Montresor family emblem depicts a snake being stepped on by a golden foot, but the snake is biting the foot in the Achilles heel (White 553). In ancient Greek tradition, the Achilles heel was viewed as the weak point on a person's body and if any misfortune came to that part of the body, it could result in death, as it did in the case of the war-hero Achilles. The coat of arms is an insight into the mind of Montresor, as is the family motto. Montresor is like the snake; he is going to have the last laugh. The family motto itself gives justification for Montresor to commit the crime he did. Through the symbolism of the coat of arms, it is clear that Montresor is simply acting in a way that is common in his family. The motto of the Montresor family spells out exactly what happens to anyone who crosses the family, and it serves as a fair

warning to anyone who wishes to challenge the family tradition.

The family tradition of Montresor fully explains why Montresor commits the crime that he does. However, the family emblem and motto do not call for a despicable plan to bury someone alive. This does not suggest that Montresor is insane; it merely provides an exclamation point to the entire situation. "He has an obligation to his family; he carries it out, with relish, and savors deeply the satisfaction that success in carrying out this obligation brings him...now, fifty years after the event, he can recount it with pride" (White 554). Montresor acts for his family and its honor. The motto and family emblem are the keys to understanding the root of Montresor's aggressive behavior towards Fortunato. In the time Montresor is alive, allegiance and pride in one's family is comparable to our modern day nationalism. As a member of the family, he feels obligated to defend his family from an attack, in this case, the attack coming directly from Fortunato. Montresor is only defending his family's honor. This makes Montresor a sort of patriot of his time (White 551). During Montresor's life, there is no national pride in existence. People are only connected to the close ones around them. It is a time of mistrust, and people had to keep their friends close, but their enemies closer. "For Montresor, with his feudal orientation, [family coat of arms and motto] would be capable of imposing the most serious and fearful obligations" (White 551). Poe deliberately informs the audience of Montresor's family heritage for foreshadowing purposes. The family emblem and motto are signs of Montresor's feelings and loyalties, and they should not be taken lightly.

Montresor's allegiance to his family and their beliefs provides a glance into his complex mind. Montresor committed his act for his family, and justifiably so. As for the method used in killing Fortunato, there is nothing wrong with making a little extra effort to get the job done. Montresor enjoys his duty of murdering Fortunato, so it is no surprise he prepares accordingly. Also, burying someone alive in the manner used by Montresor is an intelligent choice of method. Montresor has to make sure the job gets done and done right; he can not let anything interfere with

his plans. To understand why Montresor can enjoy killing Fortunato, he must be viewed as a soldier, because after all, he is defending his family. The family unit in Montresor's eyes is as important as the country is to a modern day marine. Soldiers of war take pleasure in victories, even when excessive enemy blood is spilled. The reason soldiers can take pride in such a massacre is because they are acting for the best interest of their homeland. Nothing hits as close to home for Montresor as an attack on his family (White 553). Montresor acts in a patriotic way, performing a civil duty in modern day standards. War is hell, and desperate times call for desperate measures. Montresor has the mindset of a soldier and believes he is fighting for peace, peace at any price. "Even if Fortunato's presumed offense had been directed against Montresor personally, not only Montresor but the entire Montresor family would be shamed by it. To strike one is to strike all" (White 552). Montresor acts for the honor of his family, not for unjustifiable reasons of insanity. "If we grant Montresor the mentality of a soldier in combat—and it would seem he is possibly entitled to such consideration—we should be able to understand that he would not have to be either demented or Satanic to carry out the killing of Fortunato" (White 553). Countries do not look down upon soldiers of war who commit horrible acts of murder; people should not frown upon Montresor for defending his family values

The Scottish national symbol does not feature a snake being stepped on by a golden foot like the Montresor family emblem. It does, however, offer a preview of events to unfold. Montresor is not insane; he is the greatest choreographer of the most elaborate production ever known. "The underlying structural paradigm of Poe's story is in the medallion of The Order of the Thistle: an eight-pointed star, charged with a figure of Saint Andrew, which is set behind the X-shaped cross he is holding" (Cervo 1). This symbolizes the obliteration of a human being by crossing them out, out of life. Montresor's goal in "Cask of Amontillado" is to erase the existence of Fortunato, which he succeeds in doing.

Another connection can be drawn between Saint Andrew and Fortunato, using the same idea behind the medallion. The medallion of The Order of Thistle depicts Saint Andrew carrying a cross. Not only does this represent someone being eliminated, but it also reveals how Saint Andrew died. Saint Andrew carried his cross because that is what was required of someone on their way to be crucified. He was put to death because of his views and his beliefs in Christianity. Saint Andrew held the belief in one God, and he stuck by that God until death. Fortunato can be viewed as Saint Andrew in the way he dies, making Montresor a genius in the way he murders him. With his arms outstretched and bound by chains, Fortunato assumes the position of crucifixion, even though no nails are used in the death of Fortunato. Along the same lines, Fortunato dies in such a way that resembles the death of Saint Andrew, for the love of God. " 'Yes,' I said, 'let us be gone.' *For the love of God, Montresor!* 'Yes,' I said, 'for the love of God'" (Poe 177).

Joseph Kishel comments that Fortunato yells, "For the love of God, Montresor," and Montresor simply answers his cry with an ironic mimic of Fortunato by repeating his words. This can either symbolize Montresor's own religious motives or a play on Biblical times when beggars would yell out in the streets, "For the love of God," as a sign of begging for their own lives. Montresor mocks Fortunato and does not listen to Fortunato's plea for his life (Kishel 1). One of the final pieces of Montresor's masterpiece is the connection to the Bible. Montresor displays his knowledge and his

level mindset by carrying out the murder of Fortunato in a mock religious ceremony of a human sacrifice. "Fortunato's incredulity suggests that Montresor is a Catholic...the coat of arms...is more than a simple revenge motif. The circuitous device—'A huge human foot d'or, in field azurc; the foot crushes a serpent...'—is taken from the curse upon the serpent in Genesis 3:14" (Harris 320).

Religious symbolism plays a further role in the story. The crucifixion and the motto suggest that Montresor is of Catholic descent. Montresor presents one of the last pieces to his puzzle by conducting a spoof of a traditional Catholic mass. "Montresor is performing his murder in the fashion of a grotesque mockery of Holy Mass. A supreme connoisseur, Montresor must not only kill with impunity, but also with style" (Clendenning 337). Clues also suggests that the costume that Montresor wears to the festival, the roque-laire, has significant meaning to the Catholic Church. The roque-laire is a ceremonial garment for Catholic priests that is worn during mass; the mass of the deceased (337). Montresor's thoughts reveal more insight into his holy duties. "I continued, as was my wont, to smile in his face, and he did not perceive that my smile now was at the thought of his immolation" (Poe 173). Clendenning continues by commenting on the meaning of Montresor's choice of words. Immolation is not only a killing, as Montresor is well aware; it is a sacrificial homicide (337).

Furthermore, Felheim, Moon, and Pearce elaborate by exposing additional symbolism in Montresor's crime and setting. The carnival setting in which Montresor's masterful plan is executed is representative of the ancient festival of the night of Passover. Fortunato's costume for the festival also reveals some reference to the Bible. The jester's hat that Fortunato wears is symbolic of the crown of thorns worn in ancient times. The bait itself, the Amontillado, is used by Montresor for specific reasons. Amontillado means, "From the mountain," which can be traced back to a sacred wine for Christians, otherwise known as communion. The use of bait to lure someone to their own death is the last symbolic feature to Montresor's masterpiece. In the Bible, Judas was escorted down into catacombs, exactly like

Fortunato is, and left to be mocked and eventually killed (301). The striking similarities to religious ceremonies cannot be overlooked. Montresor has extensive knowledge of the Holy Mass as well as Christian history and traditions. A person of an unstable mental state could not coordinate such a precise ritual. Montresor's ceremonial execution of Fortunato is no accident in the way it plays out. Each event is carefully calculated. "The tale has a strong flavour of a profane rite, a sort of Black Mass, or parody of archetypal events and themes in holy scripture" (301). Montresor not only acts with impunity, he acts as a crusader on behalf of God Himself.

It is easy to point a finger blaming insanity, but who are we pointing it at? Montresor is clearly not insane. Poe makes a point to show Montresor's sanity at the end of the story by his "heart growing sick" (177). Also, the Montresor family motto and coat of arms reveal that Montresor is merely acting on behalf of his family's honor; this gives justification to his actions. The relationship between the Montresor family emblem and the Scottish national seal proves that the symbol of a family can ignite enough passion to kill for a cause. The Scottish national symbol itself is symbolic of the method used to kill Fortunato. Finally, the parallels between Montresor's act and the Holy Mass are astounding. Montresor not only acts for his "country"; he fights for God Himself. This gives Montresor the status of a soldier fighting for his motherland, as well as a holy warrior, fighting in a more modern day crusade. It is difficult to tell a soldier of war he is insane for putting his life on the line for his country; thus, Montresor cannot be labeled insane for carrying out his own civil duty.

If Montresor is not insane, then who is? "Poe makes us explore the sadism that lurks in all of us" (Graham 332). Montresor begins his masterpiece by informing everyone that they share the same feelings as him by stating, "You, who so well know the nature of my soul" (Poe 173). Montresor acts for his homeland, and people today still feel a strong allegiance to their motherland. Patrick White explains:

We as members of the human community, share it with the royal house of Scotland, with the revolutionary-era American patriots, with all members of universal humanity whoever

they may be, who anticipating or experiencing a grievance against their tribal unit, whether it be one of formal political autonomy or not, feel justified in holding the right to take direct action against an adversary and in taking action if the provocation occurs. And, sharing that soul which we know so well, we know that the provocation can be slight and the retaliation brutal. (554)

Montresor knows that everyone understands his crime, and most importantly, the reasons for committing it. He knows that every human being is capable of the same thoughts and the same actions (553). On September 11, 2001, the United States of America was brutally attacked by foreign threats. At that time in our country, every American citizen wanted to see the culprits of this disaster punished harshly. Does this make the entire country insane? No, it makes us human, like Montresor, capable of thinking and performing inhuman assignments.

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Evaluation: *Matt's research is thorough, incisive, and original. He takes us through catacombs as fearlessly as Montresor does Fortunato.*

Unforgettable Trip

Halina Gil-Darlak

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Andrew Wilson

Assignment:

Write a personal experience essay.

It was a beautiful September, 1994, and that Sunday's afternoon was especially beautiful; the sun shone and beat down so strongly that I had the feeling it was the middle of the summer, not the autumn. My three-year-old son Pawel, my husband Krzysztof, and I sat on a swing in my father's garden; I still could not believe that only the day before we had been in our house in Poland, getting ready for our first trip to the United States. Because I hadn't seen my father, my brother, and my friends for very long time, because I missed all of them very much, I was very happy there, in my father's house, which was located in a small, picturesque town called Barrington. Moreover, my happiness and my joy caused the world around me to look more wonderful; it seemed that everything was much easier, and everything was possible. Therefore, I hoped that there, far away from problems, troubles, arguments, and fights with my husband, (parts of my life in Poland), I would be able to revive my broken marriage.

While my father and my brother were preparing the welcoming dinner, some delicious meals on the barbecue, my friends swam in the swimming pool. They were also very glad about our meeting, so they asked me and my husband to go with them to Minnesota for fishing. Because it was my first time in the U.S., because I wanted to see as much as I could, because I thought that this trip could be a miraculous cure for my disintegrating marriage, I decided to go with them. I borrowed my father's car, took our son, and full of happiness, joy, and hope, I began my first unforgettable trip in the U.S.

The trip lasted about eight hours until we reached our destination, but when we got there, I was very surprised. Moreover, I was deeply shocked! The place that my friends chose was completely wild. The camping area, if I can call it that, was located in the middle of a forest, nearby some big lake whose name I don't remember now, a few miles from any civilization. I knew that my friends were fervent fishermen and fisherwomen and that for them the most important thing was this lake, but I didn't expect that they would bring me to such a secluded spot. The vacation houses, which my friends had been talking about and praising, looked like sheds. There was neither a bathroom nor a restroom inside those sheds. I stopped dead trying to imagine myself going to the forest with my basic needs. There was only the small sink, but it was too small to bathe my son in it. "O my God! What am I doing here? What am I doing here?" I kept asking myself. Unfortunately, I could see nothing positive in this circumstance; the only things I saw were dirty windows, sticky floor, and filthy, destroyed furniture. And that terrible stink! The place in which I was going to spend a whole week was full of a terrible stink. Moreover, it was very cold there, and there was no heating in our "vacation shed." I was disappointed, angry, terrified, and sad. I was sad because my husband didn't care about my feelings; in contrast, he was happy!

He was happy because, as he used to say, he went there to fish, and only this was important for him, nothing else. My husband and friends woke up in the early morning, took the boat, and went fishing. They spent the whole day on the lake, and came back very late in

the evening. During this time, I stayed alone with my small boy and was waiting for their return. However, the situation did not change when they came back. My husband explained to me that they were so "busy" fishing all day, and that they were so tired; therefore, they were going to recover from stress. Of course, the best way to do that was by drinking. Because I was the only mother with a small child there, because I had to take care of him, I did not participate in the drunken parties. I felt awful because my husband did not pay any attention to me, because he didn't pay attention to his son, and because I realized that my marriage was a big mistake. I talked with him, I wanted him to understand my situation: I had nothing to do there, and I had no one to talk with of course besides my son, who was three and therefore wasn't necessarily a good companion to talk to. Unfortunately, my husband was deaf and blind.

One day, I noticed that my son had a high fever, and some strange rash was on his whole body. My son, who always was a bright, lively, and cheerful child, became sluggish, downcast, and grumpy. He complained that he was all itchy. But even then my husband was blind. It turned out that Pawel had chicken pox. Initially, my son had only a few bumps that looked like insect bites. Then, they developed into thin-walled blisters filled with clear fluid, which then became cloudy. The blisters first appeared on my son's face, and then they spread to almost everywhere else on his body, including the scalp, mouth, nose, ears, and even eyes. There were several hundred blisters on Pawel's body! When the blisters' walls started to break, they left open sores. Whereas some blisters broke, a lot of new ones appeared. As I found out later, the most characteristic feature of the chicken pox rash is that all stages of the lesions can be present at the same time.

I was sure that we had to go back home. Of course, my son's daddy was having so much fun there, so he didn't want to go back. Crying, I asked him to go home with us; I begged him for help because I needed a driver. Because I wasn't used to driving in the U.S., and I completely didn't know how to get home, I really needed his help. Moreover, I knew that I would have to take care of my sick child during the trip, but my husband refused. I knew that I couldn't stay there longer, so I

made a desperate decision to take my sick son and go home by myself.

I had never been as scared as I was while I was driving home. I wasn't sure if I was driving in a good direction, but some inner voice, my intuition, was telling me to drive that way. It was getting later and later, and my car was the only one on the highway. Because it was so dark, and only the full moon was lighting up the world around me, I imagined the worst things that could happen to my son and me. For instance, I wondered what could happen if my car broke down. I tried not to think in this way, but the thoughts did not leave my mind. Shivering and crying from the fear, I kept driving. I wanted so much to see any car on the highway because it might have helped me to feel safer. However, when this car drove up, and kept driving very, very close behind me for a long time, I felt worse than before. I thought that the driver from his car might be a killer, that he might kill me and my son. At that time, I didn't know much about the U.S.; moreover, some of my knowledge came from American horror movies. Therefore, that night, everything was horrifying for me. While driving, I also thought about my husband. I couldn't understand how he could let me drive. At that moment, my sadness transformed into anger; my powerlessness transformed into hatred, but that anger and that hatred gave me some strange power that didn't allow me to give up.

The worst part of my trip was when I made a decision to find a hotel. Because I was very tired, I could not drive anymore. In other words, I had to find a hotel to get stronger. It was not easy because I was in that part of Minnesota where there were only forests and open spaces. It was about two in the morning when I saw a lone motel standing not so far from the highway. It was a small motel that looked like the one from Hitchcock's movie, but I had no choice because my son and I felt worse and worse. I couldn't sleep all night, and I was shivering. I realized that I had a very high fever and the same rash as my son had; I had chicken pox, too. The next morning, I felt really bad, but I couldn't think about myself; my son's health was the most important for me. And although I had difficulty to get to my car, I knew that I had to drive home.

Unforgettable Trip

The morning was beautiful; the sun shone more brightly than usual, and I was lost somewhere in the U.S. I didn't know where I was, but I knew that I had to get home as fast as possible, because my son was in very bad condition. The fever was still very high, and with each minute, there were more and more blisters on his skin. He cried, but this cry was so strong that for a while he was losing his breath. Even though I felt so very, very bad, I had to think first about my little boy. I tried to calm him down; I told him some fables and sang him some songs, but it didn't work. He still cried. He kept crying for a long time. This crying was driving me crazy; I felt as if my head was splitting. Silence! At length the silence! Because he was so exhausted, my son stopped crying. He was fast asleep. Now, I was alone with my thoughts, but I didn't think about sadness, disappointment, sorrow. I neither thought about anger and hatred. My only thought was my home. Even though the blazing sun dazzled me, and even though I was almost unconscious, I kept driving. I don't remember how many hours I drove, but I remember how happy I was when I saw my home. My father and brother were surprised because they didn't know what happened in Minnesota, but they didn't ask. My father called a doctor, who was his friend, and asked him to come to our home. The doctor came and took care of us. I was so weak, and I almost don't remember what happened later. Because my son was only three, he got better very fast, but I spent many days lying half-conscious in my bed.

When I finally got home, I couldn't believe what I did. I covered that long distance between Minnesota and Chicago, but also I overcame my fear. Until I overcame my fear, I had thought about myself as a weak woman who hadn't been able to do anything without my husband's help. That trip was a very important experience in my life because I proved to myself that I was a strong woman capable of taking care of my child and me, and I didn't have to be dependent on a husband. And even though my trip wasn't a miraculous cure for my broken marriage, it helped me to solve my problems in a different way. After those few days when I could count only on myself, I had no illusions about my marriage. Therefore, I began divorce proceedings a few weeks after that unforgettable trip. Even though that trip wasn't

pleasant, it taught me how to be self-sufficient and independent. There is a well-known saying: "If something doesn't kill you, it makes you stronger." I think that this one episode of my life made me stronger, but it didn't make my body stronger. Instead, it strengthened my spirit, loosened my unhealthy link to my husband, and perfected the bond between myself and my son.

Evaluation: *This essay appeals to me because it has some of the features of a solid narrative: a semi-villain, a sense of realistic growth, and a little bit of the "stranger in a strange land" spirit.*

Global E-Commerce: Are You Ready?

Mary Greener

Course: CIS 218 (E-Commerce Development)

Instructor: Terry Morris

Assignment:

Information technology professionals often need to research new business applications of technology and report to a manager or project team.

This assignment provides students practice with this job function. In this business research report, each student chooses an aspect of e-commerce that interests him or her. The student explores, researches, and prepares a report on the chosen topic. The scope of this business report is five to nine pages. Students work on this project for much of the semester and are required to meet milestones, including topic approval, research and source evaluation, outline, rough draft, and final report. This provides students with guidance and feedback throughout the semester on their work.

Students are mentored during the process with the goal of an informative, practical business research report in mind.

There are 680 million users on the Internet today, and only 40% of those users speak English as their native language. Studies have shown that given the opportunity to make a transaction, a user will do so on a site presented in their native language. That equates to about 412 million people untouched by "English only" web sites, and the percentage of people who do not speak English will grow as less developed countries have the Internet made available to the general population. Translating web pages to another language does not make or guarantee a global sale. The investment is much larger than translation. Things to consider include culture, tradition, law, language, measurement, currency and customer service. Ensuring that a web site is truly global will be the key to success in international e-trade.

Anyone with a business engaging in e-commerce needs to apply brick and mortar international trade guidelines to e-commerce international trade. Most of the rules apply except, of course, physical contact with the customer. Edward T. Hall, a well-known anthropologist considered the founder of intercultural study, once said, "the single greatest barrier to business success is the one erected by culture." E-commerce firms should approach the process of learning about the intended audience from a student's perspective, to learn as much as they can about the culture, traditions, and professional etiquette and protocol of the people, and regions within that country. Those interested in global e-commerce should not limit their resources and should be sure to consult current, dated materials such as books, magazines, periodicals, newspapers and, of course, the Internet.

Anyone interested in developing an e-commerce business should be sure to determine the intended audience for the site before doing so. If you already have a site, you should determine who visits your site, or otherwise, determine who your potential customer will be or who you want them to be. This is a critical step when considering the localization of a web-site, because there are a vast number of nationalities in the world, and physical boundaries between countries do not often correlate with differences in culture, tradition, or etiquette. Dialects in language also differ within the same country or language. For instance, one who is of Spanish descent,

speaks Spanish, and lives in Mexico will not interpret a translation in the same context as a person of Spanish descent who speaks Spanish and lives in Spain or Cuba.

Several resources are available for existing sites to determine who current visitors to sites are, which may help in deciding on localization. Web-site log files are one resource that can indicate what languages may be worth translating pages into. Other information that can be gleaned from logs includes web browsers used and the platforms they run on. These resources will also become invaluable in analyzing the success of your investment. Knowing what technology is commonly available to your target audience is also important. Several foreign governments regulate communication channels and access. Although computers have nearly become a staple in the American household, they are not a staple in all countries. You would also benefit to know if and what hardware and software is available to your target audience.

Just as you would not overload a school schedule with too many classes, you should not overload your experience in learning about different audiences. There are far too many languages and cultures to address them all at once, so someone interested in tailoring an e-commerce web page to a specific audience should start small, plan, and work into it. Trust often comes with respect for another's culture and traditions, and trust equates to new and returning customers.

For many reasons, this educational footwork should be completed before designing a site's localized pages. One should consider learning about the pace of the customer, religions, and recognized holidays, religious as well as governmental. In many foreign countries, the business protocol is slower than in the United States. Relationships often take years to establish, unlike with Americans, who expect to establish a bond within weeks and sometimes hours. The Japanese, for example, are known for a slower pace. In running an e-commerce web site focused on a specific international audience, one should expect a potential international customer to make several visits to the site over an extended period of time before a sale is made, and the audience should be given a reason to return to the site.

In traditional trade, trust is most often built through

socialization, such as dinners and gift giving. Although the Internet makes both of these activities difficult, socialization can still be accomplished in international e-commerce. Open forums, bulletin boards, or marketing strategies such as free items are tools that can be used; however, without research, use of these steps could very well backfire. For instance, many consumers in foreign countries consider the style and thoughtfulness or personalization of a gift over substance. A free travel alarm clock might be welcome here, but in China such a gift would be considered morbid, representing death or the time left in one's life. In Japan and South Korea, to give four of an item is considered unlucky. These are just a few examples where a marketing strategy could actually drive potential customers away.

Education on the laws of exporting from within the United States and importing into your target area is a necessity for anyone involved in internationally focused e-commerce. Customs and export laws need to be applied to prevent legal complications and additional expenses that may be incurred by not following them. The United States Customs and Border Protection Service is responsible for ensuring that all goods entering and exiting the United States do so in accordance with U.S. laws and regulations (see list of works consulted for web address); however, they only enforce the laws set by other departments of the government. Civil and criminal fines for breaking these laws range anywhere from \$500 to over \$1 million, with some including jail time, depending on the severity of the breach. The actual agencies that determine these laws include the U.S. Department of Commerce; Bureau of Industry and Security; Department of State; Office of Defense Trade Controls; Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms; Drug Enforcement Administration; Nuclear Regulatory Commission; Office of Foreign Assets Control; or the Bureau of the Census. So, trying to determine who would regulate your exports may become an overwhelming task. A very helpful web site that covers not only the US laws but also some links on foreign law is Export.gov (<http://www.export.gov>). This site provides links covering exporting basics to shipping, licensing, and documentation requirements.

Sensitivity to the nuances of communication with

the target audience should take into account such factors as body language, colors, and individual words, not just verbal communication. Believe it or not, these things presented innocently on your site could drive away potential customers. There are many resources available to help one understand foreign nonverbal communication, most notably world travel guides for tourists. Whether or not you plan on traveling to the country of your potential customer, these guides will give you good insight into the ways of that culture.

Body language can be portrayed through simple graphics used on your site, such as buttons, logos, or graphics of product packaging. Although we have many hand gestures and body language we use every day without a second thought, one should be sure to think them over again before using them with the intended audience. You may be tempted to use some of these symbols to direct customers' attention to items or actions that need to be taken by them. Let's say you want to place a graphic depicting a hand gesturing an O.K. symbol instead of the word "okay" or "OK." In the United States, this gesture would be perfectly acceptable; however, it is a very rude gesture in Russia, Germany, Brazil, and Latin America. In the 1950s, Vice President Richard Nixon made a goodwill trip to Latin America. At that time, there was much hostility toward the U.S. Nixon innocently stepped off the plane on his arrival and flashed the "OK" sign. The people booed him, and this small event made headlines. This same gesture in France would translate to "worthless," or in Japan to "money." Nixon was notorious for flashing the peace sign, also known as the victory sign. Do you think he knew that having the palm toward the face while gesturing is offensive in England?

Colors used in the design of your site or in product packaging can also cause unintended harm to your success. Purple represents death in Mexico and Brazil, but white represents death in Japan. Southeast Asians like bright colors, whereas Germans prefer somber colors. In Japan, gold is considered gaudy, but in Hong Kong it is a symbol of royalty. Green is the nationalist color of Egypt but represents jungle disease in Malaysia and youth in the Orient. However, if a man wears a green hat in China it means that his wife or his sister is a prosti-

tute! People's tastes in color schemes vary depending on the culture, traditions, age, and market you are targeting.

Words that we take for granted everyday could have many different meanings across the world. Many of our words are slang and not recognized by foreigners. Once, I walked into a gas station to pay for the gas I had pumped into my car. The clerk, who was from India, was on the telephone reciting numbers to the person on the other end of the line. Jokingly, I said, "calling in numbers to your bookie, hey?" He looked at me with a questioning face. Then I realized that he had no idea what I was talking about or what a bookie was. Of course I went on to explain this to him and we laughed, but the opportunity to explain does not exist in the cyber-world. Determine what's in a word before using it--avoid sarcasm and slang. And just when you thought you'd be safe using English, here's a twist. Words in the American English language often do not equate to words in the British English language. For example, the word billion translates to trillion, can to tin, hood to bonnet, and diaper to napkin. One should determine which English your potential customers are exposed to before applying it.

Customer service can be the vital link determining the return of a new customer. This applies at home as well as abroad. Customers want web contacts to be available when they want and expect openness and honesty as they establish trust with you. Be sure to include phone numbers and the address of your business on your site, along with an e-mail address where the customer can contact you. Include pictures of the owner and staff to portray a personal effect. Be punctual in responding to questions or e-mails and be sensitive to the element of time. Although the contiguous 48 United States only has three time zones, a large portion of the world is just going to bed as we are going to work. Be clear on delivery dates and the mode of transportation available. Product availability or time constraints may be the only reason a customer has visited your site to complete a transaction. If you can achieve delivery effectively, it is more than likely they will return again because of your service.

Information on the site should be clearly expressed. Warranties should be expressed clearly in the appropri-

ate language and include return or repair instructions, and prices and quantities should be listed on the site in the appropriate currency and translation. Confusing the customer with American measurements and weights can drive them away quickly if they have to convert them. An excellent resource for conversions of almost any type is at <http://www.onlineconversion.com>, which is part of the BlueSparks network.

The servicing of a customer thousands of miles away may face several barriers that must be overcome to truly make the customer comfortable and satisfied. After all, a good after sales service can turn a negative experience into a positive one. Again, phone numbers, addresses, bulletin boards and on-line chat offer the feeling that a company is attentive to their customers' needs, but how will you interpret these modes of communication from your customer? Customers may be drawn to a site by a translated page and then be lost just as easily when they discover support doesn't come in their language.

There are a number of different options available for customer service that supports different languages. A translator could be hired, but this is probably not the most efficient use of resources. A recent advertisement for a translator speaking English, German, and French offered a salary of 17,500 to 20,000 British pounds, equivalent in America to \$31,283 to \$35,752. To employ an individual may not be costly, but to employ an individual around the clock for every language may run up quite a payroll. Luckily, there are other alternatives. You could contract with an independent on a case by case basis either locally or overseas. Drawbacks here would include availability, unless of course the individual doesn't mind waking with a cheery face when a customer calls at some odd hour or responding to calls when they are ill.

To help conquer the language barrier, you could create a virtual call center with software that uses a remote agent and telecommuting workforce. Software like this is offered by companies such as Database Systems Corporation (<http://www.databasesystemscorp.com>). These systems use the Internet, allowing customer service staff to work from home. Or, you could use a service such as Universal Engine (<http://universalengine.com>),

which supplies multilingual customer support solutions. These services offer incoming and outgoing e-mail translation by human professionals and live sales and support conversations through an interpreter, both available 24 hours a day.

Another strategy focused on conquering the language barrier involves implementation of a multilingual web-based support portal. This technology takes advantage of knowledge bases and allows users access to self-help resources, technical information, and support services that allow users to find answers to their own questions. Regardless of the solution, plenty of research should be done to address this critical portion of the customer relationship.

When looking to expand beyond the borders of the United States, you may want to consider the ISO 9000. The International Organization for Standardization's ISO 9000 is a set of standards for quality management systems that is accepted around the world. The increase in international trade brought on the development of internationally recognized quality standards. It was feared that different national standards would be a barrier to international trade, and so the ISO was born (<http://www.iso.ch>). Currently, more than 158 countries have adopted ISO 9000 as national standards. Although the manufacturing industry initially got the head start, ISO 9000 applies to all types of companies. It doesn't matter what size a company is or what it does.

It can help both product- and service-oriented companies achieve standards of quality that are recognized and respected. Registration is rapidly becoming a must for any company that does business in Europe, as the European Union has made it a key element in its drive to remove barriers to trade with Europe. Benefits from implementing this standardization claim to be management optimization, operating efficiency, reduced costs, increased marketability, and customer satisfaction.

Anyone building a truly global business should invest time in education before investing in converting to a multilingual web-site. There are far too many things to consider besides simply translating a page to be successful. So often in companies, investments and projects fail or are shelved because of lack of knowledge, structure, and understanding of the customers' needs and

desires. This also applies to foreign customers.

A three-year study completed in 2000 by the Language and Culture for Business Program at the University of Luton, England, focuses on a training program targeted at small and medium-sized companies desiring to or participating in overseas commerce. The program teaches cultural norms, etiquette, and language skills through workshops in a train-the-trainer fashion. Results of a survey in the final year of the study in relation to multicultural and multilingual web-sites revealed the following:

- Participants were treated with more respect by customers or suppliers due to making an effort to learn their language.
- Companies were able to take in more orders and close more deals with improved verbal communication skills.
- Participants saw an immediate benefit in the areas of strategic planning, marketing and business opportunity as well as effective customer service and customer satisfaction.

Education is a key to success. A trip to the country of your prospective customer would be a good idea, as would attendance at a trade fair to learn about your customers' culture of business and your current knowledge of it.

Finally, the design and mechanism you will use to translate your pages should be considered carefully. Although this should be the last and what most would think the easiest step, it cannot be accomplished effectively or successfully without the educational experience you must take first.

When designing multilingual pages, remember to apply what you have learned about your audience. Color and graphics should be used wisely, and the whole site should demonstrate a sensitivity to your customers' culture, traditions, and preferences. Slang and sarcasm should be avoided. Your customer will not understand things they have not been exposed to without an explanation. Use short, simple sentences to be clear and precise, and repeat important statements as many times as necessary to ensure understanding. All necessary information you would present in your English site should be presented in the customer's

native language. This includes warranties, privacy statements, order forms, customer service and more.

Larger companies, although they have several advantages over others, apparently haven't done all their research and have invested what must be millions into the development of their global web-sites. For instance, Nike.com offers what seems to be a wide variety of translated pages. North America has menus that indicate the USA and Canada. The native language of the USA is English. What is the native language of Canada? The laws of Canada recognize two official languages, English and French. The region of the country you are in determines the language that is used most often; however, the Canadian site is only offered in English.

The luck of the draw will tell you if any of the Nike Women sites have actually been translated. English, Spanish, French, Dutch, Italian, Polish, Turkish, Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Tia are the languages available. If you select the link to Malaysia, Singapore, or the Philippines, where the native language is Filipino, also known as Tagalog, it is written in English. Although Manila, the capital of the Philippines, and the surrounding suburbs are somewhat affluent, certainly not everyone can read English.

Another issue with the Nike.com site is Flash, Flash, and more Flash. They open with Flash and link to Flash. Several of the links to "translated" pages merely display advertising in Flash. Obviously, the availability of high-speed access and higher-end processing hardware were not what Nike was thinking about when developing their site. In May 2003, a study by Nielsen (<http://answers.google.com/answers/threadview?id=302129>) of the broadband and dial-up usage in the United States alone revealed that about 39 million Americans have a broadband access while 69.5 million have a dial-up access; and these are just the statistics for the US, a technically advanced country. Nike is missing out on a huge audience who will exit this site because of load time, regardless of translation.

Deciding on automated translation or human translation will also be an educational experience. The greatest advantage of automated translations is speed, while accuracy is the greatest advantage of human

translation. Other dynamics come into play in both, such as cost, maintenance, and culture.

Below is a paragraph that was translated from English to Spanish then back to English at <http://babelfish.altavista.com/>. This site allows the user to translate phrases for free. This is a fine example of how the value of accuracy can outweigh the value of cost.

For years I've taken pictures, had them developed and put them in a box or a photo album where they sat. I finally decided to do something with them. Now that I have a digital camera the standard process of take, develop and file has changed. Three walls of my basement, or my "Eclectic Gallery," are covered with picture frames I've collected from all over the country. Most of them are now filled with those useless photos, although many are waiting for new memories of tomorrow. I've created digital scrapbooks for friends and family and I am currently working on one for each of my boys. This is all just for fun, but maybe someday it will become something great.

Translation:

By the I've years taken pictures, it had them developed and put them in a box or an album of photo where they seated. Finally it decided to do something with them. Now which I have a digital camera the standard process of the taking, it conviértase and the file has changed. Three walls of my cellar, or my Gallery" "Eclectic;, they are covered with the I've marks gathered of everything on the country. Now they fill most of them of those useless photos, although many are waiting for new memories morning. The books of digital memories created I've for the friends and family and I are working at the moment in one for each one of my boys. This one is all hardly for the diversion, perhaps but it will become someday something great.

This process took less than one minute, the cost was absolutely nothing, and maintenance would be as simple as clicking buttons, cutting, and pasting; however, the process certainly did not translate the paragraph into anything meaningful. One cannot tell if any culture

was taken into consideration in this translation; however, we could assume not, since no questions were asked prior to submission and Spanish in Spain is different from Spanish in Mexico.

Another software application that claims to transform sites into "interactive multilingual hubs" is SYSTRANLinks. They also offer translation plug-ins for Microsoft products and claim that human translation is neither cost-effective nor capable of managing dynamic multilingual translations. Dynamic pages would bring this paper to a whole new level of education, but one should consider the static pages and the cost in time and software that would be wasted with output similar to that above. Although machine translation can filter large quantities of documents quickly, it doesn't produce perfect results. It can, however, provide an avenue to identify what documents will need human translation and speed that process.

Human translation, although very accurate if using a translator who is educated in the culture, can also be very cost prohibitive. Translation services are most often charged per word; however, this charge fluctuates based on the language and the level of the translator. To translate the example paragraph above at 40 cents per word would cost \$48.00. Although this may seem like a minimal amount, this is only a paragraph of 120 words. In evaluating translation, one should consider the cost to convert the pages necessary for localization of just one target audience and the cost every time your page is updated.

There are several resources on the Internet for translation and localization. World Lingo is a superb source for all types of translation services (<http://www.worldlingo.com/>). At World Lingo, you can obtain an instant estimate on the cost of document translation. To translate this document by a human from English to Tagalog would cost approximately \$980 or 25 cents per word. Translation by machine is limited to the most popular twelve languages by this resource, Tagalog not being one of them. They also offer services that allow you to browse the web in the twelve languages, and they offer an on-line e-mail translator, text translator, and a real-time web-site translator that you can add onto your site with one line of HTML code. They offer a live chat translator that would be beneficial for customer service

support and many other products. These are all machine translations, so remember your audience. World Lingo also has a comprehensive FAQ section on web-site localization (http://www.worldlingo.com/products_services/localization_faq.html).

What do the Social Security Administration, Rand McNally, MSNBC, John Deere and Geico Insurance Co. have in common? These are just a few of the clients that have used the translation, transcription, or interpreting services of ALS International (<http://www.alsintl.com>), another localization resource. They handle everything from language translation to web design and graphics for localized advertising. Although their site is not as informative as World Lingo, they do boast an impressive list of clients.

Several studies and projects over the past few years have given us hope in new technology. An interesting project which tries to address e-commerce communication was conducted by NESPOLE (NEgotiating through SPOken Language in E-commerce—<http://nespole.itc.it/>). The project involves personal translation of audio/video communication, or simply speech-to-speech translation. This system translates based on speech recognition, analysis, generation, and synthesis. Although not perfected, it is a success story nonetheless that presents a starting point for live automated translation.

The truth is, there is no software that will address all of your localization needs, and neither is there a translator who will. Effective solutions are a combination of technology that streamlines multilingual publishing, human translation, and interpretive expertise. Localization is more than translation.

Although widely professed to be global, the Internet is only one of the tools to your global success. Many larger companies have the resources in cash, legal expertise, and the advantage of going global brick and mortar first before applying what they have learned to international e-commerce. No doubt, there are tremendous opportunities to reach and secure foreign customers through e-commerce. But before you start translating web pages, plenty of research and analysis should go into your decision of converting to a multilingual site and truly going global, expanding your business across borders.

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Evaluation: *Mary provides a thorough overview of e-commerce localization and translation issues along with specific examples. She successfully draws from both well-regarded publications related to global trade as well as recent web sites. Mary does an excellent job of using a variety of resources to provide useful information and examples of e-commerce globalization issues important for a business to consider.*

Madness as Divine Sense in William Luce's *The Belle of Amherst*

Ellie Haberl

Course: Literature 224 (Women in Literature)

Instructor: Elizabeth Turner

Assignment:

Attend a women's literary event and compose an interpretive description of what you've experienced.

The director of City Lit Theater Company's *The Belle of Amherst*, Martha Adrienne, says in her director's notes that she often found herself wondering during rehearsals, "Why doesn't Emily seem more crazy and weird, as I hear others speak of her?" Indeed, in the collective consciousness, Emily Dickinson is regarded as eccentric: she rarely left her father's Massachusetts home, she never married, and she only wore white. With this image of Emily as a bizarre recluse being accepted by many as truth, Adrienne's question certainly hangs in the air during a production of *The Belle of Amherst*. Emily, herself, gives an answer when she writes, "much madness is divinest Sense—to a discerning Eye" (xiv). Playwright William Luce exhibits this discerning eye. By justifying Emily's strange behavior, Luce changes his audience's image of Emily Dickinson from one of a crazy recluse to a quirky genius. In his hands, madness begins to look like divine sense.

Luce delivers this change by targeting the areas of Emily's life that appear strange. He recognizes the need to explain her seclusion. This is done almost immediately after the play begins. Emily admits the behavior, saying, "I don't cross my father's ground to any house or town. I haven't left the house for years"(3). Emily then gives the explanation, "why should I socialize with gossips?" Luce has Emily portray the people of the town as nosy, walking by, and craning their necks to see into the house. Their conversation is portrayed as petty. Karen Pratt, City Lit Theater Company's Emily, takes on an obnoxious voice when she imitates the town people gossiping about Emily's sister Livinia. These conversations, when compared with the deep, beautiful, spiritual thoughts Emily shares throughout the play, persuade the audience that a lack of equal intellect is one of the reasons for Emily's seclusion.

Luce also must explain Emily's choice to dress exclusively in white. This is often a subject of psychoanalysis. Some say she wore bridal white because she never married and was disappointed in love as a girl. Luce has Emily address these concerns: "I enjoy the game. I do it on purpose. It's all—deliberate" (7). Pratt chooses to laugh playfully here to further this notion that having a little fun with the townspeople amused Emily. Luce communicates that Dickinson wanted to be regarded as a character in the town.

Luce also sees the need to address Emily's never marrying, in his effort to change Emily's image. The picture of Emily as a woman fearful of intimacy and comfortable in isolation is certainly supported by the fact that Emily remained in her father's house for her entire life, save one year of schooling, and by the fact that she lived with her sister, Livinia, until her death. Luce does not want Dickinson to look abnormal, so he explains she was the typical Amherst girl, going to dances and having crushes on boys. Pratt's Emily becomes giddy as she flashes back to her youth and reenacts flirting with James Billings at a dance. Pratt flits about the stage, smiling out at Billings as if he is in the audience. Luce also thinks it is important to Dickinson's image that he explain she had several men propose marriage. Emily says Judge Otis Lord was one such suitor. Again, there is justification for Emily's

refusal. One reason given is Judge Lord's eighteen-year seniority to Emily. Another reason Luce points to is Judge Lord's niece's objection to the marriage. Luce also wants to dispel the idea that Emily is incapable of intimacy. He includes text that describes a passionate love Emily shares with a minister from Philadelphia, Charles Wadsworth. Luce reveals that Emily can love and does. Of Wadsworth, Emily says, "like fleshless lovers, forever one. Such love was the limit of my dream, the focus of my prayer" (57). Again, so Emily will not seem abnormal, Luce makes it clear that the pair do not marry because of outside forces, not because Emily doesn't want to marry. Pratt kneels and weeps while saying, "Master—open your life wide and take me forever" (59). It is implied that it is impossible for them to marry. Emily asks, "Will you come to Amherst again? You can't? I understand" (60). It was so unusual for a female not to marry during Emily's time that Luce feels he must explain that Dickinson was able to love and willing to marry. His aim is always to prove Emily sane.

There is another, less easily defined way in which Luce paints a new picture of Emily. Throughout *The Belle of Amherst*, Luce's Emily is highly intelligent, intuitive, creative, witty, and mystical. He paints her as different, separate, gifted, and in the words of Emily's housekeeper, "genius"(9). This technique, even more than the others mentioned previously, explains Emily's unusual behavior. Luce says that Emily's behavior is different because Emily is different. Emily is physically isolated because she is intellectually isolated. Specific examples of Emily's unique sensibility abound. Luce alludes that Dickinson doesn't go to church because she feels God is present everywhere, preaching "In the name of the Bee—And of the Butterfly—And of the Breeze—Amen" (32). She has a mystical awareness that is far more developed than the spirituality of her peers, who feel they must attend church to feel God's spirit. Luce also portrays Dickinson as unusually witty. Again Luce separates her, so her differences appear genius rather than bizarre. Dickinson uses her characteristic humor when she describes her sister Lavinia's new cats. She says, "It catches a mouse an hour. We call it the minute hand"

(35). Luce also creates an Emily who has a special relationship with books and words, which also separates her from the outside world. His Emily says it is an "afternoon for heaven" (8) when she reads Keats, Shelley, Shakespeare, and Bronte. She describes feeling physically as if the top of her head has been taken off. Emily explains that there are some words so magnificent she "lifts her hat to them" (9). When Pratt, as Emily, says the word, "phosphorescence" she writes it down, stares at it in awe, and makes a joyful noise. Emily has, in the words of Luce, "a love affair with language," one so powerful it almost is like a relationship similar to that of friends or lovers. Again, Luce wants to justify Emily's isolation from the outside world, this time by saying it is a choice to marry words, and to spend her time with books. Luce wants to make Dickinson's uniqueness appear positive.

City Lit and Luce's words make madness look like phosphorescence. The play is a celebration of the passion and the beauty of being unique, yet there is a sad little pull after watching Luce's defense of Emily. Emily Dickinson needs a defense. She is seen as crazy simply because she is a woman who challenges her time by choosing to live with words rather than with a man. She wears white, and she doesn't go out into a world that doesn't accept women who think about deep topics like life, and death, and love. We call her mad for this. If only Luce could make our madness look like divine sense.

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Evaluation: *Ellie's paper is both a focused interpretation and a thoughtful assessment.*

Submission or Transformation in Unbalanced Families: Kafka's Gregor Samsa and Faulkner's Sarty Snopes

Jenn Heineman

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

Instructors: Andrew Wilson and Barbara Solheim

Assignment:

*Write a research paper in which you weave the
content of the two courses together.*

Family loyalty seems like a simple enough idea on its own. It is usually considered a positive character trait; this quality is admired, and many would say that it is easy to maintain. However, in our complex and diverse society, family loyalty cannot be counted on to maintain moral integrity or to support individuals' aspirations. Indeed, Aristotle might say that it is a virtue that could easily become a vice.

Upon examining Kafka's Gregor Samsa from "The Metamorphosis" and Faulkner's Sarty Snopes of "Barn Burning," one would likely say that these characters and their situations are very much alike. Both of these char-

acters have controlling fathers; these characters are exploited and taken for granted. However, delving deeper into the stories, one will find that they have many differences as well; at the end of each story, these characters handle their situations very differently. One submits in every way, never really trying to overcome his burden, while the other undergoes a very dramatic transformation.

Gregor is used for money; his family shows little appreciation for his hard work and generosity, and his father is misleading about the fact that he could have easily gotten a job himself. One quote, in particular, describes Gregor, his willingness to help his family financially, and the relationship that ensues:

His success at work translated directly into cash that he could lay on the table at home before his astonished and pleased family. Those had been fine times, but they had never recurred, at least not with the same warm feelings, although Gregor later earned so much money that he was in a position to support the entire family, and he did so. They simply got used to it—the family as well as Gregor. They gratefully accepted his money, and he gladly offered it, but that special warmth did not reappear. (Kafka 406)

Gregor decided to support his family financially when they were supposedly in need. It seems that at first, he got positive feedback and felt good about what he was doing. However, as the family "simply got used to it," he may have felt that he was not trying hard enough to please them. Gregor may have been blinded by this, simply letting his family take advantage of his willingness to help while hoping that he would one day do well enough to be appreciated. Sadly, his persistence is hopeless; "that special warmth did not reappear."

In a way, "The Metamorphosis" is meant to depict the selfish, destructive nature of humans and material gain. However, Sheldon Goldfarb argues that this is not entirely true:

But there are two problems with this interpretation: first, not everyone in the story becomes a piece of revolting vermin, only Gregor Samsa does; and second, there is more to Gregor Samsa's life as a bug than being disgusting and helpless. (198)

**Submission or Transformation in Unbalanced Families:
Kafka's Gregor Samsa and Faulkner's Sarty Snopes**

It is certainly true that Gregor is not helpless. His story is simply one of symbolism and the consequences he must face after the decisions he has made. However, to argue that Gregor is the only character in the story that becomes "a revolting piece of vermin" would be to look only at outward appearances.

At one time, Gregor's father had a business. When Mr. Samsa closes that business, he sets aside a good deal of money, but his son is under the impression that they have nothing left. Gregor's father lets him believe this and takes advantage of his helpful nature by letting Gregor get a job to support the family on his own without attempting to do so himself. Mr. Samsa is clearly a lazy and manipulative character.

Similarly, in Faulkner's "Barn Burning," Abner Snopes uses his son Sarty. He expects his son to lie for him, but he hardly shows Sarty any courtesy. In this way, Abner constantly takes advantage of Sarty's supposed impressionable youth and assumed resulting dependence; however, he underestimates his son. Sarty has a conscience and knows that what his father is doing is not right. When his father is telling him to be loyal to his family, and "stick to [his] own blood" (Faulkner 400), he may be feeling some resentment because blood is the only thing that he was given. It was something that he could not choose, and it is something that he knows he can never get rid of. Sarty was never given a real home, but even if he makes his own, he will always have his father's blood running through his veins. Although he is so different from his father, he knows that he would not exist without him; that is a guilt that will be with Sarty anywhere he goes. Still, Sarty knows that his father has made this family's blood too tainted for him to stick to.

Sarty's father has always made trouble for his family. He does nothing to avoid conflict; in fact, he is quite headstrong and always an instigator. A prime example is Mr. Snopes' attitude toward his boss, Mr. DeSpain, and his property. He deliberately walks through manure and does not care to wipe his feet before entering the house. When he is asked to clean the rug, he makes sure to ruin it in the process of removing the stain. Sarty's father walks his family through life being destructive and asking for trouble; when it crosses him, he is too stubborn to admit that he is wrong. Whenever he feels that he has

been wronged, or does not get his way, Mr. Snopes makes sure that someone pays; he burns the barn of every man who crosses him.

Gregor and Sarty both have undesirable fathers, but the most obvious example of their differences is the way in which these characters handle their quandaries. Gregor's problem is that he does nothing at all. He had always simply decided that he should do what he could for the family, without realizing that he was really letting them take advantage of him. Even when Gregor finds that the family had some money saved up, he makes excuses for them, saying that his father was very clever to set aside some money when he did. Because Gregor always did what was asked of him, it seems that he was already an insect before his metamorphosis. Even with this radical change, Gregor is determined to go out and do another day's work.

"Now," said Gregor—and he was well aware that he was the only one remaining calm—"I will just get dressed, pack my samples up, and be off. Will you allow me to go? Deputy Director, you see that I am not obstinate and that I want to go to work...." (Kafka 400)

It does not occur to him right away that this would not be practical even if it were possible. Physically becoming an insect hardly startles Gregor; perhaps he actually recognizes himself as one because he has always seemed and still seems to play that sort of role in life. His family even recognizes him in this new physical state. This is illustrated by the fact that Grete, Gregor's sister, brings the mutated Gregor milk, which was his favorite drink as a human. In a way, their recognition of him as an insect implies that the family is not blind to the fact that they treat Gregor with such greed. When the family is talking about getting rid of Gregor, he dies. In this way, even in Gregor's final, dying metamorphosis, he does exactly what his family wants him to do.

Quite differently, Sarty knows all along that his father does not do the right things. He is well aware of his father's problems and does not even attempt to make excuses for Abner's actions. Throughout this story, Sarty's conflicted feelings are underscored. He feels a sense of duty and eventually stands up for what he believes in (cf Ford n.pag.). Even at such a young age, Sarty must take action and move on. As his father sets

fire to the barn, Sarty breaks free and runs to tell DeSpain, knowing that his father will likely get shot. He runs towards the woods and hears shots fired; he thinks his father has been killed, but he keeps running. Abner would call this betrayal, but he fails to realize that blood is not what makes a home. Because he did not provide his son with a real home, because he was a coward who would rather run than face his problems in a civilized manner, because he did not provide his son with a decent example of a man, and because he expected Sarty to abandon his morals, Abner is the real traitor to his family.

Critics may ask why Sarty did not move on sooner, and why this particular time was so important. However, the important questions are not “why?” or “when?” Sarty is certainly torn; even after he leaves his family, he is found admiring his father. “To define himself, Sarty must define his father, so he eulogizes Abner.” (Ford n.pag.)

Father. My father, he thought. “He was brave!” he cried suddenly...“He was! He was in the war! He was in Colonel Sartoris’ cavalry!” not knowing that his father had gone to that war ...wearing no uniform, admitting the authority of and giving fidelity to no man, or army or flag, going to war...for booty—it meant nothing and less than nothing to him if it were enemy booty or his own. (Faulkner 409)

By admiring his father, it seems that Sarty wishes to embody his few positive traits. After the decision has been made, he is still uneasy about it. Despite the fact that he has already taken adult-like initiative, the fact that he is still a child and also still very vulnerable breaks through as he displays his agony over such a taxing decision. He doesn’t know that his father isn’t worthy of his second guessing, but the important bit of information is that Sarty does, indeed, move on.

Both characters are noble—Gregor, for his willingness to help his family, and Sarty, for his undying allegiance to his morals, even in such a difficult situation—but neither of them change their families for the better. Sarty, however, chooses to assert himself, showing his family that he does have an opinion on the matter of how he is treated and that his opinion matters.

Gregor never defends himself, sending the message that he does not respect himself. Perhaps more importantly, Sarty lives on with the chance to spread his message and give others the ideas and motivation for being self assertive and for demanding respect.

Using Aristotle’s discussion of what it means to have a good life, this argument is only strengthened. Aristotle explains that happiness is not attained by material gain or by receiving any other worldly pleasure. It is attained by seeking virtue (Aristotle 55). Aristotle describes the social order as divided into three parts: the life of enjoyment, the life of politics, and the life of contemplation. The life of enjoyment is rejected as vulgar. It harbors short-term goals, including power, lust, survival, and other such lowly earthly pleasures, all of which are short-lived. The other paths are viewed as positive. A life of politics may be any aspect of contribution to the general polis. We are essentially social beings, and must recognize that we can work together to sustain and possibly advance our way of life. A life of contemplation is the path that a philosopher would choose. This path promotes freedom of thought and the possibility of advancement among societies (Aristotle 56).

According to Aristotle, all humans seek happiness; however, according to his teleological, or goal-based, theory, happiness may only be found once a person has begun to live a life in accordance with virtue. Virtues are excellences of character, determined by functions relevant to that being; something or someone is good when that thing or person performs a unique function well. Aristotle also implies that one would be happier when exercising one’s unique function. Rational thinking and acting are traits unique to human beings. Therefore, to be a good human being, one’s goal should be to develop these functions. In doing so, one will feel more complete (Aristotle 57).

Aristotle’s virtue theory can be applied as an excellent way of thinking about how we shape our lives. No matter what a person’s desired function is, there is a virtue that is suited for that function. Virtue exists in two forms: moral and intellectual. Moral virtues are positive character traits that are basically habitual and often taught to children at a very young age. However, the given virtue becomes a vice if it is in excess or if it is in deficiency. Intellectual virtue is found by exercising the

**Submission or Transformation in Unbalanced Families:
Kafka's Gregor Samsa and Faulkner's Sarty Snopes**

human function of reasoning (Aristotle 59). Aristotle believes that this produces the most perfect form of happiness (Aristotle 60).

If he had lived to read Faulkner's "Barn Burning" and Kafka's "The Metamorphosis," Aristotle would be likely to interpret and compare the characters Sarty Snopes and Gregor Samsa in much the same way that I have. Family loyalty is clearly a common virtue among the two stories. Gregor tries his best to maintain it alone, and Sarty tries to balance it with other virtues. However, in each case, it has become more of an issue; it is a burden, or even a vice.

Gregor, in his dire attempt to win back his family's affection, works almost nonstop as the sole provider. Blinded by his love for his family, he does not care to realize that they are taking advantage of him. He believes that if he works hard enough, they will show their love in return and make him happy.

Unfortunately, without a healthy balance of virtues, Gregor focuses all of his energy on his family. In the end, none of the family members are better off for it. By taking advantage of Gregor, his family has chosen to live a life of enjoyment. By being so submissive, Gregor only serves to support his family's chosen path in life. He only means to be helpful, but Gregor cannot give the Samsas anything lasting by carrying on in this manner. Gregor's family loyalty has become a vice for the entire household. That vice appears in several forms; Gregor's insect-like work ethic causes him to deny his own needs, his family learns that they can easily take advantage of him, and all of their gratefulness is replaced with laziness and simple complacency.

Gregor goes too far when striving to maintain his family loyalty; it is in excess and becomes a vice. Sarty handles his family loyalty differently. It clearly is important to him because he is constantly struggling with it. However, this is a healthy struggle because it is a byproduct of Sarty's efforts to balance family loyalty with his other virtues; Sarty "represents those ideals of truth and integrity" (Loges n. pag.).

In the end, although he is still quite unsure about the moral validity of his actions, it seems that Sarty ultimately chooses to leave his family because his family situation makes it impossible for him to maintain a beneficial balance of virtues. His family is constantly

involved in seriously immoral activities. Sarty is consequently faced with the challenge of balancing his virtues with Abner's unfair expectations and twisted definition of family loyalty (Ford n. pag.). In Sarty's case, adhering to family loyalty would have become a vice, and it would cost him numerous other virtues.

Clearly, using Aristotle's virtue theory to compare the lives of Gregor and Sarty, these characters handle their burdens in two completely different manners. One significant difference is that Gregor's story is one of consequences, while Sarty's is one of a struggle and a final decision. Gregor has done nothing to overcome the vices around him, but Sarty has moved on. He may not be entirely sure of his choices, but the complexity in his thoughts shows that he has depth and virtue. On his path, this character may someday choose the life of the philosopher.

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Evaluation: *From Kafka to Faulkner to Aristotle... this is a long journey, but Jenn makes it a fun and interesting one.*

Caroline's Comeuppance

Kate Hendrickson

Course: Honors Literature 115 (Fiction)

Instructor: Andrew Wilson

Assignment:

Write a letter to any character from the literature we've studied thus far. Your letter does not have to come to any single conclusion about the character. Maybe there are good things and bad things about the character; you are free, in your letter, to demonstrate such ambiguity. Maybe you'd like to scold your chosen character about something, but maybe, too, there are things about your chosen character that strike you as semi-heroic. Again, let your letter reflect these complications (if you wish to reflect these complications, that is). Please make reference to the text in your letter. In other words, try not to be too vague about things your chosen character says/does in the text. Rather, be specific.

My dear cousin Caroline,

It has been ever so long since I have seen you or heard from you that I felt I must write to let you know the latest news. We have had the pleasure of your brother Maury's company for the last several weeks. Much to my distress, he left the day before yesterday on a business trip which will take him up north before he returns to you. It seems that he has a wonderful investment opportunity with some influential people in New York (an opportunity which Victor was unable to take advantage of at this time due to some business crisis or another—you know how these men are!), so Maury and one of his new partners went on without him. I shall miss him so. He is so lively and tells the most interesting stories.

Every evening after dinner, Maury, Victor, and I would sit together, the men with their brandy and I with my embroidery, often reminiscing about the old days, and wondering where the time has gone. Since Victor must retire early because he rises at such an uncivilized hour, Maury and I would chat about many subjects (he is ever so witty—and worldly, if you know what I mean). As he came to appreciate the sincerity of my deep affection for and interest in you and your family, he began to confide to me some of the trials and tribulations you have been subjected to (which Maury himself felt powerless to control, your husband being who he was). Now Caroline, far be it from me to speak ill of the dead, but I want you to know that I completely agree with Maury that Jason Compson was never the right man for a woman of your delicate sensibilities. Oh, he swept you off your feet with his promises and airs, but, truth be told, his overbearing manner and unreasonable Compson pride would have been impossible for the Queen of England to bear!

Why, Maury tells me that your husband was almost no help at all after Benjamin was born—he left you with nearly total responsibility for the care and rearing of that poor demented boy. Maury also says that after Damuddy died, you were so grief-stricken that you had to take to your bed and that in thirty years you have yet to fully regain your strength. No wonder! Your dear mother must have been such a help and comfort to you, and with her gone, how were you ever to go on?

Husbands never seem able to understand what we women must cope with, do they? We do our marital duty, bear their children, and off they go to conduct their business and leave us with everything else to manage. Of course in my case, since young Victor is our only child, I can hardly complain compared to what you've been through. By the way, did I tell you that young Victor has moved with his wife and my adorable granddaughter to Jackson where he has joined a law firm as a junior partner? This is surely a good step on his way to a political career. Presidents have to start somewhere, don't they? But never mind. We can talk more about that later. Still, I do miss them so.

Obviously you know what it is to suffer the loss of a son. I hesitate to say this, dear cousin, but I was shocked to learn from Maury that Quentin's accident may not have been an accident at all! Can it possibly be true that he committed suicide? Perhaps you've noticed that after his third or fourth brandy, Maury becomes a little vague when it comes to details of events, but I'm almost sure that's what he was suggesting. Caroline, why, oh why, didn't you tell me? I know you and I had our silly disagreements when we were girls, but surely you knew you could turn to me, another mother, and a Bascomb, for comfort. Even though Victor and I weren't able to be there for the funeral, you should have written and I would have flown to your side when we returned from Europe.

Maury says that you seem to have been cursed when you married into the Compson family, for trouble and bad luck have plagued you at every turn, no matter how much you give or how hard you try to please. Again, he can be a little vague, but he tells me that somehow Quentin's death was connected to Caddy's marriage, but that does sound a bit odd, so I'm not sure he has his facts straight. Nonetheless, her divorce and abandonment of her daughter to be raised by you, with all your other burdens, are disgraceful, no matter what the facts are. My dear Caroline, no one knows better than you and I do that children can be so thoughtless and insensitive to a mother's love and devotion, but Caddy's betrayal of you and all you stand for goes beyond anything I've ever heard! Maury was shocked when he learned of her scandalous behavior, but he was so proud

of you and the stand you took—wearing black, mourning her rejection of all you hold dear, was a symbolic gesture he will never forget, and on this score, he's positive that he's got the facts straight!

And where was your husband, the illustrious Jason Compson III, while all this was going on? According to Maury, he was literally drinking himself to death! Demon rum!!! Dear girl, how have you borne the pain, the betrayal, the loss (not to mention the possibility of scandal) over the years. Thank God for young Jason. I know he is the one ray of sunshine in your life—a Bascomb through and through. Maury and I can't help but wonder how Caddy's daughter—Miss Quentin, I believe—could possibly have stolen Jason's money, after all that you and Jason have sacrificed for her. I understand that Jason's temper is a little short lately, but is it any wonder, considering that he is trying to work, look after you and Benjamin and, until recently, Miss Quentin, and feed and keep a roof over the heads of the Negroes under your care?

And speaking of that, Maury has called to my attention the situation you have with Dilsey. Apparently she is quite argumentative, is slow to do her chores and give you proper attention when your fragile health requires it, and has been known to interfere when young Jason, as man of the house, properly attempted to discipline your granddaughter. Caroline, I will admit to you, as I did to Victor, that I am highly perplexed by the uppity attitude I've noticed lately among the Negroes here. Victor dismisses my concerns. He says that, like us, they're just getting old, but he's here so seldom, what with his business and all, that he really doesn't know.

But now, I saved the best for last. The only reason that I mentioned all the things that Maury told me is because I have a wonderful surprise for you. Victor has business in Yoknapatawpha County next week, and I have overcome all of his objections to my determination to visit you for a few weeks. In fact, by the time you receive this letter, we will be on our way to Jefferson. We will arrive on Wednesday (Victor will drop me off and leave immediately), and then, Caroline, we'll have such fun! We'll talk and shop and sit on the verandah and reminisce all about the good times we had when we

were girls. And you can tell me everything, and I mean everything, about your life with that man and the children he surely ruined despite the sacrifices you made to try and raise them as only a Bascomb could. Remember, dear cousin, that confession is good for the soul, and discretion is my middle name.

Also, Maury says that your house could use a coat of paint, maybe some new curtains and furniture, and the grounds could use some sprucing up. I'm sure that Jason would be willing to pay any amount to see how much good it will do his beloved mother to be up and around and busy and happy once more. You'll see, dearest cousin and friend, that together we Bascombs can change all that's gone wrong—we can change everything back to the way it used to be! Be of brave spirit, dear Caroline. Help is on the way!

Your loving cousin,

Adeline

Evaluation: *Kate was, to say the least, angry at Faulkner's self-centered Mrs. Compson. Class period after class period, Kate seethed. There's some of that here, though it's highly controlled.*

Home Schooling

Mindy Hurley

Course: English 101 (Composition)

Instructor: Andrew Wilson

Assignment:

Write a persuasive essay.

George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Franklin D. Roosevelt: what do all these presidents have in common? They were home schooled. Martha Washington, Abigail Adams, Florence Nightingale, Agatha Christie, Pearl S. Buck: what do they have in common? They were home schooled. Likewise, Mark Twain, Charles Dickens, Rembrandt Peale, Claude Monet, Felix Mendelssohn, and Amadeus Mozart were home schooled. But home schooling is by no means ancient or old fashioned. Venus and Serena Williams, the tennis stars, were home schooled. Spenser Breslin, the young Hollywood actor starring in *The Kid* and *Santa Clause 2*, is home schooled. Home schooling is no longer a fringe movement of ultraconservatives, but is becoming more mainstream, growing by about 20% annually nationwide (Paulson 18). Increasingly, Christians, agnostics, and Muslims alike all pursue home schooling because of the excellent education

home schooling gives. If we want the best for our nation today and for our future, then home schooling needs to be considered as a viable option in education for three reasons: first, home schooling delivers a superior education; second, home schooling creates more involved citizens; third, home schooling prepares students for the reality of life.

The definition of home schooling varies state by state. In some states, anything outside of the public school system, whether it is private school or home school, is considered home schooling. That is the exception rather than the rule, though. Although private school students do score higher than their public school counterparts, their scores are still lower than home schoolers' scores (Rudner 18). The state of Illinois, however, considers a home school to be a private school, given the same rights and privileges of all private schools in the state. Some home schoolers team with private schools and receive all of their curriculum from the school. Other home schoolers order their curriculum from various companies that either print curriculum for schools or specifically for home schoolers. Basically, home schooling is when children stay home with one of their parents and receive instruction one-on-one from a parent and by studying on their own. Additionally, supplemental home schooling groups offer support for home schooling families by utilizing parents with different strengths, such as a foreign language, a sport, a science, physical education, art, or music.

When people discover I am a home school graduate, one of the first questions out of their mouths is usually, "Did your mom give you an A in every class?" This question shows a serious lack of understanding about home schooling. People assume that parents will automatically give their children good grades, as if it is as simple as giving an allowance at the end of the week. But by no means did my mom give me an A in every class; I took three years of math in high school and earned a B every year. This question could be based on the fact that home schoolers consistently receive high grades, which in theory could be attributed to the parents giving good grades, instead of basing them on achievement. If that were the case, however, test scores like the Prairie State Achievement Test, the ACT, and

the SAT would reflect the home schoolers' lack of learning. But that is not the case at all: "Home schoolers consistently score 20 to 30 percentile points more than their public school peers on standardized tests" (Smith). Overall, home schooling simply delivers a superior education. It just makes sense. When a student, public or private, is struggling in a school subject, the very best help for him or her is tutoring. When someone can give that student one-on-one training and attention, he is bound to improve his understanding. And home schooling delivers that very understanding. The average class size in a public school is about 25 to 30 students, while at home there are about 4 students. Because these parents are directly involved in their children's education, they consistently do everything they can to help their children learn and improve. Home schoolers also have much higher college attendance rates than the rest of the U.S. population. "Over 74% of home-educated adults ages 18-24 have taken college level courses, compared to 46% of the general United States population" (Home School Legal Defense Association 2). As we all know, standardized tests, while very helpful in measuring achievement, cannot be perfect. But these test scores are seen as accurate by Jonathan Reider, the associate director of admissions at Stanford University. He stated, "We admire home schoolers; we think they are often very bright and independent thinkers. They are eligible to be admitted just like everybody else" (Remmerde 12). Clearly, home schoolers' consistently high grades are not a result of their parents awarding good grades, but rather, of the students' hard work and achievement.

Not only is a home school education superior in terms of test scores and the number of students, but home schooling provides superior flexibility to pursue a wide range of activities and interests. Many young actors are home schooled or privately tutored so they can keep up with their studies while pursuing a career. Venus and Serena Williams were home schooled, which gave them the flexibility to practice tennis for hours every day while still keeping up with their educations. I have two friends who are home schooled, one in Ohio and one here in Illinois, which gives them the flexibility to own a horse and spend time at the barn

working and riding, while still keeping up with high school. Home schooling also gives the flexibility for accelerated learning and early vocational training, as opposed to the rigid schedule inherent in the public school system. With home schooling,

There are opportunities and time to pursue interests that are employment related such as internships. Some topics are not even available in a typical government or private school. Advanced curriculum and vocational training are available. They can easily start college-level studies. They can take proficiency-level exams for college such as CLEP. They are not held back from higher education while waiting for a high school graduation. (Hedding 13)

Home schooling has given me flexibility in a number of different ways. My sophomore year of high school, I spent a week in Jamaica on a mission trip in the middle of February. It was very difficult for my friends to take a week off school, but home schooling allowed me to work ahead beforehand and count my time in Jamaica as cultural studies. I also was able to attend Harper part-time my senior year and take two classes both semesters. These classes counted for both high school and college, which enabled me to begin pursuing my nursing career sooner, taking classes like chemistry and microbiology. All of these activities would be much harder, if not impossible, to pursue outside the flexibility that home schooling provides. Home schoolers have flexibility not only in scheduling when they do their homework, but also in how quickly they do it and what they study. The flexibility that home schooling provides makes it easier for students to study, furthering both their educations and vocations more quickly and effectively.

The superior education of home schooling is not the only reason for home schooling, however. Home schooling also creates more involved citizens. In 2003, a study was conducted by Dr. Brian Ray of the National Home Education Research Institute, surveying over 7,300 adults who were home schooled. Over 5,000 of these adults were home schooled for more than seven years. According to Dr. Ray's study, 71% of home school graduates participate in an ongoing community service activity, compared to 37% of U.S. adults of

comparable ages (Ray 5). An ongoing community service activity includes, but is not limited to, coaching a sports team, volunteering at a school, or working with a church or neighborhood ministry such as a homeless shelter. Dr. Ray's study also discovered that a mere 4.2% of home school graduates consider politics and government too complicated to understand, compared to 35% of U.S. adults. Even more astonishing in this fact: in the 18- to 24-year-old bracket, 76% of home school graduates have voted, while only 29% of the comparable U.S. population has voted. In the older age brackets of home school graduates, the voting level never falls below 95%, while comparable age brackets of the general U.S. population never clear 53% (Ray 5). The average college-age student typically lacks community involvement and is disinterested in voting. In fact, in the most recent (2004) election, it was a national phenomenon that young people were so interested in the race. There are millions of young voters in the 18- to 24-year age bracket, of which a mere 10% voted in this year's presidential election (S. Smith). Home schoolers, on the other hand, are involved citizens who will continue to work hard for the good of their communities and their country.

Home schooling delivers a superior education and creates more involved citizens, but it also prepares students for the reality of life. The all-time, number one question adolescents and adults alike asked me during my home schooling years was, "Do you have any friends?" It was as if they thought all home schoolers live in a bubble which they are never allowed to come out of. My response to their question was always, "Yes, I have lots of friends. I have friends at church, friends in our home school group, and friends in my neighborhood." Just recently I heard a home school mom give the best reaction to that very question. She said, "Yes, socialization is a huge problem. My kids have so many friends they have a hard time finding time to do their schoolwork!" Because the environment of home schooling is much more similar to life in the real world, students are better prepared for the reality of life. For example, public schools segregate by age, with children rarely interacting with anyone who varies in age more than a year or two. But once a student graduates from college, he will very rarely, if ever, have a job

where he works entirely with people his own age. He will constantly be interacting with people whose ages vary drastically from his own, and if he can't do that well, he will not succeed. Home schoolers, on the other hand, will be very adept at such interaction because of their experience. I have friends varying in age from four months old to seventy-eight years old, and I love these people very much. I consider these extremes and many other people in between all to be my friends. But many times I have observed my friends talking to an adult and being quite uncomfortable if the conversation lasted beyond a minute or two. If they have that much trouble now, they will have difficulty in succeeding in an interview for a job. Home schoolers also just generally enjoy their lives. Fifty-nine percent of home schoolers say they are "very happy" with their lives, and another 39% say they are "pretty happy" with their lives. A mere 2% of home schoolers consider themselves "unhappy" with their lives. In the general U.S. population, only 27.6% are "very happy," 63% are "pretty happy," and 9.4% are "unhappy" (Ray 6). When asked about job satisfaction, 95.9% of home schoolers said they were satisfied with their jobs, and 85.3% consider hard work as the key factor to success, compared to 68.2% of the general U.S. population (Ray 6). These statistics show and explain what home schoolers have always known: home schooling is very effective in every area of life, from socialization to real-life experience. I realize that we cannot lean entirely on numbers and statistics to quantify happiness. What I am saying, however, is that these statistics represent a healthy degree of satisfaction with life among home school graduates.

The final argument my opponents might have is the fact that home schoolers might miss out on some of the "intangibles" of public school, such as attending lab sciences, talking with a friend by your locker while exchanging books, attending school football games, and, of course, attending school dances like Homecoming, Turnabout, and Prom. Home school students do not have the opportunity to do science labs in their homes, and that is a problem. Throughout high school, I did miss having that opportunity. But I attended Harper my senior year of high school and was able to take two lab sciences. As far as the friends you might

make in between classes, I suppose that is something home schoolers don't have, a small deficiency when considered in light of the bigger picture. Last but not least, my opposition might point out the missed football games and dances. A high school student can attend any game or dance that she wants. I chose not to attend any dances because I had no interest, although I could have attended with my friends. I have several home school friends who have attended various dances and games at their local public high school. Ultimately, even weighing these small socialization concerns against home schooling, home schooling comes out far ahead of the other options.

Home schooling is a viable third option to be considered along with public and private school, for the education of our children. People should not send their children to public school just because it is the average thing to do; rather, they should home school their children for the high quality of education it provides. Statistics overwhelmingly show that home schooling delivers students who are better educated, more civically involved, and prepared for the realities of life. Home schooling succeeds in every aspect, evidenced by some of the most influential men and women in history and continuing to the present. Home schoolers are not better people just because they were home schooled while growing up, however. Home schooling is not just for evangelical Christians, but for all people who desire a superior education for their children. Home schooling produces strong citizens that will actively lead our country in the days and years ahead.

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Evaluation: *This essay is well organized, beautifully written, and genuinely convincing.*

The Otherness

Miriam Hymes

Course: English 101 (Composition)
Instructor: Anne Davidovicz

Assignment:

Write a literary analysis of one essay in the textbook.

What do we see when we look at animals in the zoo, or by the roadside when we're camping? Better yet, why do we go to the zoo, or even bother to stop the car for that family of mountain goats by the tree line? What is it about animals that grabs our attention and holds it? In Robert Finch's essay "Very Like a Whale," he addresses this very question of our intrigue when he looks at a beached whale and says, "What was it? What had we seen?" "...why had we come to see it?"

Finch suggests there is a personal need to acknowledge and experience nature. According to Finch, this need is as great and vital to our humanity as our most basic physical needs are to our survival. This is apparent when he says, "Man, I believe, has a crying need to confront otherness in the universe." He continues: "This sense of otherness is, I feel, as necessary a requirement to our personalities as food and warmth are to our bodies."

There must be truth in what Finch suggests; why else would we stare silently at a wild animal or capture them for our amusement, save them or hunt them, write poetry and stories about them, or paint and photograph

them? When we aren't admiring our own amazing feats as human beings, we are marveling at the beauty and mystery of our fellow planetary roommates.

In the beginning of his essay, Finch compares the gathering of crowds around the whale to "flies around carrion." This metaphor is visually vivid in that we can see the swarms of tiny black flies invading upon the carrion eater and the dead carcass. It is interesting that Finch uses this visual since it is quite different from the way we view ourselves. Flies are lowly creatures that feed off the death and decay of other creatures. They are driven by a need to feed only themselves, and they are content to settle for the scraps. For the most part, flies are an unwanted presence. But we, like flies, can't help but be drawn to the carcass.

Finch further illustrates the idea of being drawn to nature when he refers to the whale carcass as a "human magnet," showing that all people are drawn to it, not just one sex, class, or age. He sees people from "electricians and oil truck drivers" to "women in high heels and pearls." No one is unaffected by the pull of nature. It's as futile for us to resist nature as for iron filings to resist the magnet. Finch then tries to answer the question why all these people had come: what exactly was this pull?

As Finch points out, the obvious answers are "Curiosity," "a break in the dull routine," or "An old human desire to associate ourselves with great and extraordinary events." Yet, these responses are not enough to answer his question, so he must dissect it further: "from what perspective were we looking at it?" and "what did we see in it that might tell us why we had come?"

Finch notes many approaches taken to understand the whale, and by doing so understands what it was that people were looking for by coming to the whale. To Finch and the crowds, it was "*Balaenoptera physalus*," "A cause for conservationists. A remarkably adapted swimming and eating machine. Perfume, pet food, engineering oil. A magnificent scientific specimen. A tourist attraction. A media event, a 'day to remember'. A health menace, a 'possible' carrier of communicable disease. A municipal headache and a navigational hazard. Material for an essay." Despite the numerable

attempts to understand the situation, the reason why they had come and what they were seeing remained a mystery. Unfortunately, these explanations were too superficial to answer Finch's lingering question.

The whale was large and real and sitting on our domain, land. The crowds had an up close view of the whale and the scars that marred his hide, while scientists had access to a vast amount of tissue and organ samples. Despite having the whale within their reach, they still could not understand its life, what had happened to it, or what they had hoped to learn from it. "On the whale's own hide seemed to be written its life history, which we could remark but not read." This massive creature, literally washed up into their hands, still eluded everyone, even in death.

In the struggle to understand this fascination, people slathered the whale with human compliments and behaviors: "very intelligent," "highly complex language," "sophisticated communications," "social structures," "personal relationships," "loyalty," "affection," and many more. It is in this flattery that Finch claims we are being "exclusive, anthropocentric" and do not "recognize nature in its own right." He claims that we are actually doing ourselves a "grave disservice" when we label the whale in human terms, as well as denying ourselves the truth about why we have this gravitation to nature. Finch believes that when we label the whale, or anything in nature, in terms of human beauty, achievement, strengths, etc...then we are narrowing our view of it. Thus we have done ourselves a disservice because we have taken away much of what should be appreciated. It is in this sense that humankind corresponds to those lowly flies Finch mentioned earlier, still drawn to and trying to label and understand the whale from one tiny point of view.

Finch's final conclusion is that we simply have a "...crying need to confront otherness in the universe." Our fascination with nature is in response to an unfulfilled need, a need that we've neglected with our cities and cars and machines. "So mankind is today in a similar, though more subtle, danger of cutting himself off from the natural world he shares with all creatures." Finch suggests that by absorbing ourselves in our own man-made world, we are slowly killing ourselves as a

species. "Our growth as a species depends equally upon establishing a vital and generative relationship with what surrounds us." He strengthens his point when he compares our obsession with ourselves to the destructive dangers of inbreeding. "We need plants, animals, weather, unfettered shores and unbroken woodland, not merely for a stable and healthy environment, but as an antidote to introversion, a preventative against human inbreeding." This implies that nature is not only a need but also our salvation from self-inflicted isolation and the eventual emotional deterioration of mankind. We need nature for more than meeting our basic survival needs; we need it to create open, healthy minds. This means, to be healthy as a species, we must meet the need for "otherness" by creating external relationships with nature. These external relationships, outside our species, are as critical to our survival as food, water, and even our relationships within our species.

By going to see the whale, or any little piece of nature, we are on some level recognizing this need and attempting to satisfy it. "Only now are we slowly realizing that nature can be confined only by narrowing our concepts of it, which in turn narrows us. That is why we came to see the whale."

Initially I agreed with Robert Finch and, in some respects, I still do; however, as a species with the ability to contemplate and reflect, I believe it is unfair to suggest that our beliefs are often "exclusive" and "anthropocentric" when it comes to our understanding or interpretation of nature. Undoubtedly, we see nature as a source of usefulness, and use nature to our advantage in, what may seem, a self-serving way. We use trees for houses and paper, we find value in only nutrient-rich soils that will give us the best crops, we raise animals solely for consumption, and so on. But what animal does not use nature to meet its needs? What does a wolf see when a hare bounds across its path? Does it see an animal that deserves "admiration and respect" because of its "inalienable right to exist," or does it see an animal that will serve as its next meal? It seems to me that every being in nature has its own centric view. In fact, the "inalienable right to exist" could be considered an anthropocentric human ideal. It is human-kind that coined this term, and it is an ideal that we apply to all of

The Otherness

humanity. As well, it is probable that we are the only beings to live by this belief, thus making it an anthropocentric value.

To better clarify, I must point out that we are the only beings to sit and observe other animals, to study them purely out of wonder, or to make efforts to protect a species that is not our own. We are the only beings to create art in the form of poetry and stories or paintings and photographs. To say we are anthropocentric is to suggest these actions are selfish and self-centered. Naturally, our minds have limitations. We can only appreciate something using the words, feelings, and ideas that are familiar to us. A human will never be a whale, and I do not believe it is possible, nor should it be expected, to admire and respect the whale, or nature, completely free of anthropocentric influences.

On the other hand, I find Finch's belief that we have a survival-like need for nature to be true. We all have this need whether we are aware of it or not. From the avid outdoorsman to the city dweller with a potted fern sitting on the window sill, from protection of endangered animals to caring for a house pet, from hiking through the forest to admiring that tiny flower that blooms between the cracks in the pavement, we all need and desire this "otherness" of nature. We are as much a part of nature as any other species of plant or animal and are therefore drawn to it and its fulfillment of needs, whether they are physical or emotional.

Evaluation: *Miriam has adroitly composed an analysis of Robert Finch's essay that accurately assesses his technique and theme. In addition, she critiques and challenges some of his notions near the end of her essay. We clearly witness her critical thinking in action.*

A Dope Fiend's Guide to Drugstores

Michael Kereluk

Course: Literature 112 (Literature and Film)

Instructor: Kurt Hemmer

Assignment:

Explain whether or not the book *Drugstore Cowboy* is more compelling than Gus Van Sant's movie.

James Fogle ends his novel *Drugstore Cowboy*, "Bob Hughes arrived at Memorial Hospital...at seven twenty-one P.M. and was pronounced dead on arrival" (214). Matt Dillon as Bob in Gus Van Sant's movie *Drugstore Cowboy* says, "I was still alive. I hope they can keep me alive." These are the final lines, albeit one is more final than the other, from a story that shared the same name, same characters, and same plot. The story is *Drugstore Cowboy*: a tale about a junkie named Bob and his rag-tag group of accomplices who are caught in a vicious cycle of doing drugs and robbing pharmacies. Like twin siblings, James Fogle's book and Gus Van Sant's movie share much of their physical make-up with one another, but when their surfaces are scratched, we see a stark contrast in tones, ideologies, and scope between the two. With the movie taking a stylized, consumable approach, it ultimately falls short of confronting the real issues that

create and perpetuate drug use. The book harnesses the raw, undisciplined energy found in the writing of then imprisoned author Fogle. This bleeds into its characters, allowing them to illuminate a poignant and often eye-opening view of the subculture within a subculture where the characters exist. These different approaches make Fogle's book *Drugstore Cowboy* far more compelling than Van Sant's interpretation on film.

The most obvious advantage found in Fogle's book is dynamic characters that build off one another to create a wider and deeper scope that is almost nonexistent in Van Sant's movie. Central character Bob Hughes best demonstrates this while he's ruminating over a "30-day hex" that falls upon him. His stream of consciousness meanders from early childhood memories as a burgeoning criminal, to time spent in jail, ultimately leading to an unfocused tirade about the politics of drugs. These awkward reflections transition Bob from a confident leader to a fallible, uncertain human being who feels trapped by his past and the potential of his future. Later in the story, when Bob decides to try to get off drugs, thoughts like these make it more believable and compelling that his character would do so. Bob is not the only one who benefits from wider development in the book. Diane, Rick, and Nadine all reveal part of the reason they would choose to live in such chaos. Diane is shown to be a negligent mother of multiple children who condones, if not insists on, using violence to feed a drug habit that makes Rush Limbaugh look like a piker. Nadine's wisdom and immaturity amalgam by comparing the drug lifestyle to "trying to bail out the ocean with a tomato-soup can" (106), and yet she chooses to stay with it for lack of better direction. Conversely, Van Sant's movie version chooses to steal these characters' dimensions by often assigning their important dialogue to Bob. They more or less become foils to streamline the themes of a movie designed to fit one digestible character, resulting in a less compelling viewpoint provided by the people actually living the lifestyle.

Just like the characters, the movie's ideologies and subject matter also get a Hollywood makeover, while simultaneously acting like a tea kettle in the book, compelling readers while they wait for it to blow its steam. Fogle's book is not afraid to delve into the convoluted

muck of flaws in the justice system, the drug wars, and politics in general. He succeeds by keeping them pure, simple, and, most importantly, from the perspective of his characters. Never does he go fishing with statistics or specific names; instead, he explores the world through the eyes of his junkies. These characters do not read the newspaper and would not know who the attorney general is, but they are experiencing the systematic control of their lives. These considerations become invaluable when watching Bob try to change his life, how he feels suffocated by a seemingly never-ending bureaucracy and life of institutionalization. On the other hand, the movie is careful never to step onto these potentially slippery slopes by not going into specifics about Bob's past or his real feelings and experiences. Keeping away from these issues allows the movie to be more stylized and entertaining, but negates most of the potency that the book delivered.

An interesting divergence between the book and movie was the tone that each used to tell this controversial story. There was no doubting where the tone of the book was coming from and how it wanted us to feel; it was written in prison, and it showed. Bleak, disturbing, and unforgiving, the novel shines light on a world that was dark to most people, exposing the horrors, the beauty, and, ultimately, the helplessness. The director of the movie chose a different, often light-hearted path by sprinkling quirky, unnecessary situations throughout it. For example, when Bob gets into a fight with his crew over the negative impact dogs have on one's luck, every channel he changes on the TV contains dogs on them. Although it is certainly humorous, it trades a quick joke in exchange for giving validity to Bob's cockamamie idea that superstition is a reasonable system to live your life. The soundtrack of the movie also adds greatly to its light tone, by attempting to be irreverent more than it tries to set real tones, often draining much of the poignancy. Even when Bob is burying Nadine, the carnival like music that is playing makes one surprised that a muzzled bear on a unicycle does not peddle by. These tone discrepancies are no doubt intentional, on Van Sant's part at least, and are effective at bringing the viewer to different places, but the book's honest tone resonates as the more compelling of the two.

Common ground can be found between *Drugstore Cowboy* the movie and *Drugstore Cowboy* the book in that they are both quality pieces of art. Being helped by its drug-chic veneer, its impeccable time of release, and its smooth, slick directing, one might say that the movie is even higher art than the book. Unfortunately, for each of those things the movie does so well, it sacrifices something pure and basic from the book. Whether it be the characters, the scope, or the ideas that the story is grounded on, the film loses some of the novel's honesty. That is why the long-winded diatribes we find in the book are more persuading than watching a spoon and a cow fly by Matt Dillon in the film. The movie *Drugstore Cowboy* may be the more enjoyable of the two, but the book is certainly the more compelling.

Works Cited

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- Van Sant, Gus. *Drugstore Cowboy*. Avenue Pictures, 1989.

Evaluation: *Michael's essay does an excellent job of explaining how Gus Van Sant transformed James Fogle's novel into a movie with a very different tone.*

Autism and Parents

Anka Koprivec

Course: ESL 074 (ESL Writing V)

Instructor: Wallis Sloat

Assignment:

In order to practice the conventions of a comparison/contrast essay in American English, advanced ESL students were asked to write about a familiar topic of their choice. Ms. Koprivec chose to compare two parenting styles.

“Daniel, stop! Please, Daniel,” a woman repeated for the third time. The four-year-old boy was spinning and throwing his toys around at the same time. Then he grabbed cereal and started throwing it according to some internal dance rhythm; the rhythm and dance were always the same. That woman was me, and the boy was my cousin’s autistic child. Before I came to the U.S. and started living with my cousin’s family, I never had a chance to meet or spend time with somebody who had autism. Then, several months ago, I met Careen and her son Tim. Tim is a cute five-year-old boy who also has autism. Looking at them, I could not stop myself from making comparisons between my cousin’s parenting style and Careen’s because they are so different.

The major difference between them is the quantity and quality of time they spend with their children. My cousin never has time for Daniel. His excuse is his job—he owns a restaurant—and his working hours. I admit that it must be difficult for him to wake up early if he goes to sleep at four or five o’clock in the morning, but Daniel needs his attention and care. In addition, if my cousin is forced to spend a day with Daniel, the child is in the house “playing” with his toys by himself almost the entire time. I must explain what it looks like. Daniel puts his toys around him, opens books with pictures, lies on the floor, and spends hours and hours just looking at them. At the same time, my cousin is “busy” doing nothing, with both legs on the table enjoying music or talking on the phone. What a “wonderful father!” Sometimes, he puts him and Philip, the oldest son, in the car and drives them around. In the house, the TV is usually on, and since Daniel has autism and reality does not exist for him, he spends his time closed in his world. Unlike my cousin, Careen is a person who gives all her time to Tim. When she discovered that Tim had autism, she left her job and decided to spend as much time as she could with him. She did not care for career or money because Tim was an important person who needed her. Looking at the two of them together is both depressing and enjoyable. Tim looks at his mom with an empty expression in his eyes while she tries to keep his attention. Sometimes he expresses his feelings by giving her a hug or just by smiling at her, which he does not do to anybody else, filling her with joy and sadness at the

same time. She has been trying for a long time to teach Tim to count, so now he is able to count up to 25. Also, he knows almost all of the entire alphabet and how to play several games specially made for autistic children.

Learning about autism and researching other parents' experience is the second big dissimilarity between their parenting styles. My cousin has read, up to now, perhaps two books about autism. He likes to spend his time playing computer games instead of searching for materials that can help him to raise a child like Daniel. Since he is not a sociable person, as my cousin has said, he does not try to make contact with the parents who have similar problems. On the other hand, Careen's house is full of the books that help her fight the everyday problems with Tim. She also spends a lot of time searching the internet for articles about autism. Several organizations that have been established by parents with autistic children are very helpful to her. Careen and Tim enjoy going to their meetings. Talking with those people and exchanging information and experiences with them helps her feel less isolated. It is, most importantly, good for Tim because he has opportunities to be with children that are like him, and maybe a small drop of happiness will enrich his empty life.

Unlike Careen, who has always been aware that Tim is different and who spends a lot of time trying to enter his world, my cousin waited almost five years to admit that Daniel had a problem; however, he still hides behind curtains of ignorance. He refused to see that the way Daniel played with toys was not typical and that he was not able to make any contact with the people and children around him. For him, everything was normal. He kept saying that Daniel would talk when he was ready, but it did not happen. Maybe because he is scared or he does not know how, my cousin today is still not able to make any contact with Daniel, even with his eyes, which is very important in communication with autistic people. Unable to stop Daniel's tantrums, he usually gives up. In contrast, Careen was aware that something was wrong when Tim was only 18 months old. The child could not respond if she tried to call him, and he never looked at her when she talked to him. Since Tim did not say anything at the age of two, she started visiting doctors and investigating what

was going on. The truth was painful for her—Tim was an autistic child. She gave all her time to help him and herself to live with it. Once she told me, "I have spent almost four years on the floor playing and talking with Tim. That whole time I was trying to make him look at me when I was speaking to him. I needed almost four years to make my son look in my eyes, and I am proud of the great success."

Looking at my cousin and my friend Careen, I feel sorry for them. Having autistic children and raising them must be very difficult. However, the path Careen chooses and her parenting style are things my cousin has to follow and learn if he wants to make Daniel's and his life less difficult. Careen is, for me, a model mom, but my cousin is the kind of parent I never wish to be.

Evaluation: Because of its excellent organization, sentence structure, and grammar, Ms. Koprivec's essay is clear and easy to read. The examples and vivid details which she includes are very engaging. Most importantly, Ms. Koprivec convinces the reader that she has analyzed her topic thoroughly and feels strongly about it.

Simply Unforgettable

Konstantin Kostov
Course: ESL 074 (Writing V)
Instructor: Lin Cui

Assignment:
*Write a narrative essay about your
first day in the United States.*

My first day in the U.S. was actually quite short. If I have to be accurate, from the moment my plane touched the runway of O'Hare International Airport to the moment I fell asleep in my friends' house just lasted seven hours. However, I counted these hours much later. In the meantime, all my senses were too busy to collect, analyze, and memorize every first site, every first smell, every first sound, and every little part of the big picture around me. Today, almost five years later, it seems simply impossible to forget my first day in America.

After a three-hour flight from Sofia to Zurich, twelve hours of delay at Zurich Airport, and a nine-hour flight from Zurich to Chicago, my wife and I were exhausted. The first step out of the jet bridge showed me an airport bigger than any other airports I had seen before. A long colorfully painted corridor brought us to the American Customs. With a little help from an officer, each of the passengers from our flight found a line for himself. I thought that Bulgarian Customs could really use a little

of the American efficiency at work. When our turn came, I could not speak to the customs officer because my English was nonexistent at that time. Despite all the language difficulties I had, the officer was doing his job very professionally and with a smile. When the whole procedure finished, a boy and a girl in green jackets with a sign "Prospect Airport Services" came near and asked us in our language, "Guys, are you Bulgarians?" We were stunned. What was this place? We had been here for less than one hour and somebody spoke to us in Bulgarian! These two children were very friendly. They helped us to find our luggage and welcomed us as the newest members of the Bulgarian community in Chicago. After such a short time, I felt like I was coming home from a long journey.

On the other hand, my wife and I found out soon enough that reality bites even in America. Going to a foreign country for the first time is a bit scary, but things get even scarier when the person who is supposed to wait for you is just not there. After waiting for one hour, we decided to spend ten dollars of our precious \$520 for an AT&T calling card and try to reach our friend on her cell phone. We almost lost any hope after 20 minutes of dialing, realizing that nobody was going to pick up the phone. Truly frustrated, I started walking around just to help myself in finding an exit from this unpleasant situation. Suddenly, I almost crashed into somebody, and I could not believe my eyes! That was our friend, with an even more hopeless look on her face than mine. We were so happy to see her that in the same second we forgave her for the delay and for the fact that she had forgotten to turn on her cell phone. The drive to our friends' house was extremely pleasant after the whole stress with the missing welcoming party. The ride in a brand new and full-of-extras Grand Cherokee was smooth, and I enjoyed seeing the wide streets and the beautiful houses of Rosemont, Des Plaines, and Mount Prospect. Then we stopped in front of a beautiful condominium, and I saw well-maintained landscaping, a gorgeous pond with some ducks in it, and a great sports complex with a couple of tennis courts. I realized that I wanted to live in a place like this and was ready to work hard for it. Also, I might have thought, "Life is not that bad after all."

Simply Unforgettable

Because hospitality is really important to all Bulgarians, our first dinner in the U.S. was simply unforgettable. Our friends cooked a Bulgarian welcoming dinner for us. A big chicken, the real reason for our waiting at the airport, was being roasted in the oven; the potato salad was ready; a couple of bottles of white and red wine were also waiting to be opened. Impressed by the portions of the food, we were truly shocked to understand that this was simply the American sized meal. After discovering the giant's nature of the American eating habits, there was another surprise for us. The meat and the vegetables were tasteless! Later, we learned that the taste adjustment would take months, and every Bulgarian used to the 100% organic Bulgarian food would have to suffer in the beginning. However, two hours after our arrival, this little inconvenience seemed a fair price to pay for the much greater opportunities in any aspect of life in the U.S.

Every now and then, I think of my first day in America as a little overture of the big drama "Life in the United States." I feel really fortunate because those hours gave me an initial impression of my new country and they put me into the right mood to build and fight for my new future. For that short period of time, I realized that home is not "before and there," but "now and here."

Evaluation: *This essay is interesting and witty. The beginning of each paragraph connects very well to the end of the previous one.*